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TREA

National Question

by TEFATSION MEDHANIE



B.R. GRÜNER · AMSTERDAM

Illustration: Tefatsion Medhanie

ERITREA
Dynamics of a National Question

by
TESTFATSION MEDHANIE

B.R. Grüner • Amsterdam

1986

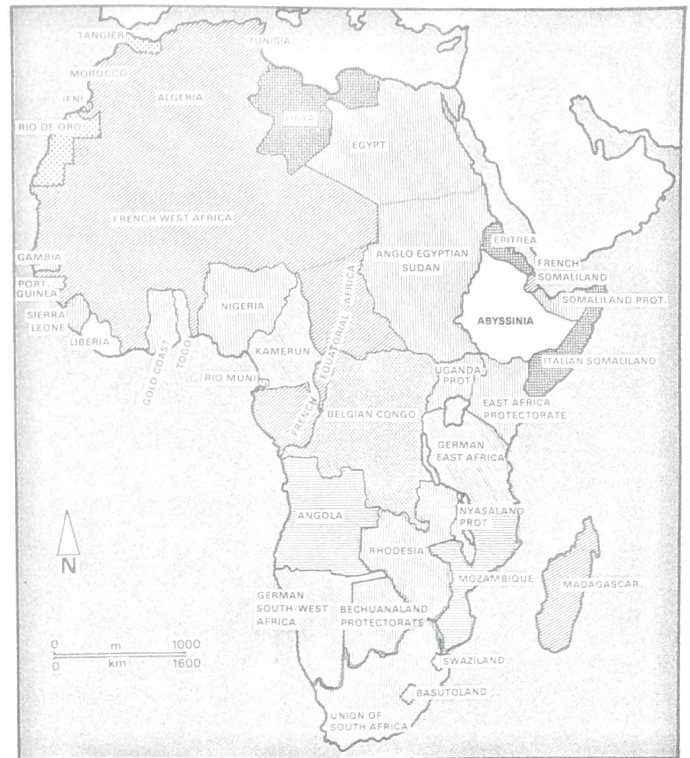
To the memory of ELF's fallen heroes and
heroines who struggled to unite Eritreans under
the banner of anti-imperialism

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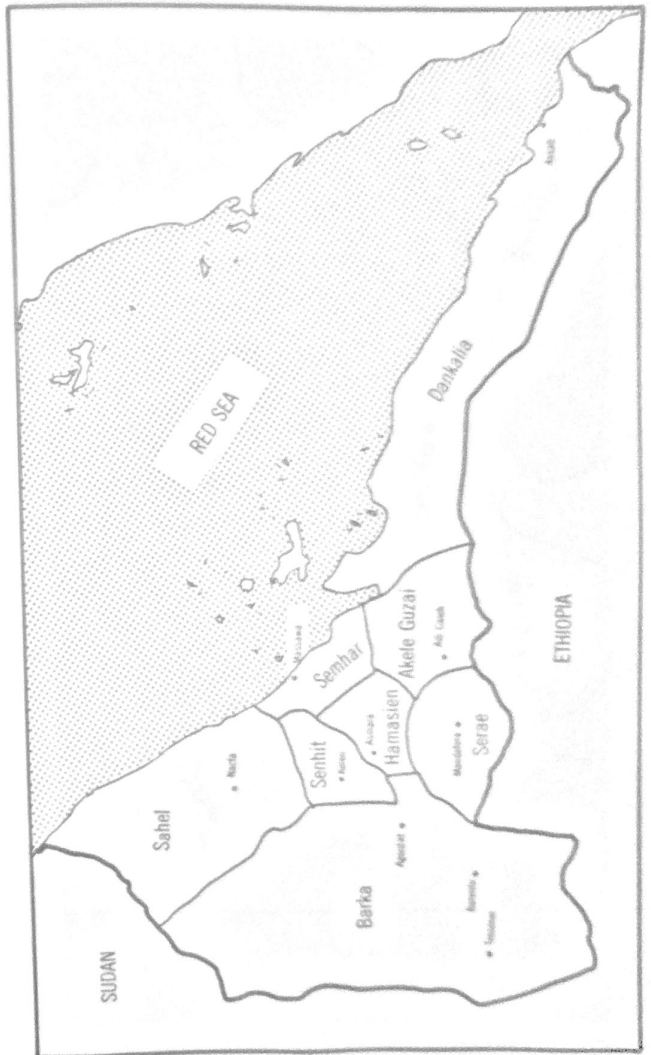
COLONIZATION: AFRICA 1914



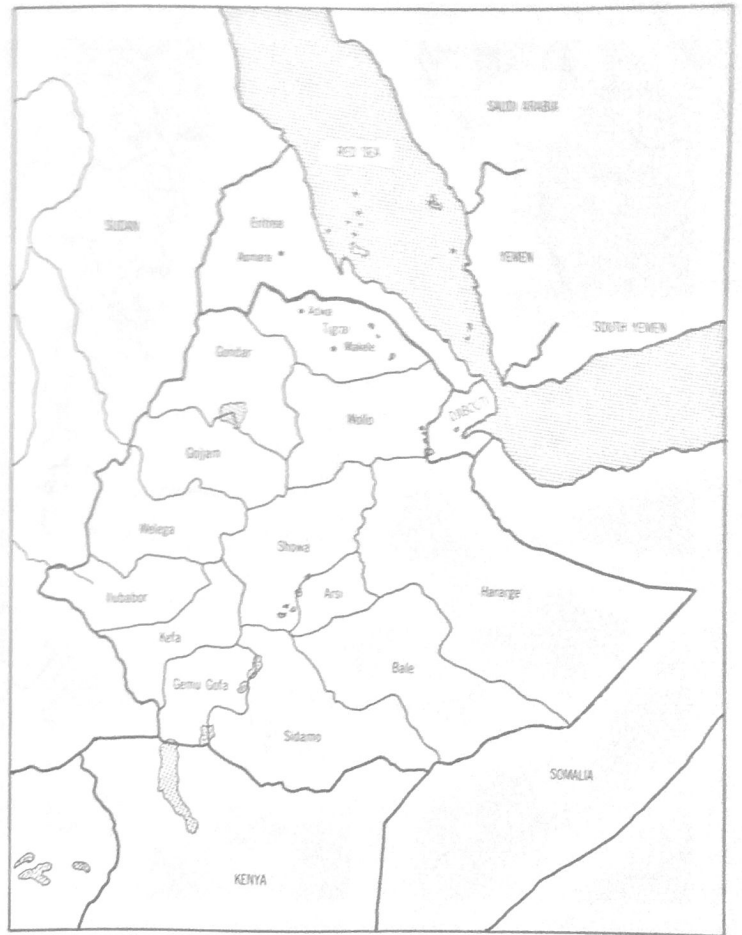
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Eritrea — a colonial entity in Africa

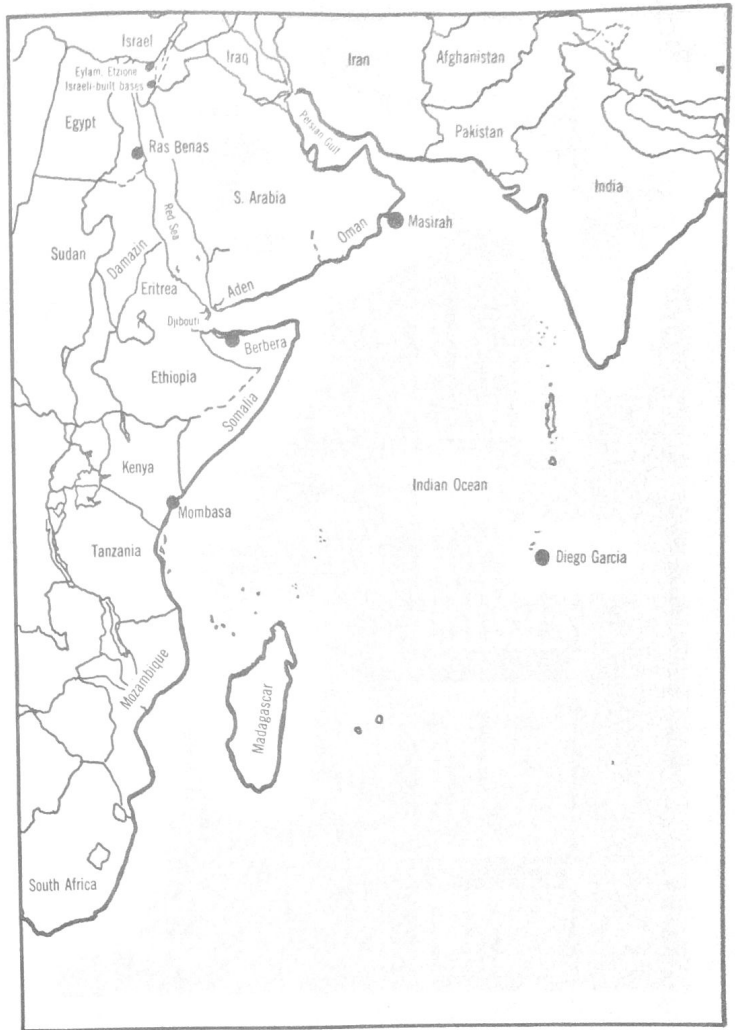
From: Maps On File. © 1985 by Martin Greenwald Associates. Reprinted by permission of Facts On File, Inc., New York.



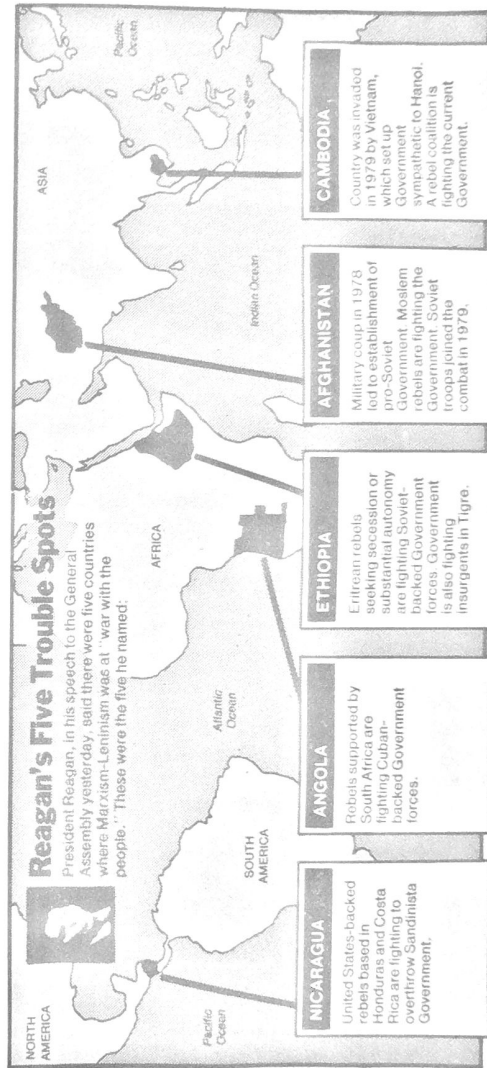
Eritrea — regions and major towns



Ethiopia — provinces



● US' RDF facilities in the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and the Horn.



Preface

For over two decades now, and particularly since the downfall of the Ethiopian monarchy, Eritrea has come to be known as a bitter theater of war. However, that it presents a complex example of a national question is little appreciated.

This book, which covers the period 1941 to early 1986, dwells on developments in the Horn of Africa and changes in the general region which have affected the context of the Ethio-Eritrean problem. It also formulates the basic issues and argues for an approach to the problem taking into account the principle of self-determination as expounded in Marxism-Leninism.

This work has a long history, the details of which it is unnecessary to recount here. It draws on personal experience and interviews as much as it does on research.

Many of the situations described in this book are familiar to me. A few are even close to my own experience or experiences of people I knew well in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, where I grew up, and in Ethiopia where I lived—mostly as a university student—in 1964-71.

I learned about the armed movement almost first-hand during my three-year stay in the Sudan. Here, I identified for myself the various trends in the movement whose main components were the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). I came to know—and admire—the cadres and combatants of *the main stream* ELF, who made the maximum effort to realize unity of the Eritrean movement under the banner of anti-imperialism. With many of them, including the senior and leading political cadres, I held countless discussions (and debates) on the political and ideological problems of the movement.

Living away from home, in semi-exile, I have encountered realities

which have affected my perspective and thinking on the Ethio-Eritrean problem. In the United States, to which I first came as a graduate law student, I have had more than a glimpse of the social inequities endemic to the "free world." In the course of pursuing an academic career in two East African countries—Uganda and Kenya—and in an Afro-Arab state, the Sudan, I could see more clearly the subtleties in the forms and devices of neocolonial domination.

The above experience enhanced my inclination to view the Ethio-Eritrean conflict in light of the quest for peace and social progress which today is tied in with the global struggle between socialism and imperialism.

This book is the product of research conducted for several years in New Haven, Connecticut, in New York City, and to some extent in Washington, D.C. I was impressed with the treasures of the libraries in these places and with the amount of material available on this subject.

"Eritrea" has been highly topical in the West ever since the radicalization of the Ethiopian revolution along the socialist road. In the last few years several books have been published; many articles have been written in various periodicals; and newspaper reports have been plentiful.

As a subject, "Eritrea" has been tortured by foreign commentators, many of whom sought to utilize it for anti-socialist and anti-Soviet propaganda. It has also been distorted by spokesmen of some organizations in the Eritrean movement, and, from a different standpoint, by those of the Ethiopian government as well.

In this work I have been critical of these books, articles and newspaper reports, particularly those which promote the aims of counterrevolution in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, I have noted that some of them include significant and historically correct facts, in which case I have quoted them or otherwise referred positively to them.

Needless to say, as an Eritrean it is impossible for me to claim detachment. I have been affected by the ongoing problem and am eager for a genuine political settlement. But I have tried to handle the subject as objectively as possible, making conscious effort not to slide into misrepresenting facts, and not to avoid issues or distort them.

For the benefit of Western readers, I would like to add one point concerning personal names. In Ethiopian and Eritrean cultures, there is no family name or surname. An individual is called by his/her name followed by his/her father's name for identification. So in this book, in many instances when an individual's name is repeated, I have used the first name only.

Many people who do not necessarily share all of my views on this subject have contributed towards the completion of this book. It is im-

possible to list them all. I am confident each of them will know in which way he or she has contributed.

But I need to mention a few such people. All my friends and relatives in New Haven have provided tremendous moral support without which I could not have finished this undertaking. The help of my friend Louise was very important, particularly when I resumed the project in 1980-81. So was the encouragement of a number of Eritreans in the U.S., Europe, and the Sudan, a few of whom actually urged me to write this book.

I am greatly indebted to Deborah who typed the first draft of the manuscript and assisted in other ways. I am also grateful to Ruth, Virginia and Esther who helped in the preparation of maps and other graphics and to friends who made invaluable contributions by way of editorial suggestions, typesetting and book and cover design.

Finally, I wish to thank my publisher, B.R. Grüner, who has been very cooperative and understanding.

While all the above and many others have contributed immeasurably, I alone am responsible for the views and conclusions presented in this book.

Tesfatsion Medhanie
New Haven, Connecticut
May 1986

Introduction

It was difficult to finish writing this book. While events in connection with the Eritrean problem are still unfolding, that is not the primary reason.

The Ethio-Eritrean armed conflict was fluid in the political sense. The political and ideological character of the parties involved was still undetermined. It was difficult to comprehensively analyze the problem—and above all, to state conclusions and suggest recommendations with any measure of certainty.

The Eritrean armed movement, which was progressive during the years of Haile Sellassie, had been changing since Ethiopia embarked on the national democratic revolution. Between the forces of anti-imperialism and those of reaction and counter-revolution (frequently disguised behind labels of socialism and Marxism), intense strife unfolded.

At the same time, the Ethiopian revolution was going through various phases of transition. How far Ethiopia would go to realize its professed commitment to the socialist road remained unclear.

Most recently, both the armed movement in Eritrea and the Ethiopian revolution have stabilized. The armed movement—as distinguished from the *political demand* for self-determination—has degenerated to a pawn of imperialism. Its right wing and sectarian factions, supported by imperialism and Arab reaction, have prevailed over the truly patriotic and progressive groups. But the developments in Ethiopia were progressive. The Ethiopian revolution deepened and, with all its shortcomings, it has developed the most advanced socialist orientation in Africa.

These realities notwithstanding, Eritrea is still a problem. The socialist-oriented changes in Ethiopia have introduced a new context within which to resolve the problem, but have by no means eliminated

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It apparently they have not even minimized its acuteness to any significant degree.

The Ethiopian revolution has now consolidated power. Its formidable global and regional enemies are desperately trying to destabilize it by utilizing the movement in Eritrea. In other words, Eritrea is the most serious problem of the Ethiopian revolution which has the brightest prospects of ushering the first socialist order into the African continent.

It would be unfortunate if these prospects were squelched as a result of failure to solve the Eritrean problem. It would be a tragic irony too because socialism is the system with the inherent capacity to solve such problems of the national question.

It is necessary to identify the nature of the Eritrean problem in order to devise effective ways of approaching it and to determine the solutions which are realistic or possible while at the same time gainful from the standpoint of peace and progress. For this purpose it is essential to examine: the roots of the Eritrean problem in Ethiopia's neo-colonial ties with the US; the experience of the Eritrean people or Eritrea's national oppression under Haile Sellassie; the early phase of the Ethiopian revolution and its impacts on the Eritrean movement; the Eritrean movement—the tendencies, differences, and conflicts within it; the revolutionary developments in Ethiopia, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf area and the corresponding shifts in the tactics of US imperialism; and the struggle between world socialism and capitalism.

Tremendous lessons can be drawn from the history of the degenerate armed movement in Eritrea. The movement had started as one against imperialism, with the active support of the progressive world, including some members of the socialist community.

This tragedy may be repeated in future cases of national questions elsewhere. The lessons from the Eritrean experience can be of some help in minimizing the number of such tragedies in the future. It is thus important to examine how the political and ideological regression of the armed movement came about. For example, in what way was it facilitated by the nature of Eritrea's national and social makeup? In general, what internal factors, and what aspects of Eritrean history did imperialism exploit to gain control of the movement? Which social groups in Eritrea collaborated with imperialism in this regard and why?

How might this deterioration have been avoided? Does this decline in any way reflect mistakes on the part of the progressive world? How were the shortcomings of Ethiopia's revolutionary democrats reflected in the approach to Eritrea? To what extent and in what ways did they contribute to the political deterioration of the movement? What were the dilemmas of the socialist community in regard to Eritrea and the Ethio-

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pian revolution? Could this community have responded differently?

I have discussed all the issues I think are important, using all the facts I believe are correct. Of course, these include issues relating to the errors of the Ethiopian regime. I believe such a discussion is responsible and appropriate today:

(i) The enemies of socialism and of the Ethiopian revolution are well informed. They know all the facts revealed in this book and much more. They are aware of and have been exploiting the flaws in the policies of the Ethiopian regime and those actions which are perceived by Eritreans as mistakes of the socialist states. They are utilizing everything which is perceived as unfair and unacceptable by Eritreans.

(ii) Now that the Ethiopian revolution has consolidated power, it can only benefit from such a discussion which may stimulate an exchange of ideas concerning a workable approach to the Eritrean problem.

The book addresses a number of audiences: Eritrean patriots, including those who are partisans of socialism; Ethiopia's ruling party and government, and Ethiopian progressives in general; the socialist community, and democratic and peace activists everywhere.

Perhaps, not all the audiences I have in mind would equally appreciate the importance of the details of the local, regional and global issues covered in this book. While this is unfortunate, there is no other conceivable way of presenting the discussion if the problem is to be addressed in all its dimensions. And the problem should be addressed as such if it is to be resolved in a way which would bring genuine peace in Eritrea, bolster the Ethiopian revolution and consolidate the gains of world socialism.

1

Ethio-Eritrean "Federation" and the U.S. Role

Eritrea is a component of the region known as the Horn of Africa. It neighbors the Sudan on the west and north-west, Ethiopia on the south, and Djibouti—the Territory of the Afars and Issas—on the south-east. It has an area of about 50,000 square miles and a population of about three million.

Eritrea's location at the junction of Asia and Africa and its proximity to the oil-rich areas of the Arabian Peninsula account for many of its past and present problems. Situated on the western flank of the Red Sea, a waterway linking the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, it has a coastline extending about 625 miles. The territory includes several islands, some of which are located in the heart of the Red Sea.

Eritrea displays a considerable variety of natural features and climate.¹ The central portion is a plateau with a temperate climate and scanty vegetation. It comprises the provinces of Hamasien, Akele Guzai, and Serae.

The western regions, consisting of the provinces of Barka and Gash, are lowlands with a hot and humid climate. The Barka areas adjacent to the Sudan are semi-arid. But the rest, and particularly the Gash province in the south-west, have rich soil and are bountiful in vegetation. The mid-western region, which is the province of Senhit, exhibits a blend of the features of the plateau and the western lowlands.

On the east and the north are the Danakil and the coastal plains. The former comprise the province of Dankalia and the latter those of Semhar and Sahel which are, for the most part, arid and have the hottest climate in the country.

Eritrea is a poly-ethnic, poly-national state.² Some of its constituent groups differ in their levels of economic and cultural development. The Tigrigna-speaking nationality, an offshoot of the Abyssinians in northern Ethiopia, is a cluster of sedentary agricultural communities in the plateau region. They had developed into class societies several centuries ago, reaching the stage of feudalism well before the advent of Italian colonialism towards the end of the 19th century.

The communities in the lowlands and the plains are a multiplicity of tribal and national groups. Many of them speak Tigre, a Semitic language closely related to Tigrigna. Other languages spoken are Bilen, Baria, Kunama, and Denkel or Afar.

Some among these latter groups are nomadic herdsmen; others are settled agriculturalists. The most advanced of them had evolved feudal relations but not to the same level reached in the plateau communities.

Generally speaking, the highlanders on the one hand and the communities in the lowlands and the plains on the other, constitute two religious groups. The former profess Christianity and the latter Islam. Notable exceptions to this distribution are the Jeberti, a small group of Moslems in the central plateau, and the Assaurta, a Moslem community in those areas of Akele Guzai bordering on the Danakil plains. The Moslems and the Christians in Eritrea are roughly equal in number.

The Eritrean Entity: A Product of Colonialism

History belies the claim that Eritrea ever existed as a separate political entity.³ It also belies the contention that this territory had consistently formed part of the Ethiopian Empire.⁴ However, history is full of instances in which many of the peoples of Eritrea were subjugated by foreign powers.⁵ Until the close of the 19th century these powers were either neighboring kingdoms or powerful states in the region.

Between the 4th and 8th century A.D. highland Eritrea was the center of the slavocratic Axum Kingdom which various scholars seem to regard as the forerunner of the Ethiopian polity.⁶ In subsequent periods the plateau and some other regions of Eritrea were intermittently controlled by kings and emperors who reigned in what is today northern Ethiopia.

In the 16th century the Ottoman Turks gained control of Massawa on the Red Sea and of the adjacent coastal plains. Gradually they pushed into the plateau and established a seat at Debaroa. They also

expanded up to Keren in the mid-western region. Their presence in all these regions was not very pronounced, involving little more than the exacting of tribute.

In the 1860's the Turks bequeathed their dominion over this region to the Egyptian Khedives. Earlier the Egyptians had also replaced the Funj Dynasty of the Sudan in the control of the Barka region, now western Eritrea.

In the 1870's the Egyptians set out to gain effective control of the plateau. This precipitated the battles between the Egyptians and the Tigrean emperor of Ethiopia, Yohannes the 4th. The latter won brilliant victories at Gundet and Doghali and curbed Egyptian ambitions in the region. However, by this time the Suez Canal was opened and Eritrea's maritime location had become attractive to European powers.

In 1869 an Italian shipping corporation known as the Rubattino Company purchased the port of Assab on the Red Sea. Hence, Italy claimed and established sovereignty over Assab. In 1885 Italy also acquired dominion over the port of Massawa, which it seized from Egypt.⁷

Italy soon started to expand its control in the direction of the plateau. Until his death in 1889 Emperor Yohannes the 4th resisted the Italian expansion. But the Italians made secret deals with Menelik, the King of Showa, which is the heartland of contemporary Ethiopia.

Menelik, a vassal of Yohannes, had vied for the throne. He entered into an alliance with the Italians in order to weaken and prevail over the descendents of Yohannes. The year Yohannes died he was crowned Emperor.

The Italians easily consolidated their control of the plateau up to the Mareb River. In 1889 they secured the conclusion of a treaty—the Treaty of Ucciale—in which Menelik formally acceded to the Italian occupation of this region. In 1890 they declared the territory an Italian colony and thus brought forth a new political entity bearing the name Eritrea.⁸ (See the map on p. vii.)

The Ethiopian Empire State

Until the end of the 19th century the borders of the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) state fluctuated with the changes in the might and ambitions of the Abyssinian emperors and of the contending powers in the region. By a process of military conquests, Menelik consolidated the present boundaries of Ethiopia at the beginning of the 20th century. In light of this, Menelik is regarded as a participant in the scramble for Africa, and present day Ethiopia is viewed as being no less a product of colonialism than Eritrea.⁹

The Italians used Eritrea as a launching pad to invade Ethiopia. Be-

fore the close of the 19th century they provoked a dispute over the Treaty of Ucciale which they claimed made Ethiopia their protectorate. Menelik rejected this claim. The dispute culminated in the battle of Adwa in 1896.

Menelik won a stunning victory over the Italians and put a halt to their ambitions in Ethiopia. But even after his victory at Adwa Menelik continued to recognize the position of the Italians in Eritrea. Italian possession of Eritrea continued until towards the end of World War II.

World War II: The British in Ethiopia and Eritrea

In 1935-36 fascist Italy invaded and occupied Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Sellassie fled the country and went into exile in Great Britain. His appeal to the League of Nations and other diplomatic efforts were in vain, but at home Ethiopian patriots pressured the Italians by waging limited guerilla operations.

A few years after the occupation, Great Britain recognized the King of Italy as the de jure sovereign of Ethiopia. Nevertheless, as one of the Allied Powers, it mounted the East African war against Italy in 1940. Imperial objectives partially underlay the British undertaking. The objectives were to render Ethiopia a British protectorate with Haile Sellassie as a puppet, and to replace the Italians in the control of Eritrea.

To the disappointment of progressive minded Ethiopian patriots,¹⁰ the government of Winston Churchill resurrected Haile Sellassie's image as the leader of the Ethiopian resistance. It encouraged him "to stir up the Ethiopians to revolt against Italian rule"¹¹, but without promising him reinstatement as *the sovereign* of the country.

Haile Sellassie was thus flown to the Sudan from where he advanced with the British forces to Ethiopia as a belligerent in the war. The East African war was concluded in 1941 with the victory of the British and the Ethiopian forces over the Italians. The British then occupied Eritrea where they set up a Military Administration. In Ethiopia Haile Sellassie was reenthroned under the shadow of Great Britain.

In the immediate subsequent years Ethiopia was virtually a protectorate of the British. The Anglo-Ethiopian agreement of January 1942 contained provisions reflecting Ethiopia's subordinate position in its relationship with Great Britain.

Haile Sellassie made efforts to extricate Ethiopia from British control. He succeeded only when he strengthened ties with the United States¹², which was then emerging as a vigorous imperial power. In December 1944 Ethiopia denounced the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement of 1942. A new treaty was concluded, reflecting the waning of British control over Ethiopia.

The British Military Administration in Eritrea

The British concentrated on a design to perpetuate their rule in Eritrea. They also sought to gain the northern Ethiopian province of Tigray which they administered from the Eritrean capital, Asmara.

The situation in Eritrea had some features which the British could use in pursuit of this design. Many of these features were outcomes of Italian colonial rule.¹³

The Italian colonialists had been engaged in mining enterprises, small manufacturing industries, and agricultural projects. They had built a network of roads joining the main towns and a railway connecting Asmara with Massawa on the Red Sea and with Agordat in the west-ern province.

During the colonial years there was a larger Italian presence in the plateau than in the lowlands. This was largely because the temperate climate of the plateau was more agreeable to European settlers. By the end of Italian rule therefore, there was more industrial growth and related developments in the Christian plateau than in the lowlands.

Italian colonialism had disrupted the feudal production relations in the plateau and the patriarchal relations in the lowlands. However, it had not done away with the superstructural factors reflecting these relations. Thus, by the end of Italian rule, regional and religious loyalties fostered by feudal and tribal ideologies still prevailed in both the plateau and the lowlands.

The peasantry constituted the bulk of the population. This social group was highly impoverished during the Italian rule. It was deprived of some of its fertile lands which were confiscated by the Italians. It was also deprived of many of its productive youth who were conscripted into the colonial army. As wage-earning servicemen, the latter became economically important to the peasantry.

Italian rule also brought about the emergence of new classes. These were mainly the working class and the various petty bourgeois groups in the towns.

The working class was only emerging and small. It preserved economic ties with the countryside and shared much of the outlook of the peasantry. It had no experience of economic or political struggle because Italian policy had forbidden the formation of trade unions.

The urban petty bourgeoisie as well was not a sizable group. A considerable segment was made up of groups who were "outcasts" in the rural communities. These included artisans like blacksmiths and weavers. Other components of this class were the traders and merchants.

Most of the weavers and traders were Jeberti Moslems who were discriminated against in the Christian plateau and denied shares of farm-

land. The Jeberti traders established connections with Arab and other foreign merchants in the towns and acquired some financial prowess. They practiced usury and profited heavily from the peasantry, the workers, and other poor sections of society.

The intelligentsia was a very minute segment of Eritrean society. Italian colonialists practiced racism in Eritrea and provided only a limited opportunity for primary education. This opportunity was offered to a few only because it was deemed necessary for auxiliary services to the colonial administration.

Italian colonialists had forbidden the formation of political parties or engagement in political activities by the population. The emerging urban petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia had therefore no political experience. They differed from the peasantry and the workers only in that they had more exposure to European style of life and had more ideas about Western-modelled state administration.

To sum up, when the British took over from the Italians, Eritrean society was one in which tribal and feudal features predominated, particularly on the superstructural level. A sense of Eritrean patriotism, transcending regional, tribal, and religious boundaries, was very weak on the part of all the social and national groups in the country. Eritreans, including the intelligentsia, generally knew little about world affairs. The situation abetted the schismatic design of the British Military Administration.

The specifics of the earliest design of the British were expressed by Brigadier Stephen Longrigg, the first British Military Administrator in Eritrea. Longrigg proposed the partition of Eritrea into three regions,¹⁴ to be disposed of differently. The western provinces were to be joined to the Sudan, then under an Anglo-Egyptian condominium in which Great Britain was the senior partner. The south-eastern portions, including the port of Assab, were to be ceded to Ethiopia. The Christian highlands, together with the Assaurta and Massawa areas, were to merge with the Ethiopian province of Tigray and form a "united Tigray state." Of course, under this plan, Tigray was to be severed from Ethiopia.

To justify the plan, Longrigg stressed the similarities between the people of western Eritrea and those of eastern Sudan, and feigned regret over the dismemberment of the Tigrigna speaking nationality into the Ethiopian Tigray and the Eritrean plateau. He sounded sympathetic to Ethiopia's need for access to the sea and emphasized the ethnic tie between the Ethiopian Afar and the Eritrean Danakil. (See the maps on pp. ix and xi.)

The British Military Administration imposed different administrations in the plateau and western lowlands. In the plateau it maintained

the privileges of the Italian community and upheld the Italian laws and institutions. It gave priority to Italians in employment.¹⁵ It appointed colonial-minded Italians to positions of high responsibility, including those of magistrates and crime investigators. This offended the Eritrean intelligentsia and the petty bourgeoisie in the plateau.

In contrast, Italians were not employed in the administration of the western provinces. Here, the administration was in the hands of the British assisted by indigenous personnel, an arrangement meant to facilitate the annexation of western Eritrea to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

The British Military Administration also took measures which agrieved the peasantry in the plateau.¹⁶ It confirmed the alienation of land effected during Italian rule. It also alienated more farmland and allocated it to Italian farmers. Furthermore, the British Administration imposed a hike on the "native tribute rates." The peasantry in the Christian plateau became more effectively subjected to this tax policy since it was more sedentary and more vulnerable than the population in the lowlands and the plains.

The British Administration had no need for the Eritrean personnel who were rendering services of military, artisan, or clerical nature to the Italian regime. It laid off many, thereby depriving the peasantry of financial subsidy from the towns.

The effect of the above measures was the impoverishment of the peasantry in the plateau. The tremendous rise in the prices of commodities compounded the problem. The highland peasantry was forced to borrow more and more from the financiers in the towns: the Jeberti Moslems. They incurred "mounting debts" which contributed to the accentuation of Moslem-Christian tensions in the country.

The frustrations of the Christian intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie converged with the disappointment of the highland peasantry. The Christian groups resented the British policy of catering to the well-being of the European community and of allowing Italian dominion in the plateau. To them the Jeberti and other Moslems in Eritrea also appeared as beneficiaries of British rule. Hence, these Christian highlanders developed a staunchly anti-European and anti-Arab (anti-Moslem) stance accompanied by a fervent sense of Black identity.¹⁷

The anti-European stance of the Christian highlanders was a spontaneous response to the experience of British rule. It did not signify a clear understanding of the essence of imperialism,¹⁸ nor did it have the qualities of consistent anti-imperialism. In short, it was without an ideological base.

The Christian highlanders were not aware that neighboring Ethiopia was in transition from British to American neo-colonial control. They

had no idea either of how oppressive and backward Haile Sellassie's regime was. With these inadequacies in their political outlook the substantial majority embraced the idea of unity with Ethiopia.¹⁹

The Moslem communities in the lowlands were less adversely affected by the policies of the British Administration. To that extent, they did not develop a sense of anti-Europeanism as acute as that of their compatriots in the plateau. Furthermore, due to the religious mistrust and antagonism accentuated by the policies of the British, they became very suspicious of the Christian highlanders. The substantial majority of the Moslem lowlanders thus rallied behind the movements for Eritrean independence, opposing the idea of unity with Ethiopia.

Interparty Differences and Struggle in Eritrea

The British Administration differed from Italian rule in several respects. For one thing, the British allowed freedom of the press, including the publication of newspapers in Tigrigna and Arabic. For another, they allowed freedom of association, including the formation of political parties.

In the 1940's political parties proliferated in Eritrea.²⁰ The compositions and platforms of the parties reflected the cleavages in the Eritrean society along regional and religious lines as discussed above.

The Unionist Party was the largest single party in the country. It was founded around 1944.²¹ It advocated the union of Eritrea with Ethiopia. Its composition was predominantly Christian highlander.

This party had obvious ties with the Ethiopian government which was represented in Eritrea by a Liaison Officer. The Liaison Officer financed the party, guided its activities, and paid its leaders.

The Unionists were most "unruly."²² They conducted terrorist activities against groups espousing independence. They were aided in these activities by bandits or "shiftas," who were sponsored and financed by the Ethiopian government.

The Orthodox Church, to which most of the highlanders belonged, played a big role on the side of the unionist cause. It was headed by a bishop who was very close to the Ethiopian government. It threatened to excommunicate its adherents if they supported the independence movement.

The composition of the movement for independence was predominantly Moslem lowlander, but it also included some groups from the Christian highlands. The largest of the latter groups was the Liberal Progressive Party (LPP).

The LPP was founded in 1943. It was led by Ras Tessema Asberom, a district chief in the Akele Guzai province. Its membership was very

small. Its main bases were in those areas of Akele Guzai and Serae far from Asmara, the capital. Quite significantly those areas were not affected by the alienation of land which had aggrieved the peasantry in the rest of the plateau.

The LPP had a few Moslem members. It also had a few followers from the intelligentsia and other strata in the communities of the plateau as a whole. Some among the latter were aware of Ethiopia's backwardness and of its obsolete political system. Indeed they were patriotically inspired to espouse Eritrean independence.

The LPP changed its platform a few times. Its initial platform called for the formation of an independent Tigrai kingdom consisting of Eritrea and the northern Ethiopian province of Tigrai. It also called for the inclusion of certain regions of eastern Sudan into this kingdom.

The idea of a Tigrai-Eritrea union, which in local parlance came to be known as Tigrai-Tigrigni, was generally compatible with the British design as articulated by Brigadier Longrigg. In fact it is said that the party's platform, which embodied this idea, had "British approval."²³ Furthermore, the party advocated that the Tigrai-Eritrea kingdom be administered by the British for some time. Its leaders are also said to have had close ties with the British.

It seems there was a connection between the LPP's advocacy of unity with Tigrai and the "Woyane" uprising which took place in the capital of this Ethiopian province in 1943. There is some controversy about the objectives of the "Woyane" movement. Some maintain that the movement was instigated by local chiefs who sought more authority from Showa and the release of their paramount head, Ras Seyoum Mengesha, from his "prolonged confinement . . . in Addis Ababa."²⁴ Others contend the movement's final objective was to sever Tigrai from Ethiopia and unite it with Eritrea. In light of the British policy and influence in the area at that time the latter contention is plausible.

The role of the British in connection with the Woyane movement was most sinister. Initially the British were behind the movement. Through it they sought to "(unite) Tigrai and Eritrea under . . . Ras Seyoum Mengesha"²⁵ with the objective of controlling both the territories. It appears however that, for some reason, they finally decided the movement was not in their interest. They thus sided with the central government, brought a squadron of fighter planes from Aden and brutally crushed the uprising.

A few facts strengthen the view that the LPP shared the objectives of the Woyane uprising. Leaders of the party, Ras Tessema and his son Abraha Tessema, had argued for the Tigrai-Eritrea union "under the possible but unsolicited leadership of Seyoum Mengesha."²⁶ Further-

more these leaders were "connected by blood and interest"²⁷ with Seyoum Mengesha himself, who was a grandson of Emperor Yohannes the 4th.²⁸

By all indications only a small minority in the LPP fervently upheld Tigrat-Tigrigni. The doctrine faded from the party platform around 1946. The timing of its demise coincided with the policy shifts of the British and with the release of Ras Seyoum and his appointment as Tigrat's Governor General in 1947.

In 1946 the LPP entered into a compromise with the Unionist Party, accepting the idea of Ethio-Eritrean federation. But this compromise was subsequently repudiated by the Unionist Party, it is believed, as a result of pressure from the Ethiopian government.

Due to the above abortive compromise the LPP suffered losses. Several of its Moslem members became disaffected and abandoned it. Subsequently the LPP resumed advocacy of Eritrean independence. About a year later it joined the alliance known as the "Independence Bloc."

The largest single party espousing independence was the Moslem League. This party was founded in 1946. Its main bases were the Moslem communities in the western lowlands where it enjoyed the overwhelming support of the serfs. The League had an offshoot in the Semhar region called the National Moslem Party of Massawa.

The platform of the League advocated Eritrean independence to be realized immediately or following a period of international trusteeship under British administration. It also called for the eradication of serfdom and the protection of the rights of Moslems in Eritrea.

The League became one of the constituents of the Independence Bloc. Consequently it was abandoned by a few of its members who organized themselves as the Moslem League of the Western Province. While espousing Eritrean independence, this splinter group advocated the independence of the western province preceded by a period of British trusteeship as an alternative.

In addition to the above there were several other parties favouring Eritrean independence. Most of these were Italo-Eritrean organizations. The largest was the New-Eritrea (Pro-Italy) Party which demanded Eritrean independence following a period of Italian trusteeship. It represented the interests of some groups with erstwhile Italian connections. These groups included war veterans and some former civilian employees of the colonial government.

Some Italian organizations in Eritrea were also involved in support of the independence movement. Most of them were actually offshoots of political parties in Italy, including the Communist Party.²⁹

The above parties represented the main political divisions in the

country. Although the Unionist Party was the largest single party, the combined membership of the various parties favouring independence was greater. However, the latter were unable to co-ordinate their efforts efficiently. As a result they could not mount an effective struggle against the "unruly" Unionists.

The Question of Eritrea and the Four Powers

At the end of the Second World War the Big Four Powers—the U.S.A., France, Great Britain, and the USSR—began deliberations on the question of the former Italian colonies: Eritrea, Libya, and Somaliland. The question was first raised in the Council of the Four Powers' Foreign Ministers which convened in London in September 1945.

The case of Eritrea became particularly complex because several states other than the Big Four claimed material interest in it. These states were Italy³⁰, Ethiopia³¹, and for some time Egypt³².

Like many other international issues at that time the question of these former colonies was entangled in the contradictions between the Big Powers themselves. The Western powers en bloc strove against the USSR. Their strategy was to check the development and influence of socialism and to perpetuate their colonial and neo-colonial systems. On the other hand the Western powers were competing against each other for spheres of influence.

All the former Italian colonies were still attractive to the imperial interests of the Western powers. Like Eritrea, Libya and Somaliland had strategic locations on the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean respectively.

On the one hand the question was of great consequence to France and Britain because of its possible repercussions on their colonial possessions elsewhere. To the U.S.A., on the other hand, it was important in light of its interest in infiltrating the colonial domain of its allies.

In 1947 the Big Four Powers and their war allies, including Ethiopia, concluded a Treaty of Peace with Italy. In that treaty Italy renounced her colonial possessions in Africa.

The Four Powers also agreed to:

jointly determine the final disposal of Italy's territorial possessions in Africa . . . in the light of the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and the interests of peace and security, taking into consideration the views of the interested governments.³³

Furthermore, the Four Powers agreed in the last treaty that if they failed to reach an agreement within a year the question would be referred to the UN General Assembly.

In accordance with the treaty a Four Power Commission representing the U.S.A., Great Britain, France, and the USSR was sent to Eritrea in September 1947.

The period was one in which the inter-party struggle in Eritrea was very intense. The Unionists engaged in violent activities and created obstacles for the independence seekers trying to express their wishes to the Commission. It was difficult for the Commission to ascertain whether the Unionists or the independence groups had the majority of followers in the country.

Moreover, due to the conflicting interests they represented, the members of the Commission could not effectively work together in conducting the investigation. In May 1948 they submitted a report to the Council of Foreign Ministers. The report was largely an exposition of the political and socio-economic conditions in Eritrea. It reflected the differences, particularly on the assessment of the wishes of the people on the future of Eritrea.

The Council of the Foreign Ministers could not reach an agreement on the question of Eritrea and the other former Italian colonies. Hence the question was referred to the UN General Assembly on the 15th of September 1948.

The UN Decision on Eritrea

Deliberations on the question of the former Italian colonies was delayed at the UN.³⁴ Part of the explanation for this was that, after joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Italy renewed its claims to the former colonies. It enjoyed the support of the Latin American states and became very active at the UN.

Italian influence at the UN reached its peak in May 1949 when a deal known as the Bevin-Sforza Plan was put forward as a draft resolution. This plan provided for the partition of Eritrea between Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. It also provided for arrangements securing Italian, British, and French trusteeship over Somaliland and the different regions of Libya.

The deal between Great Britain and Italy was made by their Foreign Ministers, Ernest Bevin and Count Carlo Sforza respectively. But it came about as an outcome of secret deliberations to which the US was also a party. It is known, that before he concluded the agreement with Ernest Bevin in London, Carlo Sforza had met and "come to an understanding" with US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, and with John Foster Dulles, then US delegate to the UN.³⁵

The USSR, other socialist countries and some Arab and Asian states, were opposed to the Bevin-Sforza Plan from the beginning, con-

demning it as a violation of self-determination. Following the rejection by the Assembly of the clause assigning Libya's Tripolitania to Italy, many more states decided to oppose the plan as a whole, which was thus defeated in the General Assembly. Following this, Italy resumed advocacy of Eritrean independence.

By September 1949 the Western powers reached an understanding on Libya and Somaliland. Thus, the UN General Assembly could reach a decision on the question of these two territories. It resolved that Libya would become independent in 1952 and that Somaliland would also attain independence but after a ten-year period of Italian trusteeship. The Assembly resolved to send to Eritrea a UN commission with tasks similar to those of the Four Power Commission which had visited the country in 1947.³⁶

The commission was made up of the representatives of Norway, South Africa, Burma, Pakistan, and Guatemala. Several of these governments differed in their international policies. South Africa, and to some extent Norway, represented the Anglo-American line. Guatemala then had a progressive government which adopted an anti-imperialist policy.³⁷ So, to some extent, did Pakistan which at that time had newly emerged from British colonial rule.³⁸ The official position of the Burmese government was to "go along with Pakistan" but its representative in the Commission insisted on having "a fairly free hand" for himself.³⁹ He was given this "free hand" and, as a result, Burma ended up siding with South Africa and the Western powers on this question.

The Commission came up with a variety of proposals for the "disposal" of Eritrea. The Pakistani and Guatemalan delegations proposed independence for Eritrea to be preceded by a ten-year period of direct United Nations trusteeship. The South African and Burmese delegations favoured the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown. The Norwegian delegation proposed the "unconditional union" of Eritrea with Ethiopia with some provisos pertaining to the western province.

The report of the Commission was submitted to the UN Secretary General. The debate on Eritrea continued in the General Assembly. The Western powers and their allies were still divided on the issue. Great Britain and the US still favoured the partition of Eritrea while Italy advocated Eritrean independence. Ethiopia persisted in its demand for the annexation of Eritrea as a whole.

While the debate was going on the US came up with what was described as a "compromise" formula. In substance this formula was very similar to the proposal of the South African and Burmese delegations on the UN Commission. It provided for the "federation" of Eritrea with

Ethiopia "under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown."

The US and other Western powers including Italy finally agreed on the formula. On the 22nd of November 1950, Ethiopia also declared its acceptance of it.

The US had then effectively replaced the European powers in the domination of Ethiopia. American companies had virtually supplanted the French and British monopolies in important sectors of the Ethiopian economy. The American-initiated currency reform had severed the Ethiopian dollar from the British pound sterling and tied it to the US dollar. This reform thus brought Ethiopia's finance "completely under American control."⁴⁰ Furthermore the US provided "technical assistance" and gained control of some crucial aspects of the Ethiopian administration including the Civil Aviation Service. To some observers the situation in 1950 appeared as though the Americans were "out to turn (Ethiopia) into their colony."⁴¹

Haile Sellassie's regime had sided with the US in the latter's competition with other Western powers. More fundamentally, it had become a faithful ally of the US against the socialist world. It openly declared its commitment to the "suppression of communism"⁴² both at home and abroad. As a practical demonstration of this, it sent troops to Korea to fight on the side of the US.

Haile Sellassie used his anti-communist stance to justify his request for increased assistance from Washington. He frequently appealed to the US for aid lest his country fall prey to "communist infiltration."⁴³ He also used his participation in the Korean War as a pretext to further press his claim to Eritrea. He beseeched Washington for help in this regard, saying that possessing the Eritrean ports Ethiopia could more effectively discharge its role in the Korean War.⁴⁴ On their part, officials of the Department of State assured Ethiopian authorities that the US would "exert every effort" at the UN to advance Ethiopia's claim for Eritrea.⁴⁵

The US had appreciated the strategic location of Eritrea for some time. During World War II it had used Eritrea for storage of supplies and for naval communications. It had installed an aircraft assembly plant at Cura in the plateau and a naval base at the port of Massawa. It had also started to use the communications facilities of Radio Marina in Asmara, the capital.

Since the earliest years of the British Military Administration the US had been eager to establish a "communications" base on the Eritrean plateau. In 1942 Averell Harriman visited Eritrea where he "met, among others, Ethiopian officials" with whom he discussed "the possibility" of establishing such a base at the outskirts of Asmara.⁴⁶

Interest in acquiring a "communications" base underlay Washington's shifting position on Eritrea. Since the end of the 1940's, when Ethiopia became subservient to US policy-makers, the best way to satisfy this interest was by first annexing Eritrea to Ethiopia. The "federal" formula was devised by the US with this objective in view.

Haile Sellassie's acceptance of the "federal" formula did not mean that he had really renounced his claims for the total incorporation of Eritrea. He accepted the formula only because he was persuaded that there wasn't enough support at the UN for his full claims. He was advised that it would be expedient for him to accept the "federal" formula for the moment and effect total incorporation later.⁴⁷

Evidently this advice was relayed to the Emperor from US foreign policy quarters through the foreign minister, Aklilou Habte Wold and his American advisor, John Spencer. The latter frequently accompanied the Ethiopian foreign minister in secret meetings with officials of the Department of State.⁴⁸

The US and other Western powers lobbied at the UN for a draft resolution bearing the "compromise" formula. The USSR, other socialist countries, some Arab-Asian states, and Guatemala opposed the draft resolution as a violation of self-determination. In a profound argument the USSR delegate exposed the "compromise" formula as a cover for US objectives in Eritrea. The delegate said in part:

... the problem is not now being settled in the interest of the Eritrean people. In recent times, the United States has become the dominating power in Africa, and determines the colonial policy of the various states in that continent.

... the proposal for federation, which was put forward by the United States delegation, reflects the interests of the colonial powers, headed by the United States.

The USSR delegation cannot therefore support the proposal for federation, which is the outcome of the struggle among the colonial powers for a new partition of the former Italian colonies.⁴⁹

The truth expressed by the USSR in the General Assembly was confirmed by John Foster Dulles, soon to become Secretary of State in the Eisenhower Administration. Dulles is said to have declared frankly:

From the point of view of justice the opinion of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interests of the United States in the Red Sea basin and consideration of security and world peace make it necessary that the country has to be linked with our ally, Ethiopia.⁵⁰

Opposing the American formula, the USSR and the Polish delegations submitted their own draft resolutions. They proposed indepen-

dence for Eritrea and the cession to Ethiopia of a corridor to the Red Sea. These resolutions were easily defeated at the UN General Assembly which at that time was by and large under the control of the US.

On December 2, 1950 the General Assembly passed Resolution 390 A (V), which was the American-initiated "federal" formula. The vote was forty-six to ten with four abstentions.

The Implementation of the UN Resolution

UN Resolution 390 A (V) provided that Eritrea "shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown." It included a few general provisions on the nature of the "federal" relationship to be established.

The "federal" government was given jurisdiction over matters of defense, foreign affairs, foreign and interstate commerce, external and inter-state communications (including ports), and currency and finance. It was to have the power to levy taxes in Ethiopia and Eritrea for purposes of "federal" expenses. Eritrea was to bear a "just and equitable" share of these expenses.

A single nationality was to obtain in both Ethiopia and Eritrea. The two countries were also to constitute a single state for purposes of custom duties on goods "entering or leaving the federation." The duties were to be assigned to Eritrea in cases where the goods have their "final destination or origin" there.

Eritrea was to have its own government comprised of legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The jurisdiction of the government extended to "all matters not vested in the federal government." This included the power to levy taxes for domestic expenses and the power to adopt a budget.

The resolution provided for the participation of Eritreans in the executive and judicial branches of the federal government. It also provided for their representation in the legislative body in the ratio of Eritrea's population to that of the federation as a whole. Furthermore, the resolution stipulated that a federal council be established in which Eritrea and Ethiopia would be represented in "equal numbers." This council was to meet once a year to "advise" on federal matters.

Article 7 concerned human rights and fundamental freedoms. These included freedom of the press, association, worship, and basic aspects of due process of law.

Paragraphs 1-7 of the resolution were to constitute the Federal Act. This was to be "submitted to the Emperor of Ethiopia for ratification." Following ratification, the Act would bind Ethiopia and Eritrea.

On the 15th of December 1950 the General Assembly appointed Dr.

Eduardo Anze Matienzo, a Bolivian diplomat, as the UN Commissioner for Eritrea. His government was a right-wing regime of large landowners and mining entrepreneurs closely allied to the US.⁵¹

His task was to prepare a constitution for Eritrea with the assistance of "experts" appointed by the UN Secretary General. He was to consult the Eritrean people, the Ethiopian government, and the British Administration.

Anze Matienzo arrived in Eritrea on the 9th of February 1951. He encountered serious problems in the course of preparing the constitution. These were rooted in the conflicts between the former independence parties and the Ethiopian government, joined by the Unionist Party on some issues.

Representing the Ethiopian government, Foreign Minister Aklilou Habte Wold urged constitutional arrangements which would have practically denied autonomy to Eritrea. He demanded that Ethiopia be empowered to appoint a Governor General and "all executive officials" in Eritrea and "to approve and reject all legislation."⁵² He also contended that Eritrea should have no flag and official language of its own.⁵³

On all the above and other minor issues the Eritrean parties were united against the Ethiopian demands. Only the Unionist Party had sided with the Ethiopian government on the question of a flag for Eritrea.

The UN Commissioner found the demands of the Ethiopian government excessive. However, he agreed to the Emperor's representation in Eritrea, but with much less power than proposed by the Ethiopian Foreign Minister.

While the Commissioner was drafting the constitution, the British Military Administration was convening the Eritrean Assembly. The Assembly adopted the constitution "with minor modifications." Haile Sellassie ratified the constitution on August 6, 1952 and the Federal Act on September 11. Hence began the Ethio-Eritrean "federation."

The constitution structured the Eritrean government with executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The Chief Executive was to be elected by the Assembly with the power to appoint "Secretaries" to head administrative departments. The legislative power was vested in the single chamber Assembly whose members were to be elected directly by the people in Asmara and Massawa and by colleges of tribal and village elders in the rest of the country. The Eritrean Supreme Court and the lower courts would possess judicial power. The judges, appointed by the Chief Executive but on the recommendation of the Assembly, were to be independent of any control by the other branches.

Tigrigna and Arabic would become the official languages of Eritrea.

Eritrea would have its own flag, seal, and arms. "All persons" in Eritrea would enjoy fundamental rights and liberties. The pertinent clauses reflected constitutions of Western democracies.

The constitution affirmed Eritrea's autonomy, limiting the powers of the Emperor's representatives to by and large ceremonial roles.

The Eritrean constitution, based on "principles of democratic government," was incompatible with the Ethiopian system of government which was founded on the "Divine Right of Kings." It threatened to undermine Haile Sellassie's regime by encouraging progressive Ethiopians to fight for at least tangible reforms along the lines of bourgeois democracy. This threat made the future of the "federation" even more precarious.

A main defect in the framework of Ethio-Eritrean relations was the absence of a genuine federal government distinct from and in addition to those of Ethiopia and Eritrea. In this framework, the Ethiopian government was the "federal" government. The American-devised UN resolution (which specifically conferred upon the Ethiopian crown the sovereignty of the federation) made Eritrea an "autonomous unit" subordinate to Ethiopia.⁵⁴ The term "federated" or "federal" only added verbal flavor to make the arrangement more palatable to Eritrean groups opposing union with Ethiopia.

The UN resolution constituted no international machinery to oversee the operation of the Ethio-Eritrean "federation" or to facilitate international intervention in case of violation. The UN Commissioner declared he was satisfied with the "assurance" given him by the Ethiopian government and saw no need for such machinery.⁵⁵

The resolution's deliberately-designed loopholes were to facilitate the erosion and final dissolution of Eritrea's autonomy.

Eritrea Becomes a US Military Base

A major aspect of the Ethio-American deal underlying the "federal" resolution was that the US would be granted military facilities in Eritrea. Thus, soon after the resolution was passed but prior to its implementation, Washington requested bilateral talks with Ethiopia on this matter. The request was formally communicated by the Assistant Secretary of State, George McGhee, to Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Aklilou Habtewold, in a "top secret" meeting held in Washington on the 11th of December 1950.⁵⁶ Aklilou, who was accompanied by John Spencer, is said to have "noddod his agreement" to the "procedure" outlined by Secretary McGhee.⁵⁷

So, in June 1951, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the US Army, Lt. General Charles Bolte, visited Addis Ababa on a "good will mission." He

held a series of talks with Emperor Haile Sellassie. Following the first round of these talks:

the Emperor 'ordered his highest military authorities to conclude an agreement' which concerned 'military concessions' to the United States.⁵⁸

That the "concessions" involved military bases in Eritrea was not officially disclosed; Eritrea was still under British administration and Ethiopia had no authority to conclude agreements directly affecting Eritrea.

In 1953, when Eritrea effectively came "under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown," Ethiopia and the US signed a treaty granting base facilities to the latter in Eritrea (including the naval facilities in Masawa). The largest was to be established at the outskirts of Asmara named "Kagnew," after the Ethiopian battalion which fought in the Korean War. The Kagnew Base was to remain in operation for over two decades.

A multi-million dollar complex, Kagnew was among the most crucial of the US National Security Agency (NSA) bases in the world. It primarily served US military and intelligence objectives in the region. It was used to promote the "command and control" of the American ballistic missiles in the Indian Ocean.⁵⁹ It also served in the conduct of what are known as "cryptologic activities."⁶⁰ These included operations of jamming and of telecasting coded information.

Using the high powered electronic devices at Kagnew, the US could monitor the Middle East and even Southern Africa, the Soviet Union, and South-east Asia. It could track the activities of various national liberation movements including those of the Palestinians, the Omani people in the Persian Gulf, FRELIMO in Mozambique, and the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau.⁶¹

Crucial to US activities in the region, Kagnew was visited by highly placed US military authorities. In February 1971 it was visited by General William Westmoreland, then US Army chief of Staff, and in March of the same year by General Robert Myer, then head of the US Strategic Command.⁶²

Kagnew also served the interest of some US allies in the region, notably Israel. The Israeli government shared certain strategic objectives with Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia.⁶³ In addition to being served by Kagnew, Israel was, reportedly, also granted military bases on the Eritrean islands of Fatma and Halieb.

Washington provided military assistance to Haile Sellassie's regime, which increased following the conclusion of a secret US-Ethiopia defense pact in 1960. Washington also paid millions of dollars to the Ethio-

pian regime. The payments were in effect "rents" for Kagnew and the naval bases in Eritrea. But they were made without "most members" of the US Congress knowing about the "existence" of these "secret" facilities.⁶⁴

Kagnew and the naval bases in Eritrea became controversial in the US Congress when a Senate sub-committee on foreign relations probed into the commitments of the US to Haile Sellassie's regime in 1970.⁶⁵ The sub-committee revealed that US "aid" to this regime was the highest in Africa since the early 1950's reaching, by 1970, roughly a quarter of a billion dollars.

Violation and Dissolution of the "Federation"

With the coming into effect of the "federation," Haile Sellassie's regime sent troops into Eritrea. It soon started measures to undermine Eritrea's autonomy.

The "Federal Council," the only approximation of a federal organ, never functioned. Ethiopian representatives denied the Council had any role in "federal" matter.

The first representative of the Emperor in Eritrea was Andargachew Mesai, Haile Sellassie's son-in-law. Andargachew openly interfered in Eritrea's internal affairs. He refused to pay even lip service to Eritrea's autonomy. In 1955 he declared that, as far as he was concerned, "there are no internal or external affairs."⁶⁶

The first Eritrean Assembly, dominated by the parties formerly espousing independence, protested Ethiopia's interference. The first Chief Executive, Tedla Bairu, who was actually from the Unionist Party, also made a mild objection to this policy. Therefore, the independence parties and the Chief Executive became the targets of the Ethiopian regime.

The regime, in collaboration with its Eritrean backers, harassed the leaders of the opposition parties. Consequently, prominent politicians like Woldeab Wolde Mariam and Ibrahim Sultan were forced to leave Eritrea. By 1955 the opposition parties were practically banned.

The Ethiopian government forced Tedla Bairu to resign in 1955. His replacement was Asfaha Wolde Micael, an avowed missionary of the Unionist cause. Asfaha was formerly the Emperor's Vice-Representative in Eritrea, a post he continued to retain while Eritrea's Chief Executive.

Asfaha assumed the post under an oath "to respect the federation . . . to serve Eritrea, to defend its constitution." His real mission however was to begin preparations for the total incorporation of Eritrea within the Ethiopian empire. His Secretaries were carefully appointed to serve this mission.

In contravention of the Constitution which provided for an inde-

pendent electoral commission to supervise elections, Asfaha reintroduced Proclamation 121.⁶⁷ This proclamation empowered him, and therefore the Ethiopian government, to control the 1956 Assembly elections. As a result, the Unionists attained the majority in the Assembly, reducing it to a puppet institution.

Controlling the executive and legislative branches, the Ethiopian regime deepened its interference in Eritrea, suppressing democratic rights and fundamental liberties, curtailing freedom of expression, harassing critical journalists and writers, and trampling upon freedom of association. Political parties and other associations, except the Unionist Party and its affiliates, were outlawed.

Haile Sellassie's regime devastated Eritrea. This "federal" government appropriated all customs dues and other "federal" revenues, denying Eritrea its proper share. It forbade the exportation of Eritrean products and restricted the Ethiopian market for them. It discouraged and in some cases explicitly forbade industrial and other investments in Eritrea. It compelled several industries, factories, and business enterprises to abandon Eritrea and re-establish themselves in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian regime undermined the labor movement in Eritrea; it dissolved the General Union of Labour Syndicates established in 1953 and suppressed the resistance of the urban workers; it crushed the general strike of 1958. This and the economic policies of Haile Sellassie's regime forced many workers to emigrate to Ethiopia, the Sudan, and the Middle Eastern countries in search of jobs.

The Ethiopian regime obstructed law and justice. It rendered the courts meaningless, particularly in cases of political "crimes" and questions of civil liberties. It ensured that Eritreans suspected of such "offenses" suffered pre-trial detention and torturous treatment in the hands of the police.

Eritreans also suffered cultural oppression in the years of the "federation." The publication of books or other literature in the Eritrean languages was restricted. The reprinting of already published works was practically stopped. The position of Tigrigna and Arabic as the official languages was effectively undermined by Ethiopia's policy which sought to popularize Amharic and Amhara culture.

The Eritrean Assembly was pressured and easily manipulated to pass legislation fundamentally eroding Eritrea's autonomy. In 1958 it "unanimously voted" to discard the Eritrean flag, allowing only the Ethiopian colors to be flown. In 1959, again by "unanimous vote," it replaced the Eritrean Penal Laws with the Ethiopian Penal Code. And in 1960 it "resolved" to replace the designation "Eritrean government" with "Eritrean administration" and the "Chief Executive" with "Chief

Administrator."

Now that all the preparations were made, the Ethiopian regime could take the final step. On the 15th of November 1962 Haile Sellassie issued Order No. 27 in which he announced that "the federal status of Eritrea is hereby terminated" and that Eritrea was "hereby wholly integrated into the unitary system of administration of Our Empire." In the preamble to the Order, Haile Sellassie stated that on the previous day, the 14th of November, the Eritrean Assembly had "unanimously adopted" a resolution to terminate the federation.

It is true that a decision to that effect was made by the Assembly but the totality of the events suggests the decision came under duress. From November 13, the Ethiopian army displayed a show of force in Asmara. Thousands of soldiers encircled the city. Others marched through its streets with tanks and ammunition declaring in war chants "kill anyone who does not comply with our wishes!"

In the morning session of November 14 the "Chief Administrator," Asfaha Woldemicael, read a statement to the Assembly. In it he requested the members to pass a resolution dissolving the "federation" and "uniting" Eritrea with "our motherland, Ethiopia." His request was accompanied by the presence of an armed detachment of soldiers outside the Assembly Hall, an implicit threat that anyone who resisted would be dealt with mercilessly.

In spite of the threat, several Moslems and a few Christian members of the Assembly expressed their opposition but the substantial majority meekly complied with the request.⁶⁸

The Assembly's decision was null and void. It was contrary to Article 91 of the Constitution, which prohibited the Assembly from passing legislation violative of the Federal Act, the international instrument which proclaimed Eritrea an "autonomous unit."

Haile Sellassie's Imperial Order 27, also null and void, was substantively a sequel to the American devised "compromise" formula which had become the UN Resolution on Eritrea. This resolution had provided a highly farcical "federation" precisely in order to make possible the subjugation of Eritrea in the form of Order No. 27, which some say was drafted by John Spencer—the American advisor to the Ethiopian government.⁶⁹

Even before the formal dissolution of the "federation" anti-Ethiopian sentiment was growing in Eritrea. Demonstrations, strikes, and other overt forms of protest had given way to clandestine political movements. By 1961 these movements had created the setting for the emergence of the armed struggle which was to expand in the years following the dissolution of the federation.

2

The Armed Struggle Until the Fall of Haile Sellassie

During the "federation" period, several Eritrean groups found recourse to international law and organizations futile. These groups had appealed to the UN and the major powers for intervention to halt and redress the violations of Eritrea's autonomy by Ethiopia. Their appeals were all in vain. They could not draw the attention of the UN nor that of any major power.

Even before the formal dissolution of the "federation," some Eritrean groups were gravitating towards the idea of separating from Ethiopia and establishing an independent state. This inclination crystallized and gained momentum following the emergence of a clandestine organization called the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) in the late 1950's.

The ELM was indeed a nucleus for a progressive national organization in Eritrea. It was organized and led by patriotic elements from the intelligentsia and other groups among the urban petty bourgeoisie. Its membership included Moslems and Christians, lowlanders and highlanders.

The ELM felt the need to bolster Eritrean patriotism as a prerequisite for a successful armed struggle. Thus, as a first phase, it engaged in underground leafletting and other campaigns designed to unite the people around concern for Eritrean independence.

ELM's progress was stifled by a new development which arose at the beginning of the 1960's. This was that, in a meeting held in Cairo in 1960, some Eritrean exiles in the Middle East unfriendly to the ELM resolved to launch an armed movement inside Eritrea.

The year 1961 was a landmark in the history of the Eritrean problem. It saw the birth of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and its armed wing, the Eritrean Liberation Army (ELA).

Equipped with obsolete Italian rifles and led by Mohamed Idris Awote, the ELA's earliest unit fired "the first shots" in September 1961. Thus began the armed conflict which was to be known in the 1980's as "Africa's longest war."

The Early ELF

The ELF was launched as a pre-emptive project against the development of the ELM. Its leadership was comprised exclusively of Moslem lowlanders. Even though it included a few intellectuals and other petty bourgeoisie, the leadership was dominated by bureaucrats known to have had strong feudal tendencies.

The leadership organized the ELA along sectarian lines, recruiting fighters from the Moslem peasantry in the western lowlands (which actually became the operational zone of the early ELA.) It preached sectarian goals, stressing that Haile Sellassie was a Christian despot and that most of the Christians in Eritrea favored union with Ethiopia.

The leadership also pursued a religious-oriented foreign policy. It confined its external activities to the Islamic Near East, spreading propaganda which portrayed Eritrea as a Moslem country and part of the Arab world. It presented the Eritrean cause as a Moslem struggle against Christian oppressors.

By 1964 the ELA had grown in size. It was joined by former Eritrean servicemen in the Sudanese Army and by students from inside and outside the country. The new recruits included many Moslems from regions other than the western lowlands. They also included a few Christians who were soon to become a visible contingent.

In the same year the first of the internecine battles in the Eritrean movement took place between the ELA and the ELM, which was seeking to establish an armed wing inside Eritrea. The ELM had been reorganized in the Sudan. Politically it had become a more advanced organization thanks to a number of Eritreans who had been actively involved in the Sudanese Communist movement.

A detachment of the ELM crossed the Sudanese-Eritrean border and proceeded into the western region. At Ila Tsaida in southern Sahel, the detachment was attacked by the ELA, sustaining serious casualties.

Many were killed. Those who escaped death were dispersed. This incident contributed to the decline of the ELM.

The Supreme Council and its Divisive Policies

In 1965, the ELF leaders held a meeting in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum and "appointed themselves" as pre-eminent heads with the name "Supreme Council." They took this step in order to entrench themselves in positions of leadership. They had felt threatened by the growing size of the ELA and by the increasing regional and national variety in its composition.

The Supreme Council practiced the policy of divide and rule. In 1964 it divided the ELA and the areas of operation into four zones, adding a fifth one in 1965.

The divisions were made along regional and religious lines. Four of the zones were in the Moslem areas while the fifth was in the Christian regions of the plateau.

Zonal Commanders were picked by the Council members. They belonged to the tribes or national groups in the regions for which they were appointed.

The Commanders had varying degrees of contact with the Council members in the Middle East. That of the fifth division—the Christian division—had the weakest contact, putting it at a disadvantage.

The activities of the zonal divisions were not centralized. This was conducive to the Council members as it facilitated the undertaking of "sectarian and regional projects" by each of them. It also suited the Zonal Commanders who engaged in "unrevolutionary practices."

Though the ELA scored several military victories over the Ethiopian Army, internal problems were mounting, due mainly to religious and regional feuds fostered by the Supreme Council and the Zonal Commanders. Many Christian fighters were slaughtered by their Moslem "comrades" in the ELA. Christian fighters became disillusioned and by 1967 a significant number had defected to the Ethiopian government.

Regional and tribal conflicts among the Moslems had also intensified. The most acute of these was between the Semhar group and the Barka-Gash lowlanders: the "Alighidir-Harghigho feud." This particular conflict sharpened because of a fierce power struggle within the Supreme Council between the Semharite, Osman Sabbe, and the prominent Barka figure, Idris Mohamed Adem, then Council Chairman.

Reform Movement in the ELF

Towards the end of the 1960's, several groups in the ELA came out in opposition to the corrupt administration and divisive line of the Supreme Council. By 1968 their efforts resulted in the emergence of "the

Reform Movement."

The movement sought to unify the ELA. It aimed at establishing the leadership of the ELF, including the Department of Foreign Relations, in the field. It called for a National Congress at which the problems of the revolution would be deliberated upon and resolved.

The earliest success of the movement was the Anseba Conference held in 1968. At the conference the 3rd, 4th, and 5th divisions of As-saurta, Semhar, and the Christian plateau respectively, agreed to unite under a Provisional Revolutionary Command.

In August 1969 the movement attained further success at the Adobha Conference which was attended by the delegates from all the divisions. This conference unified the ELA as a whole. It appointed a Preparatory Committee for the National Congress. The conference established a 38-man Provisional General Command "to lead the ELA in the field" but did not formally depose the Supreme Council. The latter was overthrown in December 1969.

The five divisions were not equally represented in the Provisional General Command. The 1st and 2nd divisions which were those in Barka-Gash and in the Senhit zones were represented by twenty members in the General Command; but the three divisions which united earlier at the Anseba conference were represented by only 18. This imbalance in the make-up of the Command was probably the most serious shortcoming of the Adobha resolutions.⁴

The members of the Supreme Council were opposed to the reform movement. One of them, Osman Sabbe, was undisturbed for some time.⁵ Following the Adobha conference however, and particularly after the overthrow of the Supreme Council, Osman Sabbe became most antagonistic to the changes taking place. He prepared to form another organization. As a first step, he established a political office in Beirut called the General Secretariat.

After the overthrow of the Supreme Council, splinter groups emerged. By the end of 1970, three were on the scene: the Popular Liberation Forces (Semharite), the Obelites (Barka), and the Isayas group (Christian highlander). These three groups were soon to form an alliance and to constitute, in effect, the armed wing of Osman Sabbe's General Secretariat. The alliance of these groups was the genesis of the present-day Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

In March 1971 the ELF held the Awote military conference. This conference was preoccupied with the question of the splinter groups. It stressed the need for a peaceful and democratic solution. Accordingly,

the ELF approached the splinter groups for a dialogue; but the latter were unwilling to talk.

The First National Congress: ELF Adopts a National Democratic Program

With the problem of the splinter groups still pending, the ELF held its First National Congress in October-November 1971. The site of the Congress was Arr, inside the Eritrean province of Sahel. Though the splinter groups were invited to attend, all declined.

A landmark in the history of the ELF, the Congress issued a clear program to guide the organization's internal and external policies. The program was national democratic in content, an indication that advanced and progressive Eritrean elements had begun to play important roles in the ELF.

The Congress stressed that Eritrea was dominated by US imperialism in collaboration with its client-state Ethiopia. It characterized Eritrea as a "special colony," dominated and exploited by Ethiopia and the US together:

... its (Eritrea's) colonization is the product of a collusion of American and Ethiopian interests . . . The United States needs its bases in Asmara and the Red Sea ports of Eritrea; and landlocked Ethiopia, access to the Red Sea. America provides the weapons, finance, diplomat and propaganda muscle; and Ethiopia provides a legal presence to American imperialism.⁶

The Congress made a class analysis of Eritrean society. It identified the needs and interests of the various classes and accordingly outlined the socio-economic tasks of the revolution. It noted that the Eritrean bourgeoisie was tied to that in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the "Grand alliance of the bourgeoisie." It concluded that this social group was hostile to the "idea of Eritrean national independence."⁷

The Congress stated that the workers were the "most democratic segment" of the Eritrean society but also noted that this social group, which was scattered in various countries, was not politically developed. It ascribed this to the repressive policies in Eritrea, to joblessness, insecurity and related problems, and to the incompetence of the former ELF leadership.⁸

Similarly, the Congress noted the backwardness of the peasantry and the nomads. It blamed the former ELF leadership for failure "to work out a programme suited" to the interests of these groups.⁹

The Congress resolved that, besides Ethiopia, the enemies of the Eritrean Revolution were "world imperialism led by US imperialism, international zionism, foreign capitalists and Eritrean collaborating clas-

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In its approach to foreign policy, the Congress adhered to the anti-imperialist line, concluding that,

- The foreign policy of the ELF is one of national independence.
- It (ELF) shall strengthen its relations with all national liberation movements.
- It shall reinforce its ties with all democratic, socialist and anti-imperialist countries and organizations.
- It shall forge closer ties with progressive Arab and African countries which are at the vanguard in the struggle against zionism and imperialism.
- It shall struggle side by side with the people of the world for peace, independence and social progress.
- It supports the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America in their just struggle against imperialism.
- It supports the heroic Palestinian people in their just struggle to regain their cherished homeland.
- It supports the struggle of the oppressed nationalities of the Ethiopian Empire in their struggle against the dominant Amhara-bureaucratic autocracy.
- The ELF likewise supports the Ethiopian revolutionary movement which is struggling against Haile Sellassie's regime and imperialism.¹¹

The Congress identified the US-Israeli military bases in the country as being most inimical to the "freedom" of Eritrea and "the neighbouring countries."¹² It resolved that the "revolutionary state" to be established in Eritrea "shall liquidate" those bases.

The Congress emphasized the need to maintain the unity of Eritrea on the basis of the equality of all the national groups. It stated:

The Eritrean Liberation Front considers the national unity of the Eritrean people as a central objective. All national groups are equal; any move to build a dominant national group shall be considered anti-nationalist.¹³

The Congress defined the ultimate objective of the revolution to be the building of a "New Democratic Eritrea." It outlined tasks concerning the political and ideological needs of the oppressed classes and other progressive strata in the society. It stressed the importance of ideological work as follows:

For the Eritrean Revolution to achieve its goals in a short space of time, it is imperative to extricate the revolutionary classes from the influence of the exploiting classes, and to provide them with a revolutionary ideology adapted to their needs.¹⁴

To facilitate this and other democratic responsibilities, the Congress decided on the formation of mass organizations. It stated the identity and status of the organizations thus:

Worker, peasant, women and student movements shall be organized. Although these democratic mass movements are answerable to the leadership of the ELF, they have the right to evolve their independent programmes by holding congresses of their own.¹⁵

Other decisions dwelt on the details of the political, economic, social, and cultural policies of independent Eritrea. These were the specifics of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist policies.

A new leadership, the ELF-Revolutionary Council (R-C), was constituted with Idris Adem as "figure head" Chairman. The effective leadership was solidly from the petty bourgeois segment. It included a number of revolutionary democrats and even a few Marxist elements. The latter, together with the progressive cadres and combatants in the bases, constituted an incipient national democratic wing in the ELF.

The changes in the ELF were quite significant. They indicated the ELF was in a state of transition from a "clan based"¹⁶ movement to a national democratic front. They gave progressive-minded followers of the revolution the hope that the birth of a socialist-oriented society in Eritrea would not be far off.

One such follower of the Eritrean revolution was Richard Lobban Jr., an American academic then at the University of Khartoum. Around the time of the Congress Lobban had visited the ELF inside Eritrea. With deep appreciation of ELF's program and its long term significance, he compared the situation of future Eritrea to that of Cuba and wrote the following:

An independent Eritrea under ELF would resemble the situation in Cuba in that it would be a politically radical state on one hand and geographically isolated on the other. American political and economic interests would also be similar, as well as the relatively strategic importance of Eritrea's physical location. With the Eritrean struggle against neo-colonialism and American imperialism moving steadily ahead, there are realistic hopes for the creation of an island in Africa of socialist democracy and freedom.¹⁷

The hopes expressed about future Eritrea under the ELF were justifiable considering the platform adopted. Otherwise the ELF was far from cleansed of sectarian Moslem cliques. The activities of these cliques

were to supplement those of the splinter groups and dampen the hopes generated by the Congress.

Sectarian Groups In and Outside the ELF

Some backward elements from the Barka-Gash lowlands made up the core of the sectarian forces in the ELF. Several of them were members of the Revolutionary Council and dominated the Military Office.

ELF's national democratic wing was small and overwhelmed with the concern for national unity. It only sought to control the influence of the sectarian cliques and even to assuage them lest they split to join the Obelites. Apparently for this reason it conceded to the appointment of Idris Adem as the figure-head Chairman.

This helped prevent further splits by Barka-Gash regionalists, but also enabled the latter to entrench themselves in crucial positions. It gave them the opportunity to establish relations with some governments in the Islamic world, thereby strengthening themselves.

The splinter groups—the cradles of the EPLF—were themselves sectarian. This is evident from the nature of the groups' compositions, relations, grievances or complaints, and practices. It belies the widely held assumption or fervently reiterated claim that the EPLF split in 1970 because it was the bearer of the "left current"¹⁸ and, as such, a negation of the ELF.

The PLF was launched at a meeting held at Sudoha-Ela (Dankalia) in June-July 1970. It was sponsored and financed by Osman Sabbe to constitute the armed wing of his General Secretariat in Beirut. Its leaders in the field were ex-members of the General Command.

The composition of this group was basically Semharite. Initially, it included a few Christian highlanders who were soon to abandon it and join the Isayas group.

The PLF was the outcome of the power struggle in the Supreme Council and the regionalist feud between the Semharites and the Barka-Gash lowlanders in the ELA. Its formation in 1970 was triggered by the strong position the western lowlanders assumed in the General Command. In its founding conference the PLF condemned the Adobha resolutions and the General Command. It declared itself the "democratic substitute" in the Eritrean movement.

The Obelites were solidly from the Beni-Amer tribe in the Barka province. The organizers and leaders were former members of the General Command. They were feudal-minded regionalists and fanatic Moslems as well, opposed to the progressive developments of the ELF which they characterized as anti-Arab and anti-Islamic.

The Isayas Group was organized by a group of Christian highland-

ers at Ala in the Akele Guzai province. Initially, the prominent figure in it was Abraham Tewelde; but Isayas Afeworki—the undisputed head of today's EPLF—was soon to emerge as its leader. Isayas joined this group in mid-1970 when, as a member of the General Command, he was assigned to Akele Guzai.

Who was Isayas Afeworki?

Isayas joined the armed movement in 1967 dropping out from the engineering school in Addis Ababa University. That year the Supreme Council sent him to Maoist China where he received a six-month military training. (Some veterans of the movement note that such an opportunity was rare particularly for a newly recruited Christian element. They also stress that Isayas, who became a political commissioner upon his return, had never been part of the rank and file in the movement).

A commonly held view about Isayas is that as the son of a "small trader" in Asmara, where he was born and raised, he comes from the small Eritrean segment of urban petty bourgeoisie. But this view is very simplistic and by and large erroneous. For purposes of political outlooks and tendencies in this precapitalist society the important facts to note in Isayas' background are his roots in Ethiopia's Tigray province and his intimate relations with some of the prominent nobilities (former feudal masters) in the Hamasien region, who wielded some bureaucratic powers and influence. The major part of his parentage belonged to a social group of Tigrean extraction some of whose members had a lingering sense of dominance over Eritreans.

Isayas' family was closely affiliated with the feudo-bourgeoisie ruling Ethiopia. His uncle, Solomon Abraha, was Asst. Minister of Internal Affairs and later Governor of Wollo province in Haile Sellassie's regime. Isayas' own self-perception, according to observers who knew him at least since his secondary school years in Asmara, has always been that of a "leader" in the traditional sense of the word. This was to be confirmed by Isayas' role in the splinter group of Christians initially led by Abraham Tewelde and in the history of the Eritrean movement up to the present.

Soon after they split from the ELF Isayas and colleagues lost no time in contacting their former friends, schoolmates, and acquaintances in Eritrea and Ethiopia. They later established contacts with some Eritreans in North America and Europe. All their contacts were Christian highlanders.

This group outlined its grievances in a document entitled "Nihnan Ilamanan," variously translated as "We and Our Objectives" and "Our Struggle and its Goals."¹⁹

"Nihnan Ilamanan" portrayed the ELF as an Islamic movement and

a sworn enemy of Christians. It reiterated the crimes committed by the early ELF leaders against Christian fighters and the peasantry.

The document admitted there were "committed revolutionaries" in the ELA struggling against the former ELF leadership. It acknowledged that those revolutionaries succeeded in unifying the ELA under the General Command. However, according to the document, the Command was infiltrated by "disguised agents" of the former leadership and made efforts "to stir up religious antagonism among the Eritrean people." The document further charged the Command had killed "more than two hundred" Christian fighters and had given further "orders to kill Christian peasants."

Many of the allegations made in "Nihnan Ilamanan" against the General Command were exaggerations. It appears they were intended to justify the split by the Christian group in 1970.

"Nihnan Ilamanan" was practically a clarion call for Christian Eritreans to rally behind the Isayas Group.²⁰ It was replete with woeful descriptions of "Jihad" (Holy War) practices in the early ELF. It falsely alleged the prevalence of the same practices in the ELF of 1970. In this light, the faint remark in the document that the problems of the revolution were not essentially religious sounded quite half-hearted. It could not allay the fear that the authors of the document harboured sectarianism of the Christian variant.

It is significant that Isayas and his colleagues were initially no more than eleven in number. The substantial majority of the Christian fighters had remained, and continued to struggle, in the ELF. They were heartened by the progressive developments and looked forward to the National Congress.

However, even by 1970, the Isayas group or any other group of Christians could have understandably opted to separate and form its own organization. At the time no degree of reform in the ELF could have totally erased the mistrust and suspicion built up in the minds of the Christian fighters throughout the years of the Supreme Council.

This is not to say that any separation by Christians, no matter what its aim and consequences, was democratic or tolerable. A move for separation was democratic only so long as it did not weaken the progressive changes taking place in the ELF.

The separation of the Isayas group, unlike that of the Obelites and the PLF, could have been such if the group was to view its separate existence as being temporary, cooperate in the efforts for gradual reunification of the whole movement, abstain from collaborating with sectarian groups, and support the progressive developments in the ELF.

ELF's First National Congress distinguished the case of the Isayas

group from that of the PLF and the Obelites. It condemned the leadership and the political line of the latter two groups and called upon their bases to rejoin the ELA. The Congress did not rule out the possibility of the use of force in the case of non-compliance.

On the Isayas Group the Congress agreed: (1) that no force shall be used against it; (2) that the group be asked to consider and reflect on ELF's national democratic program; and (3) that the Revolutionary Council exert all effort to solve the problem peacefully.²¹

In December 1971 the Revolutionary Council set up a Dialogue Committee to approach the Isayas Group. The Committee included Fitsum Gebre Sellassie, Amanuel Gebre Yesus, and other Christian elements from the revolutionary intelligentsia in the ranks of the ELF.

By the time the Committee set out on its mission a few changes had taken place in the Isayas Group. Isayas had secured a dominant position in the leadership. The initial leader, Abraham Tewelde, had died under mysterious circumstances. According to former EPLF fighters, he was actually poisoned by Isayas and a few associates.²² Abraham was killed just prior to the ELF's National Congress: he had favored attending the Congress and solving the problem through dialogue.

Isayas and the substantial majority in the group refused to face the Dialogue Committee whose mission thus failed.

United Front of Splinter Groups: Internecine Battles in Eritrea

Like the Isayas Group, the PLF and the Obelites had rejected ELF's offer for dialogue and reunification. Moreover the PLF in particular was arrogant and even condescending towards the ELF. Thanks to the resourcefulness of Osman Sabbe it was better equipped with firearms than the ELF.

In January 1972 the leaders of all the splinter groups held a meeting in Beirut and agreed to form an alliance, whose professed aim was to join forces against Ethiopia. The alliance established in this meeting was named Eritrean Liberation Front-Popular Liberation Forces (ELF-PLF). The PLF and the Isayas Group were named PLF-I and PLF-II respectively while the Obelites took the name Eritrean Liberation Forces (ELF). Osman Sabbe's General Secretariat was officially endorsed to represent all the groups in foreign relations and renamed the Foreign Mission.

The claim of the splinter groups that they formed the alliance to coordinate the struggle against Ethiopia was false. This was most obvious to the ELF which was aware that the target of the alliance was none other than itself.

In February of 1972 the ELF surrounded and attacked the Obelites in the heartland of Barka province. Most of the Obelites were either

killed or captured. A few of those who managed to escape regrouped and continued to maintain a minimal presence in the ELF-PLF. Later, in February or early March of 1972, the ELF attacked PLF-1 at Ein in the province of Sahel. Bloody battles were fought and the PLF-1 was badly defeated. It was on the verge of total annihilation when finally rescued by the Isayas Group.

The attack on PLF-I was instigated by hawkish cliques in the ELF-RC. It had been duly condemned by progressives affiliated with the ELF. However the ELF had adhered to its resolution on the Isayas Group calling only for a peaceful dialogue. It did not initiate any use of force. The Isayas Group joined the Battle of Ein without being attacked or provoked by the ELF. It did so probably in the realization that once Sabbe's PLF-I was liquidated it would have no source of arms and other material supplies.

From the Battle of Ein until the Second National Congress in 1975 the ELF condemned the ELF-PLF, including the Isayas Group, as counter-revolutionary. Severe internecine battles were to continue until towards the end of 1974.

The PLF Groups and Imperialism—Any Relation?

The Ethiopian regime had been militarily engaged in Eritrea ever since the ELF was launched in 1961. In this engagement it was heavily assisted by the US.

In addition to arms, the US provided Ethiopia with personnel for intelligence gathering and analysis and for advice on counterinsurrection measures. As if the military personnel and the electronic equipment at Kagneve were not sufficient for this purpose, the US had stationed renowned counterinsurgency experts in its Consulate at Asmara.²³

For several years the American involvement in the Eritrean War was unknown in the US. But in 1970 George Badder, then Director for Africa in the US Department of Defense, disclosed it to the Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee on Africa. He told the Sub-Committee that US bombs and ammunitions were being used against the Eritrean movement.²⁴

Ethiopia was also militarily supported by Israel. In the 1960's, Ethiopian-Israeli relations were growing parallel to the development of the Eritrean and Palestinian movements, peaking at the beginning of the 1970's. In October 1971, Israeli Chief of Staff, General Bar-Lev, visited Ethiopia and discussed military matters with its leaders.²⁵

In the prosecution of the war in Eritrea, Israeli support to Ethiopia primarily involved the training of "commandos." The "commandos" were paramilitary groups recruited from the rural sections of the Chris-

tian plateau to fight the "Arab hired bandits."

US strategists became more wary of the Eritrean movement following reports in 1965-66 that the ELF was receiving indirect assistance from the socialist countries. This wariness increased around 1967 when the ELF began to send its military cadres to China and Cuba for training.²⁶

The ELF's growing anti-imperialism was in step with the progressive changes taking place in the whole region: in the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. Some of these changes were the following:

- A few years after seizing power in 1967 the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Yemen embraced a non-capitalist orientation.
- In 1968 the movement for the liberation of Dhofar in the Persian Gulf enlarged the geographic scope of its struggle and deepened its anti-imperialist character. It "transformed itself" into a front for the liberation of all the peoples in the Gulf Sultanates and adopted scientific socialism as its "theoretical guide."²⁷
- In 1969, young officers led by Moumar Gaddafi came to power in Libya. The new government formed a close alliance with Nasser's Egypt and set out on the course of anti-imperialism and national independence.

● The same year General Siad Barre seized power in Somalia, overthrowing the government of Ibrahim Egal which was closely tied to the US. Barre's regime was to pursue an anti-imperialist policy for several years.

● In the Sudan Jaafar El Nimeiri's government came to power in 1969. This government, allied with the Sudanese Communist Party, had embarked on the non-capitalist road but its progressive orientation was to be shortlived. It was to end with the suppression of the party and the execution of prominent Communist leaders after the abortive coup d'etat of July 1971.

Of all the above developments in the general region, those in the Sudan had the most direct relevance to the Eritrean movement. They generated an atmosphere conducive to the activities of the ELF's progressive wing. They even brought Marxist oriented elements to Cabinet posts in the Sudan and these elements were most sympathetic and helpful to the national democratic force of the ELF.

The US and its allies were alarmed by these developments. They responded by intensifying their policies in the region as a whole. Working in unison with Israel, they deepened their activity in the movement for the separation of Southern Sudan (Anyanya) which they supported via Haile Sellassie's regime. Through their gendarme, the Shah of Iran, they effected schemes to suppress the Persian Gulf movements against

the obsolete and neo-colonial sultanates.

In Eritrea, Haile Sellassie's regime resorted to brutal measures. The most well known of these was the ghastly massacre at Keren in November 1970. Ona, a village on the outskirts of Keren, was "bulldozed out of existence" with "at least five hundred of its inhabitants killed."²⁸

After the Keren massacre, Haile Sellassie's regime declared martial law in Eritrea. The pretext used was the assassination of the General heading the Ethiopian army division in Eritrea. Martial law officially suspended democratic rights, giving a free hand to the soldiers to terrorize the populace and thereby facilitating the assault on the ELF.

The Ethiopian regime and US imperialism had always sought to foster and utilize schisms among the Eritrean people and in the armed movement. Indeed, there were signs suggesting that the US and Ethiopia encouraged the PLF groups. It appears that, even in 1969-70, some American, British and other expatriates in Khartoum sympathized with the moves to form the PLF. Some were "academics" at the University. A few of them are known to have been "co-operative" with PLF members. They were at the same time involved in supporting the Anyanya movement in Southern Sudan until this question was settled in 1972.²⁹

Following the First National Congress, Osman Sabbe became more vocal against the ELF, attacking it from the stance of anti-communism. He condemned the Congress as "anti-national," charging it was "maneuvered by atheist elements duped with an ideology alien to our people."³⁰ In many quarters of the Middle East he lobbied against the new ELF leadership whom he characterized as Marxist-Leninist.

In November-December 1971 a delegation of the PLF-Foreign Office led by Sabbe visited the US. Its other members were Woldeab Wolde Mariam and Taha Nur. The delegation gave talks in New York city and submitted a memorandum to the UN. It received some coverage in the press, including the *New York Times*.³¹ The delegation also proceeded to Washington, D.C. where, according to Eritrean sources, it held talks with US government officials.

In their talks with Eritreans in New York the members of the delegation were decidedly reticent on the question of ideology and the choice of a path for Eritrea. But the few remarks Sabbe³² and Woldeab³³ made in response to questions expressed aversion to scientific socialism.

Nothing was said concerning the outcome of whatever engagements the delegation had in Washington, D.C., but that trip raised mild suspicion about the existence of understandings between the PLF-Foreign Office and the US government. This suspicion was all the more reasonable in light of US policy at that time which severely restricted entry visas to representatives of genuine national liberation movements.

In 1972, members of the PLF-Foreign Mission again visited the US. One of them arrived in the summer and held talks with a group of Eritreans in New York. He shocked his listeners when, discussing the situation in the Eritrean arena, he said: "And one by one we are liquidating those who espouse socialism and communism."³⁴

It appears from the above that the PLF-Foreign Office had some connections with US imperialism. It is tempting to argue this was not necessarily true about the Isayas Group but such an argument is untenable in light of the evidence.

Ever since February 1972, the Isayas Group was officially represented abroad by Sabbe's Secretariat: the Foreign Mission. There was no basis whatsoever to draw a distinction between Osman Sabbe's political line and foreign relations and those of the Isayas group.

Prior to 1972 it seems the Isayas group had its own connections with Ethiopian authorities and US imperialism inside Eritrea. This truth emerged more clearly following the disclosure of Isayas Afeworki's secret talks with Ethiopian and US authorities in the Eritrean capital, Asmara in 1970.

The developments leading to this meeting can be better understood in the context of the power struggle between the "traditional nobility" and the "new nobility" in the Ethiopian ruling class at that time.³⁵ Those in the "traditional nobility" belonged to feudal families, some with close ties to the ruling dynasty. The "new nobility" were those who had ascended in the bureaucracy, coming from a relatively humble background. A prominent figure in the traditional nobility was Prince Ras Asrate Kasa, governor of Eritrea (1964-70). The de facto leader of the new nobility was the Prime Minister, Aklilou Habte Wold.

There had been differences between Ras Asrate and the Prime Minister concerning policies in Eritrea. It is said the Ras favored policies which were less militarist than those advocated by his power rivals in Addis Ababa. The Ras' approach was dictated by his interest in turning Eritrea into a power base for himself.

It appears that actually both policies were simultaneously implemented in Eritrea. While the militarist aggression was going on, Ras Asrate concentrated on divisive tactics and on secret efforts to work out a "political solution" with various groups in the Eritrean movement. It seems he had the co-operation of Israeli and American military personnel in Eritrea in this endeavour.³⁶

Thus, in 1970, when the challenge to US imperialism was increasing in the area, Ras Asrate and his deputy, Tesfa Yohannes Berhe, "agreed to an American project"³⁷ to isolate and wipe out the ELF. The long-term objective from Ras Asrate's point of view was to settle the problem by

restoring some measure of autonomy to Eritrea.

The Americans and the Ethiopian governors sought to realize this plan by organizing a force around the Christian dissidents in the move- Isayas group. The group, which had a dire need for arms, contacted the favorably. Its leader, Isayas Afeworki, entered the Kagneb base in As- pian governors.

The project was not implemented. Less than a year after the Kag- new talks, Ras Asrate was transferred from Eritrea and appointed Crown Counsellor by Haile Sellassie. Isayas did not obtain the arms his group needed which is possibly why he later expedited the alliance with Osman Sabbe's PLF.

However, to some extent, Isayas benefitted from the abortive deal. In addition to some cash from the Ethiopian governors, it appears he got some ideas from the Americans at Kagneb. It is said the Americans ad- vised him to concentrate his forces and establish his base in Sahel prov- ince which is the furthest to the north, bordering the Sudan and the Red Sea. If this is true, Isayas seriously heeded that advice: the EPLF, which he now heads, has concentrated its forces and its base areas in Sahel since 1972.

It has been argued that Isayas' anti-ELF plot with the US and Ethio- pian authorities was a "tactical step" to secure badly needed arms. But this argument fails to note that, as a collaboration objectively promoting the power interest of Ras Asrate and the strategy of US imperialism, this "tactical step" ran counter to the interest of the revolutionary movement in Eritrea and in the region as a whole.

The facts show that, even before the formation of the ELF-PLF, the political line of the Isayas group was no different from that of Osman Sabbe's General Secretariat.

Growth of the Isayas Group—Power Struggle in the PLF Alliance

With its alarming propaganda on the plight of Christians in the ELF, the Isayas group attracted the attention of sections of the highland pop- ulation. In the beginning of the 1970's, peasants from the plateau started to join the group in small numbers. By 1972 a few intellectuals had also enlisted with the group. These included revolutionaries who were not aware of the developments in the ELF and had wishfully assumed the Isayas group was Marxist-oriented.

The group's supporters in Europe and North America were also in- creasing and becoming better organized. These supporters were pre- dominantly from the Christian highlands. Many were in the grip of re-

gional and religious biases, as were many of the Eritrean emigres in the Middle East supporting the ELF or the Obelites and Sabbe's group in the PLF alliance.

In 1973 the leaderships of the ELF-PLF groups amalgamated most of their departments. Later in the same year, the leaderships of the PLF-I and PLF-II united to form the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces (EPLF).

Sometime in 1973, the EPLF in the field started to reflect a Marxist influence. This development was not an indication that Isayas and other leaders in this group were developing progressive positions on the cru- cial issues in the Eritrean movement. It was merely a reflection of the role then being played by the few revolutionary intellectuals in the Isayas group.

The growth of the Isayas group meant an increase in its strength in the EPLF. This had a direct impact on the power struggle simmering within the alliance almost since its inception. The power struggle in the field command was between Isayas Afeworki and PLF-I leader Mo- hamed Ali Omaro. But ultimately the struggle was between Isayas and Osman Sabbe. Omaro was only the military viceroy of the latter.

Omaro was initially more powerful in the field command. Indeed, he had tried to subdue Isayas and to submerge the latter's group into PLF-I. The source of his power was the supplies he received from Sabbe and channeled to the Isayas group (and to the Obelites).

The increasing number of recruits from the Christian highlands, in- cluding daring and effective warriors from the peasantry, elevated the esteem of Isayas. It certainly spared him continuing disdain and pres- sure from Omaro and, in the end, enabled him to take the initiative in the power struggle.

Thus, beginning in mid-1974, Isayas concentrated on subtle maneu- vers to discredit and weaken Omaro in the field. Through these maneu- vers he was also gradually undermining Osman Sabbe's internal power base in the EPLF.

1973: Progressives crushed in EPLF

This tragic episode is the story of "Menkaii," a progressive move- ment which emerged towards the end of 1973. The movement, whose members were exclusively from PLF-II, aimed at democratizing and transforming the "structure and operations"³⁸ of the EPLF as a whole.

"Menkaii" is a Tigrigna word meaning "bat."³⁹ It was used by the EPLF leadership to slander the movement. It was intended to attribute opportunistic characteristics to the movement by likening it to the mam- mal which also flies like a bird.

The movement began in response to the corruption and other problems in the Isayas group (PLF-II) whose members were from the three regions of the Christian plateau: Akele Guzai, Serae, and Hamasien. In the initial years the fighters from the Akele Guzai region had numerical superiority in this group. Taking advantage of this a clique of regionalists among them became dominant in the leadership. It formed an alliance with its counterpart from Serae which thus shared power as a junior partner.

The dominant Akele Guzai-Serae alliance discriminated along regionalist lines. This influenced the entire operation, including the assignment of posts and the recruitment of new fighters. It alienated the Hamasienites whose representation and influence in the leadership was the weakest.

Though seriously overpowered there was also a small Hamasienite circle in the leadership. Led by Solomon Wolde Mariam, it made counter-efforts which were equally regionalist.

Solomon's clique strove to enlist as many Hamasienites as it could into the army. It had more success after the PLF-II transferred its base from Ala to the Sahel province (adjacent to the Karnescim region of Hamasien). By 1973 there were enough Hamasienites in the army to embolden Solomon in the power struggle.

With all these feuds, which he certainly exploited in his own interest, Isayas remained the overall leader.

The rank and file soon became resentful of the leadership squabbles. They found them reminiscent of those in the early ELF. Thanks to the influence of the revolutionary intelligentsia, many had come to realize that the regionalist feud was a power struggle.

Aware of this development (and the role of the revolutionary intelligentsia in it), the leadership proceeded to curtail democratic rights, restricting freedom of expression, discouraging questions by the rank and file, limiting discussion among fighters, and reducing political education to mundane issues.

The leadership targeted the revolutionary intelligentsia, unleashing a smear campaign to nullify their credence in the eyes of the fighters who were mostly from the peasantry. It spread rumours branding several among the intelligentsia as spies for this or that enemy. In 1973 a revolutionary intellectual, Melles Gebre Mariam, was charged with being an agent of the Ethiopian government. On the basis of flimsy evidence and a "confession" obtained under torture, he was found "guilty" and executed.

By September 1973, the power struggle and the regionalist feud in the leadership had become so fierce that the dominant Akele Guzai-Serae

alliance decided on a plot to purge Solomon Wolde Mariam. It charged Solomon with regionalist practices and appointed a committee to hear the case. In one large meeting convened to discuss the case, several of the advanced cadres participated. Among them were a few members of the progressive group which came to be known as "Menkaii."

The "Menkaii" members addressed the issue candidly. They stated that the leadership was guilty of regionalist practices and that an action against Solomon alone was not a solution. The remark offended the leadership and led to a heated exchange and a physical fight in which one of the "Menkaii" participants, Mussie Tesfa Micael, was severely battered. The meeting ended in chaos.

The leadership blamed Mussie for the incident. The rank and file exploded in protest, articulating the complaints they had been nursing all along. They charged lack of "democracy" in the organization and demanded "guarantees for respect to our lives and for the observance of our rights."⁴⁰

The various units of PLF-II met separately and concurred that the leadership was responsible for all the problems. They noted that this body had monopolized authority in the organization, ruling over the fighters as though they were inanimate objects. Hence they called for a new democratically elected leadership. They also demanded the introduction of measures to reform the administration of the EPLF as a whole.

At this juncture "Menkaii" became an open movement and the vanguard of the opposition.

An important point not commonly appreciated is that the "Menkaii" movement had also challenged the sectarian political line of the whole EPLF alliance. "Menkaii" leaders had maintained a position which sharply countered that of the EPLF leadership and Osman Sabbe. They had aspired for the ultimate unification of the Eritrean revolution under the banner of revolutionary democracy. They had become aware that there were progressive groups in the ELF with whom they hoped to join hands.⁴¹

Though the Menkaii leaders had condemned the ELF leadership for initiating internecine battles, they opposed the efforts on the part of Isayas and others to sustain and deepen the tensions in the Eritrean movement. Some had openly protested the leadership's "educational" endeavours to instill anti-ELF bigotry in the mass fighters.⁴²

Naturally, the Menkaii movement was a danger to all the power groups in the EPLF leadership. It threatened not only the Akele Guzai-Serae alliance and Solomon's Hamasienite faction in PLF-II, but also the Semharite Omaro group in the other component of the EPLF and Os-

man Sabbe in the Foreign Mission. All these power cliques momentarily curbed their rivalries. They concerted their efforts and worked out plans to crush Menkaii and the mass opposition in the PLF-II.

While united with the others against Menkaii and the movement, Solomon Wolde Mariam was engaged in expanding his group of Hamasienites. He succeeded in recruiting several from the rank and file, including intellectuals. Most of these intellectuals had shared the academic background but not the ideological orientation or commitment of the Menkaii leaders.⁴³ The Hamasienite clique, particularly its intellectuals, took the frontline in the agitation against Menkaii, becoming the main instrument of Isayas and developing strong ties with Omaro's Semharite clique.

The showdown came when the regionalist alliance manipulated the election of a committee to supervise the EPLF as a whole. Being a full participant in the election, Omaro's force played a crucial role by directing its rank and file to line up behind the regionalist groups, thereby outnumbering the Menkaii supporters in votes. Thus, the Hamasien-Semhar alliance became dominant in the Committee and in the affairs of the EPLF. When the opposition challenged the outcome of the election the leadership arrested the revolutionary intellectuals and others who had played leading roles in the Menkaii movement.

Open regionalist rivalry then resurged in the leadership of PLF-II. This time Solomon's Hamasienite group, in collaboration with the Semharites, took the initiative against the Akele Guzai clique. It deposed the Akele Guzai leaders, demoting some of them to lower ranks and others to even unclassified ordinary fighters.

The Hamasienite group, in alliance with Omaro's Semharites, thus consolidated its dominion over the organization. It restructured the component units and accorded leading military and administrative posts to those Hamasienites who supported (or did not resist) its regionalist stance. It tightened the security apparatus, of which Solomon took personal charge. It used this apparatus to mop up any remnants of Menkaii and to intimidate any opposition.

At that time, Isayas was on a trip abroad. It is known however that he had worked out the whole plan with Solomon. Hence, subsequent to the change, Isayas retained his incumbency as the Supreme leader.

Three years later Solomon and his cadres were to suffer the same fate as their Akele Guzai rivals. This was carried out in a conspiracy masterfully executed by Isayas for the further consolidation of his position.

The leaders of the Menkaii movement were executed sometime in late 1975 or early 1976. Various theories have been suggested on the timing of their executions. One view is centered on the fact that, in the said

period, the great majority of EPLF fighters were new. It maintains that, since these fighters knew practically nothing about Menkaii, the leadership could take this measure without fear of protest from the bases.

Another view explains the timing in light of the emergence of another opposition movement within the EPLF: Isayas and his clique felt threatened lest "Menkaii" be resurrected and thus murdered the detained leaders. A third view explains the timing of the executions in light of EPLF's relations with international reaction: the execution was the outcome of the "role played by the American CIA and Saudi Arabia"⁴⁴ to cleanse the Eritrean movement of genuine Marxist and anti-imperialist groups and utilize it to constrain the Ethiopian revolution.

The above views are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some or all may be correct.

The defeat of "Menkaii" was more crucial in the history of the EPLF than it is usually held to be. The movement had the potential to transform the EPLF into a national democratic front. It is no mere speculation to say that a victorious "Menkaii" in the EPLF would have strengthened the anti-imperialist forces in Eritrea. It would also have complemented ELF's progressive wing in the struggle to unify the Eritrean revolution.

Though its foremost leaders were decimated, "Menkaii" continued to live as a tendency and as a word symbolizing opposition to the EPLF leadership. To date, it persists as a nightmare haunting Isayas Afeworki and his associates. For years the EPLF leadership has been trying to discredit "Menkaii" by vilifying it as an ultra-left nuisance⁴⁵ or, even more horrendous, a regionalist movement.⁴⁶

The EPLF leadership drew lessons to improve its tactics against progressive opposition in the EPLF and elsewhere in the Eritrean movement. Its post "Menkaii" tactics included the denunciation of genuine progressives as "reactionaries." Excessive clamors of Marxist and Maoist phraseology and pretending to be the revolutionary vanguard in the Eritrean movement were later to characterize EPLF's role.

The Situation in the Last Years of Haile Sellassie

The alliance of the Isayas group with Sabbe's PLF and the Obelites had already made the situation thorny for ELF's national democratic wing. It undermined its open advocacy of a peaceful approach to the problem. However, even in the period following the commencement of the internecine battles, ELF's national democratic wing struggled not only to prevent the incidence of such battles but also to bring about a situation favourable for dialogue. But it could not avoid participation in political campaigns to expose the EPLF.

ELF's national democratic wing was distressed by the defeat of

"Menkail," which, it had hoped, would be its EPLF counterpart. It was further troubled by the broader developments after this tragic episode. The Isayas clique now seemed likely to prevail over Omaro's and dominate the EPLF field command. Given sectarian tensions, this prospect seems to have exacerbated certain negative trends in the ELF.

Sectarian Moslem groups in the ELF hurried to exploit this possibility, agitating for Moslem power in the ELF. They intensified their clandestine activities, organizing secret cells to counter, in the long run, the rising "Christian power" in the EPLF.

Though many of the Moslem fighters in the ELF were not themselves sectarian or regionalist, they were not sufficiently influenced by ideas of national democracy. They became alarmed by the rising dominance of the Isayas group in the EPLF and feared Christian domination in future Eritrea. A number became vulnerable to the influence of the sectarian cliques by whom they were eventually co-opted.

ELF's national democratic wing was overwhelmed with the pressures of the EPLF power struggle and the activities of the sectarian forces in the ELF. Thus, it could not flourish to the same extent which was hoped in 1970-71.

Still, ELF's progressive wing strove to implement the national democratic program. In external affairs, it strengthened ELF's relations with anti-imperialist regimes in the Middle East. In 1972, it secured the admission of the ELF to the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization (AAPSO).⁴⁷

On the domestic front it established the mass organizations—i.e. General Unions of Eritrean Workers, Students, and Women—as stated in the program. It provided rudimentary political education consistent with the orientation of the platform adopted in the Congress.

However, until 1975-76, its overall achievements were quite modest. This could not have been otherwise considering all the problems in the Eritrean movement and the overwhelming control of Eritrea by the Ethiopian forces at that time.

While experiencing internal traumas and fighting each other, the ELF and the EPLF were engaged in battles against the Ethiopian forces. These battles were increasing in both frequency and intensity. Indeed, a war situation was gradually building up in Eritrea.

Haile Sellassie's regime stepped up its militarist response to the armed movement. It bombed and napalmed vast areas, particularly in the western lowlands, devastating hundreds of villages and settlements. It demonstrated its contempt for Eritrean lives by barbarous massacres of innocent civilians such as that perpetrated at Um Hager in 1974.

This militarist policy, coupled with the deteriorating socio-economic

situation in Ethiopia itself, influenced the Christian youth in Eritrea. It convinced increasing numbers that they could not hope for progress and well-being under Ethiopian rule. Hence, in the year 1974 when young Ethiopians were irreversibly tilting towards the idea of overthrowing the feudo-bourgeois order, many Christian Eritreans chose to join the armed struggle.

However, even in this period, Christian participation in the armed movement was not massive and, on the political level, the idea of separation was far from being embraced by the Eritrean people as a whole. Whatever prospect there was for Eritrean independence appeared inseparable from the efforts of the progressive forces in Ethiopia to take over state power. What Fred Halliday had written in 1971 was still accurate in 1974:

Above all, it is impossible to see how the Eritreans could ever inflict a definitive defeat on the Ethiopian army without a parallel antimonarchic revolution inside Ethiopia itself. In that sense, the victory of the opposition inside Ethiopia appears to be a strategic precondition for the liberation of Eritrea.⁴⁸

Halliday's plausible observation was shared by many watchers of Ethiopian and Eritrean events. However, the antimonarchic revolution which consummated in Ethiopia in September 1974 did not lead to the resolution of the Eritrean question.

What was even less expected was that the struggle over the Eritrean question has become more bloody since 1975, after the overthrow of the feudo-bourgeois apparatus and the concrete initiation of profound social transformations in Ethiopia. At this time, thousands of Christian highlanders joined the armed movement; practically all Eritrean national groups supported the demand for independence; and the Ethio-Eritrean confrontation literally assumed war proportions.

Why in 1975? What compelled this development to occur after the declaration of "Ethiopian socialism" by the new regime in Addis Ababa?

A familiar explanation is that Eritreans then joined the armed movement with the aim of subverting the Ethiopian revolution. This explanation is accurate as regards the sudden mushrooming of "Eritrean patriotism" in the minute segment of the bourgeoisie which was interwoven with the overthrown Ethiopian ruling class.

But this explanation is generally fallacious. It does not help one to understand the reason for the support by workers, peasants, and revolutionary intelligentsia of the armed movement. It has inspired anti-Eritrean sentiment among the Ethiopian masses and has misrepresented the Eritrean cause in the progressive world.

For a genuine understanding of this phase in the Eritrean move-

ment, one should carefully probe into the events which immediately followed the overthrow of the ancien regime in Addis Ababa. Principally, one needs to consider the overall policies the new regime pursued in Eritrea in its early years.

3

Eritrea in the Early Phases of the Ethiopian Revolution

The socio-economic problems of Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia were ultimately the consequences of feudal and imperialist oppression. By the early 1970's these problems had become extremely severe. They sharply affected the lives of the peasantry, the workers, the lower ranking military, and even the larger part of the intelligentsia and small businessmen.¹

The years 1973-74 saw a dramatic increase in the prices of essential commodities, including gasoline. These commodities ceased to be easily affordable to the working people whose earnings remained meager.

In the said period, drought and famine struck certain areas of the country. The government utterly neglected the famine problem and the starving population. It even tried to prevent publicity about them.

The convergence of the above and other problems precipitated the explosion of popular discontent in 1974. This explosion was the beginning of a protest which was to develop into a revolution.

Indeed, in 1974 the objective situation in Ethiopia was ripe for revolution. However there was no force organized enough to utilize it and seize state power.

The students² and much of the intelligentsia had been vocally against the monarchy but were by no means equipped to lead or effect a

revolution. If there was a group in which a force could be organized to overthrow the monarchy, it was the military.

The military under Haile Sellassie was a highly stratified body. The colonels and the generals, part of the ruling elite, had no practical dealings with the rank and file. Hence the majors and lower officers were the "real leaders" and were bound to be influential with the bases in the armed forces.³

Deepening of Political Crisis

The popular discontent which erupted in 1974 initially involved an array of interests.⁴ Teachers, taxi drivers, workers, and the rank and file in many divisions of the armed forces expressed their respective grievances and economic demands. It was not long before these demands evolved and acquired political dimensions. The labor unions and other civilian groups sharpened their grievances and called for political reforms.

With the NCO's playing prominent roles, the rank and file in the military continued to deepen the aims of their protest. A coordinating body, the NCO's Committee, emerged in February 1974. Some of its members called for the resignation of Aklilou's government.

Aklilou's government had survived in the past largely because of Haile Sellassie's support. But by 1974 the octogenarian emperor had lost most of his Machiavellian skills.⁵ The government was thus utterly helpless. Unable to withstand the pressures from the military and the general uprising, it resigned at the end of February 1974.

In the midst of the general crisis, the rivalry between the "traditional" and the "new" nobilities in the ruling class had come to the fore.⁶ The former sought to exploit the situation for discrediting Aklilou and his group and for wresting full control. Its ambition seemed on the verge of fulfilment when, following Aklilou's resignation, an "interim government" was established with Endalkatchew Mekonnen as Prime Minister.⁷

Endalkatchew was "reputedly over-ambitious."⁸ A member of the aristocracy, he did not lack the audacity to portray himself as a "born leader of men."⁹ He was contemptuous of Aklilou and other non-royal bureaucrats and had gained notoriety as a rabid Amhara chauvinist. Evidently Endalkatchew was one of the younger politicians US strategists had groomed for leadership in post-Haile Sellassie Ethiopia. In the early seventies he was made President of the Western-dominated World Y.M.C.A. He was also a candidate for the post of UN Secretary General. His candidacy was lauded by some US strategists but it was only meant to boost his political image in Ethiopia.

Endalkatchew and his associates were threatened by the NCO's Committee even though they had indirect ties with some of its members. Hence, upon becoming the Prime Minister, Endalkatchew organized a new committee of the armed forces based in Addis Ababa, the capital. This committee, which was designated the "Armed Forces Coordinating Committee," was headed by Colonel Alem Zewd Tessema, a relative of Endalkatchew.

Endalkatchew endeavored to pre-empt the revolutionary situation by introducing some reforms. Through Alem Zewd's Committee he tried to suppress the radical wing of the NCO's Committee. He also finalized his schemes against Aklilou and the former ministers, all of whom were arrested by the Committee in April 1974.

The success of Endalkatchew's pre-emptive measures did not last long. Radical elements in the Committee of the armed forces organized against Alem Zewd. They established ties with the Territorial Army, the police, and the army divisions outside the capital, soon becoming a sizeable group as they were joined by delegates representing these sections of the military. Amid increasing popular unrest and deepening demands, this group gained strength. It isolated and weakened Alem Zewd's faction. In June 1974 it seized control of the national media and practically of the government. It identified itself as the "Co-ordinating Committee of the Ethiopian Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army." The composition of this body, which was better known as the "Derg,"¹⁰ remained secret. Its Chairman was Mengistu Haile Mariam, a delegate from the third division in Harar.

The Anti-Monarchic Revolution

The emergence of the Derg is described as "the turning of a protest movement into a Revolution."¹¹ With remarkable prudence the Derg took steps to erode the power of Haile Sellassie and the aristocracy.¹² It incarcerated the leading figures of the landed nobility, including Premier Endalkatchew and his gendarmes led by Alem Zewd Tessema. Finally, on the 12th of September 1974, it deposed the emperor and officially took over the government.¹³ It designated itself the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC).

The Derg Chairman, Mengistu Haile Mariam, had close ties with Lt. General Aman Andom. He had known the General since the early sixties when they both served in the division in Harar. Like many others in the division Mengistu had come to admire Aman who had earned the reputation of a hero in the wars against Somalia. Mengistu was aware of Aman's unequivocal stance against the monarchy. He had also appreciated Aman's potential as an ally against the nobility and the upper

crust of the military. Hence he used his influence in the Derg to secure the appointment of Aman to high positions in the military and later in the government. In July Aman was made Chief of Staff and a few weeks later Minister of Defense. When the emperor was deposed in September, Aman, who was not a Derg member, was appointed Chairman of the PMAC.

Though united against the monarchy and the nobility, the initial Derg was not a homogeneous body. Composed of junior officers (petty bourgeois) and NCO's (mostly of peasant background), it represented a variety of tendencies. Its members did not share a common view on the path of development the country should pursue. It is known that, even at the beginning, several members of the Derg favored a "radical, anti-capitalist change."¹⁴ But they were not equipped with the ideology of scientific socialism. They had no ties with a Marxist party or any group which could have provided them ideological guidance.

Mengistu Haile Mariam was consistently identified with the most radical wing of the Derg. He aspired "to change the stagnant society overnight."¹⁵ However it is also noted that, like his radical colleagues in the Derg, he was not clear on how to accomplish this goal.¹⁶

The lack of ideological clarity on the part of the radicals in the Derg and the absence of a Marxist-oriented party did not preclude revolutionary changes in the country, but were crucial in regard to the way changes were effected. To a large extent, they account for the mishandling and aggravation of some problems in the early years of the PMAC. The most serious of these problems was that of Eritrea.

Eritrea and General Aman

Since his "execution" in November 1974, General Aman has become a controversial figure. Different and, in a sense, opposing views are expressed about his role in the early phase of the Ethiopian revolution. His plan for Eritrea and the extent to which it was material in precipitating his killing are less controversial but the details in these regards are not yet fully known.

Some writers on the Ethiopian revolution have portrayed General Aman as a counter-revolutionary element. According to Raul Valdes Vivo, the General acted "from the very start . . . to slow down, weaken, adulterate, and in the end kill the Revolution."¹⁷ Vivo and other proponents of this view do not acknowledge Eritrea as a controversial issue in the PMAC under General Aman.¹⁸

Others praise Aman as a genuine revolutionary. They maintain that he played a "crucial" role "at one of (the) most crucial stages" of the Ethiopian revolution.¹⁹ They even contend that he persuaded a reluctant

Mengistu Haile Mariam and other Derg members to depose Haile Sellasie.²⁰ They credit him with maneuvers which enabled the Derg to seize and incarcerate the members of the aristocracy.²¹ Such admirers of the General eschew any mention of the social system he aspired for Ethiopia. They stress Eritrea as the issue on which Aman and the Mengistu faction in the Derg differed.

The truth of the matter is somewhat complex and seems to include aspects of both the above views. Aman and the Derg led by Mengistu differed on important issues. However, they were also embroiled in a struggle for power, which probably spawned or accentuated some of the political differences.

Mengistu and the Derg had brought Aman into the limelight in order to contain the forces of the nobility and the top ranking military. They had intended only a figure-head role for him. The PMAC Chairmanship was not invested with substantive powers. But Aman was assertive. By the judgement of his former colleagues, he was "a real gentleman"²² in the sense that he could not be put in a puppet position. Furthermore, Aman was well aware that he was a Lt. General while the Derg comprised junior officers and NCO's. He could not acknowledge, much less accept, that his military subordinates had become his actual political superiors.

Aman demanded that the Derg be reduced to the size of a regular junta. Contrary to the wishes of the Derg, he assumed an active role as leader. He sought to exercise the powers of a head of state. He differed with and confronted the Derg on several issues.

Although a long time opponent of the monarchy, Aman did not share the radicalism of Mengistu and his supporters in the Derg. He is known to have been naively fascinated by the system of Western "democracy." By all indications he would have opposed any movement towards socialism. He would have endeavored to maintain Ethiopia's ties with the US and other Western powers.

On almost all important issues contested in the PMAC "Aman was identified with 'moderate' positions."²³ He insisted that the deposed emperor not be tried and that the female members of the royal family be released from detention. He objected to the idea of executions and was adamantly opposed to the summary punishment of the detained former leaders and aristocrats.

General Aman and the Derg also differed on the question of Eritrea. The General, who was Eritrean by birth, had shown a genuine interest in solving this problem. He traveled to the most distant parts of Eritrea delivering talks in both Tigrigna and Arabic. Wherever he went, he promised a solution to the problem which he attributed to the policies of

the overthrown regime.

Aman's Ethiopian patriotism was beyond reproach. He believed in the unity of Ethiopia and Eritrea. He was convinced, however, that the Eritrean problem called for a political and not a military solution. It seems he contemplated negotiations with the Eritrean fronts and the restoration of the "federal" or autonomous status to Eritrea.²⁴

Aman's campaign was well received by the Eritrean people, a large section of whom still favored a settlement "short of total independence."²⁵ In some areas of the plateau it inspired the people to independent guerrillas to consider a peaceful solution.²⁷ It even threatened to isolate the fronts whose leaders thus branded Aman a traitor.

The dominant section of the Derg led by Mengistu Haile Mariam rejected Aman's approach on the Eritrean problem. It persisted in a "policy of military suppression of the (Eritrean) movement."²⁸ To implement militarist policy, the Derg requested Aman to authorize the dispatch of 5,000 more soldiers to Eritrea. The General flatly refused, absenting himself from the meetings of the PMAC and staying at his home on the outskirts of Addis Ababa.

The Derg was wary about the rupture of its relations with General Aman. It became seriously concerned about the possibility of a counter-revolutionary movement by the top-ranking military. It feared Aman could very well lead such a movement. This fear was strengthened by some indications that the General had taken some moves to organize his own bases both inside and outside the Derg.

Hence, on the 23rd of November 1974 the Derg sent troops to arrest the General, who resisted arrest. A mini battle was fought for several hours and the General and two of his followers were finally killed.

The Derg sought to contain whatever consequences might ensue from the death of the General. Hoping to make his death a less prominent episode, it executed many of the incarcerated aristocrats and bureaucrats and a few of its own members. In the morning of November 24, it publicly announced the "execution" of General Aman and over 60 other detainees.

Most of the Christian Eritreans not previously behind the armed movement were disheartened by the "execution" of Aman. Believing he was killed because he favored a peaceful settlement of the Eritrean problem. They were either unaware or unconcerned about the other issues on which Aman differed from the Derg. They simply romanticized that Aman died for Eritrea. They perceived the Derg as being no less, if not more, jingoist than Haile Sellassie. Hence they spontaneously developed a sympathy for the armed movement in Eritrea and for independence from Ethiopia.

After Aman's death, the Derg continued its posture on Eritrea. It took further steps which, together with developments in the Eritrean movement, led to a massive exodus of Christian Eritreans to the armed fronts.²⁹

"Ethiopian Socialism," Escalation of Ethio-Eritrean War

In the first few months after Aman's death the PMAC embarked on radical and even drastic measures to destroy the obsolete socio-economic order.³⁰ The most remarkable of these was the nationalization of land which put an end to feudal exploitation in the south and to the cumbersome land tenure system in the north. The PMAC also nationalized urban lands including houses, allowing private ownership of only personal dwellings.

These radical measures were accompanied by the declaration of "Hibretesebawinet" or "Ethiopian socialism" as the guiding ideology of the country. "Hibretesebawinet" was presented by the PMAC as the essence of the earlier slogan "Ethiopia Tikdem," which means "Ethiopia first" or "Ethiopia forward." It was a socialistic postulate and rested on an idealist world outlook. It was a blend of some egalitarian and moral principles. It enunciated five basic concepts: equality, self-reliance, dignity of labor, primacy of social interest and territorial integrity. Like many "African" and other qualified socialisms, "Hibretesebawinet" was elusive. Its contents could be arbitrarily determined and varied.

"Hibretesebawinet" justified certain progressive undertakings by the regime. More significantly, it represented the germination of socialist ideas in the Derg.

On the other hand, "Hibretesebawinet" was used to promote nationalistic or even chauvinistic policies. After all, it meant, among other things, "the indivisibility of Ethiopian unity."³¹ "Ethiopian unity"—a familiar theme under the *ancien regime*—signified preservation of Ethiopia's imperial boundaries by any means necessary. It was the same slogan under which Eritrea was annexed. There was no indication that, in its new pronunciation, it meant voluntary unity based on the exercise of self-determination.

While professing "Ethiopian unity!" and uttering slogans like "Unity or Death!" the Derg took some steps which it later claimed were sincere efforts to solve the Eritrean problem peacefully. It sent deputies of elders to "convey the good will of the government"³² to the Eritrean guerrillas. It also sent a delegation to Middle Eastern countries to express "the sound and good intentions of the government."³³

Apparently the only response the Derg desired from the fronts was an agreement to lay down their arms and accept a status within the

Ethiopian state. Its delegations to the Middle East tried to obtain promises to discontinue support for the Eritrean movement. Coming after the "execution" of Aman Andom and indicating no preparedness to accept a possible variation of Eritrea's status, the Derg's call for peace sounded hypocritical. To some it even appeared as a cover for preparations to unleash an offensive against the fronts.

The fronts rejected the PMAC's call for "peace." Taking advantage of the low morale and other weaknesses of the Ethiopian army in Eritrea, they escalated their activities, extending their control virtually to the outskirts of the Eritrean capital, Asmara.

Towards the end of December 1974 the Derg appointed Brig. General Teferi Benti Chairman of the PMAC. Chief of the Army division in Asmara, the General was a hardliner on Eritrea. It was said that he had serious differences with General Aman on this matter. By appointing General Teferi, the Derg appeared determined to unleash an assault on Eritrea. In fact, soon after this appointment, the Derg declared that, after lengthy deliberations, it would crush the Eritrean "bandits" by force.³⁴

The Eritrean fronts took the initiative and attacked Asmara in January 1975. Full-scale war broke out. It continued in the city and surrounding area for several weeks. This marked the beginning of a new phase in the Ethio-Eritrean conflict.

The Eritrean fighters demonstrated remarkable skill, inflicting considerable damage on the Ethiopian army. This and other aspects of the war were publicized throughout the world, much of which thus heard of the Eritrean movement for the first time. The Ethiopian soldiers were bewildered by the movement of the guerilla army. They looted property and committed atrocities. They falsely accused villagers of helping the "bandits" and killed them en masse at their homes, in churches and other public places. They bayoneted priests who, on behalf of their communities, begged for mercy in the name of the Lord. They murdered parents in the presence of their children. The Ethiopian Air Force supplemented the land activities of the army. Using American made jets it bombed hundreds of villages and other civilian settlements.

A serious humanitarian problem arose in Eritrea. A sizable portion of the people were displaced. Thousands became refugees in the Sudan.

The Ethiopian regime made no attempt to ameliorate conditions. On the contrary, it prohibited the Red Cross and other organizations from providing any assistance to displaced Eritreans.³⁵

The prohibition of humanitarian assistance was part of a starvation policy. This policy was strongly implied in a pronouncement made by Brig. General Getachew Nadew³⁶, then military Governor of Eritrea. It was reported that he

summoned a number of leading Eritreans to the old palace in the provincial capital, Asmara, and told them "if you wish to kill the fish, first you must dry up the sea," a statement taken to imply that starvation was to be a deliberate policy.³⁷

The Derg's stance, the "execution" of Aman Andom, the war atrocities, and the starvation policy hardened Eritrean animosity towards Ethiopia. The armed struggle for independence seemed to be the most sensible alternative to the people. Tens of thousands of young Eritreans, mostly from the Christian plateau, joined the fronts. Thus, during the first year of "Ethiopian socialism," almost all the national and social groups in Eritrea supported the armed struggle.

Later, in 1976, the PMAC made a slight change in tone, if not substance, of its approach to Eritrea. This change was expressed in the National Democratic Program and the Nine Point Peace Plan on Eritrea. The offer of a peaceful solution appeared deceptive because at the same time the PMAC launched the military adventure later called the Peasant March. The armed Eritrean organizations rejected the plan.

In 1976-77 there were three organizations in the Eritrean movement. The dominant ones were the ELF and the EPLF, which had serious differences. But these were not accurately perceived by most watchers of Eritrean affairs. The PMAC held mistaken notions about the nature of these differences. Consequently, it was to attempt a separate deal with the EPLF thus further undermining the possibilities for a peaceful solution.

The ELF and the EPLF

The Christian highlanders who joined the armed movement in 1975 went in equal numbers into the ELF and the EPLF. This brought about a quantitative growth in both fronts. This development also contained the potential for qualitative change in the ELF and the EPLF. Many of the new fighters were educated and could be trained to operate modern weapons. They also had the potential to become articulate and thus the capacity for constructive as well as destructive political roles.

The ELF

In May of 1975 the ELF held its Second National Congress. It readopted the program and the resolutions of the First National Congress, with some modifications in response to recent developments. The most significant of the modifications concerned the question of the EPLF and Eritrean unity. The ELF would now

conduct a democratic dialogue with the Popular Liberation Forces, leadership and

bases, by means of all communication channels, with the objective of realizing the unity of both organizations.³⁸

Basically, this responded to the popular demand for unity. But its immediate rationale was ELF's assessment that the new Christian fighters in the EPLF were patriotic and thus favorably disposed towards unification of the Eritrean movement. On the basis of this resolution the ELF, or the larger segment of it, was to strive for unity in subsequent years.

The Congress elected a new leadership which included some of those in the Revolutionary Council since 1971.³⁹ The composition of the new leadership reflected the new developments in the organization and the growing strength and fear on the part of the sectarian Moslem groups in the ELF.

The Congress removed Idris Mohamed Adem as the figure-head Chairman and elected Ahmed Mohamed Naser in his place. Ahmed was a basic contrast to Idris Adem. He was a young revolutionary democrat, steered in the armed struggle, and with a sense of commitment to the ideal of national unity and to the anti-imperialist cause. Though he came from the upper crust of the Assaurta national group in Akele Guzai, Ahmed was modest. (Some say he was too modest and even suggest he was not strong enough as a leader.)

Several of the new members of the Revolutionary Council were fresh, young Christians. Though they had national democratic tendencies, most lacked political experience and ideological training. Nevertheless, many would develop quickly during the struggle and contribute to the revolutionary growth of the ELF. A few would play into the hands of sectarian and opportunist groups.

By this time, the sectarian Moslem forces in the ELF had also gained strength. They owed much of their strength to financial support from certain Arab regimes whose "interests" in the Red Sea and the Eritrean movement had dramatically increased since 1975. These clandestine groups were mainly regionalists from Barka and to some extent from Gash and Sahel—all in the western lowlands. Several of them had a Pan-Islamic orientation coupled with the ideology of Arab Baathism of the Iraqi variant.

The supreme chief of these cliques was Abdullah Idris, head of the military bureau. A veteran in the organization, Abdullah had established secret ties with some of the Islamic parties and governments in the Middle East. Indeed he was the contact for a significant portion of the financial and military assistance the ELF received. Abdullah was from the Beni-Amer tribe in the Barka province. Literally of peasant origin, he was unexposed to educational and other experiences outside tri-

bal life. He had joined the armed wing of the ELF early in the '60's and gradually rose in the hierarchy, becoming a Council member in 1971. Abdullah was to survive a number of purges carried out against the sectarian groups in the years after 1975. He was also insidious and brutal, plotting the murder of several of ELF's progressive and advanced cadres, both Moslem and Christian.

Abdullah and his inner circle were advised by several Arab political strategists, mainly from Iraq (which was Abdullah's main backer). The most renowned of these Iraqi advisors was Abul Ela.⁴⁰ Abul Ela attended ELF's Second National Congress as a member of the Iraqi fraternal delegation; but he was more than a fraternal delegate. He actually participated in the machinations of the sectarian groups.

With the assistance of Abul Ela, these cliques managed to exclude the new Christian fighters from the election process. Furthermore, they frustrated the re-election of the most influential of the Christian cadres, Heroui Tedla Bairu, to the Revolutionary Council.

Though Heroui's defeat was crucial, these groups did not succeed in dominating the Revolutionary Council numerically. On the contrary, they were a small minority. The new Revolutionary Council was thus a body in which sectarian groups and national democrats co-existed. The former were a minority but financially resourceful thanks to their ties with the Arab world. The latter, whose composition was both Moslem and Christian, were the majority but without affluent patrons abroad. They were mostly petty bourgeois, but several were of working class and peasant origin. Such national democrats headed most of the departments in the organization. They provided guidance to the policies of the ELF in domestic and foreign affairs.

A key ELF institution was the clandestine or semi-clandestine political party known as the Eritrean Democratic Labour Party (EDLP). The information available on this party is very scanty to date.⁴¹ Now defunct, the EDLP is a controversial institution in the history of the ELF. Apparently founded at the end of the 1960's (when the Rectification Movement in the ELF was at its height), it appears to have played both positive and negative roles in the ELF.

The EDLP professed scientific socialism. Its erstwhile leaders included eminent cadres like Heroui Tedla Bairu, Azen Yassin, Abdulkadir Ramadan, and Ibrahim Mohamed Ali. These and other ideologically-advanced leaders used the party to propel national democratic reforms in the ELF. With the numerical growth of the ELF in the post-1975 period the EDLP appears to have increased in membership. At the same time it became increasingly open.

Though there were Marxist or Marxist-oriented cadres in its ranks,

the EDLP is said to have been ideologically disparate. Its membership included national democrats and sectarian Moslems. In this light, several insiders characterized the EDLP as a "front" similar to the Revolutionary Council. Many fighters regarded it simply as a bureaucratic appendage of the Council.

The dual tendencies in the Revolutionary Council as well as in the EDLP afflicted the operations of the ELF as a whole. The struggle between these tendencies marred the administration in the period after 1975. Given the multi-religious and multi-national composition of the ELF, this struggle easily acquired serious dimensions. It was eventually to weaken the ELF and make it vulnerable to the reactionary designs of the EPLF.

In addition to occupying important posts in the Military Bureau, Abdullah's groups managed to place some of their members in many administrative positions. These positions were in the western lowlands, where the members of the cliques were from, and in the ELF offices in the Arab world. Hence the administration in these areas was marked by corrupt and discriminatory practices. It also suffered from inefficiency, sluggishness, looseness and other features of the lax tribal cultures in the western region.

In the first years after the 2nd National Congress, these cliques sought to demoralize the Christian fighters in the rank and file, branding many as highland chauvinists and/or sympathizers of the EPLF. Some of those who headed clinics and dispensaries in the western lowlands and the Sudan deliberately neglected many of the sick and wounded Christian fighters.

Most new Christian fighters also betrayed certain weaknesses. They had joined the armed struggle dismayed by the "execution" of Aman Andom, embittered by the murder of civilians in the February war, and threatened by the overall militarist stance of the Derg. Otherwise, their sense of Eritrean patriotism was weak, their political and ideological formation rudimentary, and their understanding of the history and the nature of the divisions in the Eritrean movement inaccurate. The few radical-minded among them were impetuous and naive.

Quite a number of the new fighters assigned to the western lowlands were incensed by the sluggishness and corruption in the administration. A number became bitterly disappointed and quit the armed struggle. Others developed a Christian highlander chauvinistic stance.

Opportunists exploited the administrative ills, abandoning the struggle to pursue a "peaceful" life abroad. They dignified this step by claiming to have been disillusioned by ELF corruption.

All of this served the EPLF. Until 1977, it was not unusual for disap-

pointed Christians to desert the ELF for the EPLF. The activities of Abdullah's cliques and ELF maladministration in general nourished EPLF's sectarian propaganda, while the sensational tales by ELF deserters sustained it.

Furthermore, self-seeking Christian elements in the ELF exploited the weaknesses and the opportunism in the above groups of Christian fighters. Most prominent among these was Heroui Tedla Bairu. Following his defeat in the elections Heroui, who is the son of Eritrea's first chief executive, had soured. He embarked upon egotistical and vindictive projects to retrieve his former position in the leadership.

Heroui masterminded a certain clandestine movement called the Central Marxist Group or Ma Ma Ghu, its Tigrigna acronym. In spite of this colorful name, the members of the group were primarily innocent nationalists and opportunists bound by their common allegiance to Heroui Tedla. Only a few of the members were Marxist-oriented revolutionaries.

Heroui's Ma Ma Ghu operated mostly in Kassala, Sudan. It had few followers in the army; it seems to have encouraged adventurist moves by some among the new Christian fighters. These took the form of contemptuous defiance of the leadership, smear campaigns, defamation of forthright Christian cadres who were prudent and far-sighted, and the arrogant claim of being "the democratic force" in the ELF.

Plagued by such problems (which the EPLF exploited) the ELF went through turmoil. In 1977-78, Christian and Moslem groups deserted it. (That experience is appropriately a subject for a separate study.)

The above problems do not detract from the fact that the majority of the new Christian fighters became a solid component of the national democratic force in the ELF. Thus enriched, ELF's national democratic force became the most progressive body in the Eritrean movement. This force included Christians and Moslems from both the leadership and the bases. It dominated most of the departments and enjoyed the support of most of the army and the mass organizations. It was the motive force behind the progressive achievements of the ELF.

The ELF established political education schools, which trained hundreds of cadres in the basics of Marxism-Leninism. John E. Duggan, an American writer, who visited the ELF sometime in 1978, wrote the following concerning the school of Cadres:

The official ideology of the ELF is Marxism-Leninism and the cadre school reflects this. The basic 3 month course is Historical Materialism covering such topics as: social development, socio-economic formations, social revolutions, political economy of capitalism, imperialism, socialism, democracy and democratic centralism,

experiences of world revolution, neo-colonialism, human development, the national question, protracted war, mass organizations (workers, students, women, peasant, and youth), cultural revolution, non-capitalist way of development.

Those who take a second 3 month program study Dialectical Materialism, philosophy of the cognition of matter, universal forms of the existence of the material world; consciousness; the property of highly organized matter, components of materialist philosophy, modern bourgeois philosophy, theory of knowledge, practice.⁴²

The cadres educated thousands of the fighters and followers of the ELF. They popularized ideas of revolutionary democracy both within Eritrea and in the Eritrean communities abroad.

ELF's Department of Press and Information issued a number of periodicals. In addition to reports, the periodicals carried articles suffused with Marxist-Leninist thought. They were distributed to the fighters and members of the mass organizations.

The ELF had a conducive environment for political and ideological development. The fighters had the freedom to possess and carry books of their own. They could take up issues with their cadres and leaders. This right was abused by some opportunists, but on the whole it was helpful in the political cultivation of combatants and other members.

The department of education in the Social Affairs Bureau implemented successful literacy programs. It also set up primary schools with competent curricula which reflected the progressive line along which the ELF aspired to build a new Eritrean society.

The mass organizations of the ELF increased. After the 2nd National Congress, the Eritrean Democratic Youth Union (EDYU) and the General Union of Eritrean Peasants (GUEP) were established. A few of the branches of the mass organizations were controlled by the clandestine Moslem forces. Still, these organizations became the conduits through which ELF's national democratic wing could reach and politicize the civilian population.

The ELF undertook a variety of projects relating to infrastructure and production work. It constructed roads and set up workshops—woodwork, tannery, and repair shops, and others. It launched huge agricultural programs to become self-sufficient in food production. These were sometimes obstructed by several problems, including those arising from armed attacks by Ethiopian soldiers.

Later, the ELF confiscated lands from agricultural capitalists, certain religious institutions and other large landowners. It distributed those lands to the poor and landless peasants. It set up farm co-operatives which became quite successful.

The ELF took steps to influence Eritrean culture along the lines of national democracy. Through the General Union of Eritrean Women, it waged a struggle against the oppression of women fostered by feudal and patriarchal ideologies. The National Theatre and Musical Revival Troupe, and the Department of Fine Arts played momentous roles in the area of culture. Through song, drama, and painting they popularized democratic and progressive values; they vigorously campaigned against the obsolete traditions and harmful practices in the society. Through the folkloric dances of all the nationalities they familiarized the Eritrean national groups with each other, stressing respect for the various national forms of Eritrean culture.

The ELF was mindful of the lot of the Eritrean people. It set up clinics and provided medicines. The veterinary department made considerable achievements in the treatment of domestic animals which are essential to the livelihood of the people.

The ELF established markets in the areas under its control. It facilitated the supply of essential commodities from abroad to these markets. It regulated the markets to secure equitable distribution and made them accessible to all Eritreans including supporters of the EPLF.

Its administrative weaknesses and other problems notwithstanding the ELF was, basically, an anti-feudal, anti-imperialist movement. Its composition was truly multi-national. Hence it was a competent representative of the Eritrean people.

The EPLF

At an Organizational Congress in January 1977 the EPLF designated itself a "front." Hence the name Eritrean People's Liberation Front with the acronym still remaining EPLF.

Certain developments had taken place within the EPLF prior to the Congress which reflected the culmination and resolution of contradictions which were latent until 1975-76. The power struggle between Foreign Mission boss Osman Sabbe and Isayas Afeworki in the Field Command had intensified. Combined with other developments, this struggle split the EPLF. Osman Sabbe broke away and formed another movement called the Eritrean Liberation Front—Popular Liberation Forces (ELF-PLF).

Some observers interpret this development in light of the revolutionary events in Ethiopia and the unfolding tactical changes in US policy in the Horn of Africa. They maintain that the Isayas group had by 1976 secured assistance from the US or its allies who were applying increasing pressure on the new Ethiopian regime. Hence, they opine, the

group could afford divorce from Osman Sabbe whom it had needed only as a source of arms and other materials.⁴³

The above may constitute an important aspect of the ultimate explanation. Otherwise, the split was precipitated by a squabble over the unity agreement Osman Sabbe's Mission signed with ELF in late 1975. It occurred a few months after the Isayas clique rejected the agreement, denying Sabbe's Mission had any authority to conclude it on behalf of the EPLF.⁴⁴

As a result of the split the EPLF was abandoned by many Moslem members. Only a minute contingent of Semharite Moslems remained. The organization became a Christian highlander bloc to a much greater degree.

Following the split, Isayas purged Omaro and Solomon, the leaders of the Semhar-Hamasien alliance. He groomed several of the 1974-75 recruits and utilized them in a carefully orchestrated campaign against the two veterans and their prominent cadres.

In the Organizational Congress, Isayas easily had his way. Solomon and Omaro were disgraced. They were not even nominated for membership in the "Central Committee" which was "elected" at the Congress.

The Central Committee was firmly controlled by the Isayas clique, reorganized to include new figures. The Central Committee members outside the clique were mere puppets rubber-stamping the decisions of Isayas and his followers.

Isayas and the chief members of his coterie had their class origin in the bureaucratic bourgeoisie of the Christian highlands. They were fundamentally affected by the Ethiopian revolution as their family members who had occupied ministerial and gubernatorial posts in Haile Sellassie's regime were overthrown. Isayas' own uncle, the former governor of the famine-stricken Wollo province, was executed by the new regime in November 1974.

The clique established a clandestine body known as the Eritean People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). The EPRP is headed by Isayas. In the parlance of some former EPLF fighters it is "his party."

This "party" is not known to conduct political or ideological activities. Its existence is top secret and is apparently intended only for political consumption in progressive-minded circles. It is meant to serve as a credential in circumstances where the ruling clique needs to portray the EPLF as a developed, progressive movement.

The Isayas group appointed several Moslems to the Central Committee. In fact, the Secretary-General is Ramadan Mohamed Nur, a Moslem from the Semhar region. A malleable character, Ramadan is most

obviously a puppet of his "deputy," Isayas Afeworki. His appointment as Secretary-General, like those of other Moslems to the Central Committee, was mainly meant to lubricate EPLF's relations with Middle Eastern regimes.

In the period since 1975, the EPLF leadership intensified its sectarian undertakings. Like the cliques in the ELF, it conducted activities which objectively militated to divide the people along regional and religious lines. It severely undermined the effort of ELF's national democratic force to reunify the Eritrean movement.

The EPLF targeted the ELF as a primary enemy and sought to isolate it from the Christian communities. Wherever it campaigned in the Christian regions, it invariably referred to the ELF in Arabic names. It portrayed the ELF as the same old organization of the early and mid sixties, an Islamic movement which cannot represent the interest of Christians. It practically denied that any of the Moslems in the ELF were progressive. It condemned the Christians in the ELF as tools of their Moslem "bosses."

The substantial majority of the Christians who joined the EPLF in 1975-76 had little or no political experience. They could not resist the influence of the leadership's divisive propaganda. They were readily polluted by regionalist and religious prejudices already pervasive in the society. Whatever aspirations they had for the unity of the Eritrean movement were easily supplanted by a severe anti-ELF bigotry.

The EPLF disguised its sectarian policies behind Marxist rhetoric. It even designated itself an alliance of workers and peasants, claiming to be the "vanguard" and the only progressive movement in Eritrea.⁴⁵

Several factors behooved the EPLF to sound "socialist" and Marxist. These included the revolutionary developments in Ethiopia, the fascination of Eritrean youth with socialist ideas, and to some extent, the leadership's traumatic experience with the "Menkaii" movement of 1973.

The EPLF made efforts to lend credence to its claims. In these efforts, it undertook projects and employed tactics which were essentially ultra-left. The EPLF leadership had certain advantages over the sectarian forces in the ELF in pursuing these tactics. Its members had an urban background and some level of Western-modelled education. Coming from the Christian highland communities, which have the highest social formation in the country, they were more efficient and more organized in the implementation of their plans. They could be more discreet and apply greater sophistication in their corrupt practices.

The EPLF constructed roads displaying impressive engineering skills. It exhibited a careful management of property, clinics, workshops, agricultural schemes, and other projects of "self-reliance."

Such efficiency and technological achievements, which are politically and ideologically neutral, were dramatized by the leadership as evidence of its "correct line." They were used to bolster the propaganda effort to flaunt a revolutionary image.

These technological achievements and efficiency persuaded some to believe that the EPLF was the most progressive Eritrean organization. But the more careful observers of the Eritrean revolution were becoming increasingly aware of the dangers posed by the ultra-left practices of the EPLF.

Outstanding among such observers was Richard Lobban Jr. Lobban noted the ultra-left features of the EPLF, and thus the differences between the ELF and the EPLF. Writing in 1979, he said:

The EPLF has moved considerably further to the left of the ELF. One perspective would insist that the EPLF has become more 'revolutionary,' while my own perspective is that it has, in fact, become 'ultra left.' Some characteristics of their ultra-leftism are: 1) a pre-occupation with leftist and radical terminology, 2) emphasis on 'self-reliance' rather than internationalism at a period when they have few foreign allies, 3) internal splitting tendencies, viz. Osman Saleh Sabbe, and 4) emphasis on military rather than political dimension of the struggle, and 5) isolation or separation from their foreign based student, youth, and women's organizations.⁴⁶

Lobban's view is shared by other observers, including the Italian writer Roberto Aliboni.⁴⁷ It is also attested by Eritrean revolutionaries who, since early in the mid-seventies, had noted the anti-national aims underlying the "ultra-left" features of the EPLF.

The EPLF leadership distorted and abused socialist and Marxist concepts to justify oppressive measures and ultra-left adventures. In light of the need to "safeguard the 'mass line,'" it maintained a Gestapo type spy network, suppressed democratic rights, and severely checked the political and ideological growth of the fighters. In the name of "nationalization," it confiscated books, forbidding any fighter to carry even a single book of his own. In the name of "centralism" and "revolutionary discipline" it penalized anyone who questioned or simply failed to express enthusiasm for its practices and pronouncements. The leadership reiterated the phrase "class struggle" and used it to rationalize its divisive policies.

EPLF's sectarian objectives and the attendant ultra-left tactics were most apparent in regard to unity and the ELF. It rejected a merger with the ELF, no matter how gradually this might be implemented. The rationale was embodied in the doctrine satirically known as the "Isayas prophecy." The doctrine rested on the false premise that, while the

EPLF was led by an alliance of workers and peasants, the ELF was an organization of feudalists and the petty bourgeoisie. Hence, the argument went, there could be no merger between the two. The doctrine stated that, in the final analysis, the Eritrean masses would line up behind the EPLF and demolish the ELF.⁴⁸

The leadership did propose a "united front" with the ELF to defeat the Ethiopian forces. It declared that throughout the period of war with Ethiopia the "contradictions" between the two organizations would be "secondary." It frankly stated however that, following the defeat of the Ethiopian forces, these "contradictions" would become "primary." The final episode would be, stated the EPLF, a bloody strife in Eritrea leading to the "dissipation" of the ELF.⁴⁹ In fact, the EPLF had no intention of living up to any initial "united front": it consistently escalated the strife against the ELF despite the need to join forces against the Ethiopian army.

While proposing a "united front," the EPLF leadership stressed what it called "ideological differences" with the ELF. This propaganda was accompanied by a portrayal of the ELF as a puppet organization of Islamic states. It galvanized the anti-Moslem prejudices of the Christian fighters and followers of the EPLF. It was a Marxist-sounding, reactionary appeal to the ethnic and religious fears of the Christian communities.

The EPLF leadership prevented its fighters and followers from learning about the ELF. It forbade them to engage in dialogues with combatants and cadres of the ELF. It instructed them to be confrontational whenever they encountered ELF contingents.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary intelligentsia and some other progressive-minded fighters in the EPLF sought unity of the Eritrean movement. These genuine patriots became the targets of the leadership's spy system. Many of them languished in the prisons of Sahel where they were subjected to various forms of psychological and physical torture. These included sleep deprivation, forcing the prisoners to maintain a certain position for hours on end. Many lost their lives after being severely beaten or burned with red hot scythes or tormented with electrified devices. Furthermore the leadership frequently initiated adventurist battles to dispose of these "unwanted" fighters. Such was the battle at the Port of Massawa to which about 2000 carefully selected potential opponents were sent. Almost all were killed.

The EPLF leadership created a rift between the peasant fighters and the revolutionary intelligentsia. It accomplished this mainly by exploiting the backwardness of the former. Peddling certain Maoist precepts, it convinced them they were more revolutionary than the intelligentsia

could be.⁵⁰

The leadership promoted negative stereotypes about the intelligentsia to destroy their credibility and influence among the peasant fighters. It portrayed the intelligentsia as the prime bearers of all the weaknesses of the "petty bourgeoisie," with a deep lust for the comforts of life and devoid of the stamina to engage in battle. "Sissy" and "opportunist" were some of the words used to vilify them.

The revolutionary intelligentsia were thus prevented from playing constructive and enlightening roles in the EPLF. Many became cowed and demoralized. A few of them committed suicide. But the majority survived by maintaining very low profiles.

There were some among the intelligentsia who supported the leadership's sectarian policies and secured bureaucratic privileges. They became cadres in the various departments and in the mass organizations both inside Eritrea and abroad. They administered the espionage network. They were the prime agents of divisive rumors and smear campaigns against the revolutionary and advanced groups in the organization.

The leadership promoted the opportunists among the intellectuals as devoted revolutionaries, exalting them before the peasant fighters for successfully committing "class suicide."

It also divided the peasant fighters themselves, largely through regionalist tactics. Its members, who were from the three provinces of the Christian highlands, led various sub-cliques organized on a regionalist basis. They spread regionalist accusations and counter-accusations.

The leadership thus realized several interrelated purposes. It kept the masses of the fighters divided along regionalist lines. It also kept them isolated from the revolutionary intelligentsia. It thus succeeded in forestalling the emergence of the Menkaii-type challenge to its policies and avoiding any internal threat to its position.

Of course the EPLF leadership also targeted the progressive forces in the ELF. It sought to liquidate as many of the advanced elements in the ELF as possible. In the period 1975-77 alone, it saw to it that many of the ELF's revolutionary cadres were kidnapped, ambushed, or otherwise terrorized and killed.

The ELF cadres victimized by the EPLF were Christian highlanders who had played a considerable role in implementing the ELF's national democratic program. Their activities had strengthened the position of the ELF in the Christian highlands and enriched its multi-religious and multi-national composition. They had effectively frustrated EPLF's endeavors to mobilize all the Christian highlanders.

Without limiting itself to the victimization of such cadres, the EPLF

also undermined various programs undertaken by the ELF. It harassed, and in some instances successfully disrupted, ELF's mass organizations particularly in the Christian plateau. It ransacked schools set up by ELF's Social Affairs Bureau and attacked the teaching and administrative staff. It invaded and plundered some of ELF's agricultural schemes.

EPLF's propaganda abroad mainly aimed at isolating the ELF from its allies and undermining its external support. The propaganda made different portrayals of the ELF in different quarters. In progressive circles it smeared the ELF as a reactionary organization of feudalists. In reactionary quarters, including in some Arab states, it portrayed the ELF as a "pro-Soviet" Marxist organization.

A corollary of the above was that the EPLF flaunted different and contradictory images about itself. It professed different and opposing ideologies to suit the interests of the various governments whose favors it sought. Teklai Gebre Mariam (Aden), formerly a member of EPLF's Central Committee and Deputy Chief of its Security System, observed:

Besides, one cannot tell what its (EPLF's) guiding philosophy is; sometimes it pretends to be Marxist-Leninist, at other times a confirmed Maoist, and still at other times drops these mantles and stands with Arab reaction. What then is the real EPLF?⁵¹

Former EPLF fighters who deserted to the ELF confirmed this assertion. Five spoke to John Duggan, who visited all the fronts inside Eritrea. Duggan wrote:

All five had worked together in the EPLF Information Department as Arabic-speaking guides and translators. Their experience as guides were a major factor in their going to the ELF.

When journalists came from a country like Saudi Arabia they would be assigned as guides because of their Arabic. They would hide all the Marxist books; all would carry copies of the Koran and the guests would be taken to the lowland Muslim areas in an effort to make Eritrea appear an Arab country. When left journalists came they were given a different tour. So too with liberal and conservative journalist from the West. All were shown only what the EPLF believed they wanted to see.⁵²

Similar testimonies (by former EPLF fighters who abandoned the movement and settled in the Sudan, the Middle East, and Europe) point to the fact that the EPLF assumed a variety of colors to accommodate pragmatist aims.

The PMAC's National Democratic Program and the Policy on Eritrea
In April 1976, the PMAC promulgated the National Democratic Program. The Program reflected the steps taken toward adopting scientific

socialism as the official guiding theory of "Socialist Ethiopia."

In May of the same year the PMAC issued the Policy Decisions on Eritrea, commonly known as the Nine Point Plan. The Plan was an application of the Program's nationalities clause to the Eritrean case.

The Nationalities clause in the Program provided "the right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected." But it uncompromisingly limited the form in which the exercise of self-determination was to be manifested. It stated that the nationalities would be "accorded full right to self-government" which "means that each nationality will have regional autonomy to decide on matters concerning its internal affairs."⁵³

The clause did not indicate a different policy was to be adopted on the Eritrean question. The Nine Point Plan⁵⁴ issued subsequently confirmed beyond any doubt that, in substance, the same policy was to apply.

The Plan stated the PMAC's preparedness to solve the Eritrean problem by granting regional autonomy. It effectively ruled out federation, confederation, or state separation as options available for the Eritrean people.

The Plan referred to nationalities. It did not state or imply that Eritrea, as a multinational entity, was to be granted regional autonomy. In view of this, some felt the Plan might have contemplated dividing the country into its various national components, granting regional autonomy to each of them or joining some of them to other nationalities in Ethiopia and thereby abolishing Eritrea as a political entity.⁵⁵

The Nine Point Plan called for a "peaceful solution" along the lines indicated above. But its call for peace could have no positive impact on Eritreans, particularly those in the fronts. This was mainly because, as mentioned earlier, the PMAC then seemed intent on launching the "Peasant March."

The apparent preparation for the Peasant March and the call for a "peaceful solution" were clearly incongruous. According to some researchers, this incongruity reflected divisions within the PMAC on the question of Eritrea.⁵⁶

The faction of hardliners favoring the March prevailed. The PMAC thus went ahead with mobilizing the peasant army. It appealed to the religious sentiments of the poor peasants and aroused thousands of them to fight the "Arabs" who "invaded" Eritrea. It is also said that those responsible for the mobilization enticed the peasants by promising them land in Eritrea.⁵⁷

The March was an utter failure. The "ill-equipped" and ill-trained peasant invaders could not match the Eritrean guerillas. Before they

could even pass the border into Eritrea they were met by units of the ELF which apparently was the sole target of the March. Hundreds of them were killed and about a thousand captured. Most fled the scene of the battles. A few of the latter lost their way and unknowingly went inside Eritrea. These fell into the hands of the EPLF which publicized their capture and falsely claimed to have repulsed the invasion.

The PMAC called off the March. This step was prompted not only by the failure of the March but also reportedly by PMAC's "contacts with the EPLF" whose outcome was still "pending."⁵⁸

PMAC's Contacts with the EPLF

PMAC's moves to contact the EPLF dated back to the period preceding the Peasant March. Around the time the Nine Point Plan was issued Major Sissay Habte, then head of the Derg's Political Affairs Committee, and Haile Fida, the leader of the All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), which at the time was the PMAC's civilian ally, were engaged in these moves.

It is said that the wording of some crucial clauses in the Nine Point Plan reflected the PMAC's aim at a separate deal with the EPLF. Clauses 3 and 4 stated the PMAC was prepared to "discuss" with and "give full support" to the "progressive groups and organizations" in Eritrea. This, apparently, was a way of saying the PMAC was willing to support the EPLF with the objective of a separate deal.⁵⁹

It is probable that the PMAC was under the wrong impression—as were many others—that the EPLF was the progressive or Marxist organization in the Eritrean arena. It is also possible that it feigned positive regard for the EPLF only in order "to widen the split in the (Eritrean) nationalists' rank."⁶⁰ The PMAC probably believed that, by virtue of its almost solidly Christian composition, the EPLF was likely to collaborate with Ethiopia in designs detrimental to the ELF, and thus inimical to the Eritrean movement as a whole.

Following the declaration of the Nine Point Plan and the termination of the Peasant March, in the period 1976-77, the PMAC launched a propaganda offensive against the ELF. It bitterly condemned the ELF, lumping it sometimes with the monarchist Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and other times with the ultra-left Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP).⁶¹ In its propaganda, it declared "The ELF shall be crushed!" and "Down with the ELF!" but it made no mention of the EPLF.

In interviews and speeches, spokesmen of the PMAC implied the EPLF was progressive. In pamphlets and other literature the PMAC's spokesmen conveniently ignored the EPLF and attacked the ELF as the counter-revolutionary movement in Eritrea.⁶²

The contacts with the EPLF reached their maximum in March 1977 which was a year of landmarks in both Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Eritrean fronts had made tremendous military achievements. They had controlled almost the whole countryside in Eritrea and all the towns, except the capital Asmara and the two ports.

In this same year the Ethiopian revolution had been radicalized along progressive lines. The PMAC had taken decisive steps terminating Ethiopia's military and other dependencies on the USA. It set out on an alliance with the Soviet Union and other socialist and anti-imperialist states.

The socialist community tried to bring about a closer relationship between Ethiopia, the PDRY, and Somalia. In mid March 1977 Cuban President Fidel Castro arranged a meeting of Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam and Somali leader Siad Barre in the PDRY capital of Aden. He put forward a plan for the establishment of a confederation between Ethiopia, Somalia, and PDRY.

Within the framework of this wider confederation, Castro's plan included a proposal for a solution to the problems of Eritrea and the Ogasden. According to some reports the proposal offered regional autonomy for both. According to others it contemplated a federal status for Eritrea.⁶³ This status was said to be "analogous" to that of Byelorussia in the USSR.⁶⁴

There is no instance in which Castro expressed any position on the question of the ELF and the EPLF. There is no concrete evidence that Cuba or anyone in the socialist community favored either one of the two organizations against the other.⁶⁵

Various Western newspapers hurried to charge Cuba with an attempt to exploit the divisions in the Eritrean movement. They reported that, under Castro's plan, state power in a federated or otherwise autonomous Eritrea would be placed in the hands of the EPLF. In this connection, some even alleged the socialist powers would supply arms to the EPLF for the annihilation of the ELF.

In an account publicized in 1978 the PMAC denied that its plan of agenda for the Aden meeting had included the idea of a separate deal with the EPLF.⁶⁶ But this denial is not credible in light of the PMAC's contacts with the EPLF both before and immediately after the Aden meeting. As late as May 1977, Jean Claude Guillebaud reported that the Ethiopian leaders were still "making increasingly pressing appeals to the progressive Eritreans and are still hopeful of coming to an ideological rapprochement with the EPLF . . ."⁶⁷

No understanding could be reached between the PMAC and the EPLF. The ostensible reasons, as stated by reporters, were that 1) the

EPLF responded with "uncompromising attitudes on independence,"⁶⁸ and 2) that the EPLF maintained it would not enter into negotiations with Ethiopia without the participation of the ELF.

Given the military achievements of the Eritrean fronts at the time, it is probable the EPLF hoped for and insisted on "independence" or state separation. But EPLF's demand for the participation of the ELF, against whom it had continued to wage propaganda and military offensives, was not genuine. This demand astounded some observers who had viewed the EPLF as the progressive organization in Eritrea.

The EPLF raised the question of ELF's participation only upon being quite certain the PMAC would not agree to Eritrea's separation. It raised this question mainly in order to appear compliant with an agreement earlier concluded between the ELF and the EPLF concerning possible negotiations with Ethiopia. The agreement had stipulated that such negotiations be held only jointly by the two fronts.

It was actually too late for the EPLF to pretend observance of this agreement. The ELF and many in the Eritrean community had already spread the charge that the EPLF violated the agreement by engaging in secret dealings with Ethiopia.

Following the failure of the Aden meeting the EPLF heightened its collaboration with reactionary and anti-Soviet regimes in the region. It was soon to conduct propaganda and other activities serving US imperialism which by then had targeted Ethiopia for subversion.

4

Deepening of the Ethiopian Revolution and US Responses

In the two years following the execution of General Aman and the declaration of "Ethiopian socialism" Washington maintained a friendly posture towards the PMAC. It expected to influence the new regime.

"Hibretesebawinet" or "Ethiopian socialism" was not very alarming to the US. Eschewing the tenets of scientific socialism, it was not regarded as a concept necessarily upholding anti-imperialism. It seemed more akin to African or any other qualified "socialism," whose exponents are close to US imperialism.

The US was not opposed to several of the reforms undertaken in the name of Hibretesebawinet. It was aware that reforms, particularly in land tenure, were long overdue.¹ It had also appreciated that no government would survive after Haile Selassie without introducing some changes.

Undoubtedly, some of the reforms came as a shock to Washington, particularly the nationalization of urban and rural lands, certain basic industries, banks and insurance companies.² These nationalizations were, by any standard, sweeping and radical. They were the first concrete indication that Ethiopia might proceed along the non-capitalist road.

The overall composition of the PMAC was not hopelessly radical from the viewpoint of the US. Even after Aman's death the PMAC included several prominent members who regarded Washington favorably. A number of the officers had been trained in the US.

The PMAC, which was fighting a war in Eritrea and facing danger from Somalia, was militarily dependent on the US. The Ethiopian weapons were American made and these were the only types of weapons the Ethiopian military was trained to operate. The PMAC badly needed US weapons and spare parts.

1975 Congressional Hearings on Ethiopia

In early March 1975 the House sub-committee on International Political and Military Affairs held a hearing on "US Policy and request for sale of arms to Ethiopia."³ George Badder (from the Department of Defense), Edward Mulcahy and Wendell Coote (both from the Department of State) testified.

They reported the Department of State was seeking "to pursue a prudent policy that protects our overall interests."⁴ These "interests" concerned American military presence in the Kagnew base, US influence in the Middle East, and US reputation among the states in Black Africa. They pointed out that the Kagnew base was becoming increasingly obsolete, due to improvements in the technology of communications and related developments in the satellite program. But the base was still "valuable" since the satellites were not yet fully "operative."⁵

They stressed that Ethiopia should be regarded "just not as a part of Africa" but as part of "a greater region that would include the Arabian peninsula and the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean."⁶ Apparently the sub-committee was persuaded that supporting the PMAC was "a sensible thing to do."⁷ It was favorably disposed towards approving the sale of arms to Ethiopia.

The sub-committee was satisfied that the provision of weapons to Ethiopia would not jeopardize US relations in Africa and the Middle East. Indeed, refusal to provide arms to Ethiopia (at a time when the latter needed them most) would make the US unpopular in Africa and reduce its credibility.⁸ A question was raised regarding the affect of an arms sale to Ethiopia on the Middle Eastern countries supporting the Eritreans. However this question was dismissed on the strength of the argument that the US would advocate the settlement of the Eritrean problem by negotiations, which the Middle Eastern allies of the US favored.⁹

The sub-committee considered a "statement submitted for the Record" by an organization of Eritrean students in North America.¹⁰ It also

studied several documents including one on "Ethiopia and Somalia"¹¹ prepared by Christopher Clapham in 1972.

Clapham's document included several theses which are significant in light of subsequent developments of US policy on the Horn of Africa. Clapham noted that the fragmentation of the Ethiopian empire was "most unlikely to become a reality."¹² He added however that the threat of such fragmentation could be a pressure on the Central government in Addis Ababa.¹³ Haile Sellassie's government had contained the movements of the oppressed nationalities ("sub-national" groups) by emphasizing the "national"—i.e. Ethiopia's identity as a state—and by maintaining a strong army.¹⁴ The stronger internal opposition groups had sustained their movements by forming links on the international ("supra-national") level. Clapham cited the ELF as such a group, claiming that it linked its struggle to "the Arab-Israeli conflict."¹⁵

Clapham was aware that several of the latent conflicts in the Horn of Africa could explode and acquire international dimensions. He stressed that the internationalization of these conflicts would menace Ethiopia. In his words:

At the supra-national level, the Ethiopian position may be upset by involving the Horn in wider conflicts over which Ethiopia would have little control.¹⁶

In the initial years therefore the policymakers in Washington were not entirely averse to the PMAC. However they were carefully studying the vulnerability of a central government in that multinational society. They were engaged in quiet deliberations on which problems to exacerbate in the event they needed to pressure the PMAC.

While continuing military and other assistance to the PMAC, Washington viewed with concern the developments unfolding in the Ethiopian revolution. It saw Hibretesebawinet being superseded by the theory of scientific socialism.¹⁷ It took note of the PMAC's increasing anti-imperialist pronouncements and growing relations with the socialist community. It learned that the PMAC might eventually terminate its military dependence on the US.

Senate Hearings of August 1976

The deepening of the Ethiopian revolution prompted US policy makers to undertake a comprehensive reappraisal of the situation. Between the 4th and the 6th of August 1976 the Senate Sub-committee on African Affairs chaired by Senator Dick Clark (D-Iowa) held hearings on Ethiopia and the Horn.¹⁸

The witnesses in the hearings were William Schaufele, then US Assistant Secretary of State, and several American experts on the Horn of

Africa: John Spencer, the veteran advisor to Haile Sellassie's regime; Edward Korry, a former ambassador to Ethiopia; Tom Farer, former advisor to the Somali government; and Prof. Donald Levine, a sociologist known for his scholarly works on Ethiopia. There is no doubt that the Senate Sub-committee and the witnesses were covertly assisted by some Ethiopian and Eritrean elements serving as "consultants and informants."¹⁹

The hearings focused on the direction of the Ethiopian revolution, assessing the short and long range impacts of the revolution on US "interests" in the general area. They were meant to help in the formulation of effective tactics for the promotion of US strategy. The experts were in basic agreement on most of the issues. Only Tom Farer differed on the approach to several of the issues: the differences were tactical.

Testimony reflected wariness about the PMAC's radicalization and its growing relations with the USSR. John Spencer repeatedly berated the PMAC's drift "away from the Maoist type of socialism to a closer approach to the Soviet solution," or its "rapid evolution toward pro-communist."²⁰ Others doubted the drift was that far. At least they were not certain that the socialist community would establish an alliance with the Ethiopian regime. Prof. Levine noted that the socialist countries were enthusiastic about the PMAC's adoption of the socialist line but "do not seem to have moved toward major commitments to the regime."²¹ He even added that he did not think "the Russians are going to jump into" Ethiopia.²²

Levine and others who shared this view perceived that the USSR would not intimately ally itself with the Ethiopian regime lest this jeopardize its relations with Somalia, Syria, and other Arab states.

Most of the experts agreed that Ethiopia and the Horn should be regarded as part of a wider region comprising the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. But they did not imply that Ethiopia's membership in the OAU and the interests and policies of the African states were immaterial.

The majority concurred that Ethiopia had not totally slipped away from the US sphere of influence (though this might eventually occur). Secretary Schaufele said that, in spite of its socialist-oriented pronouncements and policies, the PMAC was not yet "systematically or instinctively anti-United States."²³

In this light, most of the witnesses felt the US should continue to supply arms to Ethiopia. They differed slightly over the level of assistance and the mode of its delivery.

They also suggested different ideas regarding the forms of pressure

to be exerted on the Ethiopian regime. John Spencer favored the continuation of the arms supply as a "time gaining" device. He stressed the assistance be made without much publicity as such exposure could have negative political consequences elsewhere.²⁴ He counted on the intensification of the famine problem as a "weapon" contributing to the downfall of the PMAC. He preferred the US refrain from aiding in the fight against this problem which he said was "fueling the revolt" in various parts of Ethiopia.²⁵

Prof. Levine recommended a "reduced amount of military aid." He added that such aid be accompanied by pressure on the PMAC "to reverse the direction of their activity."²⁶

Tom Farer opposed the arms supply to Ethiopia. He felt the "real argument" in favor of such supplies was based on "the need to preserve US credibility." He maintained such an argument was not persuasive and could not, in the new circumstances, promote the U.S.' interests.²⁷

Secretary Schaufele stated that the US should reduce economic and military assistance to Ethiopia. He conceded that the situation in Ethiopia was "serious," but "evolutionary" and not definitive enough to warrant a policy change.²⁸

Schaufele and most of the experts thought it was expedient to assist the PMAC during this "evolutionary" stage. They emphasized the need to watch further developments. Schaufele said:

Whether we can continue this degree of co-operation with Ethiopia will depend largely on the course finally taken by the new revolutionary regime . . . To the extent that this does not lead to systematic opposition to the United States, it still leaves ample opportunity for continued co-operation . . . But the situation is sufficiently volatile to bear close watching.²⁹

The Secretary described this position as "cautionary." He explicitly declared that if "things" in Ethiopia "develop in an adverse fashion," Washington's "programs" of economic and military aid to the PMAC could change.³⁰

In this context, the Hearings addressed the question of Eritrea, where the US was still making use of the Kagnaw base.

Witnesses favored the continued association of Eritrea with Ethiopia. Spencer exclaimed that "if Eritrea is lost, Ethiopia would be lost" and this is a "strategic danger in a sense."³¹

Eritrea was discussed in light of US interests in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, particularly that of containing the "threat" to Israel. Speakers emphasized that the Eritrean movement had its main support in the Arab world and especially in those states staunchly opposed to Israel. Ambassador Korry stressed that the ELF was "closely attached" to the

PLO and to the governments of Syria and Libya.³² John Spencer reiterated that an independent Eritrea would be "an Arab vilayat . . . an Arab state on the western shores" of the Red Sea.³³

Most of the experts thus opposed Eritrean independence. Secretary Shaufele admitted that "the movement to establish an independent Eritrea is not something we either acknowledge or recognize."³⁴ The experts contended Eritrea was historically part of Ethiopia. They professed respect for the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and other African states.

Most of the experts acknowledged Haile Sellassie's regime was at fault in dissolving the Ethio-Eritrean federation. They also recalled that other violations by Ethiopia contributed to the worsening of the Eritrean problem. In light of these and other considerations they supported the idea of a negotiated settlement to reinstate Eritrea to its autonomous or "federal" status within Ethiopia.

Tom Farer differed on the approach to Eritrea as he did on sending military supplies to the PMAC. He took issue with geo-political and historical theses expounded by the others. He believed the arguments concerning Israel were unfounded. He noted that the US and other Western powers were developing "an amity" with the Arab states.³⁵ Thus, there would be less reason for concern about the Red Sea becoming an "Arab lake" and independent Eritrea a strategic loss.

Farer termed the argument that Eritrea has always been part of Ethiopia "inaccurate."³⁶ He did not, on the other hand, assert it was an entity carved out by Italian colonialism. He added however that Eritrean nationalism had been developing particularly during the years of the armed struggle.³⁷

Farer emphasized that Eritrea's case was unique in the nationality problems of Africa. He insisted that the "teaching effect" or the domino theory as applied to Eritrean independence was untenable.³⁸

On the thesis that independent Eritrea would become Moslem dominated and therefore another Arab state. Farer made a significant argument. Referring to Prof. Levine's concern that Eritrean independence would encourage the "secessionist strivings" in Tigrai province whose inhabitants are the kith and kin of the Christian highlanders in Eritrea, he contended there was no danger in the secession of Tigrai so long as this province united with Eritrea. He said:

If the Tigreans were to secede from Ethiopia they would unite with their brothers in Eritrea and then you would have a very large Christian majority.³⁹

Thus, the secession of Eritrea and Tigrai as one state would forestall any possible threat Eritrean independence might pose to US interests in the region. With the Christians as the substantial majority, an indepen-

dent Tigrai-Eritrea entity would not endanger the "security" of Israel or other US "interests" targeted by the radical Arab states.

The internal divisions of the Eritrean movement were not much discussed, but were not totally ignored. They were mentioned in assessing the religious difference, if any, in the composition of the ELF and the EPLF. John Spencer pointed out that Christians were becoming the majority in both the ELF and the EPLF. But, he said, "a good deal of Arab money has found itself in the control of the head of the ELF"⁴⁰, implying the ELF was closer and more amenable to Arab influence. He approached the issue ostensibly in light of Ethiopia's need to avoid simultaneous wars in Eritrea and the Ogaden and to solve the Eritrean problem by restoring autonomy. He argued that no "useful purpose would be served by attempting to exploit" the dissension between the ELF and the EPLF.⁴¹

Prof. Levine was skeptical about the significance of the Christian majority in the two Eritrean fronts. He emphasized that the whole movement was backed by the radical Arab states. He stressed that ELF troops were "currently being trained in South Yemen"⁴² and that many of the Christians in the two fronts were "basically very Marxist and Soviet oriented."⁴³ In his view the movements would lead to the domination of Eritrea by the radical Arab states and ultimately to the eruption of Lebanon-type confrontations between the Moslem and Christian communities.⁴⁴

Tom Farer and John Spencer made a few points concerning the importance of Somalia and the Sudan for military and political activities affecting Ethiopia. These points were indeed crucial considering the policy pursued by Washington in subsequent years.

Tom Farer pointed to the growing opportunity for proxy intervention in the region. In his words, the Horn of Africa "displays an arresting charm" for "a detente-shaking proxy confrontation between the superpowers."⁴⁵ The real "charm" was that the Soviets "are in danger of getting expelled from Somalia if they don't give the Somalis what they want."⁴⁶ It appears he felt that the Mogadisho regime could be talked into abandoning anti-imperialism and becoming a surrogate of Washington.

John Spencer dwelt on the importance of the Sudan for both political and military purposes. He noted that Khartoum, the capital, had become a principal transit station for Ethiopian "personalities" on their way "into and out of Ethiopia."⁴⁷ He stressed that "the Sudan and in particular Nimeiri, can be of great assistance with the mass of knowledge available on military and political developments in Ethiopia."⁴⁸ In addition Spencer underlined the point that the Sudan "could properly

become the channel and control center for⁴⁹ the influx of firearms into Ethiopia.

Clearly, the hearings assembled a variety of views about Washington's approach to Ethiopia. Some supported moderate pressure while others suggested more aggressive tactics.

Most of the experts believed that in the "evolutionary" period or the period of "close watching," the US should maintain a friendly posture towards Ethiopia's PMAC. But if the Ethiopian government cultivated closer ties with the USSR, Washington should support the PMAC's adversaries, both internal and external.

US prepares to subvert Ethiopia

In the meantime—until Ethiopia's orientation became conclusive—Washington prepared for the alternative of subversion against the PMAC. In some cases it went beyond the stage of preparation and actually provided support to forces opposed to the Addis Ababa regime.

One was the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), a counter-revolutionary group representing the interests of the overthrown feudalists, latifundists, and bureaucratic bourgeoisie. The EDU was initially based in London and was organized by the British acting on behalf of U.S. imperialism.⁵⁰ It had some contingents in the Sudan and armed units roving in northwestern Ethiopia. By 1976 it was receiving generous funds from Saudi Arabia acting with Washington.

In this period too, the US establishment media adopted some changes in its attitude towards the Eritrean question and the armed movement. It frequently carried reports on the situation in Eritrea, publicizing the Eritrean issue and the activities of the fronts. The reports usually referred to the violation of Eritrea's federal status by Haile Selassie's regime. They portrayed the Eritrean fronts as organizations of considerable strength wielding the allegiance of the majority of the people. They exposed the mass killings and other violations of "human rights" by Ethiopian soldiers in Eritrea.

Washington also took steps to consolidate the alliance of right wing regimes neighboring or otherwise close to Ethiopia. These steps were facilitated by the position of the US in the general region and the relations between the regimes in North East Africa.

The first of these steps concerned US relations with the Sudan. It is recalled that US-Sudanese relations had somewhat chilled since mid-1973 when some Palestinians attacked the American Embassy in Khartoum, killing some of the diplomatic staff. In 1975-76 Washington improved its relations with the Sudanese regime. Khartoum increasingly became an important center of US activities.

In mid-1976 Nimeiri's regime survived another attempted coup d'état. It charged the regimes of Libya and Ethiopia (which had just established friendly relations) with invading Sudanese territory and trying to overthrow Nimeiri's government. The charges were gross exaggerations even though the Libyan and Ethiopian governments were, to varying degrees, somewhat implicated. The Sudanese dissidents who attempted the coup were based in Libya and had the support of Colonel Gaddafi, and some of their prominent leaders, together with a tiny contingent, had been provided refuge in Ethiopia.

Nimeiri's regime was fundamentally shaken by the abortive coup d'état. Consequently, it became openly hostile towards the government of Colonel Gaddafi with whom its relationship had been uneasy for some years. It also became an avowed enemy of the PMAC in Ethiopia. It thus maximized its association with the Egyptian regime of Anwar Sadat, which was friendly to Washington and inimical to Gaddafi.

Washington soon launched a scheme to organize a bloc of some governments in the region. This project was to culminate in the formation of the "Red Sea Security" in 1977.⁵¹

Egypt's Anwar Sadat was Washington's emissary in the organization of the "Red Sea Security" whose purpose was to combat Soviet influence in the region. Sudan's Nimeiri and a few other Middle Eastern leaders were the junior bit players in this project.

The Landmarks of 1977 and US Response

The year 1977 saw crucial developments in the domestic and external affairs of Ethiopia.

On the domestic scene, the PMAC underwent another round of purges. The faction headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged victorious, executing the figure-head Chairman, General Teferi Benti, and other officers in the Derg.⁵² Several members of the vanquished groups had a conciliatory attitude towards some of the opposition movements in the country. A few of them were also known to have been soft on the question of relations with the USA.

This incident, which brought Mengistu Haile Mariam to the Chairmanship of the PMAC, was seriously heeded outside Ethiopia. It was regarded in both the socialist community and the West as the consolidation of power by the most radical wing of the Derg.

Immediately after, the PMAC took historic measures on the diplomatic "front." In April (1977), it closed down several of the US "facilities" and institutions in the country including the Kagnev Military Base, the Military Assistance Advisory Groups (MAAG), the Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU), and the United States Information Service (USIS).

In early May 1977 a PMAC delegation led by Mengistu Haile Mariam paid an official visit to the USSR. The Ethiopian and Soviet leaders signed a "Declaration of the Basic Principles of Friendly Mutual Relations and Co-operation," a prelude to a Friendship Treaty. They noted, among other things, the efforts of imperialism to organize an alliance of reactionary regimes in the Red Sea Region and to bolster the counter-revolutionary forces in the Horn.⁵³

Ethiopia now started receiving massive supplies of weapons and economic assistance from the USSR and other socialist countries. This marked the end of the PMAC's military dependence on the US and the beginning of Ethiopia's effective alliance with the socialist world.⁵⁴

The policymakers in the Carter Administration were upset and resorted to new tactics whose ends were most antagonistic to the Ethiopian regime.

Having assumed office in the immediate post-Vietnam period, the Carter Administration had to cope with the "Vietnam Syndrome." This "syndrome" represented the totality of the moral and political impacts of the Vietnam War inside the US, including the "shift of opinion . . . against intervention . . . or hostility to Third World wars and to US use of its power to bludgeon Third World peoples."⁵⁵

U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young favored a "gradual" or "low profile approach" by the US.⁵⁶ He maintained that the Ethiopians and other African peoples were patriotic ("nationalists") and would resent the "Russian" presence. He predicted the USSR would eventually be ejected from Ethiopia as it was from the Sudan and Egypt. Zbigniew Brzezinski on the other hand, approached the issue from the standpoint of "linkage":⁵⁷ in response to the Soviet-Ethiopian rapprochement and the waning of American influence in the Horn, Washington would take counter-measures in areas like arms talks and detente.

In the early years of the administration, the Andrew Young line prevailed over the latter. But, with the deepening of the Ethiopian revolution, there was a mild trend in Brzezinski's direction. This began when the USSR signed the "Declaration of Basic Principles" with the PMAC and started supplying military assistance to Ethiopia. The Brzezinski line was to become dominant after the revolution in Iran and Afghanistan.

In May 1977 President Carter "cut off military assistance and sale credits to Ethiopia."⁵⁸ He took this measure using the violation of "human rights"⁵⁹ in Ethiopia as an excuse.

On the 11th of June 1977 Carter made a statement regarding these new steps in foreign policy. The statement was made in connection with his intensified attack on the USSR regarding "human rights." He said:

We are dealing with the question of normalizing relationships with countries who have been our adversaries or even enemies in the past. This is one that is fraught with grave political consequences if they are not handled in a sensitive fashion.

My own inclination, though, is to aggressively challenge, in a peaceful way of course, the Soviet Union and others for influence in areas of the world that we feel are crucial to us now or potentially crucial 15 to 20 years from now.

This includes places like Vietnam and places like Iraq and Somalia and Algeria and places like the People's Republic of China and even Cuba.⁶⁰

The American president added: "I don't have hesitancy in these matters."⁶¹

The "challenge" Jimmy Carter resolved to undertake was "to gain friends in the Soviet sphere."⁶² In plain terms, this meant Washington would try to win over some of the developing socialist and anti-imperialist regimes and use them in the strife against the USSR.

Touching on Ethiopia, President Carter said he was "quite concerned" about the situation in the Horn of Africa. He revealed that steps were underway "to improve relationships with Somalia."⁶³ He also stated his administration was "trying to understand the Eritrean movement in Ethiopia."⁶⁴

The president's statement made no mention of the EDU, the main Ethiopian counter-revolutionary force, whose links with imperialism were undisguised. This indicated that, by mid-1977, Washington's confidence in the military potential of the EDU was waning.

Western assistance to the EDU escalated in early 1977 when the Derg purged itself and the faction led by Mengistu Haile Mariam consolidated power. Beginning in February, the EDU increased its activity in the Sudan, transferring its "political command" from London to Khartoum. Here, the EDU was provided with the facilities of Radio Omdurman to broadcast propaganda in Amharic and Tigrigna.

The EDU soon made military gains inside Ethiopia. It gained control of the towns of Humera, Metemma, and Dabat in the northwestern province of Beghemidr. However, it could not sustain its military victories for any significant period. In mid-1977, it suffered severe military losses and the three towns were retaken by government forces.

Washington then presumably concluded that, as a military movement, the EDU had no bright future in Ethiopia. Still, Washington analysts continued to regard the EDU as "a non-communist" if not "an ideal"⁶⁵ alternative to the PMAC. They argued that assistance should be funneled to the EDU or a "more viable group which would replace it"⁶⁶ so that "it is ready to assume power when the Derg collapses."⁶⁷

Hence, though it continued to assist the EDU, Washington focused its interest on Eritrea and Somali. As Carter's statement indicated, it was eager to find ways to infiltrate the Eritrean movement and to win over the Somalia regime for the purpose of pressuring Ethiopia and "challenging" the Soviet Union.

US Plan on Eritrea

US' goal to control and utilize the Eritrean fronts was obvious; but its concrete plan concerning the future of Eritrea was not clear to many. Was Eritrea to be independent? Or was it to be "federated" with or otherwise contained within the state boundaries of a US allied Ethiopia?

John Spencer's work entitled "Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and US Policy" throws considerable light on these questions. Published in September 1977, when Washington's moves on the Eritrean movement were underway, it included Spencer's updated and revised views on the issues raised in the 1976 Senate Hearings.

Spencer noted that the Eritrean fronts were "the most effective" force fighting the Ethiopian regime. He contended that "the success of the independence movement in Eritrea" was the surest route for bringing about the downfall of the Derg and "the withdrawal of the Soviet Union."⁶⁸

On the other hand, Spencer shared the view that Eritrean independence was counter to Israeli interests and thus not an objective Washington should promote.⁶⁹ Furthermore, he reiterated the obsolete argument that Eritrea was not "economically viable."⁷⁰ He thus shunned the idea of independence as the long-run solution for Eritrea.

While averse to Eritrean independence, Spencer noted that "so much blood has been spilled in Eritrea's secessionist struggle."⁷¹ "Independence" was the only platform which could further mobilize Eritrean forces and sustain the armed struggle against the Ethiopian regime. He felt that local autonomy or any other status short of state independence was not gainful rhetoric. Hence, as "a way out of this dilemma," Spencer suggested:

The movement for Eritrea's independence can proceed to the point of causing the Derg's downfall and possibly the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, without irretrievably compromising US and Israeli strategic interests in the Red Sea. (emphasis added)

To John Spencer therefore Eritrean "independence" was only a means for the overthrow of the PMAC and the termination of Ethiopia's alliance with the USSR. As such the "independence" was not envisaged to be a perpetual or a continuing reality. It was visualized only as a transi-

itory, or in Spencer's words, "a fleeting experience"⁷² serving American-Israeli strategy.

Spencer outlined what he called "a formula for partitioning and autonomy." (His formula was quite reminiscent of the Bevin-Sforza plan which was debated and rejected at the UN General Assembly in 1949.) It provided that, once the Derg was overthrown and state power assumed by the EDU or a suitable replacement, Eritrea would be partitioned as follows: the Christian plateau, the Danakil, and the coastal region extending from Massawa to Bab-El-Mandeb would be joined to Ethiopia. Within Ethiopia this area would have local autonomy.⁷⁴ The rest of Eritrea—the Moslem populated western region including the Red Sea province of Sahel—would be ceded to the Sudan.⁷⁵

It seems Washington adopted Spencer's ideas. Toward the end of 1977, it undertook a secret venture to support "Eritrean independence" as the first phase of a scheme whose final objective was the overthrow of the PMAC and the elimination of Eritrea as a political entity. In this venture Washington acted through Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Shah Pahlavi's Iran and others in the Near East and the Persian Gulf region.

Moves to "Unify" Eritrean Fronts

Imperialism had realized that the schisms in the Eritrean movement were the main obstacles to the attainment of independence. Noted analysts Colin Legum and Bill Lee wrote in 1977 that "the combined Eritrean forces are now sufficiently strong to do a 'Dien Bien Phu' in Asmara." They added, "only their own growing divisions stand in their way of such a stroke."⁷⁶

The US strategists and their collaborators in the Middle Eastern region had realized that "unity" was the slogan of the Eritrean people. They perceived that the commencement of some kind of "unification" process between the fronts would help in further mobilizing the Eritrean people to struggle for "independence."

In October 1977, therefore, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states acting at the behest of Washington set out to unify the Eritrean fronts. The Western media, including The New York Times, and some Western analysts, had propagated the idea in the preceding few months that the ELF and the EPLF shared the same ideology and the same commitment to progressive social reforms.⁷⁷

In the same period the EPLF leadership indicated a sudden willingness to start a unification process with the ELF, a complete about-face. It adopted the pro-unity posture pursuant to its understandings with Washington's proxies, reached in the summer of 1977 when its

leader Isayas Afeworki toured some states in the Horn and the Middle East.

Isayas started the tour around the time of the Aden meeting at which Fidel Castro proposed some solutions to the problems in the Horn. He used the major part of his tour to confer with the governments of Somalia and Saudi Arabia.

Towards the end of his tour Isayas embarked on a propaganda campaign against the USSR and other socialist and national democratic states for their support of Ethiopia. In the clearest terms, he condemned the USSR as the enemy of the Eritrean people. On the 13th of August 1977 he told the Saudi newspaper, *Al Madina Al Manawarah*:

We consider the Soviet Union, or any other state which sides with our enemy against us as our enemy . . . This applies to the Soviets as well as to others, with regard to our evaluation of the relation of the Eritrean revolution with the world. We are now attacking the Soviet Union in the Eritrean publications for its position in support of Ethiopia.⁷⁸

Isayas was not merely criticizing USSR's support of the PMAC's policies in Eritrea. He was flatly declaring that the socialist community and the progressive world supporting Ethiopia were enemies and not strategic allies of the Eritrean revolution.

Consistent with his condemnation of the socialist community, Isayas denied that either he or his organization was Marxist. He said:

. . . the accusations publicized against us which describe us as Marxists are not true, for neither am I personally a Marxist nor is the front (EPLF). Rather, we are nationalists seeking to obtain the Eritrean people's legitimate right.⁷⁹

The denial was shocking, particularly to those under the impression that the EPLF was a genuine Marxist movement. It laid bare EPLF's reactionary line, hitherto hidden behind ultra-left rhetoric.

To those who had known the "real EPLF," Isayas' statement was not surprising. It only indicated that, in the said period, the EPLF leadership saw no need to appear Marxist to the outside world. It confirmed EPLF's determination to continue its relations with imperialism and collaborate in the "challenge" against the Soviet Union.

In the context of EPLF's avowed alliance with international reaction, a unity agreement was concluded between the ELF and the EPLF on the 20th of October 1977 in Khartoum. The negotiation leading to the agreement was conducted under the direct auspices of the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab proxies of Washington. It was chaired by then-Sudanese Vice President Abdul Qassim Mohamed Ibrahim.

In the negotiations the ELF adhered to its stand for the establish-

ment of a single national democratic front allowing a period of transition. The EPLF accepted this position while Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF agreed to dissolve itself and join the two organizations. Hence, with the ELF and the EPLF as the signatories, the Pact stated:

Both sides confirmed their firm belief in the need for the establishment of one national democratic front in the Eritrean arena.⁸⁰

The Pact provided for joint committees in the various spheres of activity: military, information, economic, social, and foreign relations, to coordinate the activities of the two fronts. This, it was said, would be crucial in bringing the two fronts closer during the period of transition.

The Pact also stipulated that a Supreme Political Command (SPC) be established. The SPC was to be the highest joint body and was to provide guidance to the joint committees. Its final task was stated to be the preparation of

a unification Congress which will create the national democratic front in Eritrea in accordance with the agreement reached upon by the two organizations.⁸¹

Some followers of events in Eritrea and the Horn warned that the "unity" agreement sponsored by the Arab emissaries of Washington was not in the interest of the Eritrean revolution. They had suspected that it was meant to strengthen the right wing in the Eritrean movement as a whole and chain the Eritrean organizations to Arab reaction.

The "Unity" Pact, it follows, was to the detriment of the progressive force, the national democratic wing of the ELF.

In spite of Soviet support of Ethiopia, ELF's progressive wing adhered to its position on the question of imperialism and the world revolutionary movement. It certainly was critical of the USSR and other states for their support of the PMAC's policy on Eritrea and, in a comradely fashion, entreated them to correct their positions. But, it consistently hailed the USSR and other components of the world revolutionary movement as the strategic allies of the Eritrean revolution. This approach was best expressed by Ibrahim Toteel, then ELF Vice Chairman, who stated the following in an interview with the Beirut daily, *An Nahar*:

In our political programme we state that our strategic allies are the countries of the Socialist Bloc and the world national liberation movements, as well as the democratic forces in the capitalist countries. It is however regrettable that many of the Socialist Bloc countries, especially the Soviet Union, are taking positions against our right and in support of the Derg (Ethiopia).

We do not justify this policy of the Soviet Union and consider it a mistaken

one . . . Regarding imperialism and our attitude towards it, the answer is clear: imperialism is one of our strategic enemies.

Its (imperialism's) position with regard to our question is a natural one. However, there is a difference when it comes to evaluating the imperialist attitude towards our question and the attitude of the countries of the Socialist Bloc.

We are still calling upon the countries of the Socialist Bloc to rectify their position, comprehend the justice of our struggle and support it. As for imperialism, we do not call upon it to comprehend our struggle and to change its position, for this position is in full accordance with its nature and goals. This is the difference in our outlook towards these two camps.⁸²

ELF's national democratic wing was aware that imperialism had motives in the "Unity" Pact. It had also sensed the complicity of the right wing Eritrean forces in those objectives. It had no doubt that these forces, particularly the EPLF and Abdullah Idris' clandestine groups in the ELF, would continue to undermine efforts for unity. However, the national democratic wing also noted that the pact, on the face of it, was consistent with the aim of unity so dearly cherished by progressive Eritreans. It was a platform which could be used to agitate for unity, including among the bases and the followers of the EPLF. With this in mind, it supported and joined the pact.

Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF was an accomplice in the approach of Washington and its Arab proxies. It was quite open about its alliance with international reaction. In early 1977, Osman Sabbe openly appealed to Jimmy Carter to support the Eritreans against the Soviet Union and Ethiopia.⁸³

Soon after splitting from the EPLF in 1976, Sabbe's ELF-PLF had vigorously campaigned for "unity." Through this campaign Sabbe intended to build and legitimize his latest organization. There is no doubt however that to some Eritrean groups the campaign appeared sincere.

The ELF-PLF had problems with the EPLF and some of the sectarian cliques in the ELF. The problems were petty, essentially involving power struggles and personal rivalries. More fundamentally, the ELF-PLF had ideological differences with the ELF's national democratic wing. Sabbe's organization favored a capitalist-oriented Eritrea allied with the US and conservative Arab states.

Washington and the Arab states who sponsored the "Unity" Pact could thus not have backed the dissolution of the ELF-PLF. Nor would Sabbe and other leaders of the organization have acquiesced in such a move. Hence, the pact's stipulation that the ELF-PLF would dissolve was a window-dressing, necessary only because the EPLF leadership (whose petty feud with Osman Sabbe was still fresh) refused to deal with the ELF-PLF.

Later, imperialism and the right wing Eritrean forces pursued their aims behind the "Unity" Pact. They continued to threaten ELF's national democratic wing.

Surveillance and Subversion Against ELF

Washington escalated surveillance of the Eritrean movement from the Sudan which by then had become "the CIA's regional centre for Central and Eastern Africa."⁸⁴ It sent a visible number of consultants and think-tankers to Khartoum, mainly British and American personnel. They came disguised as "correspondents," "free-lance journalists," "researchers," "academicians," "relief workers," etc. They carried out in-depth studies of the political tendencies in the Eritrean movement and delved into the Who's Who of the movement, to identify those upholding the anti-imperialist ("pro-Soviet") line.

These envoys worked closely with the EPLF offices in Khartoum. They also infiltrated the ELF through corrupt elements among its representatives there. Apparently, one of those representatives became fully engaged in a host of clandestine activities serving US-Israeli projects in the region.⁸⁵ Until his dismissal, he practiced deliberate maladministration (making the ELF an object of ridicule) and demoralized many ELF followers in the Sudan. His other functions included conducting character assassinations of ELF cadres and other activists known for their roles in promoting anti-imperialism.

Through the government of the Sudan, Washington acted to limit the political and ideological influence of ELF's national democratic wing. A case in point was the decision in late 1978 revoking the permit of the ELF and the EPLF to use the facilities of Radio Omdurman for daily broadcasts in Tigrigna and Arabic. The decision was announced by Sudanese Vice President Abdul Quassim a day after the broadcast of a childish and indecent polemic by the EPLF. The professed justification for the decision was that the radio facilities should not be used for such polemics.

The whole affair around EPLF's polemics was a smokescreen to terminate ELF's broadcasts, which at that time promoted the political line of the national democratic force. It was quite obvious that the decision was not detrimental to the EPLF because, by that time, the EPLF was installing a mobile radio station inside Eritrea.

After the conclusion of the Pact, the EPLF showed no change of attitude to unity. Through its cadres it reassured its followers abroad that there was no change in its position with regard to the ELF. Clearly, it was determined to use the Pact to realize the Isayas prophecy, with the "United Front" leading to the dissipation of the ELF. Inside Eritrea

the EPLF did not publicize the details of the "Unity" Pact. According to some of its former fighters, it announced the conclusion of the Pact long after October. The announcement was made largely in order to mislead the civilian population (which supported unity), not to inspire the fighters with a sense of unity towards the ELF.

Not surprisingly, the EPLF practically refused to cooperate in the programs of the joint committees. It continued to subvert the achievements of ELF's national democratic force. It harassed the mass organizations, ambushed and murdered political cadres, and provoked interne-cine battles which claimed many lives.

Likewise, the sectarian groups inside ELF continued opposition to the national democratic force. They became incensed by the mere conclusion of the "Unity" Pact. Several of them abandoned the ELF, alarmed by what they feared might become a successful unification process. To justify this step they alleged once again that the ELF was becoming antagonistic to Islam and Arabism.

Many of the members joined Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF. Others organized themselves in Saudi Arabia and launched an armed movement of their own. In the early summer months of 1978 the latter groups crossed the Red Sea and landed in Dankalia where they were totally decimated by a contingent of the ELF.

Later, in early 1979, those who had joined Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF split and formed a movement of their own bearing the name ELF-PLF-Revolutionary Committee (ELF-PLF-RC). Led by Osman Ajib, the ELF-PLF-RC was avowedly Baathite. Ajib and his colleagues were not coy about being identified as cadres of the ruling Baathite party of Iraq, by whom they were generously funded.

The most virulent of these groups remained within the ELF. Led by Abdullah Idris, this group continued to plague the organization.

By 1978, Abdullah's group had very much shrunk in size and influence. Even its monopoly of the military bureau gradually weakened as progressive cadres in the ELF increasingly assumed high military posts. This group still had agents in most of the departments. Thus, here and there, it obstructed both the internal and foreign operations of the ELF.

Abdullah's group was not any more interested in unity than the EPLF leadership. It subtly countered the progressive wing's effort to implement the unity agreement. In some cases it succeeded, as when some of its members caused serious setbacks in the Battle of Barentu jointly undertaken by the ELF and the EPLF.

This group was also closely tied to the Baathite government of Iraq. Its position on international issues was patterned on and fluctuated with

that of the Iraqi regime. At the end of the seventies it became sharply anti-Soviet, consistent with the posture adopted by the Iraqi regime in the immediate years after the Iranian Revolution.

The right-wing crippled the movement's potential to sustain military victories over Ethiopia. But this did not reduce the pressure on the PMAC because the battles against the Ethiopian army increased in frequency and intensity.

The divisive activities were actually seen as being useful and not detrimental to the interest of US imperialism. After all, they kept up the constraints on the anti-imperialist forces in the ELF and fanned the sense of regional and religious differences preparing the situation for the ultimate objective of partitioning Eritrea.

Somali Invasion of Ethiopia

Simultaneously, the US and its allies ventured to win Somalia to their side. It appears they easily succeeded. The earliest sign of their success was Somalia's negative stance on the plan for a "Marxist Confederation" put forward by Fidel Castro in the Aden meeting.

Somalia said it would not renounce "support for the liberation of the Ogaden,"⁸⁶ an area in southeastern Ethiopia inhabited by Somali people. This indicated that imperialism was intent on exploiting the border disputes and the problem of the Ogaden which had strained Ethiopian relations in past years largely due to Mogadisho's anxiety to promote "Greater Somalia."

The concept of "Greater Somalia" was articulated in the 1940's by British neo-colonial strategists. It stands for the unity of all the Somali peoples adjacently found in Somalia (both the former British and Italian Somalilands), Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti or the Territory of the Afars and Issas. "Greater Somalia" is now symbolically accommodated in the five points of the white star in the center of Somalia's national flag.

The border disputes and the Ogaden may involve issues which are debatable in international law.⁸⁷ However true this may be, there is no doubt that Mogadisho's "Greater Somalia" is a doctrine of irredentism.

Throughout the years of sporadic conflict with Somalia, Ethiopia's ancien regime was militarily supplied by the US. On the other hand, since the beginning of the seventies, Somalia had friendly relations with the USSR, which provided it economic and military assistance.⁸⁸ While maintaining friendship and cooperation with Somalia, the USSR did not support Mogadisho's territorial claims in the Horn and East Africa. This fact is admitted by Western writers on the subject⁸⁹ and even mildly acknowledged by American diplomats who had served in the region.⁹⁰

With the deepening of the Ethiopian Revolution and the burgeon-

ing of Soviet-Ethiopian relations, the USSR continued to maintain the same stance on Somalia's claims. Thus, regarding the Ogaden or any other territorial dispute, the USSR made no policy change prompting Somalia to swing to the "West."

Internal factors in Somalia made it possible for imperialism to woo the Siad Barre regime away from the socialist states. These included the regime's ideology, the country's socio-economic level, and the character of its economic ties with international capitalism. Barre's regime came to power in 1969 in a coup d'etat that overthrew the government of Prime Minister Ibrahim Egal. Egal's government was notoriously corrupt⁹¹ and closely tied to the US.

The coup d'etat followed the assassination of the head of state, Abdi Rashid Shermarke. The army easily filled the power vacuum created by the failure of wrangling parliamentarians to agree on a successor. They arrested Egal and others in his government, suspended the constitution, and set up the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) headed by General Siad Barre.

In the first half of the seventies Siad Barre repeatedly condemned imperialism's efforts to sow discord among the peoples and states in the developing world.⁹² He appealed to African and Asian leaders to be vigilant against the "machinations of imperialism in driving serious wedges between us."⁹³ He noted that disputes between African states were being exploited for neo-colonial ends. In light of this he urged the African states "not to pay any heed to imperialist fabrications."⁹⁴

Barre had also realized how "regrettable" it was that a number of states in the non-aligned movement were collaborating in the military designs of imperialism. He had termed such designs "a serious threat to national independence and sovereignty of other states."⁹⁵ He was critical of those states which were collaborating with imperialism to destabilize the situation in the progressive developing countries. Addressing the Fourth Summit Conference of non-aligned nations in 1973, Barre expressed a "great disappointment" in those governments which "collaborate with imperialist forces in order to wage war of aggression against smaller progressive independent states."⁹⁶

Ironically, however, Barre's regime later played the same role it had so eloquently criticized. It ended up collaborating with imperialism against the forces of progress.

One may question the authenticity of the regime's earlier anti-imperialist pronouncements. At the same time, one may ponder the character of the "Socialism" which was the basis of the regime's "anti-imperialism."

Barre claimed his regime was guided by the theory of scientific so-

cialism. But the guiding principles of the regime, as expressed in Barre's speeches and other documents, were rather eclectic, reflecting the influences of religion (Islam) and other idealist principles, combined with such socialistic ideas as nationalization, equality, and social welfare.

A basic factor to consider in explaining the degeneration of Mogadisho's foreign policy is the composition of Somali society. Siad Barre once said:

In Somalia there are no classes in the Marxist sense: rather we are nomads, farmers, small employees and soldiers.⁹⁷

Barre's notion that there were no classes in Somalia is evidently erroneous. But significantly, his statement indicates that class formation in Somalia was still incipient. Somalia lacked a strongly-formed class of workers, advanced petty bourgeois groups, or a sizable intelligentsia. Hence there was no major social force in Somalia to safeguard the principles of anti-imperialism in spite of the regime's tendency.

Surely, Siad Barre's regime carried out certain reforms, especially in the socio-cultural sphere.⁹⁸ Prominent among its achievements was the Latin scripting of the Somali language. Perhaps even more important were the measures introduced to abolish the oppressive laws concerning women. Other reform measures in the socio-cultural sphere included programs to raise the literacy rate, youth centers to cultivate the young in the tradition of "socialism" and projects aimed at boosting the spirit of co-operation and the work ethic in the society.⁹⁹

The regime had taken certain steps in the economic sphere as well. It nationalized foreign banks and oil companies and pursued the Somali-ization of personnel in many areas. It made attempts to resettle the nomads. It made some improvements in the infrastructure, the most notable of these being the Chinese-built highway connecting the former Italian and British Somalilands.¹⁰⁰

The above reforms and measures were progressive, but did not include radical steps to restructure the economy and mold socio-political institutions in a way or to a degree that would have decisively committed Somalia in the direction of socialism. Not the least crucial of Somalia's weaknesses was that, while having close relations with the USSR, it maintained subservient economic ties with international capitalism. In many respects its economy was dependent on investment by Western corporations and on aid from Western-controlled financial institutions. Furthermore, its cardinal import-export relations were with certain Arab and Persian Gulf states, most of which were tied to the US.

These factors lend support to an observer's view that the regime's "attachment" to the USSR was one "of a rather pragmatic kind."¹⁰¹

other words, since Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia was allied to and armed by the USA, Siad Barre's regime established friendship with the USSR in order to obtain weapons. Thus, it follows, the regime's professed anti-imperialism could easily be dropped with the offer of arms and other "assistance" from the West.

Such an offer was made to the Somali regime in 1977. In various ways, the US and other Western powers conveyed their promises of enormous military and economic assistance if the regime would join their schemes against the Ethiopian Revolution. The oil-rich Saudi monarchy offered the regime an attractive sum of \$300-500 million "on the condition that Somalia join the movement to eliminate Russian influence in the Red Sea."¹⁰²

Somalia readily accepted the offers from international reaction. By the middle of 1977 its leaders began expressing sympathy for Washington. In an interview with a *Newsweek* correspondent, Siad Barre expressed his government's readiness to deepen ties with the US and its allies and declared "I am not anti-American."¹⁰³

Towards the end of July 1977, Somalia invaded Ethiopia's Ogaden region. The Somali forces soon penetrated far beyond Ogaden into the interior of Ethiopia and for some time seemed able to hold it. At first, Mogadisho denied involvement in the attack. It claimed to have only provided support to the so called Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF), allegedly a movement of Somalis in Ethiopia fighting to "liberate" the Ogaden. But, soon after the escalation of the war, concrete pieces of evidence, including downed Somali war planes were found. This made it difficult for Mogadisho to claim disengagement.

Washington feigned neutrality in the Somali-Ethiopian war. It was clear however that the Somalis launched the war after obtaining assurance that the US and its allies would "come to their aid if they attacked Ethiopia."¹⁰⁴ It is said that initially it was Saudi Arabia which "encouraged"¹⁰⁵ Somalia to count on the support of the Western powers. Even the Western media reported that Washington had sent a message to President Siad Barre telling him the US was "not averse to further guerrilla pressure in the Ogaden,"¹⁰⁶ and that it was ready to "consider sympathetically Somalia's legitimate defense needs."¹⁰⁷

According to various sources, Washington sent the message through the intermediary of Kevin Cahill, an American physician. Dr. Cahill is a specialist in tropical medicine who had served in Africa as a member of the US Public Health Service. He had treated President Siad Barre and cultivated a personal friendship with him as he had with several other African heads of state. He openly maintained that "combining

medicine and diplomacy represents the most natural vehicle for modern international communication."¹⁰⁸

Through its ambassador in Washington, the Somali government learned that the message given by Dr. Cahill was accurate. Within less than a month it launched the offensive against Ethiopia.

The Soviet Union, Cuba, and other socialist countries provided unequivocal support to Ethiopia, decisive in the victory over Somalia in March 1978. The US and its NATO allies were caught in a dilemma when the tide began to turn against Somalia. They would have liked to have "openly intervened" on the side of Mogadisho but were apprehensive of the condemnation such an intervention would evoke from many African states which had clearly noted Somalia was the aggressor.

Washington took desperate diplomatic steps to secure a cease fire while Somalia still held Ethiopian territory. In January 1978, President Jimmy Carter visited the Shah of Iran in Tehran and the Saudi monarch in Riyadh. His engagement with those two autocrats was described by observers as part of an "intensive behind-the-scenes . . . attempt to get Middle Eastern and African countries to lead a drive for cease fire negotiations"¹⁰⁹ between Ethiopia and Somalia. But these efforts could not halt the course of the war. The Somali invaders were finally driven out of Ethiopian territory. No military steps were hotly pursued against the Somali forces once they evacuated Ethiopia, underscoring the defensive character of the support provided to Ethiopia by its socialist allies.

Somalia complained that the "West" failed it in its engagement against Soviet-supported Ethiopia but still proceeded to bind itself even more tightly with the US and other NATO powers, of which it was soon to become a virtual satellite. In Ethiopia, on the other hand, the outcome of the war gave further impetus to the process of the revolution, strengthening the country's anti-imperialist stance. The experience further enriched the people's sense of alliance with the socialist community and their notion of solidarity with the world forces of progress.

Subsequently, imperialism continued to pressure Ethiopia and "challenge" the Soviet Union. It upped the level of coordination between the anti-Soviet forces in Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf region. In the aftermath of the Iranian and Afghan revolutions, it was to organize these forces in a move to eliminate the "Pro-Soviet" segment of the Eritrean movement. This move, an integral part of the anti-Soviet strategy, was aimed at the national democratic wing of the ELF.

5

Anti-Sovietism and Counter-Revolutionary Trends in Eritrea

Following its victory over Somalia, Ethiopia firmly stayed the course of the revolution. It continued to make achievements in raising the literacy rate and expanding educational facilities. It also scored notable successes in mass organizational and ideological work.¹ It deepened ties with the socialist world and the anti-imperialist movement.² Its relations with the USSR became close, reaching a new level in November 1978 when the two states concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation.

PMAC Consolidates Power

In this period the position of Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam as head of state and government was firmly secured. The prospect for a civilian government in Ethiopia became remote, particularly following the demise of the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON) in early 1978. This development was largely precipitated by the provocative engagements of MEISON itself.

In late 1977, the MEISON was apparently making preparations to overthrow the PMAC. Alarmed, the latter proceeded to liquidate the MEISON in the same way it had earlier liquidated the EPRP.³

Though MEISON was suppressed, its offshoots continued to operate for some time on friendly terms with the PMAC. These were the Revolutionary Struggle of the Oppressed Ethiopian Masses (ECHAT), the Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Organization (MALERED), and the Labour League (WAZLEAGUE).

Later, in 1978, these offshoots of MEISON were also dissolved. This was effected in a subtle and gradual process.

Two other organizations, the Revolutionary Flame (Abyot Seded) and the Provisional Office of Mass Organizational Affairs (POMOA), survived, but not for long. They dissolved in September 1979, when the plan for the formation of a workers' party was announced. On the 17th of December 1979 the first step towards the realization of this plan was announced. This was the formation of the "Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia" (COPWE).⁴

The members of the Commission were partly recruited from the mass organizations—i.e. from the All Ethiopia Trade Union (AETU), the All Ethiopia Peasant Association (AEPa), the Urban Dwellers Association (Kebelles), and the Organizations of Youth and Women. The majority of the members however were from the armed forces. Mengistu Haile Mariam was named Chairman of the Commission.

In this period, the problem of the nationalities remained unsolved. The clauses of the national democratic program dealing with this problem were not implemented. But some policies were implemented signifying a recognition of the cultural rights of some of the nationalities. For example literacy programs were conducted and radio broadcasts were made in Oromogna and in the languages of a few other oppressed nationalities.

The "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia still persisted. The Oromo movement continued with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) as the leading organization. So did the movement in the northern province of Tigray under the Tigray People's Liberation Forces (TPLF). The problem in the Ogaden still remained unsolved. In spite of its humiliation in the 1977-78 war, Somalia continued to disturb the peace in that region through its puppet organization, the Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF). Only the question of the Afar nationality seemed to have been by and large solved. An understanding was reached between the PMAC and the progressive section of the Afar movement.⁵

Two armed movements became seriously weakened in this period. They were the EDU and the EPRP. By mid-1978, the EDU had become practically defunct. It ceased to have a military wing inside Ethiopia. Its political presence outside had also declined. As will be discussed below, it was being replaced by the TPLF.

The EPRP also dwindled as an armed organization. The pace of its demise increased in mid-1978 when it was severely attacked by the TPLF which seized EPRP's main base in Asimba, Tigray. After losing Asimba, the EPRP could maintain only a small military presence in northwestern Ethiopia.

PMAC's Military Victories in Eritrea

On the question of Eritrea the PMAC still adhered to the position expressed in its Policy Decisions of 1976. Following the failure of its rapprochement with the EPLF it renewed efforts to liquidate the Eritrean movement by force.

The failure of the rapprochement (which excluded the ELF) rationalized the militarist policy. One easily gets this impression from works on this subject by writers sympathetic to the PMAC.⁶

But the PMAC did not want to appear as being totally militarist, and in fact its spokesmen frankly stated they did not regard a military solution as the final settlement of the issue. In June 1978, Foreign Minister Feleke Gedle Giorgis emphasized in an interview:

We want to solve the problem peacefully. We don't believe that the military solution will bring the permanent solution to the problem.⁷

Apparently, this was an accurate statement of Ethiopia's plan. It expressed the PMAC's intent to weaken the Eritreans militarily so they would then "accept" regional autonomy. This is apparent from the pronouncements made by Ethiopian authorities. Two such authorities told a Soviet writer of "Ethiopia's new national policy which is based on the principle of equality and self-determination, up to and including territorial autonomy."⁸ (emphasis added).

An important development totally ignored by the PMAC and most of its supporters was the offer made by the ELF and the EPLF to negotiate with Ethiopia. This offer was made in Beirut in the summer of 1978. The new aspect in this offer was the fronts' expressed readiness to talk "without preconditions," without demanding prior acceptance by the PMAC of Eritrea's right of separation or prior evacuation of Ethiopian forces from Eritrea.

The PMAC was then preparing a huge offensive in Eritrea. It is quite probable that EPLF's aim behind the offer was to avert the offensive. There is little doubt however that ELF's national democratic wing was sincere in its quest for the unconditional negotiations. Apparently this point was noted by several progressive observers.⁹

Ignoring the offer, the PMAC launched the military campaign. It sent a large number of soldiers and militiamen equipped with sophisticated

cated weapons to those areas of Eritrea under the control of the ELF. The ELF approached the EPLF and urged it to join the battles. But the EPLF refused.

A number of battles were thus fought between the ELF and the Ethiopian forces, resulting in the loss of many lives on both the sides. The Ethiopians finally forced the ELF to withdraw from the towns and from most of the border areas in the south. They were victorious and this time also prudent to a degree. Unlike in 1975, they exercised some restraint in their treatment of the civilian population.

The ELF took this setback with the greatest tact possible under the circumstances. It provided the Eritrean people the facts about the fighting. Though it knew the Soviet weapons provided to Ethiopia were consequential, it avoided any denunciation of the USSR or other allies of Ethiopia.

The EPLF expressed no regrets over the situation of the ELF. On the contrary it seemed delighted. Certainly some of its followers outside Eritrea were openly jubilant about ELF's defeat, which they said was further "proof" of the ELF's "reactionary line."

In November of the same year the "progressive" EPLF suffered the same fate. The Ethiopian forces attacked Keren, the last major town under EPLF's control. They were equipped with roughly the same type of weapons they had used against the ELF in the summer. They badly defeated the EPLF, which retreated to the rural areas. In contrast to the ELF, the EPLF reacted in a desperate manner. It hated to admit having lost the battles and resorted to propaganda against the Soviet Union.

The end of 1978 thus marked the beginning of a new phase in the Ethio-Eritrean military situation. The Ethiopian forces took all the major towns from both the ELF and the EPLF. More importantly, they gained morale and seized the military initiative.

Soviet Support to Ethiopia: Confusion and Controversy

Ever since Ethiopia embraced the non-capitalist path, the Soviet Union had stressed a peaceful solution of the Eritrean question. Apparently it now favored a resolution within the framework of an Ethio-Eritrean union.¹⁰ Until early 1977, its view of a solution seemed to include the option of a confederation for Eritrea. Later, it seemed to support regional autonomy as outlined by the PMAC.

In mid-1977, the socialist community failed to help solve the Ethio-Eritrean and other disputes in the Horn. The US and its backers in the region had wooed Somalia and some sections of the Eritrean movement. They had set forth and launched their plan to derail the Ethiopian revolution.

Pregnant with danger for revolutionary Ethiopia, the situation also posed a serious challenge to the socialist community and other progressive world forces.

The USSR and many other socialist states provided moral and material support to the PMAC in its battles with the Eritreans. However not all fully approved of the way the PMAC was handling the problem. Cuba, for one, strongly favored a negotiated settlement of the question and turned down the PMAC's request for troops to fight in Eritrea.¹¹

Several communist parties and revolutionary democratic states were even more critical of the PMAC on this issue. They favored unrestricted application of the principle of self-determination.¹²

The support given to Ethiopia by the USSR and other states helped the Ethiopian forces overpower the Eritrean fronts and regain control of the major towns. But, on the other hand, this support contributed to a negative perception of the Soviet Union by many Eritreans, mainly those abroad and in the armed movement. Actually, since mid 1977, anti-Sovietism had emerged and was gradually growing among these Eritrean groups. This was partly a nationalist response to both the material assistance (weaponry) and the propaganda support the USSR provided to Ethiopia.

The Soviet press had become totally supportive of the Ethiopian side. It carried reports and views which complemented the Ethiopian propaganda on Eritrea. Here are a few examples.

Regarding the legal status of Eritrea, Soviet writings emphasized it is Ethiopia's "Red Sea province."¹³ They prominently featured quotations from Ethiopian sources stressing "Eritrea is an integral part"¹⁴ of Ethiopia. They even accommodated the "historic" arguments favoring Ethiopia's claims. One stated:

Although 45% of the population in Eritrea are Moslems, it has *always* been part of Ethiopia, the majority of whose peoples are Christians. More, local historians consider this region to have been the "cradle of Ethiopian civilization."¹⁵ (emphasis added)

Soviet writings fully endorsed the Ethiopian characterization of the Eritrean movement, referring to it as "reaction-inspired"¹⁶ and "foreign-inspired."¹⁷ They ignored the historical roots of the problem, focusing only on imperialism's designs on Ethiopia. They emphasized the aims of the right wing Arab states which sought "to sever from Ethiopia its northern province of Eritrea and set up there a new reactionary Moslem vassal state dependent on its patrons."¹⁸

Some writers even charged that foreigners were fighting side-by-

side with the Eritreans. Writing in the *New Times*, Vladimir Shubin said:

The Eritrean separatists in the north have stepped up operations in which servicemen from some reactionary Arab countries are taking part.¹⁹

Furthermore, several Soviet writers seemed even to doubt that the right to self-determination up to separation applied to Eritrea. They seemed to support the view of Ethiopian propagandists that Eritrea is not a nation. Gennady Gabrielyan approvingly quoted a pertinent remark by Fikre Wolde Tensay, Eritrea's Provincial Administrator.²⁰

A few Soviet writers showed familiarity with the history of the struggle. They acknowledged that the ELF had adopted an anti-imperialist platform in 1971. But they presented the history to justify and support the policy of the PMAC. Georgi Galperin stated:

In a resolution adopted in its First Congress in 1971, one breakaway (sic) organization known as the Eritrean Liberation Front, defined the aims of the movement as a struggle against the bloc of the ruling Haile Sellassie clique with its allies personified by the exploiting classes of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and also against the American military presence . . . The aims are similar to those Ethiopia's revolutionary democratic forces set themselves and which they have in large measure achieved.²¹

Presumably Galperin was aware that one of ELF's main aims was to sever Eritrea from Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia. But he eschewed any mention of this aim and simply stressed that "regional autonomy" in the PMAC's policy was "seen as the most progressive and expedient form of self-determination."²² He praised the PMAC's policy declaration on Eritrea, saying it "envisages a democratically based peace settlement."²³

Many of the reports and views in the Soviet press seemed to condone the PMAC's military undertakings in Eritrea. Several invoked Lenin's dictum that "no revolution is worth anything unless it can defend itself,"²⁴ citing it to support PMAC's moves against both the internal counterrevolutionary forces and the Eritrean fronts.

The Soviet writings could only be understood in light of the need to repel the imperialist threat to the Ethiopian revolution.

Preoccupied with defending the Ethiopian revolution, the writings included certain factual inaccuracies. Reports like the one alleging the participation of Arab servicemen in the Eritrean fronts were not only untrue but ill-considered. They needlessly irritated many Eritreans, particularly those Christians who were uneasy about being associated with the Arabs.

In this light, the USSR became controversial among Eritreans

abroad and in the armed movement. It became an issue around which confusion, disappointment, opportunism, and counter-revolutionary dangers mounted. Many Eritreans could not understand why the USSR, which had supported the demand for independence in 1950, now favoured Eritrea's continued association with Ethiopia.²⁵ Some became bitterly disappointed, regarding the USSR as an outright enemy of the Eritrean people. A few went so far as to condemn it as a "social-imperialist" power.²⁶

Other Eritrean groups hurried to exploit the Soviet support to Ethiopia and negative Eritrean perceptions. These were the right-wing forces and those who belonged to the overthrown Ethiopian *feudo-bourgeoisie*. They employed the situation in their agitations against ELF's position that the socialist community, including the USSR, is a strategic ally of the Eritrean revolution.

To some extent, disappointments and doubts about the USSR also spread within the ELF. Thus, the ELF's progressive segment encountered a serious challenge. In a sense this segment found itself in a dilemma. While adhering to anti-imperialism, it could not afford to declare open support to the Ethiopian revolution led by the PMAC nor could it publicly justify all aspects of Soviet support in defense of this revolution.

Towards the end of the 1970's this dilemma of ELF's progressive wing became severe. It increasingly suited the politics of Abdullah's cliques. It also served some opportunists in the organization who were parading as advanced Marxists inspired by the works of China's Mao Ze Dong and Albania's Enver Hoxha.

These and other right-wing groups in the ELF fanned the controversy over the Soviet support to Ethiopia and the Soviet writing on Eritrea. By so doing they sought to embarrass the national democratic wing, undermine its influence, and even compromise its credibility as a "patriotic" force.

Above all, the EPLF moved quickly to utilize the confusion and doubts about the USSR as a pretext to heighten its anti-Soviet propaganda and its collaboration with world reaction.

EPLF Escalates Anti-Soviet Propaganda

Following the battle of Keren in November 1978, the EPLF brought anti-Sovietism to a qualitatively new level. It publicized horrendous charges against the USSR. These charges not only rationalized EPLF's losses but also sought to mould Eritreans' confusion and doubts about the USSR into a hardened anti-Sovietism.

The EPLF blamed everything on the USSR. It asserted the Ethiopian attack on Keren was a "fascist offensive"²⁷ designed by the USSR. It

charged: "This barbarous war of colonial aggression has been masterminded by the Soviet Union."²⁸ Elucidating, it said:

In short, the Soviet Union is masterminding this scorched earth policy, this brutal war of extermination against the Eritrean people. . .²⁹

The USSR was not only "masterminding" but also actually executing the war. In fact the EPLF defined the parties in the battles as being itself on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. For example, a few days after the EPLF was driven out of Keren, Isayas Afeworki told journalists:

The face of the war has changed. We are not fighting the Derg (Ethiopia) anymore. Now it is the Soviet Union.³⁰

In a major document published in the *Guardian* (New York) and in other Western papers, the EPLF stated:

Planning and conducting and supervising this fascist offensive are over 200 Soviet military experts and 13 high ranking officers, including Air Forces and Army generals, all based in Asmara. More than 1000 Soviet troops, operating the hundreds of Soviet supplied tanks, fighter planes, helicopters and sophisticated heavy weapons are directly participating in the fierce battles on the Asmara, Mas-sawa, and Agordat fronts.³¹

These allegations portrayed "Keren" as a major war in itself. They were by and large unfounded. Those about the participation of numerous Soviet generals and over 1000 Soviet troops were fabrications.³²

The EPLF also made baseless accusations about the "deliberate" commission of barbarous activities by Soviet Air Force pilots and ground troops. It stated:

Soviet airforce pilots, flying MIG 21 and MIG 23 fighter bombers as well as helicopters, are raining napalm, cluster and phosphorous bombs on the Eritrean civilian population . . . They are carrying out deliberate and systematic saturation bombing of densely populated areas, economic installations, schools, hospitals, refugee camps, etc. They are engaged in the deliberate destruction of villages and the burning of harvests, home and property.³³

The EPLF declared the USSR conducted the "barbarous war" in order to promote a reactionary ultimate purpose. It charged:

The Soviet Union has committed this barbarous aggression to perpetrate (sic) the denial of the Eritrean people's legitimate right to self-determination, the trampling upon their basic democratic rights, and the suppression of their culture, languages and revolutionary initiatives.³⁴

The EPLF implied the Soviet aggression was not limited to Eritreans. It claimed, in some cases, the aggression was also directed against Ethiopian soldiers. In one of its many leaflets on "Keren," it stated that the Soviet troops threatened to kill those Ethiopian soldiers who sought to retreat from the battles.

The EPLF portrayed the USSR as a colonial power. It attributed imperialist characteristics to the socialist state.³⁵ This was most significant, a clear statement of EPLF's readiness to collaborate with any power in its fight against the Soviet Union.

Thus, the EPLF made an appeal in which it

urges all peace, justice and freedom loving countries, organizations and individuals to raise their voice in unison and condemn the barbarous crimes of the Soviet Union against the Eritrean people.³⁶ (emphasis added)

Realistically, this was directed to the attention of those powers, states, and organizations antagonistic to the Soviet Union: the US, other Western powers, and their supporters.

In this spirit, the EPLF openly courted American and other Western legations. In the Sudan, EPLF "cadres" and followers canvassed Western embassies with anti-Soviet leaflets. At the same time, the EPLF representatives in Khartoum approached and held talks with UN Ambassador Andrew Young who was attending a conference in the Sudanese capital. It is known that, in addition to filling in the American diplomat on "Soviet atrocities" in Keren, they intended to present him with a request for assistance including arms.³⁷

Post "Keren" Relations Within the Eritrean Movement

In the immediate years after "Keren"—1979-80—there was no positive change in the relations between the Eritrean fronts. They became even more polarized.

In spite of its military losses the ELF was making tremendous strides in socio-economic reforms, growing further along the line of national democracy. These achievements had become possible partly because Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF—which had posed obstacles to the progressive force in the ELF—was forced out of Eritrea.

On the other hand the EPLF had been undergoing serious internal problems. Many members had become dissatisfied. Several of its senior cadres became disaffected. Members in the mass organizations abroad condemned and abandoned it. EPLF's problems, precipitated to some degree by military debacles, reflected a fundamental malaise. A greater number of EPLF fighters and followers were losing faith in the policies and tactics of the leadership.

The year 1979 witnessed the defection of Eritrean fighters to Ethiopia in greater numbers than ever before. It seems the majority were from the EPLF. They exposed the "real EPLF" and helped to enlighten some who were still in EPLF's mass organizations abroad.

This disturbed the EPLF leadership. To divert the attention of its fighters from internal problems, it resorted to a familiar tactic: the intensification of anti-ELF hysteria. It became increasingly antagonistic to the ELF, as noted even by foreign observers. Referring to the situation in the latter part of this period, Aliboni wrote: "There can be no doubt that the EPLF is now more sectarian than it was."³⁸ For all practical purposes the EPLF suspended the Unity Pact with the ELF. Consequently the subsidiary agreement on operational details "remained a dead letter."³⁹

Meanwhile, the ELF, or its national democratic wing, heightened its relations with the progressive world. Notable in this respect were diplomatic activities in the socialist community which led to talks in Moscow between ELF delegates and leaders of the CPSU.

Furthermore ELF's relations in the Middle East underwent modifications, corresponding to the changes and developments occurring in this region in the said period.

An important issue dividing the EPLF and the ELF was the characterization of the Ethiopian regime. This difference was to become crucial. It was to be utilized by imperialism to widen the gulf between the fronts and isolate the progressives.

The EPLF found the PMAC not only reactionary but also "fascist," in spite of the reluctant admission made earlier by Isayas Afeworki that the PMAC had carried out some positive reforms in Ethiopia.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, ELF's progressive wing became more daring in stating its true assessment of the PMAC; but it still could not publicize it widely. It acknowledged the reality of the Ethiopian revolution and implied the PMAC was a national democratic regime. However it opposed the PMAC's policy in Eritrea. It was also critical of the PMAC for the suppression of some progressive civilian groups.⁴¹

In its view of Ethiopia, the mainstream ELF stood alone. It differed not only from the EPLF but also from Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF (subservient to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates); from Osman Ajib's ELF-PLF (RC) (the avowed protégé of Iraq); and from the sectarian groups led by Abdullah Idris (also close to Iraq).

ELF's progressive force differed also with the so-called Eritrean Democratic Movement (EDM), which had an apparent existence in the Sudan and in some Middle Eastern and European countries. By the most generous assessment the EDM was a loosely organized movement led by Heroui Tedla Bairu. It had practically no organizational structure. Ac-

tually, not all who regarded themselves as followers of the EDM recognized Heroui's leadership.

Most EDM members (or followers to be more precise) were Christian highlanders formerly affiliated with the ELF. The majority were in the Sudan. But many of these moved to the Middle East, Western Europe, and later to the US.

Though EDM had no organizational structure, a few of the "members" posed as "leaders" in the Sudan: viceroys of Heroui, who had moved to Europe in 1978. These "leaders" and other "cadres" of the movement were not particularly known for high integrity. Among other things, they exploited the innocence of many in the Eritrean refugee community, particularly the women.

They were also "politically active." They agitated against the ELF and its cadres in the Sudan. Towards the end of the seventies, they adopted a sharply anti-Soviet stance. In fact several established ties with operatives of imperialism in the Sudan.

It appears Heroui himself established a liaison with some Western governments and their allies in the Middle East. He was granted a presence of sorts in a few Western capitals. This was not surprising. The "Marxist" Heroui had become an eloquent crusader against Soviet policy in the developing world.⁴² He was also busy besmirching his former colleagues in the ELF by branding them agents of the Soviet KGB.⁴³

The TPLF

Crucial to a comprehensive understanding of Eritrean events is an examination, albeit brief, of another "nationalist" movement in Ethiopia—the TPLF. What was the origin of this movement?

A few years before the fall of Haile Sellassie an armed movement had emerged in the province of Tigray called the Tigray Liberation Front (TLF). It was established and operated with the assistance of the ELF.

Yohannes Kidane Mariam, a former student of history at the University in Addis Ababa, emerged as a prominent leader. He was particularly known for the intensity of his Tigrean nationalism. It is not clear how Yohannes and colleagues envisaged the status of a liberated Tigray. But, considering the depth of their nationalism, it seems they favored the establishment of a separate state.

The TLF is said to have had secret links with the then-governor of the province, Prince Ras Mengesha Seyoum, a member of Tigray's traditional ruling elite. The prince resented, and to some extent resisted, Shewan hegemony over Tigray. He apparently aspired to the Ethiopian throne itself.

In the early stages of the anti-monarchic revolution in Ethiopia, the

Prince fled to the hills of Tigrai. He was under the protection of the TLF and for some time it appeared he would be its ceremonial leader. But in early 1975 he joined the EDU, severing all ties with the TLF.

While the TLF was emerging, a small group of Tigreans was being trained by the EPLF in Eritrea. In 1975 this group moved to the countryside of Tigrai where it organized a force and started operating side by side with the TLF. Supported by the EPLF the new force soon engaged in subversive activities against the TLF leadership. A fierce power conflict ensued.

The conflict also had a regionalist feature. The TLF leaders were predominantly from the central regions of Anderta and Agame. Those of the new force were from the northwest—mostly from Adwa, and a few from the Axum and Shire areas.

Armed clashes broke out between the two groups, continuing until a cease fire was concluded, thanks to the efforts of concerned peasants.

The leaders of the new force were determined to control the movement. Despite the cease fire, death squads made a sneak attack on the TLF, killing Yohannes Kidane Mariam and most of his colleagues in the leadership. The TLF soon disintegrated. Some of its fighters defected to the Ethiopian government; many others joined the EDU.

The new force thus emerged as the sole movement professing to liberate Tigrai. It declared itself the Tigray People's Liberation Forces (TPLF).

In class origin, the TPLF leadership resembled the Isayas clique dominating the EPLF. Many of its members are said to be predominantly from the upper layers of society in Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia.

As its name suggested, the TPLF became a replica of the EPLF following the latter in practically every respect. It crowded over infrastructural works and other projects of "self reliance." It used radical terminology and spoke often of "class struggle."

The TPLF leadership introduced a network of spies to keep the rank and file in line. It suppressed the progressive intelligentsia. It divided the peasant fighters along regionalist lines. It liquidated those fighters and cadres who were critical of its policies.

Designs behind EPLF-TPLF alliance

The EPLF leadership and the TPLF had agreed from the start on a long range plan on the future of Tigrai and Eritrea: following its separation from Ethiopia, Tigrai would merge with Eritrea on the basis of autonomy or federation. Evidently the plan sought to vindicate the Tigrai-Tigrigni doctrine which, in the 1940's, expressed the power interests of

feudalists in Tigrai and Eritrea. It was also in line with the ideas expressed by Tom Farer in the Senate Hearings.

The plan to establish a Tigrai-Eritrea entity was not officially declared or otherwise publicized. In the EPLF it was a secret between Isayas Afeworki and others among the Christians in the leadership. But it was not long before the secret plan started to leak out. On departing from Eritrea in 1975, several TPLF founders had disclosed it to some EPLF fighters.

Well informed writers on Ethio-Eritrean affairs also had a general idea of the aim behind the EPLF-TPLF alliance. For example, the Ottaways noted the TPLF "broke off from the (TLF) under the influence of the EPLF" and that its members "initially" entertained "the concept of an independent state comprising Tigre and Eritrea."⁴⁴

On the whole, the plan was also compatible with imperialism's strategy on Ethiopia in the early post-Haile Sellassie years. In fact at this time some Western propagandists were promoting the idea of Tigrai-Eritrea union in some clever ways. For example, Legum and Lee stressed the "significant" fact that after invading Ethiopia in 1935-36, fascist Italy extended Eritrea's boundary southwards to include the province of Tigrai and the Wolkayit area in Begemidir:

During the 1936-41 Italian occupation, they (Italians) adjusted the frontiers of Eritrea to include Dankalia—the country of the Afars—and more significantly, the province of Tigre and later the Wolkayit region of Beghemder. The effect of the latter two changes was to unite the *Tigrigna speaking peoples and the related ethnic groups of northern Ethiopia into one entity, thus recognizing the essential unity of the Tigreans of "Ethiopia" and of "Eritrea."*⁴⁵ (emphasis added)

Furthermore Legum and Lee stressed that in the 1940's the Liberal Progressive Party in Eritrea had called for the "independence of Eritrea and incorporation of Tigre."⁴⁶

The TPLF was designed and the idea of Tigrai-Eritrea union conceived partly to expand the power base of Isayas Afeworki who looked forward to becoming the supreme leader of the union. The strongmen in the TPLF leadership were related to Isayas who is partly of Adwa origin.

The plan was also an extension of EPLF policy. It projected a state in which Christians would be the overwhelming majority, unacceptable to the Moslem communities.

Founded on long range common plans, the relations between the EPLF and the TPLF were most intimate. They continued at this level until the end of 1976 when the EPLF changed its attitude.

In this period and throughout most of 1977, EPLF interest in the TPLF declined. It appeared to regard the TPLF as no longer necessary.

True, at that time, the TPLF was militarily too weak to be considered a useful ally in a confrontation. It was in fact on the verge of extinction following a strong attack by the EDU. But its military weakness was not the main reason for the change in EPLF's attitude.

Instead, this lay in the contacts at that time between the EPLF and the Ethiopian regime. The EPLF was then hoping the PMAC might acquiesce to Eritrean "independence" with the EPLF in state power; it decided that association with the TPLF was worthless, even counter-productive.

The TPLF felt betrayed by the EPLF. In the Sudan its cadres waged a propaganda campaign against the "opportunist" and "undemocratic" EPLF.⁴⁷ In fact they expressed tremendous admiration for the ELF. The latter had provided refuge to TPLF fighters when, in 1976, they were beaten and chased out of northwestern Tigray by EDU forces.

In 1978 the EPLF and the TPLF began a gradual improvement in their relations. By the end of the year they became most intimate once again.

This resumption of intimate relations took place in light of the changes and developments of that period. The EDU had been badly defeated by government forces and its non-viability had become obvious to Western strategists; and the EPLF had maximized ties with US imperialism and right-wing governments in the region.

Western analysts had long feared the image of the EDU as a movement of monarchists was a serious liability. They had realized such an image was debilitating in a society where Marxism and socialism were increasingly becoming popular. Legum and Lee contended the EDU was at a disadvantage because it "lacked the ideological fervour of the Marxist opposition movements"⁴⁸ in the country. Western strategists worried that the EDU would not last long. In 1977, John Spencer hinted at the possible need to replace the EDU with a "more viable grouping."⁴⁹

Following the EDU's crushing defeat in 1978, the TPLF was viewed as the "more viable grouping." It had the "ideological fervour" as it professed "Marxism" of the Maoist variant.

By the end of the year, the TPLF effectively took the place of the EDU in the capitals of the Western powers and their Middle Eastern surrogates. A TPLF sympathiser in the West, Jon Bennet, wrote in 1983:

Significant diplomatic gains were also made through the defeat of the EDU, for now for the first time, TPLF were recognized as the legitimate representatives of the Tigrean diaspora in countries which had previously given unqualified support to the EDU. In spite of often volatile diplomatic relations, the TPLF offices could now be open for refugees in Sudan and Middle Eastern countries, as well as Western capitals.⁵⁰

Now that it had become the substitute for the EDU, the TPLF amended the presentation of its objectives to accommodate the counter-revolutionary goals of the EDU and the interest of US imperialism in the Horn.

The TPLF now focussed on the principle of self-determination. In the name of this principle, it claimed to seek the equality and freedom of the Tigrean people and other nationalities within a united Ethiopia. It stressed however that this could be realized only under a "democratic" government in Ethiopia and not under the "fascist" PMAC. It emphasized that "if the existing national oppression continues or is aggravated"—so long as the PMAC or another revolutionary democratic regime is in power in Ethiopia—self-determination "means the birth of an independent Tigray."⁵¹

Clearly, the TPLF aimed to overthrow the revolutionary government in Addis Ababa. The idea of severing Tigray from Ethiopia was a threat designed to serve this goal.

The TPLF also modified the tone of its foreign policy, bringing it in line with US strategy and propaganda. It became more vehement in attacking the USSR and its "presence" in the Horn. But unlike the EDU, this self-avowed Maoist movement attacked the USSR from the "left."

The EPLF and the TPLF renewed their intimacy. They became twin organizations and again charted a common plan of work.

Some EPLF leaders gave clear indications of their wish to unite Eritrea and Tigray, portraying it as an alliance against the "Showan regime," the PMAC in Addis Ababa. French writer Rene Lefort has recorded a revealing incident which he witnessed while touring the EPLF-held territory in Eritrea. He recalled listening to "a long, very long soliloquy" by an EPLF leader on "the reasons for the struggle of the Eritreans."⁵² He added that the EPLF leader concluded the talk by saying, "we are the inheritors of the kingdom of Axum. We will have nothing to do with this Showan regime."⁵³ The perceptive Lefort commented that, in those words of the EPLF leader, "there was . . . more than a mere verbal sally."⁵⁴

The joint TPLF-EPLF plan became clearer after TPLF's convention in the spring of 1979. The plan's ultimate objective was to fight the PMAC and "challenge" the Soviet "presence" in Ethiopia and the Horn. The convention was dubbed an "Organizational Congress" as was EPLF's in January 1977. It was held inside Ethiopia. It was attended by EPLF representatives and by "correspondents" and "distinguished guests" from the West.

As the EPLF had done in 1977, the TPLF changed its name. It

adopted the designation "front" in place of "forces." The Tigray People's Liberation Front retained the acronym TPLF.

The Congress endorsed the aims and policies the TPLF had actually embraced since mid-1978, issuing a program embodying counter-revolutionary objectives under the guise of "self-determination." On the Horn and the general area, it passed resolutions compatible with the policy of the US and its allies. According to insiders, the Congress even settled on the characterization of the USSR as a "social-imperialist" power.

TPLF antagonizes ELF

Soon after, the TPLF set out to provoke the ELF. As a pretext, it laid claim to an Eritrean territory of importance to the ELF. It asserted that Eritrea south of the Gash River was Tigrean territory unlawfully incorporated into Eritrea. It included the Baria, the Kunama, and other national groups in this region among the peoples of Tigray.

For many years, that region had been under ELF control; its inhabitants supported the ELF. The only exception were the Kunamas or the Bazas who had sided with Ethiopia, opposing the Eritrean movement as a whole. But in 1979 even many among these were clearly leaning towards the ELF.

The ELF rejected TPLF's territorial claim. It demanded the TPLF withdraw the claim and stop all the propaganda on this matter. It urged the TPLF to refrain from all activities which might embroil the two organizations or incite hostilities between the peoples of Tigray and Eritrea.

But the TPLF became even more adamant. Going beyond verbal and written propaganda, it engaged in an all-out cartographic provocation against the ELF. It issued maps showing southwestern Eritrea up to the Sudanese border as part of Tigray territory.

The EPLF, however, was silent on TPLF's claim of southwestern Eritrea. It continued its intimate relations and co-operation with the TPLF in both domestic and foreign affairs.

Towards the end of 1979 the TPLF further pursued its territorial claim. It assaulted ELF's peasant militias in the southwestern border regions of Eritrea. It demanded loyalty and tribute from ELF's followers in this region. It harassed ELF supporters among the Eritreans in Tigray, who were mostly Christian and tried to force them to support the "Christian" EPLF.

The ELF could not remain idle in the face of this aggression. It had to defend its peasant militias and followers who were being assaulted and harassed by TPLF forces. It sent several units to the border areas in

the southwestern region. And so, in late November 1979, the first battles were fought between the ELF and the TPLF.

In due course it became obvious that the EPLF and TPLF were conspiring against the ELF. It also became increasingly clear that their conspiracy involved global and regional forces opposed to the Soviet Union.

The ultimate basis of this conspiracy was the US plan for counter-revolution in Ethiopia. The plan was long range. Apparently it was formulated roughly along the line advocated by John Spencer in 1977.

The first phase of this plan was to support the movement for Eritrean "independence" but only to the point of weakening and finally overthrowing the Ethiopian regime. A primary objective in this phase was to eliminate the truly anti-imperialist or "pro-Soviet" groups in the Eritrean movement. This objective was to be fully undertaken as an aspect of the Carter Doctrine in 1980.

6

Iran, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the Carter Doctrine

In April 1978 a national democratic revolution was launched in Afghanistan. Towards the end of the same year a revolution also took place in Iran, ousting the US gendarme Shah Pahlavi.

These revolutions dealt heavy blows to imperialism. Their impacts were sharp, mainly due to the geographic positions of the two countries and the role Shah Pahlavi had played on behalf of Washington.

The Afghan Revolution

Afghanistan's location is important to the geo-political interests of the US and other Western powers. The country borders the USSR and is close to the oil producing countries in the Persian Gulf region.

The April revolution overthrew the oppressive rule of Daoud Khan. It established a revolutionary democratic regime led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The new head of state was Nur Mohamed Taraki.

The new regime had several problems, including a shortage of professionals and "urban intellectuals."¹ Still, it acted "boldly" to tackle the problems of the Afghan society. From the start, it sought to effect democratic reforms.²

The new regime proceeded to terminate feudal privileges and rela-

tions. It cancelled the debts owed by peasants to landlords. It implemented a land reform as a result of which thousands of families received parcels of farmland.

In education and culture, the new government implemented significant reforms. It built hundreds of schools and carried out a successful literacy campaign. It terminated child marriage and reduced bride price.

The revolutionary regime grappled with the problems of nationalities in the country. It made an effort at a democratic solution of this problem by restoring "cultural and educational rights"⁷³ to the various national minorities.

Revolutionary Afghanistan established friendly relations with the socialist community and other anti-imperialist states. Its relations with the neighboring USSR reached the highest level with the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation.

The revolutionary government was constrained by problems emanating from the backwardness of the Afghan society and from divisions within the ruling PDPA. It also faced the potential danger of counter-revolution from reactionary Afghan groups. The latter included the overthrown feudal lords, usurers, and other such exploiter groups. They were supported by some governments including Pakistan, China, right wing Arab states, and later the USA. They aimed at exploiting the problems of the Afghan society and the shortcomings and errors of the new government.

Shah's Overthrow in Iran

While the enemies of Afghanistan were planning counter-revolution, a popular movement was growing in neighboring Iran, which threatened to overthrow the autocratic regime of Shah Pahlavi. The Shah was reenthroned in 1953 by the American CIA which overthrew the anti-imperialist government of Mohamed Mossadeg. For a quarter of a century he was to act as a principal surrogate of Washington in the region.

The Shah's regime was tyrannical. Its "political police," the SAVAK, was practically a "branch" of the American CIA.⁴ This institution gained notoriety for its fascistic operations which included "the most refined tortures, assassinations, kidnappings and massive repression."⁵ It victimized patriotic Iranians everywhere, including in the US.

The Shah's regime policed the Gulf region up to the western parts of the Indian Ocean. It controlled the Strait of Hormuz and secured the plunder of Persian Gulf oil by the US and other Western monopolies. It was actively engaged in the suppression of liberation movements in the

general area. It protected the right-wing regimes in North Yemen, Oman, and the Emirates.

Iran under the Shah was an ally of Israel. It supplied 70% of the latter's oil needs. The SAVAK maintained "close liaisons"⁶ with Israeli intelligence networks and actively assisted in the oppression of the Palestinian people.

The Shah's regime also collaborated with the apartheid government of South Africa. It supplied most of South Africa's oil requirements. In this and other ways it provided support to Pretoria's racist policy.

The Shah supported US war efforts in Southeast Asia. He took an active role in the aggression against the Vietnamese people. In November 1972 he sent jet fighters to prop up the neo-colonial government in Saigon.⁷

Iran's location as a neighbor of the USSR and its position on the Persian Gulf were heavily utilized by US imperialism. The country became an outpost for US espionage on the USSR. Its capital, Tehran, was the seat of CIA headquarters for Southwest Asia.⁸

Naturally the patriotic opposition to the Shah's regime had the moral support of the progressive world. The opposition grew to represent the "broadest sections of the Iranian society" and overthrew the Shah in February 1979.

A new regime was established in what became the Islamic Republic of Iran. Headed by an Imam, Ayatollah Khomeini, the new regime was profoundly theocratic. In the first two years it implemented a number of progressive measures which were supported by the Iranian Party of the Masses (Communist Party)—Tudeh—and other progressive groups.

The new regime nationalized the country's oil resources which for a quarter of a century had been plundered by US corporations. It also expropriated 70% of the private industries in the country.⁹

The government adopted objectively anti-imperialist measures. It expelled 40,000 military advisors, cancelled arms purchases involving billions of dollars a year, and terminated economic treaties which unfairly benefited Western monopolies.¹⁰ It also abrogated other treaties including the 1959 military accord with the US.

The new regime condemned the Camp David deal and broke off relations with Cairo and of course with Tel Aviv. It committed itself to support the Palestinian people and provided an office for the PLO in Tehran. It terminated oil supplies to South Africa and expressed its support for the struggle against apartheid. It withdrew from the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and officially joined the non-aligned movement.¹¹

Though it initially took some progressive steps, Imam Khomeini's

regime included right-wing forces. Led by sheiks and mullahs close to the Imam himself, these forces enjoyed considerable power and authority.

The right-wing forces were to a large extent responsible for the failure of the regime to ensure "anti-imperialist democracy"¹² and civil liberties. They administered antiquated Islamic laws in a swift manner which did not promote justice and social progress in every case. In later years, they were to wield full control of state power and use it to suppress progressive groups including the Tudeh.¹³

It was a foregone conclusion that the fall of the Shah would be a crucial loss to the US. Long before February '79, US President Jimmy Carter had openly stated that the US "would be disturbed"¹⁴ if the Shah "disturbed" and embarked on desperate moves to make strategic readjustments in the region.

Washington reinforced its relations with Pakistan. By July 1979, it had transferred the CIA headquarters for Southwest Asia from Tehran to Peshawar in Pakistan.¹⁵ Here it prepared moves against Afghanistan, in light of wider geo-political calculations.

Problems in Afghanistan: Danger of Counterrevolution

US imperialism sought to exploit Afghanistan's severe and complex problems. Several of these problems were rooted in the make-up, history, and conditions of Afghan society, a large segment of which still lived under feudal and prefeudal conditions. A considerable proportion of the people still led a nomadic life.

Almost all Afghans are Moslems. About 80% belong to the Hanafi sect (Sunni) which is predominant in Pakistan. The rest belong to the Shii sect which predominates in Iran. Afghanistan is home for twenty ethnic groups. Some of the groups had suffered national oppression and bore grievances towards the central government in Kabul.

In addition to those rooted in Afghan society, there were also problems within the ruling PDPA itself. These arose from divisions and conflicts between the PDPA's two factions, the Kahlq (People) and the Parcham (Flag). The Khalqs were led by President Taraki and Deputy Premier Hafizullah Amin, and the Parchamis by the First Deputy Prime Minister and Vice President Babrak Karmal.

The two factions emerged and the PDPA split soon after it was formed in 1965. The factions differed on how to build socialism in the country. The Khalqs favored a hurried implementation of reforms and expected a socialist society in Afghanistan "within years."¹⁶ The Parchamis, on the other hand, supported a more gradual process. They envis-

aged a longer period of reform to fulfill the prerequisites for the construction of socialism in Afghanistan. They favored a national democratic regime representing the workers, peasants, revolutionary intelligentsia and other strata including small merchants and clergy.

In 1977 the two factions merged again, reestablishing the PDPA. But their differences were not fundamentally resolved. Soon after the April revolution, the differences resurfaced and the PDPA faced the danger of splitting again. In the summer of 1978 the Khalqs purged the Parchamis in the government. They banished Karmal and others to ambassadorial posts abroad. They demoted many other highly placed Parcham authorities. This purge was successfully carried out partly because of PDPA's internal structure which is said to have been "extremely undemocratic."¹⁷

There were also differences within the Khalq faction. These were mainly "personal differences, which often took a political coloring later on."¹⁸ Such "differences" existed between President Taraki and the Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin. The latter is said to have been an "ambitious man" and eager "to gain full control of the PDPA at Taraki's expense."¹⁹

Amin engaged in "acts of betrayal"²⁰ which augmented the problems of the PDPA. As Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and as head of the security force known as Aqsa, he directed measures of repression resulting in "the decimation of party ranks."²¹ He also enforced sectarian policies which effectively "undermined the government's reformist intentions."²² All these evoked resentment to the PDPA government in several parts of the country.

Efforts to halt Amin's activities were futile. They easily became entangled with the "personal differences" in the Khalq and could produce no positive results.

Finally President Taraki attempted to remove Amin from power but did not succeed. Amin then acted swiftly against the president, overthrowing him on the 16th of September and having him executed three weeks later. Amin thus ascended to the presidency.

As head of state Amin continued to follow the same disastrous course. He aggravated the situation in the country, making it even more vulnerable to counter-revolutionary menaces.

The states neighboring or otherwise close to Afghanistan were not friendly to the revolutionary government in Kabul. The only exception was the USSR. Even before the April revolution, the Pakistani regime had been ill disposed towards Kabul over the question of some ethnic groups or nationalities. After the April revolution it became openly hostile. It provided sanctuary to dissidents from such ethnic or national

groups. It increased its support for right-wing Islamic movements in Afghanistan.

The Shah's regime in Iran was most unfriendly to the Afghan revolution. Until its overthrow in February 1979 it had actively participated in preparations to destabilize the Kabul government.

Ayatollah Khomeini's regime also opposed the new Afghan government. It provided support to the "cause" of reactionary Moslem opposition groups in Afghanistan.²³ The emphasis on Islam in the Iranian revolution and the seizure of power by Moslem clerics underlay the Iranians' provision of "encouragement to the 'Muslim' opponents"²⁴ of the new regime in Kabul.

It also deported thousands of Afghan workers from Iran, thereby depriving revolutionary Afghanistan of badly needed hard currency.²⁵

The new government in Kabul was also caught in a predicament arising from the problems in Sino-Soviet relations. Its attempts to establish a good rapport with China failed because Peking abhorred Afghanistan's intimate relations with the USSR. It was not long before the Afghan regime became a target of Peking's policies.

The USSR maintained good relations with the regime of Hafizullah Amin. It continued to assist Afghanistan on the basis of the Treaty of Friendship concluded earlier between the two states. The assistance involved socio-economic matters and military preparations against a possible counter-revolutionary offensive.

Amin's policies aggravated the existing problems and spawned additional ones. They disaffected many in those segments of the Afghan society whose interests were the primary concerns of PDPA's program. They facilitated the activities and propaganda of counter-revolutionary forces. This state of affairs was clear to the USSR, to progressive Afghan forces, and to followers of Afghan events.

By December 1979 the counter-revolutionary menace to Afghanistan became imminent. The training of anti-government Afghan insurgents in Pakistan (not only by Pakistan but also by China and the US) was proceeding swiftly. The US was intensely involved in the preparation of the counter-revolutionary insurgency. It had puppets among its top leaders. Two were actually US citizens said to have been trained and sent by the CIA.²⁶

As the dangers to the Afghan revolution increased Amin became a hated figure even in his own faction, the Khalq. It appears that finally "the majority of the Khalq" together with the Parchamis "wanted to overthrow Amin."²⁷

On the 27th of December 1979 Amin was overthrown and executed. A new government was established with the Parchami leader Babrak

Karmal as president. According to some sources, these events took place pursuant to decisions passed in secret meeting of PDPA's Central Committee and the Afghan Revolutionary Council.

Though the USSR favored Amin's removal from power, this does not mean it supported his execution. Actually "it seems clear" the USSR "did not want Amin to be killed."²⁸ It was aware that his execution would only serve Western propaganda.

The USSR sent massive troops to Afghanistan. It decisively helped Babrak Karmal's government to repel the counter-revolutionary offensive and to preserve the independence of the country.

The USSR's intervention conformed to the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty which concerned, inter alia, matters of defense. In fact, even before the removal of Amin there were thousands of Soviet military personnel in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the intervention took place and continued pursuant to a request made by the government in Kabul. As a legitimate government, the latter had the sovereign right to obtain military assistance from any friendly state.

The US had aimed to gain control of Afghanistan and turn it into a base for operations against the USSR and Iran. Its aims were frustrated when, with the decisive assistance of the USSR, progressive Afghans managed to salvage their revolution and independence.

Washington thus vehemently protested the Soviet intervention. In concert with its allies, it used the intervention as an excuse to promote cold war policies against the USSR.

The New Carter Doctrine

The Carter Doctrine or the "new" Carter Doctrine was Washington's response to the overall revolutionary developments in the western region of the Indian Ocean and in the Persian Gulf: the anti-imperialist changes in Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Iran, and the further consolidation of the revolutionary democratic regime in South Yemen.²⁹ Taking place in a region important both for its oil resources and strategic location, these developments were a serious setback to the neo-colonial system.

Even before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the US administration was leaning towards a belligerent course regarding the USSR and the anti-imperialist states, to abandoning the "low profile" approach of Andrew Young who had resigned his post in 1979. President Carter, who was campaigning for re-election, now declared that the Soviet "invasion" of Afghanistan was "the most serious threat to world peace since the Second World War."³⁰ He added that he had therefore changed his opinion about the USSR. All these statements were meant to preface

the official reversal of his erstwhile moderate image on questions of peace and detente.

In early 1980 Carter announced new steps, the substance of his "new" doctrine. In an interview with *Meet the Press* (on NBC television), he stated the basis of his "new" approach:

... I am still committed to peace—but peace through strength—and to letting the Soviets know in clear and certain way by action of our own country and other nations that they cannot invade an innocent country with impunity. They must suffer the consequences.³¹

The American president and the members of his cabinet reiterated that the Gulf area was "vital" to the "national interest" of the US. To contain the "Soviet" threat to this "national" interest, the president announced that

... We are increasing and will maintain an increased level of naval forces in the northern Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf region, and we are now exploring with some intensity the establishment of facilities for the servicing of our air and naval forces in the northern Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf region.³²

The underlying theme of Carter's "new" doctrine was that "US diplomacy rests on a credible display of military power."³³ This theme reflected an approach akin to that advocated by National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski.

To implement the "new" doctrine, the US administration launched several military projects in the Gulf area, the Indian Ocean, and the Horn of Africa. It increased the number of naval ships, equipment and personnel in the Indian Ocean; it "hurriedly expanded" the US base on the island of Diego Garcia; it moved to acquire "access to ports and airfield" in Kenya, Oman, and Somalia; it allocated millions of dollars to improve the Ras Benas air base in southern Egypt and scheduled "joint exercises" of US and Egyptian troops. These moves aimed at accelerating the "build up of an intervention corps" or the Rapid Deployment Force.³⁴

The Carter administration stepped up its activity against Afghanistan. It provided enormous material and propaganda support to the extreme reactionaries in the insurgency. At the same time, the media misrepresented the policies of the USSR and the Afghan regime.³⁵

The administration also intensified its activities against the anti-imperialist states in the region. It sought to destabilize several, mainly by exploiting the problems of nationalities and border disputes. Its hottest targets were Iran and Ethiopia.

Here, Washington acted in collusion with certain governments and

movements in the area. During the period in question, one of these governments was the Baathite regime of Iraq.

Iraq's Conspiracy with US Imperialism

The Baathite regime in Iraq had always been controversial. Some viewed it as bureaucratic bourgeois in character. Others regarded it as progressive, possessing the qualities of revolutionary democracy.

The controversy partly stemmed from the paradoxes in the overall policies of the regime. For example, while by and large anti-imperialist, the regime was unrelenting and cruel in suppressing the communists in the country.³⁶

In the mid-1970's the Iraqi regime appeared less consistent in its anti-imperialist stance. In the period after the Iranian revolution it even seemed to abandon anti-imperialism altogether. Headed by a new president, Saddam Hussein, the regime practically allied with Washington against several progressive movements and states in the region.

In 1980 a communique between the Tudeh party of Iran and the Communist Party of Iraq described Baghdad's foreign relations as follows:

In foreign policy Saddam Hussein has deviated from a policy of friendship and solidarity with socialist countries and true national liberation movements and has started co-operating with the regimes in the region such as: Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Oman, and Somalia. Also it participated in various intrigues against the Palestinian people's resistance movements, Ethiopia, POLISARIO, and Steadfastness Front which is composed of: Syria, Libya, Democratic Yemen, Algeria, and the PLO.³⁷

The degeneration of Iraq's foreign policy reflected the threat of the Iranian revolution to the ruling clique in Baghdad. Saddam Hussein's government had become uneasy about the seizure of power by the Shiite clerics in Iran. It feared that Imam Khomeini could inspire an opposition movement in Iraq itself where the Shiites constitute about 60% of the population. Saddam Hussein and other cardinal members of the ruling Baathite clique belong to the minority Sunni sect.

Thus, soon after the Shiite dominated government was established in Tehran, the Iraqi regime endeavored "to weaken the revolution of Iran."³⁸ It provided shelter and propaganda facilities to counter-revolutionary groups. It also sent "sabotage groups to Kurdistan of Iran and Khozistan."³⁹ The latter groups inspired demands and movements for the dismemberment of certain regions from Iran.

In September 1980, Iraq invaded Iranian territory using a long exist-

ing border dispute as the pretext. Full scale war broke out, resulting in colossal human and material losses for both countries.

An evident "characteristic" of the Iraqi invasion was "its harmony with the policy of US imperialism."⁴⁰ The invasion took place at a time when the US administration was threatening Iran over the American hostages in Tehran. Several facts indicate the US role in designing the Iraqi invasion of Iran. They also suggest that the objective was to bring about a situation in which the Khomeini regime could be overthrown.

It is known that, for some time before the invasion, certain Iranian counter-revolutionaries, including former generals of the Shah, were busy commuting between Washington, Baghdad, and other places. They were cooperating with authorities in Washington, organizing Iranian groups (including refugees) to overthrow the new regime in Tehran.⁴¹

Jordan and Saudi Arabia, close US allies, openly supported Iraq's war effort. The former provided military assistance while the latter took care of Iraq's financial needs. These two states in effect acted as proxies of Washington.

Moreover, US participation in the war was clearly discernible. Its AWACS planes operated from the airspace of Saudi Arabia. They monitored the movement of Iranian forces, gathering information considerably useful to the Iraqis.

Concerning the issues and problems in the Horn of Africa, the Iraqi regime modified its position bringing it in perfect harmony with the "new" Carter doctrine. The core of its new position was the objective of destabilizing the revolutionary democratic government in Ethiopia.

This was not to suggest that the Baathite regime in Iraq had been friendly to Ethiopia in the past. The point is that, since 1979-80, the regime's anti-Ethiopia policy became charged with anti-Sovietism and anti-communism.

Iraq thus joined the US in bolstering the Somali regime. It also took an active part in the implementation of US plans involving the Eritrean fronts and the Ethiopian "nationalist" movements.

The "New" Carter Doctrine Threatens Ethiopia

Among the Carter Doctrine's objectives the establishment of a military base in Somalia bore directly on Ethiopia.

In August 1980 Washington and Mogadisho concluded an accord on this matter. Soon after, the US government proceeded to install the military base at the Somali port of Berbera.

In return, the Somali regime received assistance from the US. The assistance included credits of millions of dollars for the purchase of "de-

fensive" arms.⁴² It also included the provision of lorries, "sophisticated communication equipment" and other "non-lethal equipment."⁴³

The US now took several other steps which were a threat to Ethiopia. These were the establishment of a base at the Kenyan port of Mombasa, the increase of military assistance to the Sudan, the supply of sophisticated weapons to Saudi Arabia, and the escalation of US military presence in North Yemen.

These were integral parts of the undertaking to build the Rapid Deployment Force. They constituted a virtual encirclement of Ethiopia and escalated the threat to other progressive states in the area. (See map on p. xiii.)

Simultaneously, the US set out to realize its plans on the fronts in Eritrea and the "nationalist" insurgents in Ethiopia. It heightened its support for the anti-Soviet forces in these movements.

The forces in collusion with US imperialism included the EPLF in Eritrea and the TPLF in northern Ethiopia. The EPLF had once again resumed parading as a "Marxist" organization. The TPLF also claimed to be "Marxist" and socialist-oriented.

The policy planners in Washington fully realized that "Marxist" or "socialist" was of no consequence as long as these movements were anti-Soviet.⁴⁴ Apparently they expected the labelling would hide the true character of these movements—at least for some time—and raise them above suspicion of American connections.

In its attempts to realize the aims of the "new" Carter Doctrine, Washington acted in concert with its surrogate states in the region and through the instrumentality of the internal reactionaries in Eritrea and Ethiopia. In addition to the "Marxist" EPLF and TPLF, the internal reactionaries included the sectarian factions in the ELF itself.

7

Anti-Soviet Hysteria: Assault of the ELF

In 1979-80 the ELF was the only Eritrean force practicing a progressive foreign policy. It maintained ties with the progressive governments and movements in the region as a whole. It strengthened its friendly relations with Syria, the PLO, and other anti-imperialist states and organizations in the Middle East.

ELF on Iran and Afghanistan

One of the ELF's new friends was Khomeini's regime in Tehran. The new Iranian regime held the ELF in high esteem. It offered the ELF a place of honor and an office in Tehran. It appears that Tehran's friendly attitude towards the ELF was based on several considerations. One was Khomeini's desire to support what he thought was a struggle of Moslems in Eritrea.¹

A major consideration however was to pay tribute to ELF's history of solidarity with the anti-Shah resistance of the Iranian people. An episode to recall in this connection was ELF's refusal to accept assistance from the Shah. Sometime after the overthrow of Haile Sellassie, the Shah had offered material help to the various Eritrean organizations. While some accepted, the ELF rejected his offer and condemned his oppressive and reactionary policies.

Progressive Iranians were aware of ELF's solidarity. The regime of Ayatollah Khomeini also recognized this. It regarded the ELF as an anti-imperialist, or more probably an "anti-American" movement. It appointed the ELF to the Commission investigating American crimes in Iran.

Like many others in the progressive world at that time, the ELF supported Khomeini's regime which it found patriotic and anti-imperialist. On other important issues of the time, the ELF also maintained progressive stands. One such issue was the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The ELF was aware of Washington's hue and cry about Afghanistan and declared them a smokescreen for imperialist moves in the general region including Eritrea. Expressing this view, ELF Chairman Ahmed Nasser said:

It is an open secret that after the events in Afghanistan for instance, the Red Sea zone and the Middle East region as a whole became the focus of attention in the global political activities. The American moves in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula and the surrounding region are too obvious to recount here. One can easily deduce that the Eritrean Revolution is one of the significant elements in the developments. In other words, the imperialist circles have their calculations and projects on us. *This is why we face big responsibilities in the struggle to safeguard our national interests on one hand and promote goals of world national liberation movements in general.*² (emphasis added)

Because of its positions on such issues and its openly expressed sense of alliance with the USSR, the ELF earned the hostility of most Middle Eastern states. Several of these states had been its supporters in the past. Now they either switched their policies or heightened their anti-Sovietism and became allied with Washington. Notable among them was Iraq.

After the Iranian revolution, Iraq increasingly resented ELF's anti-imperialist policy and particularly its friendly regard for the Soviet Union. This in itself indicated the change in Iraq's policy towards the USSR. As several Western analysts put it:

... Now, as their own relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated sharply, the Iraqis were growing restless about what they saw as the increasingly Soviet Marxist line of the ELF.³

Of course this applied only to the progressive wing, the mainstream of the ELF—not to Abdullah's groups.

EPLF's Mideast Policy and Relations

Contrary to the ELF, the anti-Soviet EPLF established operative re-

lations with US allies in the Middle East, extensions of its ties with Washington. On prominent issues the EPLF expressed positions consistent with the policy of US imperialism. For example, it supported the US propaganda effort against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The support was expressed in the form of remarks by EPLF leaders and cadres. Here are a few examples.

Commenting on an alleged contact between the ELF and Ethiopia under the auspices of the USSR in early 1980 an EPLF leader said:

The apparent Soviet and Ethiopian gestures toward the ELF (are) part of a broader political offensive "closely related to the problem in Afghanistan."⁴

("Broader political offensive" was suggestive of EPLF's adamant opposition to Soviet policy in the region.)

A condemnation of the Soviet role in Afghanistan was also implied in a work by Bereketeab Habte Sellasie, EPLF's most prominent propagandist in Washington. In his *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, Bereketeab touched on the Afghan story. Discussing pronouncements by Ethiopia's Mengistu Haile Mariam which expressed an unusually mild attitude on Eritrea and friendly overtures towards the Sudan, Bereketeab said:

The shift reflects Mengistu's anxiety over Eritrea, and perhaps also events in Afghanistan, which show what happens when a nationalist leader is disliked by the Soviet Union.⁵ (emphasis added)

This statement contained the essentials of the lies Washington spread on this issue. It asserted that the USSR invaded Afghanistan. It charged the USSR with eliminating Amin, suggesting that he had refused to play a servile role for Moscow.

It is significant that several Western supporters of the EPLF also engaged in anti-Soviet propaganda on Afghanistan. One was Gerard Chaliand.

Chaliand had lauded the EPLF. At one time he even said, "after the Vietnamese the EPLF is probably the most impressive group I've seen."⁶ But this French journalist was also impressed by the counter-revolutionary insurgents in Afghanistan. He condemned the Soviet intervention, contending it was meant to secure "territorial continuity which has always dictated Soviet advances."⁷

The most notorious of the pro-EPLF reporters in the West was Dan Connel. Connel, who portrayed himself as a "Marxist-Leninist,"⁸ played a considerable role in promoting anti-Soviet designs in the Horn of Africa. He too condemned Soviet intervention in general as being "against" the interests of the Afghan people.⁹ He praised the counter-revo-

lutionary insurgency as a "national movement" aimed at repelling "the external threat to the Afghan nation."¹⁰

Likewise, those quarters arming and otherwise assisting the counter-revolutionary Afghan rebels also rendered maternal assistance to the EPLF. Foremost among these was the US whose CIA is said to have been "forwarding covert and overt assistance and encouragement to the EPLF."¹¹ Others included Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, and other US allies and surrogates in the Middle East.

Egypt supplied the EPLF with Soviet-made weapons it had acquired when it enjoyed good relations with the USSR.¹² It provided them to the EPLF pursuant to an understanding with Washington on this matter.

The Baathite government of Iraq, formerly abused in the EPLF media, now provided material support, including pharmaceutical and medical assistance. In 1980, Iraqi transport planes were to fly wounded EPLF fighters from Kassala, Sudan, to Baghdad for treatment.

The Saudis, restrictive of EPLF activities in earlier years, now came to its side. They now allowed the EPLF to operate freely in the country, raising funds for anti-Soviet crusade. The Saudi monarchy also provided financial assistance.

The Sudan, western gateway to Eritrea and Ethiopia, played a key role affecting the forces in the Eritrean movement. Discriminating against the ELF, it restricted its activities and movements while allowing the EPLF and other anti-Soviet groups to operate. The Nimeiri regime impeded the transportation of ELF's arms and other material equipment from Port Sudan to Eritrea.

The US allies in the Middle East also assisted the other anti-Soviet Eritrean groups. Iraq provided support to all groups but the ELF. It supported Osman Ajib's ELF-PLF (RC) and Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF. It even assisted, or in the words of the Western media, provided "diplomatic backing," to EDM leader Heroui Tedla Bairu.¹³

Anti-ELF Writings Proliferate in the West

Towards the end of 1979, writings on the Eritrean movement began to proliferate in the West. These works were undertaken by the propaganda arms of the Western establishments, their "left" collaborators, and other reactionaries.

As scholars noted, these writings focused mainly on the EPLF. They ignored the importance of and, in due course, even the existence of the ELF.¹⁴ As can be inferred even from earlier works by EPLF supporters,¹⁵ this reflected that the EPLF was in the service of Western powers.

In 1980 alone, several books appeared in the US, the United Kingdom, and other countries in the West.¹⁶ Most included little original of

incisive material. They rather attacked Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa and supported the anti-ELF charges of the EPLF.

Western periodicals carried frequent reports on Eritrea. One of the best known of such periodicals was the London based *Africa Confidential*. Evidently the *Confidential* had access to inside information on the Eritrean fronts. It could publish facts unavailable to other periodicals. At the same time, it interspersed such facts with anti-Soviet and anti-ELF accusations.

Several of the periodicals similarly engaged were overtly right-wing and anti-communist. These included *Problems of Communism*, an official publication of the United States Information Agency in Washington, D.C. This carried several works, including one in the form of a book review, promoting the EPLF as a "progressive" organization.¹⁷

Essentially the same propaganda was also purveyed by ultra-left organizations in the West, including the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA (RCP-USA).¹⁸

Two other magazines conducting pro-EPLF propaganda were the "*Horn of Africa*" journal which was "ideologically . . . uncommitted" and the *Guardian* of New York which claimed to be radical or left and "independent".¹⁹

In spite of its claim, *Horn of Africa* is primarily a forum for anti-Soviet propaganda on issues pertaining to the Horn and the general region. It was launched when Washington resolved to "challenge" the influence of the USSR in the Horn and elsewhere in the developing world. Many suspect that this "ideologically uncommitted" journal has the backing of some quarters in the US establishment.

The Journal's Editorial Board and the list of its "contributing editors" included activists of the EPLF, elements from the overthrown Ethiopian feudo-bourgeoisie, a few Somalis opposed to Soviet "social imperialism,"²⁰ and a Sudanese affiliated with such organizations as the Rockefeller Foundation in New York and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Princeton, New Jersey.²¹ Several of those on the journal's editorial staff are regular contributors of articles and reviews. Other contributors included American and British scholars with experience in Ethiopia during the reign of Haile Sellassie.

Part of the journal's objective is to widen the circulation of anti-Soviet and anti-Ethiopia articles published in other periodicals. The journal has reprinted such articles from liberal US magazines like the *New Republic*,²² from US establishment propaganda publications like *Africa Report*,²³ and from neo-Marxist and new left publications like the *Socialist Register*.²⁴

On the Ethiopian revolution the position of the *Guardian* of New

York has been by and large reactionary. This "independent" "radical" paper, which takes progressive and decent positions on many other issues, effectively denied the revolutionary character of the new regime. It backed the "left" opposition groups as well as the counter-revolutionaries disguised as "nationalist" movements. Beginning in the mid-seventies it fanned the divisions within the Eritrean movement. It fully endorsed the claims and sectarian policies of the EPLF, the "vanguard of the Eritrean revolution."²⁵ It became an effective participant in the campaign against the ELF. After the events in Afghanistan, the *Guardian* heightened its anti-ELF campaign.

The *Guardian* became a forum for some free-lancers whose reports and articles — couched in leftist terminology — were in effect adverse to the cause of peace and progress. Prominent among them was Dan Connel, already mentioned in connection with his views on Afghanistan.

Beginning in 1976, Dan Connel wrote extensively on the Eritrean movement. He described himself as a free-lance journalist.

On the pretext of preparing a book on "the sources"²⁶ of the Eritrean conflict, Dan Connel deepened his involvement in the Eritrean movement. He became most intimate with the EPLF leadership. In fact, according to a former EPLF insider, Dan Connel "lived with the EPLF leaders in the Sudan and sometimes in Eritrea . . . and shares all their secrets . . ."²⁷

Former EPLF fighters seem to believe Dan Connel was one of EPLF's links with the US.²⁸ It is said however that Connel denied having ever played such a role. He only stated on some occasions that he consulted and relied on US intelligence reports in Khartoum to which, it seems, he had an easy access.²⁹

Connel claimed he was anti-imperialist progressive. In one of his articles he emphasized his support for "the struggle against imperialism and revisionism."³⁰

As a "Marxist-Leninist," Connel condemned the Soviet role in Afghanistan. He assailed the leaders of revolutionary Afghanistan as "opportunists"³¹ who chose "to ally themselves with the Soviet Union against their own people."³² It was also as a "Marxist-Leninist" that he joined the EPLF in the campaign against the ELF, against the Ethiopian revolution, and against Soviet policy in the Horn.

Given the sharpness of their anti-Sovietism, Dan Connel's writings were more than agreeable to the Western media. His "eyewitness reports" appeared frequently in the *Washington Post*, the *Financial Times*, the *New Statesman*, the *Miami Herald* and many others. A few of them were also published in liberal magazines like *The Nation*. Connel also

wrote for *Horn of Africa*, which he finally joined as a contributing editor. He also reported for the BBC and Reuters.

Several others also reported "facts." A few wrote for the *Guardian* and were close to Dan Connel. Apparently they too were "Marxist-Leninists."

The various books, periodicals and newspapers portrayed the ELF inconsistently. Most included pieces designed to isolate the ELF from sections of the Eritrean people and its supporters in the region. They appealed to groups and interests which were different and, in some cases, antagonistic.

Some depicted the ELF as a "nationalist movement." They portrayed it as a military organization uninvolved with progressive ideological, educational, cultural, economic, and other activities.³³ Others could not deny the ELF had a declared goal of socialism but qualified it as "Pan Arabic" and "Pan Islamic."³⁴

A few admitted the ELF was engaged in reform activities, acknowledging the existence of mass organizations. But they belittled these achievements, asserting that the mass organizations were established "in response to the EPLF initiative."³⁵

Beginning in early 1980, anti-ELF reports became clearly intertwined with opposition to Soviet "presence" in the Horn. The new theme was that the "pro-soviet" ELF was taking steps traitorous to the cause of Eritrea's "independence." Specifically, reports charged that the ELF would negotiate with the Ethiopian regime and the USSR and settle for regional autonomy.

Prior to the escalation of this theme, and apparently as a prelude, "free-lance journalists" had emphasized the similarities in the political lines of the ELF and the Ethiopian regime.

ELF's "Similarity" with PMAC Stressed

In an article entitled "Eritrea: An Intersection of Ideologies,"³⁶ Dan Connel devoted several paragraphs to the similarities. He stressed that both the ELF and the PMAC were "opportunists" and "revisionists" serving the interest of what he elsewhere termed "Soviet domination."

Connel dwelt on the point that both the ELF and the PMAC embraced the theory of the non-capitalist road, which he attacked much in the same way that neo-colonialist ideologists had for a long time. He spoke from the standpoint of anti-Sovietism. The non-capitalist road, he said:

is not so much a political theory as it is a rationale after the fact for a Soviet-dominated united front against the United States.³⁷

In this light, Connel denied the theory was rooted in Marxism-Leninism. He asserted that it originated in the Soviet Union "in the 1950's."³⁸ He sought to discredit its validity saying it had failed anywhere it was tried. He cited "Nasser's Egypt, Siad Barre's Somalia, and Jaffer Nimeri's Sudan"³⁹ as the "classic examples"⁴⁰ of the non-capitalist experience in Africa. He made no mention of the formerly backward nationalities in the USSR, Mongolia, Vietnam, North Korea, and other countries where the theory of the non-capitalist road has been vindicated.

Connel found the theory "revisionist." He implied the ELF and the PMAC were "revisionist" as they embraced this theory in 1971 and 1976 respectively. It appears Connel feared the characterization "revisionist" was not demeaning enough to the ELF and the PMAC. Perhaps charges of his "revisionism" even enhance the prestige of the ELF and the PMAC among truly Marxist circles, which accept the theory of the non-capitalist road.

Connel thus included an alternative argument essentially contending the ELF and PMAC were not "genuinely revisionist":

Neither the ELF nor the Derg are genuinely revisionist, in the sense that neither is a proletarian Marxist-Leninist force which arrived at their present political line through deviations. Instead both petty bourgeois forces adopted the "non-capitalist" line from outside and grafted it on to their pre-existing political strategies.⁴¹

The bottom line of Connel's argument on this issue was his objection to the fact that, in accordance with the theory of the non-capitalist path, the ELF and the PMAC regarded the USSR as a strategic ally.

Dan Connel's attacks on the ELF have been particularly severe. In several other articles he implied it was particularly ridiculous for the ELF to continue adhering to the theory of the non-capitalist path. Typical of his statements with such implications was the following:

... The ELF is guided by the pro-Soviet line of "non-capitalist development" despite the role of the USSR on the Ethiopian side.⁴²(emphasis added)

Connel's denunciation of the theory as a "rationale" for "Soviet domination" was shared by EPLF leaders. Isayas Afewerki had unequivocally condemned the non-capitalist path as "propaganda" of the USSR.⁴³

At the same time, Connel pointed out the similar "anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and anti-feudal stands"⁴⁴ of the ELF and the PMAC. But, he alleged the ELF and the PMAC proclaimed them "as they moved to crush the working class movement in their countries."⁴⁵ Furthermore Connel noted that both the ELF and the PMAC "established mass asso-

ciations of youth, women, peasants and workers."⁴⁶ He also acknowledged they both "armed civilian militias."⁴⁷ But, he flatly asserted "there was no class content to either the ELF's or the Derg's mass mobilizations."⁴⁸

On the basis of such similarities Connel declared, "the ELF has proved to be little different from the Derg."⁴⁹

Connel praised the EPLF as the vanguard organization in Eritrea. It was a "revolutionary movement guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology and a strategy of self-reliant protracted people's war,"⁵⁰ a movement opposed to the USSR's "revisionist" theories and adhering to "New Democracy" as expounded by Mao Ze Dong.

Connel's arguments likening the ELF to the PMAC were meant to isolate the ELF, based on the assumption that the Eritrean people distrusted and disliked the Ethiopian regime. Still, his charges contained important truths. They reflected the awareness in the West that the large segment of the ELF was a genuine Marxist-oriented movement and that this segment was gaining acceptance in the socialist community. They reflected the West's fear that the ELF was indeed similar to the PMAC and would not flinch from its stand against imperialism.

In 1980 some Western writers stated these truths more explicitly. One described the ELF as "the Marxist" organization in Eritrea while designating the EPLF and the ELF-PLF as "Christian" and "conservative" respectively.⁵¹ He pointed out "there had been a Marxist-Leninist influence inside the ELF for some time,"⁵² which had grown so much that the ELF leadership was preparing to establish a "communist party."⁵³

Other writers (in 1980) were more concerned with the socialist community's view of the ELF. One implied that the USSR and other socialist states regarded the ELF as "the most doctrinaire Marxist of the Eritrean groups."⁵⁴

Charges of ELF-Ethiopia Negotiation

Much of the above discussions, particularly Connel's attacks, accompanied reports in early 1980 of the ELF's alleged moves for separate negotiations with Ethiopia. There were at least two slightly different versions of what took place in the said negotiations.

One asserted that, under Soviet auspices, contacts were made between the ELF and the PMAC aiming at a "federal solution for Eritrea."⁵⁵ This version added that "the good offices"⁵⁶ of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) were used in the process.

The other version claimed that talks were held in Rome between an ELF delegation and the Italian Communist Party, concerning the estab-

lishment of an "official Eritrean Communist Party"⁵⁷ in the ELF. The party "would be recognized"⁵⁸ by the Italian party, other communist parties, and by the USSR and Ethiopia, and would then negotiate for a solution of the Eritrean problem along the lines of federation or regional autonomy.

Whatever their differences, all versions agreed on the basic objective: the ELF had apparently dropped the idea of a separate Eritrean state in favor of a status short of "independence." Further, Western news services and right wing Arab states attributed murderous plans to the ELF: to proceed with the negotiations, the ELF had resolved to annihilate the EPLF and others in the Eritrean movement.⁵⁹

Charges of a separate ELF deal with Ethiopia and an anti-EPLF conspiracy were baseless. According to objective followers of Eritrean events, including those in the movement itself, these charges could not be substantiated. The ELF also categorically denied them.

It is true that the progressive segment of the ELF leadership then favored a negotiated settlement. It is also true that the USSR, other socialist states and communist parties were urging the ELF to consider federation or regional autonomy as a basis for negotiations. The ELF leadership contacted the prominent EPLF leaders on this matter, proposing ideas about a negotiated settlement to them. But EPLF leaders rejected the proposals.

Though significant, the above facts were not proof of the charges about the ELF conspiring with Ethiopia or any other state. In themselves they were not of considerable use to the enemies and detractors of the ELF. The latter finally found an issue they could exploit to promote their views. This was the visit to Moscow by ELF Chairman Ahmed Nasser in early 1980.

False Charges After the "Moscow Visit"

Anti-ELF propaganda in the West and the Arab world raised a hue and cry over this visit. They called it an act of betrayal, a confirmation of all the charges made against the ELF, proof of ELF's conspiracy with Ethiopia and the USSR to liquidate the EPLF.

The ELF exposed and condemned the outcry, but made no secret of its diplomatic activities in the progressive world. It proudly admitted having had relations with various communist parties, including the Italian party. It acknowledged that its delegations had visited Moscow and conferred with CPSU leaders.

Referring to these diplomatic activities, especially the visit to the USSR, Ahmed Nasser stated:

An ELF delegation headed by myself held discussions with the USSR officials in Moscow between January 29 and February 1. We were there on an official invitation to explain our viewpoint concerning the regime in Ethiopia and the situation in Eritrea. By the way, this is a normal task in our everyday contacts with all progressive and anti-imperialist forces in the world which are willing to listen to our point of view. I say this because some quarters are trying to rouse some hullabaloo around the visit itself. But who has the right to question our political contacts? I again say that readiness on the part of others to listen to our viewpoint is positive by itself.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, now going beyond previous allegations, the EPLF and its supporters charged that the ELF had ceased military hostilities with Ethiopia. In the words of Dan Connel, "the ELF had avoided direct contacts with Ethiopian forces."⁶¹

To support this charge, Dan Connel and others cited the withdrawal of ELF forces from certain areas of Sahel, where the EPLF and the ELF had agreed to cooperate. Actually the withdrawal had nothing to do with ELF's attitude towards Ethiopia. It was made because the EPLF kept provoking disputes and quarrels, rendering military cooperation practically impossible.

Another accusation held that the ELF sought an all-out military confrontation with the EPLF and TPLF and that it initiated military clashes with both. The Western media claimed the ELF instigated the military clashes because it was threatened by the alliance of the EPLF and TPLF. *Africa Confidential* stated the ELF felt it might be "isolated" and "overshadowed" by the EPLF-TPLF alliance.⁶²

There were military clashes. But they were invariably provoked by the EPLF-TPLF alliance, then preparing an offensive to be launched against the ELF in September 1980.

Concerning this matter, Western reporters contradicted themselves on some issues. For example, while alleging in early 1980 that the ELF was attacking the EPLF and TPLF, many of the reporters declared the ELF membership had dwindled to an insignificant size. Dan Connel, who accused the ELF of provoking clashes, emphasized ELF's "physical shrinkage to a minor military force."⁶³

Earlier, *Africa Confidential* had publicized an estimate of ELF's and EPLF's numerical strengths. It stated the ELF "is now said to number less than 4000 men in roving guerilla bands" while "the main EPLF forces still number between 25,000 and 30,000 fighters."⁶⁴

Some "facts" were invented to account for the dramatic "physical shrinkage" of the ELF. A typical statement by Dan Connel appeared in the *Financial Times*:

The ELF has suffered large scale defections both to the EPLF and the Ethiopian government since early this year (1980). According to Mr. Sebhat (Efrem) more than 1400 ELF members have deserted to Ethiopia and 830 have joined the EPLF since January, while an unknown number have fled to neighboring Sudan.⁶⁵

The talk about ELF's "physical shrinkage" in early 1980 was untrue. In this period the ELF and the EPLF were equal in size. True, ELF fighters deserted to the Ethiopian government and to the Sudan but they were not as numerous as Connel claimed. More importantly, they were not the only ones to desert the armed movement. There were as many, perhaps more, from the EPLF as well.

The dissemination of "facts" was part of the psychological warfare waged against the ELF. In addition to misinforming the Eritrean people, it aimed at disheartening the followers of the ELF and leading them to consider switching sides to the EPLF.

"Facts" portraying the ELF as an obstacle to progressive socio-economic reforms also came to light. In the summer of 1980, it was held, the ELF objected to EPLF land reform moves.

Again the truth was quite the contrary: the EPLF obstructed the implementation of ELF land reform projects. It actually threatened military action if the ELF went ahead with the projects. The EPLF had feared the implementation of the reform would further strengthen ELF's position in society, particularly among the peasantry. Eager to avoid charges of obstructing land reform, the EPLF hurried to shift blame to the ELF.

Growth of the Anti-Soviet Alliance in the Horn

While campaigning to isolate the ELF, the Western media promoted the growing relations between the anti-Soviet forces in the Horn, especially between the EPLF and the TPLF.

The new books on Eritrea which appeared in the West promoted the TPLF and its intimate relationship with the EPLF. One of these, Bereketab Habte Sellassie's book, even supported TPLF's territorial claims against the ELF. It included a map showing southwestern Eritrean regions within Tigrai territory.⁶⁶

Western periodicals gave supportive coverage to the "growing alliance between the EPLF and TPLF." They acknowledged that opposition to Soviet policy was the basis of this alliance. *Africa Confidential* emphasized

the similarities in the political line of the EPLF and TPLF—both strongly critical of the Soviet Union's intervention in Ethiopia and both in favour of a non-aligned Marxist policy of independent economic and social development . . .⁶⁷

Some on the "left" in the West also supported the alliance, stressing the EPLF had more in common with the TPLF than with the ELF. They cited, among other things, the common approach of the EPLF and TPLF toward the Ethiopian régime. In his many reports supporting this alliance, Dan Connel emphasized that

The TPLF, like the EPLF, characterizes the self-proclaimed "Socialist" Ethiopian junta as "fascist."⁶⁸

The Western press highlighted the contention between the EPLF and the ELF, blaming ELF's progressive positions on the USSR and the Ethiopian Revolution. Thus, *Africa Confidential* stated that one of the factors spawning the dispute was

the ELF's refusal to label the Ethiopian dergue "fascist" or to criticize the Soviet Union publicly for its role in the Eritrean war . . .⁶⁹

Likewise the *Guardian* stressed the difference between the ELF and the EPLF on these questions. Its reports implied this difference was the cause of the disputes and the impending internecine conflicts. In late 1980 one such report stated:

In recent months, differences in the EPLF's and ELF's characterization of both the Ethiopian régime and the Soviet role there have become important points of contention.⁷⁰

The US and its allies hoped the unity of the EPLF and TPLF would be the inception of a wider alliance of anti-Soviet movements in the Horn. They endeavored to form an alliance of the EPLF, TPLF, Somalia, the WSLF, and possibly the OLF and MEISON.

Washington and its allies strove to expedite the formation of this alliance. Their media reported on its development. In May 1980, *Africa Confidential* stated:

There are signs of tactical alliance between the EPLF and representatives of other non-Amhara and non-Eritrean peoples in the various parts of Ethiopia.⁷¹

It continued:

There are also signs of a tactical alliance between the EPLF and other left-wing movements formerly based in Addis Ababa.⁷²

The best known of these "left-wing movements" was the remnant of MEISON which *Confidential* said "has also made efforts to set up relations with the EPLF in Eritrea."⁷³

Other Western journalists encouraged and reported on the burgeoning relations between the EPLF and Somalia. Dan Connel wrote:

... In June (1980) . . . the Marxist led Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) opened a permanent office in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu.⁷⁴

EPLF's "permanent" presence in Somalia was also a clear sign of the "developing ties" between the EPLF and the WSLF which was an anti-Soviet movement with strong inclinations toward Islamic fundamentalism.⁷⁵ Most of the WSLF leaders were avowedly right wing.⁷⁶

The move to form the anti-Soviet front in the Horn was accompanied by the escalation of reportage charging the USSR with crimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Lies About Chemical Weapons

In the year 1980 some organizations and reporters in the West charged that the USSR violated basic rules of war by using chemical weapons in Eritrea.

One of these organizations was the "Research and Information Centre on Eritrea" (RICE). RICE described itself as "an independent organization of European progressives which works closely with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)."⁷⁷ This Rome-based organization acted as a propaganda arm of the EPLF, run in part by European and American personnel.

In March 1980, RICE wrote a lengthy article in the *Guardian* of New York entitled "Eritrea needs support against Soviets." It charged:

When observing the methods of warfare employed by the Soviet superpower, we find a close imitation of the horrible US "achievements" in Vietnam. Napalm and fragmentation bombs have been introduced anew, and are systematically thrown on towns and villages to obtain the Eritrean people's surrender.

Defoliants have been spread above the highlands to destroy the crops and deprive both the guerilla fighters and the peasant population of food. This chemical warfare—10 years ago condemned by the UN at the initiative of the Soviet Union—has caused tremendous losses, both human and material.⁷⁸

RICE's allegation were unfounded. Objective sources, Eritrean or otherwise, found no confirmation.

In the early summer of 1980 Don Connel and others in the Western media carried this falsehood further. Connel alleged that "lethal gas (was) used in Eritrea":

The gas said to be in Eritrea is a lethal agent which reportedly kills upon direct contact within two minutes. It can be delivered by artillery shells, rockets or missiles, and is capable of lingering up to four weeks after initial contact.

The symptoms are intense sweating, bronchial congestion, uncontrollable vomiting, convulsions, paralysis and respiratory failure. Death is due to suffocation.⁷⁹

Connel and other reporters offered no evidence showing the supply of the lethal gas by the USSR, let alone the actual use of it by Ethiopia. In most cases they attributed their "facts" to Eritreans unlikely to know anything about the subject. For example, in the above report, Connel wrote:

Eritrean refugees reaching neighboring Sudan claim that the Soviet arms shipments include a deadly nerve gas, for which there is no known antidote.⁸⁰

In all probability no refugees reaching the Sudan ever made such claims. In fact such refugees were unlikely to know what Soviet shipments were being made to Ethiopia. They were not among those who had access to information on the details of Ethiopia's arsenal. They had no expertise to opine on the characteristics of a "nerve gas" and its antidote.

Military cadres in the ranks of the ELF saw no evidence pointing to the use of lethal gas. They did not endorse the claim that the USSR supplied such gas to Ethiopia. Also, objective observers of Ethio-Eritrean events rejected the nerve gas story. They believed Ethiopia needed no lethal gas. After all, they noted, Ethiopian forces were doing increasingly well using only conventional weapons.

The ultimate authors of the lethal gas propaganda were the Western circles (particularly those in Washington) representing the military industrial complex. They invented the story as a further justification for undertaking the manufacture of chemical weapons. Such propaganda on chemical weapons was not new. By 1980 it had become a familiar item in the Western media. It had already been directed against the USSR and Vietnam, charging them with the use of nerve gas in Afghanistan and Kampuchea respectively.

The EPLF and its global supporters had hoped the nerve gas story would be effective and beneficial. They had expected the story would alarm Eritreans and impel more to join or support the EPLF. They had also imagined it would horrify the Ethiopian people, many of whom painfully remembered the poison gas Italian fascists used in 1936.

Through the so called Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), the EPLF spread the nerve gas propaganda worldwide. The ERA is a Khartoum-based agency of the EPLF. It is actually EPLF's main link with "charity" organizations of the West, including those which front for intelligence operations.

The ERA raised the issue of lethal gas in various international organizations. With reference to ERA's lobbies, Dan Connel wrote:

Officials of the Sudan-based Eritrean Relief Association have appealed to the UN and the International Committee for the Red Cross to block the introduction of the gas in the Eritrean war.⁸¹

Moreover, the EPLF organized anti-Soviet demonstrations on this false issue. In July 1980 the ERA, together with some other groups, sponsored a demonstration at UN Plaza in New York City. The demonstration called upon the UN

... to denounce the stockpiling and possible use of nerve gas and to condemn all new preparations by the Soviet-backed Ethiopian government against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).⁸²

At that time, several EPLF leaders and officials made repeated visits to the US, staying primarily in Washington and New York. Prominent among them were Amde Micael Kahsai (member of the Central Committee and the Politburo) and Ande Berhan Wolde Giorgis (alternate member of the Central Committee). Another notable visitor was ERA Chairman Paulos Tesfa Giorgis, whose mission included the dissemination of the "nerve gas" story and promoting the public protests at the UN Plaza.

Of course, no ELF leaders or officials visited the US. In fact none of them could have made such a visit. This was amply demonstrated in the ordeal of an ELF political cadre who was repeatedly denied entry at the airport of Boston (1979) and Washington, D.C. (1980) though he was holding a valid tourist visa.

In addition to EPLF leaders and officials, TPLF representatives were also visiting the US. In most cases they came as members of the EPLF entourages.

When EPLF leader Amde Micael Kahsai visited Washington and New York in the summer of 1980 he was accompanied by a TPLF representative. Amde Micael and his TPLF colleague lobbied practically as one delegation. They attended the annual convention of EPLF supporters in North America and denounced the ELF. Addressing the convention, the TPLF representative condemned the "counter-revolutionary" ELF, saying it engaged in a separate deal with the Ethiopian regime and the USSR. On his part EPLF leader Amde Micael stressed the same charges and flatly denied the possibility of his organization ever uniting with the ELF.

US Agencies Airlift Eritrean Refugees

In the summer of 1980 some "humanitarian" organizations in the

US set out to demonstrate their "concern" for Eritrean refugees. The best known was the International Rescue Committee (IRC) whose headquarters are in New York city.

Bearing an innocent name, the IRC is actually a right-wing political organization. Specifically, it is an anti-communist organization operating mainly in connection with refugees from socialist and other progressive states. Its activities include intelligence operations.

The IRC is known to have operational ties with the intelligence networks in the US. "Over the years," this organization has "worked closely with the CIA in certain programs involving refugees."⁸³ It was implicated in CIA destabilization operation in many progressive states, including Allende's Chile.

It appears the IRC is highly esteemed in US intelligence circles. It is the institution upon which some notable US figures built their intelligence careers. One such figure is William J. Casey, CIA Director in the Reagan administration. Apparently one of the credentials which qualified Casey for the CIA directorship was that in 1966-71 he was "president and executive committee chairman"⁸⁴ of the IRC.

Since 1951, the IRC has been headed by Leo Cherne, an "old friend" of William Casey. Cherne is known for his ties with the CIA and involvement in "intelligence connected activity."⁸⁵

Besides the IRC, other organizations were involved in the rescue of Eritrean (and Ethiopian) refugees. Some posed as affiliates of churches and other religious institutions. They expressed concern for refugees as a matter of Christian "charity." In reality, they advanced the same objectives and interests as the IRC.

The plight of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan was not a sudden development in 1980. It had started towards the end of the sixties when the influx of the refugees actually began. It was accentuated by the escalation of the Ethio-Eritrean war in 1975.

The IRC and other "humanitarian" organizations were not concerned about Eritrean refugees during the reign of Haile Selassie and, for that matter, in the very early years of the PMAC. In 1980, while airlifting Eritrean refugees, they ignored the plight of other refugees whose governments were puppets of the US. For example they were unconcerned about Haitian refugees deported from the US or suffering incarceration at prison camps in Florida.

The airlift of the refugees was thus part of the overall anti-Soviet design on the Horn and particularly on Eritrea. It was meant to embellish the image of the US in the eyes of Eritreans; it was intended to give a humane face to Washington and contrast it with Moscow, which was "shipping nerve gas" to Ethiopia.

The US was not the only country accepting Eritrean refugees in this period. Some Western European states also opened their doors to the refugees. The Federal Republic of Germany granted entry to practically anyone carrying any document which was purportedly an Ethiopian passport. France too accepted a considerable number of Eritreans, many of whom were subsequently assisted by the IRC to proceed to the USA.

It was correct to provide humane assistance to refugees, whether they were Haitians fleeing the neo-colonial regime of Duvalier or Eritreans caught up in the problems of a developing progressive regime. But actually the airlifting of Eritrean refugees was conceived in 1979-80 for the purpose of fighting communism. It was an effort to exploit a humanitarian problem for anti-Soviet goals. It was meant to serve and actually did serve to mask the preparations for launching an assault on the ELF.

Military Offensive Against the ELF

On the 28th of August 1980 the various anti-Soviet forces made a concerted effort to encircle and crush the ELF. A united force of the EPLF and TPLF attacked ELF units in the northern province of Sahel. A large division of the TPLF set out to invade the ELF in the southwestern region of Eritrea. It is also said that some of the forces of the splinter groups were prepared to attack the ELF from the border areas of the Sudan.

In the course of the battles the forces of the EPLF and TPLF committed brutal atrocities. They ransacked the clinics of the ELF in Sahel and killed those who were seriously ill. From ELF prisoners they took large amounts of blood for transfusions for wounded EPLF fighters. Several of the ELF fighters died as a result.⁸⁶

The battles were some of the most ferocious and deadly ever fought in Eritrea. They involved the use of the heaviest artilleries the fronts had in their arsenals.

Despite valiant resistance, however, the ELF gradually lost territory to the EPLF and TPLF. This was because, in addition to being assaulted by the huge united force of the EPLF and TPLF, it was being internally undermined by the clandestine groups headed by Abdullah Idris which were in the service of Washington, much like the EPLF and TPLF.

Though a small minority, they had affected some of ELF's operations. They even induced the publication of reactionary propaganda in some ELF literature. This included occasional references to the Ethiopian regime as "fascist," a few reports advancing the nerve gas charge, and remarks denying that Ethiopia was militarily encircled by imperialism.

Abdullah Idris himself is known to have favored these endeavors. In casual conversations with ELF followers in Khartoum, he indicated his displeasure with the view that the USSR was a strategic ally of the Eritrean revolution.⁸⁷

Abdullah's groups had their own project for the ELF: to weaken and liquidate the progressive wing and reduce the ELF to an organization of Moslem lowlanders. They anticipated the substitution of the national democratic program with a regionalist solution, including the possible severing of the western region from the rest of Eritrea.

It seems that, like the EPLF-TPLF alliance, the agenda of Abdullah's groups had the backing of imperialism. Like the EPLF-TPLF alliance, it was consistent with the long range plan of partitioning Eritrea—a plan advocated by John Spencer in 1977.

To them, the clear emergence of the EPLF-TPLF alliance was a blessing, a union of Tigrigna speaking Christians. It provided a pretext for mobilizing sectarian forces and pursuing regionalist goals.

In their official roles the members of these cliques avowed concern for the unity of Eritrea and opposition to the EPLF-TPLF alliance. But, in less guarded circumstances, it was clear they cared little for the unity of Eritrea and were not disturbed by the alliance of the "Christians." In some instances, even Abdullah Idris could not pretend to regret the emergence of the EPLF-TPLF alliance.⁸⁸

In the battles with the EPLF-TPLF alliance, Abdullah and his associates in the military bureau sought to weaken and demoralize the ELF fighters. They instructed the fighters to withdraw toward the western lowlands bordering the Sudan, even in instances when ELF fighters were comfortably repelling EPLF-TPLF forces.

Throughout the fighting the supporters of the EPLF and TPLF in the Western media continued to drum anti-ELF lies, even alleging that the ELF initiated the battles.

Washington and its proxies in the Arab world went ahead with the effort to reduce the movement to a hub of an anti-Soviet united front against the Ethiopian government. In fact they increased this effort soon after the offensive was launched against the ELF.

In September 1980, Dan Connel wrote "reports" supporting this united front, openly declaring that its purpose was to overthrow the Ethiopian government:

... leaders of the TPLF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) are now talking about forming a united front of all anti-imperialist (sic) opposition groups in Eritrea and Ethiopia with the aim of toppling the current ruling military junta.

With this in mind, the EPLF has for the past six months been strengthening its relations with a broad range of national and class forces in Ethiopia, which

include the TPLF, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in southern Ethiopia, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in southeastern Ogaden region and the now underground All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON).⁸⁹

Connel stated the united front was to include even the EPRP, or in his words, its "remnants." TPLF leaders apparently were in touch with the EPRP on this matter.

The EPLF fully endorsed an anti-Soviet united front in the Horn. Member of the Central Committee and the Politburo, Sebhat Efreem, was quoted as saying:

We are optimistic that we will be able to form a united joint struggle against the junta . . . We are ready to do anything for the consolidation of this unity.⁹⁰

Of course this would-be united front excluded the ELF. In a lengthy article on the plan, Connel did not even mention the ELF. In fact, he seemed to imply the ELF no longer existed. He glorified the EPLF, referring to it as the organization "which has led the 19-year war for Eritrean independence from Ethiopia for the past decade."⁹¹

EPLF Rejects Unity Goal in Eritrea

From the time it launched the offensive in September 1980, the EPLF officially rejected the need for unity with the ELF.

During a press conference in November of that year, the EPLF proposed a referendum by the Eritrean people on the status of Eritrea. It called for a political contest between those favoring "independence" (meaning separation), those in favor of federation, and those who want regional autonomy within Ethiopia. Of course it implied "independence" was the choice of the overwhelming majority of Eritreans. The EPLF was portrayed as the representative of this majority.

In the press conference the EPLF leadership expressed its authentic attitude on the question of unity in Eritrea. It frankly stated it did not regard unity of the Eritrean movement as being absolutely necessary. Isayas Afeworki said:

We don't feel that the question of unity of the Eritrean revolution has to be a stumbling block to a peaceful solution to the war . . . Having the unity of the Eritrean revolution as a precondition to a peaceful solution means we might never arrive at a solution.⁹²

Isayas' statement was an outright denial of the basic assumption behind the unity pacts concluded since 1977: that unity and a single national democratic front were indispensable for the resolution of the Eritrean problem.

Shortly after this press conference there was an effort to invalidate the Unity Pact of October 1977 and its subsidiary agreements. This was the Tunis Agreement of March 1981 concluded in Tunis under the auspices of the Arab League. It was initiated by the president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayid of Abu Dhabi, who wanted to forestall a solution of the Eritrean problem by the efforts of the socialist community.⁹³

The agreement was entered into between all the organizations in Eritrea. It called for the cessation of the armed conflict and "hostile propaganda" between them. It called upon all the organizations to "direct all weapons against the common enemy,"⁹⁴ Ethiopia. In its operative paragraphs, the agreement avoided even a mention of the ideal of unity in the Eritrean movement. It only suggested some kind of umbrella organization in which the constituent fronts would remain autonomous.

The anti-Soviet supporters of the EPLF applauded the Tunis agreement. Dan Connel termed it a "more realistic reflection of the internal situation than prior pacts calling for complete merger."⁹⁵ The same anti-Soviet supporters of the EPLF also hurried to announce the repeal of the Unity pact of October 1977 and its subsidiary agreements. Dan Connel declared the Tunis agreement "effectively supersedes"⁹⁶ the 1977 Unity Pact.

EPLF leaders viewed the Tunis agreement as an instrument providing for a "united front" whose final objective was the dissolution of the ELF. They implied this view in remarks to their confidants and trusted reporters; Dan Connel wrote:

It would be naive to think that the loose pact arrived at in Tunis will end the deep rooted problems in the Eritrean movement which will in the final analysis reflect sharp class divisions in the programs and aims of the various groups. But EPLF leaders say the agreement can be a check on them at least for the immediate future.⁹⁷

Connel implied that the Tunis agreement would provide a temporary respite from the infighting. But no such respite resulted.

Military Defeat of the ELF

A few weeks after the conclusion of the Tunis agreement, the EPLF and TPLF resumed the military offensive against the ELF, while Abdullah Idris and his associates continued to undermine the ELF from within.

The immediate result was the military defeat of the ELF. In August 1981—almost a year after the battles began—the entire ELF force re-

treated to Sudanese territory bordering Eritrea. The EPLF and its supporters thus rejoiced in "the demise of the ELF."

Eritrean patriots had no reason to celebrate the defeat of the ELF. On the contrary, they regretted it particularly in light of its accompanying tragedies and setbacks.

The year-long battles had yielded colossal loss of life. Disillusioned by the infighting, thousands abandoned both the EPLF and ELF. Most apparently defected to the Ethiopian government, while the rest became refugees in the Sudan.

Politically, the EPLF sustained serious losses. Two members of its Central Committee abandoned it. One defected to the Ethiopian government. In a well-publicized interview, he exposed EPLF's internal repression and connections with world reaction.

Many of EPLF's followers and supporters abroad terminated their affiliation with it in response to what they called "anti-national" activities of the EPLF. Among them were Eritrean figures well-established in the Sudan and Kuwait.

On the whole, the Eritrean people became disillusioned with the armed movement. But more of them attained better clarity on the real differences between the EPLF and the ELF. They saw the EPLF as a sectarian movement inimical to Eritrean patriotism. They came to respect the ELF as the truly national movement in Eritrea in spite of its military losses.⁹⁸

The political objectives of the EPLF and its global supporters were not fulfilled. The ELF did not become isolated and most of the Eritrean people refused to rally behind the EPLF.

8

Reaganite Escalation of US Interventions: Disintegration of the ELF

The Reagan administration represented the far-right sections of the US ruling class. It came into office at a time when the crisis of capitalism was sharpening world wide,¹ a time when the myth was being shattered in the US that capitalism in this epoch is a thriving system.

The administration assumed office as a staunch defender of a threatened system. Its policies reflected the fascistic tendencies innate in monopoly capitalism.² They were fundamentally dangerous to the American people and to the peoples of the world.

Against Detente, Peace and National Liberation

On matters of foreign policy, the administration was bellicose. In fact, as a noted activist put it, it had no foreign policy but "a war policy."³ This jeopardized the achievements of the forces of peace and detente and caused an international relapse into cold war tension.

Reagan's foreign policy was not a basic departure from that which Jimmy Carter pursued in the last two years of his presidency. It was only a more extreme version of the Carter Doctrine. It had a more pronounced chauvinistic tone reflecting a balmy yearning for America's imperial heyday.

In pursuing its "war policy" the Reagan administration resorted to the most crude variant of anti-Sovietism. Reagan branded the USSR "the evil empire" and socialism an "aberration" in human society. His came the first US administration in many decades to resuscitate the notion of socialism being overthrown in the USSR. Several Cabinet members openly expressed their wishes to "destabilize and decapitate" the USSR.

The Reagan administration portrayed the USSR as the source of all the wars in the world today. Reiterating the concept of "linkage," it charged the USSR and other socialist countries were the sources of the popular uprisings against imperialist domination and obsolete systems in the developing world.

The administration expressed an utter disregard for the principle of self-determination. It vociferated against the peoples fighting for national sovereignty and independence. It fulminated against "international terrorism," referring to the national liberation movements and the support accorded them by the USSR and other socialist and progressive states.

The War Oriented Policy and the Arms Buildup

The Reagan administration reintroduced the hypothesis that the US might have to fight two and a half wars at the same time rather than only one and a half.⁴ Allegedly, the situation in the Persian Gulf region behooved the reintroduction of this concept by engendering the possibility of a full scale war.

In concrete terms, the administration held that the US might have to fight a war against the USSR in Europe, another war against invading Soviet forces in the Gulf region, and a half war or several mini-wars against Soviet-supported guerilla movements in the developing world—all at the same time. Using this assumption, the administration undertook an arms buildup of unprecedented magnitude. The buildup bloated the military budget at the expense of social needs.

Several administration members postulated that nuclear war is survivable. They renewed the idea of manufacturing neutron bombs to be planted in the vicinity of Eastern Europe. They introduced the idea of space weapons.

Challenged by the growing peace movement in the US and the world, the administration at times softened its tone on nuclear arms. But such softening never represented a change of substance. If anything it was a cloak for intensifying war-oriented policies, a cover for real increases in the military budget. At times it was even a diversion by the

administration which was charting the "plans for a long nuclear war" issued by the Pentagon in May 1982.⁵

The Reagan administration effectively rejected the concepts of parity and equal security as the basis for US-USSR relations. It went ahead with plans for attaining nuclear superiority. It kept the SALT II Agreements shelved and proposed what it called Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START).

The superficiality of Reagan's "START" was to be evidenced most dramatically in 1983 when the US deployed the Cruise and Pershing II missiles, first-strike weapons against the USSR, in several Western European countries. By this act, the Reagan administration was to torpedo the Geneva talks on medium range weapons.

As part of the overall war preparations the Reagan administration also increased and upgraded US conventional forces. The Pentagon chief, Caspar Weinberger, repeatedly emphasized the "need" for "strong conventional capacity."⁶

According to some observers, the "lion's share" of the military budget for 1982 was to be spent on conventional forces. Specifically it was "to be allotted to the RDF and other combat units designed for intervention in the Third World."⁷

Policy of Intervention in the Developing World

The administration anticipated US intervention in the developing world. In fact it attacked the Carter administration for a policy of "weakness" which, according to the Reaganites, resulted in the victory of "Soviet-backed forces" in Angola, Afghanistan, Iran, Nicaragua, Grenada, and other countries. As soon as it came to office, the administration escalated RDF activities in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean regions.

One of the plans was to set up the Persian Gulf Command, which, it was said, "will eventually include as many as 250,000 GI's, dozens of ships, and hundreds of aircrafts and tanks."⁸

The administration increased allocations for upgrading US bases in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean area. Millions of dollars were allocated for improving the Ras Benas air base in Egypt, the base on the island of Masira in Oman, and the main base at the island of Diego Garcia. Similar allocations were made to upgrade the RDF "facilities" in Kenya and Somalia.

The Reagan administration provided massive military assistance to its allies and satellites in and around the Middle East, the Gulf, and the Indian Ocean region.⁹ It rendered such assistance to Israel, Turkey, Jordan, North Yemen, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, and Somalia. It sold AWACS and other highly sophisticated weapons to Saudi Arabia which

was emerging as the head of the Washington-sponsored "informal" alliance of Gulf states.¹⁰

The administration cultivated friendly relations with South Africa, almost overtly condoning the apartheid system.¹¹ These relations with South Africa, which is a littoral to the Indian Ocean, also served US strategy in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. Likewise, Washington enhanced its alliance with Pakistan. It negotiated with the government of this Southwest Asian state to further secure air and naval access to the Gulf.

The US administration also approached the NATO members to "facilitate" the activities of the US RDF for operations in the Gulf. But, though the administration claimed success, its effort in this respect was an utter failure. Reportedly, several Western European states (including West Germany, Greece, and Italy) were "wary about granting port facilities or overflight rights for troops or equipment of the RDF moving into Southwest Asia."¹²

These and other military activities embodied an unprecedented US presence in the region. They attested to the preparedness of the Reagan administration "for a direct military intervention in the Persian Gulf."¹³ Such activities propped up the right-wing status quo against the emergence of popular, anti-imperialist and socialist-oriented movements in the area. In fact, according to some observers, the "real role" of the RDF was "to fight insurgents within Arab states if emergencies arise."¹⁴

"Soviet Threat" in the Gulf and the Middle East

The Reagan administration's pretext for escalating the RDF and other military activities in the region was the "Soviet threat." Reagan claimed the USSR posed a threat to the oil supply from the Middle East to the West. He repeatedly alluded to future US-Soviet conflict in the region. On several occasions he declared that, if the USSR took an aggressive step in the Gulf area, it "would be asking confrontation with the United States."¹⁵

To lend credibility to this approach, the administration—and US media analysts—pointed to the alliance of the USSR with Ethiopia and South Yemen, attaching bellicose implications to it. Even those who knew the USSR supported creating "a zone of peace in the area" made alarming reports which alleged an increasing Soviet military presence "near the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf outlets."¹⁶ They claimed "the Russians are building"¹⁷ an installation at the Yemeni island of Socotra and bases on the Ethiopian (Eritrean) islands of Perim and Dahlak. They also asserted the USSR was utilizing the port of Aden for military purposes.¹⁸

The reports quoted "Western intelligence experts" as saying the USSR was carrying out "the most advanced construction"¹⁹ in the Dahlak islands. They claimed the USSR "built submarine pens as well as missile repair and storage silos."²⁰ They charged the USSR was setting up "electronic communications and surveillance equipment."²¹

But the above charges were groundless. The USSR, the largest producer of oil in the world, had posed no danger to the supply of oil from the Middle East to the West and Japan. It had repeatedly stated that it "does not intend to encroach either on Middle Eastern oil or its supply route."²²

It is true the USSR had Friendship Treaties with several states in the area including Ethiopia, Syria, South Yemen, and Afghanistan. It cooperated with these states in economic and cultural development. It also provided military assistance to these states which were actually among the main targets of imperialism.

However, Soviet military presence in the region did not increase. For example, there was no evidence for the alleged construction of Soviet bases in the Dahlak archipelago. This was admitted by observers who were not friends of the USSR or present-day Ethiopia. Several writers thus came up with a new version: that the USSR had desired such bases but was resisted by PMAC Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam.²³

Using the "Soviet threat," the Reagan administration practiced subversion elsewhere in the developing world. When it came to southern Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean the menace sometimes appeared as the "Soviet-Cuban threat."

In southern Africa the administration was obtrusively hostile to the anti-colonial movements and progressive regimes. It embraced the racist Pretoria regime providing it, inter alia, open diplomatic support on Namibia.²⁴ It attempted to counter international pressure against Pretoria.

Anti-Sovietism: Primary Basis of US Policy in the Developing World

Under Ronald Reagan, Washington determined its policy towards the states in the developing world concretely according to each state's stance towards the USSR. The administration applied this approach even in cases where a country claimed "socialism" as its official ideology. Such an approach towards "socialist" states in the developing world was not new. It was based on "Realpolitik," or what Henry Kissinger calls "Geopolitics." It held that any state (irrespective of ideological label or "domestic characteristic") can be a US ally and merit US support as long as its foreign policy is one which objectively promotes

Western "commercial" interest and American positions in the "US-Soviet rivalry."²⁵

The policy-makers in the Reagan White House were skeptical about "Realpolitik." The "hardliners" as they were called were said to be hesitant to give aid to "gray area" Marxist states" like Zimbabwe.²⁶ The key members of the Reagan administration directly concerned with foreign policy differed from the "hardliners." They supported "Realpolitik." This was true of Reagan's first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, who was said to be "willing to work with local leftists."²⁷ Moreover,

He does not believe communism is deeply rooted in some developing nations and would not write them off.²⁸

Alexander Haig maintained that national democracy or "communism" in the developing countries is reversible under certain circumstances. Apparently, he noted that favorable circumstances for reversal obtain particularly in those states not effectively allied with the USSR, the socialist community and the rest of the world revolutionary forces.

Officials of the Department of State running the Africa desk espoused ideas generally consistent with the "Realpolitik" approach. Notable among them was the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Mr. Chester Crocker. Crocker had been consistently critical of Carter's Africa policy, even after the Young-Vance line had given way to that of Brzezinski.

Crocker had bitterly opposed Andrew Young's view that, in light of African nationalism, US policy should back African solutions to African problems. He argued that "African nationalism is fueled by an infusion of communist military equipment."²⁹ He added:

... in Africa's increasingly militarized context, a policy of support for African solutions may in fact amount to support for military solutions imposed by other external powers.³⁰

Crocker claimed that the USSR was militarizing the African context. He called upon the Western powers to challenge this Soviet role. Later he advocated a foreign policy based upon "US interest." He argued that even food be used "as a tool for the promotion of . . . US interest—either developmental or political."³¹ He stated his policy recommendations for the 80's:

In the coming decade, policy makers will need to develop a more careful calculation of the means-ends relationship in African policy. At the same time, the case for an activist regional policy must be based more explicitly on clearly defined American interests that can be understood and supported at home.³²

According to Crocker the US need not deny economic aid or avoid economic ties with African regimes professing Marxism or socialism, "provided" they are not friendly with the USSR.

... American policy elites should restrain their inclination to conceive of Africa in terms of ideological abstractions and political slogans. Profitable business can be done with avowedly Marxist regimes provided that they are not essentially Soviet puppets—in which case there may be overriding arguments for limiting official economic ties.³³

Like Alexander Haig, Crocker seemed to count on the reversibility of national democracies in African states. This is clear from his emphasis that Africa is in transition and its future is an "undetermined one."

Crocker advocated American pursuit of "profitable business in . . . white-ruled South Africa." He was aware that business with apartheid might engender fury in the frontline states of southern Africa. He maintained however that such fury could be easily placated or even forestalled if US policy makers exploited certain weaknesses of the regimes in the region.

According to Crocker, African leaderships were characterized by pragmatism and survival instinct, and thus "eager" for "Western ties." US policy makers might exploit this eagerness.

Crocker maintained these views even after becoming the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Apparently, he influenced Reagan's Africa policy to a significant degree.

Crocker was to conduct shuttle diplomacy of sorts between the Pretoria regime and some southern African states in early 1984. It appears that during this shuttle diplomacy he tested his approach of exploiting the "eagerness" on the part of some leaderships in the region for "Western ties."

US Provocations and Wars in the Middle East

US policy targeted the member states of the steadfastness front: Libya, South Yemen, Syria, the PLO and other anti-imperialist states in the region, notably Ethiopia.

Libya and Ethiopia were among the crucial targets of the Reagan administration. As stated by some observers, Libya was the more immediate target because US diplomats felt that "Qaddafi has been a major thorn in our side for too long."³⁴ But, in the long run, the same observers felt "the new Reagan policy is likely to be more confrontational toward Ethiopia."³⁵

Towards the end of 1981 the Reagan administration tried to provoke an all-out war with Libya. In August, US forces intercepted and shot

down two Soviet-made Libyan planes over the Bay of Sidra.³⁶ In November the US Rapid Deployment Force conducted a war exercise called "Bright Star" on Sudanese and Egyptian territories adjacent to Libya.³⁷ Later in the year and in early 1982 Washington circulated the fiction of a Libyan "hit team" sent to assassinate President Reagan and other top officials.³⁸ Some believed this fiction to be a smokescreen for aggressive undertakings by Israel. They maintained that it "may have been introduced" by the Israeli Intelligence Service (MOSSAD) in order to deflect world attention from the formal Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights which took place at that time.³⁹

It should be noted in this connection that US roles in the Central African state of Chad were related to the moves against Libya. The CIA-designed maneuvers which led to the overthrow of the patriotic regime of Goukouni Oueddei by the pro-imperialist Hussein Habre aimed at securing a US base in Chad, Libya's southern neighbor.⁴⁰

One objective behind US maneuvers against Libya was to overthrow its leader, Colonel Moumar Gaddafi. US surrogates in the region spoke openly of this aim: for example, Sadat's regime in Egypt called upon the people of Libya to "hang Colonel Gaddafi."⁴¹

Observers warned that the attempts to overthrow Gaddafi, and other provocations, represented a threat to the progressive forces in the Middle East. For example, commenting on the incident of the Bay of Sidra, the Beirut daily *An Nahar* noted:

The incident could have wider implications for the Middle East—namely, Israel's occupation of Lebanon to remove the Palestinian commandos.⁴²

Indeed, at the time of the incident, the Reagan administration and Israel's Begin-Sharon government were planning to attack the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement.⁴³ It was in accordance with these plans that Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982. Militarily, the Israeli invasion set back the PLO, which was forced to abandon Beirut and other areas of Lebanon. It also caused considerable damage to Syria which was the only Middle Eastern state to become involved on the side of the PLO. (States capable of rendering assistance did not do so: Egypt, frozen by the Camp David accords; Iraq and Iran, embroiled in a war in which Iran seemed to have the upper hand in 1982.)

The Reagan administration introduced US Marines into Beirut to protect the Falange government of Amin Jemal. But, by early 1984, its forces in Beirut were to suffer defeat at the hands of the Lebanese National Movement and Syria. It was to withdraw the Marines in hardly disguised humiliation.⁴⁴

The Iraqi regime continued to serve US policy in the area. This in

fact motivated Washington's expressed concern over Iranian military successes in the war with Iraq. Washington, it is to be recalled, had maintained "neutrality" when Iraq had the upper hand. But Iranian victories in the summer of 1982 seemed to alarm the US administration, which expressed its sympathy for Iraq. Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State, insisted the US was neutral but said that neutrality

does not mean that we are indifferent to the outcome. We have friends and interests that are endangered by the continuation of hostilities. We are committed to defending our vital interests in the area.⁴⁵

The Reagan administration expressed satisfaction with Iraqi policy in various ways. It started lifting the "assistance" restrictions imposed on Iraq during the years when the latter adhered to the policy of anti-imperialism. Restrictions continued against Libya, Syria, South Yemen, Cuba, Angola, Laos, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and a few others. (A professed rationale for the restrictions was that these states abetted national liberation movements which the Reagan administration calls "international terrorism.")

In lifting the restrictions on Iraq, Washington noted the latter's increasing isolation from national liberation forces or "terrorist" groups. Reagan's Deputy Secretary of State, Ernest Johnston, said:

In 1981 Iraq continued the pattern of recent years of reducing assistance to individuals and groups which employ terrorist means. We have a significant interest in encouraging Iraq to take further steps in this direction.⁴⁶

Other officials of the Department of State were more explicit about the motive behind lifting the restrictions on Iraq. They said the motive was "to encourage Saddam Hussein to keep his distance from Moscow."⁴⁷

As in 1980 the right wing Arab states were on the side of Iraq in the 1982 war with Iran. Egypt declared its support for Iraq and provided it with arms. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states funneled financial assistance to the Baghdad regime.

Iran's role in the war of mid-1982 was by no means immaculate. Ayatollah Khomeini launched an invasion called "Ramadan" whose ultimate mission was the overthrow of the "infidel" Saddam Hussein. In the view of progressive observers the "Ramadan" gave US imperialism another opportunity for meddling in the region to safeguard its "vital interests."

In fact at this time Khomeini's Islamic regime was turning against the progressive Iranian forces which had consistently supported it all the time, cracking down on the TUDEH party. It improved relations

with US banks (which had swindled Iranian wealth during the reign of the Shah) and engaged in anti-communist and anti-Soviet diatribes.

After dislodging the PLO in Lebanon, US imperialism proceeded with long-range plans in southern Africa and the Horn. Its main target in the Horn was the Ethiopian regime.

Situation in the Horn and Immediate Surroundings

Though the US-allied regimes in this area faced no external—particularly Soviet—menace, they were threatened with the possibilities of home grown, internal uprisings. Extending from Pakistan in Southwest Asia to Morocco on the Atlantic coast, they constituted the “arc of instability.”⁴⁸ They were invariably corrupt and repressive. Most had bankrupt, or near-bankrupt, economies. Miserable living conditions and severe deprivation of democratic rights prevailed.

Sudan and Somalia, the two US allies neighboring Ethiopia, were among the worst cases. The regimes of Nimeiri⁴⁹ and Siad Barre were facing intractable economic problems and serious domestic political challenges. The economic problems of Nimeiri’s Sudan were profound. Inflation, which affected even food prices, exceeded 50%. The country’s foreign exchange reserve was often insolvent. Mismanagement and corruption led to industrial and agricultural disaster. Discontent among workers, the intelligentsia and other segments of the Sudanese society increased. There emerged a plethora of groups opposing Nimeiri. They ranged from Moslem fundamentalists to communists, from the intelligentsia to the military.

Late in 1983 Nimeiri tried to pacify the people and silence the opposition by the manipulative use of religion. He Islamized the laws of the country, replacing all the statutes by the principles of the Sharia. But he only angered more sections of the population, particularly in the non-Moslem southern region.

Discontent in the South had been fermenting since the end of the 1970’s. Following Nimeiri’s disclosure of the plan to redivide the southern region, discontent developed into a resistance movement bearing the name Council for the Unity of Southern Sudan (CUSS). This resistance movement culminated in the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) and Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). The SPLM-SPLA was not a secessionist movement, but rather one which sought a progressive change in the Sudan as a whole. It was sometimes described as socialist-oriented.

Many Southerners considered the plan a device to further weaken them in relation to the central government, to secure to Khartoum the lion’s share or even all of the revenues expected from the new-found oil

wells in the south. A US corporation, Chevron, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of California, was planning to extract oil and construct a pipeline from the wells to Port Sudan in the north.

Now that a US corporation was to exploit the oil resources in the south, Washington would continue supporting Nimeiri’s regime, or at least support any right-wing regime against the movement in the south. The vice-president of Standard Oil stated, “We get the feeling that Washington is determined that Sudan should not be lost.”⁵⁰

It was obvious however that Nimeiri could not survive every challenge. Even government officials in Khartoum have been heard to say: “There are only three options for the future—a left-wing coup, a popular uprising or a complete breakdown of government.”⁵¹

More than ever, Nimeiri’s regime needed to deflect attention from internal problems to external “enemies” and “threats.” Hence, it repeatedly charged that Ethiopia was preparing to invade Sudanese territory.

Siad Barre’s regime in Somalia was no better. Inflation, unemployment, and other problems beset Somalia’s economy. Drought had also struck again, causing distress to a considerable section of the population. The regime was menaced by Somali opposition groups inside and outside the country. In a desperate move, it effected a tribalist policy. It reshuffled the cabinet, assigning key posts to Barre’s relatives and followers from his Marehan tribe. But, the regime only exacerbated the opposition.

One of the strongest opposition movements was the Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF), based in Ethiopia; it sporadically harassed the Mogadisho regime. It conducted armed activities in the Somali-Ethiopian border region, leading to serious clashes in July 1982.

Haunted by the opposition forces, Siad Barre’s regime pointed an accusing finger at Ethiopia. Several times, it charged that Ethiopian forces and planes violated Somalia’s territorial sovereignty.

It appeared Siad Barre’s regime had no future. This was evident to its supporters in the West. It is even said that the US had been looking for a figurehead replacement among dissidents in the army.

In addition to the internal insecurity of Washington’s puppet regimes, other developments threatened US interests in the region. These included progressive changes in several states and the strengthening of alliances between anti-imperialist states.

Notable was the change on the island of Mauritius, which has the legitimate claim to Diego Garcia and the rest of the Chagos archipelago. A new government came to power in June 1982, electorally defeating the party led by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, which was tied to the West and was receiving assistance from the Reagan administration. The new

government, a coalition of the Mauritius Militant Movement (MMM) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP),⁵² won the election on a platform of socio-economic reforms, non-alignment in foreign policy and the restoration of Mauritian sovereignty over Diego Garcia. It adhered to its campaign promises. It officially protested the heightened US military activity in the Indian Ocean and claimed sovereignty over Diego Garcia and the rest of the Chagos.⁵³

Libya, Ethiopia, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen strengthened their alliance. In August 1981, the leaders of these states held a summit meeting in Aden and concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.⁵⁴ (Each had such a treaty with the USSR). The treaty promoted coordination of efforts to counter the new level of imperialist activity in the area from the southern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean.

The local Tripartite agreement disturbed local US allies. Egypt and Somalia staged a bellicose propaganda campaign. Radio Cairo called the Tripartite agreement "a new Soviet move carefully planned by Moscow,"⁵⁵ aimed at "spreading" Moscow's "hegemony in the Arab area, infiltrating Africa, and strengthening its occupation of Afghanistan."⁵⁶

Somalia broke diplomatic relations with Libya. It accused the Libyan regime of conspiring to perpetuate Ethiopia's "Black colonialism" in the Ogaden and Eritrea. It condemned Libyan participation in the Aden agreement as the "latest manifestation" of this conspiracy and called upon the Libyan people to overthrow Colonel Gaddafi.⁵⁷

Posture of the Reagan Administration on Ethiopia and Eritrea

The Reagan administration considered the Eritrean problem in light of US "vital interest" in the oil-rich Gulf and the Middle East.

As early as 1978, would-be members of the Reagan administration had expressed views linking the problems of the Horn to the struggle of the "free" world against the socialist countries. They had advocated policies faithfully reflecting this global strategy.

One of these was Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Writing in May 1978, Crocker contended there were "several interrelated elements" operating in the Horn. He did not specify them but made it clear he regarded the "involvement" of the USSR as the "immediate" cause and the Ethiopian revolution as the "ultimate source" of the tension in the Horn:

The breakdown of established authority in Ethiopia appears to have been the ultimate source of the Horn's current turmoil, but the more immediate triggers of violence reflect external involvement.⁵⁸

Crocker charged that the shipment of arms to Ethiopia makes the USSR responsible "for the militarization of what had been a primarily political problem."⁵⁹ He called for active US involvement in the Horn. He sharply criticized Andrew Young's support for "African solutions" to the problems in the region, charging that Young's position meant, "We should welcome the neo-colonial role being played by Moscow and Havana."⁶⁰

With Crocker and his ilk as its top experts on Africa, the Reagan administration especially resented Ethiopia's alliance with the USSR and other socialist states. As soon as it took office, it implicated Ethiopia in various charges against the USSR, including those about arms shipments. It made repeated assertions that Soviet arms were being shipped from Ethiopia via Nicaragua to the guerillas in El Salvador.

The administration declared that, for US-strategic concerns, the Horn (including Eritrea) was part of the Middle East and the Gulf area. Reagan's first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, said:

Our broad strategic view of the Middle East recognizes the intimate connections between that region and the adjacent areas: Afghanistan and South Asia, Northern Africa and the Horn, and the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.⁶¹

During the early period of the administration periodicals gave some hint of the nature and magnitude of US concerns. In February 1981, *Business Week* revealed the objectives of the administration in the Horn. It noted that, following the resolution of the question of American hostages in Iran, the Horn became "a key test of President Reagan's foreign policy in the Third World—and of his clout with Congress."⁶² The Reagan administration "is now prepared . . . to pursue a more active US policy in the Horn."⁶³ For this purpose, *Business Week* added, the administration would put up a "tough fight" against Congress, seeking, among other things, either "modification or repeal" of the Clark amendment. Reagan's policy in the Horn sought "to check further attempts by Ethiopia to widen its influence."⁶⁴ This objective focused on the Ogaden and the Eritrean movement.

Business Week reported that, in early 1981, the Reagan administration was considering steps regarding the Ethio-Somali border dispute or Somalia's territorial claims and the "Somali insurgents" in Ethiopia (the WSLF). The administration envisioned

ending Somalia's diplomatic isolation on the question of the Ogaden by backing Somali territorial claims within well defined limits.⁶⁵

In addition to providing diplomatic support the administration was intent on supplying arms to Somalia, which it did in 1981-82. In arming

Somalia, the Reagan administration made no effort to make sure the weapons would not be transferred to the WSLF. In the words of *Business Week*, the administration was prepared to

(seek) expanded military assistance for the Somalis and not being too fussy whether some of the weapons find their way to Somali insurgents operating inside Ethiopian territory.⁶⁶

The administration was, at the same time, determined to continue utilizing the Eritrean movement to harass the Ethiopian regime. From the outset, the administration considered

granting indirect help to Eritrean guerrillas opposing the Ethiopians in the north. This is considered the least likely of the steps being debated, but it could be ordered if Soviet and Cuban troops significantly increase their military presence in the Horn.⁶⁷

At this stage, US imperialism, was still utilizing "Eritrean independence" to cover its steps against Ethiopia. Reagan advisors voiced opinions in support of Eritrea. Peter Duignan, of the Hoover Institution, said:

Our basic objective ought to be to push the Ethiopians back to their old borders. They don't belong . . . in Eritrea.⁶⁸

The Reaganites intended "indirect" assistance only for those forces in Eritrea who were anti-Soviet. Of course, they were aware of the differences between the ELF and the EPLF. For example, in February 1981, the *National Review* (whose far-right editor William F. Buckley Jr. is close to the Reagan administration) commented:

The rebels, who have about thirty thousand men continuously under arms, are split into two movements or 'fronts,' one of them Marxist but fiercely independent, the other Marxist also and allied to Moscow.⁶⁹ (emphasis added)

Obviously the "fiercely independent Marxist" front was the EPLF, while the Marxist movement "allied to Moscow" was the progressive wing of the ELF.

The above was indicative of the administration's interest in the continuation of the attack on the mainstream ELF.

Conflicts Within the ELF: Final Assault on the Progressive Wing

Following the withdrawal of the largest segment of the army to the Sudanese border regions, differences, accusations and counter-accusations exploded within the ELF. Combatants and cadres expressed grievances concerning the administration of the organization. In particular,

they levelled charges against the top echelons in the military bureau. They accused Abdullah Idris and his group of subverting ELF's military operations in repelling the EPLF-TPLF offensive.

Abdullah and his associates still promoted divisive, regionalist goals. In this confused state of affairs, they sought to form an organization of their own as a counterpart to the Christian EPLF-TPLF forces. They revived sectarian squabbles, charging that ELF combatants (most of whom were Christian) "retreated" to the Sudanese border regions because they did not want to kill their Christian kith and kin in the EPLF-TPLF alliance.

Abdullah and his followers conspired with the Sudanese government to promote their goals. The earliest result was the incident of August 23, 1981.

On this date the Sudanese government sent heavily armed troops to the border regions where ELF fighters had gathered. The troops requested the fighters to lay down their arms on the pretext that they were on Sudanese territory. The fighters refused and the Sudanese troops threatened to attack. War became imminent.

Chairman Ahmed Nasser and many others in the ELF leadership felt that conflict with the Sudan would have serious consequences on the future of the ELF and even on the Eritrean refugees in the country. Hence they instructed the fighters to comply with the request of the Sudanese troops. The fighters laid down their arms and were transferred by Sudanese forces to Korkon and Tahdai, further from Eritrea and closer to the Sudanese town of Kassala.

Of course, Abdullah and his associates had prior knowledge of what steps the Sudanese government was going to take. Hence, before the arrival of the Sudanese troops, they alerted their followers, gathered their armaments and proceeded northeast towards Eritrea. They were not followed by the Sudanese troops. This incident introduced a new situation in the ELF: Abdullah's groups remained armed, while the large section of the national democratic force was disarmed.

But, to the disappointment of ELF's enemies, the combatants and cadres in the Korkon-Tahdai area continued to act as an organized body and launched a movement to rectify the organization. Together with members of the mass organizations in the Sudan, they presented basic demands: an appraisal of the war and, more fundamentally, an assessment of ELF's experience to identify the essence of its problems. They called for an organizational seminar.

Following the 6th regular session of the Revolutionary Council and the election of a new Provisional Executive Committee with Ahmed Nasser as the Chairman it was agreed that the seminar would be held at

Rasai in the northeastern border region of Sudan, where Abdullah's armed detachment was stationed.

But, before the seminar could be held Abdullah's groups—the "right wingers"—launched a military coup at Rasai where many cadres had gathered. On the evening of March 25, 1982 an armed detachment from Abdullah's group killed Melake Tekle, member of the Revolutionary council and popular leader strongly opposed to Abdullah's line. Soon after, the group arrested its opponents in the Executive Committee, the Revolutionary Council, and among the cadres at Rasai. The detainees included Ahmed Nasser, and other longtime leaders of the ELF. Evidence suggests the complicity of the Sudanese regime. Melake's assassination and the arrest of the leaders and cadres was carried out in Sudanese territory. They were criminal acts under the laws of the Sudan. Yet the Sudanese government arraigned no one.

Abdullah's group then hurriedly convened a "meeting" of the Revolutionary council, held at gun point without a quorum. A new Executive Committee was "elected," with Abdullah Idris as Chairman.

In the history of the ELF, the "Rasai Coup d'etat," marked the beginning of a new crisis leading to disintegration.

The Rasai Coup was described as "Baghdad inspired,"⁷⁰ designed by the Iraqi regime. It is said that during the weeks when preparations were being made for the organizational seminar, Abdullah Idris and his associate Saleh Eyay were "still abroad, touring 'friendly' states," including Iraq.⁷¹ They conferred with their supporters in the region on ways of finalizing the assault on ELF's anti-imperialist force. Their talk with the Iraqis is also said to have included the transfer of ELF's main foreign office from Damascus, Syria to the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

The assassination of Melake Tekle sent shockwaves everywhere among the members and followers of ELF. Melake was an eleven-year veteran in the organization. Until the 6th regular session of the Revolutionary Council, he was a member of the Executive Committee and head of the Department of General Security. As a leader, strategist, and combatant he had gained the utmost respect of the leadership and the rank-and-file; by 1980-81, he had unquestionably emerged as a hero. Though not particularly known as a theoretician, Melake had sided with the national democratic force. He had long been a strong opponent of Abdullah and his followers. He had supported the bases' demand for an organizational seminar and the Third National Congress.

The assassination of Melake, who was from the Christian highlands, was an effort to facilitate Abdullah's plans and the destruction of ELF's progressive wing. It was meant to aggravate Moslem-Christian

feuds and create an atmosphere in which Abdullah and his followers could mobilize western lowlanders for a regionalist cause.

To his patrons and accomplices in neighboring Moslem states, Abdullah boasted that he had achieved a victory for Islam and anti-communism. He defended his "Rasai Coup," describing it as a setback for the Christians and communists in the ELF. Those Christians and communists, he said, had favored negotiated settlement of the Ethio-Eritrean case under the auspices of the USSR.

The bases and members of the Revolutionary Council condemned the "Rasai Coup." ELF's mass organizations everywhere also denounced it.

Most of the Eritrean people rejected Abdullah's group which gained little acceptance even among the Moslems. It secured only a fraction of followers from the western lowlands and its armed force did not exceed a few hundred.

This group finally crystallized in a small movement of western lowlanders, most of whom were natives of the Barka province. Several months after the "Rasai Coup," it held an "Organizational Congress" and "elected" its leadership headed by Abdullah. It resolved to release Ahmed Nasser and the others detained at Rasai. It could not establish significant military presence inside Eritrea. But in Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other right-wing Arab states it became increasingly visible in serving the cause of anti-communism and anti-Sovietism.

The relations of this organization with US imperialism became increasingly open. In the early summer of 1983, Abdullah's Vice Chairman, Yohannes Zere Mariam, accompanied by Haile Garza visited Washington, D.C. and New York. Talking to Eritreans, Yohannes blamed the problems of the ELF and the Eritrean movement on the existence of clandestine Communist parties.

Soon after, this organization also sent another cadre to the US. According to some Eritrean sources it sought to establish an "ELF office" in Washington, D.C.

Further Crisis in the ELF

The ELF went through further splits the details of which are very complex. Suffice it to point out that a large section of the disarmed fighters, called the Eritrean Liberation Army (ELA), finally mutinied against the Revolutionary Council and declared its overthrow. But the RC still managed to exist with civilian followers and cadres and for some time even a few guerilla units inside Eritrea's Gash province.

Largely based in the Sudan neither group could safely remain by itself. Each had to establish tactical relations with one or the other of the

"Eritrean" organizations. Many of the Revolutionary Council members gravitated towards Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF and, in fact, signed a "unity agreement" with it. The "ELA," on the other hand, established ties with the EPLF. But it was clear that both groups would be disappointed by their new "tactical" allies.

Osman Sabbe was not going to help the progressive ELF leaders to make a comeback in the movement. After all, they were dubbed "pro-Soviet communists." He not only reneged on the agreement but took cruel steps against several of them. With his complicity, the Sudanese government, in mid 1983, detained these leaders and their cadres on the charge that they were "communists," "Soviet agents," and accomplices of the Ethiopian regime.

The EPLF, which at first pretended to respect the autonomy of the "ELA," finally demanded that the latter join its rank and file as regular members. Though not surprising, this move aggrieved most of the ELA which thus terminated ties with the EPLF.

The members of the Revolutionary Council, their cadres and combatants, and the substantial segment of the ELA could not return to Eritrea as armed organizations. But they all continued to operate politically in the Sudan and elsewhere abroad. On the whole, they were alive and well politically, and, in fact, with a strong potential to become dominant as a *political movement* for Eritrea's self-determination.

Campaign to Unify "Anti-Soviet" Eritrean Groups

After the demise of ELF's progressive wing Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and other surrogates of US imperialism in the region made several attempts to unify the Eritrean groups. The long-range plan was and still remains to unite these forces in an Eritrean "Patriotic Council."

In January 1983, Abdullah Idris' "ELF(RC)," Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF, and Abdulkadir Jeillani's ELF-PLF(RC) held a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and concluded a preliminary agreement (sometimes referred to as the Tripartite agreement) leading toward the Patriotic Council.⁷² They agreed to hold their respective organizational Congresses and elect their respective "executive and Central Committees."⁷³ After the Congresses a Council would be set up, which would then elect an Executive Committee to negotiate with the EPLF to form the overall "Eritrean Patriotic Council."

The goal seemed unrealistic. Some observers pointed out that Abdullah's "ELF-RC was unenthusiastic about EPLF participation"⁷⁴ in the projected "Patriotic Council." The EPLF itself objected to Abdullah's organization taking part in the Council.

After the Jeddah agreement, mild controversies arose between the

parties to the Tripartite accord on the proportions in which they were to be represented. Other developments likely to affect the "Patriotic Council" occurred, most notably the meeting and understandings between the EPLF and Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF.

The initial meeting was held in November 1983 in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, followed by another meeting in Kuwait City, Kuwait in December. In the latter meeting the EPLF and ELF-PLF produced a written, signed statement.

The signatories to the statement were Isayas Afeworki for the EPLF and Osman Sabbe for the ELF-PLF. They praised the efforts for "unity." They urged "the brother Arab states to intensify their efforts towards creating a suitable atmosphere for the success of the national unity struggle."⁷⁵ The two organizations agreed upon "the scopes" of co-ordination between them and stated their ultimate objective was unity on the "national" level. They "decided to establish a Supreme Joint Committee for the execution of the resolutions reached."⁷⁶

They expressed "deep appreciation" to all who "are offering political and material support" to the Eritrean movement and specially thanked "the brother states" of Saudi Arabia and the Sudan "for their continuous support of the Eritrean cause."⁷⁷

This development was not surprising, though for many years the EPLF had portrayed Osman Sabbe's organization as "reactionary" and "anti-national."

To conclude, with ELF's national democratic wing destroyed as an armed organization, the "Eritrean" movement continued to exist in disparate groups. The armed ones were the small band of Abdullah Idris and the bigger force, the EPLF.

Actually the EPLF had fully controlled the armed movement in Eritrea since 1981. It shared this control with the TPLF with whom it continued alliance.

Wholly dominated by the EPLF and TPLF, the armed force in Eritrea degenerated into an all-out counter-revolutionary movement.

The "Eritrean" Armed Movement: A Pawn of Imperialism

At the beginning of the 1980's Ethiopia's national democratic revolution continued to intensify. The PMAC scored notable successes in certain areas of domestic policy;¹ the most publicized was the literacy campaign. Less successful but nevertheless significant were the efforts to boost the socio-economic development of the rural sector.²

Even in the West, Ethiopia earned a positive reputation regarding its management of economic and financial resources. The World Bank and the European Economic Community (EEC) seemed to have more confidence in Ethiopia than in many capitalist-oriented developing states.³ Ethiopia's relations with socialist and anti-imperialist states flourished, enhancing the development of the country in socio-economic and ideological spheres.

But, the Western media claimed there was a "deterioration" in Soviet-Ethiopian relations. It assessed Mengistu and other leaders as "nationalists" who would not hesitate to terminate friendship with the socialist community. In late 1981, the media reported an alleged replacement of a Soviet ambassador to Addis Ababa pursuant to a request of the Ethiopian government.⁴ Nonetheless, Ethiopia was increasingly becoming the most consistent and dependable African ally of the USSR and of the socialist world.

The domestic scene in Ethiopia had its negative side as well. There were increasing manifestations of administrative backwardness. Nepotist practices appeared within the bureaucracy. A number of opportunists professing Marxism and socialism rose in the administrative bureaucracy, and some say in COPWE itself. As a result, several revolutionary intellectuals and professionals lost hope. Some even left the country.

Led by the PMAC, the military continued to be the ruling elite, exercising supreme power in COPWE, which was laying the groundwork for the establishment of the party in September 1984. Many observers did not expect the anticipated Workers' Party of Ethiopia to introduce anything dramatically new. Some even feared it would only be another vehicle to perpetuate the rule by the same military elite leading Ethiopia since 1977, if not 1974. But others strongly hoped the party would signal the emergence of a developed Marxist-Leninist vanguard.

Problems of Nationalities Unsolved

On the issue of nationalities, the national democratic program remained unimplemented. But a few preparatory steps were taken, including the establishment of the Institute of Nationalities, staffed by intellectuals (several of whom were on the teaching staff at the National University). In the early 1980's, the Institute was still studying possible frameworks for implementing regional autonomy as enunciated in the NDR program of 1976.

In this period the problems of nationalities remained unsolved.⁵ The various "nationalist" movements persisted and continued to drain much of Ethiopia's economy. The strongest were the EPLF and TPLF.

In Eritrea, the Ethiopian government had introduced slight changes in administrative policy, which Eritrean progressives (working in cooperation with the PMAC) earnestly supported. Using the new approach, the Ethiopian administration in Eritrea welcomed over 10,000 defecting former guerillas, first placing them in re-orientation camps. It relaxed the atmosphere and facilitated the reactivation of economic life and of educational institutions including the University of Asmara.⁶

The PMAC's attitude to Eritrea remained unchanged. It openly proclaimed its goal to defeat the armed groups by force. In pursuit of this goal, the PMAC unleashed a sixth military campaign in Eritrea, part of an inclusive program called "Operation Red Star." The operation was "an all purpose revolutionary campaign" whose aim was the "political-military reconquest" of Eritrea.⁷

The program envisaged several civil and political tasks involving

agriculture, industry and youth, trade union and other organizations.

The military campaign of "Operation Red Star" was under the personal command of PMAC Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam.⁸ It was to become one of the largest but not one of the most deadly, campaigns in the history of the Ethio-Eritrean war.

The continued state of war had serious impact on life in Eritrea. It even contributed to rapid deterioration of Eritrea's ecology. By late 1982, Eritrea and the northern region of Ethiopia became victims of drought and famine. This problem was the outcome of a number of factors, including deforestation which had been going on in both the guerilla-held and government-controlled parts of the country.

The Ethiopian government made a world wide appeal for assistance to deal with this problem. It received limited relief aid from various quarters, including the West where Ethiopia's food requirement was regarded as a weapon.

For some time, Western media accused the government of using the limited relief aid to feed its soldiers on the war fronts. Ethiopia was also charged with diverting the aid to the USSR as a partial payment for military hardware.⁹

EPLF's Isolation in Eritrea

The EPLF was becoming isolated from the Eritrean people. After 1981 it could not recruit volunteers to its armed forces. It resorted to forcible conscription of young Eritreans in the rural areas of the country. To avoid conscription, thousands of young people moved from the countryside to the Ethiopian-controlled towns in Eritrea.

In the early 1980's, a considerable number of EPLF fighters abandoned the organization, many defecting to the Ethiopian government. EPLF leaders denied the reports about desertion and defection. But they could not consistently pretend indifference to the impact of the crisis. One leader, Ermias Debesai, while asserting that "we are the only independent force," had to admit that "the liberation movement faces the worst crisis in its 20 year history."¹⁰

In fact the EPLF was not merely facing a "crisis." It was devoid of whatever character it had as a national liberation movement. This can be understood in light of the preliminary stages of the second phase of the US plan for Eritrea.

Preparations for the Second Phase of US Plan

Beginning in late 1981, the second phase of the US plan on the future of Eritrea began to unfold. Writings by American and other Western experts on the Horn of Africa suggested new steps by US policymakers.

One was Paul Henze, who had served at the US embassy in Ethiopia and subsequently in the US National Security Council in Washington, D.C. He was a "specialist . . . on nationalism in Eastern Europe and the USSR."¹¹ Less publicized is the fact that Henze was a highly-placed CIA functionary and was at one time chief of the CIA station in Turkey.¹²

In late 1981 Henze wrote an article in *Problems of Communism*, addressing the prospects for solving the problems in the Horn, including Eritrea. He dismissed as "hardly practical" the endeavor of the socialist community for a negotiated settlement:

Moscow may still cherish the kind of scheme Fidel Castro tried to implement first in March 1977 in a last ditch effort to avert the complications created by the Somali July invasion; a plan for federation of the entire Horn, with Ethiopia and Somalia joined in a common socialist state which would include an autonomous Ogaden and an autonomous Eritrea. But such a grand Marxist "synthesis" is hardly practical in the real world.¹³

Henze offered no argument to support his contention. He merely stated that such a "synthesis" ran counter to US interests in the region. This was most clearly reflected in his recommendation in the case of Eritrea:

A more practical solution has been pushed by Sudan's Nimeiri, based on his own settlement in 1971 (sic)—with Ethiopia's help—of Khartoum's bloody 17 year struggle with southern rebels . . . Nimeiri conceded genuine autonomy to the south, honored his promises, and consequently turned the region into a primary area of support for himself.

Could Mengistu do the same with Eritrea? There is probably no question of greater importance for the future of the Horn.

Nevertheless, it is only Nimeiri and the West who have something to offer Mengistu or any subsequent Ethiopian leadership on Eritrea.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

Henze indicated that what Nimeiri and the West had to offer the Ethiopian regime is the cessation of pressure by the armed movement. He stressed the dependence of the Eritrean movement on the good will and cooperation of the Sudanese government, pointing out Nimeiri's ties with conservative Arab states and the West. The Sudanese regime

would find it exceedingly difficult to take decisive steps to undermine the Eritrean insurgency as long as Ethiopia remains dependent upon the Soviet Union and Cuba and declares itself to be a communist state.¹⁵ (emphasis added)

Under the aegis of the West and conservative Arab states, Nimeiri would thus allow the Eritrean "nationalist" movements to menace the Ethiopian regime as long as the latter maintained friendly ties with the

USSR. Henze sought to induce Ethiopia to renounce its anti-imperialist policy (which was what Nimeiri did to achieve cessation of the Western supported insurgency in Southern Sudan in 1972). He envisaged a "solution" (under Western auspices) akin to that in Southern Sudan in 1972: regional autonomy of sorts within the framework of a US-dominated multi-national state.

It is plain that the main difference between the Castro formula and the Southern Sudan framework is the international alliance of the Ethiopian state. To wit, Eritrea's autonomous state within the framework of Ethiopian unity is "hardly practical" if Ethiopia remains allied to the socialist community; but it would be "a more practical solution" if Ethiopia once again becomes a client state of US imperialism.

Other former supporters of Eritrean independence under the EPLF seemed to modify their position to fit the second phase of the US plan, among them Gerard Chaliand. In a newly published work, which provoked the wrath of some EPLF members in the US, Chaliand referred to the Eritrean movement as a "separatist" one, indistinguishable from that of Biafra and other secessionist endeavors in Africa.¹⁶

Another writer whose works were apparently meant to help in the long-range implementation of the US plan was Haggai Erlich, who is affiliated with the Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University. This Israeli writer has frankly stated his wishes to see Ethiopia reverse its line and become "allied" with the West again. Responding to an interviewer's question concerning "the more longterm solutions to Ethiopia's problems," Erlich said that, for one thing, "Ethiopia must re-establish its ties with the West."¹⁷

Erlich published a *Political Biography of Ras Alula in 1982 and The Struggle Over Eritrea, 1962-1978* in 1983.

The former work (published by the African Studies Center of Michigan State University and the Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies in Tel Aviv) gives the military and political biography of Alula, a Tigrean military and political figure of the late 19th century who subdued the traditional rulers of what is today Eritrea and governed it on behalf of Abyssinia's Tigrean emperor, Yohannes the IVth. The book in effect advances the idea that Eritrea—particularly the highlands—and Tigray were one entity (though composed of loosely related principalities) before the Italian colonization of Eritrea. It emphasizes the lack of unity between Tigrean leaders was mainly responsible for the transfer of political power to Shoan Amharas in Addis Ababa.

Certain fundamental conclusions in the book apparently encourage highland Eritreans and Tigreans to think along the idea of Tigray-Eritrea union for combatting "the Shoan regime" in Addis Ababa. Erlich also

seems to encourage collaboration with imperialism to win independence from Shoa; he stresses that Alula's failure to "become an ally of the Italians" in Eritrea and his "recognition of Shoa hegemony may be regarded as a fatal, if not final, blow to Tigrean independence."¹⁸ Erlich's book, which is well-researched, rationalizes the EPLF-TPLF alliance. It seems to campaign for Tigray-Eritrea union led by the TPLF-EPLF, which may be supported by imperialism (or "the Italians") against the PMAC (or "Shoa hegemony").

Erlich's second book was published in 1983 by the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, a right-wing think tank at Stanford University.

It held that the movement for Eritrean independence had fallen victim to the divisions engendered and sustained by the very composition of the Eritrean society:

... the Eritreans failed to pull together in the name of Eritreanism. The reality of ethnic, religious, regional, social and personal rivalries couched in revolutionary phraseology, legitimizing disunity proved stronger than the relatively young sentiment of Eritrean nationalism.¹⁹

The book is supposedly based on events up to 1978. But the timing of its publication in 1983 is deliberate. It coincides with the effort (supported by Erlich's own work on Ras Alula) to make Tigray-Eritrea unity against Addis Ababa the politically and historically sound option.

Other developments reflected the preliminary steps of the second phase of the US plan. Several involved the relationship between the "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Relations Among the "Nationalist" Groups

The TPLF and EPLF were still the strongest of the armed bands in Ethiopia and Eritrea respectively. They continued their alliance. But the TPLF ceased to be the junior partner.²⁰ It became larger than the EPLF, mainly because the latter had become increasingly isolated from the Eritrean people. It appeared the TPLF would eventually dominate the EPLF.

Given the second phase of the US plan on Eritrea, it was logical that the TPLF become the leading partner in the alliance. As a substitute for the EDU, it aspired to take state power in Ethiopia following the overthrow of the PMAC, to become the government in a US-allied multinational Ethiopia and possibly grant regional autonomy to the EPLF-administered Eritrea or the highland portion of it.

The TPLF had become even more explicit in its anti-Soviet stance. This was reflected in the "Concluding Declaration" issued by its "Sec-

ond Organizational Congress" in May 1983. It characterized this period as one in which world peace is "further endangered" by the "incessant imperialist competition and the proliferation of nuclear weapons" by the Soviet Union and the United States.²¹ It expressed "unreserved solidarity" with various movements including the US-supported counter-revolutionaries in Afghanistan and the Chinese-based Pol Pot forces fighting the Kampuchean regime.²²

Thus, the TPLF "called upon all anti-Derg and anti-Soviet aggression forces to co-ordinate and intensify their activities."²³ It resolved to raise the level of its alliance with the EPLF. It stated that it "will further strengthen its already existing relationship with the EPLF . . ."²⁴ It also declared that it would "co-operate and co-ordinate its activities with other national forces in Eritrea."²⁵

But, substitution of the TPLF for the EDU (as the "democratic" movement to take power in Addis Ababa following the overthrow of the PMAC) was unrealistic. The TPLF was unsuited to this purpose. As a Tigrean organization, it could not secure acceptance in the Amhara communities of northern and central Ethiopia, and in the non-Amhara communities of the South.

It appears that both the TPLF and its sponsors came to realize this problem. They found it necessary to popularize an organization more acceptable to non-Tigreans which, in effect, would be a puppet of the TPLF. Thus in 1983, several Ethiopian organizations—besides the TPLF and OLF—were given publicity in the Western press. These included the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), the Ethiopian People's Democratic Alliance (EPDA), the Liberation Front of the Ethiopian People (LIFREP), the National Front for the Liberation of the Ethiopian People (NFLEP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Ethiopia (DFLE).²⁶ These organizations lacked military presence in Ethiopia. Only the EPDM, which was created by the TPLF in 1983, seemed "to have a serious reality."²⁷ Led by Amharic speaking Ethiopians, it was "of major value to the TPLF as it allows the TPLF to operate outside Tigrean speaking areas where its own fighters are unacceptable."²⁸

EPLF Tightens Relations with Imperialism

The EPLF deepened its relations with imperialism and the right-wing Arab states. Now that there was no armed force in Eritrea or Ethiopia with an anti-imperialist orientation, it could maintain such relations without fear of being exposed before the Eritrean public. In a sense,

EPLF competed with the TPLF to become NATO's most favored opposition movement in Ethiopia.²⁹ It sought to overtake the TPLF which, with its pronouncements on "Soviet Social-Imperialism," had been more overtly anti-Soviet. The EPLF also competed with other anti-Soviet Eritrean groups for prestige and respect from Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. It tuned its propaganda even more to suit these states which, because of the religious factor, would normally lean more favorably toward the other Eritrean groups.

Until early 1982, the EPLF pretended it was not isolated from the world revolutionary movement. Some of its leaders even claimed that the Eritrean cause, as represented by the EPLF, enjoyed "widespread sympathy . . . throughout the world."³⁰ EPLF "diplomats" abroad claimed they were building ties with progressive African states. In May 1982, Amde Micael Khasai stated EPLF's relations were "excellent" with Algeria and improving with Mozambique, Madagascar, Angola, and the Francophone African states.³¹

There was no sign confirming Amde Micael's claims regarding relations with anti-imperialist African states, although Mozambique had declared its support for Eritrean independence in 1979. There is no doubt however that the EPLF had established some contacts with Senegal and other Francophonic African states, several of whose ruling parties belong to the Socialist International.

Furthermore there were growing indications—from the EPLF and pro-EPLF writers—that EPLF's policies this time were consistent with the second phase of the US plan on Eritrea. Several writers claimed to have noted EPLF's willingness to settle for a "federal" solution of sorts within an Ethiopian state. In a review of the pro-EPLF works *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa* and *Behind the War in Eritrea*, Bill Freund (of Harvard University) wrote:

The independence of Eritrea can be defended as that of an unwillingly colonized territory, first of Italy and then of Ethiopia, but while valid as far as it goes, this line of reasoning follows an unsatisfactory legalistic argument also. Is not the emergence of co-operative and federal forms in the Horn the only real hope for the area, the only real antithesis to the historic weight of imperial Ethiopia? Yet, both books, despite analytical limitations, convince the reader that there seem to be more possibilities in this direction in the EPLF and other insurgent movements than in the politics of General [sic] Mengistu. They suggest as well that the travails of the people in the Horn will continue for years to come before the achievement of any such solution.³²

Thus, for the "federal" or other "co-operative" solutions to be real-

ized in the Horn "General Mengistu" has to go. The Ethiopian revolution must be reversed and Ethiopia retrieved by the West before the question of Eritrea can be solved on a federal or any other similar basis.

The two books reviewed by Freund contain no hints of EPLF's preparedness for a solution along the line of federation or autonomy. (In fact, they were published in 1980-81 in support of the EPLF, which at that time was lambasting the ELF, charging it with seeking a negotiated settlement under the auspices of Moscow!) But Freund's contention in 1982 held significance nonetheless as an indication of what Freund knew the EPLF was up to. It reflected his knowledge of EPLF's readiness this time to become openly associated with the idea of federal or other such solutions following the overthrow of the PMAC.

At this point, EPLF leaders were indicating that the EPLF's central objective was to put pressure on the PMAC and breed turmoil in Ethiopia. In May 1982, Amde Micael Khasai stated:

We will fight and hold the offensive. We intend to contribute to the aggravation of the internal situation in Ethiopia.³³ (emphasis added)

Later, EPLF leaders elucidated this counter-revolutionary aim more clearly. In August 1983, EPLF Politburo member, Sebat Efreem, visited the US. He addressed Eritrean groups in various parts of the country including Washington, D.C. He touched on the subject of coup d'etats, stressing repeatedly that social changes could be brought about by overthrowing the individuals or groups in power. In support of this theory, he mentioned Iran and Nicaragua, as if what happened in these countries in 1979 were only coup d'etats and not revolutions.

The "social change" Eritreans need, he stressed, can be achieved by overthrowing the PMAC. According to observers who attended the talk, Sebat Efreem referred not to Eritrean independence but only to the objective of overthrowing the PMAC.

In the same talk, Sebat surprised his audience by frequent use of the term "democratic" to characterize the fight against the "fascist" PMAC. He praised all "democratic" forces, whatever their class interest or character. He even seemed to apologize to those Eritreans who, in past years, called for "democratic" struggle without any regard for questions of class interests, social structures, or ideologies. Sebat's statement indicated that the EPLF was a "democratic" movement like the EDU. It hinted that the EPLF was not pursuing "Eritrean independence" but acting as one of the local Ethiopian movements to overthrow the PMAC.

In early 1984, another EPLF leader visiting the US emphasized Sebatian's point: the struggle was "democratic" and any group, irrespective of class interest, could participate. The visitor was Al-Amin Mohamed Said, member of the Politburo, and the place was again Washington, D.C.

Al-Amin stressed that any Eritrean group opposed to the PMAC could join the projected "Patriotic Council." He particularly emphasized that Eritreans espousing capitalism could join the Council and the "democratic" struggle. The EPLF was now "democratic" enough to allow the bourgeoisie and the feudalists to strive for the overthrow of the Ethiopian regime.

The EPLF was thus integrated into the movement of "nationalist" and other Ethiopian trends which by 1983 were almost openly supported by the CIA as "pro-Western."³⁴ Thus, for all practical purposes, it became an imperialist-instigated movement changing tunes in accordance with Washington's tactical shifts in the Horn.

Washington Seeks to Entice Ethiopia

In early 1982 Washington made some curious moves apparently meant to win over the Ethiopian government peacefully. In January, the *Washington Post* carried a series of articles confirming "Ethiopia's shift to socialism brings major social reforms."³⁵ Soon the Department of State and the Immigration and Naturalization Service revoked the temporary resident status—Voluntary Departure as it is called—of an estimated 28,000 to 40,000 Ethiopians and Eritreans in the US. The professed justification for this decision was "the stabilization of conditions in Ethiopia."³⁶

The admission that social reforms were thriving in revolutionary Ethiopia was out of character for the *Washington Post* and for the big business media in general. It was inconsistent with this media's denial that "socialism" or the "socialist road" could bring about positive reforms.

The decision to revoke the status of Voluntary Departure on grounds of "stabilization" in Ethiopia was at once puzzling and ironic, puzzling because it accompanied the quickening resettlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees from the Sudan and elsewhere in the US, ironic because it contradicted Washington's customary accounts of "turmoil" and "violation of human rights" in Ethiopia (and in socialist and national democratic states generally). Clearly, the decision constituted a message to the PMAC. In the words of a political analyst, it

"might have been a signal to the Mengistu government that the US is interested in normalizing relations . . ."³⁷

Washington further endeavored to impress the Ethiopian regime with the benefits of abandoning the USSR and allying with the US. State Department officials declared that the US "regarded the fight between Eritrean rebels and the Ethiopian government as an internal matter."³⁸ Significantly, it was then (early 1982) that EPLF spokesmen made pronouncements stressing EPLF's purported readiness for self-determination without insisting upon separation as the only acceptable form.³⁹

By all indications, Washington did not expect to win over the PMAC. This probably explains the half-heartedness of its "signals," the continuation of the resettlement program, and the fact that no Ethiopian or Eritrean was actually deported from the US after the revocation of the status of Voluntary Departure. It also indicates why Washington continued to support the "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Indeed, the Reagan administration's "signals" provided a "basis" for a future claim that the possibilities for a peaceful rapprochement with Ethiopia had been exhausted. Policy makers sought to ward off possible criticism by liberal circles when the time came for a more vigorous policy against the PMAC.

Not surprisingly, Washington's "signals" proved unattractive to Ethiopia. The Addis Ababa regime would neither terminate friendship with the USSR nor re-establish subservient ties with the US.

It was not too long before Washington overtly antagonized Ethiopia again. And soon the EPLF and other "nationalist" movements in the country stepped up their military activities and propaganda.

Washington Resumes Hostilities Against Ethiopia

In the early summer of 1982, a time of wars and skirmishes in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, Washington resumed activities against Ethiopia.

At that time the Begin-Sharon offensive was underway in Beirut. Iran and Iraq fought in renewed fratricide. In the Horn, the Somali regime combated popular opposition forces including the Ethiopian based Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SDSF).

The US used the domestic conflict in Somalia as a pretext to send more arms to the Mogadisho regime. To many observers there was no doubt the arms were mainly intended for use against Ethiopia.

Washington also used the occasion to resume its propaganda offensive against the Ethiopian regime. US officials, including UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, called the PMAC one of the most "repressive"—"totalitarian"—regimes in the world.

Washington's renewed confrontational attitude appeared also in the reversal of its decision concerning Ethiopians and Eritreans in the US. The Reagan administration dropped the threat to deport these exiles. The announcement came on the 6th of July 1982.⁴⁰ Though preceded by a Congressional resolution opposing the earlier decision, the reversal was basically an act of the Administration. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Elliot Abrams, "spearheaded the move to revise official policy towards Ethiopian refugees."⁴¹

Congressional sponsors of that resolution acted for a variety of reasons, several of which differed from those of Reagan's Executive Branch. The liberals among them, including Senators Kennedy and Tsongas, urged reversal on considerations of humanitarianism. The members of the Congressional Black Caucus had disapproved of the original decision to deport because of its racist dimensions.⁴² They had viewed it as discriminatory, considering the ease with which European exiles (particularly those from the socialist countries), acquire residence in the US.

But some other sponsors of the resolution including Senator Daniel Moynihan and Representative Jack Kemp, were motivated by sheer anti-communism. They favored permitting Ethiopians to stay in the US because they regarded them as right-wing fugitives from "communism." Kemp dubbed the Ethiopian regime "one of the most barbaric in the world."⁴³

As Washington renewed its anti-Ethiopia posture, the EPLF resorted to venomous charges against the PMAC, other progressive governments in the region, and the USSR.

EPLF's Charges and Propaganda

The EPLF had not actually halted, but only minimized, propaganda against the PMAC and the USSR. Thus, even as it declared in early 1982 that separation was not the only solution to the Eritrean problem, it still made serious allegations against the PMAC, the USSR, and their friends in the region.

The allegations coincided with the "6th offensive," as the EPLF called the PMAC's "Operation Red Star," which began in early 1982. It accused foreign powers—the USSR, Libya, and South Yemen—of participating on the Ethiopian side. It informed reporters that, in addition to the "100,000" Ethiopian soldiers "grouped in 13 divisions," there were "400 Soviet advisors (including four generals)" fighting the EPLF.⁴⁴ One of its leaders even put the number of Soviet advisors at 1000.⁴⁵

The EPLF also charged that Libyan and South Yemen pilots were flying Mig 21's and Mig 23's and raiding EPLF's positions. The Libyans,

it was said, poured millions of dollars into "Operation Red Star." South Yemen, the EPLF continued, also provided "sea transport" and sent its Navy to "participate in the shelling of our coastal positions."⁴⁶

More seriously, the EPLF escalated its charges that Ethiopia actually used the nerve gas or chemical weapons allegedly supplied to it by the USSR. Even before the announcement of the war, it had issued a press release stating Ethiopia would use chemical weapons. The January 5, 1982 statement declared that

... the single most dangerous weapon brought forward by the Ethiopians is the Soviet-supplied stock of nerve gas, a highly poisonous chemical weapon never before used against which our fighters and civilian population have virtually no effective defense.⁴⁷

Following the commencement of the war, the EPLF reiterated reports of nerve gas. It gave the date and place at which the nerve gas had been used: February 15, in Turukruk (Sahel Province).⁴⁸

The Western media turned this into sensational news. It reported that, "according to the EPLF" or "according to guerilla sources," the Ethiopian government had used Soviet-supplied chemical gas on defenseless people.

In New York, as before, the EPLF promoted demonstrations at UN Plaza, the Ethiopian Mission to the UN, and the Soviet Mission to the UN.⁴⁹ Demonstrations also took place in Italy, West Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.⁵⁰ Right-wing governments, political parties, and anti-communist organizations (sometimes bearing "labor" and "socialist" designations) joined the chorus. In addition to the Somali government and others in the region, these included the British Labor Party, the Italian Socialist Party, the French Socialist Party, and the Inter African Socialist Organization which met in Dakar, Senegal, in February 1982. The chemical weapons charge was the chief rallying point.⁵¹

Incidentally, the EPLF had promised to prove that chemical weapons had been used. In early 1982, it claimed to have collected "samples for analysis" which would soon "provide concrete evidence."⁵² But it did not furnish any such evidence.

It was clear that the EPLF was misrepresenting the facts. Pressed by demands for proof, its spokesmen became frustrated and, at times, embarrassed. One of these, Ermias Debesai said in early 1982:

People keep on asking for proof, but we never make false allegations. The gas is just part of the huge supply of arms from the Soviet Union. So far, the gas has been fired into our combat positions by mortar.⁵³

Ermias' statement, which promised no "proofs," appeared a few months after the collection of the samples and presumably subsequent to their "analysis."

For a time, the EPLF made contradictory statements on the military situation. On the one hand, it alleged Ethiopia's use of nerve gas against EPLF fighters who "have virtually no effective defense." On the other hand, it claimed that the same fighters were beating back the Ethiopian forces.⁵⁴

Apparently, the EPLF finally realized that its fighters could not be victorious while being consumed by nerve gas. And so it modified its story on the character and impact of the gas. In February 1982, it declared: "The gas appears to be a disabling, rather than a fatal variety."⁵⁵

EPLF's nerve gas story intensified at a time when the Reagan administration was laying "the groundwork for a presidential decision" to begin the manufacture of new chemical weapons, alleging the USSR was producing them in plenty.⁵⁶ The reports were also intended to excuse the probable losses by the EPLF in its engagement with Ethiopian forces. Though for several months, EPLF leaders admitted no losses, they finally conceded that they had been forced to make "tactical changes" due to the effect of chemical weapons. Ermias Debesai explained that "we have had to change our tactics . . . because the Ethiopians have been using nerve gas."⁵⁷

EPLF's arguments widened in the summer of 1982, coinciding with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the resumption of open hostility by Washington towards Ethiopia. On June 12th, the EPLF issued an "Important Declaration" which included bitter and far right condemnations of the USSR, Libya, South Yemen and Ethiopia. It stated once again that it was fighting mainly the Soviet Union and its allies in the region. Indeed, the EPLF "is not fighting the fascist Dergue's troops but the Soviet Union and its partners."⁵⁸ This was because "the command of the (Ethiopian) army" fighting in Eritrea "has been entirely transferred to the Soviet generals."⁵⁹

The EPLF described Libya and South Yemen, together with their senior "partner" the USSR, as "the principal actors and beneficiaries of the ongoing offensive."⁶⁰ Its accusations against Libya's Moumar Gaddafi were strikingly similar to those made by Washington and its proxies in the region. It stated that Gaddafi was providing assistance to Ethiopia "in his attempt to realize his hitherto unfulfilled fantasy . . . of 'becoming a great leader of a vast territory' . . ." ⁶¹ The EPLF charged that South Yemen had participated in the battles on the side of Ethiopia and made its "naval transport ships" available for military use.⁶²

The "Declaration" made attacks on the Treaty of Friendship and Co-

operation between Ethiopia, Libya and the PDRY. Washington, Cairo, Khartoum, and Magadisho, it is to be recalled, had labeled the treaty a device for Soviet control of the region. Likewise, the EPLF charged the Soviet Union with "supplying the fascist Dergue with arms" and instigating "it to unleash war" in order "to implement a strategy that it has formulated to protect its own interests" in the region.⁶³ It thus called upon the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia "to step up their struggle against Soviet presence in the area."⁶⁴

The EPLF had spewed anti-Soviet propaganda in the past too. What was new about the "Declaration" was the emphasis on struggle against Soviet policy and "Soviet presence" in the general region. In a statement issued in December 1982 EPLF leader Isayas Afeworki emphasized the theme of opposition to "Soviet presence":

Generally speaking, the *situation in our region* has two central dimensions. The first constitutes *the aspirations of the peoples of the Horn* for liberation, prosperity and peace, while the second is the cravings of the Soviet Union—whose international influence is diminishing and *which is losing ground in our region*—to maintain its presence in the Horn of Africa and through this its presence in the Middle East at any cost, including by crushing the legitimate rights of peoples. Though other factors may be involved, *the main confrontation* is essentially between these two interests.⁶⁵ (emphasis added)

Having condemned the main enemy, Isayas went on to deny the presence of imperialism in Eritrea and in the region. In his words "imperialism and Zionism are non-existent in Eritrea."⁶⁶ He considered "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Zionism" in the region a "spurious rationale."⁶⁷

At the same time, Isayas fully defended Siad Barre's regime in Somalia. He attacked the Soviet Union and Ethiopia as the manipulators of the progressive "Somali Democratic Salvation Front" (SDSF) fighting the Siad Barre regime. Referring to skirmishes between the SDSF and Barre's forces in late 1982, Isayas said:

The various political ploys conjured up by the Soviet Union and the Ethiopian regime to consolidate their power have invariably failed and proved to no avail. At this stage even the military institution they regard as their unswerving political base is not only cracking but, more ominously, has commenced to raise arms in dissension. The recent border incursion into Somalia territory under the umbrella of what they called the "Somali Salvation Democratic Front" in a haphazard attempt to create internal and external confusion, is evidence of their desperation.⁶⁸

And therefore, Isayas declared that the EPLF "condemns the Soviet-Dergue aggression on Somalia."⁶⁹

EPLF's Advocacy of a Regional War

Beginning in mid-1982, certain indications emerged that the EPLF and its international backers sought to widen the conflict. They were intent on involving the Sudan and its allies in the region in a confrontation with Ethiopia.

The signs were apparent in the publications of the EPLF, and in the "reports" prepared by Western supporter-correspondents.

The EPLF repeatedly charged that the fighting had spilled over into the Sudan. Ermias Debesai stated:

... the Ethiopian forces crossed the frontiers . . . We know that they have penetrated at least six kilometers into Sudan in an attempt to encircle our forces. We are enquiring of President Nimeiri what action he intends to take because we see this as an Ethiopian attempt to provoke Sudan.⁷⁰ (emphasis added)

One of the Western journalists implying Ethio-Sudanese confrontation and regional war was Dan Connel. Connel reported "the continuing battles in northern Eritrea and the Sudan:"⁷¹

Sudanese diplomats in Washington also say they have no information about the spread of the fighting into Sudan, but they express concern that such a development could threaten the fragile rapprochement between that country and Ethiopia.⁷² (emphasis added)

Another EPLF fan, Gayle Smith, wrote in the same vein:

Khartoum-based diplomats also express concern over the danger of an escalation that could draw the entire region into a larger political confrontation at a time when the US backed Sudan government is increasingly unstable. The Sudan . . . has sought to remain neutral towards the Ethio-Eritrean conflict, but there are reports that the latest fighting has spilled into northeastern Sudan.⁷³

Such reports of fighting in the Sudan accompanying EPLF's objections to "Soviet presence" indicated preparations to attack progressive states using Nimeiri's regime and the "nationalist" forces in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Some free-lancers even predicted the "coming" of a devastating war in the Horn. In June 1982, Dan Connel anticipated such:

Political developments in the strategic Horn of Africa have lately slipped out of headlines; but the confrontation brewing there could dwarf earlier conflicts in both military fury and political complexity.⁷⁴

The "confrontation" could only have been a regional war involving several states in addition to the Eritrean and other "nationalist" forces in

Ethiopia: the Sudan, Egypt, Somalia, and other right wing states on one hand; Ethiopia, and possibly Libya and South Yemen on the other.

Connel made striking reference to the EPLF as the "powerful Marxist-led Eritrean nationalist government."⁷⁵ This was the first instance in which the EPLF was referred to as a "government." The reference connoted the apparent intention of Western powers to elevate the EPLF to a sort of provisional government⁷⁶ (all the more plausible given their cooperation in EPLF's efforts to attain observer status at the UN.⁷⁷) This would have provided the Western powers with the "basis" for overtly assisting the EPLF "provisional government" in the "national liberation" war against the PMAC and the Soviet Union.

But the reference to the EPLF as a "government" appeared nowhere else. Nor did Dan Connel repeat it.

The PMAC was still in firm control of the situation in Ethiopia. It seems the US and its allies noted the time was not yet ripe for sparking the regional war and for implementing the ultimate plan on Eritrea and Tigrai. Possibly for this as well as other reasons the EPLF started to re-emphasize the goal of Eritrean separatism, while collaborating with the West, Nimeiri, and Ethiopian counterrevolutionaries to bring about a situation in which to overthrow the PMAC.

Workers' Party in Ethiopia

For the most part, 1984 in Ethiopia was dominated by final preparations for the inauguration of the Workers' Party. This period was also one in which imperialism and its supporters tried to obstruct revolutionary developments in Ethiopia, including the formation of the Workers' Party.

Provocations through Nimeiri's Sudan

In 1983 and early 1984 the regime of Jafer Nimeiri in Khartoum was fundamentally shaken by opposition forces in the northern (Arab) Sudan and the armed insurgency in the Southern region. In an effort to deflect the attention of the Sudanese people from internal problems, the regime alleged that Ethiopia and Libya were plotting against it and supporting these and other opposition movements.¹

On the 16th of March 1984 a bizarre incident took place in Khartoum: the bombing of a residential area in the vicinity of the Omdurman radio station. Apparently this was the work of the government itself.² One of its main targets, according to opposition spokesmen, was the residence of Sadiq el Mahdi, a leader of an opposition group in the north.

Nimeiri's regime alleged the bombs were dropped by Libyan planes; Washington supported this allegation. On the excuse of aiding the Sudan against "external" threats, the Reagan administration sent more arms to its allies in the area: AWAC planes to Cairo, and coun-

terinsurgency and other weaponry to the Sudan.³ The Sudanese government also declared a state of emergency and imposed martial law.⁴

Using this episode Washington fortified Nimeiri's government against the Sudanese people and against the movement in the oppressed Southern region. It also facilitated the transfer of weapons to the Sudan—weapons which were to find their way to the EPLF in Eritrea and the TPLF in Ethiopia. Naturally the military supply to the Sudan aroused Ethiopian suspicion and protest. It also torpedoed the talks underway between the two states, which thus became fiercely antagonistic to each other. Apparently the Ethiopian government was not wrong to suspect that much of the weaponry would be used against it.

EPLF Increases Activity Inside Eritrea

Coinciding with Sudan's propaganda in early 1984, the EPLF escalated military activities inside Eritrea, particularly in the western region. It seized the towns of Tessenei and Alighidir at the cost of a considerable number of lives. According to some reports the seizure of these towns aimed to demonstrate to the world that the EPLF still had a military existence inside Eritrea.

In the third week of March 1984 the Western media reported that the EPLF had scored "what can be considered the Eritreans' biggest victory since the start of the civil war about twenty years ago."⁵ The reports inflated Ethiopian losses and made no mention of those sustained by the EPLF.

One thing significant in the reports about EPLF's "biggest victory": the implication that the EPLF now possessed highly effective weapons including "a range of anti-aircraft guns."⁶ These guns could only have been supplied to the EPLF by the US through its proxies in the region. Actually, they may well have been part of the arms Washington supplied the Sudan in March 1984.

At the end of May 1984 the EPLF damaged several of Ethiopia's aircraft in Asmara;⁷ but its claim to have destroyed over 30 of them was an exaggeration. It did not accomplish this by raiding the airport or shooting from the area close to it. According to some observers, it damaged the aircraft from a considerable distance using the sophisticated US weapons channeled via Nimeiri's regime.

Situation in the "Eritrean" movement

By 1984 a marked shift had occurred in the alignment of forces within the "Eritrean" movement. The shift represented an aggravation of the division and animosity along religious lines.

In a development which appeared to counter the preparations for

the 2nd phase of the US plan on Eritrea, the EPLF and Osman Sabbe's ELF-PLF halted their rapprochement. They abandoned the unification process which they had officially started in 1983. Osman Sabbe now gravitated towards the Tripartite agreement initiated in Saudi Arabia in 1983. In late June 1984, the ELF-PLF, ELF-RC, and ELF-PLF-RC met in Khartoum and "agreed to unite by the end of the year."⁸

In mid-1984, the EPLF unleashed a propaganda campaign heavily charged with anti-Arabism. The tone and content of its propaganda was typified by the claims and other pronouncements made by Sebhat Efreem in Washington D.C. in mid-August. Sebhat stated EPLF's categorical rejection of unity with the Tripartite groups, expressing a particular animosity towards those led by Abdullah Idris. He condemned these groups as "anti-national" forces sustained by Arab sponsors. At the same time however Sebhat declared EPLF willingness to unite with "national" Eritrean groups. So he claimed that his organization was engaged in a unity process with "Saghim," the predominantly Christian faction formerly in the ELF.⁹

In polemicizing against Abdullah Idris' ELF-RC, Sebhat singled out Yohannes Zeremariam, the Vice-Chairman. He branded Yohannes a "mercenary" and likened him to Heroui Tedla Bairu. EPLF's resolve to "expose" Yohannes made sense only in the context of the sectarian feuds in Eritrea. Yohannes was a Christian from the predominantly Moslem tribe of Mensai in the western low-lands. The EPLF feared that he could possibly influence some Christians and jeopardize its sectarian objectives.

Perhaps the EPLF leaders also feared that Yohannes might undermine or at least compete with them for greater attention from Washington. It is quite significant that Yohannes, who first visited Washington in the summer of 1983, returned to the US in early November 1984, just two months after Sebhat.

In his talks Sebhat had sounded like a crusader on a war mission against Moslems and Arabs. His statements clearly indicated that there would be wars with the "Arab sponsored" forces of Abdullah and others.

Indeed, a few days after his talk there erupted another round of internecine fighting in Eritrea.

The Internecine Battle

Abdullah's forces had caused considerable damage to the EPLF in the Barka region. They had mined many parts of the region. Quite a number of EPLF's lorries and tanks were blown up. Several of EPLF's fighters were maimed and a few killed.

Towards the end of August the EPLF attacked the forces of ELF-PLF-RC and ELF-RC in their bases which were actually in Sudanese territory. Osman Sabbe's combatants (ELF-PLF) were not touched. Contrary to initial reports, which stated that only Abdullah's forces sustained casualties, losses were heavy on both sides.

The incident seemed to have repercussions in the Middle East. Abdullah appealed to the conservative Arab states which assist all the anti-Soviet organizations in Eritrea, including the "Christian" EPLF. These states, which included the Sudan and Saudi Arabia, formally ordered the closure of EPLF offices. But this move appeared only temporary and did not adversely affect the EPLF in any fundamental sense.

Ethiopia Declares a Workers' Party

In a well-organized and highly publicized celebration of the revolution's 10th anniversary, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) was inaugurated on the 12th of September 1984.

The celebration was attended by representatives of all the socialist and anti-imperialist states, as well as national liberation movements. Leaders of neighboring states not unfriendly to Ethiopia also attended. The Soviet Communist Party sent a high level delegation, led by Grigory Romanov, then member of the CPSU Central Committee and Politburo.

The convention elected a Central Committee which in turn elected the General Secretary and other members of the Politburo. It also set up the various leading bodies of the party. Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam was unanimously elected as the General Secretary of the party. He was praised as a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary, both by his colleagues and by foreign dignitaries.

The Politburo includes elements from various social and national groups: military and civilian personnel, revolutionary intellectuals, and experienced civil servants from various nationalities. The class composition of the Central Committee warrants the designation of the party as that of working people. For the most part it includes workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, and middle-and lower-ranking military.

On the whole, however, the party as well as the Central Committee and the Politburo are still dominated by the military elite led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. To a large extent, this reflects the reality of Ethiopia which is marked by counter-revolutionary endeavors including insurgencies which brought about what is practically a situation of emergency.

In comparison with the leadership of the pre-convention Organizing Commission (COPWE) there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of civilians in the Central Committee and the Politburo.¹⁰ This sug-

gests that eventually a civilian Marxist vanguard may evolve to become the leading body. In fact the main significance of the party is that it provides a structure which can evolve—something whose contents can be refined to furnish a developed Marxist-Leninist party. It is something to build on.

Party Program and a Ten Year Development Plan

The founding congress of the WPE approved the party program and the 10-year plan for Ethiopia's economic and social development. Both documents detail the ways in which Ethiopia will proceed along the socialist path.

The Program proceeds from the assessment that even though the national democratic program of 1976 has been realized in the main, key areas remain unfulfilled. The task is thus to complete the national democratic revolution and "set up a material and technical base" for building a socialist society and a People's Democratic Republic. The Program sums up the experience of the Ethiopian Revolution in the 10-year period since 1974. It identifies the features of this stage in Ethiopia's revolution and accordingly outlines the tasks of the revolution.

The Program states the domestic and international tasks of the party. It stipulates party goals in the fields of education, agriculture, industry, and mass organizational and ideological works. It stresses Ethiopia's commitment to anti-imperialism, peaceful co-existence, and social progress.¹¹

The Program declares that the party's activities in the international sphere will be "based on the principle of proletarian internationalism." Ethiopia will strengthen "all-round links" with the socialist community of states, and the national liberation movements. It will enhance its contribution to the defeat of imperialism and the elimination of "all forms of oppression and exploitation," including colonialism, racism, and Zionism.

The 10 year plan specifies the objectives of socio-economic development. It provides a framework of centralized planning. It outlines an extensive and multi-faceted program of industrialization. By 1993 the industrial output will grow and its share in the GNP will increase from 16.6% to 24%. In the field of agriculture too, output will grow but its share in the GNP will decrease from 48.3% to 39.1%. By 1993 the majority of the peasants in the country (53%) will be members of producer's co-operatives.

The plan envisages progress in other areas of socio-economic development as well, including energy, construction, and communications. It focuses on the goal of improving living standards in Ethiopia. It envi-

sions the growth of the annual per capita income from 282 Ethiopian dollars to 397 by the end of the 10-year plan. It provides agendas on ways of increasing "the output of food stuffs and clothes," housing development, and dealing with the problem of unemployment. It outlines avenues of educational and cultural development and improvement of health care.

On the Problem of Nationalities and Eritrea

There was no indication of a significant policy change on the problem of nationalities, including that of Eritrea. Scanty references to this problem appeared in speeches and newspaper reports confirming the general policy based on the National Democratic Program of 1976.

In his report,¹² Mengistu Haile Mariam briefly mentioned the subject of nationalities. He practically ruled out separation as a possible manifestation of self-determination for any of the nationalities or regional entities in Ethiopia. He stressed that secession from Ethiopia at the present would only deprive the working people in the region or the nationality concerned of their true independence and of the opportunity for social progress. The aim behind efforts for secession today, he added, can only be "to join the camp of reaction and imperialism."

He said that the nationalities would exercise self-determination within the framework of Ethiopian unity. All nationalities were equal and would enjoy self-determination or regional autonomy. Such exercise of self-determination would strengthen their unity, enhance their fraternal relations and common prosperity, and promote respect for their integrity. Apparently the same policy applied to Eritrea. There was at least no indication in the Chairman's speech of any different approach.

Writings in the Ethiopian press reflected the same position or policy on Eritrea. At the opening of the Party's Founding Convention, *The Ethiopian Herald*¹³ carried an article addressing the problem in Eritrea which it said was "created by the united front of separatists and imperialism." It praised the "uninterrupted efforts" of the PMAC "to solve the problem peacefully on the basis of the programme of the National Democratic Revolution and the right of all nationalities to self-determination" which is that of regional autonomy.

The article described Eritrea as a region which "has always been the core of historical Ethiopia." Because of the stance taken by the "separatists and their mentors," armed confrontation was going on in Eritrea. The Ethiopian masses "are determined to save their revolution and preserve the historic unity of their Motherland." It claimed that the Ethiop-

ans were now "in the final stages of defeating these enemies politically and otherwise as well." (emphasis added)

Views such as this, which were expressed in the government newspaper, and the absence of any new declared policy on Eritrea made it clear that the new party will pursue the same policy the PMAC followed after the declaration of the NDR in 1976.

EPLF Rejects the WPE

Like its underwriters in the West and the Arab world the EPLF had aimed at frustrating the formation of the Workers' Party. In his talks in Washington, D.C. EPLF's Sebat Efrem had denounced the final preparations (August '84) for the inauguration of the WPE. He declared that what was being undertaken was an organization of the military which cannot be a peoples' party.

Sebat also expressed EPLF's determination to frustrate prospects of socio-economic development in Ethiopia. Speaking in New York City, he stated explicitly that his organization would destroy whatever projects the Ethiopian government launches in the name of socio-economic development.

At that time (August-September) imperialism was renewing efforts to wean the PMAC away from socialism by assuring the PMAC that "Eritrea" could be solved by negotiations on the basis of regional autonomy (not secession) provided the Ethiopian regime would terminate its "dependence" on the USSR. This approach resembled one put forward earlier by Western spokesmen: the idea of convincing the PMAC to follow what Jaafer Nemeiri did in 1972 in connection with the Anya Nya movement in the South.

While imperialism was offering the possibility of such a solution in Eritrea, ideas about "negotiations" and political solutions were leaking out from the EPLF. This was hardly coincidental. For the first time, known EPLF supporters began to speak of the need for a peaceful solution. Lionel Cliffe, who co-edited a pro-EPLF work in 1980 and has since visited EPLF controlled areas in Eritrea wrote:

... if the superpowers are to be dissuaded from using the new situation to renew their cold war efforts in the Horn of Africa it is vital that progressive forces support any practicable peace formula. For it is only by a negotiated settlement that the Eritrean issue can be solved in a manner that does not lead to a total disintegration of the states of the Horn.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

At the same time, the EPLF itself expressed readiness for a peaceful solution. It discussed such a solution in the 6th regular meeting of its "Central Committee" held in early September 1984. In a "Declaration,"¹⁵

the EPLF stated that, coincident with its "unrelenting" military campaign, it had sought to bring about a "peaceful political solution." The same Declaration characterized the PMAC as a "fascist" regime conducting a colonial war in Eritrea. Clearly, the EPLF leadership was neither serious nor genuine in its rhetoric on a peaceful solution.

It is also quite curious that EPLF's Central Committee meeting, which had not taken place for the last five years, was held at exactly the same time as the Founding Convention of the Workers' Party in Addis Ababa. The EPLF might have been indicating that it was not impressed by the inauguration of the party in Ethiopia. It might have been trying to signal the world that, as far as it was concerned, there was no development in Ethiopia with any consequence or bearing on the Eritrean problem.

In fact, the EPLF attempted dramatic military operations while the Convention was going on in Addis Ababa. It was reported that, on the 12th of September (Revolution Day in Ethiopia), "bombs exploded near the main square" in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, killing 8 people and wounding 30.¹⁶

Rumors abound about secret meetings between the EPLF and representatives of the Ethiopian government in Rome, Aden, and Paris but there was then no official or otherwise concrete confirmation that such meetings took place. And the war was still going on in Eritrea.

Significance of the Party's Inauguration

The inauguration of the Workers' Party represented another phase in Ethiopia's development along the socialist path. The world revolutionary movement thus welcomed it. The head of the Soviet delegation to the Convention, Grigory Romanov, termed the formation of the party and its Program "an event of paramount importance for the revolution, for all working people of the country."¹⁷ He noted: "There is no doubt that under the leadership of the party Ethiopia's advance along the path it has chosen will be even more confident and fast."¹⁸

The USSR and other socialist states expressed their determination to help Ethiopia to succeed in its march along the socialist path.

The USSR and Ethiopia signed a long-term program of economic cooperation, the latest in a series of such agreements which are more than 50 in number. In substance the program coincides with the 10-year socio-economic plan, stipulating plans to raise the level of Soviet-Ethiopian economic relations and of Soviet assistance which "goes above all to the development of the key sectors of the Ethiopian economy." As Grigory Romanov said, it is "fresh evidence of the fact that the mutually

advantageous co-operation between our countries acquires an even larger scale and has good prospects."¹⁹

Accompanied by the signing of this program and other agreements strengthening Ethiopia's relations with the socialist community of states, the inauguration of the party solidly confirmed Ethiopia's choice of the socialist path. It delivered an unmistakable message to all concerned that Ethiopia was to stay firmly in the socialist (anti-imperialist) camp.

The US and allies were dismayed by what took place in Ethiopia. Observers acknowledged that it was time to "believe" that the socialist orientation is there to stay in Ethiopia.²⁰ Commentators portrayed Ethiopia as the only African country where Soviet diplomacy or foreign policy has been a success. Conservative columnist Flora Lewis, in the midst of rereflexions about how "Moscow mishandled its chances in Africa," referred to Ethiopia as the exception: she cited Somalia, Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea as states which, to varying degrees, were establishing links with the US at the expense of their relations with the USSR. She stressed however that "the Kremlin can take a glint of satisfaction from the advancing communization of Ethiopia."²¹ Other commentators and reporters in the Western media depicted the inauguration of the party as an indication that Ethiopia had become a tightly-held satellite of the USSR. David Willis, for example, called Ethiopia the "USSR's biggest toehold in Africa."²²

The US Department of State derided the newly-established party as a Soviet-contrived project. One of its officers was quoted as having said that Ethiopia's "military leadership wouldn't have set it (the party) up at all if the Russians hadn't pressured them."²³

Ethiopian exiles opposed to the PMAC even charged that the establishment of the party was a violation of Ethiopia's sovereignty. Such Ethiopians in North America staged a demonstration in front of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C. on the 12th of September 1984. Members of the "democratic" and "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia joined the demonstration, or what was described as a "united Ethiopian voice of protest." They condemned the PMAC and the Soviet Union (or "Russians") for "undermining the nation's sovereignty with deceit and military might, trampling on the rights of the individual, and imposing ideology by decree."²⁴

Some American reporters dramatized their claims of Ethiopia's capitulation to "Moscow" by attaching derogatory implications to some aspects of Ethiopia's policy in recent times. David Willis referred to the fact that Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam "called off his visit to the West" in 1983 at "a time when Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gro-

myko, stayed away from the United Nations General Assembly.²⁵ He also referred to Ethiopia's absence from the Los Angeles Olympic Games to substantiate his claim that Ethiopia had become a Soviet satellite.

Some Western commentators could not help reflecting their apprehension that this development in Ethiopia would contribute to the growth of revolutionary movements in the region. Analysts in London feared "a Soviet showcase in Africa as a whole." They stressed that this was not "desirable for the West, since what happens in Ethiopia affects not just the Horn of Africa, but the Red Sea, such conservative Gulf states as Saudi Arabia, and the countries through which the Nile River flows, including Egypt and Sudan."²⁶

Failure of "Food" and Economic Pressure

From almost the beginning of the 1980's, the US and its allies had been using "food" as a weapon against Ethiopia, a means to force a change of socio-economic orientation.

But they were providing precious little aid, a pittance compared to that provided capitalist-orientated countries. Said "aid" made no significant difference in Ethiopia's famine problem. In mid-September 1984 this discriminatory policy against Ethiopia was acknowledged in *The New York Times*:

Several (relief experts) blamed the politics of international food aid. They argued that the outspoken Marxist government made Ethiopia a far less attractive recipient of aid from the West than other drought-stricken African nations.²⁷

The US and other Western governments had been using economic pressure in an effort to dissuade the PMAC from proceeding with its plan to establish the Workers' Party and "joining the Soviet camp formally." One commentator noted:

Ethiopia is already the biggest recipient of European economic aid of any of the Lome Treaty members. But will the Western powers be ready to go on helping Ethiopia once it joins the Soviet camp formally, and if, as seems highly probable, the deteriorating military situation leads to even more brutal repression, backed by the Soviets?²⁸

The inauguration of the Workers' Party in September 1984 was a firm indication that Ethiopia would nonetheless continue on the socialist road. Apparently, some observers had realized the ineffectiveness of the economic pressure even before the inauguration of the party. Colin Legum had warned that Ethiopian appeals for aid from the West did not signify any intention of abandoning the socialist road:

Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam—who is also the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity—is clearly a leader who should be taken at his word. Western policy makers who suggest that he might be weaned from his declared ambition of making Ethiopia into a vanguard party in Africa and to play a leading role in the Moscow oriented international communist movement, appear to seriously misinterpret his true intentions. Like other Marxist leaders, including those in the Soviet bloc countries, he wishes to improve diplomatic relations with the West and to attract foreign investment and aid; but this is a means of consolidating their regimes, not of changing their foreign policy orientation.²⁹

Dismayed by the failure of economic pressures, Western strategists now concentrated more directly on the aim of overthrowing the Addis Ababa regime. But, at the same time, they pretended to be concerned with new ways for weaning the regime away from the socialist community. They feigned interest in "new" approaches to the Ethiopian regime. One hinged on the existence of the "nationalist" movements and Ethiopia's debt to the USSR for military hardware. This thesis held that as long as the "nationalist" insurgencies continued to exist Ethiopia would remain "hostile to the United States and firmly allied to Moscow."³⁰ Its proponents, described in the *New York Times* as "Western diplomats who hope for a shift in the political stance in Addis Ababa," reportedly professed that only the cessation of the separatist wars or "a move by the Soviet Union to demand repayment of its arms bill" might "cool Addis Ababa's ardor for the Russians."³¹

If anything, these reports camouflaged undertakings actually inimical to the Ethiopian regime. While such theses were being proclaimed in the media, imperialism had already resorted to the use of Ethiopia's famine tragedy not for attracting the regime but for overthrowing it and reversing the country's orientation. In this regard, it also continued to utilize the "nationalist" movements, particularly those in Eritrea and Tigray.

Ethiopia's Famine: Moves for Counter-Revolution

The re-election of Ronald Reagan portended further dangers to world peace. It posed increasing threats to the sovereignty of many states in the developing world. In particular it meant the escalation of aggressive foreign policy towards the progressive developing states.

Fascist Forces Around Reagan

Reagan ran for re-election as the chief emissary of the "new coalition" of "fully mobilized, disciplined, sophisticated and well financed ultra-right and fascist forces" which "took over" the Republican Party and the Republican National Convention in 1984.¹

However, Reagan's re-election did not signify any popular endorsement of the agenda of the "fascist-tinged" groups around him.

While the media (in particular the TV networks), which caved in to the ultra-right forces, were promoting Ronald Reagan as "invincible" the fascist-like forces were already outlining strategies for Reagan's second term. Some were mapping out plans, in conjunction with fascist groups of other countries, to subvert progressive young states—including Ethiopia.

Aspects of these plans circulated at the 17th annual conference of an ultra-right organization known as the World Anti-Communist League (WACL) held in San Diego, California in September 1984.

The WACL was founded in 1966 with overt support from Taiwan and South Korea to coordinate the activities of fascist organizations, support fascist governments, and fund and sustain counterrevolutionary and terrorist movements everywhere. It pursues these objectives in the interest of combatting "the expansionism of communist influences throughout the world."²

The WACL's US affiliate is the United States Council for World Freedom (USCWF), which hosted the September 1984 annual conference at San Diego's Sheraton Harbor Island Hotel. Major-General (Ret.) John Singlaub, one of the most notorious ultra-right figures close to the Reagan administration, serves as USCWF chairman. He was elected president of WACL at the San Diego Conference. He and several other Reaganites affiliated with this organization belong to the American Security Council (ASC), which is one of the organs of the military industrial complex with "the greatest influence on Reagan Administration foreign policy."³

The WACL conference offered several highlights. First, Ronald Reagan warmly greeted the conference, thus becoming the first US president to openly praise and identify with this group. Also, representatives of counterrevolutionary forces operating in the developing world addressed the conference. These were the "anti-Soviet resistance movements" in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Nicaragua.⁴ Possibly, the EPLF and TPLF were among the "anti-Soviet resistance movements" in Ethiopia which sent "representatives" to participate in and address the "Anti-Communist International."

The WACL meeting adjourned declaring it would undertake various commitments, one of which was to increase its fundraising efforts. The money raised would boost ultra-right publicity campaigns and purchase medical supplies and weaponry for counterrevolutionary movements and reactionary dictatorships.

Soon after the re-election of Ronald Reagan, other signs appeared that the US ultra-right was seeking to enhance its influence in US foreign policy. Especially significant was the Heritage Foundation's recommendation that the Reagan administration escalate support to counterrevolutionary insurgencies in nine states in the developing world.⁵ One of the states named was Ethiopia.

The Heritage Foundation, an ultra-right think tank tied to the ASC had influenced the selection of "personnel" and "the shaping of policy" during Reagan's first term. The Foundation's proposals for the nine states may indeed influence Reagan's policy. Former National Security Advisor Richard Allen, now a fellow at the Heritage Foundation itself,

believes the recommendations "will have a very significant impact"⁶ on US policy makers during Reagan's second term.

Other countries slated for destabilization were Kampuchea, Laos, Vietnam, Angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Iran and Libya. Most were already facing various degrees of US-supported (and in some cases US-sponsored) measures of destabilization. The Foundation mentioned that the US was underwriting "cautious, limited" aid to the "insurgents" fighting the government of Afghanistan and "moderately effective" assistance to the anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua.

The Heritage Foundation was dissatisfied with the nature and level of assistance already provided. It termed aid to Nicaraguan contras and Afghan counterrevolutionaries "vague and ill-defined."

The only hope for these limited endeavors lies in the framework of a broader and more consistent United States policy, which in turn must be based on a stronger public consensus than exists today.⁷

The Foundation stressed that the nine states (which "threaten United States interests") be subjected to "paramilitary assets," operations by "existing rebel groups," or some "actions involving the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Department of Defence (DOD)":

Indigenous operational assets can be identified and developed, and the staff resources of CIA and DOD are in a position to expand significantly if required for a joint operational effort.⁸

Though implicitly admitting that such efforts may not succeed, the Foundation insisted on proceeding for the purpose of signaling

that the United States no longer will countenance the subversion or overthrow of friendly governments within the developing world.⁹

At the time of the Foundation's report, imperialism had already embarked on a multi-pronged plot against the Addis Ababa regime, in light of the worsening famine tragedy in Ethiopia. It vilified Ethiopia's socialist orientation, maligned and agitated for the overthrow of the regime and even tried to provoke a regional war.

Famine in Ethiopia and Sub-Saharan Africa

By late 1984 Ethiopia was not the only country in the continent with the problem of drought and famine. Twenty-three other states in sub-Saharan Africa faced the same problem, though to varying degrees.

The problem was neither new nor sudden, be it in Ethiopia or generally in sub-Saharan Africa. Sahelian countries like Chad, Mali, Niger and Mauritania were afflicted by the spread of the desert, a process

known as "desertification." Countries not bordering the Sahara, including Somalia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and even Kenya were affected by drought and threatened with famine.

The situation in Ethiopia was quite grave. And, certainly the regime's socialist orientation was not the cause. The famine was the culmination of a problem which had been going on for a long time.

Several factors accounted for this problem in Ethiopia, including deforestation, obsolete agricultural practices and the failure of rain.¹⁰ Serious deforestation had been going on throughout the century making the steep soil increasingly susceptible to erosion. The impact of this was aggravated by poor agricultural practices like ploughing up and down steep slopes and overgrazing.¹¹ Finally, a precipitating factor of the problem was the failure of rain in various parts of the country, particularly in Eritrea, and in the provinces of Tigray and Wollo. There had been no rainfall for three consecutive years.

It should be noted in this connection that the war situation in the northern region, particularly in Eritrea, contributed to the worsening of all the above factors. The insurgencies here "cost Ethiopia an estimated half a million dollars a day,"¹² thereby curtailing its financial ability to deal with the drought and with socio-economic problems in general.

Response of the Ethiopian Regime and of Allies

The present regime was aware of the possible consequences of the drought and famine. It was in its own interest to contain the danger of famine, which it knew was the factor which precipitated the downfall of Haile Sellasie in 1974.

It outlined long range as well as immediate measures to forestall drought and its consequences. The land reform it implemented since 1975 was expected to help in this respect. The distribution of land to the peasants and their freedom from the obligations to landlords could provide them with a big incentive to work on the farms with due regard to environmental and other concerns.

The government also made genuine but modest efforts to prevent soil erosion or at least to minimize it.¹³ It allocated millions of dollars for this purpose, and conducted a campaign to involve the peasants in this effort. It encouraged the Peasant Associations to undertake preventive measures like digging terraces and planting trees.

Since the beginning of the 1980's it was clear to the Ethiopian government, international organizations and some relief agencies that drought and famine were impending. They tried to secure aid, including from the US and other Western states. But, except for a modest response from the EEC countries, their efforts were in vain.

In late 1984 the government made the famine problem a top priority. It intensified to the maximum the campaign to obtain emergency assistance from the international community. It diverted financial resources from various areas—including military—and used them to assist the famine victims. It redeployed military trucks to transport food to the famine stricken areas.

As a major response the government set out on a huge project to resettle famine stricken people from the north to the fertile Gambella areas in the southwestern part of the country. The goal for 1985 was to resettle a total of one and a half million people. Since January tens of thousands were being evacuated from the north every month.

The ruling Workers' Party and the mass organizations played a big role in this regard. Thousands of party members as well as workers responding to the call of the All Ethiopia Trade Unions (AETU) went to the southwestern region to help the famine victims settle in the new environment.

The program was unprecedented in Ethiopia and perhaps in the whole of Africa. It was described as "one of the largest resettlement programs in recent history."¹⁴ It was also highly significant not only for Ethiopia but for all African countries with similar problems. Some Western "experts" had observed

If the project succeeds . . . it could become a model for other drought-stricken countries of sub-Saharan Africa whose growing populations are destroying the fragile environment that provides their subsistence.¹⁵

Hence, the enemies of Ethiopia and socialism endeavored to smear the concept of resettlement and to frustrate the project. On the other hand, humanitarian relief workers including the world renowned Mother Teresa of Calcutta admired and praised the resettlement effort.¹⁶

The Ethiopian government cooperated as well as it could in the transportation of food and other aid from the ports to the famine areas. But inconvenience, delays and other problems probably did appear. Ethiopia lacks adequate roads and other infrastructure; and the Red Sea ports are not well equipped for large freighters.

Problems in transportation, etc. also arose because the government was security conscious. It continued to face political and military problems particularly in the north. Actually, it had candidly stated that it could not ignore these in dealing with the famine.¹⁷

On the whole, the government's effort was commended. Even *The New York Times* reported at one point, the view of many "private relief workers" that "Ethiopia actually has one of the best famine response programs in Africa."¹⁸

The socialist countries and several other progressive states provided Ethiopia as much assistance as they could afford. Earlier, the USSR, the GDR and other socialist states (themselves food importers) had shipped limited food aid and various items necessary for relief operations. In late 1984 they stepped up their assistance. The USSR sent 10,000 tons of rice, over 200 trucks, a dozen airplanes, and two dozen helicopters.¹⁹ It also sent large water tank trucks and well drilling equipment and experts.

One of the most notable—and perhaps unprecedented—aspects of Soviet emergency help to Ethiopia was the installation of the hospital at Assosa which is the center of the southwestern region to which people were being resettled from the drought stricken northern provinces. The hospital was literally transported from the USSR—by sea and by air. It had a medical staff of 159 people and all the necessary equipment for surgical, therapeutic, pediatric, obstetrical and other purposes.²⁰

The German Democratic Republic allocated \$8 million in immediate emergency aid. It airlifted 3,000 tons of food aid including 200 tons of baby food, and several tons of medicine, blankets and tents. It also sent 35 trucks.²¹ Bulgaria sent flour, trucks, tractors and water pumps. Hungary sent tons of food products. Poland delivered a big supply of medicine;²² and Czechoslovakia provided a large volume of miscellaneous items.

Among Ethiopia's friends in the developing world, Libya provided a large team of doctors and nurses. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen sent 1250 tons of wheat flour.²³

The government of Ethiopia, which is aware of the agricultural situation in the USSR and most of the other socialist countries, was deeply appreciative of the relief assistance they provided. On several occasions the leaders and spokesmen of the government expressed their gratitude to these states.

US Policy: Food and Famine as Weapons

Ever since the US targeted Ethiopia for destabilization its policy has focused on the likelihood of another drought and famine such as that which precipitated the fall of Haile Selassie. It aimed to fulfill a long range scheme, which apparently was based on a plan stated by John Spencer in his testimony before the Senate Sub-Committee on African Affairs in 1976.

It is to be recalled that Spencer had advocated the use of "hunger" as a "weapon" against the Ethiopian regime. More specifically, he had put forward some suggestions as to how the hunger could be utilized to overthrow the PMAC (the Dergue) and how the US could use food and

other "funds" for enabling counterrevolutionary groups to seize power. He said:

... let the machinery (of the Ethiopian government-TM) run down by the weapon which is there already, the weapon unfortunately of hunger. Hunger is fueling the revolt . . . So let the process (of hunger) take place.

What happens? . . . there will be regional groups that will emerge with the downfall of the Dergue. When these begin to emerge, their leaders will emerge. What we do then is to give them funds. I am not saying who "we" are. We give them funds in order to meet the weapon, the weapon of hunger.

At that point, we can join with them, those who will be released from prison by the downfall of the Dergue and those national leaders from prison and national leaders in exile, and we have lists. The State Department has lists. Other agencies have lists.²⁴

This aspect of Spencer's testimony constituted a basis of US policy. While trying to win back Ethiopia in various ways, it seems the US harbored the Spencer plan as an option to which it could resort anytime.

The Reagan administration became increasingly eager about the implementation of Spencer's "process of hunger." Policy-makers in the Department of State—notably Chester Crocker—and in the National Security Council (NSC) led the unrelenting use of food and famine as weapons against Ethiopia. Indeed, they "let the process" of hunger "take place."

In early 1985 Columnist Jack Anderson wrote in investigative reports that the US administration knew "as far back as 1982" that drought and famine were growing in Ethiopia and approaching a disastrous level. But, he continued, the administration's response was dominated by the decision of the National Security Council which "insisted on using famine relief as a tool to extract political concessions from Ethiopia."²⁵

Anderson reported that a US inter-agency task force was established in 1982 "to deal with the problem" in Ethiopia. Represented in it were the Departments of State, Defense and Agriculture, the AID, the CIA and the NSC. The NSC—represented by a certain Fred Wettering, who Anderson said "now works at the CIA"—became one of the chief obstacles to the provision of relief aid to Ethiopia arguing, among other things, that "the Marxist regime should . . . make strategic concessions before it received US aid."²⁶

Of course, the Ethiopian regime made no concessions. The result was that thousands of Ethiopians died and by late 1984 millions were on the verge of death.

During October and November, 1984 the drought and famine in

Ethiopia became a major news item in the US and the Western media. TV networks ran films showing the plight of the stricken population in the northern regions. The extensive publicity aroused the sympathy of many people in the US (and Western Europe as well) who sent contributions to relief agencies.

At this juncture, the Reagan administration also donated several million dollars worth of food. But this donation was only meant to give the administration and other right-wing forces some kind of leverage for conducting subversive propaganda and further activities inimical to Ethiopia. Thus, at this phase, the Reagan administration sought to bring about the overthrow of the government and the socialist orientation in Ethiopia while providing a pittance of relief aid. Towards this aim it spewed ludicrous charges and propaganda against the Ethiopian regime, against the USSR and against socialism; and it increased overt support for the counterrevolutionary movements.

False Charges Against Ethiopia and Socialism

The right-wing campaign to discredit Ethiopia and socialism on the subject of the famine comprised several dimensions.

Some held that the Ethiopian government was not seriously concerned about the problem. They falsely alleged, for example, that it had spent an incredible \$150-200 million dollars on the inauguration of the Workers' Party,²⁷ and that it was not cooperating in the transportation of food aid from the Red Sea ports to the famine stricken areas in the heartland.

Senators and highly placed US officials made such allegations. Senator Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kansas), who opposed increasing relief to Ethiopia, stated that "the question is getting the food out of (Ethiopian) ports."²⁸ Peter McPherson, administrator of the Agency for International Development (AID), charged that "the Marxist Ethiopian government had at times closed off its ports to shipments of emergency aid, giving priority to cargoes of fertilizer and concrete from the Soviet Union."²⁹

Many other government officials as well as prominent columnists and commentators made similar charges. The propaganda that the USSR had provided no assistance to Ethiopia accompanied the reports on Addis Ababa's indifference. Former US Ambassador Robert J. McCloskey, now Senior Vice-President of Catholic Relief Services, called for measures to "rescue" the "starving Ethiopians," stressing that Ethiopia's "patron and model, the Soviet Union, had done virtually nothing to help in the crisis."³⁰

Of course, many in the Western media were aware of the assistance the USSR had provided to Ethiopia. Thus some reported it even though

barely;³¹ some others depicted it as an effort to share credit with the West for the relief operations.³²

The Reagan administration used Ethiopia's famine problem to promote capitalism as the ideal system for developing countries. US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick spoke to this effect during a November, 1984 General Assembly debate. She attributed the famine and the economic crisis in sub-Saharan Africa to "state controlled programs"—in the case of Ethiopia, Socialist orientation—and suggested instead "incentives and competition": unbridled capitalism.

Many parts of the continent, including areas that were previously net food exporters, have become dependent on food imports . . . Coercion failed where market incentives might well have succeeded.³³

More specifically, she stressed that "market mechanisms and adequate producer incentives" were "the most effective engines of economic development."³⁴

Other members of the Reagan administration expressed similar views. On Cable News Network's (CNN's) "Crossfire" program³⁵ Peter McPherson argued that Ethiopia could solve its problems by reintroducing private ownership of land. He declared that Ethiopians "will not be able" to increase agricultural productivity "until (they) move away from some of these bad economic policies," based on Socialist-oriented programs. He averred that "we" really are getting a number of countries to change their economic policies. He cited several examples, including Somalia and Mali. Significantly (in late 1984), he indicated a similar "change" in Mozambique where, he claimed, formerly state-owned agricultural projects had become "privatized farms producing wonderful tomatoes."

A host of that CNN program was Patrick Buchanan, then a syndicated columnist. He argued that the famine situation proved "how wrong (those liberal) characters" were who condemned imperialism and colonialism. He attacked anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism as "idiotic ideology" and acclaimed colonial rule in Africa:

Under colonialism Africa was not starving; 150 million people were not hungry and they were exporting food.³⁶

Buchanan asserted the famine problem is "not an act of God" but, by and large, "an act of man—a Marxist man." He declared that there was a "powerful argument for getting rid of the regime that allowed this to happen."

US "aid" and the famine tragedy in Ethiopia also became an occasion for airing racist and anti-human views on African and Third World

demography. Right-wing lobbyists proclaimed that "world population growth threatens (US) national security."³⁷ Donald Mann, president of Negative Population Growth, Inc., asserted that unless African countries, including Ethiopia, embark on "negative population growth," they would always have famine and related problems:

Africa as a whole has the world's highest population growth rate . . . Some few third world countries see no problem with their population growth, and until they do, there is not much we can do to help them. For example, the government of Ethiopia has stated to the United Nations that it considers its current rate of population growth to be satisfactory.³⁸

The US, Mann continued, should increase "foreign aid for population control" as an investment that could be "justified on national security grounds." Indeed, "starving people can only breed political and social turmoil that will eventually threaten United States strategic interests."³⁹

US and Western Propaganda Rejected

Most peoples and states of the world did not share the approach of the Reaganite and other right-wing propagandists in the West. At the above-mentioned session of the UN General Assembly, a substantial majority rejected Ambassador Kirkpatrick's claims and proposals. The Cuban representative expressed the views of many when he said that the "distorted economic structures" and attendant problems in Africa were legacies of "a century of colonial domination."⁴⁰ He called for a New International Economic Order to redress the situation.

The progressive world clearly saw and rebuffed the evil motives behind the uproar of the US and other Western governments and media about Ethiopia's famine. It saw that official Western "humanitarian" statements were, as one commentator observed, "crocodile tears" actually aimed at discrediting the socialist world and diverting Ethiopia away from the socialist world.⁴¹

While appreciating popular concern and sympathy in the US and other Western countries, Ethiopian leaders rejected the ulterior motives of the governments particularly those of the US and Britain. PMAC Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam expressed gratitude to the peoples of Europe and the US for "bringing pressure to bear on their governments"⁴² to provide assistance to Ethiopia. But, he emphasized, there were basic differences between the Ethiopian and the US governments dating "back to the time when Ethiopia decided to follow a socialist economic system."⁴³ He made it clear that US food aid "would not lead to a thaw in the relations with Washington" and that Ethiopia would con-

tinue on the socialist path. He acknowledged Soviet assistance and said that as a result, Ethiopia had "made more progress in the last ten years than in the previous 40."⁴⁴

The US (and other Western governments) were aware that the propaganda offensive by itself was not enough to reverse the political order in Ethiopia. It seems their propaganda was mainly an effort to create an atmosphere for conducting other subversive activities.

Secondly, and more importantly, the administration expected the possibility of intervening militarily via the "nationalist" movements in Eritrea and Tigray which still remained its main cards for destabilizing Ethiopia. In fact, Western reports focused on the problems posed by these movements while discussing the famine in the same breath.

Government's Response to the Famine in Eritrea and Tigray

The government responded to the famine in Tigray and Eritrea in the same way as it did in Wollo and other regions. But, obviously the war situation here affected its mobility and thus limited the area of its relief activities.

It is to be recalled that early in 1975 some military officials under the PMAC had advocated the use of starvation as a state policy to snuff out the Eritrean movement. But these officials did not last long. In fact they were purged in 1976 though not really for advocating this and other repressive policies in Eritrea.

Since then there has been no evidence showing the consideration—let alone the use—of starvation policy. The problem was that, be it in Eritrea or in Tigray, the government was objectively prevented from reaching everywhere; besides, here, as in the rest of Ethiopia, it had some degree of inefficiency and maladministration even in relief work.

No doubt, the regime was determined to defeat "the rebels" in both Eritrea and Tigray; but, at the same time it endeavored to resolve the famine problem. The government's relief effort was considerable, particularly in Tigray, which was more severely stricken. It was noticeably successful too. In fact, it was said that, as a result, the government won the allegiance of some supporters of the TPLF. As one reporter put it:

Peasants sympathetic to the Tigrean cause have flocked to the cities in the province in search of food. Diplomats said the government is gaining some political capital by providing food in the cities—something the rebels cannot do.⁴⁵

With some foreign assistance—including assistance from relief organizations—the government established relief centers in such places as Korem and Makelle. Furthermore, it undertook resettlement of people from Tigray to the south. Actually, the well publicized resettlement pro-

gram concerned mainly the stricken population in this northern province. Many thousand of Tigreans were thus transported on trucks and planes to the areas of resettlement in the Assosa region.

EPLF and TPLF Join Anti-Ethiopia Campaign

The approach of the EPLF and TPLF on the famine problem was consonant with that of the Reaganites in the US. These "liberation" movements supported allegations which, in effect, bolstered the anti-communist accounts of the American ultra-right. To undermine the Ethiopian government's credibility and bring about its overthrow they sought to prevent the success of its relief operations.

The Western media often examined Ethiopia's famine by emphasizing the insurgencies in Eritrea and Tigray. So strong were these, it was said, the Ethiopian government lacked access to considerable territory in the two regions. The government, according to the Western press, objected to any relief work being done in areas controlled by the insurgents; consequently, the media said, several relief agencies refrained from assisting the famine communities in Eritrea and Tigray.

In October and November, 1984 when international attention to the famine was at its peak, the Western press mentioned a possible cease-fire, and the northern insurgents made proposals to that effect.⁴⁶ In light of the enormous strain the insurgents had put on the Ethiopian economy, some in the West had expected (perhaps naively) that the PMAC would readily accept a cease-fire.

Upon examination, the proposal of the insurgents appeared dubious. For example, while calling for a cease-fire "to facilitate the distribution of famine relief by aid and relief workers,"⁴⁷ the EPLF charged:

The Addis Ababa military government is preparing for a new military offensive in Eritrea. What is more appalling, the Ethiopian authorities are using in their war preparations the large amount of emergency food aid the country has received for drought victims.⁴⁸

The TPLF made similar statements. Apparently, neither the EPLF nor the TPLF put forward cease-fire proposals with the expectation that the PMAC would accept. Their "cease-fire" offensive, so to speak, sought to put the PMAC on the spot.

Not surprisingly, the Ethiopian government flatly rejected the proposals. Talking to reporters, Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam said:

We are aware of a conspiracy from ill-intentioned people to take advantage of the drought to oblige us to make a deal with terrorists and secessionists in the North.

Ethiopia will never allow this to happen. We will never negotiate with terrorists.⁴⁹

It appears the Ethiopian government would not have accepted the cease-fire even if the offer of the EPLF and TPLF were genuine. The government was concerned that agreement to a cease-fire would be tantamount to giving the EPLF and TPLF a status qualitatively higher than that associated with "bandits" or "mercenaries" or "terrorists."

Following Ethiopia's rejection, EPLF and TPLF supporters in the West accused the regime of refusing to cooperate in relief efforts. Dan Connel, who was now Executive Director of Grassroots International ("a private agency in Cambridge, Mass., which sends emergency relief supplies to famine victims in Eritrea and Northern Ethiopia"⁵⁰), stressed that the Ethiopian government "has so far refused" a cease-fire:

Starvation is being used as a political weapon against hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians . . . The Ethiopian government is covering up the fact that it lacks access to the starving in the war-affected areas.⁵¹

Chris Carter, Associate Director of Grassroots International, had earlier made similar charges. Carter termed starvation "Ethiopia's secret weapon against rebellion:"

Military objectives alone dictate Ethiopia's 'famine program' in its embattled northern regions.⁵²

EPLF and TPLF representatives disseminated like charges in the US press, including the TV networks. The Chairman of EPLF's Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), Paulos Tesfa Giorgis, who arrived in the US in the middle of November 1984, held press conferences with TPLF representatives. Paulos praised the "American media" and the US society:

We are taking our case to the American media because in a free society, it is often the best means to start government action.⁵³

As reported in *The New York Times*, Paulos "felt" that "the (Ethiopian) government" and "not the drought" was "to blame for the shortages."⁵⁴

Drought is not totally new to Ethiopia, but in the past we have been able to take care of the animals and the crops.⁵⁵

A spokesman for the TPLF, Berhane Gebre, was even more direct:

The main cause of starvation and drought in Ethiopia is the military regime. Famine is not given the highest priority in Ethiopia. The government is more concerned with killing the rebels.⁵⁶

The government's successful relief operation in Tigray apparently dismayed the TPLF. This rebel group even sought to obstruct the relief effort. According to reports in mid-November 1984, it seized the relief "key relief center." after "a day-long battle."⁵⁷ As a result, food "arriving in Korem" either by air or by road; "stocks" in the relief camp became "low."⁵⁸

Furthermore, the TPLF attempted to obstruct the government's resettlement program calling it a ploy "designed to depopulate areas"⁵⁹ of Tigray where the TPLF enjoyed support. In mid-November TPLF forces reportedly stopped government trucks carrying famine victims to the south. They ordered the passengers off the trucks. According to relief agency officials, the trucks were then "either blown up or burned."⁶⁰

The military and other activities of the EPLF and TPLF "severely hampered relief efforts"⁶¹ by the government. At times, even some Western papers had to state disapproval of the cynicism behind such activities.⁶²

US "Relief" Aid in EPLF and TPLF Areas

For some time prior to the news about Ethiopia's famine tragedy, the US had been secretly providing aid to the EPLF and TPLF and distributing food supplies in the areas they controlled. In late December 1984, this secret relief operation was leaked to the US media. *The New York Times* reported that "according to Western diplomatic sources, the United States, with the help of private charity organizations has been quietly funneling food" to the "rebel relief organizations" in Eritrea and Tigray.⁶³ This relief activity had been going on "for the last year."

It was known that several US based organizations became heavily involved in secret relief operations in Eritrea: Lutheran World Relief, the Mennonites Relief International, Church World Service, the United Church Board for World Ministry, and the United Methodist Church.⁶⁴ And the California-based World Vision was, according to one report "re-evaluating whether to start up some work in Eritrea."⁶⁵

An effort was soon made to justify overt US "relief" in EPLF and TPLF-held areas and to introduce a new dimension to "relief activities."

The EPLF, TPLF and many in the Western media portrayed the Ethiopian government as lacking control of 80-90% of Eritrea and Tigray and, in the first place, as unwilling to help the starving in these two regions. They focused on the Ethiopian government's rejection of the cease-fire proposal. Proceeding from this, they called for an open supply of "relief" to the areas controlled by the insurgents. For example, EPLF's Paulos Tesfa Giorgis emphasized his organization's supposed endeavors "to impress the (US) government to help all victims of the

drought,"⁶⁶ and declared:

The Ethiopian government does not send a single sack of grain to areas it does not control . . . If the aid is to go to our people, it must go through us.⁶⁷

Towards the end of November, reports proliferated in the US media that thousands of Eritreans and Tigreans were crossing the border into the Sudan. Some claimed that by the end of the month there were 600,000 refugees "who have already" walked to the Sudan.⁶⁸

Western strategists here made ample use of the television screen. US TV networks offered many dramatic broadcasts on this subject. One program gave considerable coverage to refugees fleeing Tigray and Eritrea for the Sudan.⁶⁹ Another featured the EPLF (inside Eritrea) as prime news. It showed EPLF strong man, Isayas Afeworki, vowing to continue the fight, and even to advance it after the famine.⁷⁰ Still another program presented the TPLF combatants demonstrating their morale and determination to fight.⁷¹ Chris Carter (of Grassroots International) was shown inside TPLF-held areas making statements endorsing TPLF's claims and pressing for relief programs in these areas.

With this groundwork, sources reported at the end of November that the US administration had allocated \$20-30 million worth of food and other relief aid for EPLF- and TPLF-held areas. This aid would be introduced, it was reported, via the Sudan and distributed within the next six months through private relief agencies.⁷² A follow-up account confirmed the story, adding that the US government was trying to keep its decision secret lest the Ethiopian government be offended.

From the humanitarian point of view it could be argued that the provision of food and other relief assistance to suffering Eritreans and Tigreans, wherever they may be, was in itself important. Nevertheless, US relief in "rebel-held" areas constituted ground for serious concern because it came in light of anti-communist political agenda.

The concern about this relief aid was all the more serious in view of the fact that in 1984 the US supplied to the EPLF and TPLF not only food aid but also military hardware. A report attributed to the Newhouse Information Service stated that the US provided over 60,000 tons of armaments to the insurgents in Eritrea and Tigray.⁷³ It is said that this provision was made following a visit by General Vernon Walters to the Sudan for an "on the spot study" of the situation. Walters, who was to become Reagan's UN Ambassador in 1985, is a former deputy director of the CIA and a "specialist in secret operations."⁷⁴

It was even feared that this "relief aid" could lead to US military intervention. After all, Caspar Weinberger's Department of Defense had proposed a role for US military in "relief" operations.

Proposed Role of US Military

The Department of Defense had sought participation in programs of "humanitarian assistance" in Ethiopia and Central America. A study directed by Caspar Weinberger recommended that:

increased assistance would improve the image of the United States and its armed forces, provide live training for military personnel and permit these to familiarize themselves with regions in which they might be ordered to operate.⁷⁵

It is said that the Agency for International Development (AID) and the Department of State objected to this approach. Nevertheless, the US Congress gave "greater latitude" to the Department of Defense in regard to "humanitarian projects" particularly in Central America.⁷⁶

The Reagan administration, it was reported, had "considered," then ruled out, the use of Air Force planes for relief operations inside Ethiopia. It knew, as implied in the report, that the Ethiopian government would never allow such a role by US military personnel.

But as regards "relief" operations in the Sudan, several things pointed to the dangers of US military intervention. These include recommendations made by ultra-right think tanks, the approach advocated by some US and British "relief experts," the pronouncements of prominent US leaders including Vice President George Bush who visited the Sudan in early 1985, and the peripheral involvement of US military planes in the relief operations.

Heritage Foundation Recommends Direct US Relief Intervention

The Heritage Foundation made policy recommendations on Ethiopia's famine problem towards the end of 1984. In late December it released a report⁷⁷ in which, among other things, it stressed that the US give relief aid to Ethiopia "but should do so only on specific terms": that the US "should not tolerate the denial of food relief to rebel areas" where, as *The Washington Post* put it, "insurgents are fighting the Marxists."

The Foundation did not envisage official Ethiopian participation in such relief operations. It wanted:

to ensure that the food goes where it is needed . . . expert personnel from the United States, which so far has donated most of the emergency aid, "must administer" the rescue mission.⁷⁸ (emphasis added)

Apparently, the Foundation also favored the exclusion of the United Nations. In fact it seemed to view the UN as some kind of "left" organization, or at any rate, as an obstacle.

The Foundation recommended instead the establishment of a

"Council of Ambassadors," comprised not only of those "nations that have representatives in Washington" but also "those that desire to send representatives . . ." In short, the Council would be a body dominated by the US and other Western powers, their allies and the "liberation movements" they sponsor. Obviously, it was intended to provide an appearance of international support for US policies, many of which have been rejected and condemned by the absolute majority of the UN members. In fact, the proposed Council would function differently from the UN:

Such a Council would be able to function unencumbered by the bureaucracy, ideology and posturing that paralyzes the United Nations.

The basic aim behind the Foundation's proposals was the destabilization of Ethiopia (and other progressive states) using "relief" as an excuse. The same aim was stated—almost openly—by President Reagan and CIA Director, William Casey in January 1985.

Reagan's "Hunger Initiative" and the CIA's "Irregular Wars"

In early January 1985, President Reagan addressed the famine problem and announced "a comprehensive African hunger relief initiative."⁷⁹ The President blamed the problem on "socialist economic systems," which "have failed to achieve economic growth" in the "underdeveloped" states. As restated by Peter McPherson, "the general aim" of the "comprehensive program" was:

to persuade African governments through a carrot and stick approach, that past economic and agricultural policies had often not worked and need to be changed.⁸⁰

This "general aim" had serious implications for Ethiopia towards which the approach involved much "stick" and little "carrot." Clearly, the aim of the "stick" approach was to aggravate the situation of hostilities in the country.

Soon after, this was almost blatantly confirmed by CIA Director William J. Casey at a "private luncheon" of members of the "Union League Club" in New York.⁸¹ Casey stressed that "the tide has changed" against "Marxist regimes" which, he alleged, "were responsible for a holocaust comparable to the one inflicted in Europe by Nazi Germany." He pointed to the special significance of the counterrevolutionary movements fighting progressive states:

Today in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia and Nicaragua, to mention only the most important arenas, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people are

volunteers in irregular wars against the Soviet Army or Soviet supported regimes.⁸² (emphasis added)

Casey called upon the US and its allies to continue supporting such movements and fanning "irregular wars":

resistance to Soviet military aggression imposed directly or by proxy (is) growing and offer(s) the Western countries an opportunity that must not be ignored. (emphasis added)

All the above "recommendations" and policies underlined US relief operations in Eritrea and Tigray. They were also the motives behind the claims and propaganda made by a number of British and American "relief experts," including George Galloway, Dan Connel and Chris Carter.

Provocative Charges and Claims by "Relief" Experts

George Galloway is General Secretary of the *War on Want* (WOW), a British organization having "close contacts with the famine relief wings" of the EPLF and TPLF.⁸³ Galloway had "worked in Eritrea" for over ten years.

Proceeding from the charge that the "ruthless military government" of Ethiopia was "deliberately starving out whole areas of its country," Galloway proposed an "international commission" to "supervise and control the famine relief operations" in Ethiopia.⁸⁴ Galloway's "International Commission" was, according to one observer, a "Western commission to take famine relief out of the hands of the Ethiopian government and to run the operation as the agency would see fit."⁸⁵

Dan Connel also relayed the anti-Ethiopia plans of the Heritage Foundation. Connel (the former "Marxist-Leninist" free-lancer), now became a resource person for such big business spokesmen as the *Wall Street Journal*.⁸⁶ In early 1985 he wrote an article⁸⁷ effectively advocating the recommendations of the Heritage Foundation. He charged "political manipulation" of the famine tragedy by Ethiopia's government, which was "systematically covering up" its "lack of access" to most of the starving in Eritrea and Tigray.

Connel lambasted the United Nations. He accused it of complicity with Ethiopia "by remaining silent about" the alleged "cover-up" by the latter. Like the Ethiopian government's, he said, UN assistance was not reaching "the countryside" in Ethiopia and Tigray.

Having found the Ethiopian government and the United Nations incapable (and the former unwilling) to aid the victims in most of Tigray and Eritrea, Connel suggested a few "essential steps" to deal with this "terrible human tragedy." His "first steps" echoed the projects outlined by the ultra-right in the US. A basic "step" was "an even distribution" of

"aid" to the famine stricken people "wherever they are to be found," not only among the refugees in the Sudan but also inside Eritrea and Tigray. Another concerned the means of facilitating the "distribution" of "aid." In Connel's own words, this required:

The safe passage of relief supplies under neutral international supervision to all the hungry across the battle lines by airlift and trucks. (emphasis added)

Clearly, Connel was advocating the "distribution" of "aid" inside the embattled areas. He was calling for the use of not only trucks but also airplanes by US and other Western "relief workers" inside Eritrea and Tigray. In this operation "international supervision" would be conducted not by the United Nations but by a body which, like the one proposed by the Heritage Foundation, would be a type of International Council acting at the behest of US strategists.

Dan Connel, whose Grassroots International had been "providing direct, behind the lines relief assistance"⁸⁸ to the EPLF and TPLF, also advocated more provocative undertakings. Now, the time for a regional war, which he had predicted or advocated in 1982, had apparently arrived with the famine tragedy in Ethiopia. He seemed to remind Ethiopia's enemies of the opportunity which the famine provided:

All those in a position to foster peace and an equitable distribution of aid must now step forward—there simply is no longer any excuse to stay quiet.⁸⁹ (emphasis added)

Connel's deputy, Chris Carter, made the same endeavor. He had no "fear that larger, more publicized relief efforts" might further offend and alarm the Ethiopian government.⁹⁰ He was aware of the activities of the Ethiopian Air Force and of the dangers these entailed.⁹¹ Yet he called for more trucks to the relief wings of the EPLF and TPLF to intensify "relief" activities. "We need hundreds or thousands of trucks" he said, adding that "private resources are simply inadequate."⁹²

These and other US "relief experts" in the Sudan advocated the further engagement of US governmental "resources"—a step which could easily compel military response from the Ethiopian government.

At the same time, Western strategists attributed bellicose intentions to the Ethiopian regime. Some predicted that Addis Ababa might unleash "a new military offensive against the insurgents" in Eritrea and Tigray "within the coming months." One declared:

What the (Ethiopian) government has to consider is can they afford another major military operation and can they count on the donors to continue supporting the relief efforts while they are fighting . . . Of course, even if the answer to both

these questions is no, that only makes an offensive a dangerous move, not necessarily an unlikely one.⁹³

It appeared that such pronouncements were preparations to lay the blame at the doorstep of the Addis Ababa regime in the event conflict intensifies and a wider war erupts.

Bush Visits Sudan-Eritrea Border

In early March 1985 US Vice-President George Bush visited the Sudan and traveled to the refugee centers close to the Sudan-Eritrea border. Though Bush had also accomplished several things pertaining to the Sudan itself, the most highly publicized aspect of his trip concerned the Ethiopian famine and the war in Eritrea and Tigray. Even before he left Washington the Vice President had taken part in a propaganda offensive against Ethiopia and the USSR in these matters. In a speech before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. he accused the Ethiopian regime of using food as a weapon:

Famine has been so devastating in Ethiopia in part because the government has used it as an instrument of war in Eritrea and Tigray.⁹⁴

The Vice President reiterated the familiar accusations about the government refusing "to allow relief agencies safe passage to take food" to Eritrea and Tigray from the Sudan. He called this refusal "the most serious abuse of human rights."

In the same speech, Bush leveled accusations against the USSR saying that its response to the famine was as "shocking" as that of the Ethiopian government itself. He charged that the USSR and other socialist countries had "pumped" into Ethiopia a billion dollars worth of military hardware and 20,000 Cuban troops, but contributed only a pittance toward the relief effort. He thus declared:

We call on the Soviets to be as serious about the relief of famine in Ethiopia as they were about the conduct of the war there.⁹⁵

Soon after arriving at the Sudanese capital of Khartoum, the Vice-President flew to Kassala from where he proceeded to the refugee camp at Wadi Sherife. In his speeches Bush essentially repeated the same accusations he had made in Washington. But he also claimed to have been "deeply moved" by the situation of Eritrean refugees as he saw it. He made dramatic pronouncements about such scenes as "children on tiny legs."⁹⁶

Here too, Bush stressed the demand for relief operations inside the war areas:

The situation cries out for safe passage and safe delivery of food for Eritrea and Tigray; and let politics be put aside.⁹⁷

The Vice President of the US, whose neo-colonial system was the root cause of the Ethio-Eritrean problem, accused the Ethiopian government of being "extraordinarily brutal" towards Eritreans. He received a petition from an Eritrean and said in response:

We want to help . . . if there is some role we might play in solving all the political problems.⁹⁸

Bush's visit to Kassala and Wadi Sherife was also meant to provide a moral boost to insurgents. It was a clear indication of the seriousness with which the US had planned to intervene in the region.

Provocative Mode of Relief Delivery

It was reported that at the airport in Kassala Vice President Bush had "watched" US Air Force C-147s unloading cargoes of food and other relief items. These were the planes that regularly transported the relief to Kassala. According to some observers, it was the first time ever that these were used for relief purposes.

This seemed like an application of Weinberger's idea of US military participation in "humanitarian" activities. The US thus acquired a military presence close to Eritrea and Ethiopia, giving its Air Force personnel opportunity to get better acquainted with the terrain of the area.

Some allies of the US also took provocative steps. Australia conducted a most glaring provocation in mid-January 1985. The Liberian registered ship, the Golden Venture, sought to deliver 6000 tons of food aid worth \$11.2 million from Australia to the EPLF and TPLF. The food was impounded at the port of Assab where the ship had also delivered 3,500 tons of food aid to Ethiopia. The very arrogance of trying to proceed from Assab to the relief wings of the EPLF and the TPLF in Port Sudan was an affront to Ethiopia.⁹⁹

It appeared that Australia took this provocative step on the basis of an understanding with the US and other allies. It is significant that the Western media were fully behind the Australian move. *The New York Times* even editorialized supporting Australia and condemning the measures taken by Ethiopia.¹⁰⁰

All the provocative steps and the propaganda campaign pointed to the danger of the US being militarily involved in the war against Ethiopia. To some followers of the events in the region it looked like US forces might be involved on the side of the EPLF. Writing in early 1985, David Ottaway said:

The danger now is that the US may become entangled in the Eritrean conflict on the side of the secessionist groups.¹⁰¹

In early 1985, too, there seemed a strong possibility of a regional war involving Ethiopia and its regional allies on one hand and the Sudan, Egypt, Somalia and even Israel behind the EPLF-TPLF alliance (all supported by imperialism) on the other. In this connection we must examine the role of Israel and other Western governments in the evacuation of Ethiopian Jews from northwestern Ethiopia to the Sudan and their subsequent airlift to Israel.

Operations "Moses" and "Joshua"

These "operations" attained much publicity in early 1985 when the Israeli government disclosed the venture to airlift Ethiopia's Jews, commonly known as "Falashas," to Israel. They were publicized at the time of intensified reports of Ethiopia's famine tragedy. Thus, by and large, the world was given the impression that the Falashas were being airlifted because they were famine stricken and nationally and religiously oppressed.

Facts show however, the "operations" had practically nothing to do with famine and that they were not launched in the interest of the Falashas.

Like so many other national groups, the Falashas were oppressed during the reign of Haile Sellassie. They could not own land, but only till it as tenants. They were a neglected community, devoid of any assistance for social progress; but strictly speaking, they were not persecuted.

Again, like many of the nationalities, the Falashas have benefited from the Ethiopian revolution. They could now possess and cultivate the land for themselves. They benefited from the nationwide achievements of the revolution in areas such as literacy, public health, infrastructure. As a religious group too, it can be said that the change in Ethiopia is, in a sense, to their advantage. The state was secularized, freedom of religion and the equality of all religions was introduced. There is no threat of religious persecution and there is a governmental policy against religious discrimination of the Falashas or any other religious group for that matter.

Even by late 1984 and early 1985, the Falasha areas were not afflicted by drought and famine as were those in Wollo, Tigray and Eritrea. Some Western newspapers, including *The Washington Post*, reported at one point that the Gondar region where the Falashas live was "relatively peaceful and well provisioned."¹⁰²

The Falashas bore no particular resentment against the new regime

in Addis Ababa, but it has always been their "dream" to go to Jerusalem, to Israel—"the promised land." Again, a few Western reporters acknowledged this fact, including one who wrote the following in *The New York Times* in early 1985:

Even so, before long, many (Falashas) reveal that their dream is to go to Israel. It is a dream that does not necessarily stem from any bitterness toward Ethiopia or even toward the Marxist government that came to power here 11 years ago.¹⁰³

Of course, the Falashas had a fervent Judaic sentiment and the dream to go to Israel also during the time of Haile Sellassie who was a close ally of the Israeli government. The Israeli government was aware that Haile Sellassie's regime oppressed national minorities including the Jews. But still it fully supported the regime and raised no issue about the plight of the Falashas.

Sometime after the overthrow of Haile Sellassie, Tel Aviv and Zionist groups in the US and other Western countries planned to exploit the Judaic sentiment of the Falashas, particularly their dream to go to Israel. They began to show "concerns" about the Ethiopian Jews. These "concerns" increased with the deepening of the Ethiopian revolution along socialist orientation.

By the end of the 1970's some American Jewish groups had embarked on sinister moves to entice Falashas to leave their homeland and resettle in Israel. One of such groups, the American Association for Ethiopian Jews (AAEJ), conducted "rescue operations" in 1979-1982 and airlifted 280 Falashas. These operations were carried out via the Sudan where the AAEJ used some Eritrean hirelings like Haile Temesgen, who, according to *The Washington Post*, admitted he "was involved in six rescue plans, and brought 25 Falashas to Frankfurt, West Germany in March 1980."¹⁰⁴ The AAEJ also acted as a pressure group in the US urging action to "rescue" the Ethiopian Jews.

It is said that preparations for the more massive project dubbed "operation Moses" started in 1981. At that time, an ultra-rightist organization, the "American League for Defense of Ethiopian Jews" began intensive activities in the Sudan. Reportedly, some Sudanese authorities objected to its activities and even arrested some of the operatives involved. But, these authorities had to back down because they were faced with threats from the US embassy in Khartoum and from the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee.¹⁰⁵

In early 1985 the "rescue" operation reached its peak. Israeli and other operatives enticed thousands of Falashas to cross the border to the Sudan from which they were airlifted "home" to Israel via Italy, Belgium

or Switzerland.¹⁰⁶ This heightened "operation" was part of the US orchestrated comprehensive campaign against Ethiopia and socialism.

The Sudanese regime of Jafer Nimeiri fully collaborated with the US in this regard. As reported in a US magazine Nimeiri "cooperated with the US Central Intelligence Agency"¹⁰⁷ in the execution of this "rescue."

In January, the Director General of the Jewish Agency's Immigration Department, Yehuda Dominitz, boastfully stated that "Operation Moses" had indeed taken place. The Israeli government itself subsequently confirmed the statement and declared that it airlifted more than 10,000 Ethiopian Jews "in the last few years."¹⁰⁸

Ethiopia condemned this "illegal trafficking" as "gross interference."¹⁰⁹ It described the "rescue" as a "sinister operation" involving the Sudanese government, other more powerful states, and "anti-Ethiopian and counterrevolutionary elements."

Following the publicity of the "rescue" which embarrassed the Sudanese government, there was a halt in the operation. But it was clear that it could be resumed in spite of Ethiopia's protests. Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres had termed the action "one of the most daring and wonderful acts of self-redemption that our country—and not only our country—has ever known."¹¹⁰ He had vowed to complete the "rescue mission": "We shall not rest until our brothers and sisters from Ethiopia will come safely home."¹¹¹

Predictably, the "rescue" resumed in March in a smaller action christened "Operation Joshua." This operation took place following the visit to the Sudan by US Vice President Bush who is said to have successfully "negotiated the airlift" with the Sudanese President Jafer Nimeiri.¹¹²

Reportedly, "Operation Joshua" was the result of considerable maneuvering in Washington, including in the Senate. Liberal Democrats and ultra-right Republicans in the Senate advocated the resumption of the airlift. Among the leading advocates were liberal Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) and ultra-right Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-N.Y.).¹¹³

Needless to say, the Israeli government had plans for the relocated Falashas. It settled a number of Falasha families at Kiryat Arava near el Khalil (Hebron) in the occupied West Bank. Moreover, it drafted Falashas into the Army. By late January 1985, it had decided to raise the number of Falasha draftees to 2000 and "to station a special Falasha battalion in the occupied West Bank."¹¹⁴

All the activities related to the "operations" and the propaganda accompanying them were provocative to Ethiopia. It appeared they could incite military confrontation at any time, which could grow into a

wider war given the atmosphere of hostility in the general region.

Threat of Regional War

There were several other signs of this danger. In late 1984, Siad Barre's regime in Somalia acquired Hawker Hunter aircraft from Kuwait. Furthermore, it "recruited white pilots from South Africa and Zimbabwe who once flew in the air force of those countries."¹¹⁵ In early January 1985 Somalia accused Ethiopian forces of attacking the Somali town of Balambale, killing four Somali soldiers and wounding fourteen. It claimed to have successfully repulsed that attack, killing two hundred Ethiopians.¹¹⁶

Neither the Ethiopian nor the international media confirmed the incident. But Somalia seemed ready for a new round of fighting with Ethiopia. In fact, it appeared that Somalia was establishing most dangerous ties for this purpose. According to the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Somalia had signed a secret accord with South Africa under which the latter would install a military base in Somalia.¹¹⁷

Other states near Ethiopia were no less hostile. The Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf ministates remained surrogates of Washington, heavily involved with the "nationalist" movements opposed to socialist influence and the Soviet Union.

Iraq too continued to underwrite certain factions in the Eritrean armed movement. Saddam Hussein's regime, which embraced the EPLF since 1979-80 had drawn closer to the US. In late 1984 it re-established full diplomatic relations with the US "which underscored the improving ties of recent years between Washington and Baghdad."¹¹⁸

The "Christian" EPLF (as well as the TPLF) still enjoyed good relations with all these "Moslem" states. Its offices in the Sudan and other Middle Eastern countries, closed following the armed clashes with Abdullah's forces in the summer of 1984, had been reopened and were fully involved in aggravating the possibilities of a regional war.

Evidently the Ethiopian government remained alert to the preparations of its neighbors. In early 1985 it charged the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Morocco and Syria and the PLO¹¹⁹ with plotting "against the territorial integrity of Ethiopia," of engaging in efforts to destabilize Ethiopia by "backing rebels in the north," notably Eritrea.¹²⁰

The early months of 1985 were thus *critical* times for Ethiopia. Its global, regional and domestic enemies militated against it in a concerted action. They all pinned their hopes on the famine tragedy which had already claimed thousands of lives.

Hence, the main task for Ethiopia, for the socialist community and all peoples supportive of the Ethiopian revolution was to contribute in

various ways to the success of the relief effort. In fact, as one scholar of Ethiopian affairs observed:

The success or failure of (Ethiopia's) efforts to deal with the famine may indicate the eventual success or failure of the revolution itself.¹²¹

Later in the year, it became clear that the relief succeeded mildly, though on the whole the problem was still serious. The Ethiopian regime had survived the ordeal. On the contrary, in 1985 some governments and movements opposed to Ethiopia did not fare well. In the Sudan, Nimeri was overthrown. In Eritrea and Tigray, the EPLF and TPLF landed in troubles—both political and military.

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Nimeiri Overthrown: EPLF-TPLF Alliance Shaken

The first half of 1985 ushered in significant developments obstructing the US approach to Eritrea and to the designs on regional war. Central among these were the events in the Sudan following the overthrow of Jaafar El Nimeiri and the strain in relations between the EPLF and TPLF.

The only episode which seemed in line with the US approach was the "merger" of the ELF-RC, ELF-PLF, and ELF-PLF (RC) in a Patriotic Council under the chairmanship of Yohannes Zere Mariam. But even this "merger" was insignificant as it did not aim at unifying the rank and file in the three organizations.

Nimeiri's Overthrow

Nimeiri was overthrown on the 6th of April while visiting Cairo on his way back from the US. Army leaders headed by General Abdel Rahman Sewar El Dahab took over and, a few days after the coup, established a 15-man Transitional Military Council (TMC) to act as the supreme ruling body for a year.

The overthrow of Nimeiri's regime did not come as a surprise. This regime had been unpopular for several years and its demise was predicted.¹ The country's economic problems had reached a crisis level. One-third of the population was facing starvation.²

The regime had resorted to fascist practices. In addition to crudely enforcing the repugnant penal aspects of the Sharia (like amputation and flogging), it jailed and executed its enlightened opponents, including Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, founder and leader of the Republican Brothers.³ It antagonized every major socio-political group in the country. Finally, it even cracked down on the right wing Moslem Brothers, imprisoning their most notorious leader, Hassan El Tourabi.⁴ The armed resistance in the south had been gaining momentum.⁵ The war had become increasingly intractable and costly for Nimeiri's regime.

Ultimately, Nimeiri's regime imposed austerity measures dictated by the IMF. These measures included devaluation of the Sudanese pound and sharp increases in the prices of gasoline, food and other essential items.⁶ The Reagan administration backed these measures by refusing to release 180 million dollars of aid to the Sudan unless the government complied with IMF's requirements.⁷

These steps only aggravated the already severe problems in the country. They provoked riots and demonstrations not only by the students, the workers and other poor in the country but also by those in the middle stratum including the lawyers and doctors who called a national strike for April 3rd.⁸ The government and its dwindling supporters in the capital moved to silence the opposition. They rallied in Khartoum, threatening to use violence against the usual scapegoats, the Communists, but concentrating "their fire on the Moslem Brotherhood."⁹

These threats did not deter the strikers who escalated their opposition to the regime. On the 4th of April a leader of the Doctor's Union was to read an open letter to Jaafar El Nimeiri asking him to resign the presidency during a rally:

—it is our patriotic duty to ask you to step down from the leadership of the Sudanese people and leave the national and democratic popular movements to make their destiny.¹⁰

To stem the impact of the general strike, Nimeiri's government announced a reduction in the prices of commodities. This announcement was made following Nimeiri's visit to Washington where he pleaded with the US administration and the IMF and where President Reagan agreed to release the frozen aid and provide an additional 225,000 tons of food assistance.¹¹

But it was too late. Only a day after the announcement of price cuts Nimeiri's regime was overthrown.

A Pre-Emptive Coup

There is little doubt that Nimeiri's overthrow was a "pre-emptive

action" masterminded by US strategists. Given Nimeiri's unpopularity, the US was worried that progressive forces might take power. At the end of 1984, an "American team" had prepared "a secret report" which included a note on "the possibility of a pre-emptive coup to quell unrest from junior officers in the army."¹² It is also known that some US officials had feared that the civil war in the southern region "may be generating opposition to Mr. Nimeiri in the military."¹³ Furthermore it is said that Vice President George Bush had expressed such fears to the Sudanese dictator when he visited Khartoum only a few weeks before the coup.¹⁴ The US Vice President stressed that the Sudan was "a key country in a volatile region."¹⁵

The timing of the austerity measures is another indication of the US's role in the pre-emptive action which overthrew Nimeiri. These measures which, among other things, raised prices of food and gasoline by as much as 60% were most oppressive and provoking. Reflecting some degree of naivete on the issue, some American observers remarked that these US backed austerity steps "helped strangle" US ally Nimeiri though they were ostensibly meant "to save" his country's economy.¹⁶

Apparently, the US and other Western powers encouraged what in effect was a propaganda campaign to get rid of Nimeiri. It also seems that Sudanese exiles well known for their pro-US political stance were involved in these campaigns. Among these exiles was Dr. Mansour Khaled who was given significant media exposure in early 1985, expressing views on "Nimeiri and the Revolution of Dismay"¹⁷ and practically calling for the removal of the Sudanese dictator whom he had served in various ministerial capacities until 1978.¹⁸

It is almost certain that Vice President George Bush was somehow involved in the reshuffle which brought General Sewar El Dehab to the most prominent position in the military. General Dahab was appointed Defense Minister and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces on the 16th of March¹⁹, just a few days after Bush's visit to Khartoum.

Thus, it was no surprise that Sewar El Dahab emerged as head of the ruling body following the overthrow of Nimeiri on April 6. Even some in the Western media admitted that the event of April 6 took place in accordance with a plan made jointly by the Generals who took power and Sudan's regional and global allies. *Africa Confidential* stated that Dahab and other Generals "made arrangements in advance with Egypt and possibly the United States, in order to pre-empt moves by middle rank officers and civilians."²⁰

For some time Sewar El Dahab's regime made statements and declarations stressing that there would be no basic change in foreign policy.

On his first day in office General Dahab met with the US Chargé d'affaires in Khartoum, assuring him of an "interest in the maintenance of continued good relations with the United States."²¹ The US envoy told the General that "the United States government shares fully the desire for strong bilateral ties."²² General Dahab was said to have conferred in a similar way with Egyptian and Saudi diplomats. The new Sudanese regime had actually expressed its readiness to continue "relations of blood and unity of destiny with sister Egypt."²³

The reaction of the Reaganites in the administration and the Congress was generally described as one of "conspicuous relief." A US official in Cairo expressed the most "conspicuous" satisfaction when he described the event in the Sudan as a "status quo coup, not along the lines of Liberia or Ghana, where you had a bunch of sergeants or second lieutenants taking over . . . There is a lot of relief . . . These (General Dahab et al) are respectable people."²⁴ Representative Mark Silljander (R-Michigan) who is the leading Republican in the House Foreign Affairs Sub Committee on Africa, visited Cairo a day after the overthrow of Nimeiri and held a meeting with President Hosni Mubarak. The Congressman stated that the Egyptian leader was "happy to support the new government."²⁵

The Department of State was heartened by the "moderate" and "conciliatory" statements of General Dahab. However, through its spokesmen it also expressed caution. According to media reports it stated that "it was too early for the United States to offer any detailed assessment of whether the new military government there was friendly."²⁶ It is possible that the Department of State's apparent hesitation aimed at freeing the new regime of suspected connections with the US and blocking the demand by progressives for early termination of the TMC's rule.

Public Pressure and Apparent Leanings Toward Non-alignment

There were two main forces which compelled the new regime to introduce changes in policy, particularly foreign. These were the patriotic civilian groups including the Communist Party of Sudan (CPS) and the armed movement in the southern region led by Colonel John Garang.

The Sudanese were happy to see Nimeiri go. As an observer put it they were relieved to see the end of 16 years of "nightmare."²⁷ But they were not thrilled at the prospect of continuing military rule. Some were "depressed" to see the top army leadership holding state power and regretted that "once more we are ruled by the military. We cannot remove them."²⁸

Some Sudanese felt that "for the time being the army is needed" in state power to prevent chaos and to contain the "dangers from the old regime."²⁹ Others who also saw the need for army leadership to ensure a "disciplined change" feared the army might hijack "the revolution" or wondered if the military "might want to scare us and get our support for their own formula."³⁰

The Sudanese political atmosphere in the immediate post-Nimeiri period was described as "extraordinary."³¹ Thirty political parties and 77 trade unions emerged.³² Many Sudanese political elements returned from exile. Hundreds of political prisoners, including members of the Communist Party, became free.³³ The Communist Party became legal and an influential left political force. Its General Secretary, Mohamed Ibrahim Nogud, spoke openly and addressed rallies exposing and denouncing the CIA and its collaborators in the Sudan.³⁴

The civilian groups pressured the TMC. The main demands concerned the establishment of a civilian government, measures dealing with the economic crisis, prosecution of Nimeiri and his chief collaborators, review of the Sharia imposed in the country, and the resolution of the conflict in the Southern region.

In a compromise struck between the TMC and the civilian groups (the Allied National Forces—or "The Alliance," in short), a government was constituted while the TMC remained intact, holding supreme power. Headed by Dr. Gizouli Dafallah—leader of the Doctors' union—the government included 15 cabinet members, five of whom were actually appointed by the TMC.³⁵

Neither General Dahab nor Prime Minister Dafallah were willing to take clear measures to reverse Nimeiri's Sharia law. The Prime Minister (who, like General Dahab, is a devout Moslem) told reporters that the Sharia law is "a question which cannot be solved by a rushed decision."³⁶

Neither the Generals nor the government of Premier Dafallah were inclined to accept the public demand to try Nimeiri and the corrupt elements linked to him. Some felt the new military leaders were reluctant because, among other reasons, "they were involved themselves with Nimeiri."³⁷

Some Problems of Foreign Relations

In foreign policy, the government of Prime Minister Dafallah seemed intent on introducing significant changes; this, by and large, was a response to the problem posed by the armed movement in the southern region. Many in the National Alliance acknowledged that this movement, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) led by Col.

John Garang, played a crucial role in the overthrow of Nimeiri's regime. In April, Prime Minister Dafallah praised Col. Garang as a "true patriot" and declared that, by opposing Nimeiri, the colonel had "spoken for us all."³⁸ He added that the rebellion in the south "cannot be solved militarily" and thus Garang "must be included" in the post-Nimeiri process to solve the country's problems.³⁹

In his first reaction to the change in Khartoum, Garang called on the Generals to hand over power to civilians. He denounced the new regime as "the Second Republic of Nimeiri,"⁴⁰ "Nimeiryism without Nimeiri,"⁴¹ and accused it of "stealing power from the people's revolution."⁴²

Such remarks displeased the TMC. A spokesman for the TMC answered that Garang could not speak for the Sudanese people and charged he was carrying out the instructions of "his communist masters."⁴³

The new regime made overtures toward a negotiated settlement of the southern problem. It abrogated Nimeiri's 1983 decree which had redivided the south into three regions. It invited Col. Garang to negotiate. It even hastily announced he would come for talks, an announcement immediately denied by the SPLA.⁴⁴

Despite the overtures no progress was made. The prospect of solution further dimmed when negotiations became tied in not only with the handing over of state power to civilians but also with Khartoum's support for Eritrean and anti-government Ethiopian movements. As reported in some Western papers:

Mr. Garang is asking a high price for ending the war. He is . . . asking for a reduction in Sudan's policy of giving sanctuary to the Eritrean rebels fighting for independence from Ethiopia.⁴⁵

It is not certain whether the SPLA leader had explicitly asked for such a "high price." There is no doubt however that the question of the southern problem was related to issues of Sudan's international relations, both regional and global.

Both Libya and Ethiopia—two states Nimeiri had severely antagonized—supported the SPLA. A solution to the southern problem obviously required an improvement in Sudan's relations with its two neighbors. Furthermore, Nimeiri's regime had indeed antagonized Libya and Ethiopia in its role as US surrogate and junior partner of Egypt. Hence, to improve relations with these states and solve the southern problem, the new regime needed to modify the image of its relations with the US and Egypt. Pro-Western analysts of the Sudanese situation had seen the need for such modification, the need for improved relations with Libya and Ethiopia and for reducing the overt policy of anti-

communism. Dr. Mansour Khaled said in an interview in London that Nimeiri had played "an excessive pro-American role in its (Sudan's) relations with Ethiopia and Libya, which had made it inevitable that Colonel Garang would gain support from abroad in his fight against the regime in Khartoum." He added:

Nimeiri tried to be more royalist than the king, and played the American game of 'fighting communism' in the Horn of Africa.⁴⁶

Sudan's new leaders and their international "friends" and supporters had seen the connection between the southern problem as represented by the armed movement, SPLA, and Sudan's international relations. They had realized the need for at least an apparent rapprochement with Libya and Ethiopia and for reducing the appearance of dependence on the US and Egypt. Soon after the coup, Western diplomats in Khartoum observed:

The new leadership believed there would be a greater chance of ending the civil war in the south if relations with Libya and Ethiopia improved.⁴⁷

Regarding wider international relations, the new government also indicated plans for change. As soon as he became the premier, Dr. Dafallah made pronouncements indicating there would be a modification in the nature of Sudan's relations with the US and "other countries," which seemed to include Egypt. He declared that his government would "maintain good ties with both Washington and Moscow,"⁴⁸ and that it would "espouse non-alignment."⁴⁹ Elucidating on this point, he said:

Our foreign policy has to be reappraised, because we are going to review our relations with the United States and other countries as well.⁵⁰

With reference to Egypt, the Prime Minister was highly diplomatic and evasive. He said his government would "distinguish between regimes and peoples" and that the Egypto-Sudanese "historic links" were beyond "regimes and leaders."⁵¹

Soon after the coup, there were signs of improved relations between Libya and the Sudan. On the 9th of April it was reported that Libya's Col. Gaddafi had telephoned General Dahab congratulating him for overthrowing Nimeiri.⁵² In fact Libya became the first country to recognize the new regime.⁵³ Furthermore, the Libyan leader called upon Col. John Garang and the SPLA to back the new regime in Khartoum and enter into peaceful negotiations.⁵⁴ He also uttered harsh words of warning against US interference, stressing in particular that "Reagan has nothing to do with Sudan."⁵⁵

But Ethiopia has not made such dramatic expression of support for

the new Sudanese regime. Rumors abound about moves by the new regime to approach the Ethiopian government for talks concerning the south. In July, General Sewar El Dahab stated that he expected to meet Ethiopian leader, Mengistu Haile Mariam, at the OAU summit in Addis Ababa. He said that meeting "will undoubtedly lead to closer relations, and if there are any outstanding problems, I'm sure we will overcome them."⁵⁶ But, even after the OAU meeting there was no reduction in Ethiopia's support for the movement in the south where armed clashes continued, resulting in loss of life and property.

US Uneasy About Developments in the Region

Though Washington saw Sudan's urgent need to introduce some changes in foreign policy, it became uneasy about the form of the changes gradually taking place. Most serious of these—from the Reagan administration's point of view—was the conclusion of a military pact between the Sudan and Libya.

The pact, described as "military protocols," was concluded in early July (1985) in Libya. As reported in the Sudanese media, it stipulated that Libya would extend support to the Sudanese armed forces "in spheres of transportation, equipment, training and tasks, as well as naval forces and air defense."⁵⁷ Libya also undertook to send enough oil for three months and emergency food aid to the Sudan.

Most significantly, Libya agreed to cooperate with Khartoum in regard to the southern problem. As stated by the Sudanese Defense Minister, the Libyans "promised that they would no longer aid the southern rebels."⁵⁸

The Sudan-Libya "military protocols" somewhat jolted US policy makers. Washington feared that the Sudan may "not only shift toward Third World 'neutrality'" but also "wind up, by accident or design, in the same strident anti-Western camp as Libya and Ethiopia."⁵⁹ It expressed to the Sudanese authorities "grave concern at the prospect of a military relationship between Sudan and Libya" and emphasized that "such a relationship could only impact adversely on US-Sudanese ties."⁶⁰

In addition to the military pact with Libya, other developments worried the US government. One was the cancellation by Khartoum of the joint US-Sudan military exercises scheduled for August. This joint project, in which Kenya and Somalia were to participate, was part of the so-called "Bright Star" exercises—military war games for increasing the proficiency of US' Rapid Deployment Force. Khartoum's decision to cancel led some to observe that Sudan's "post-coup rulers are attempt-

ing to distance themselves from any high profile reminder of Sudan's dependence on US backing."⁶¹

In other areas too, the Sudanese regime gave out similar signals. For example, the government made it clear that it was not going to collaborate with the US and Israel against Ethiopia by organizing and effecting the exodus of the Falashas to Israel. In fact it established a Commission of Inquiry with the declared intention of prosecuting those who were involved in the affair.

Outside the Sudan, one more development in the region challenged US strategy: an agreement between Libya and Somalia to resume diplomatic relations. Announcing this agreement in April, Somalia's Radio Mogadisho emphasized that diplomatic ties were restored "for the sake of Arab unity."⁶² Quite significantly, this agreement reportedly came through the mediation of Morocco, which had concluded a treaty of federal union with Libya in late 1984.

One may also add here that by mid-1985 the developments in South Africa threatened the position of imperialism in Somalia which had established links with Pretoria and agreed to provide it a military base. The escalation in the anti-apartheid movement signalled the approaching end of white minority rule in South Africa and, to that extent, the weakening of imperialism in Somalia.

Still, the Sudanese government insisted that it was a "friend" of the US. Referring to the concern expressed over the Sudanese-Libyan agreement, General Dahab said "There is nothing that our friends in the West should be worried about."⁶³ He described the agreement as a "memorandum of understanding" and "not a military pact or treaty."⁶⁴ He admitted that "a closer relationship" was developing between Sudan and Libya, but he emphasized:

I am not at all worried that our relations with Libya might affect our relations with America. Because you become friends with somebody, that does not mean you are giving away your friendship with someone else.⁶⁵

Such words of assurance from Khartoum notwithstanding, the US administration remained concerned. Observers noted that the administration was worried particularly about the Sudanese-Libyan ties. After all, they stressed, the agreement of federal union between Libya and Morocco had "significantly set back the American policy" and "cooled" US-Moroccan relations.⁶⁶

As for improvement in Ethio-Sudanese relations, two main problems stood out. These were the armed movements in Eritrea and northern Ethiopia, and the famine situation in the Sudan. The Ethiopian government, it was observed, was unlikely to put pressure on the SPLA for

negotiations with Khartoum unless the latter denied sanctuary to the Western-supported armed movements in Eritrea and Tigray.⁶⁷ But, on the other hand, this was something the Sudanese government could not easily afford to do. The main obstacle remained Sudan's famine problem, which some reported was as "serious" as that of Ethiopia.⁶⁸ The Sudan was receiving famine aid from the US and other Western sources—the same sources supporting the EPLF and TPLF. Thus, it could not comply with the wishes of the Ethiopian government without at the same time "alienating donor nations and agencies at the time of greatest need."⁶⁹

Despite all these problems and contradictory facets, the situation in the Sudan showed some reduction in US influence. But it remained fundamentally fluid. As a British "scholar" on Sudanese affairs put it: "There is great uncertainty about which ways things are heading."⁷⁰

Partly exacerbated by the new situation in the Sudan, new developments arose in the armed movements in Eritrea and Tigray, aggravating the estrangement of the EPLF and TPLF.

Anti-Ethiopia Activities Minimized in Sudan

The posture of non-alignment assumed by the new Sudanese regime required an apparent reduction in the presence of anti-Ethiopian government groups in the country. Thus, the EPLF, TPLF and others were induced to maintain a low profile: their movements and activities were somewhat curbed but not completely stopped.

In Sudan's Islamic society the participation of Nimeiri's government in the airlift of the Falashas was taken as an indication that the country had become utterly subservient to Washington and Israel. In the post-coup period this became a very sensitive issue. The new government established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the matter fully. Even during the early stages, the investigation revealed the complicity of some Eritrean figures in CIA and Israeli activities regarding the Falashas. In this connection, the Chairman of the ELF-RC, Abdullah Idris, who was involved in the affair, was brought before Sudanese authorities and questioned.

While the Commission investigated Abdullah's role, Haile Garza, an active member of Abdullah's organization, was murdered in Khartoum. Haile, who had visited the US in 1983, was a key witness who was ready to tell everything he knew about the Falasha affair. It is said that he himself might have been involved. It was generally believed that Abdullah and colleagues plotted Haile's murder because they feared he would testify against them.

Besides Abdullah and his colleagues, other Eritrean and Ethiopian

elements took part in 1984-85, and even earlier. Some were independent operatives of imperialism and zionism and thus organizationally unaffiliated with Abdullah or the EPLF in the '80s.⁷¹

While the EPLF, Abdullah's ELF(RC) and all the other "anti-Soviet" groups who had enjoyed the support of Nimeiri's Sudan faced restrictions in the early post-coup period, the national democratic groups of the ELF managed to make a comeback as political movements. These included the group led by Ahmed Nasser and another group which had been the major component of "Saghim"—the ELA rank and file which rejected the RC.

The group led by Ahmed Nasser held meetings in Kassala and reconstituted a transitional leadership headed by him. Just before, this group had been provided an office in Syria, in place of Abdullah's ELF-RC whose policies the Syrian government presumably rejected.

The new "Saghim" had resisted the takeover moves by the EPLF leadership and had ultimately launched a movement of its own in the Sudan (and, according to some, in Eritrea's Gash province as well).

Several patriotic Eritreans observed that, if united, these two national democratic groups would easily surpass the EPLF as a *political movement*. This observation seemed plausible particularly as EPLF's relations with the TPLF were deteriorating, raising the possibility of armed clashes between the erstwhile allies.

EPLF-TPLF Discord

In the first half of 1985 the relations between the EPLF and TPLF worsened. The discord was a power conflict between the leaderships of the two organizations. In particular, it reflected increasing disappointment of Isayas' ambitions behind the plan on Eritrea and Tigray.

The ambitions of Isayas and associates foundered in several ways. The most important was that the TPLF, which was increasing in importance to the West, was no more easily amenable to guidance from the latter. In other words, this Tigrean organization had become too assertive vis a vis the EPLF and thus not a docile or even a dependable power base for Isayas Afeworki. With reference to this situation, it was rumored that among those in the TPLF leadership who had been close to Isayas, some were becoming critical of the EPLF while the rest were weakened and on the verge of being purged.

It also seemed that nationalist minded Eritreans were displeased with the apparent likelihood of the EPLF being relegated to a second place and trailing behind the TPLF. Indeed, there was a serious threat to the image of the EPLF leadership among the followers of the organization.

Isayas and colleagues in the EPLF leadership thus found it necessary to terminate their virtual union with the TPLF. To this end, they employed various pretexts, including the apparent revival of Eritrean separatism as their goal and new claims of political and ideological differences with the TPLF.

By 1984 the EPLF leadership had started to emphasize Eritrea's right to independence and EPLF's choice for separation. At times, however its spokesmen only stressed "an internationally supervised referendum form of association with Ethiopia."⁷² It is quite possible that in their secret meetings with US and other Western authorities they tactically stressed "independence" or separation as their preferred choice.

Ideologists of neo-colonialism seemed to regret EPLF's apparent insistence on separation. Some of them seemed to regard it as an "obstacle" to the unity of the "national liberation" forces against the Ethiopian regime. Colin Legum wrote:

The opposition to the Mengistu regime would undoubtedly be further strengthened if there were a united front among the different national liberation movements.

But, for historical reasons, as well as because of logistical problems, efforts to get the Eritrean, Tigre, and Oromo rebels and others united have not made much headway. One of the obstacles is that the Eritrean movement, for example, favors secession while the others don't.⁷³

Others were not only displeased with EPLF's stance but seemed inclined to undermine it. Paul Henze went so far as to imply that the idea of Eritrean separation makes no sense. He even argued that separation does not appeal to either Eritreans or Tigreans. He wrote:

In Eritrea too, there are anomalies. Eritreans still live and work all over Ethiopia. Propaganda aside, few Eritreans seem to be committed to separation. They are ready for a political settlement. The same is said to be true for Tigre.⁷⁴

Henze wrote the above in 1984 when imperialism was expecting to bring about the downfall of the Ethiopian regime by exploiting the famine situation and by equipping the armed movements in the north. He claimed that the movements in Eritrea, Tigrai and Gondar (EPLF, TPLF, and EPDM) were "flourishing" and stressed that "the government has lost more ground to rebels in Eritrea."⁷⁵ Undoubtedly, he assumed the time for overthrowing the PMAC and implementing the second phase of the US plan was very near.

Nevertheless, the rift between the EPLF and TPLF widened and occasioned a serious discord somewhat exacerbated by reports of negotiations between Ethiopia and the EPLF. These reports were as alarming to the TPLF as they were to nationalist-minded Eritreans. But, in truth, though the socialist community made a genuine effort, the talks made little headway. In fact the EPLF and Ethiopia were not negotiating directly but were merely "talking about talks"⁷⁶ through the intermediary of some progressive states like Democratic Yemen and some political parties including the Italian Communist Party.

By early 1985 the EPLF-TPLF discord gave rise to open polemical exchange between the two organizations. The EPLF asserted a difference between the question of Eritrea and those of Tigrai and other nationalities in Ethiopia. It claimed that Eritrea has the right to secede while Tigrai and others do not.⁷⁷ It also accused the TPLF of suppressing the Afars and other non-Tigran nationalities in Tigrai province. By the middle of the year, EPLF leaders were openly proclaiming their "political" and "ideological" differences with the TPLF. In August, Sebat Efrem came to Washington, D.C. and reported on the EPLF-TPLF discord and other pertinent matters.

Sebat stressed EPLF's latest position regarding the question of Eritrea, Tigrai and other nationalities in Ethiopia. He added however that the EPLF would continue to support the "struggle" of the TPLF, the OLF, and other Ethiopian groups against the Ethiopian regime. His organization, he said, suggested that the TPLF and other Ethiopian organizations form a united front against Ethiopia. He reassured his Eritrean audience that the EPLF still adhered to the objective of independence—i.e. separation. And for this purpose, his organization was engaged in efforts to realize unity with all the Eritrean groups, except Abdullah Idris' ELF-RC.

His remarks on the rumored "talks" between the EPLF and Ethiopia were quite revealing. He said that whenever governments approach the EPLF for talks with Ethiopia his organization does not turn them down because it does not want to appear opposed to negotiations and peace. Otherwise, he added, the EPLF does not expect the Ethiopian government to recognize the rights of Eritrea and work towards a peaceful solution. "The Ethiopian regime only desires to suppress the movement by force," and thus, he added, "we shall continue to fight it militarily."

In connection with military engagements against Ethiopia, Sebat drummed up some propaganda about the capture of Barentu by the EPLF in early July after "a thirty six hour battle" in which the EPLF claimed to have "killed, wounded or captured"⁷⁸ thousands of Ethiopian soldiers.⁷⁹

He also claimed a basic ideological difference between the EPLF and TPLF. He portrayed his organization as following the socialist ideology. He claimed that, unlike the TPLF, his organization does not receive any assistance from such quarters as the USA and Saudi Arabia. The latter claim seemed incredible to many of his listeners who knew well that the TPLF and EPLF had the same ultimate providers.

Many Eritreans greeted the EPLF's break with the TPLF. But they did not accept all the "explanations" offered by Sebbat. Many in particular doubted EPLF's claim of "ideological" differences with the TPLF.

Incidentally, what was the "ideological difference" between the TPLF and EPLF in 1984-85. It is true that the TPLF openly branded the USSR "social-imperialist."⁸⁰ But, aside from the use or non-use of this phrase, was there any substantive ideological difference between them on such basic questions as imperialism, socialism, the USSR, Cuba, and Ethiopia?

EPLF's Latest Ideology

Sometime in April 1984 Isayas Afeworki gave a lengthy interview in which he expressed his views on such questions, thus giving a clear picture of the EPLF's ideology. The interviewers were two British public figures who co-authored a book on Eritrea in early 1985.⁸¹ They were Stuart Holland, M.P. (and also Labour Shadow Minister for Overseas Development and Co-operation), and James Firebrace, a well known activist in the War on Want and its Programme Officer for the Horn of Africa. Isayas said that his organization is guided by some kind of socialism, which his interviewers dubbed "an independent autonomous socialism,"⁸² the aspiration for which "is completely understandable" in the Third World. But, he added that "as to the details and the models, we do not have models practically."⁸³ He emphasized that "socialism" independent of the USSR was the way to go for Third World countries:

Third world societies should come out with new theories about their socialist transformation. They have to work out a programme which would be fully independent from the guidance and the intervention of outside sympathizers like the Soviet Union.⁸⁴

Isayas seemed to count on alliance with "Europe" as distinguished from the USSR (and other socialist countries) and supposedly from the USA as well. Talking about the need for "very simple" aid he said "I think there is the capacity in Europe, without our going to the Soviet Union or the United States."⁸⁵ He praised "Labour and socialist parties" in Europe which, he said, "have had a long contact with us and . . .

have been genuine and clear about their position"⁸⁶ on the question of Eritrea.

The EPLF leader was bitter towards the USSR and its policies. Pointing to the experience of several "Third World" states and parties with the USSR, he said:

The Soviet experience with China, their experience with their friends, not only liberation movements, was already a lesson to the EPLF before they [Soviets-TM] established good relations with the Ethiopian regime. We never took them for enemies, but nor did we have any illusions about their global strategy.⁸⁷

Isayas charged the Soviets were "physically involved in the liquidation of our population," in pursuit of "their superpower politics and their strategy."⁸⁸ Even before the Ethiopian revolution, the Soviets "were friends with Haile Sellassie and they never openly supported the Eritrean struggle . . . One cannot even say they were sympathetic indirectly."⁸⁹ He announced that his organization has "established" one fundamental point: "that the Soviet Union cannot be a genuine friend to Third World people outside its global interests."⁹⁰

Isayas seemed to attribute the increasing anti-communism in some Middle Eastern states today in part to the USSR:

In the Middle East we now see fundamentalist movements replacing progressive movements. One of the factors for their (progressives') liquidation was their alignment with the Soviet Union and their consequent misconception of the nature of the struggle they should wage to mobilize the population for a continuous struggle to transform their society.⁹¹

Proceeding from notions like these, Isayas advocated "independence" or "autonomy" from the Soviet Union, equating the USSR and the socialist community with the US and other imperialist states and clearly denouncing their internationalist policy: he expressed an anti-communist and pro-imperialist ideology.

In the same interview, Isayas commented on Cuba. Regarding that country's basic policy on Eritrea, he stated that "according to some reports, they support" the "proposal for a referendum." He added that they "are not in favor of a military solution in Eritrea" and actually "refused to participate in the war."⁹² Despite certain truths here, this observation was overshadowed and rendered insignificant by Isayas' implication of the Cubans—albeit indirectly—in the Eritrean war and even in alleged Ethiopian preparations for aggression against Somalia. Referring to the Cuban troops in the Ogaden, Isayas stated that this "presence . . . allows the Ethiopian regime to redeploy and concentrate its forces for its war in Eritrea or aggression against Somalia."⁹³

More seriously, Isayas distorted the fraternal relations between Cuba and the USSR. He portrayed Cuba as an entity in a dilemma which complies with the dictates of Moscow only because it is threatened by the US:

The Cuban problem with the Soviet Union is they are at the gate of the United States and for them to be independent is a difficult matter. They have come to some kind of concessions with the Soviet Union. But it is very clear that they are not in full agreement with the Soviets on many issues even inside Ethiopia.⁹⁴

Thus, he said, the Cubans support a referendum in Eritrea but they can't say it officially as "it would cause a lot of trouble for them with the Soviet Union."⁹⁵

On other problems Isayas expressed views which were in conformity with the strategy of imperialism on the Horn. He portrayed the Ethiopian spontaneous popular uprising against Haile Sellassie. Without acknowledging any of its virtues, he only emphasized that it "will go on pursuing a military solution" in Eritrea.⁹⁶ Isayas, who favors "autonomous socialism," implied that the changes going on in Ethiopia were not socialist-oriented. He said that his organization "can help" to introduce "socialism inside Ethiopia" by uniting forces with all the anti-government Ethiopian groups—which he dubbed "liberation movements"—including those he admitted were supported by the US:

Even though we don't give much credit to ourselves in this regard, we can help to a certain degree to bring socialism inside Ethiopia by our efforts to unite our action practically with other liberation movements. You have the western Somali Liberation Front, the Afar Movement, the Oromos, the TPLF, the EPDM. But there are other political forces supported by the Americans now organizing themselves in the Sudan like the EPDA, the EDU and many other smaller organizations. Those organizations who claim to be more democratic and genuine should join hands to unite their action.⁹⁷

Isayas expressed the sincere desire of his organization to support all the above-mentioned movements. He declared, "There are many things to be done to topple the regime. We will not be limited to operations within the Eritrean borders."⁹⁸ But he was not certain that (at the time of the interview) the Ethiopian "liberation movements" were ready to take over the government and that he feared the overthrow of the regime would only create a "vacuum" of the kind which obtained in 1974.⁹⁹

Isayas said the EPLF would negotiate a settlement in Eritrea but he emphasized that "that might not mean that we directly negotiate with the present regime."¹⁰⁰ He declared that Eritrea under the EPLF "can

allow" Ethiopia "an outlet to the sea" and establish "economic, social, cultural and other ties" with it. He made it clear however that these cannot be undertaken "with the present regime" but "with a genuine government that does represent the Ethiopian population."¹⁰¹

In the view of Isayas and the EPLF therefore the armed movement in Eritrea was actually part of the concerted effort to overthrow the socialist-oriented regime in Addis Ababa and to establish a "democratic" one in its stead. Isayas was quite plain on this score:

There are demands we have regarding the situation in Ethiopia. In order to have the guarantee of avoiding any eventual conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia there should be a *democratic transformation inside Ethiopia politically*. The issue of nationalism and other political problems should be resolved before there can be a durable peace with any government that took power in Addis.¹⁰² (emphasis added)

The EPLF would go on fighting until the PMAC was overthrown. Isayas made it clear that the EPLF had plenty of ammunition thanks to which "we are now on the offensive." Further, "our mechanization has improved a lot"—so much so that "we" would not have to "keep our positions in very broken areas, mountainous areas."¹⁰³ In fact, "now it's very easy to fight in open plains."¹⁰⁴ He insisted the EPLF received no supplies from the US or the Saudis, but rather repeated the lie that all the ammunition were Soviet-made captured from the Ethiopian Army in the battlefields.

It was the above ideology that Sebat Efreem also expressed in his talks in Washington, D.C. True, at one point he said that the "socialist" EPLF would not "directly attack" the USSR and other socialist states. Even so, Sebat kept on citing EPLF's "military achievements" and boasted that the EPLF was the force most seriously challenging what he described as the mighty military presence of the USSR in the Horn of Africa.

The EPLF and the TPLF thus shared the same ideology and policy. And in 1984-85 it was not only Eritrean patriots who exposed EPLF's claim of ideological differences with the TPLF and its self portrayal as Marxist and socialist. For even ideologists of imperialism—including Paul Henze, who, in 1981, had designated the EPLF and TPLF as "Marxist"—rejected EPLF's self portrayal as Marxist and socialist in the belief of course that such portrayal of the EPLF was no longer useful as a veneer for their agenda on Ethiopia and Eritrea. In 1984, Paul Henze frankly characterized the EPLF and TPLF as non-Marxist, Christian dominated groups. Quoting an unnamed Italian observer "long familiar with northern Ethiopia," Henze wrote:

The Tigre Popular Liberation Front, like its older Eritrean counterpart (i.e. the EPLF-TM) is now dominated by Christians whose Marxism is largely a ploy to embarrass the PMGSE (Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia).¹⁰⁵

Henze also implied in the same breath that under the EPLF and TPLF there would be neither Arab domination nor influence in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Quoting the same Italian source, he disregarded the presence of some Moslems in both organizations:

Moslems in both the movements (EPLF and TPLF) . . . serve as window dressing to attract funds from conservative Arab states.

In mid 1985 ultra-right propagandists in the US confirmed the characterization of the EPLF and TPLF as "democratic" or anti-communist. They extolled them as "new liberation movements" fighting "to throw off Soviet colonialism."¹⁰⁶

EPLF's contention that the Eritrean question was different from that of the nationalities in Ethiopia was rejected not only by the TPLF but also by the OLF. Interestingly enough, the EPLF had sought not only to avoid antagonizing the OLF but also to win the latter's alliance against the TPLF. For this purpose it had tried to exploit what was described in some Western media as the "Oromo factor," which was a reference to OLF fears about Tigrai-Eritrea domination in Ethiopia after the overthrow of the PMAC.¹⁰⁷

For some time the EPLF seemed to win over the OLF. At least in 1984 some observers were convinced that "as a balance against Tigrayan-led initiatives, relations between the EPLF and the OLF are quite good."¹⁰⁸ However, in 1985—following the rumors about negotiations between the EPLF and the Ethiopian government—the OLF gravitated more towards the TPLF. In April, they signed a joint communique which "reiterated the principle of self-determination for Oromo and Tigray and stressed the desirability of establishing a joint military front."¹⁰⁹ By the middle of the year, the OLF was tactfully campaigning against EPLF's position on nationalities. Some Oromo elements in North America—no doubt reflecting OLF's views—conducted open polemics against the EPLF on this question.¹¹⁰

The EPLF had also tried to "encourage anti-TPLF actions" by a certain outfit known as Afar Liberation Front (ALF) which was severing ties with the TPLF.¹¹¹ The Afar are a small national group found in Tigrai, Wollo, Eritrea and in the Territory of the Afars and Issas (Djibouti). In this regard too EPLF's attempts failed miserably.

Thus, by 1985 a change in the alignment of the forces opposed to the Ethiopian regime had taken shape. Developments in the Sudan and

in the interstate relations in the Horn and North Africa—which seem to have reduced the danger of regional war—complicated the change.

In light of the above developments, the second phase of the US plan on Eritrea seemed to be foiled. But at the end of the summer indications appeared that things could change again the other way.

Ethiopia's Military Gains—EPLF's Frustrations

In late August 1985, the Ethiopian forces embarked on retaking the towns in western Eritrea from the EPLF.¹¹² They took Barentu which the EPLF had captured only seven weeks earlier. They also proceeded to rout the EPLF in the region and take Tesseney and Alighider, in the hands of the EPLF since 1984. EPLF casualties were in the hundreds. Demoralized by its military losses to Ethiopian forces, the EPLF leadership took desperate measures, including the disclosure¹¹³ of the "secret" negotiations which had been going on with the Ethiopian government. It also announced the suspension or termination of those negotiations.

Amde "Bahandit," a member of the EPLF's Central Committee, told the BBC in September¹¹⁴ that the "preliminary meetings" (designed to pave the way for peace negotiations) could not continue "because of intransigence of the Ethiopian military regime." These meetings had "reached a deadlock," and thus the EPLF disclosed the "secret" negotiations. Regarding what was going to happen after this "deadlock" the EPLF leader said:

Of course, in the face of the stubborn refusal of the Ethiopian regime to seek a negotiated settlement of the Eritrean war, *the only prospect is for more intensified fighting.*

"Militarily speaking" his organization was "stronger than before the battle of Barentu." He even claimed Ethiopia's retaking of Barentu, Tesseney and surrounding areas "a victory for us [EPLF]," because his organization would no longer have "to defend a terrain much more favorable to the Ethiopians, being open plain." He asserted that the EPLF deliberately "withdrew in order . . . to consolidate and to preserve our forces and attack" the Ethiopians "at places and at a time of our own choice." Asked if his organization was "planning a new offensive" the EPLF leader told his interviewer, "What I can assure you is that future military developments would verify what I've just told you."

This statement and the contents of EPLF's main press release¹¹⁵ on this development clearly indicated that the organization would do anything to continue fighting the Ethiopian regime militarily.

WPE's Declaration on Eritrea

But the Ethiopian regime also did not seem interested in a peaceful solution to the problem. For the first time the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) issued a lengthy document on Eritrea whose contents and tone were not encouraging.

The party issued the document in August 1985. Entitled *The Sole Truth and Only Solution*,¹¹⁶ the document was published in Tigrigna, Amharic and English. It contained nothing new in substance as far as the approach to the problem was concerned. It expressed raw sentiments of nationalistic arrogance sometimes couched in Marxist phrases.

The document reiterated the shopworn claim that Eritrea has been historically part of Ethiopia. It stressed that this "northern part of Ethiopia" is "the cradle of Ethiopian civilization."¹¹⁷ It also asserted that Ethiopia—the former empire—is the home of a united people, "tied together by history, culture, economic and social life, as well as psychological outlook."¹¹⁸

The Ethiopian Workers' Party did not acknowledge that Haile Sellassie's regime had oppressed Eritreans and other nationalities in the empire, thereby inspiring the emergence of the armed movement. It blamed everything on the "bandit leaders," a collective reference to all the leaderships of the Eritrean movement, irrespective of differences in their orientations and aims. It alleged that "for more than 20 years"—even during the reign of the pro-imperialist Haile Sellassie's regime—these "bandit leaders" had "traded on the peace, property and life of the broad masses of the Eritrean region."¹¹⁹

The document declared the armed movement in Eritrea as defeated as the Somali invaders in 1978. Addressing the Eritrean public it stated:

You are a witness to the merciless punishment meted out to the heavily armed Somalia invading forces and to the traitorous bandits claiming to be "liberating" the Eritrean region.¹²⁰

It proclaimed that after the Ethiopian seizure of Barentu "the bandit leaders are now fleeing in various directions to save their lives!"¹²¹

The document announced that Eritreans have no choice but to surrender to the Ethiopian army and that if they don't they would be dealt with mercilessly. In a tone reminiscent of imperial decrees, the Workers' Party said:

What do you intend to achieve by confronting a people's army drawn from a nation of 42 million strong? Listen to reports of the fate of your colleagues at Barentu, Haikota, Tessenei, Sawaforto and Gugni. Don't place your life at risk by putting stock in the empty promises made by your bandit leaders. Yesterday's braggado-

cio of your leaders has since been turned into wailing. Remember that you will meet the same fate. Better make your choice NOW!¹²²

The document concluded with further threats against Eritreans—threats of military annihilation and condemnation in history:

Think carefully, if you side up with anti-people elements for useless aims and thereby condemn your kith and kin to misery and death, . . . you will become a dreg of history! You will be crushed by the united elbow of the people!¹²³

Eritrea would remain part of Ethiopia where, the WPE declared, a People's Democratic Republic would soon be established. Presumably, the document advocated the same regional autonomy the PMAC had espoused since 1976. (There are unconfirmed reports about a plan to redivide Eritrea and even join some parts with Tigray—a plan which, if implemented, would have disastrous consequences). Furthermore, the document expressed no change of view regarding how "Regional Autonomy" or any other desired and progressive framework would be realized. There was no mention—let alone, assurance—that this "solution" would be brought about in a process representing the voluntary choice of the working people.

The document's militaristic position and intimidating tone suited the interests of the EPLF, other rightwing "nationalist" groups, and imperialism and its supporters in the region. It added to the atmosphere of hostilities and strengthened the "Eritrean" cause to fight the "arrogant" Ethiopian regime. It disappointed those Eritreans, Marxists and non-Marxists alike, who are anxious for negotiations and a peaceful, progressive solution.

US Still Focusing on Ethiopia and the Horn

The Reagan administration continued to view the ongoing war in Eritrea as an opportunity for destabilizing Ethiopia. It kept on exploiting the situation for charging Soviet "violations" of "human rights" and "invasions" of other territories.

The seriousness with which the US regards the Ethio-Eritrean conflict as an object of an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist campaign could be seen in President Reagan's Address to the U.N. General Assembly on the 24th of October 1985. The speech,¹²⁴ which was the latest expression of the "Reagan Doctrine," was actually part of Reagan's propaganda before the Geneva summit meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev. The US President named Ethiopia as one of the five countries in the world—together with Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan and Kampuchea—where wars are being fought "exacting a staggering human toll" and allegedly contra-

dicting the "expression of peaceful intent by leaders of the Soviet Union." In fact, though these wars "originate in local disputes" they are "the consequence of an ideology imposed from without, dividing nations and creating regimes that are, almost from the day they take power, at war with their own people." He further alleged that "in each case Marxism-Leninism's war with the people becomes war with their neighbors."

The US President asserted that in Ethiopia, "1,700 Soviet advisors are involved in military planning and support operations along with 2,500 Cuban combat troops," referring primarily to the situation in Eritrea and Tigray. Indeed, *The New York Times* noted that one of "Reagan's five trouble spots" was Ethiopia, where, "Eritrean rebels seeking secession or substantial autonomy are fighting Soviet backed government forces. Government is also fighting insurgents in Tigray."¹²⁵ (See map on p. xv.)

The President stated that unless these conflicts are settled, they can foster wide regional wars; they "threaten to spill across national boundaries and trigger dangerous confrontations." His statement indicated precisely what the strategy and tactics of the US and its allies have been (and still are) concerning the Ethio-Eritrean conflict and other "trouble spots": the widening of such local conflicts into regional wars aimed at destabilizing progressive regimes.

The "trouble spots" Reagan mentioned are all revolutionary democratic states maintaining fraternal ties with the USSR and other socialist countries. He depicted these and other progressive states as cases of socio-economic crisis:

We need only open our eyes to the economic evidence all around us. Nations that deny their people opportunity in Eastern Europe, Indo-China, Southern Africa and Latin America, without exception are dropping further in the race for the future.

Of course, those countries following the capitalist path (countries of "economic freedom and personal incentive") are "success stories" of social progress (such as Botswana, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea).

The US President was in effect calling for the restoration of the capitalist path in the five "trouble spots." He proposed "negotiations" and a "regional peace process," for each. In the final phase of the process the US would:

move onto . . . welcoming each country back into the World Economy so its citizens can share in the dynamic growth that other developing countries that are at peace enjoy.

At this final phase of the restoration of capitalism in these "trouble spots," the President added,

the United States would respond generously to their democratic reconciliation—with their own people, their respect for human rights and their return to the family of free nations. (emphasis added)

President Reagan declared that the US would continue to pressure these states until they take steps to reverse their policies. It would continue to assist the opposition armed movements:

until such time as these negotiations result in definitive progress, America's support for struggling democratic resistance forces must not and shall not cease.

Reagan was mainly trying to deflect world attention from arms control to issues of regional conflict and "human rights," and to establish a connection between the two. He was practicing "linkage," asserting that the question of "nuclear disarmament" is tied to US perceptions of Soviet policy in various parts of the world. He was, in other words, using the Ethio-Eritrean conflict and other regional problems as excuses to avoid cooperation in the struggle for peace and nuclear disarmament.

Reagan's speech, as well as the posture of US policy—even after the Geneva summit—suggested the US and its allies will continue to challenge the Ethiopian regime through the EPLF, TPLF, and other "nationalist" movements. It appeared they would probably endeavor to unify these armed groups and continue threatening a regional war.

In the Fall of 1985 the EPLF seemed interested once more in deeper alliance with the TPLF. In October 1985, it issued a statement which suggested that the strain between the two organizations arose because some of TPLF's policies objectively undermined the struggle of all the anti-government "democratic" forces in Ethiopia. Careful observers noted that this statement indicated EPLF's readiness for normalizing (restoring) the alliance with the TPLF. Thus, in the Fall of '85, it appeared that the EPLF and TPLF may be closely allied anytime again on the basis of either the same old US plan of partitioning Eritrea or another US plan designed still to combat socialist influence or "Soviet presence" in the region.

The situation in the general region—the Horn, North Africa, and the Middle East—is still fragile and tense.

Libya's Col. Gaddafi continued to be a key target of the Reagan administration. Towards the end of 1985 the CIA authorized measures to overthrow his regime. In March 1986 US Naval forces on military exercises went into the Gulf of Sidra provoking incidents which claimed Libyan lives. On April 14-15 carrier-borne aircraft of the US 6th Fleet and F-

111 planes based in Britain raided Libya, striking Tripoli and Benghazi in a most flagrant act of war. They bombed Gaddafi's quarters and other civilian centers wounding and killing civilians including some members of Gaddafi's own family. At the same time, the Voice of America beamed anti-Gaddafi propaganda to Libya with the aim of sparking military uprising against Gaddafi.

The attempt to overthrow Gaddafi failed. In fact, it boomeranged against the US administration, isolating it even more and enhancing sympathies towards the Libyan leader in the Middle East.

In Somalia the situation is as bad, and even worse than before. The country is torn by ethnic feuds. The opposition movement keeps on pressuring the government of Siad Barre who is said to have an aircraft ready to exit the country in case of a coup d'état or a revolution.

In early 1986 meetings were held between Ethiopia's Mengistu Haile Mariam and Siad Barre in Djibouti followed by talks in Addis Ababa; it is possible that they will lead to peace between the two countries but it is very doubtful that they will contribute to improving Siad Barre's future as Somalia's leader.

In the Sudan the situation is now basically fluid but with marked foreign policy developments leaning towards anti-imperialism, particularly since the US raid on Libya.

The Sudanese government condemned US actions while students and trade unions staged massive protests. The US evacuated hundreds of its citizens from the Sudan ostensibly in response to the shooting of an embassy official in Khartoum. But even earlier in November 1985 the US Department of State had warned US citizens not to go to Khartoum saying that Libyan and Palestinian terrorists were in the Sudanese capital¹²⁶—an allegation the Sudanese government denied.¹²⁷

However, the Sudan is still embroiled in a civil war in the south. Col. Garang's SPLA is still enjoying the support of Ethiopia with whom Sudan's relations have not yet fundamentally improved.

Elections were held in the Sudan in April 1986. The results favored the conservative Umma party (of the Ansar Islamic sect) headed by Saadiq-el Mahdi, who became Sudan's first elected civilian prime minister in 16 years.

Mahdi had mildly good relations with Ethiopia when he was exiled from Nimeiri's Sudan. Soon after being elected premier, he pledged to seek improved relations with Ethiopia and other neighboring countries. But whether or not there will be substantial changes in Ethio-Sudanese relations in the coming period remains to be seen. How far the Sudan will move in the direction of anti-imperialism also remains to be seen. But there is no question that the country is not a client state of the US as

it was in Nimeiri's times. There is no doubt too that the US will try hard to regain control of the Sudan and use it to carry on with its plans against Sudan's neighbors particularly Ethiopia, against whom ultra-right leaders in Congress are calling for a vigorous application of the "Reagan Doctrine" of intervention.¹²⁸

Urgency for Peace

Eritrea's situation is very grave. The country continues to bleed. Its sons and daughters die on the battle fields and languish in refugee camps in the Sudan. Its flora and fauna deteriorating, Eritrea is becoming a desert. Exodus into neighboring Sudan and the Arab world disperses its communities.

Peace, the absolute pre-condition for halting and reversing the hemorrhage of Eritrea, is nowhere in sight. It cannot be found on the agenda of the armed movement, which has regressed into an instrument of imperialism and Arab reaction. However peace cannot be achieved unless the Ethiopian leaders approach "Eritrea" as a political problem requiring a creative solution for which, among other things, flexible attitudes and courageous moves are necessary.

"Eritrea" is a challenge to the recently formed Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE), which was a landmark in the evolution of Ethiopia's socialist orientation. The WPE is not—or is not yet—a communist party. It is a political organization of working people developing along Marxism-Leninism. An increasingly creative and effective role in resolving "Eritrea" on the basis of self-determination would be the clearest indication of its development and maturity.

13

Self-Determination: Meaning and Content

Self-determination has been a principle of international law ever since the Charter of the United Nations came into effect on the 24th of October, 1945. Generally stated in the Charter¹, the principle has been concretely enunciated in various UN General Assembly resolutions and declarations.

General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960, entitled "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples," provides a definition of self-determination:

All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.²

The inclusion of the principle in the UN Charter reflected the growing influence of socialist international relations. It was proposed by the USSR and was actually derived from the Soviet Constitution of 1936; its ideological roots are in Marxism-Leninism.

Importance of the National Question and Self-determination in Marxism-Leninism

The founders of Marxism—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels—re-

garded the national question as a subject of immense "practical importance."³ They taught that socialists should support progressive movements for the separation of oppressed nations. It is said that the "common defect" Marx observed in the socialists of the oppressed nations was their "failure to understand their socialist duties towards the downtrodden nations, their echoing of the prejudices towards the bourgeoisie of the 'dominant nation.'"⁴

Later, in the early twentieth century, the Bolsheviks developed more comprehensive theories along the lines charted by Marx and Engels. They expounded theses on the "Right of Nations to Self-determination" which they defined as follows:

The right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and other institutions, to repress its language, or to curtail its rights . . . The right to self-determination means that a nation may arrange its life on the basis of autonomy. It has the right to enter into federal relations with other nations. It has the right to complete secession. Nations are sovereign and all nations have equal rights.⁵

The Bolsheviks applied the principle to a variety of situations: nations oppressed in the multinational states and empires of Eastern Europe, nations annexed by the imperialist powers, and colonies.

Self-determination is not an abstract precept. It is meant to fulfil a historical task in the process of social progress. Its task, generally speaking, is to put an end to national oppression, which impedes social progress, and to guarantee the independence of nations and peoples.

Meaning of National Oppression

National oppression signifies the suppression of rights pertaining to all classes and other social groups, or all the people, in the nation. It has two interlinking forms: internal and external.⁶

The internal form relates to the economic, cultural and political life of a nation in a multi-national state. It is the violation or suppression of democratic rights of a people—rights the free exercise of which is requisite for "national development." Such are, for example, the "destruction of schools and other institutions," the "violation of habits and customs" of the people, genocide on a national basis, and so forth. The "persecutions" constituting "national oppression" directly encroach upon the life of all the classes and social groups of the nation. They are "common to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie," to the landlords and the peasantry, or to all the national and tribal groups in the country.⁷

The external form of national oppression is the violation of the inde-

pendent international political status of the nation. This status may be one of separate statehood, or federal, confederal, or other types of association with other nations in a multinational state: it is commonly enjoyed by all the classes and other groups comprising the nation, and is essential for "national development."

External oppression takes place in cases of annexations and classical colonialism. In most cases it leads to the internal form of national oppression.

Annexation is the incorporation of a nation against its wishes or without its consent into an alien state. In the *Decree on Peace*, Lenin defined annexation as:

. . . any addition of a small or weak people to a large powerful state without the definitely, clearly, and voluntarily expressed consent and desire of the people . . .⁸

As a violation of the nation's international status, annexation affects all the social groups in the nation.

Classical colonialism, as distinguished from neo-colonialism, is "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation."⁹ As such, it involves both annexation and the internal suppression of democratic rights. The phrase "alien subjugation" means forcible joining or annexation; the phrase "alien . . . domination and exploitation" signifies the control of the political, social, cultural and economic life of the nation, and the plunder of its resources by another nation or state.

When applied to cases of the "external" form of national oppression, self-determination aims to guarantee *political independence* for peoples. It promotes the attainment of such independence by oppressed people and the continued enjoyment of it by those who are already independent.

Meaning of Political Independence

Lenin had stressed that the right to self-determination "implies the right to independence in the political sense."¹⁰ Elaborating, he said that the "demand" for self-determination is "therefore . . . not the equivalent of a demand for separation."¹¹ He added that it "implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression."¹²

The freedom of peoples from national oppression is the essential meaning of political independence. This freedom is the core of the definition of self-determination: peoples have the right to "freely determine their political status" and freely pursue their development.

Hence, political independence specifically means the attainment and enjoyment by a people or peoples of the political status or affiliation

of their choice. It also implies the freedom of peoples to change the political status or affiliation they have chosen for themselves.

As a chosen political status or affiliation "political independence" therefore has various manifestations. A nation or a people is politically independent when it freely and voluntarily establishes a separate state of its own. A nation or a people is also politically independent if it freely and voluntarily unites with other nations and peoples on the basis of confederation or federation or autonomy, or even if it freely and voluntarily merges in a unitary state.

Thus, separation or separate statehood is by no means the only form of political independence. It is not the sole possible outcome of the exercise of self-determination by a people or peoples. But the right of separation, like the right to choose association with other nations, is integral to the concept of "political independence."

The Right of Separation in Marxism

In the course of advancing the Marxist position on the right of separation for oppressed nations, Lenin had to deal with arguments put forward by "opportunists of all stripes" as he described them. He had to combat the position of "left" social democrats who opposed the party's program on the "Self-determination of Nations." These social democrats, prominent among whom was Rosa Luxemburg, had argued the right of separation was "impractical" or "utopian" under capitalism or imperialism and "reactionary" or "superfluous" under socialism.

In connection with the right of separation under capitalism or imperialism, Lenin exposed the bankruptcy of the "impracticability" argument. He termed it a position of "refrain" and thus non-revolutionary. He cited the separation of Norway from Sweden in 1905 as "sufficient to refute 'impracticability.'"¹³ Further, he strongly argued that "some slight changes in the political and strategic relations"¹⁴ between the imperialist powers could make it possible for the oppressed nations and peoples to secede and attain independence.

Under socialism too, Lenin showed that the right of separation, far from being superfluous, is a fundamental principle. Unlike the exploitative class systems preceding it historically, socialism provides the basis for the full practical enjoyment of democratic rights. Nevertheless, "the state borders will be determined in a democratic way, i.e. in conformity with the will of the people,"¹⁵ and thus, in principle, nations would continue to have the right of separation.

Lenin rejected the view that "there would be no national oppression in a workers' state and therefore no need for nations to have independence."¹⁶ He stressed this argument was opportunistic and the "antithesis

of the party's international policy."¹⁷ He argued that, in a socialist order it is important to acknowledge the right of separation as a "historical expression of the class struggle," or of the national oppression which had existed in the exploitive systems of the past.

Though it recognizes the right of separation, Marxism-Leninism favors the fusion of nations and peoples over the fragmentation or atomization of states. It sees the advantage in the largeness of states. Lenin thought there were advantages in large states "both from the standpoint of economic progress and from that of the interests of the masses . . ."¹⁸ But, on the other hand, he also maintained that such advantages can be realized only if the "concentration" or the unity of nations in one state is based on genuine democracy, the free consent of the nations or the nationalities concerned. He warned that a "union" founded upon the violation or disregard of the consent of the nations or nationalities may only serve to accentuate discord and antipathy among peoples.

The Leninist approach fulfils a dual purpose. It respects the sensitivities related to nationalism while, at the same time promoting the unity of nations in a multinational state. It assures nations of their equality and political independence by guaranteeing their right to secede if these are violated. It compels observance of the equality of the nations and of other conditions of the union, thus perpetuating the unity between nations.

The Right of Separation and Internationalist Duty of Socialists

A profound insight into the psychology of nationalism and national relations is reflected in the Leninist approach to various aspects of the national question. One aspect involves the responsibility of socialists in the oppressor and oppressed nations for "educating workers in the spirit of internationalism."¹⁹

The principle of self-determination or the right of separation is germane to the subject of internationalism. It is an aspect of the process leading to the unity or amalgamation of nations in the long run. It is a means of unifying the struggle against reactionary forces who exploit the working masses in their own nations and oppress other nations and peoples. It is important that socialists of both the oppressing nation and the oppressed nation approach *separation* from the standpoint of internationalism. But while their agitational tasks among the workers in the respective nations aim towards internationalism, they are not "concretely identical."²⁰

The socialists of the oppressing nation should focus on raising the consciousness of the workers concerning the plight of the oppressed nations and their right to separate. In the words of Lenin:

The weight of emphasis in internationalist education for the workers in the oppressing countries must necessarily be concentrated upon preaching and getting them to demand the right of secession for the oppressed countries. Without this there is no internationalism. It is our right and duty to condemn every socialist of an oppressing nation who fails to conduct such propaganda, as an imperialist and a scoundrel.²¹

The socialists of the oppressed nation however should stress the usefulness or expediency of amalgamating with other nations on an equal basis. Even in instances where they favor separation from an oppressing nation, they should still promote internationalism by combating "small nation narrow mindedness." Lenin wrote:

... a Socialist belonging to a small nation must concentrate the weight of his agitation on the second word of our general formula: "voluntary amalgamation" of nations . . . he must fight against small nation narrow mindedness, insularity and aloofness, he must fight for the recognition of the general and the whole, for subordinating the interests of the particular to the interests of the general.²²

The above stated tasks of socialists in both the oppressing and the oppressed nations—though not "concretely identical"—promote internationalism. The agitation by the socialists of the oppressor countries for the right of oppressed nations to separate contributes directly to the dissipation of the suspicion and distrust on the part of the latter. On the other hand, the agitation by the socialists in the oppressed nations for amalgamation or, at any rate, against "small nation narrow-mindedness," prepares the oppressed people for solutions within the framework of unity with others. It bolsters the chances for democratic decision by the oppressed nation to unite with other peoples when such unity is not counter to the interests of social progress.

Self-determination and the Supremacy of Social Progress

As noted earlier "self determination" is a principle with a historic mission of advancing the progress of societies. Likewise, in addressing the subject of nationalism, Marxism assumes social advancement as the underlying objective:

Marxism-Leninism approaches nationalism, as it does all social phenomena, from a concrete historical point of view, i.e. from the point of view of the interests of social progress.²³

Since the time of Marx and Engels, proletarian revolutionaries put forward the slogan of self-determination and supported the right of oppressed nations to separate but consistently upheld social progress as

the primary objective of the resolution of national questions. Marx and Engels subordinated the national question to the "labor question" or the class struggle. They supported those national movements that were historically progressive, those movements that "represented progress . . . in relation"²⁴ to the states from which the separation was sought. On that basis, Marx espoused the independence of Poland from Czarist Russia. His later position on the Irish question favored the "national emancipation" of Ireland which he thought was not only an end to the oppression of Ireland itself but also "the prime condition of emancipation"²⁵ for the English workers.

Following the October Revolution, which took place in the epoch of imperialism, the Bolsheviks effectively recognized the right of separation for those nations formerly oppressed by Czarist Russia. In the few cases in which nations opted for separation, the Bolsheviks believed it was compatible with the interest of the revolutionary movement and social progress. More recently, the members of the socialist community actively supported the secession of the former colonies in what is now the developing world. They deemed such secession necessary for, and not counter to, the progress of the colonized peoples and the struggle against world imperialism.

Therefore, Marxists would support a national movement for separation—whether colonial or otherwise—only if it does not "contradict" or does not "conflict with the interest of the revolutionary movement . . ."²⁶ In this period, still an epoch of imperialism even though socialism is triumphing in large parts of the world, such movements would be supported which "tend to weaken, to overthrow imperialism, and not to strengthen and preserve it."²⁷

The principle of self-determination is thus invoked and utilized with due regard for the interest of social progress or the class struggle. It is concretely interpreted and applied in every single case. Hence, with time and historical developments, its interpretation on a given question may even change.

The point here is that the national question is *subordinate* to the class question or the question of social progress. It does not become submerged or nullified, but rather achieves resolution with the interests of the class struggle or social progress as the absolute context.

Dynamism of the "National Question" and the Right of Separation

Ultimately, the national question is a class question. Any national question raised is initially propelled by the interests of a certain class or classes in the "nation."

By virtue of its class content, the national question is dynamic. It

changes in character according to the changes in the class or classes raising it, or to socio-historical developments changing the character of the class or classes from the standpoint of social progress. This point was well stated by Stalin:

Everything changes . . . Social life changes, and with it, the 'national question' changes too. At different periods different classes enter the arena, and each class has its own view of the 'national question.' Consequently, in different periods the 'national question' serves different interests and assumes different shades, according to which class raises it and when.²⁸ (emphasis added)

Hence, in history there have been the "national questions" of various classes. In the experience of eastern Europe there have been the "national questions" of the nobility, that of the bourgeoisie, and that of the proletariat.

A certain class may be progressive (and its "national question" supportable from the Marxist standpoint) at a certain period in a given society. However, due to developments in "all internal and external socio-historical factors" or to developments pertaining to the interest of the revolutionary movement, the same class may cease to represent progress and may become reactionary. Then, its "national question" or demand for separation "contradicts" the interest of social progress and ceases to be supportable from the Marxist viewpoint:

A Marxist party could support a nation's striving to secession in a definite historical period, but once the situation changes, it could come out against it.²⁹

In this connection, it is important to bear two points in mind. First, the undesirability and therefore the rejection of actual separation does not mean non-recognition of the right to secede. A Marxist party would continue to recognize the right of separation. Second, the rejection of actual separation does not deny effective exercise of self-determination in other ways. The nation concerned can opt for federal or autonomous or other status in association with other nations.

The Use of Force and the Right of Separation

The right of self-determination in regard to political status or state affiliation can be exercised in various ways. It can be exercised by peaceful means—ideally using the institution of the plebiscite—or, failing such means, by use of force or wars of liberation. The latter method raises serious issues, particularly when applied to situations which are not colonial.

The Marxist view on war follows from the dictum: "every war is a continuation of politics by other means,"³⁰ by violent means. A war may

be progressive or reactionary—and thus supportable or not—depending on the nature of the politics or interest it is meant to promote.

Marxists have actively supported wars of liberation by colonial peoples particularly when such peoples had exhausted the peaceful means to attain freedom. Such use of force aims at national emancipation and thus is a continuation of progressive politics. It actually promotes peace. In the words of Amílcar Cabral, colonial peoples engaged in wars of liberation are "anonymous soldiers for the United Nations,"³¹ whose Charter upholds the principle of self-determination as the basis of peaceful and friendly relations between peoples.

In non-colonial situations too, oppressed peoples may be forced to take up arms for liberation. This may happen where the oppressor nation is ruthlessly authoritarian and has resorted to militaristic and fascist measures to suppress the demand for self-determination.

On the other hand history is full of instances in which reactionary wars were waged in the name of "national liberation." This happens in cases where the cause itself—secession—is contrary to the interests of the masses of the people. It may also happen in cases where a legitimate cause can be pursued by peaceful means and does not necessitate the resort to arms.

The character of a war for separation may undergo changes, like that of the striving for separation itself. At a certain period and circumstance, a war fought for separation may be progressive and merit the support of world revolutionary forces. However, due to changes affecting the interest of social progress, the war may "be transformed into its opposite."³² It may, in the new circumstances, serve the interests of reaction and not of progress.

Question of Nationalities and Self-determination in the Developing States

Self-determination is a universal principle of action. It has implications for "all peoples" irrespective of their levels of social development. It applies to all situations where peoples are oppressed by other nations or nationalities. Thus, it also applies to questions of nationalities arising within the developing states today, including those in Africa.

The application of the principle to the problems in these states is a complicated task. The complications arise from several factors.

Most or almost all the developing states in Africa are multinational in that they are composed of various national and tribal groups. They are former colonies. Their boundaries were determined by colonialists who had no qualms about dismembering national and tribal groups and lumping them with others. Second, most of these states are predomi-

nantly at a pre-capitalist level of development. They are mostly pre-national.

Working people in these states strongly feel a spirit of nationality or tribal sense of affiliations. In many cases, this sense of affiliation seriously prevails over their sense of class loyalty. Problems of self-determination and incidents of secessionist strivings frequently arise in these states. In some cases, the incidents are popular responses to oppression. In others they possess irredentist aims. Yet, in other cases, they are counter-revolutionary moves masterminded by local reactionaries and imperialism trying to impede the process of development in a progressive state.

The situation in these states is very fluid, marked by frequent changes in government. Some changes are revolutionary; others are mere coup d'états with no consequence for class relations and structure; still others are even reversals of progressive orientations. This detracts from the fact that on the whole the world revolutionary movement continues to make gains everywhere, including in the developing world.

The fluidity of the situation in the developing states makes their national questions even more complex. The "national" or separatist movements in these states easily and frequently undergo changes of character from the standpoint of anti-imperialism or social progress. They may be objectively anti-imperialist at a certain period; but with certain important changes, they may degenerate and in effect become tools of imperialism.

In light of the above, it is necessary to avoid a mechanical interpretation or any flat applications of self-determination to problems of nationalities in the developing states, including those in Africa. The nationalities question in Africa, as Soviet Africanist Roza Ismagilova noted, "is an extremely complex matter and calls for careful analysis in each specific case."³³

Writing in 1978, Ismagilova refers to the situation in Eritrea as one of the "concrete examples" of the problems of self-determination in African states.³⁴ Comparing it with other such problems in the continent, she observed: "The Eritrean problem (in Ethiopia) is extremely acute."³⁵

Now, in early 1986 the situation is basically the same. Two Soviet experts on Ethiopian affairs, Galperin and Sharayev, noted the "protracted armed struggle" in Eritrea and Tigray and the problem of nationalities in Ethiopia generally. With emphasis on Eritrea they correctly observed that the problem of the "complicated and unresolved national question" in the country "remains acute to this day" with international

and domestic reaction seeking to exacerbate it by "exploiting in particular the difficulties caused by the drought."³⁶

The "acute" Eritrean problem is still intricate. It defies any simplistic approach either in the name of vindicating Eritrean nationalism or of promoting Ethio-Eritrean unity. The problem calls for the most careful examination in light of the theories and objectives underlying the principle of self-determination.

Eritrea and Self-Determination: Reflections on Some Issues

Different views of Eritrea and self-determination persist today. Many are incorrect and have only worsened the problem.

The incorrect views are themselves diverse and seek to vindicate opposed interests and aspirations. Some hinge on distortions or misinterpretations of the Marxist theory of self-determination, others on misinterpretations of historical facts. Still others stem from wrong interpretations of or unwarranted conclusions from such facts.

Both Ethiopians and Eritreans have contributed to the cumulation of wrong views on this issue. Some in the progressive world supporting Ethiopia have endorsed Addis Ababa's assertions, including those which are untenable. On the other hand, ideologists of imperialism now fully backing the armed groups in Eritrea have endorsed and amplified the claims of the latter.

The erroneous viewpoints on the Ethiopian side reflect legacies of imperial tradition, and to some degree the paranoia and the ideological limitations of the socialist-oriented regime in Addis Ababa. Those on the Eritrean side express the innocent and nationalist aspirations of many among the people, and the reactionary interests and goals of those cliques leading the armed groups at this time. Further, they also reflect anti-Sovietism and anti-communism—the ultimate strategy of the reactionary quarters underwriting the armed movement today.

J. Some Fallacies in Ethiopia's Contentions

Inaccurate views on the Ethiopian side concern several issues. A key issue is Eritrea's national character. Ethiopian spokesmen have contended that Eritrea is objectively not a bearer of the right of self-determination up to separation. They have stressed Eritrea's makeup as an amalgam of pre-national peoples. Addressing the nation in 1978, PMAC Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam reiterated the point that "Eritrea is not a nation"¹ and denigrated "the wholesale shout about the independence of Eritrea."²

Mengistu Haile Mariam and other spokesmen of the regime uphold regional autonomy as "the only scientific solution" to the problem of Eritrea and to that of other nationalities in the former empire state. They claim this is the Marxist position on the question. They maintain that in the Soviet Union as well as China the pre-national territorial groups exercise self-determination through regional autonomy "which means" that the groups "do not have the right to secede."³

Likewise, several supporters of the Ethiopian regime in the progressive world have insisted that Eritrea is not a nation. Two progressive writers making this assertion wrote in 1978:

The characteristics of a nation consist of a historically constituted community of people possessing a common language, a common territory, a common economic life and a common culture . . . Eritrea, in the northern region of Ethiopia, is in no sense a nation . . . Therefore, its separation from Ethiopia is a sheer artificial division of Ethiopia into pieces.⁴

They limit the right of separation to "nations" as defined in the Bolshevik theses on the Right of Nations to Self-determination.⁵ In this view, separation is exclusively the right of "national" entities, communities which have attained the capitalist level of development.

The argument is fundamentally wrong. Marxism-Leninism does not limit the right of separation to capitalistically developed communities. It is true that, as initially formulated by the Bolsheviks, the theses on self-determination referred to nations. But the Bolsheviks formulated the theses while dealing with some real problems of annexed or otherwise oppressed communities, many of whom were nations in the sense of capitalistically-developed entities.

Marxism-Leninism states clearly that self-determination is a democratic principle of universal application. As such, the right to self-determination up to separation is not "confined . . . to 'civilized' nations"⁶ or to "capitalistically" developed communities. Lenin explicitly stated that self-determination is also the right of "capitalistically underdeveloped" peoples who are faced with the need to eliminate alien "oppression."

With reference to the "underdeveloped" countries in Eastern Europe, the colonies and semi-colonies, he said:

In those areas, as a rule, there still exist oppressed and capitalistically underdeveloped nations. Objectively, these nations still have general national tasks to accomplish, namely democratic tasks, the task of overthrowing foreign oppression.⁷

Responding to the argument that a "workers' party" should not "demand self-determination . . . for countries where there are no workers,"⁸ Lenin stressed that, as a democratic principle, self-determination is

addressed specifically to the whole people and that is why in it (the party's program) we speak of the 'people' . . . Even . . . where there are no workers, only slave owners and slaves, etc. the demand for "self-determination," far from being absurd, is obligatory for every Marxist . . .⁹

The Marxist-Leninist principle of self-determination applies to any situation where a historically constituted community, national or pre-national, is oppressed by another nation or state. It makes no distinction between peoples on grounds of differences in levels of social formation. Shevtsov states:

Lenin regarded a nation, a national group, and a nationality as the subjects of self-determination.¹⁰

It is true that, like Ethiopia and many other countries in the developing world, Eritrea is not a nation in the sense that it is not a capitalistically-developed historical community. However, like most of these countries, Eritrea is a political unit constituted by a history of colonial rule and composed of various nationalities and national groups which are subjects of self-determination both separately and together.

Thus, like all other "peoples," Eritrea is a subject of self-determination in every sense. *In principle*, it has the right of separation as well.

Incidentally, several of those who emphasize Eritrea's pre-national stage of development have argued at the same time that Ethiopia is a nation.¹¹ This is simply ludicrous. If anything Eritrea is closer to being a nation than Ethiopia. After all, even by the admission of Ethiopian and some other writers, there is more capitalist development in Eritrea than in Ethiopia.¹²

The "Dismemberment" Argument and Self-determination

Some deny Eritrea's right of self-determination up to separation on the ground that the entity is an amalgam of "dismembered" nationalities or national groups with different levels of social formation. This ap-

proach stresses that Eritrea is an "artificial" entity, that the Eritrean movement is likewise "artificial" and thus foreign-instigated;¹³ as proof, it points to the divisions and conflicts within the Eritrean movement.

Eritrea is indeed a mosaic of nationalities, national groups and tribes. It should be remembered however that such is the composition of most countries in the developing world, which were carved out by colonialism. Two Soviet writers who have done impressive research on revolutionary democracy and its task in the contemporary period observed:

The ethnic heterogeneity of the majority of the young states is a consequence of their colonial past. Firstly, these states emerged within the boundaries of the former colonial possessions, boundaries which the colonialists established at will, without consideration for historical, economic and most importantly, ethnic factors. As a result, a single colony would embrace fragmented parts of various ethnic groups and a single ethnic group would be divided between several colonies which frequently belonged to different colonial powers.¹⁴

As in many former colonies, imperialism dismembered tribal and national groups in the determination of Eritrea's borders. The Tigrigna-speaking people of the plateau are separated from those in the northern Ethiopian province of Tigray; the Hedari and the Beni Amer in the western region were separated from the Hadendawa and the (Sudanese) Beni Amer respectively in eastern Sudan; and the Danakil in the eastern region from the Afar people in the former French colony of Djibouti.

Of course even the process by which Ethiopia became a multinational empire state involved the inclusion of a number of tribal and national groups dismembered from their kith and kin in all the neighboring countries. The Shillouk, the Ingassana, the Nuer and tens of other tribes in western Ethiopia are torn from their siblings in southeastern Sudan; the Boranas and other tribes in the south, the Somalis in the Ogaden, and the Afars in the eastern region are severed from their kith and kin in northern Kenya, in Somalia, and in the former French colony of Djibouti respectively.

Thus it is a plain fact that Ethiopia, like Eritrea, includes many tribal and national groups who have "more in common with their neighbors" in adjacent countries "than with each other."¹⁵ Therefore, as far as the arguments of multinationality and dismemberment are concerned, the Ethiopian government and its supporters cannot condemn Eritrea as an "artificial" entity without, at the same time, condemning Ethiopia likewise.

Eritrea, which has nine national and tribal groups, is actually a mild case of multinationality in Africa. For example, the Congo has 77 tribal

and national groups; mainland Tanzania has 120; and even Ethiopia itself has more than 50.

Nor is it peculiar to Eritrea that there are national groups with differences in religion and levels of social formation. Again, precisely such differences exist between the national and tribal groups in Ethiopia itself.

There is no doubt that an entity which is an amalgam of "dismembered" pre-national peoples—which a colony or former colony in most cases is—is, as a unit, a subject of self-determination. If a colonial entity exercises its right to self-determination in the form of establishing its own sovereign state, obviously it continues to be a subject of the right as a unit. Where it exercises the right in the form of joining another state, accepting any status within the framework of that state, that entity would still retain its historically acquired capacity for the right to self-determination so long as its various peoples freely maintain their sense of political community in relation to it.¹⁶

It is in the above sense that Eritrea, as a political unit, still remains a subject of the right to self-determination. Its various national groups were oppressed by the same colonial rule, which Eritrea, as a unit, had the right to overthrow. Again, by the machinations of imperialism, Eritrea as a whole was annexed into Ethiopia. Eritrea's peoples, by and large, continue to maintain their sense of political community in relation to it.

In practice the principle of self-determination has been applied to multinational entities whether these are separate states on their own or united with others in a multinational state. For example, in the Soviet Union it was applied and continues to apply to Union Republics, Autonomous Republics, and Autonomous Regions. In many cases, these entities are multinational, comprised of peoples who were at one time at different levels of social formation.

Eritrea is thus a multinational entity *analogous* to a Union Republic, or Autonomous Republic, or Autonomous Region in the USSR. As such it should be regarded as a unit bearing the right to self-determination.

Divisions in the Eritrean Movement and their Significance

As mentioned earlier, Ethiopian spokesmen and supporters, as well as progressive Eritreans disenchanted with the movement have often cited the persistence of the divisions in the Eritrean movement to support the contention that Eritrea makes no sense as a political unit. But Eritrean divisions do not necessarily negate the meaningfulness of Eritrea as a political unit and a bearer of the right to self-determination. After all, such divisions did not render Angola, Zimbabwe or Palestine

meaningless as political units and subjects of the right to self-determination. There is no reason why they should in the case of Eritrea.

Still, these divisions are significant. They reflect the reactionary class character and backwardness of the divisive forces in the movement, the EPLF leadership, Abdullah Idris' clique, and other such groups. These divisions are also made possible by the nature of Eritrea's social makeup and Eritrea's history. Indeed they attest to the feeble character of Eritrean patriotism.

Eritrean society, like Ethiopian and other societies in the developing world, is transitional. Wider patriotism—transcending tribal and nationality allegiances—and provincialism (regionalism) exist side by side, with the former gradually becoming dominant in the people's consciousness. The infirmity of this transitional patriotism suited the aims of the EPLF leadership and its counterparts among the Moslem-low-lander groups. It was exploited for fomenting and sustaining divisions in the Eritrean movement.

To recapitulate, the divisions in the movement do not totally negate the reality of Eritrean patriotism. Nor do they in any way vindicate the thesis that Eritrea is not capable of exercising self-determination as a unit.

Its feebleness notwithstanding, Eritrean nationalism or patriotism is an objective reality. It is significant that most of the Eritrean people condemned the divisive policies in the movement. A few times spontaneous popular moves even arose to unify the fronts. Indeed, the various groups have some sense of "Eritrea" as an entity to which they belong. Ignoring this fact is unwarranted and dangerous.

No case of self-determination?

Ethiopia and its supporters deny legitimate cause for Eritreans' demand for self-determination. They contend Eritrea's is not a national question, or a colonial question, or a religious question.

It is true that after mid-1977 the Eritrean question ceased to be colonial in character. (More on this later.) It is also true that the discrimination against the followers of Islam and the suppression of the Eritrean languages, which certainly existed during Haile Sellassie's reign, are now in the process of being eliminated.

Though the armed groups in Eritrea have finally become proxies of US imperialism and Arab reaction, the demand for Eritrea's self-determination is not "foreign-inspired," but rather has a historical basis. Under Haile Sellassie, Eritrea suffered national oppression. Under the revolutionary regime, Ethiopia sought the forcible retention of Eritrea and, to

that extent, failed to allow the consummation of Eritrea's right to self-determination.

In what sense did Eritrea suffer national oppression under Haile Sellassie?

In the first place, Eritrea was annexed into Ethiopia by the imperialist-designed "federal" resolution. That annexation itself embodied a form of national oppression, the external form. It imposed on the Eritrean people an affiliation they had not chosen.

During the years of "federation" and following its dissolution, Eritrea suffered national oppression in every sense. The oppression involved a collusion of colonial exploitation by the United States, and the plunder of Eritrea's wealth and the suppression of political, economic and cultural rights of the people by the now overthrown Ethiopian feudo-bourgeoisie.

Haile Sellassie's regime deprived the Eritrean people of their political rights. Political parties were banned, freedom of expression was suppressed. The bourgeois democratic institutions established by the Eritrean constitution were destroyed. Courts lost their powers, especially in examining "political" crimes.

Eritrea became impoverished. The country was plundered and its economic life ruined. The regime appropriated port revenues in violation of the Federal Act. Factories closed, their owners relocated south in Ethiopia. Large investments in Eritrea fell. Unemployment mounted, forcing people to migrate to Ethiopia itself, to the Sudan, and to the neighboring countries of the Middle East.

Deliberately arresting cultural and educational developments in Eritrea, Haile Sellassie's regime discouraged the use of Eritrea's official languages and masterminded the disappearance of literary works in those languages. Gradually, it effectively imposed Amharic as the official language and tried to popularize Amhara culture in the country.

These constituted the internal aspect of national oppression, affecting all the classes and social groups in the country.

Moreover we have seen how Haile Sellassie's regime discarded Eritrea's national flag, eroded the "federation" and finally forcibly incorporated Eritrea into its empire. Even if the legality of the UN resolution which "federated" Eritrea with Ethiopia is assumed, the forcible incorporation which took place in 1962 was in itself an external form of national oppression. It changed the international political status of Eritrea without the free consent of its people and by an essentially coercive act. That act violated the UN Charter's guarantee of the right to self-determination. It was a violation of the conditions of the "union" sanctioned by the United Nations.¹⁷

Thus, beginning with the annexationist UN resolution and throughout the reign of Haile Sellassie, the Eritrean people suffered national oppression of both external and internal forms. This was the operative root cause of the problem. It spurred the movement demanding self-termination for Eritrea.

What about the post-revolution period? To what extent did national oppression cease for Eritreans?

Unfortunately Eritrea is one of those problems in connection with which the progressive Ethiopian regime was caught up in its historic shortcomings.

It can be said that, to a large extent, the progressive regime has perpetuated the features of the external aspect of Eritrea's national oppression. It has practically continued the annexation or forcible retention of Eritrea. It has refused to acknowledge the annexation of Eritrea, which it insists is part of Ethiopia. It has failed to recognize in principle the right of Eritreans to determine their own status, including by establishing their own sovereign state.

In its earliest period the PMAC took steps which had the effect of worsening the Ethio-Eritrean situation. Soon after the fall of the ancien regime the PMAC, with Mengistu Haile Mariam as its real leader, assumed an extremely militarist approach to Eritrea. It rebuffed General Aman Andom who, though capitalist-oriented and by all indications anti-communist, earnestly sought to solve the Eritrean problem peacefully within the framework of federation or autonomy. It implemented policies designed to crush the Eritrean movement.

The PMAC's earliest policies thus escalated the Ethio-Eritrean war. In fact, they galvanized the armed movement to an unprecedented degree.

Certain aspects of the internal form of national oppression were thus aggravated. Strict martial law came into force. Eritrean civilians in the countryside fell victim to indiscriminate bombings by the Ethiopian airforce. Innocent people were bayoneted and murdered in other barbarous ways. Thousands were tortured and killed in prisons.

Some may be inclined to dismiss the mass murders, tortures, arbitrary detentions and other undemocratic policies practiced in the early years of the PMAC as petty "moral issues." But to the Eritrean people these practices were most oppressive and inhuman. They sharpened the Eritreans' distrust of Ethiopia and of the "military" regime, strengthening the demand for separation.

In this light, it is obvious that the Eritrean problem and the demand for self-determination are not "artificial," but are historically rooted in

the oppressive policies of Haile Sellassie, to a significant degree perpetuated by the blunders the PMAC committed in its early years.

Historical and Economic Arguments

One still hears about history and Ethiopia's economic needs to justify Ethiopia's continued retention of Eritrea. These hold that Eritrea was historically part of Ethiopia and that Ethiopia needs an outlet to the sea. Haile Sellassie's government had presented these arguments at the Big Powers Conference and later at the United Nations General Assembly. The PMAC had also systematically hammered on them in its early years. By now these arguments seem to be generally subsiding. However some of them, particularly those concerning history, continue to appear, even in progressive periodicals.

Ethiopia's "historical" claims do not correspond to fact. True, Eritrea did not exist as a political entity prior to Italian occupation in 1890; but, *in its present entirety*, it has never been part of Ethiopia. In fact, the latter was constituted as a modern empire state only at the turn of the century. The truth is that certain parts of what is today Eritrea belonged to Abyssinian kingdoms in the highland areas of today's Ethiopia.

More importantly however, even if Eritrea as a whole had been part of Ethiopia at a certain period of history, this cannot justify the incorporation of Eritrea into Ethiopia today against the will of the Eritrean people. Subsequent to the historical period which Ethiopia cites to support its claim for Eritrea, certain historical developments—starting with Italian colonization in 1890—have taken place, shaping the people of Eritrea as a political entity and investing them with the right of self-determination.

Ethiopia's claim for Eritrea on the basis of economic needs or more precisely the need for access to the sea is even less tenable. This claim seems to suggest that any landlocked state may assert the right to incorporate into its frontiers the neighboring states adjacent to the sea. It is incompatible with the right of peoples to self-determination which takes precedence over the economic or military or any other interests of other states. However, this is not to deny that the two entities—no matter what their relations—should be considerate of each other's needs and cooperate in all spheres in the best way possible.

The Ethiopian Revolution: Effect on the Question of Eritrea

For a decade now it has been argued that since there is a revolution in Ethiopia the question of Eritrea should be resolved within the framework of Ethiopian unity and specifically on the basis of regional auton-

omy. This, for example, has been the argument on which the PMAC based its nine point policy decisions on Eritrea.

Many progressive governments, parties, and writers who formerly supported the Eritrean struggle for separation have emphasized the significance of the change which has taken place in Ethiopia. They have called upon the Eritreans to settle for a status within the framework of a united Ethiopia where, they stress, a progressive regime is now in power.

There is no question that there is a change in Ethiopia. There is no doubt either that, from the standpoint of Marxism, the practical exercise of self-determination by Eritrea is governed by several factors including "the changed character of the Ethiopian ruling class." But in what way does the change in Ethiopia affect the exercise of self-determination by Eritrea? Does it affect it in such a way that Eritrea ceases to have the right of separation?

In principle, the new situation in Ethiopia does not terminate Eritrea's right of separation. As shown earlier, Marxism recognizes the right of annexed nations to separate even after the emergence of a socialist—or national democratic—regime in the annexing state. Lenin is most clear on this point:

If a socialist party declares that it is 'against the forcible retention of an oppressed nation within the frontiers of the annexing state,' it is *thereby committed to renounce retention by force* when it comes to power.¹⁸

Thus, no matter how progressive the present regime in Ethiopia—a former annexing state—*recognition* of Eritrea's right to separate remains imperative. The Ethiopian regime or any progressive government or party may only disagree as to the expediency of actual separation at this time and for that reason call for resolution of the problem in other ways.

Many in the progressive movement contend that actually the PMAC took steps to grant the right of self-determination to Eritrea but that the Eritrean organizations refused to co-operate. They cite the PMAC's offer of regional autonomy and its rejection by Eritreans.¹⁹

True, the PMAC declared regional autonomy as the solution for Eritreans and the formerly oppressed nationalities in Ethiopia. To what extent does this fulfill the principle of self-determination?

"Regional autonomy" becomes a form of political independence if it is a status freely and voluntarily chosen by the people. Specifically, it would be a manifestation of self-determination if the Eritrean people so decided.²⁰ But "regional autonomy" as declared by the PMAC is not consistent with the principle of self-determination for it is not the status chosen by the Eritrean people. It is a "policy decision" of the PMAC, an

administrative "solution" the PMAC would like to apply. It is not even a framework suggested as a basis for negotiations.

The PMAC offers the same status to the formerly oppressed nationalities in Ethiopia. It thus holds the Eritrean question to be the same as that of the other oppressed nationalities in the former empire. This stance of the PMAC is obvious in the Nine-Point Policy Declaration on Eritrea:

Like all their countrymen, the masses of the Eritrean people have suffered from the injustices of feudal oppression and exploitation. For long they have been denied their individual and collective rights, particularly the right to assert their cultural identities and to establish regional and local administrations that best meet their needs.²¹

It is incontrovertible that the Ethiopian regime should equally respect the rights of both the formerly oppressed nationalities in the country and those of the Eritrean people. But historical factors distinguish the question of one nationality from that of another.

In a very important sense, the problem of Eritrea is historically different from that of the oppressed nationalities in Ethiopia. Eritrea did not historically evolve within the former empire state of Ethiopia. It was annexed into Ethiopia in relatively recent times. It is still a case of fresh annexation.

Some progressives are aware of this point, yet understate its importance. For example, one engaged in the following rhetoric:

Who drew the national boundaries in Europe? Was it the working class? Of course not. In Europe it was the bourgeoisie just as in China it was, in the first place, the feudal war lords.²²

As a general description of the way in which empires and other states were formed, this point is accurate. But it cannot apply to Eritrea today. Eritrea's forcible inclusion or annexation into Ethiopia took place recently, in fact at a time when self-determination had become a principle of international law. From the beginning, the majority of the Eritrean people opposed the annexation. The opposition continued uninterrupted and for over twenty years in the form of an armed movement. The continuous protest against annexation precluded Eritrea's inclusion into Ethiopia from crystallizing as historical fact. Thus, even though Eritrea suffered the internal form of national oppression, the matter still concerns Eritrea's incorporation into Ethiopia.

The case of the oppressed nationalities in Ethiopia involves internal oppression by the overthrown ruling class of the Amhara nationality in the former empire state. It is true that initially those oppressed nationalities

ties were subjugated or annexed by Showan feudalists. In fact it was through the subjugation of various nationalities or tribes that the Abyssinian or Ethiopian empire emerged in the late 19th centuries. Following their annexation, these nationalities and tribes suffered economic, social and cultural oppression.

The initial subjugation or annexation of these nationalities and tribes was a violation of self-determination. Their subjugation should be condemned no less than the annexation of Eritrea. In spite of this however, the question of these nationalities *today* differs from that of Eritrea. How? These nationalities were annexed into the Abyssinian kingdom in relatively early times. In several cases they put up heroic fights resisting the aggression of Showan expansionists. Their resistance was finally crushed and they have been contained within the Abyssinian empire ever since. And so, the idea of these nationalities separating from the Abyssinian or Ethiopian state subsided and ceased to exist in any practical sense.

The affiliation of these nationalities with the Abyssinian (now Ethiopian) state, unlike that of Eritrea, has crystallized as historical fact. The question of these peoples now is, therefore, not one of annexation. It is one of nationalities who suffered national oppression in a multinational state of which they are constituent parts.

Eritrea and the Danger of Ethiopia's Fragmentation

The failure to appreciate the way in which the question of Eritrea differs from that of the oppressed nationalities in Ethiopia has spawned serious misconceptions about the nature of the Eritrean problem. It has led to some unwarranted fears, false analogies, and erroneous theses.

One of the misconceptions is that the matter of Eritrea is akin to that of secession by a tribal or national group from a multinational young state in which it was included by the process of classical colonial rule or as part of which it otherwise crystallized in history. This led to the false analogy of Eritrea with Biafra, Katanga, and other secessionist attempts in Africa. It has led some to justify the retention of Eritrea within Ethiopia on the basis of the 1964 OAU resolution which confirmed and legitimized the boundaries determined by the former colonial rulers in Africa.

This misconception has also fostered the fear that Eritrea's separation would have a disastrous impact on Ethiopia's unity. The thesis is frequently propounded—the domino theory as it is called—which holds that Eritrea's separation would encourage the non-Amhara nationalities to seek separation, thus leading to the fragmentation of the Ethiopian state.²³

The fear is by and large unwarranted. The distinctiveness of the

Eritrean question is easily explicable. The regime can at least recognize the right of Eritrea to self-determination up to separation and still maintain the frontiers of Ethiopia.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the question of nationalities and that of Ethiopian unity are of serious import in themselves, irrespective of the Eritrean factor. But what can forestall the emergence or growth of separatist movements within Ethiopia is not the forcible retention of Eritrea but the genuine implementation of the National Democratic Program which enunciates the goals of promoting the political, economic, and cultural development of the formerly oppressed nationalities.

The above are some of the main errors in the approach of Ethiopia and its supporters on the question of Eritrea. Consequent policies have not and cannot bring about a solution.

II. Falsehoods in Eritrean Contentions

The theories expressed in certain Eritrean quarters, are as absurd in their own way as many of Ethiopia's arguments. Some of those propounded by the EPLF and its supporters pose special dangers. Below is a discussion of several.

Is Eritrea a Colony?

Some perpetuate the notion that the Eritrean problem today is of colonial character. A corollary holds that Eritrea's struggle is against "Ethiopian colonialism."

Until the middle of 1977 it was correct to view the question of Eritrea as being colonial in a fundamental sense. Specifically, it was a question of a *special colony* as the ELF characterized it in its National Congress of 1971.²⁴

In what sense was Eritrea a special colony? To understand this, an examination of the meaning of colonialism and neo-colonialism is in order.

The 1960 UN Declaration on Decolonization defines colonialism as "the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation." This general definition indicates that colonialism embraces several aspects, including political and economic ones, some of which vary under classical colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Invariably, classical colonialism features outright political domination, maintained by the overt presence and use of the military and other governmental powers of the dominating alien state. With regard to the political or constitutional aspect of classical colonialism, Jack Woddis wrote:

The political essence of colonialism is the direct and overall subordination of one country to another on the basis of state power being in the hands of the dominating foreign power.²⁵

The dominating alien state exercises the supreme political power. The subdued or colonized people exercise certain governmental functions only if and to the extent the dominating state "allows." Political domination or control becomes a means of securing the economic exploitation of the subdued peoples and their territories. In the eras of pre-monopoly capitalism and imperialism, such exploitation involved the extraction and plunder of national wealth, the use of the colony as a market for finished products, the use of the colony for exclusive investment by the industrial and financial oligarchies of the dominating state, and the use of the labor power of the dominated peoples.

It does not mean that every colony was exploited or used in this particular way. Some territories were colonized to be used as military bases for the protection of other colonial possessions:

In some cases, it is true, territories were seized not so much because of the wealth they contained or their economic potential, but as military bases which could help safeguard imperialist interests in other more economically valuable territories.²⁶

Such was the colonization of Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Aden.

The period since the end of the Second World War is marked by the enlargement of the socialist community and the "break-up of the colonial system." It is also characterized by the emergence of the USA as the leading power in the imperialist camp.

Decolonization did not occur because imperialists were awakened to the right of self-determination. It was the result of active struggles by the forces of national liberation and the socialist community.

But even after formal decolonization, imperialists devised ways by which they kept many of the young states economically and militarily dependent. In many cases they even controlled the political machineries and the educational and cultural institutions of the young states. In addition to all the purposes for which they had directly colonized them earlier, they controlled the young states for checking the influence of the socialist community and the development of the anti-imperialist national movements.

The main difference between the colonial and neo-colonial systems is that, while the former involves "direct and overt" subjugation of peoples, the latter does not. In the case of a classical colony, the colonial power is directly and overtly the sovereign. In the case of a neo-colony, the dominated state has state sovereignty or independence which has

been termed "clientele sovereignty" or "fake independence." This is not to suggest that "clientele sovereignty" or "fake independence" represents no improvement in the situation of colonial peoples. Such sovereignty or independence can help—as it has in many cases—to accelerate the developments intensifying the anti-imperialist struggle and enhancing the attainment of genuine national liberation.

What was the situation in Ethiopia in the period after the Second World War? As already mentioned, Haile Sellassie was re-enthroned as a puppet of imperialism and Ethiopia became a client state of the British and later of the USA. Ethiopia was a satellite—and for all practical purposes—a neo-colony of the USA. Quite evidently Ethiopia, a neo-colony itself, could not have been a colonial power in the post-war period. This does not however warrant the conclusion that Eritrea's situation could not have been or was not colonial.

Eritrea's was a somewhat complex and special case. In several respects it resembled that of a classical colony. How?

The neo-colonial system, as mentioned above, does not overtly annex territories in the state frontiers of the imperialist powers. But many times it seeks to preserve and, if possible, to expand imperialism's spheres of influence by organizing or masterminding (a) the secession of territories from socialist, national democratic, and other staunchly anti-imperialist states, and (b) the annexation of nations or territories into other states which are clients of imperialism.

An example of an attempted secession instigated by neo-colonial forces was that of Katanga. This attempt aimed at carving out the mineral-rich territory from the then-Congo and securing it for exploitation. This aim coincided with the interests of Moïse Tshombe and his henchmen.

The secession of Katanga was the only way for the neo-colonial system to pursue at that time. This was so because the anti-imperialist regime of Patrice Lumumba then presided over the Congo.

There are several examples of cases in which imperialism masterminded and effected the annexation of territories into their client states, to exploit the economic resources of the territories, use them as military bases or to otherwise involve them in the web of imperialism. In carrying out or in helping to realize such annexation, imperialists may pretend they are only "recognizing" and giving effect to the "legitimate claims" of their client states.

This was exactly what the neo-colonial system did in the case of Eritrea. We recall US diplomat, John Foster Dulles, arrogantly and bluntly stating that "the strategic interest" of the US required that Eritrea

"be linked with our ally, Ethiopia" irrespective of the "opinions of the Eritrean people."²⁷

The neo-colonial interest of the US was the basic motive and the US role was the basic factor that brought about the UN-sponsored annexation of Eritrea into Ethiopia. Following the annexation, the US used Eritrea as its military base in practically the same way that other strategically located colonies — Malta, Aden, Gibraltar — were exploited by Western colonial powers. At the same time, as stated above, Eritrea suffered domination and injustice in the political, economic, and cultural spheres.

So, was Eritrea's situation simply neo-colonial like that of Ethiopia? Or did it possess all the elements of classical colonialism?

Eritrea suffered alien subjugation and domination. It was annexed into Ethiopia. Submerged beneath the state sovereignty of the latter, it did not even have a "fake independence." Its political, economic, and cultural life was brought under Ethiopian control.

US imperialism took advantage of Eritrea's strategic location. The country became a US military base, designed to protect imperialism's spheres of influence in the area. It was utilized for checking the influence of the socialist world and for curtailing the growth of anti-imperialist national movements.

Hence, Eritrea's situation did not fully correspond to that of a classical colony. It was different in that the US, the imperialist power exploiting Eritrea, was not "directly and overtly" present in the country as the ruling or the sovereign state. It was through the instrumentality of the Ethiopian state, itself neo-colonial, that US imperialism exploited Eritrea. Thus Eritrea was a special colony. In that special situation the colonial power was not Ethiopia but US imperialism, which also had dominated Ethiopia itself.

Of course, it is true that the overthrown Ethiopian feudo-bourgeoisie plundered Eritrea's wealth in collaboration with their Eritrean cohorts. They had also oppressed Eritrea politically and culturally. In light of this, some progressive observers seem to think that Eritrea suffered colonialism under Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia, irrespective of the US factor. A. Nikanorov, a staff correspondent for *Izvestia*, wrote in February 1975:

In accordance with the United Nations decision of Sept. 15, 1952, (Eritrea) was annexed to Ethiopia as part of a federation . . .

The feudal regime, which held sway in Ethiopia until recently and which depended on the fomentation of ethnic and religious conflicts, carried out a policy of

internal colonization in Eritrea. This naturally led to increased separatist tendencies.²⁸ (emphasis added)

Nikanorov's characterization of Haile Sellassie's policy in Eritrea as "internal colonization" is warranted by the severity of the economic, political and cultural oppression Eritrea suffered. But he would be erring however if he was implying that Eritrea's ultimate or essential problem was Ethiopian "colonization."

By virtue of the oppressive practices in Eritrea, alone, one cannot describe Ethiopia as a colonial power. In fact, the possibility of these practices ensued from US imperialism linkage of Eritrea to Ethiopia. In other words, Ethiopia's oppressive practices were incidental to the domination and exploitation of Eritrea by US imperialism.

Given that Eritrea was actually colonized by US imperialism through the instrumentality of Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia, it ceased to be a special colony in mid 1977. Thereafter, Ethiopia was no longer a satellite or a neo-colony of the US. It terminated its subservient relations with the US. It dismantled the US military bases in Eritrea which thus is no longer being used for the protection of imperialism's spheres of influence and in the strife against socialism and the national liberation movements.

The problem of Eritrea today is its continued inclusion within the frontiers of the Ethiopian state without the expressed will of its people. This situation may be characterized as one of forcible retention, but it is certainly not colonial.

Some Eritreans who believe they are suffering "Ethiopian colonialism" are ill-informed about the essential meaning of colonialism. They equate colonialism with mere annexation or forcible retention. Many have genuine national sentiments but are also innocent and have been unwittingly utilized by Eritrean reactionaries and imperialism.

But others protesting "Ethiopian colonialism" are not innocent at all. They are not ignorant of the meaning of colonialism either. They are opportunists and press this claim only to absolutize Eritrea's right to secede from Ethiopia.²⁹ Such Eritreans insist that ever since Eritrea was annexed into Ethiopia it was a colony of the latter. To them it does not even matter that Ethiopia itself was dominated by the US in a neo-colonial form. One, Bereketab Habte Sellassie, even advanced the thesis that Eritrea was "a colony of a neo-colony."³⁰

Outside the Eritrean community there are many experts of disinformation in the West and some well-meaning but unfortunately misguided liberals who support the thesis that Eritrea today is a colony of Ethiopia. Lately, there have also emerged some EPLF sympathizers who

support this thesis from a unique "African" perspective, so to speak. The most prominent and most eloquent among these is the Tanzanian political commentator, Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu, former Minister of Planning and Economic Development in Julius Nyerere's government.

Babu characterizes the Eritrean problem as colonial and sees no difference between Ethiopia in relation to Eritrea, and South Africa in relation to Namibia. In an article he wrote after visiting EPLF held areas in late 1985 Babu said:

Sooner or later . . . the world will have to acknowledge that the Eritrean question is not a secessionist struggle; it is a liberation struggle against Ethiopian colonialism as authentic as the Namibian struggle against South Africa, the only difference being that Ethiopia is a Third World colonial power and a member of the OAU and South Africa is neither.³¹

For all the reasons discussed earlier Babu's argument regarding the situation of Eritrea today is fundamentally false. Perhaps even more disturbing are the argument's implications about Namibia, a victim of apartheid rule being perpetuated with the decisive support—and really on behalf—of US led world imperialism. The suggestion that "the only difference" between Ethiopia and South Africa is that the former is a "Third World colonial power and a member of the OAU" plays down and in effect covers up the evils of apartheid; to that extent, it undermines the struggle to assert the full dignity of all African peoples including Eritreans.

Elsewhere Babu had assailed the Ethiopian regime as "the most cruel, the most repressive and the most imperialistic of the leftist governments in Africa."³² He condemned "its pursuit of imperialistic ambitions in Eritrea."³³ He had praised the armed movement in Eritrea saying that as in Chad and Uganda (1983) it was a case of "organized armed resistance on a wide scale" in a continent whose "experience is confined to coups and counter-coups."³⁴

The attitude of Babu and many other left-oriented African intelligentsia can be explained in light of their intense dislike for military governments in the continent. It also reflects dissatisfaction over the failure or refusal on the part of the regimes—including the Ethiopian regime so far—to handle problems of the national question in the most democratic way.

Babu and others are justified to resent and pronounce condemnations of the oppressive and undemocratic policies of African regimes. But they have no right to oversimplify or distort the nature of the issues in a problem like that of Eritrea. Above all, they should approach the

issues with the sense of responsibility duly expected of them and avoid the false equation of Eritrea today with Namibia or with any other entity victimized by fascism and imperialism. (Incidentally, some EPLF lobbyists in Washington, D.C. were also heard arguing similarly about the Ethiopian regime and apartheid South Africa while attributing, in the same breath, imperialist predilections to the USSR and other socialist countries.)

The presentation of Eritrea's question today as colonial is not only false but also harmful to both the Eritrean masses and the revolutionary movement in the region. It effectively suggests separation as the only possible form of self-determination for Eritrea. It eschews the interests of the class struggle in light of the developments in Ethiopia. It presumes the rejection of negotiations and compromise and runs counter to the interests of peace.

Such a view also tends to justify any reactionary alliance the Eritrean forces might forge in order to fight "Ethiopian colonialism." The EPLF and other right wing forces in the Eritrean movement who claim to be engaged in anti-colonial struggle are indeed collaborating with imperialism and the right wing states in the region.

Denying there is a Revolution

There is also the argument that no revolutionary change has taken place in Ethiopia. Another variant states that there was indeed a revolution in Ethiopia in 1974 but that it has been "betrayed" by the military regime still in power.³⁵

The argument that there is no revolution in Ethiopia is made by innocent Eritrean nationalists as well as a variety of opportunist groups and reactionaries—Eritrean, Ethiopian, and foreign. It is advanced by ultra-left groups, imperialist spokesmen and even by certain segments of the overthrown feudo-bourgeoisie.

All argue that what has taken place in Ethiopia is a mere coup d'état. Usually, they also contend that the PMAC is "fascist."

Some Eritreans have embraced this view innocently. As far as the handling of the Eritrean problem is concerned, these Eritreans saw no basic difference between the overthrown imperial regime and the PMAC, particularly in its early years. They resented the PMAC's militarist approach to such an extent they could not appreciate the revolutionary character of the change in Ethiopia.

Some other Eritreans knowingly belittle the Ethiopian revolution as a coup d'état supposedly in order to help the Eritrean cause. They think that denying the reality of the Ethiopian revolution will help sustain the legitimacy of the Eritreans' demand for self-determination. Many such

Eritreans are found among those exiles who support the armed movement.

But several other Eritrean groups propound fraudulent theories belittling the change in Ethiopia as a coup or what is even worse, contending the PMAC is "fascist." These groups are aware that this change was one of the most "authentic" social revolutions—probably even the most "authentic"—to take place in contemporary Africa.³⁶

Many such Eritreans are indeed reactionary and are not really concerned with the Eritrean problem. Some were part of the parasitic segment in Eritrean society, and closely affiliated with the ruling elite in Haile Sellassie's Ethiopia. They oppose socialist oriented changes. They are invariably anti-communist and favor alliance with imperialism.

Closely related to these are the members of the clique dominating the EPLF leadership, which, quite often, disguises its bureaucratic interests in revolutionary garb. So are a few others heading some of the factions in the Eritrean movement.³⁷

As regards the nature of the change in Ethiopia the truth is quite evident. What took place in that country was a revolution. It was not a mere change of personalities within the feudo-bourgeois framework, but rather a basic change in which state power was transferred from a reactionary class to other classes that are progressive in contemporary Ethiopian society.³⁸ Needless to say, this revolution was not "betrayed." It is still alive and has deepened in many areas even though some problems remain unsolved.

Confusion Over Revolutionary Democracy and Socialist Orientation

In light of the PMAC's policy towards Eritrea, many Eritrean and foreign observers deny it is progressive. They argue that, since the PMAC does not recognize the right of Eritrea to self-determination up to separation, it is not socialist or revolutionary.

As noted earlier, the PMAC erred in its approach to the Eritrean problem. But this does not detract from the fact that it is a progressive regime, a national democratic, or revolutionary democratic government which has become socialist oriented. Many Eritreans confuse national democracy or revolutionary democracy or even socialist orientation with socialism. They maintain that the PMAC is not progressive because its policy on Eritrea is not that of a socialist or proletarian party. Such Eritreans are the inverse of some progressive and Marxist activists who correctly believe the Ethiopian regime is revolutionary but erroneously deduce that therefore its policy on Eritrea cannot be wrong.

Both these Eritreans and the pro-Ethiopia progressives and Marxists, it seems, lack an adequate understanding of the nature of the Ethio-

pian regime (and of the character of revolutionary democratic or socialist oriented states generally). They need to be aware of its strengths as well as its weaknesses, contradictions and vulnerabilities as a transitional regime.

Such a regime is oriented towards socialism but is not yet socialist. Socialism is effectively reached following the stage of capitalism, in situations where productive forces have become too developed to be contained within capitalist production relations.

In pre-capitalist societies like Ethiopia, the material base and the subjective factors necessary for the construction of socialism do not yet adequately exist. Therefore what can be done in aiming towards socialism in these societies is carrying out a national democratic revolution. This means combatting feudalism and imperialism and in general effecting economic, political and cultural reforms that will raise the level of the productive forces and elevate the consciousness of the masses. It also means that steps must be taken to increasingly provide working class orientation to the masses of working people.

Thus, a national democratic or a socialist oriented regime is only transitional and does not have developed characteristics of a communist or proletarian party. It is engaged, not in the building of socialism, but in the fulfillment of the material and spiritual pre-requisites for it. It would be wrong to judge such a regime in light of what the policies of a socialist regime or a proletarian party ought to be. And of course, it would be wrong to decide on that basis whether such a regime is progressive or not.

Naturally, a revolutionary democratic regime suffers from historic inadequacies when it comes to the implementation of certain principles of proletarian internationalism, one of which is that of self-determination. It is bound to commit mistakes and blunders which may aggravate certain problems.

Ethiopia's PMAC is no exception. It has used wrong approaches to the Eritrean problem. It has failed to apply the principle of self-determination in the best way possible for solving the problem while still upholding the interests of social progress.

Eritrean Question Regardless of the Ethiopian Revolution?

Some Eritreans and their foreign supporters assert that whatever change has taken place in Ethiopia is irrelevant to Eritrea and self-determination. They insist on divorcing the question from developments in Ethiopia and, it follows, from developments elsewhere.

Dan Connel is one of the exponents of this argument. In a response to the series of articles by the late Wilfred Burchett³⁹ who backed the

PMAC on Eritrea, Connel said:

The character of the Ethiopian regime or its backers is not the issue, though it is certainly open to serious question. The key question is whether or not Eritrea has a legitimate historical right to national self-determination and whether or not the EPLF is a genuine revolutionary movement.⁴⁰

Of course, Connel's argument expresses a fundamentally reactionary view. It approaches the question of Eritrea in isolation from the interests of social progress.

As emphasized earlier, the practical exercise of the right to self-determination is subordinate to the interests of the class struggle and the world revolutionary movement. In the case of Eritrea today, this means the exercise of the right is subject to the interests of the class struggle in Eritrea and Ethiopia and to the requirements of the anti-imperialist movement in the Horn of Africa, which is related to that in the Middle East and the world at large. This has several implications.

In the first place it means that the exercise of self-determination by Eritrea should not result in the country being ruled by a class which is reactionary in relation to the classes leading the revolution in Ethiopia today. It makes no difference whether such a reactionary class pretends it is "revolutionary" as does the EPLF leadership. The working people of Eritrea would lose if, in the name of self-determination, the Eritrean feudo-bourgeoisie and other reactionary classes are allowed to gain state power in a separate Eritrea. Instead of advancing towards socialism in present-day Ethiopia, they would be exploited in an "independent" Eritrea.

Secondly, the right to self-determination should be exercised in a way which is progressive given the situation of Ethiopia vis-a-vis imperialism. What is the situation today?

Socialist-oriented Ethiopia is now a target of imperialism. The US and its allies are making efforts to impede the development of the Ethiopian revolution with the aim of overthrowing it. They are bolstering right-wing neighbor states which in various ways are exerting pressure on the Ethiopian regime. They are instigating and equipping so called "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia—some threatening to secede, others striving to overthrow the PMAC and replace it with a "democratic" regime.

In the years preceding the revolution in Ethiopia the Eritrean movement was objectively progressive—i.e. progressive in itself. It was so by virtue of its being an opposition force and a weakening factor against the pro-imperialist regime of Haile Sellassie.

But now the situation has changed. Anti-imperialism and socialist

orientation prevail in Ethiopia. A movement waged in the name of Eritrea's right to self-determination is no longer progressive in itself. It may merit the support of the world revolutionary movement only if it is not allied with forces of reaction.

Conclusion

The situation in Eritrea is desperate. It continues to deteriorate mainly as a consequence of the armed hostilities in the country.

It is of central importance to note the political deterioration of the armed movement in Eritrea today. Its erstwhile progressive content has been squeezed out by the machinations of imperialism acting through the right wing factions in the movement.

In a real sense the movement serves the interest of the US military-industrial complex. It is being used in the concoction of falsehoods about Soviet military power and policy as, for example, the charge of Soviet-Ethiopian use of nerve gas in Eritrea. It is being exploited to justify Washington's undertakings to escalate the manufacture of such lethal weapons. It has even become one of the "regional conflicts" the Reagan administration is exploiting to avoid genuine disarmament talks with the USSR. It is also implicated in the effort to exploit Ethiopia's famine tragedy for anti-socialist propaganda and anti-Ethiopia designs.

The armed "resistance" going on now is in effect a counter-revolutionary crusade masked behind the label of "Eritrean nationalism." It is qualitatively indistinguishable from the TPLF, EDU, and other counter-revolutionary movements postdating the Ethiopian revolution.

This degeneration does not come as a surprise. As early as 1978, activists in the communist movement had warned that the armed "hostility" benefited imperialism.¹ They had noted that imperialism and

Arab reaction were "attempting to prolong armed hostilities . . . in Eritrea in order to undermine and halt the revolutionary process in Ethiopia."²

Many progressive writers who regret the fate of the Eritrean movement have not been quite alert to the mistakes of the revolutionary Ethiopian regime. They either forget or neglect the PMAC's share of responsibility in the deterioration of the movement.

The PMAC's Role

Of particular gravity in the mistakes of a revolutionary democratic regime on the national question is the attempt at a military solution. This almost inevitably guarantees the further sharpening of the problem, unless undertaken as a last resort to repulse a real imperialist attack or a reactionary offensive. On this point Ismagilova noted:

Recognition of the political undesirability of the secession of one people or another . . . does not mean *a priori* recognition of the legitimacy of military suppression of the striving of a people to secede. That kind of action can lead to serious aggravation of interethnic relations in African conditions, and so cannot yield a stable, long term solution of the problem.³

It is exactly this kind of blunder the PMAC committed, particularly in its early years. It adhered to a policy of military suppression. It thereby spurred Eritreans, particularly the young, to join and support the armed movement which imperialism ultimately captured.

Some prominent figures in the communist movement had noted these errors. They had observed that this policy had produced a grave situation. One of these figures was the late Jack Woddiss of the British Communist Party who wrote as follows in 1980:

The leaders of the Ethiopian revolution were understandably concerned to safeguard their victory; but trying to solve the Eritrean question by armed force, even if accompanied by proposals for regional autonomy, has prolonged the conflict and made a solution very intractable. It can be argued that the Eritrean leaders, in their turn, should have recognized that there was a different regime in Addis Ababa and should have sought a peaceful, political way out of the difficulty. Possibly, if the Ethiopian leaders had recognized the right of the Eritreans to self-determination, the latter might have opted for a federal solution. As it is, the war has dragged on, providing possibilities for external interference.⁴

Events since 1980 confirm this statement. Partly because of the intransigence of the Ethiopian regime the war has "dragged on." The "Eritrean" armed movement has now become a tool by which the US, its allies, and its Middle Eastern surrogates are interfering in Ethiopia.

Some believe that the PMAC—particularly in its early years—even wished the Eritrean movement would become a tool of imperialism. Is this possible?

The PMAC was obsessed with maintaining the "territorial integrity" of Ethiopia. It emphasized "Unity" as a watchword signifying absolute and unflinching commitment to the objective of retaining every inch of land in the former empire state. The slogan "Ethiopia or Death" or "Unity or Death" conveyed the literal essence of the PMAC's policy on this question.

This meant, among other things, retaining Eritrea at any cost. The PMAC sought a basis to condemn the Eritrean fronts as reactionaries, liquidate the movement, and retain Eritrea. It was not concerned about the danger that, in the process, the position of imperialism might be strengthened in the region.

After defeating the Somalis in the Ogaden war, the PMAC intensified its charge that *all* the Eritrean fronts were tools of imperialism, which was untrue. Mengistu Haile Mariam himself is quoted as having said: "The reactionary war in Eritrea is substantially the same as that of Ogaden."⁵

This indicates the PMAC decided on the expediency of likening the Eritrean movement to the Somali invasion of the Ogaden in order to justify any measure for maintaining Ethiopia's "territorial integrity." It even seems the PMAC assumed it was in its own interest for the Eritrean movement to become allied with imperialism.

In later years too, when the mainstream ELF was targeted by imperialism as the anti-imperialist, in fact as the "pro-Soviet" or "pro-Derg" group, the PMAC did nothing to encourage or support it in any way. The PMAC never seems to have really desired the strengthening of the anti-imperialist and progressive forces in the Eritrean movement. "Unity" or "territorial integrity" prevailed over all other concerns or principles.

Eritrea is a Genuine Problem

The reactionary character of the EPLF and other armed groups notwithstanding, there is still a genuine "Eritrean problem" which must be addressed. In fact the armed movement seeks to thrive and world reaction tries to menace Ethiopia by exploiting the existence of this unresolved problem. In this connection what an Italian Communist Party leader, Gian Carlo Pajetta, said in 1978 is in some sense still true today. Pajetta regretted to admit that right-wing Arab regimes "may be interested in encouraging" the Eritrean movement. He added however that

"that does not detract from its (movement's) character as a national popular movement."⁷

Eritrea has the right to self-determination. But what manifestation of self-determination best serves the interests of the working people in Eritrea and the world revolutionary movement at this time? Imperialist encirclement of Ethiopia and the tightening of imperialist control over the armed movement in Eritrea are reality today, requiring the united response of Eritrean and Ethiopian progressives.

At present the unity of the anti-imperialist forces in Eritrea and Ethiopia would become effective and meaningful if a constitutional tie is maintained between the two countries, if the matter is resolved at the moment within a framework of Ethio-Eritrean unity. Examples of such a framework are confederation, federation, and regional autonomy.

The Italian political analyst, Roberto Aliboni, concluded that "federation" seemed to be "the most" or "the more" expedient or "realistic" solution to the problem.⁸ He reached this conclusion via "realistic" considerations of the attitudes and interests of the regional and global "actors" involved in or concerned with the problem. Federation, he noted, has better chances of being agreed upon by the parties to the dispute.

More importantly, federation is the most progressive solution at this time. It can provide self-rule to Eritreans while, at the same time enabling Eritrea to join Ethiopia in the experience of socialist orientation. For purposes of international status "federation" would maintain a single Ethio-Eritrean entity and thus secure the unity of the forces in both countries against imperialism. The specific content of "federation" would be determined in light of the interests of progress in both Eritrea and Ethiopia. It should differ from the farcical Ethio-Eritrean "federation" of 1950 which subordinated Eritrea to the "Ethiopian crown."

But can this be brought about as the chosen political status of the Eritrean people, as the outcome of a democratic process, as a manifestation of self-determination? This task requires that all parties involved, particularly the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) and progressive Eritreans, gear their thinking, policies and tactics towards a peaceful solution and compromise.

Ethiopia Should Change Its Approach

The Ethiopian leadership should change its approach to Eritrea. Of course, Ethiopia must combat imperialist-backed aggression whether it comes under the label of the "Eritrean movement" or any other "nationalist" movement.

But whatever its response to the armed movement, the WPE must recognize that, *in principle*, Eritrea has the right to secede.

At one point in 1983 the PMAC seemed to appreciate the need to recognize this principle. This was indicated in the 1983 May Day speech of PMAC Chairman, Mengistu Haile Mariam:

In principle, we strongly support the abolition of the subjugation of nationalities in the name of unity, and recognize the right of nationalities to self-determination up to secession or through the process of democratic unity.⁹

He meandered quite a bit before making this statement and left no doubt that he was only stating a principle:

... the struggle of genuine revolutionaries must focus on the removal of all divisive vestiges, inherited from the oppression of feudalists and imperialists, and must seek the democratic co-operation and unity of all Ethiopian nationalities.

The fact that the choices of pseudo-revolutionaries here is that of opposition cannot be surprising. What is surprising in actual fact is their blatant assertion that nationalities always prefer separation.¹⁰

Mengistu's statement was important. It seemed to indicate significant ideological growth on the part of the Ethiopian leadership and generated hopes about future PMAC cooperation for a political solution. (Unfortunately, neither the Chairman nor any other spokesman of the government or the party ever repeated even such a reluctant acknowledgement of "principle.")

Here, however, Chairman Mengistu did not explicitly distinguish the question of Eritrea from that of the other nationalities. While Ethiopian leaders should recognize in principle the right of all nationalities to secede, they should also appreciate the special character of Eritrea which is "sui generis"¹¹ in Ethiopia's problem of nationalities.

Regional autonomy is probably the most realistic solution to the general problem of nationalities in Ethiopia. But the details of its content cannot be uniform. They would differ from one concrete situation to another.

Ethiopian leaders should seriously consider "federation" as the practical solution of the Eritrean problem at the moment. They should reconsider their views on the nature and real purposes of the Ethio-Eritrean "federation" effected in 1952. They should renounce the implication that this "federation" was formulated by imperialists to facilitate future strivings for secession.¹²

Several writers on the Ethio-Eritrean problem perceive that the armed movement in Eritrea is in difficulty.¹³ But this observation is accurate only in the sense that the armed movement has no prospect as a struggle with "patriotic" content. Otherwise, it can continue for a long

period menacing the Ethiopian regime and slowing the pace of socio-economic progress in the country.

Even those who support the EPLF admit that the impact of its persistence would mainly be the undermining of the economic and political situation in Ethiopia. One such supporter says:

Whether the Eritrean nationalists now have the ability to move against Ethiopian forces remains to be seen, but in a war such as this, a stalemate amounts to a guerilla advantage as it continually erodes the economic and political base of the regime in Addis Ababa.¹⁴ (emphasis added)

The Ethiopian leaders should be aware that the armed movement in Eritrea is, in a sense, the local bulwark of the counter-revolutionary "nationalist" movements in Ethiopia as a whole.¹⁵ For several years now the EPLF has provided encouragement, training, organizational guidance and other support to those movements. It may continue to be the main current in the movement of the "nationalist" groups, even though the TPLF is contending for this position and might seize it any time.

Again this only points to the need for a political solution of the Eritrean problem. The WPE and the PMAC should reflect on their past errors and seek the cooperation of all the anti-imperialist Eritrean groups towards such a solution.

Eritrean Patriots and Their Tasks Today

Progressive Eritreans, in particular the Marxists among them, must play a pivotal role in salvaging the Eritrean society. They have enormous tasks in the political and ideological spheres. The sizeable Eritrean community of refugees faces a constant barrage of narrow nationalist, counter-revolutionary, and anti-Soviet propaganda. Progressive Eritreans must assume responsibility for the innocent fighters in the bases of the EPLF and other reactionary Eritrean groups.

They should combat the supra-class approach to the Eritrean issue, which now even the EPLF (for years vociferous about "class struggle" of a sectarian, false and diversionary type) sometimes openly promotes. Supposedly "independent" Eritrean groups, who contend that even feudalists can pursue armed struggle in Eritrea for a "patriotic" cause, have also endorsed that approach.

But, this seemingly non-class approach to the Eritrean question is in fact a class conscious approach of the feudo-bourgeoisie and other reactionary classes in the Eritrean communities. Progressive Eritreans should unmask the exploitive and bureaucratic interests which are cleverly shrouded in this ostensibly innocent or "patriotic" approach. Indeed, the only legitimate Eritrean question today is the national ques-

tion of the working people which calls for a political solution conditioned by the revolutionary developments in Ethiopia.

Eritrean Marxists and progressives must combat anti-Sovietism. They should convey to their compatriots the serious implications of anti-Sovietism. They should emphasize that anti-imperialism signifies strategic relations with national liberation movements and the socialist community of states whose most powerful and leading member is the Soviet Union.

No movement can be anti-Soviet and anti-imperialist at the same time. In fact, for all practical purposes, anti-Sovietism is pro-imperialism. A movement which is anti-Soviet is part of world reaction and not a component of the world revolutionary movement.

Genuine confusion obtains on the part of many Eritreans about the fact that the USSR and other socialist countries, which supported Eritrean independence in 1949-50, now favor a union of Eritrea and Ethiopia. The propaganda of right-wing forces in Eritrea and the imperialist media have added fuel to the fire. They have deliberately misinterpreted the shift in the position of the USSR and other socialist states on this question in order to portray the USSR as an imperialist power concerned with a geo-political interest in Eritrea and the Horn generally.¹⁶

But a Marxist party may change its position on a particular national question in light of changes and developments pertaining to the interest of social progress or the revolutionary movement. There are such changes and developments in the Ethio-Eritrean situation. It is not only the USSR which has changed its position on the Eritrean question. Most socialist states, Communist and Workers' Parties, and revolutionary democratic regimes have abandoned their former position supporting the movement for the secession of Eritrea and are now calling for federal or other such solutions to the problem.

Moreover, this is not the first time in history that the USSR is changing its position on the Eritrean question. For example, in 1948, it had dropped its advocacy of Eritrean independence and adopted the new position that Eritrea be placed under the trusteeship of the Italian government. This new position, incidentally, was the same as that of the Truman administration in Washington. But its underlying considerations differed with those of Washington.

In 1948 national elections were taking place in both the USA and Italy. President Truman was the candidate of the Democratic Party. He supported the idea of placing Eritrea under Italian trusteeship in order to please Italian-Americans and win their votes. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, favored Italian trusteeship at that time in light of the widely-held expectation that the Italian Communist Party would win the

elections. Apparently, it projected that, if Eritrea was placed under Italian trusteeship with the Communist Party in state power, it would inevitably attain independence, for the Italian Communist Party, as a working class party, would not seek to perpetuate Eritrea's "trusteeship" or national oppression in any form. The results of the elections were not as expected. The Italian Communists lost. So the USSR changed its position on Eritrea and started advocating independence once again.¹⁷

The shifts in the positions of the USSR on this issue accorded with the principles of self-determination in Marxism-Leninism and were prompted by the changing requirements of the interests of social progress at the time.

Now too, the USSR has changed its position based on considerations of the interests of social progress. Its present underlying assumption holds that the union of the progressive forces in Eritrea and Ethiopia would be a tremendous victory and a further boost to the anti-imperialist movement, that unity is necessary for the social progress of both peoples along the socialist path.

There is the popular assumption that the USSR has been and remains fully in agreement with the totality of the PMAC's position on Eritrea. This assumption is not correct. According to certain sources, by no means related to the socialist community or the world revolutionary movement generally, the USSR favored and would still favor wider autonomy for Eritrea than the PMAC would agree to.¹⁸

Progressive Eritreans should know the considerations underlying the change in the Soviet position on the Eritrean question today. They should vigorously campaign in the Eritrean communities for an exact understanding and appreciation of the change and its underlying considerations. Of course, they themselves may be critical of various aspects of Soviet policy. But criticism is one thing; condemning the USSR as an imperialist power or rejecting the basic strategy of the socialist community and the anti-imperialist movement in general is a different matter altogether. It is pro-imperialist and reactionary.

Progressive Eritreans should appreciate the emergency situation of Eritrea and the Eritrean society. In view of this, they should understand the need to compromise their own choice of the form of self-determination. They should realize that it is now in the interest of the Eritrean people to settle for "federation." (They should bear in mind that Eritrea would continue to have the right of separation which, if it becomes imperative, may actually take place in the future.)

They should note the grave consequences of the ongoing war. They should constantly recall that the war has meant both the deaths of young Eritreans and the misery accompanying any embattled situation

in the developing world: mass exodus and wretched refugee life in neighboring states whose own record of civil and political rights is abysmal; dismemberment of families and the attendant emotional and mental anguish; and destitute life, including prostitution and pandering in the Sudan. The ongoing war, Eritreans should realize, is a large factor in the desertification of the country. It is drying up the lakes and springs, killing flora and fauna, and aggravating the drought and famine.

They should carefully note that the war is slowing the pace of socio-economic progress in Eritrea (and Ethiopia as well). Material and human energies are going to waste. Roads, bridges, and other aspects of the infrastructure are crumbling under attack. Development projects go by the wayside. Eritrean youth, if not consumed in the battlefields, are slaving in the oil-rich sultanates of the Middle East. Other young Eritreans are also vegetating in the capitalist West. Effectively barred from educational opportunities, most are gaining neither enlightenment nor skills necessary for Eritrea to which, actually, many of them do not seem likely to return.

Eritreans in the West, particularly in the US, are being subjected to anti-Soviet propaganda, including fabrications spawned by anti-communist elements in their own ranks.¹⁹ Conceivably, some may be actively engaged in opposing working class and other revolutionary movements in their "host" countries as well as national liberation movements abroad. Some may even be drafted—as was rumored in 1983—into the US army to invade territories and fight against peoples struggling for self-determination.

Of course, certain Eritrean elements abroad are becoming well to do and even rich. These include some prominent accomplices of imperialism, serving centers of strategic studies and other "think tanks" in the US, and wheeler dealers in the Arabian peninsula and the Emirates. These affluent groups and a few other Eritreans in the US and the Middle East are being provided with everything to develop and sharpen their commitment to capitalist orientation. They are being groomed to become part of the future problem in Eritrea. They are being prepared to constitute the internal social base of neo-colonialism in Eritrea and Ethiopia in the future.

Progressive Eritreans should thus be mindful both of the misery of their people and the reactionary plans for which some of their compatriots abroad are being prepared.

The Socialist Community's Role in Peace
There is no denying that the intransigence of the PMAC put the

USSR and other socialist states in a dilemma. As much as they wanted to influence the PMAC on this question, they also had to exercise caution lest they appear to dictate policies to the Ethiopian regime.

Certain private accounts confirm that the USSR and other socialist states made a serious and in depth study of the Eritrean problem. Unfortunately however, this fact is not reflected in the writings and broadcasts coming out of the USSR and other socialist states. Rather, these prompt one to think that these vanguards of the world revolutionary movement have embraced the Ethiopian position totally and uncritically though lately there has been an indication that on this subject Soviet writings could be critical in a constructive way.²⁰

The apparent total congruity of Soviet and other socialist writings and broadcasts with the policy of the Ethiopian regime probably became a tactical necessity, an effort to portray unity between the socialist community, Ethiopia, and other revolutionary democratic forces on this question. The portrayal of this unity, it could be argued, was necessary for the struggle against imperialism which was trying to (and finally did) infiltrate and control the armed movement in Eritrea. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the appearance of total Soviet-Ethiopian accord on Eritrea had its share in exacerbating anti-Sovietism among Eritreans.

It is necessary that the USSR and other socialist states *indicate* that they approach the problem seriously, independently, and with an earnest desire to solve it. Such an indication would even gratify many Eritreans who would then get the sense that the socialist community has accorded the Eritrean problem appropriate consideration. Many Eritreans might then see why the problem should be solved within the framework of federation or other forms of Ethio-Eritrean unity. It may also help to correct the attitude of many Eritreans towards the USSR and other members of the socialist community.

A striking weakness in the writings of the socialist community and the progressive world in general has been the failure to provide support to the truly anti-imperialist forces in the Eritrean movement. Many have talked about "secessionist Eritreans" or "Eritrean separatists" in general, which ignores the existence of different trends and tendencies. The most serious failure in this regard was the withholding of even moral support to the ELF—the "pro-Soviet" ELF—particularly in 1980-81 when this organization fell victim to attack by local, regional, and global reactionaries. It is indeed tragic to witness all sorts of opportunists ridiculing the former ELF or ELF leadership for its principled policy toward the USSR and the socialist world in general from which, they imply, it elicited no support whatsoever, not even moral or propaganda support. For example, Herouei Tedla Bairu's EDM has repeatedly derided the ELF for "in-

triguing with the Kremlin leaders"²¹ and characterized the policy as a capitulation to the "Soviet backed fascist junta in Addis Ababa."²²

It is quite possible that there were good reasons why the USSR did not express open support for the ELF. But one cannot conceive of any sound reason why the USSR and other progressive states did not make an effort to unmask and publicize in a general way the conspiracy of the EPLF and other "nationalist" Ethiopian movements with imperialism to liquidate the anti-imperialist forces in the Eritrean movement.

The resolution of the Eritrean problem should be high on the foreign policy agenda of the socialist community of states. The ongoing war in Eritrea seriously strains the socialist orientation of Ethiopia. It drains resources which would otherwise be utilized to enhance Ethiopia's socio-economic development.

The persistence of Eritrea's controversial question, it should be realized, has also helped to sustain the atmosphere of confusion, including ideological confusion, on the principle of self-determination. For one thing, ideologists of neo-colonialism are now exploiting the Eritrean problem to stress the differences between "Leninism" and "Stalinism"²³ with the aim of creating doubts about the soundness of Marxism-Leninism.

The socialist states and the Communist and Workers' Parties should know the PMAC's historic shortcomings, particularly in relation to Eritrea. They should make earnest, sensitive efforts to help the PMAC to overcome its weaknesses and to reduce, to the extent possible, the impact of these weaknesses on the determination and execution of policies.

In the world revolutionary movement, Eritrea today is a problem. It is a tragic situation fostered by the interplay of backward tendencies and reactionary forces on the local, regional, and global level. In a unique process, the right-wing and opportunist groups in the Eritrean movement and the backward, paranoid and obstinate elements in the PMAC have objectively collaborated to sustain and worsen the situation.

The progressive forces in Eritrea and Ethiopia, with the assistance of the socialist community and others in the revolutionary movement, must cooperate to end this tragedy. They must unite efforts to reach out politically to the Eritrean masses and in particular to the innocent fighters who joined the armed movement because they resented the militarist aspect of the PMAC's policy, or were otherwise aggrieved. They must join hands to realize a *political solution* of the problem and put an end to a situation of which imperialism has availed itself rather well.

Reference Notes

Chapter 1: Ethio-Eritrean "Federation" and the US Role

1. For a geographical survey of Eritrea see Y. Abul-Haggag, *A contribution to the physiography of northern Ethiopia* (London: The Athlone Press, 1961), pp. 38-110; G.N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition, 1941-52*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 1-4.
2. For a brief demographic description see British Military Administration, *Races and Tribes of Eritrea*, (Asmara: 1944).
3. This claim is made by certain factions in the Eritrean movement.
4. This is still the view of the Ethiopian government.
5. On the history of Eritrea see Stephen Longrigg, *A Short History of Eritrea*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945).
6. A Western scholar on Ethiopian history, David Mathew, wrote:

The first polity from which the Ethiopian world can be considered as deriving in any sense is the Aksumite Kingdom founded by . . . semitised Hamitic peoples. In area it seems to have covered the extreme northern portion of the plateau, the region known as Tigrai and now politically divided between the northern provinces of Ethiopia and the southern region of Eritrea.

David Mathew, *Ethiopia: The Study of a Polity 1540-1935*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 8.

A Soviet scholar on Ethiopia, Georgi Galperin, also says that the Axum Kingdom was "the precursor of the Ethiopian state."

Georgi Galperin, *Ethiopia: Population, Resources, Economy*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), p. 65.
7. Italy acquired dominion over Eritrea with the encouragement of the British. For a revealing discussion on this subject, see F.A. Trofimov, "The Beginning of Italian Expansion in North-East Africa and Complicity of Great Britain" (the '80s of the 19th century) in *Colonialism, Old and New*, (Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences, NAUKA Publishing House, 1966), pp. 27-55.
8. The name Eritrea was given to the territory by the Italians. It is derived from the Greek word "Erythraea" which means red.
9. A proponent of this view is Edmund Keller. See his article "Ethiopia: Revolution, Class and the National Question," in *African Affairs*, (London), Vol. 80, No. 321, (Oct. 1981), p. 529.
10. Some of the Ethiopian patriots are said to have been "radical and genuinely progressive." Addis Hiwet, "Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution," *Review of African Political Economy*, (London), Occasional Publications No. 1, (1975), p. 87.

11. Alberto Sbacchi, "Haile Selassie and the Italians, 1941-1943," *The African Studies Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, (Apr. 1979), Mass. p. 26.
12. Haile Selassie sent messages to US President Franklin Roosevelt and the US diplomatic representatives urging for the establishment of close ties. For examples of such communications see Haile Selassie's message to Roosevelt, May 1, 1942, in US Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the US, Diplomatic Papers*, 1942, Vol. IV, pp. 112-113; Haile Selassie's message to the U.S. Consul at Asmara, Sept. 22, 1942, *Ibid.*, p. 111; Haile Selassie at the Suez Canal in Egypt. Haile Selassie flew to Egypt without the knowledge of the British in Ethiopia. John Spencer, *Ethiopia, The Horn of Africa, and U.S. Policy*; (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1977), p. 11.
13. For a concise discussion of the social set-up in Eritrea by the end of Italian rule see Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), Foreign Information Center, *Eritrea: The National Democratic Revolution versus Ethiopian Expansionism*, (Beirut, 1979), pp. 10-12.
14. His proposal is included in his book *A Short History of Eritrea*, op. cit., pp. 168-175.
15. The British did this on the pretext that Eritrea was suffering from a shortage of qualified personnel and other problems. These problems were discussed in British Military Administration (BMA) Ministry of Information, *The First to be Freed*, (London, 1944), pp. 1-47.
16. My discussion on this point is practically a summary of Trevaskis', *Eritrea . . .* Op. cit., pp. 52-57.
17. This was expressed in some writings of the political activists. For extracts from such writings see Richard Greenfield, "Pre-Colonial and Colonial History," in Basil Davidham, Lionel Cliffee, and Bereket Habte Selassie, *Behind the War in Eritrea*, (Nottingham: The Spokesman Press, 1980), p. 28.
18. For example, in one of the writings quoted by Greenfield, Britain is described as having been "the only friend of the Black race." This statement reflects poor understanding of the nature of imperialism on the part of these activists. See *Ibid.*, p. 28.
19. For a supplementary view on how "the Unionist cause was strengthened by . . . British . . . policy" see, Tom J. Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa: The Widening Storm*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1979), pp. 27-28.
20. In spite of minor errors, a reasonably good essay on the history of the Eritrean political parties is Lloyd Ellingson, "The Emergence of Political Parties in Eritrea 1941-1950," *Journal of African History*, Vol. XVIII, no. 2, (1977).
21. Its members claimed that it was founded in 1941. The truth is probably that it was established around 1944. *Ibid.*, note 19, p. 267.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
23. Richard Sherman, *Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980), p. 38.
24. Sbacchi, "Haile Selassie and the Italians . . ." Op. cit., p. 38.
25. This certainly was the impression on the part of the central government in Addis Ababa. *Ibid.*
26. R. Greenfield, "Pre-Colonial and Colonial History . . ." Op. cit., p. 26.
27. Trevaskis, *Eritrea . . .* Op. cit., p. 63.
28. It is quite significant that, in their campaigns, the leaders of the party stressed that, under Emperor Yohannes the 4th, Eritreans and Tigreans fought together at Doghali and Meterma. (For this information I am indebted to some veterans of the Eritrean movement.)

29. The offshoot of the Italian Communist Party may be what was referred to in 1948 as "the youngest and smallest communist party in Africa." ELF, *Eritrea: The National Democratic Revolution . . .* Op. cit., p. 15.
30. On the Italian claims, see Amare Tekle, "The Creation of the Ethio-Eritrean Federation: A Case Study in the Post War International Relations (1945-1950)," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Denver, 1964, pp. 16-20.
31. Imperial Ethiopian Government, *Memorandum on Ethiopia's Claims to the Return of Eritrea and Somaliland*, presented to the Council of Foreign Ministers in London, Sept. 1945, (Revised edition, April 1946)
32. Amare Tekle, *Creation of the Ethio-Eritrean Federation*, Op. cit., p. 30.
33. Annex 11 of the 1947 Peace Treaty between the Allied Powers and Italy.
34. The reason for the delay was mainly that the Western powers could not agree on the revision of the former Italian colonies. V. Berezikov, "The future of the Italian colonies," in *New Times*, (Moscow), No. 42, (1949).
35. Amare Tekle, *Creation of the Ethio-Eritrean Federation . . .* Op. cit., p. 228.
36. This was only a device to postpone a decision on the issue of Eritrea until the Western powers could reach an understanding. V. Dubovitsky, "Dividing up Italy's former colonies under the guise of Trusteeship," in *New Times*, (Moscow), (1949), No. 50.
37. *A Short History of the World*, 2 Vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 2: 474-475.
38. Undeniably the Pakistani regime had co-religionist sympathy for the Moslems in Eritrea. However, it is also true that as a young emancipated state it was committed to the right of peoples to self-determination. Ethiopian writers tend to exaggerate the religious factor in Pakistan's position on the question. An example is Andargachew Tiruneh, "Eritrea, Ethiopia and Federation (1941-1952)," in *NorthEast African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1980-81), Vol. 3, No. 1, (1981), p. 116.
39. A "fairly free hand" for the Burmese delegate apparently suited diplomats of the Western powers. For a secret communication on this issue between U.S. diplomats see U.S. Foreign Relations, 1950, Vol. V, p. 1648.
40. "The Yankee in Ethiopia," *New Times*, (Moscow), No. 48, (1950).
41. *Ibid.*
42. Memorandum from Haile Selassie's office to the U.S. Ambassador in Ethiopia, dated 12th of August 1950, in *U.S. For. Rel.*, 1950, Vol. V, pp. 1698-99.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. On the 15th of Sept, 1950 U.S. Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee held a secret conversation in New York with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Aklilou Habte Wold, accompanied by John Spencer. McGhee "assured" Aklilou of US' resolve to take "any reasonable action which Ethiopia desired" at the UN. *U.S. For. Rel.*, 1950, Vol. V, p. 1678.
46. R. Sherman, *Eritrea*, p. 142.
47. Amare Tekle, p. 353.
48. It seems US officials were very pleased with Aklilou. In one of the secret meetings at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City at which both Aklilou and Spencer participated, US Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee said he would "make it clear to the Emperor through our Embassy in Addis Ababa how co-operative (Aklilou) has been with the United States officials in trying to find a satisfactory solution to this (Eritrean) problem." *US For. Rel.*, 1950, Vol. V, p. 1674.
49. *Official Records of the General Assembly*, 5th session, 316th meeting p. 537
50. Quoted in DMS, "Report on Ethiopia," *Market Intelligence Report*, (Greenwich February 1977, p. 2.

51. This government was overthrown and replaced by a progressive regime in 1952. *A Short History of the World*, (Progress Publishers) 2: 474.
52. Trevaskis, Eritrea . . . Op. cit., p. 116.
53. The Ethiopian Foreign Minister insisted that "as elsewhere in the federation", Amharic should be the official language in Eritrea. *Ibid.*
54. This weakness and other points relating to the absence of a federal government are well discussed in Alem-Seged Tesfai, "The Role of the Four Great Powers and the General Assembly of the United Nations in the Federation between Ethiopia and the Eritrea," (MCL Thesis, University of Illinois, 1972).
55. See *Final Report of the UN Commissioner for Eritrea*, United Nations documents A/2188, p. 7.
56. *US For. Rel.*, Op. cit., 1950, Vol. V, p. 1705.
57. *Ibid.*
58. "One more link in the US chain," *New Times*, (Moscow), No. 26, (1951).
In spite of his role in obtaining the "military concessions", some scholars on Ethiopian affairs argue that Bolte viewed Ethiopia as being low in the strategic priorities of Washington. One of such scholars is Harold Marcus. Marcus has made this argument in a paper, "American Security and Ethiopia," presented at the 7th International Conference on African Studies, Lund, Sweden, 1981.
59. David Pool, *Eritrea: Africa's longest war*, (London: Anti-Slavery Society, 1979), p. 42.
60. R. Diamond and D. Fouquet, "American Military Aid to Ethiopia and Eritrean insurgency," *Africa Today*, Vol. 19, no. 1, (Winter 1972), p. 42.
Some journalists have stated that Kagnev was used in the "hot line" connecting Washington and Moscow. A. Araujo, "Kagnev Base: How vital to the US?," *Sunday Nation*, (Nairobi), Sept. 21, 1975.
61. *Liberation*, a publication of Eritreans for Liberation in North America (EFLNA), Vol. 5, No. 1, (Sept.-Oct. 1975), p. 14.
62. Diamond and Fouquet, "American Military Aid . . .," Op. cit., p. 41.
63. D. Pool, *Eritrea . . . Longest War*, Op. cit., pp. 42-43.
64. Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1974), p. 198.
65. See U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad: Ethiopia Hearings*, 91st Congress, 2nd session, June 1, 1970.
66. As quoted in R.B. Taylor "Eritrean Separatism and the Eritrean Liberation Front," (M.A. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1971), p. 19.
67. This was a proclamation issued by the British Administering Authority. It had given the Administrator the power to supervise the first Assembly elections in 1952.
68. The events of Nov. 14th were told to me by an eyewitness in the Assembly Hall.
69. The USA supported and, it appears, even encouraged Haile Sellassie's regime to effect the total incorporation in 1962. For one thing it is known that Mr. John Spencer, "had on at least four separate occasions suggested to the ministry that annexation be considered." L. Ellingson, "The Origins and Development of the Eritrean Liberation Movement", in Robert Hess (ed.), *Proceedings of the Vth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1978), p. 618.
Others have said that Spencer actually drafted Haile Sellassie's Order of 1962. It is not surprising that, in spite of article 91 of the Eritrean Constitution and the provisions of the Federal Act, John Spencer argues that the termination of the "federation" in 1962 "was not entirely without legal basis." J. Spencer, *Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa, and US Policy*, Op. cit., note 68, p. 31.

Spencer now denies he had anything to do with the Imperial Order. In an autobiographical work published in 1984 he goes to the extent of saying that he would have opposed any move to terminate the "federation" in 1962 "as I had done" in 1955 and 1957.
John Spencer, *Ethiopia at bay*, (Algonac, Mich.: Reference Publications, 1984), pp. 303, 305, 318.

Chapter 2: The Armed Struggle Until the Fall of Haile Sellassie

1. *The National Democratic Revolution versus Ethiopian Expansionism*, Op. cit., p. 33.
2. This phrase is used to describe the preoccupations of the early ELF leadership which became the Supreme Council. *Ibid.* p. 32.
3. *Ibid.* p. 33.
4. It was later professed that this imbalance was "dictated . . . by the precarious situation in the Revolution" at that time. *Ibid.* p. 40.
5. It is said that Osman Sabbe was supportive of the Revolutionary Command established at the Anseba Conference and had hoped to use it as "a power base in the field." *Ibid.* p. 47.
6. ELF, *The Eritrean Revolution: A Programmatic Declaration*, (Damascus: 1971), p. 23.
7. *Ibid.* p. 33.
8. *Ibid.* p. 34.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.* pp. 36-37.
11. *Ibid.* pp. 39-41.
12. *Ibid.* p. 48.
13. *Ibid.* p. 37.
14. *Ibid.* p. 35.
15. *Ibid.* pp. 38-39.
16. This was how some writers characterized the early ELF. For example, Jim Paul, "Struggle in the Horn: A Survey," *MERIP*, Vol. 7, No. 9, (November 1977), p. 4.
17. Richard Lobban Jr., "Eritrean Liberation Front: A close-up view," *Munger Africana Library Notes*, No. 13, (California Institute of Technology), (Sept. 1972), p. 20.
18. This is a phrase used by J. Paul, "Struggle in the Horn." Op. cit.
19. An English translation of the whole text of "Nihnan Ilamanan" — "Our struggle and its goals" is reproduced in *Liberation*, Vol. II, No. 3, March 1973. The quotations attributed to the document are taken from the same translation.
20. As recently as 1980 Bereketeab Habte Sellassie, a member of the EPLF, has referred to "Nihnan Ilamanan" as a "clearly articulated political program." See his book *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, (New York and London: Monthly Review, 1980), p. 66. Such characterization of the document is inaccurate. "Nihnan Ilamanan" was not a political program in form or substance.
21. For a detailed discussion of the resolution on the splinter groups see *Hizbawi Ilama*, No. 13, (An ELF publication in Tigrigna).
22. This information has been communicated to me by several former EPLF fighters in the Sudan. In official publications the ELF has stated that Abraham Tewelde was murdered by Isayas and associates. See *AWET*, No. 5, (An ELF publication in Tigrigna).
23. Those experts were typified by Murray Jackson, the head of the Consulate in the late 60's and early 70's. About him Georgie Geyer wrote in 1970 that he was "a rugged and extremely knowledgeable man" and "a counterinsurgency specialist whose last job was in Vietnam." G. Geyer, "Eritrea: a name to remember," *The Progressive*, No. 34, June 1970, p. 25.
In 1971 Murray Jackson claimed that the ELF "barely exists anymore." See J. Kramer, "Africa's Hidden War," *Evergreen Review*, Dec. 1971, p. 63.

24. U.S. Congress, Senate, *United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad: Ethiopia*. Op. Cit. pp. 1918-1919.
25. Christopher Clapham, "Ethiopia and Somalia," as reproduced in US Congress, (House), *U.S. Policy and Request for Sale of Arms to Ethiopia*, Hearings, 94th Congress, 1st Session, March 5, 1975, p. 43.
26. For an indication of this wanness see "Cuba said to agree to train Eritrean guerrillas" and "Instruction for Terrorists by Peking also indicated," in *New York Times*, March 3, 1967.
27. F. Halliday, "Class Struggle in the Arab Gulf," *New Left Review*, no. 58, (Nov-Dec 1969), p. 33.
28. L. Ellingson, "The Origins and Development of the Eritrean Liberation Movement," Op. cit., p. 620.
29. On this I obtained concrete information while in East Africa in 1973-75 and in the Sudan 1976-80.
30. "The National Democratic Revolution versus Ethiopian Expansionism," Op. cit., p. 56.
31. See *New York Times*, Dec 15, 1971.
32. Sabbe sounded very cynical about "scientific socialism," a term which he laughingly uttered. He did not openly say he was opposed to it. Nevertheless, the brief remark that he made left little doubt that he disfavoured socialism.
33. Though he did not explicitly state that he opposed socialism, Woldeab Wolde Mariam warned his young audience not "to bring us amalgams of ideas from places like Cuba and China." He stressed Eritreans had an indigenous socialism, a reference to the "Dessa" system in which land is collectively owned by a village and periodically redistributed to family heads.
- Some other talks and interviews he gave at other occasions in New York were not reassuring about his understanding of imperialism and the nature of U.S. policy. See his interview with the *Intercontinental Press*, New York, Feb. 21, 1972, pp. 162-184.
34. I was told of this incident by several who attended the meeting.
35. For a discussion on these nobilities see Marilyn H. Baissa, "Civil-Military Elite interaction in the Ethiopian Revolution: The Role of Students," in R. Hess, *Proceedings of the Vth International Conference*, Op. cit.
36. An Israeli writer, Haggai Erlich, states that Ras Asrate strongly favored Ethiopia's ties with Israel. He adds that "Israeli advisors were almost permanent guests in his Asmara palace." See Erlich's book, *The Struggle over Eritrea, 1962-1978: War and Revolution in the Horn of Africa*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), p. 40.
37. See *The Eritrean Newsletter*, ELF Foreign Information Center, Beirut, No. 38 (Dec. 31, 1979), p. 14.
38. The phrase is used by Sherman to describe the "challenge" Menkaii posed to the EPLF. R. Sherman, *Eritrea*, . . . Op. cit., p. 64.
39. Apparently the EPLF leadership did not realize the word Menkaii also stands for "left" in certain regions of the plateau where Tigrigna is spoken. Hence, in this sense, former followers and supporters of "Menkaii" proudly accept the term as a reference to themselves and the movement.
- See the preface to *MENKAAY*, Uppsala, (Sweden), May 1975, (in Tigrigna). The document is written by three former fighters of the EPLF who were involved in the Menkaii movement. *MENKAAY* is, to date, the only reliable document on the Menkaii movement. Much of my information on this subject is derived from it.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
41. Haile Wolde Sellassie quit the EPLF and joined the ELF in 1973. In 1979 he defected to the Ethiopian government. In an interview on radio Addis Ababa he said that Mussie Tesfa Micael, a Menkaii leader, advised him to quit the EPLF and join the ELF. He stressed that Mussie told him there were progressive groups in the ELF with whom he could struggle for unity.

42. I was told by a veteran of the EPLF that Afeworki Teklu, a member of Menkaii, had made several such objections to Isayas.
43. The most prominent leaders of Menkaii were former students at the University in Addis Ababa. They were well known for their militant roles in the student movement. Yohannes Sebhatu was particularly known for his brilliance as a scholar and generally for his brilliance as a scholar.
44. See "Genesis of the Problem in Eritrea," in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Revolution Information Centre, 1979), p. 127.
45. EPLF's written propaganda portrays Menkaii as an ultra-left movement. See *Fitawrari*, No. 9, (a publication of the EPLF in Tigrigna). See also the document prepared by EPLF leader Isayas Afeworki entitled *The destructive movement of 1973*, (in Tigrigna).
46. Such vilification is conducted in oral propaganda in informal circumstances. In this propaganda the EPLF leadership was objectively aided by some opportunistic and regionalist Eritrean groups in the Sudan and elsewhere who paraded as followers of Menkaii.
47. C. Clapham, "Ethiopia and Somalia," Op. cit., p. 42.
48. Fred Halliday, "The fighting in Eritrea," *New Left Review*, No. 67, (May-June 1971), p. 65.

Chapter 3: Eritrea in the Early Phases of the Ethiopian Revolution

- Some researchers single out the land tenure system under Haile Sellassie as the "underlying cause" of the problems and the Revolution. An example is L.G. Diebo, "Land Tenure, underlying cause of the Ethiopian Revolution," in R. Hess, *Proceedings of the Vth International Conference*, Op. cit., p. 713.
For a discussion of the several economic and social problems before the revolution see John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, (Nottingham: Spokesman Press, 1978), Part I.
- Since the mid sixties radicalism of the new left type overwhelmed the student movement in Ethiopia. Though progressive, the students seriously lacked theoretical clarity on several issues of importance.
For an observation on this see Marina Ottaway, "Land reform in Ethiopia 1974-77," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 86.
For a brief expose of the views of the students in Ethiopia on the question of nationalities see T.G. Wagaw, "Emerging issues of Ethiopian nationalities: Cohesion or Disintegration," *North East African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1960-81); Vol. 3, No. 1, (1981), p. 69.
The Ethiopian student movement suffered from splits beginning 1969 or 1970. Despite some factual inaccuracies, an informative work on this subject is "Petty Bourgeois Radicalism and Left Infantism in Ethiopia: the case of EPRP," *UNITY AND STRUGGLE*, vol. 1, no. 2, (July 1977).
- H. Erlich, "The establishment of the Derg: The turning of a protest movement into a Revolution," in Hess, *Proceedings...* Op. cit., p. 785.
- M. Ottaway, "Social Classes and Corporate Interests in the Ethiopian Revolution," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, (Cambridge, England), Vol. 14, No. 3 (1976).
- For some ideas on the Machiavellian tactics of Haile Sellassie, see R. Kapuscinski, *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publ., 1983) The first section, entitled "The Throne," is particularly relevant.
- On the "traditional" and the "new" nobilities at the beginning of the Revolution, see M.H. Baissa, "Civil-Military Interaction in the Ethiopian Revolution," Op. cit., p. 772.

7. A well-informed discussion of this development and of the earliest phase of the Ethiopian Revolution in general is available in Pliny, the Middle aged, "The PMAC: Origins and structure" Part I, in *Ethiopianist Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1978).
8. H. Erlich, "The establishment of the Derg..." Op. cit., p. 789.
9. That was how Endalkatchew referred to himself sometime in 1970-71 while a candidate for the post of UN Secretary General.
10. "Derg" is an Amharic word meaning "committee."
11. This description is made by Hagai Erlich in "The establishment of the Derg..." Op. cit.
12. This process has been variously described as "creeping coup," "coup d'etat by installment," etc. It was by and large bloodless until November 23, 1974.
13. A good description of the event of September 12, 1974 is given in Valentin Korovikov, *Ethiopia: Years of Revolution*, (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1978), pp. 29-31.
14. Semret Habte, *Background to the Dilemma of the Eritrean Liberation Fronts*, (unpublished), (1979?), p. 20.
15. These are the words of an ex-Derg member as quoted in Semret Habte, Op. cit., footnote no. 13, p. 28.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Raul V. Vivo, *Ethiopia's Revolution*, (New York: International Publishers, 1977), p. 87.
18. Vivo's work has been criticized by several writers. Most of the criticism has come from anti-Soviet and pro-Western academic circles. But progressive writers also identify some shortcomings in the book. For example, the work ignores the existence of the Eritrean problem and does not even make a mention of it. For such criticism see D.W. Bray, "Ethiopia: Discovery of a Revolution," *Latin American Perspectives*, No. 28, (1981), p. 127.
19. Bereket H. Sellassie, "Political Leadership in Crisis: The Ethiopian Case," in *Horn of Africa*, (Summit, New Jersey), Vol. 3, No. 1, Jan-March 1980, p. 7.
Apparently Bereket feels deeply attached to Aman as his "friend and fellow Eritrean" (See Bereket's book, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., Preface, p. IX).
20. Bereket, *Conflict and Intervention...* Op. cit., p. 28.
21. Bereket, "Political Leadership in Crisis," Op. cit., p. 7.
22. Pliny the Middle Aged, "The PMAC: Origins and Structure, Part I," Op. cit., p. 13.
23. T.J. Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., p. 42.
24. *Ibid.* p. 41.
See also Pliny the Middle Aged, "The PMAC: Origins and Structure," Part I, Op. cit., p. 13.
25. Pliny, *Ibid.*
26. This observation was made by Marina Ottaway and David Ottaway who toured Eritrea in Sept.-Oct. 1974. See their book *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution*, (New York and London: Africana Publishing Company, 1978), footnote 5 of Ch. 10, p. 207.
27. This was told to the author by former Eritrean guerrillas.
28. The Ottaways, *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 7.
29. Tom Farer points out this exodus resulted from the death of Aman and from the rumors about preparations for "pogrom" against Eritreans. *War Clouds...*, Op. cit., p. 44.
30. For an outline of these measures and achievements see Z. Gyenge, *Ethiopia on the Road of Non-Capitalist Development*, (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1976), pp. 29-36.

- V. Korovikov, "A New Life Comes to Ethiopia," in *International Affairs*, (Moscow), March 1977.
- See also "Revolution in Ethiopia," by "an observer" (anonymous) in *Monthly Review*, (New York), Vol. 29, No. 3, July-Aug. 1977, p. 50.
31. The Ottaways, "Empire in Revolution," Op. cit., p. 63.
32. This is part of the statement issued by the PMAC, as quoted in the Ottaways, *Empire in Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 157.
33. *Ibid.*
34. The PMAC announced this resolve on Radio Ethiopia sometime towards the end of 1974.
35. It was reported in September 1975 that, in his capacity as the Relief Commissioner of Ethiopia, Colonel Tessema Abaderash instructed that no assistance shall be allowed for those who are displaced and famine stricken in Eritrea. See *Sunday Times* (London), Sept. 7, 1975.
36. Earlier to his appointment as Military Governor, Getachew Nadew had carried out atrocities at Um Hager and other parts of western Eritrea in which many innocent civilians were killed. Brig. Getachew, who was executed by the PMAC in 1976, is said to have finally developed a conciliatory attitude towards the Eritrean problem.
37. *Sunday Times* (London), Sept. 7, 1975.
See also T.J. Farer, *War Clouds...*, Op. cit., pp. 43-44.
38. ELF *The National Democratic Revolution versus Ethiopian Expansionism*, Op. cit., p. 63.
39. For profiles of some members of the Revolutionary Council see "Ethiopia I: The ELF in Eritrea," *Africa Confidential*, May 26, 1978; Pliny the Middle aged, "Eclectic Notes on the Eritrean Liberation Movement: E pluribus Unum?," *Ethiopianist Notes*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1978, p. 45.
40. This information on Abul Ela comes mostly from ELF fighters who attended ELF's 2nd National Congress.
41. In 1982-83 groups and movements opposed to the ELF leadership revealed more information on the EDLP. The information is one sided and does not include any mention of the contributions of the EDLP.
See "Saghim," (in Tigrigna) an organ of ELF's Eritrean Liberation Army, No. 1, Dec. 1982, pp. 3-5.
42. John E. Duggan, *Politics and Organization of the Eritrean Guerilla Movements: A first Hand Report*, (unpublished), p. 32.
43. This view is privately voiced by Eritreans close to the ELF and the EPLF. It is also intimated in "The Genesis of the Eritrean Movement," Op. cit., pp. 125-126.
44. For details of how the ELF came to sign the agreement with Osman Sabbe's Foreign Mission see *The National Democratic Revolution versus Ethiopian Expansionism*, Op. cit., pp. 64-65.
45. Some of EPLF's propaganda even implied the working class was the vanguard of the Eritrean struggle and of the EPLF itself. For example, see *In Defense of the Eritrean Revolution*, (New York: AESNA and AEWNA, 1978), p. 161.
46. R. Lobban, as quoted in R. Sherman, *Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution*, Op. cit., footnote 17 of Ch. II, p. 169.
An earlier view of Richard Lobban held there were no serious differences between the ELF and the EPLF. R. Lobban, "The Eritrean War: Issues and Implications," in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (1978), p. 342.
47. Roberto Aliboni, "The Ethiopian Revolution: Stabilization," in *Armed Forces and Society*, (Chicago), Vol. 7, No. 3, Spring 1981, p. 430. Aliboni characterizes Lobban's analysis as "penetrating" and adds that "the sectarianism of the EPLF" was one of the factors "weakening the Eritreans." (p. 430)

48. This doctrine is stated in EPLF's *Manual of Political Education for Fighters*, (1974), (in Tigrigna), p. 87.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Former EPLF cadres attest that at times the leadership claimed the EPLF was engaged in a "peasant revolution."
51. *Eritrean Newsletter*, Op. cit., Special issue, Feb. 1981, p. 6.
52. J. Duggan, quoted in "ELF through the eyes of a foreign journalist," in *Eritrean Newsletter*, Op. cit., No. 45, Jan. 1982, p. 13.
53. Article 5, Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia.
54. Provisional Military Government (of Ethiopia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press and Information Department, "Decisions to provide a peaceful solution to the problem in the Administrative Region of Eritrea," in *Eritrea Then and Now*, (Addis Ababa, May, 1978).
55. It seems this feeling is shared by Marina and David Ottaway. *Empire in Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 158.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.* See also F. Halliday and M. Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1981), p. 163.
58. The Ottaways, *Empire in Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 160.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
60. *Ibid.*
61. Following the execution of Brig. General Teferi Benti and others, the then Vice Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam said:
 It is by no means hidden from you that these internal reactionaries (EDU, EPRP, ELF) supported by collaborators within the PMAC and imperialists who have generously extended to them moral and material help and assistance, have inflicted severe damage against our revolution ...
 Quoted in the Ottaways *Empire in Revolution*, p. 144.
 In relation to the same incident Mengistu said on another occasion that "decisive steps" were taken "against the internal collaborators and supporters of the EPRP, EDU and ELF..." Quoted in the Ottaways' *Empire in Revolution*, p. 145.
62. One of the earliest theoreticians of the PMAC was the late Dr. Senay Likke. In his pamphlet entitled *The Ethiopian Revolution: Tasks, Achievements, Problems, and Prospects*, (undated — 1976?) Senay condemns the ELF as a counterrevolutionary movement in Eritrea but he does not even mention the EPLF.
63. A. Nwafor, "Revolution and Socialism in Ethiopia" in *OMENANA*, (Roxbury, Mass.), Vol. 2, Nos. 1 & 2, (1980), p. 42.
64. The Ottaways, *Empire in Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 170.
65. In his series of articles on Castro's mission to Aden and Ethiopia David Ottaway does not indicate that the Cuban leader or anyone in the socialist community was biased in favor of the EPLF. See his articles in *The Washington Post*, Feb. 28, 1977; March 17, 1977; March 18, 1977.
66. The PMAC's account is that EPLF leaders Isayas Afeworki and Ramadan Mohamed Nur failed to report at the Aden meeting and went instead to "Kuwait and other Arab countries." Hence no negotiations could take place between the EPLF and the Ethiopian leaders.
 According to the PMAC's account, the Ethiopian government was also informed through the PDRY that "individuals who claimed that they were the leaders of the so-called Workers' Party of Eritrea" wanted to negotiate at Aden. The PMAC's account does not specify the date or the organizational affiliation of the Workers' Party. It states however that the PMAC was willing to talk but "the individuals failed to show up."

- "Efforts made by the PMAC to resolve the problem in Eritrea peacefully," in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 47.
67. Jean-Claude Guillebaud, in *The Guardian Weekly*, (Manchester, England), May 1, 1977.
68. *Ibid.*

Chapter 4: Deepening of the Ethiopian Revolution and US Responses

- Edward Mulcahy, in US Congress, House of Rep., Sub Committee on International Political and Military Affairs, *US Policy and Request for Sale of Arms to Ethiopia, Hearings*, 94th Congress, 1st Session, March 5, 1975, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 11.
 Partly this reflected the view of some US strategists that the main importance of Ethiopia, like that of the rest of the Horn, was "simple geography" or strategic location. For this perception of the Horn's importance see J.B. Bell *The Horn of Africa: Strategic Magnet in the Seventies*, (New York: Crane, Russak & Co.: 1973), pp. 8-9.
- A typical Western reaction to the acts of nationalization is expressed in D. Hamilton, *Ethiopia's Embattled Revolutionaries*, *Conflict Studies*, (London), No.82, (April 1977), p. 13.
- US Policy and Request for Sale of Arms to Ethiopia*, Op. cit.
- Ibid.* p.5.
- Ibid.* p.7.
 The US at that time was constructing a base at the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia. But on the whole there was in this period a "relative reduction" of US "military bases on land." This is to be explained in terms of the increase in US "strategic mobility."
 See Organization of Arab Students in the US and Canada and the Gulf Solidarity Committee, *Arms Buildup in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf*, (Eugene, Oregon: March 1975), pp.4-5.
- US Policy and Request for Sale of Arms to Ethiopia*, Op. cit., p.13.
- Ibid.*
- Ibid.* p.4.
- Ibid.* p.13.
- The statement was from "Eritrean Students, Washington D.C." It was entitled "The Ethiopian Fascist Military Junta's mass slaughter of Eritrean people." See *US Policy and Request for Sale of Arms*, Op. cit., pp.27-28.
- Clapham's *Ethiopia and Somalia* first appeared in the 1972 series of Adelphi Papers, The Institute of Strategic Studies, London. It is included in *US Policy and Request for Sale of Arms*, Op. cit., as an appendix, pp.32-49.
- Ibid.* p.49.
- Ibid.*
- Ibid.* p.48.
- Ibid.*
- Ibid.*
- Hebretesebawinet* was superseded by scientific socialism partly as a result of an intensive ideological debate in Ethiopia in 1976-77. For the substance and mode of these debates see M. Ottaway, "Democracy and New Democracy: The Ideological Debate in the Ethiopian Revolution," *African Studies Review*, April 1978.
- US Congress, Senate, Sub Committee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, Hearings*, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, Aug. 4, 5, and 6, 1976.

19. Negussay Ayele, "The Horn of Africa: Revolutionary Developments and Western Reaction," *NorthEast African Studies*, Op. cit., Vol. 2, No. 3 (1980-81); Vol. 3, No. 1 (1981), p. 19.
20. *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa*, (Hearings), Op. cit., p. 15.
21. *Ibid.* p. 41.
23. *Ibid.* p. 123.
24. *Ibid.* p. 31.
25. *Ibid.* p. 87.
26. *Ibid.* p. 41.
27. *Ibid.* pp. 72-73.
28. *Ibid.* p. 127.
29. *Ibid.* p. 114.
30. *Ibid.* p. 121.
31. *Ibid.* p. 43.
32. *Ibid.* p. 46.
33. *Ibid.* p. 100.
34. *Ibid.* p. 119.
35. *Ibid.* p. 83.
36. *Ibid.* p. 101.
37. *Ibid.* p. 101-102.
38. *Ibid.* p. 81.
39. *Ibid.* p. 106.
40. *Ibid.* p. 100-101.
41. *Ibid.* p. 33.
42. *Ibid.* p. 103.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.* p. 73.
46. *Ibid.* p. 109.
47. *Ibid.* p. 33.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. F. Halliday, review of *Beyond the Vietnam Syndrome: US Intervention in the 1980's*, by Michael Klare, in *Race and Class*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, (Summer 1982), p. 94.
51. For the plans behind the Red Sea project see Y. Tsaplin, "The Red Sea in Reaction's Plans," in *New Times*, (Moscow), No. 17, 1977, p. 21.
52. Detailed information on this incident is found in Pliny The Middle Aged, "The P.M.A.C: Origins and Structure," Part Two, *North East African Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1978.
53. V. Sidenko, "Giving Friendship," in *New Times*, No. 20, 1977, p. 7. For a discussion of past and present Soviet-Ethiopian relations and cooperation see A. Gromyko, "USSR-Ethiopia: Traditions and Contemporary," *Asia and Africa Today*, (Moscow), No. 1, (1980), pp. 6-10.
54. The evolution of Ethiopia's foreign policy in the post revolution period is generally treated in Olusola Ojo, "Ethiopia's Foreign Policy Since the 1974 Revolution," *Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., Vol. 3, No. 4.
For an understanding of Ethiopia's foreign policy during the ancien regime see

- Negussay Ayele, "The Foreign Policy of Ethiopia," in Glajide Aluke (editor), *The Foreign Policies of African States*, (London, Sydney, Auckland, Toronto: Hodder and Staughton, 1977).
55. F. Halliday, review of *Beyond the Vietnam Syndrome*, Op. cit., p. 93.
56. R. Sherman, *Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 146.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. Western reporters have commented extensively on "violations of human rights" by the PMAC. For an apparently different view on this question see Peter Schwab, "Human Rights in Ethiopia," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1.
60. As published in *New York Times*, June 12, 1977.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. See F. Halliday, "US Policy in the Horn of Africa: Aboulia or Proxy Intervention?," *Review of African Political Economy*, (London), no. 10, (Sept.-Dec. 1977), p. 20.
64. *Ibid.*
65. J. Spencer, *Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and US Policy*, Op. cit., p. 64.
66. *Ibid.* p. 67.
67. *Ibid.* p. 64.
68. *Ibid.* p. 63.
69. *Ibid.* p. 65.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*, p. 63. Emphasis added.
73. *Ibid.* p. 65.
74. *Ibid.* p. 65-66.
75. *Ibid.* p. 66.
76. Colin Legum and Bill Lee, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (New York and London: Africana Publishing Co., 1977), p. 55.
77. See the series of articles by John Darnton in *New York Times*, July 11, 12, & 13, (1977).
See also S.B. Feraidoon, "Conflict in the Horn of Africa," *Current History* (Philadelphia), Vol. 73, No. 432, Dec. 1977.
78. As reproduced in the *Eritrean Revolution*, (an organ of the ELF), Vol. 2, Aug-Sept. 1977, p. 10.
79. *Ibid.*
80. See *The National Democratic Revolution versus Ethiopian Expansionism*, Op. cit., p. 72.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Eritrean Revolution*, Vol. 2, (Aug.-Sept. 1977), p. 8.
83. Sabbe's appeal to Washington disheartened many in the world revolutionary movement.
For example, see G. Galperin, "In and Around the Horn of Africa," *New Times*, No. 32, 1977, p. 21.
84. Mohamed Ibrahim Nagud, (interview), *The African Communist*, No. 103, Third Quarter, 1985, p. 74.
85. It is said that this representative had secret ties with the EPLF also.
86. C. Legum and B. Lee *Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., p. 23.

87. For a brief exposition of the legal issues involved see Yonas Kebede, "The Legal Aspect of Ethiopian-Somali Dispute" in *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Jan-March 1978). For an argument decidedly in favour of Somalia's claim of the Ogaden see W.M. Reisman, "The Case of Western Somaliland: An International Legal Perspective," *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (July-Sept 1978).
The Ethio-Somali dispute also inspired several political as well as polemical writings. See Said Yusef Abdi, "Self Determination for Ogaden Somalis," *Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., Vol. 1, No. 1, (Jan-March 1978); Mesfin Wolde Mariam, *Somalia: The Problem Child of Africa*, (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, 1977).
88. A discussion of US-Ethiopian and Soviet-Somali relations in the period before the Ethiopian Revolution is found in Marina Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982).
89. J. Mayall, "The Battle for the Horn: Somali Irredentism and International Diplomacy," in *The World Today*, (Oxford, London), Vol. 34, No. 9, (Sept. 1978), p. 340. Marina Ottaway also notes that "officially, the Soviet Union never gave its support to Somali irredentism." *Soviet and American Influence*, Op. cit., p. 80.
90. Raymond L. Thurston, formerly US ambassador to Somalia, points out for example that "on the broader front of politics and strategy the Somalis were disappointed by the lukewarm attitude of the Soviet government towards strident Somali claims during the recent crisis over the De Gaulle instigated plebiscite in Djibouti in March 1967." See his article "The United States, Somalia and the Crisis in the Horn" in *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (April-June 1978), p. 14.
91. The corruption of Egal's government is admitted even by anti-Soviet Western writers. See G. Pavton, "The Somali Coup of 1969: The case for Soviet Complicity," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (Sept. 1980).
92. See Siad Barre, *My Country and My People*, (Selected Speeches) 1969-74, (Mogadisho: Ministry of Information and National Guidance, 1974).
93. *Ibid.* p. 17.
94. *Ibid.* p. 36.
95. *Ibid.* p. 37.
96. *Ibid.* p. 38.
97. *Ibid.* p. 69.
98. Abdi Sheikh Abdi, "Ideology and Leadership in Today's Somalia," *NorthEast African Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1980-81), and Vol. 3, No. 1 (1981), p. 48.
99. *Ibid.* p. 147.
100. *Ibid.*
101. F. Halliday, "Aboulia or Proxy Intervention. . .," Op. cit., p. 19.
Contrary to the truth some Western strategy analysts have contended Somalia's "socialism" was not only authentic but even more "genuine" than that of Ethiopia. See Mohamed Ayoob, *The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Superpower Involvement*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 18, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1978), p. 23.
102. C. Legum and B. Lee, "Conflict in the Horn. . .," Op. cit., p. 7.
103. Siad Barre, (interview), *Newsweek* magazine, June 27, 1977, p. 46.
104. F. Halliday, "Aboulia or Proxy Intervention. . .," Op. cit., p. 20.
105. *Ibid.*
106. Arnaud DeBorchgrave, "Crossed Wires," *Newsweek* magazine, Sept. 26, 1977, p. 42.
107. *Ibid.*
108. See Jim Paul, "Kevin Cahill, M.D. — A Medical Macchiavelli," in *MERIP*, Op. cit., No. 62, (1977).

- According to some Western analysts the message carried by Dr. Cahill was only one of the "signals" Washington sent to Mogadisho. See M. Ayoob, "The Super Powers and regional 'stability': Parallel responses to the Gulf and the Horn," in *The World Today*, Op. cit., Vol. 35, No. 5, (May 1979), p. 203.
109. *The New York Times*, Jan. 2, 1978.

Chapter 5: Anti-Sovietism and Counter-Revolutionary Trends in Eritrea

- G. Galperin, "Ethiopia: the Revolution Continues," in *Asia and Africa Today*, (Moscow), No. 3, 1978.
- Concerning Ethiopia's growing relations with the anti-imperialist movement in early and mid-1978 see: Anthony Monteiro, "Bright Future of the Ethiopian Revolution," in *Freedomways*, Third Quarter, March 1978; A. Monteiro, "Ethiopia: An Ancient Society Takes the Path of Freedom," in *New World Review*, (New York), Vol. 46, No. 4, July-August 1978.
- Until the middle of 1977 the MEISON was a civilian partner of the PMAC. It played a leading role in the ideological struggle. As an ally of the new regime it successfully fought the ultra-left EPRP.
But in the middle of 1977 when the PMAC was beleaguered by the Somali invasion, the war in Eritrea and the armed opposition inside Ethiopia, the MEISON sought to control the peasant militias and appeared to be planning the overthrow of the government. Thereby it provoked the wrath of the military government which thus liquidated MEISON.
Supporters as well as critics of the PMAC are generally in agreement on this particular point. See:
M. Ottaway, "Democracy and New Democracy . . .," Op. cit., p. 29; Addis Hiwet, *Analysing the Ethiopian Revolution: A Critical Review*, July 1982, p. 13; J. Markakis, "Garrison Socialism: The Case of Ethiopia," in *MERIP Reports*, Op. cit., No. 79, p. 15.
- A brief discussion of the process of the party formation in Ethiopia is found in: Y. Dennisov and V. Sharayev, "A Vanguard Party in the Making," in *Asia and Africa Today*, Op. cit., Jan-Feb 1981.
- The progressive section of the Afar movement, the Afar National Liberation Movement (ANLM), issued a communique stating its positive attitude towards the Ethiopian Revolution. In the Communique it expressed its willingness to join hands in the implementation of Ethiopia's National Democratic Program.
See The Communique of the ANLM (undated).
- A *New Times* Special Correspondent, Boris Asoyan, wrote:
The revolutionary government has repeatedly offered the separatists to start negotiations and try to find a peaceful solution to the problem. But these overtures had evoked no response. In the middle of 1977 the Provisional Military Administrative Council, which has headed the state since the abolition of the monarchy, decided to crush the counter-revolutionary stronghold in Eritrea by force of arms.
B. Asoyan, "Ethiopia: The Revolution's Arduous Path," *New Times*, No. 37, 1979, p. 26.
- The interview was published in *Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., April-June 1978, p. 5.
- This statement was made by PMAC members Tamrat Ferede and Fisseha Desta in a talk with Soviet writer Gleb Starushenko. See G. Starushenko, "Awakened by the Revolution," *New Times*, No. 30, July 1978, p. 24.

9. For example, writing in the *African Communist*, A. Azad singled out ELF Chairman Ahmed Nasser saying that he "called for a negotiated settlement with the Ethiopian government." See A. Azad, "The Horn of Africa: Defeat for Imperialism," in *The African Communist*, No. 74, Third Quarter 1978, p. 47.
10. Not only the USSR and other socialist countries, but also some communist parties in the West and the developing world adopted a new position on the Ethio-Eritrean question. Among the first to change its position on this question was the South African Communist Party (SACP). See Sentinel, "Eritrea and Ethiopia: Reflections on Separatism and the national question," in *The African Communist*, No. 63, Fourth Quarter 1975.
- For an earlier view of the *African Communist* see "Ethiopia: Is this a Revolution?" (Africa: Notes and Comments), in *The African Communist*, No. 60, First Quarter 1975.
11. On the role of Cuba in Africa see Michael Manley's article, "More pluralist than thou," in *The Nation*, Aug. 8-15, 1981.
- For an exchange of views on whether or not the Cubans had a military role in the Eritrean war, see Paul Sweezy's letter to *The Nation*, Aug. 22-29, 1981, and Michael Manley's reply to that letter in the same issue of *The Nation*. In his reply Manley said:
- The Cubans have stated that they will not become involved in that (Eritrean) dispute, and there is absolutely no evidence that the Cuban Army has ever been used against the rebels.
12. One of the communist parties calling for this approach to the Eritrean question was the Communist Party of the Sudan. The party expressed its "basic . . . principled position" that:
- recognition of the right of the Eritrean and other peoples of the former Ethiopian empire to self-determination and respect of this right by both the Ethiopian government and the leaderships of the Eritrean revolution, are the principal guarantee to stable relations of brotherhood and mutual benefit between Ethiopia and Eritrea, whether the Eritrean people decided on independence or on some form of union with Ethiopia. (emphasis added)
- The Sudan Bulletin*, No. 3 (1978), issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Sudan, pp. 53-54.
13. For example see Y. Tsaplin, "The Red Sea in Reaction's Plans," in *New Times*, No. 17, 1977, p. 21.
14. *Ibid.* Tsaplin approvingly quotes then OAU Secretary General William Eteki who said:
- Eritrea is an integral part of this country (Ethiopia) and any attempts to raise the Eritrean problem at international forums should be seen as interference in Ethiopia's internal affairs.
15. V. Sofinsky and A. Khazanov, "The Imperialist Design for the Horn of Africa," *New Times*, No. 7, (1978), p. 5.
16. G. Galperin, "In and Around the Horn of Africa," *New Times*, No. 32, (1977), p. 23.
17. V. Sofinsky and A. Khazanov, "The Imperialist Design for the Horn of Africa," *Op. cit.*, p. 5.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
19. V. Shubin, "Ethiopia — Revolution Square," *New Times*, No. 50, 1977, p. 22.
20. The administrator said:
- Eritrea is a component part of Ethiopia in all respects — political, economic and cultural . . . No one can deny that. Its very name, it may be recalled, was introduced by the Italian colonialists at the end of the last century. Contrary to the separatists' claim, there is no "Eritrean nation," there is only a conglomerate of nationalities and tribes to be found also in other provinces of Ethiopia and abroad.
- Quoted in G. Gabrielyan, "Ethiopia — In the Liberated Areas of Eritrea," *New Times*, No. 16, (1979), p. 30.

21. G. Galperin, "In and Around the Horn . . .," *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 24. In this article Galperin says the dictum is "frequently quoted of late by the Ethiopian press." He states that this "well known formula" is recalled to support, *inter alia*, the policy of "preserving the country's territorial integrity."
- The dictum is also cited in V. Shubin, "Ethiopia — The Revolution Square," *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
25. Most of these Eritreans had no accurate understanding of the Marxist principle of self-determination. They advocated the right of separation irrespective of the interests of class struggle and social progress.
- On the other hand, however, no work was published (in English) by Soviet writers addressing the Eritrean problem in sufficient detail. None of the published articles had presented a comprehensive analysis showing why the interest of social progress now required some kind of union between Eritrea and Ethiopia.
- The most extensive of the published articles is Georgi Galperin's essay, "Ethiopia: Some aspects of the nationalities question," in *Asia and Africa Today*, Nov-Dec 1979. But even this article did not adequately examine the issues involved in the Ethio-Eritrean dispute. Moreover the article appeared at the end of 1979 when negative attitude towards the USSR had already developed among a considerable number of Eritrean groups.
26. Such, for example, was the view taken by former EPLF supporters in North America. See EFLNA and AEWNA, *Eritrea: Revolution or Capitulation*. (New York, Oct. 1978).
27. See Documents — "EPLF," in *The Guardian*, (New York), Dec. 13, 1978.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. See *The Guardian*, (New York), Dec. 20, 1978.
31. Documents — "EPLF," *Op. cit.*
32. Objective observers who were at the war zone said MIG jets were used as they were against the ELF in the summer months. They noted the jets were extremely well operated. In light of this they opined the jets were possibly manned by personnel from any of Ethiopia's allies.
33. Documents — "EPLF," *Op. cit.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. Contrary to the substance of its propaganda, the EPLF leadership disclaimed any intention to portray the USSR as imperialist. In late 1978 or early 1979 Isayas Afewerki told Jean Louis Peninou:
- People would have us say that the Soviet Union is not a socialist country . . . We don't agree with the analysis of the 'new class,' the 'return to capitalism,' etc . . . Already in 1967, Ramadan and I disagreed with the Chinese on this point.
- See J.L. Peninou, "Interview with EPLF leaders," in *Liberation*, (organ of EPLF supporters in North America), March 9, 1979. In light of EPLF's propaganda imputing colonialist and imperialist essence to Soviet policy in Eritrea, Isayas' statement above is meaningless.
- Secondly Isayas' alleged discourse with the Chinese party accused the Soviet leaders fabrication. This is so because in 1967 the Chinese party accused the Soviet leaders only of revisionism. It began to charge them with capitalism or "social imperialism" in late August 1968. Furthermore the six month training Isayas attended in China in 1967 was mainly military. It did not involve political and ideological training, though it probably included a rudimentary education on national liberation struggles.
36. See Documents — "EPLF," *Op. cit.*

37. This information was leaked out by some people in the hotel where the meetings took place. It was later confirmed by ELF operatives in Khartoum. This writer has no information on exactly what Andrew Young's response was.
38. K. Aliboni, "The Ethiopian Revolution: Stabilization," Op. cit., p. 429.
39. Ibid.
40. Isayas had made that statement in an interview which appeared in a special issue of "MERIH," an EPLF organ, in the summer of 1978, (in Tigrigna).
41. See for example ELF Press and Information Dept., *Eritrea, the Eritrean People, the Question of National Liberation and the Eritrean Revolution*, (Sept. 1978), pp. 118-119 (in Tigrigna).
42. Heroui is quoted in Africa Contemporary Record as saying in early 1980:
 "Peoples Republics made in the Soviet Union and stamped for export are unacceptable to the peoples of the Horn and elsewhere in Africa and the Arab world."
 See ACR, *Annual Survey and Documents*, (1979-80), (New York and London: Africana Publishing Co.), p. B-196. The ACR indicates Heroui gave the statement to the "Voice of the Arab World," London, 15 April, 1980. Even a few years earlier Heroui had made similar statements. Beginning at the end of 1977, he wrote a few pamphlets, some of which attacked the theory of the non-capitalist path, calling it a tool for Soviet "hegemony."
43. In a pamphlet written in January 1979 Heroui alleged the core of the ELF leadership has "been successfully infiltrated by the KGB." He singled out Omer Mohamed, who was head of the Arabic section of ELF's Information Office, calling him a KGB operative initially recruited in Baghdad in 1973 and "affirmed as a full fledged agent in 1974 in Aden."
 See EDM, *Eritrean Democratic Movement: A Political Statement*, Jan. 12, 1979, pp. 1-2.
44. The Ottaways, *Empire in Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 87.
45. C. Legum and B. Lee, *Conflict on the Horn* . . . , Op. cit., p. 21.
46. Ibid., p. 22.
47. This writer arrived in Khartoum in Oct. 1976. He had the chance for extensive dialogues with some members of the TPLF who provided him with considerable information on the repressive practices of the EPLF leadership.
48. C. Legum and B. Lee, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., p. 87.
49. J. Spencer, *Ethiopia, The Horn of Africa and US Policy*, Op. cit., p. 67.
50. J. Bennet, "Tigray: Famine and National Resistance," in *Review of African Political Economy*, Op. cit., No. 26, July 1983, p. 99.
51. Ibid., p. 97.
 This central objective of the TPLF is also reproduced in Bereket Habte Sellassie, *Conflict and Intervention* . . . , Op. cit., p. 89.
52. Rene Lefort, *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution?*, (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 268.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.

Chapter 6: Iran, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the Carter Doctrine

1. F. Halliday, "Afghanistan — A Revolution consumes itself," in *The Nation*, Nov. 17, 1979, p. 493.
2. For a discussion of the problems and achievements of the Afghan revolution see the following works:
 Marilyn Bechtel, "Afghanistan: The Proud Revolution," Part I. in *New World Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (Jan.-Feb. 1981); Part II, *NWR*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (March-April 1981).
 M. Bechtel "Afghanistan Revisited: A New Society takes shape," Part I. in *New World Review*, Vol. 49, No. 5, (Sept.-Oct. 1981); Part II, Vol. 49, No. 6, (Nov.-Dec. 1981).
 William Pomeroy, "The New People's Republic of Afghanistan," *New World Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2, (March-April 1979).
 A. Ratebzad, "Afghanistan's Road to the Future," *New World Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (July-August 1981).
 Another work which includes valuable information on the history, geography and society of Afghanistan, and addresses the problems and early achievements of the new regime is F. Halliday, "Revolution in Afghanistan," in *New Left Review*, No. 112, (Nov.-Dec. 1978).
3. F. Halliday, "Afghanistan — A Revolution Consumes Itself," Op. cit., p. 493.
4. James West in a dialogue with Ali Khavari of the Tudeh Party. See "Root cause of the Conflict: Iranian American Dialogue," in *Views on Iran*, a publication of the Organization of Democratic Youth and Students of Iran in USA, Nov. 1980 (no.5), p. 12.
5. I. Eskandari, "International Solidarity helps the embattled people of Iran," in *Four Articles on Iran's Revolution*, published by the People's Party of Iran (TUDEH), p. 31.
6. James West, Op. cit., p. 12.
7. Arms Build-up in the Indian Ocean, Op. cit., p. 10.
8. W. Pomeroy, *Why Soviet Troops are in Afghanistan*, (New York: National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, 1980), p. 19.
9. For some information on the early achievements of the new regime see the interview of Nurredin Kiannuri, First Secretary of the Central Committee, TUDEH, with "Horizont" in *Views on Iran*, Op. cit., (No. 3), Sept. 1980, p. 39.
10. Ibid.
11. For some of this information see A. Khavari, "The Anti-imperialist tide in Iran," in *Views on Iran*, Op. cit., No. 1, July 1980, p. 12.
12. This phrase is used by A. Sadeg, representative of the TUDEH Central Committee, in an interview with *Marxism Today*, (London), Aug. 1983, p. 12.
13. Ibid. In the interview Sadeg states the analysis on the basis of which the TUDEH had made an alliance with the Khomeinists.
14. As quoted in Hamid Safari, "Struggle for revolutionary and democratic renewal," in *Four Articles on Iran's Revolution*, Op. cit., p. 5.
15. W. Pomeroy, *Why Soviet Troops are in Afghanistan*, Op. cit., p. 19.
16. K. Ege, "Eyewitness Afghanistan," in *Counter Spy*, (Baltimore), Sept-Nov 1983, p. 47.
17. F. Halliday, "War and Revolution in Afghanistan," in *New Left Review*, No. 119, (Jan-Feb 1980), p. 25.
18. This was an observation made by Feroz Ahmed, a Pakistani journalist. See *MERIP Reports*, July-August 1980, p. 14.
19. F. Halliday, "War and Revolution in Afghanistan," Op. cit., p. 25.

20. Gus Hall, "What really happened in Afghanistan," in *Basics*, (New York: International Publishers, 1980), p. 74.
21. Feroz Ahmed, Op. cit., p. 16.
22. F. Halliday, "Afghanistan — A revolution consumes itself," Op. cit., p. 493.
23. F. Halliday, "War and Revolution in Afghanistan," Op. cit., p. 25.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
26. W. Pomeroy, *Why Soviet Troops are in Afghanistan*, Op. cit., p. 16.; Ahmed, Feroz, Op. cit., p. 18; Gus Hall, *Basics*, Op. cit., p. 73.
27. Feroz Ahmed, Op. cit., p. 16.
28. *Ibid.*
29. A reasonably good discussion on these developments, their causes and impacts, is given in F. Halliday, "The Arc of Revolutions: Iran, Afghanistan, South Yemen, Ethiopia," in *Race and Class*, Vol. XX, No. 4, (Spring 1979).
30. President Carter in an interview with NBC's Meet the Press, as published in *New York Times*, January 21, 1980.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. See Y. Gudkov, "Rapid Deployment Neutrality," in *Views on Iran*, Op. cit., No. 5 (Nov. 1980), p. 37.
34. *Ibid.*
35. A good exposé of the lies on Afghanistan and the role of the USSR is Phil Bonosky's "The Afghan Story — Fabricating the News," in *Political Affairs*, (New York), Vol. LIX, No. 5, (May 1980), pp. 3-12.
36. The Secretary General of the Iraqi Communist Party, Aziz Mohamed, provides some information on this subject in an interview with Fred Halliday. See *MERIP Reports*, No. 97, (June 1981), pp. 20-21.
37. *Joint Communique of the Central Committee of the TUDEH Party of Iran and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iraq*, (undated, probably issued in October 1980), p. 2.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. See J. McConnel, "Iraq-Iran War," in *CounterSpy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Nov. 1980-Jan. 1981, pp. 22-26.
42. *The Guardian*, (New York), Sept. 3, 1980.
43. R. Manning, "Carter focuses on the Horn," in *New African*, April 1980, p. 45.
44. The policymakers in Washington were aware that states or movements in the developing world could be authentically anti-imperialist only when they ally themselves with the world revolutionary movement, particularly the USSR and the socialist community. In the Carter years some analysts close to the establishment openly advocated support for "communist" states in Asia and Africa which "demonstrate independence from Moscow and willingness to contribute to the establishment of other hand they called for measures to "restrain and . . . isolate" revolutionary democratic regimes like those in South Yemen and Ethiopia. On the other hand they called for measures to "restrain and . . . isolate" revolutionary democratic regimes like those in South Yemen and Ethiopia. See Donald Zagoria, "Into the Breach: New Soviet alliances in the 3rd World," in *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1979, p. 750.

Chapter 7: Anti-Soviet Hysteria, Assault of the ELF

1. F. Halliday, "War and Revolution in Afghanistan," Op. cit., p. 25.
2. Ahmed Nasser as quoted in *Eritrean Newsletter*, No. 39, April 30, 1980, p. 4.
3. *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1979-80, Op. cit., p. B 196.
4. Dan Connel in the *Guardian*, (New York), Feb. 20, 1980.
5. Bereket H. Sellassie, "Conflict and Intervention," Op. cit., p. 159.
6. G. Chaliand, (interview), *MERIP Reports*, March 1978, p. 14.
See also his article "The Horn of Africa's Dilemma," in *Foreign Policy*, No. 30, Spring 1978.
7. G. Chaliand, "Survival of the old warrior spirit" in *New Statesman*, London, 19/26, Dec. 1980, p. 8.
His other article on Afghanistan, "Marching with the Rebels," appeared in *New Statesman*, Dec. 12, 1980.
8. Connel made this claim in his article "Afghan debate weak on National Question," the *Guardian*, (New York), March 26, 1980.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. Teklai Ghebre Mariam, Op. cit., p. 11.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
See also Michael Warr, "There is a revolution in Ethiopia," in *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 7. (Warr erroneously includes the ELF as a recipient of arms from or via Egypt.)
13. Africa Confidential, May 7, 1980.
14. For example, John Markakis, a follower of events in Ethiopia made such observation. See "No longer a hidden war: Recent writings on the Eritrean nationalist struggle" (book review) in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Op. cit., Vol. 19, No. 2. (June 1981).
15. In this connection it is interesting to recall what Dan Connel stated in January 1979. He said:
Why is Eritrea given so little importance by the media and the world in general? The struggle there involves the Soviet Union in a major land war whose end is not in sight . . . One reason for the lack of interest may well be that in spite of the Soviet involvement the EPLF, unlike the Somali regime, have not turned elsewhere for backing.
"The Changing Situation in Eritrea," in B. Davidson, L. Cliffe, B. Sellassie, *Behind the war in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 54.
Most probably Connel's statement was only a camouflage to cover EPLF's connections with US imperialism, which were growing at that time. More importantly, the fact that the press amply covered the EPLF in the period subsequent to 1979 starkly demonstrates that the EPLF, like Somalia, had "turned elsewhere for backing."
16. These were Bereketeab Habte Sellassie, *Conflict and Intervention . . .*; B. Davidson, L. Cliffe, B. Habte Sellassie, eds. *Behind the War in Eritrea: R. Sherman, Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution*; D. Pool, *Eritrea, Africa's Longest War*.
For a sound review of these books see Tekeste Negash's "Review Article" in *North-East African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1983.
17. See R. Sherman "Marxism on the Horn of Africa," in *Problems of Communism*, Sept.-Oct. 1980, pp. 61-64.
18. In late 1981 the Revolutionary Communist Party U.S.A.'s organ, the *Revolutionary Worker*, printed more lengthy articles spreading lies on the events in the Horn and on the character of the organizations in Eritrea.

RCP's *Revolutionary Worker* described the problems and the conflicts in the Horn in terms of "Soviet moves." The most important of these "moves" was the Soviet "embrace" of the Ethiopian regime which the RCP called a "fascist junta." The RCP said that such a move was "an integral part of the Soviet imperialist strategy in Africa."

Proceeding from its stance of anti-Sovietism, the RCP slandered the ELF as "the blood brothers" of "petty feudalists" elsewhere in Ethiopia. On the other hand it praised the EPLF as the organization "recognized throughout the world as the legitimate representative of the Eritrean people."

See the pamphlet, *The Horn of Africa: Imperialist Battleground*, Revolutionary Reprints, from the *Revolutionary Worker* of Sept. 4, 11, & 18, 1981, (RCP publications), Chicago, pp. 11-12, p. 4.

19. An accurate observation about the *Horn of Africa* and the *Ethiopian Profile*, published in London, is made by Peter Schwab in his book *Ethiopia: Politics, Economics and Society*, (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc., 1985). He said that both magazines "are primarily propaganda publications that ought not to present themselves as objective." (p. 70)
20. One of these Somali elements was Said Yusuf Abdi. His article "Cuba's role in Africa: Revolutionary or Reactionary," *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 1, no. 4, (Oct/Dec 1978), reflects his view that the USSR is imperialist like the "Western powers." (p. 24)
21. These think tanks are known for their support of US policy.
22. For example Louis Rapoport's "There is a hope for Ethiopia," which appeared in the *New Republic*, was reprinted in the *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1979).
23. Anthony Hughes' "Reagan and Africa: Policy options in the Horn," appeared in *Africa Report*, May-June 1981, which was reprinted in *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1981). *Horn of Africa* did not find it necessary to state the article was a reprint from *Africa Report*.
24. Paul Klemen's "A Critique of the Ethiopia Revolution," which appeared in the *Socialist Register* of 1982 was reprinted in *Horn of Africa*, Vol. 5, No. 2.
25. *Guardian* (in the introduction to Wilfred Burchett's first of eleven series of articles on Ethiopia), Nov. 15, 1978.
26. This alleged research engagement of Dan Connel is stated in *The Nation*, March 19, 1977, p. 337 in connection with his article "Ethiopia, Eritrea, and US policy."
27. Teklai Ghebre Mariam, Op. cit., p. 11.
28. Former EPLF Central Committee member and Deputy Chief of the Security Department, Teklai Ghebre Mariam, expressed this opinion about Dan Connel in an interview with the Ethiopian press. Ibid.
29. For example, addressing a symposium held in London in Jan. 1979, Dan Connel said:

General Petrov . . . was the top commander of the Ethiopian ground forces in the Eritrean campaign, whilst another Soviet general commanded the Air Force.
 . . . EPLF intelligence reports . . . name Lt. Col. Alexi Alexandov as the commander of the Ethiopian forces on the western front, Lt. Col. Vassily as the eastern front commander, and Lt. Col. Eduard as the northern front commander.
 One of them, Lt. Col. Eduard was fatally wounded in a battle at the town of Elaberet in late November, 1978 and died later in Addis Ababa. This was confirmed to me in Khartoum by US intelligence reports. (emphasis added)

"The Changing situation in Eritrea," Op. cit., p. 56.
30. See Dan Connel, "Afghan debate weak on national question," Op. cit.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. For example, Bereket made such portrayals of the ELF. His anti-ELF diatribe was

similar to that made earlier by a certain Linda Heiden in her article "The Eritrean struggle for independence," in *Monthly Review*, June 1978.

34. For example see Roman G. Bhardwaj, "The growing externalization of the Eritrean movement," in *Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., Vol. 2, No. 1.
35. R. Sherman, *Eritrea . . .*, Op. cit., p. 54.
36. The article appeared in the *Guardian*, May 16, 1979.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
- The idea that, under certain conditions, societies can bypass a stage of social development was stated by Marx and Engels. Later Lenin articulated these concerns . . . without having to pass through the capitalist stage." The phrase "non-capitalist road" was first used at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928.
 Joe Slovo, "A Critical Appraisal of the Non-Capitalist Path and the National Democratic State in Africa," in *Marxism Today*, Op. cit., June 1974, p. 179
39. Ibid. (Dan Connel).
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. D. Connel in *Guardian* (New York), Feb. 20, 1980.
43. See J.L. Peninou, "Interview with EPLF leaders," Op. cit.
44. *Guardian*, May 16, 1979.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. *8 Days, Middle East Business*, Vol. 2, No. 10, 8 March, 1980, p. 8.
52. Filvio Grimaldi, "Red Shadow over Eritrea," in *8 Days*, Vol. 2, No. 10, p. 10.
53. Ibid.
54. *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1980-81, p. B172.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. F. Grimaldi in *8 Days*, Vol. 2, No. 10, March 8, 1980, p. 10.
58. Ibid.
59. The Kuwaitian press was among the main disseminators of this propaganda. For some quotation from this press see *Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81*, p. B172.
60. Quoted in *Eritrean Newsletter*, No. 39, April 30, 1980, p. 4.
61. D. Connel, "Eritrea divided as Ethiopians attack nears," *Financial Times*, London, August 19, 1980. Connel attributed the information to an EPLF leader Sebbat Efrem.
 Also John Currie carried the same allegation in an article which appeared in the *Guardian*, (New York), May 7, 1980. Currie attributed the charge to "reliable sources."
62. *Africa Confidential*, May 7, 1980.
63. D. Connel in *Guardian* (New York), Feb. 20, 1980.
64. *Africa Confidential*, Dec. 12, 1979.
65. D. Connel in *Financial Times* (London), Aug. 19, 1980.

66. In his book *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, Bereket says Tigray is "bordered on . . . the west by the Sudan," which is not true. On pages 16, 87, 98, Bereket has included doctored maps showing Tigray as adjacent to the Sudan and parts of southwestern Eritrea as belonging to Tigray.
67. *Africa Confidential*, May 7, 1980.
68. D. Connel, "Eritrea's EPLF forms united front," *Guardian*, Oct. 1, 1980.
69. *Africa Confidential*, May 7, 1980.
70. "Eritrea, ELF betrayal?", *Guardian*, Nov. 5, 1980.
71. *Africa Confidential*, May 7, 1980.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. D. Connel in the *Guardian*, (New York), Aug. 20, 1980.
75. Dan Connel wrote:
- Feeling a sharp sense of betrayal by the socialist countries, which in the main back Ethiopia on this issue, the WSLF appears to be searching about for an alternative ideology, and a new source of arms. Some of the younger guerillas especially the more highly educated minority, seem enamored with China, but the older leadership looks to the Islamic revival in the region and seeks assistance from the oil rich Arab countries.
- Guardian*, (New York), Aug. 20, 1980.
76. In connection with the political outlook of the WSLF Dan Connel quotes one of the leaders, Ahmed Sheir, who said:
- The political strategy of the WSLF is on the right side . . . We are muslims and we are not on the left side.
- Ibid.*
77. See "Eritrea needs support against Soviets," in the *Guardian*, June 18, 1980.
78. *Ibid.*
79. D. Connel in the *Guardian*, (New York), June 18, 1980.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*
82. "Protest nerve gas threat in Eritrea," in the *Guardian*, (New York), July 23, 1980.
83. L. Wolf, "William Joseph Casey: The 'Cyclone' moves in at Langley," in *Covert Action*, Washington, D.C., No. 12, (April 1981), p. 30.
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*
- Leo Cherne is a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) in the Reagan administration. He was also a member of this board in past administrations. The PFIAB meets "several times a year to evaluate the activities of the intelligence community and to make recommendations for needed change." Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, Op. cit., p. 334.
86. As reported in ELF publications.
87. This writer was present on some occasions at which Abdullah made remarks indicating a negative attitude toward the USSR.
88. This writer was also a witness to some comments Abdullah made indicating that he was not concerned about the growing EPLF-TPLF alliance.
89. D. Connel, "Eritrea's EPLF forms United Front: Fighting rages in Ethiopian province," the *Guardian*, (New York), Oct. 1980.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*

92. D. Connel, "Eritrea: Peace Plan," the *Guardian*, Dec. 3, 1980.
93. Hinting the rationale behind Sheik Zayd's moves, the *Africa Confidential* stated: "Conservative Arabs are seeking a plan to preserve the Red Sea littoral against such a (Marxist) confederation." *Africa Confidential*, Feb. 25, 1981.
94. *Eritrean Newsletter*, June 1981.
95. D. Connel, "Eritrea: Unity Move," the *Guardian*, April 22, 1981.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Ibid.*
98. In early 1982 Eward Girardet visited the Ethio-Sudanese border region and learned from "refugees and other sources" that the "ELF commands greater respect and loyalty on grass root level than the EPLF." E. Girardet, "Eritrea: Africa's longest war sputtering," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 9, 1982.

Chapter 8: Reaganite Escalation of US Interventions: Disintegration of the ELF

1. For a brief discussion on the general crisis at this period in the capitalist world see V. Ryamalov. "Economic Aspects of the General Crisis of Capitalism," in an Exchange of Opinion on "Imperialist Foreign Policy at the Present Stage of the General Crisis of Capitalism," *International Affairs*, Moscow, No. 3, 1982.
2. All the essays in "Imperialist Foreign Policy . . .," Op. cit.
3. Angela Davis as quoted in *Daily World*, New York, Nov. 17, 1983, p. 5.
4. "Reagan's Arms Buildup," "Searching for a Strategy," in *Newsweek*, June 8, 1981.
5. Tim Wheeler in *Daily World*, June 5, 1982.
6. Quoted in *The New York Times*, May 6, 1981.
7. Jack Calhoun in *Guardian*, New York, June 10, 1981.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Guardian*, March 8, 1981.
10. The provision of such assistance to Saudi Arabia and its allies in the region was partly meant to induce these "moderate" Arab states to join the Camp David deal. This purpose was very much stressed by former Secretary of State, Alexander Haig. See "Haig's foreign policy," in *Newsweek*, April 6, 1981.
11. For a discussion of Reagan's policy toward South Africa, see Anthony Monteiro, *For Unity Against Reaganism and Apartheid*, NAIMSAL, 1983.
12. *Guardian* (New York), June 10, 1981.
13. *Ibid.*
14. F. Halliday, as quoted in *Ibid.*
15. Quoted in O. Ogunbadejo, "Diego Garcia and Africa's security," *Third World Quarterly*, Jan. 1982, p. 109.
16. "US Naval Buildup is Challenging Soviet Advances in Asia and Africa," *New York Times*, April 19, 1981.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*

22. Leonid Brezhnev as quoted in Vladimir Katin, *For a collective and just solution of the Middle East problem*. (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1981), p. 45.
See also F. Halliday, *Threat from the East?*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 53, 59.
23. Patrick Gilkes, "Building Ethiopia's Revolutionary Party," in *MERIP Reports*, Vol. 12, No. 5, (June 1982), p. 24.
On this point see also U. Meister, "Ethiopia's Unfinished Revolution," *Swiss Review of World Affairs*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (May 1983), p. 10.
24. *Guardian*, (New York), Jan. 21, 1981; "Reagan and South Africa," *Newsweek*, March 30, 1981.
25. J. Brown, "The Trilemma of US Foreign Policy," *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review*, Washington, Vol. II, No. 5, p. 2.
26. Haig's foreign policy, Op. cit.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Chester Crocker, "The Quest for an African Policy," *The Washington Review of Strategic and International Studies*, (now *Washington Quarterly*), Vol. I, No. 2, (April 1978), p. 73.
30. *Ibid.*
31. C. Crocker, "African Policy in the 1980's," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Summer 1980), p. 74.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
34. These are the words of a highly placed US diplomat as quoted by Susan Santini in *Guardian*, April 29, 1981.
35. *Guardian*, April 29, 1981.
36. For a discussion on this incident see *Africa Research Bulletin (ARB)*, Aug. 1-31, 1981.
37. The implication of the Bright Star exercise and other provocative steps are discussed in V. Usov, "Anti-Libyan Syndrome in Washington," *International Affairs*, Moscow, No. 3, 1982.
38. V. Usov, Op. cit.; K. Gellen in *Guardian*, (New York), Jan. 6, 1982
39. "The Israeli Connection," in *Africa Confidential*, Jan. 6, 1982, p. 2.
40. "CIA Keeps its Man in Power in Chad," *CounterSpy*, Sept.-Nov. 1983, pp. 8-9.
41. *ARB*, Aug. 1-31, 1981, p. 6160.
42. As quoted in *ARB* Aug. 1-31, 1981, p. 6160.
43. See "US supports Begin's genocide," *Daily World*, July 20, 1982.
In mid August 1982 Israeli Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, said in an interview that several days before the invasion he told US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of State Alexander Haig that "Israel must act in Lebanon."
Cape Cod Times, Aug. 15, 1982.
44. On this subject see Robert Prince, "The US in the Middle East: Continuing Agenda for disaster," *New World Review*, May-June, 1984.
45. Quoted in Mansour Farhang, "Khomeini and Saddam Hussein; One must go," *The Nation*, July 3, 1982, p. 15.
46. Quoted in "A tilt towards Baghdad," *The Middle East*, (London), June 1982, p. 8.
47. *Ibid.*
48. A summary of the situation in the US allied states is given in F. Halliday, "With friends like these . . . Along the 'arc of instability,'" *The Nation*, April 10, 1982.
49. In addition to Halliday's works the following contain information on the situation

- prevailing in the Sudan in early 1982.
50. "Sudan: Divided we fall," *Africa Confidential*, Feb. 14, 1982;
51. "Sudan in a sea of troubles," *The Middle East*, London, Feb. 1982;
52. "Sudan's backbreaking burdens," *Middle East International*, Feb. 12, 1982;
53. "Sudan's backbreaking burdens," *Middle East International*, Feb. 12, 1982;
54. "Army purge in Sudan?," *The Middle East*, March, 1982.
55. Quoted in "Sudan in a sea of troubles," Op. cit.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 6162.
57. F. Halliday, "With friends like these . . ." Op. cit.
58. *Guardian*, (New York), June 23, 1982.
59. *Guardian*, (New York), July 7, 1982.
60. *Guardian*, (New York), July 7, 1982.
61. See *ARB*, Aug. 1-31, 1982, p. 6161.
62. Quoted in *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, p. 6162.
65. C. Crocker, "The African Setting," *The Washington Review of Strategic and International Studies*, (special supplement), (May 1978), p. 21.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
68. Quoted in M. Hudson, "Reagan's Policy in North East Africa," *Africa Report*, March-April 1982, p. 8.
69. "A Test in Africa for Reagan's Clout," *Businessweek*, (New York), Feb. 2, 1981, p. 99
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. "Asmara: Twenty years on," *National Review*, Feb. 6, 1981.
77. See *A letter from Rasai*, anonymous, written by an eyewitness to the incident.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1983, pp. 6-7.
80. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 25, No. 5, Feb. 29, 1984.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
82. Statement issued by the EPLF and the PLF-ELF.
83. *Ibid.*
84. *Ibid.*

Chapter 9: The "Eritrean" Armed Movement: A Pawn of Imperialism

1. The achievements are briefly discussed in Negussay Ayele, "The Ethiopian Revolution," in *UFAHAMU*, (Los Angeles), Vol. XII, No. 3, 1983.
See also Negussay Ayele, "The Ethiopian Revolution — Seven Years Young," in *Journal of African Marxists*, (London), Issue 3, 1983; G. Galperin, and V. Platov, "Revolutionary Transformation in Ethiopia," *International Affairs* (Moscow), June 1982.
2. See "The Revolution goes to the countryside," *AFRICA*, (London), No. 128, April 1982, pp. 37-38.

- See also "Ethiopia: A resolute step into the future," in *Socialism Principles, Practice, Prospects*, (Moscow), No. 4 (April) 1983.
3. The World Bank's note of the Ethiopian government's efficiency in "aid disbursement" is stated in *Africa Research Bulletin* (ARB), April 15-May 14, 1983, p. 6834.
 4. See for example *World Affairs Report*, (Stanford, Cal.), Vol. 12, No. 1, (Oct.-Nov., Dec. 1981), p. 115.
 5. There were signs, however, of the Ethiopian government's concern for the formerly oppressed national groups, including those in the remotest and most inaccessible parts of the country. See R. Caputo, "Ethiopia: Revolution in an ancient empire," *National Geographic*, May 1983.
 6. For the situation in Eritrea in the early 1980's see Richard Pankhurst, "Peace returned to Asmara," in *AFRICA TODAY*, (Denver, Colo.), (2nd quarter, 1982).
 7. "Eritrea: The next assault," *The Middle East*, London, April 1982.
 8. "Mengistu's Moles," *The Economist*, June 26, 1982.
 9. For an example of this propaganda see "Food for starving babies sent to Russia for assistance by the Ethiopian government was baseless even though there were some administrative problems acknowledged by Ethiopia's Relief commissioner. See 'Ethiopia: Famine Aid,' in *The Nation*, March 31, 1984.
 10. "Eritrea: The next assault," Op. cit.
 11. This description is given in *Problems of Communism*, Op. cit., May-June 1981.
 12. See "The Pope Plot: CIA Productions, Inc." in *Counterspy*, June-August 1983, p. 8.
A CIA veteran, William Hood, also describes Henze as one who for 30 years served "in US government and government related organizations ranging from Radio Free Europe to the embassies in Ethiopia and Turkey, to the National Security Council under Zbigniew Brzezinski. He knows Turkey well and speaks its language fluently."
W. Hood, "Unlikely Conspiracy," a review of *The Plot to Kill the Pope* by Paul Henze, and of *The time of the assassins: Anatomy of an investigation*, by Claire Sterling, in *Problems of Communism*, March-April 1984.
 13. P. Henze, "Communism and Ethiopia," *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1981, p. 73.
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
 16. Gerard Chaliand, (ed), *Guerilla Strategies: An Historical Anthology from the Long March to Afghanistan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 12.
For the wrath of an EPLF member on Chaliand's statement see the book review by Arata Tseggai "Guerilla Movements They Have Known," *Guardian* (New York), Sept. 21, 1983.
 17. Hillel Schenker, "Interview — Haggai Erlich: Facing the Ethiopian Tragedy," *New Outlook*, Tel Aviv, Feb.-March 1985, p. 22.
 18. H. Erlich, *Ethiopia and Eritrea During the Scramble for Africa: A Political Biography of Ras Alula, 1875-1897*, (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University, 1982), p. 202.
 19. H. Erlich, *The Struggle over Eritrea . . .*, Op. cit., p. 96.
 20. This is even indicated in *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 23, No. 20, (Oct. 6, 1982), p. 2.
 21. TPLF, *Concluding Declaration of the Second Organizational Congress of Tigray People's Liberation Front*, p. 1.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

25. *Ibid.*
26. A short list of these organizations is included in *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 24, No. 19, (Sept. 21, 1983), footnote No. 2.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. In mid 1982 EPLF's representative in Europe, Ermias Debesai, was transferred, in the same capacity, from Rome, Italy to Brussels in Belgium where the EPLF had practically no Eritrean followers. Brussels thus became the seat of one of EPLF's main European offices. According to some Eritrean observers this was meant to bring the EPLF closer to the NATO headquarters in the Belgian capital.
30. "Eritrea: The Next assault," Op. cit.
31. "Ethiopian drive 'repelled,'" *The Middle East*, London, May 1982.
32. B. Freund, review of *Conflict and Intervention* by Bereket H. Sellassie and of *Behind the War in Eritrea* by B. Davidson, Bereket H. Sellassie and L. Cliffe, in *Race and Class*, Vol. XXIV, Summer 1982, No. 1.
33. *The New York Times*, May 16, 1982.
34. The CIA's backing of the armed movements fighting the Ethiopian regime became well known in 1982-83. In its issue of Oct. 10, 1983 *Newsweek* stated the CIA provides "training, arms and financial assistance . . . to military forces" fighting the Ethiopian regime. (p. 41).
35. The articles written by Jay Ross appeared in *The Washington Post* of January 4 and 5, 1982.
36. *Africa Report*, (Washington) March-April, 1982, p. 36.
Justifying the decision, Deputy Director of East African affairs at the State Dept. Richard Baker, said: "There was a period when things were pretty grim (in Ethiopia). But bodies aren't turning up in neighborhoods anymore. Random violence is no longer occurring. We don't grant asylum just because you like the standard of living here."
Quoted in *The New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1982.
37. M. Hudson, "Reagan's policy in NorthEast Africa," in *Africa Report*, March-April 1982, p. 10.
38. As stated in *The New York Times*, May 16, 1982.
39. See, for example, "Ethiopian drive 'repelled,'" Op. cit.
40. "State Dept. Reverses Policy on Ethiopian Exiles in US," *The New York Times*, July 7, 1982.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Outside the Congress, civil rights organizations in the US had opposed the decision against Ethiopian refugees. NAACP executive director, Benjamin Hooks, had condemned the move of the Reagan administration as "racist." See "The Quiet Ethiopians" in *The Progressive*, Aug. 1982, p. 17.
For a discussion of racism in the immigration policy of the US see R. Laychick, B. Hooks, and F. Williams, "Racial implications of US immigration policy," in *Issue*, (Los Angeles), Vol. XII, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring/Summer 1982.
See also Shirley Chisholm, "US policy and Black Refugees," *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.
43. *The New York Times*, July 7, 1982.
44. "Ethiopian drive 'repelled,'" Op. cit.
45. Amde Micael Kahsai, quoted in *The New York Times*, May 16, 1982.
46. Al-Amin Mohamed Said, (interview), in *Liberation*, (organ of EPLF), (Beirut), Jan.-April 1982, p. 9.
47. EPLF (Rome office), *Press Release*, Jan. 5, 1982.
48. "Ethiopia using chemical warfare," *Guardian*, (New York), Feb. 24, 1982.

48. The march was held on the 22nd of January 1982. Its aim, as stated in an EPLF leaflet, was to "denounce the genocidal Soviet-Ethiopian military offensive in Eritrea, and to protest the criminal use of chemical warfare including lethal gas."
49. *Liberation*. (EPLF, Beirut), Jan.-April 1982, pp. 21-23.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
51. D. Connel in *Guardian*. (New York), March 3, 1982.
52. "Eritrea: The next assault," *Op. cit.*
53. The EPLF claimed to have killed and wounded about 30,000 Ethiopian soldiers and to have taken over a thousand prisoners. See "A fallen star over Eritrea?," *SUDANOW* (Khartoum), May 1982.
54. "Ethiopia using chemical warfare," *Guardian*, (New York), Feb. 24, 1982.
55. See "US said to weigh nerve gas output," *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 1982. See also "Why make more poison gas?," *New York Times* (editorial) Jan. 21, 1982.
56. Though not fully accurate a helpful article on this subject is M. Osborne and J. Ferera, "Chemical warfare: The Superpowers deadly game," *The Middle East*, April 1983.
57. "Eritrea: The next assault," *Op. cit.*
58. EPLF Political Bureau, "Important Declaration," June 12, 1982, p. 2.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Isayas Afeworki, *Press Release*, (EPLF), Rome, Dec. 1, 1982, p. 2.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
70. "Eritrea: The next assault," *Op. cit.*
71. D. Connel in *Guardian* (New York), March 3, 1982.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Gayle Smith in *Guardian* (New York), March 10, 1982.
74. D. Connel, "War crisis escalates," *MERIP Reports*, Vol. 12, No. 5, (June 1982), p. 3.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
76. Some Western propagandists in the states neighboring Eritrea sought to misinform the public by saying that there were no relations or "dialogues" between the EPLF and Western representatives. An example of this is an article by an unnamed "visitor to EPLF held territory." Written in May 1982 the article said in part:
- ... diplomats in Khartoum who earlier predicted the end of the EPLF by April confess to re-evaluating their position, although they say that they are by no means prepared to take a step further and initiate a dialogue with the front for fear of handling such a diplomatic hot potato.
- See "A fallen star over Eritrea?," *Op. cit.*
77. Amade Micael Kahsai, frequently visited the US. Some pro-EPLF reporters even called him the "EPLF diplomat". (See, for example, D. Connel in *Guardian*, Nov. 4, 1981). With the obvious co-operation of US officials, Amde Micael could "lobby at the United Nations for official status of his organization." *The New York Times*, May 16, 1982.

Chapter 10: Workers' Party in Ethiopia

1. *The New York Times*, March 4, 1984.
2. S. Cole, *Guardian* (New York), May 16, 1984.
3. V. Korionov, "Increasing Tensions," in *Daily Review* (APN, Moscow), March 22, 1984.
4. On the US supply of arms to the Sudan see *The New York Times*, March 6, 1984; March 13, 1984; March 18, 1984; March 29, 1984.
5. *The New York Times*, April 30, 1984.
6. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 25, No. 10, (May 9, 1984), p. 6.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
8. According to *The Economist*, "10 Mig fighters and six helicopters" were "badly damaged by guerillas". PMAC Chairman, Mengistu Haile Mariam, flew to Asmara to assess the situation at the airport. *The Economist*, June 9, 1984, p. 38.
9. *The New York Times*, July 1, 1984.
10. The truth was that the EPLF leadership was pressuring "Saghim" to join the EPLF rank and file.
11. Western newspaper took note of this. But notably the *Africa Confidential*, on a second thought, refused to acknowledge the significance of this fact. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 25, No. 20, (Oct. 3, 1984).
12. For the *Confidential's* previous assessment see Vol. 25, No. 19, Sept. 19, 1984.
13. For a detailed statement of Ethiopia's foreign policy see Goshu Wolde's interview in "Ethiopia's Determination," *Daily Review*, Sept. 18, 1984.
14. The report was published in *Serto Ader*, organ of WPE, (Addis Ababa) Page 1, 1976.
15. "For Unity of Nationalities," *The Ethiopian Herald* (Addis Ababa) Sept. 6, 1984.
16. L. Cliffe, "Eritrea: Winning the Unwinnable War?," in *Africa-Asia-Latin America*, Aug.-Sept. 1984, p. 31.
17. EPLF, *Declaration of the 6th Regular Meeting of the Central Committee*, Sept. 1984, p. 31.
18. *The New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1984.
19. *Daily Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 186, (7571), Sept. 14, 1984.
20. *Daily Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 182, (7567), Sept. 10, 1984.
21. *Daily Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 186, (7571), Sept. 14, 1984.
22. On the question of whether or not Ethiopia's "socialism" is genuine, a diplomat is said to have exclaimed: "You see the hammer and sickle everywhere. Why don't you believe it?" Quoted in *The New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1984.
23. Flora Lewis, "Dismal Diplomacy," *The New York Times*, Oct. 2, 1984.
24. David Willis, *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 13, 1984.
25. Quoted by Paul Henze in *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 18, 1984.
26. Quoted in *Ibid.*
27. D. Willis in *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sept. 13, 1984.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *The New York Times*, Sept. 18, 1984.
30. Colin Legum in *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 13, 1984.
31. C. Legum, "Ethiopia — Moscow's closest ally in Africa," in *Horn of Africa*, *Op. cit.*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (1983/84), p. 43.
32. *The New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1984.
33. *Ibid.*

Chapter 11: Ethiopia's Famine; Moves for Counterrevolution

1. On this "new coalition," see Gus Hall, *The New Danger: Reaganism's Alliance with Ultra-Right and Fascist Forces*. (New York: Hall-Davis Campaign '84, September 1984).
2. Mark Allen in *Daily World*, November 27, 1984.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *The Guardian* (New York), September 26, 1984.
5. *The New York Times*, November 20, 1984.
6. Quoted in *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. These factors are briefly discussed in Grigori Polyakov, *Daily World*, November 12, 1985; November 13, 1985.
11. Michael Cross, "Ethiopia famine: There was ample warning," *the interdependent*, United Nations Association-USA, (New York), Vol. 10, No. 5, (Sept./Oct. 1985).
12. *The New York Times*, September 18, 1984.
13. Michael Cross, "Ethiopia famine: There was ample warning," *Op. cit.*
14. *The New York Times*, December 14, 1984.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *The New York Times*, January 8, 1985.
17. See for example, Dawit Wolde-Giorgis, *Introductory Statement on the drought and famine situation in Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa: *Relief and Rehabilitation Commission*, October 1984), pp. 5-6.
18. *The New York Times*, October 26, 1984.
Some relief workers also specifically denied the charge that the Ethiopian government was using the food provided by Western donors to sustain its military forces.
In August 1984, the *Times* of London wrote:
International aid agencies operating in Ethiopia deny that substantial quantities of relief food is being diverted from civilian victims of the famine to the Ethiopian military forces . . .
Similarly, the *Daily Telegraph* wrote:
. . . neither the EEC Commission nor the other bodies which have looked into allegations that food has been diverted to the army and merchants have found any significant evidence to support these claims . . .
Quoted in Dawit Wolde-Giorgis, *Introductory Statement*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.
19. *Daily World*, November 16, 1984.
20. *Pravda*, December 28; *Izvestia*, April 21, 1985 (Abridged in *Daily Review*, APN, April 23, 1985).
21. On the famine aid from the GDR and other socialist countries of Eastern Europe, see *Pravda*, November 17, (reproduced in *Daily Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 231 (7616), November 19, 1984); *The New York Times*, November 4, 1984; *Pravda*, December 17, 1984; reproduced in *Daily Review* (APN) December 17, 1984.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Daily World*, November 16, 1984.
24. *Hearings, Senate* (Sub-Committee on African Affairs), 1976, *Op. cit.*, p. 87.
25. Jack Anderson in *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1985.
26. Jack Anderson in *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1985.

27. *The New York Times*, September 18, 1984.
The charge concerning expenses for the party's inauguration was groundless. The expense incurred was estimated at no more than two million dollars. Further, much of the preparations (including the construction of a new hall) were made possible by assistance from socialist countries.
28. *The New York Times*, September 20, 1984.
29. *Ibid.*
30. Robert J. McCloskey in *The New York Times*, November 8, 1984.
31. See for example, *The New York Times*, November 1, 1984; November 9, 1984.
32. A columnist who seemed to suggest the USSR was sending assistance to compete with the West was the conservative Flora Lewis. She wrote:
Now that the West is pouring in help, the Soviet bloc countries have also started to send planes and trucks to get the food where it is needed.
The New York Times, November 9, 1984.
33. Jeane Kirkpatrick, quoted in *The New York Times*, November 7, 1984.
34. *Ibid.*
35. The program was aired on the 22nd of November 1984.
36. Also a few US reporters took the famine situation as an opportunity to praise the colonial system. One of such reporters, David K. Willis, wrote the following from Addis Ababa:
Ever since African nations began to claim their independence two decades ago, perceptive analysts have warned that the end of the colonial era could be the beginning of a slide into shortage, poverty and hunger.
The Christian Science Monitor, November 27, 1984.
37. Donal Mann, (letter to the editor), *The New York Times*, November 10, 1984.
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Quoted in *The New York Times*, November 7, 1984.
41. William Pomeroy in *Daily World*, November 10, 1984.
42. *The New York Times*, November 17, 1984.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *The Afro-American* (Baltimore), November 10, 1984.
46. For example, see *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 30, 1984.
47. Quoted in *The Afro-American*, November 10, 1984.
48. Quoted in *The Guardian*, November 14, 1984.
49. Quoted in *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1984.
50. This description accompanied an article by Dan Connel in *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 19, 1984.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Chris Carter, (letter to the editor), *The New York Times*, October 12, 1984.
53. Quoted in *The Hartford Courant*, November 24, 1984.
54. *The New York Times*, November 25, 1984.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Berhane Gebre, quoted in *The Hartford Courant*, November 24, 1984.
57. *The New York Times*, November 20, 1984.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *The New York Times*, November 25, 1984.

60. *Ibid.*
61. *The New York Times*, September 18, 1984.
62. For instance, *The Washington Post* said in an editorial: "There are instances in which rebels in Eritrea and Tigre provinces are at fault." As an example, it cited the seizure of the relief center at Korem by the TPLF. (*The Washington Post*, November 21, 1984.)
63. *The New York Times*, December 28, 1984.
64. *The New York Times*, November 25, 1984.
65. *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 20, 1984.
66. Quoted in *The Afro-American*, December 1, 1984.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
69. This was the program "Cry, Ethiopia, Cry," on "Frontline," PBS-Channel 13, aired on November 27, 1984.
70. CNN Prime News, November 29, 1984.
71. NBC Nightly News, November 30, 1984.
72. NBC Nightly News, November 30, 1984.
73. This is stated by V. Krisnov in *Izvestia*, February 20, 1985. It is also pointed out by Grigori Polyakov, *Daily World*, November 14, 1985.
74. G. Polyakov, *Daily World*, November 14, 1985.
75. *The New York Times*, November 9, 1984.
76. *Ibid.*
77. *The Washington Post*, December 27, 1984.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *The New York Times*, January 4, 1985.
80. *Ibid.*
81. See *The New York Times*, January 10, 1985.
82. *Ibid.*
83. *The Times* (London), December 3, 1984.
84. *Ibid.*
85. William Pomeroy in *Daily World*, January 4, 1985.
86. See, "Murder by Hunger," an editorial in *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 1985 which made supportive references to an article by Dan Connel.
87. Dan Connel's article appeared also in *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 1985.
88. *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 4, 1985.
89. Dan Connel in *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 1985.
90. *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 31, 1984.
91. *The Observer*, December 2, 1984.
92. Quoted in *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 31, 1984.
93. *The New York Times*, January 6, 1985.
94. Quoted in *The Washington Post*, February 26, 1985.
95. *Ibid.*
96. *The Washington Post*, March 6, 1985.
97. *Ibid.*
98. *Ibid.*
99. For the story see *The New York Times*, January 17, 1985.

100. *The New York Times*, January 19, 1985.
101. *Guardian*, (London), April 15, 1985.
102. *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1985.
103. *The New York Times*, February 25, 1985.
104. *The Washington Post*, March 13, 1985.
105. *Izvestia*, November 24, 1985 (as summarized in *Daily Review*), Vol. XXXI, No. 231, November 25, 1985.
106. *The New York Times*, January 8, 1985.
107. *US News and World Report*, July 22, 1985.
108. *The New York Times*, January 4, 1985.
109. *The New York Times*, January 5, 1985.
110. *The New York Times*, January 9, 1985.
111. *The New York Times*, January 8, 1985.
112. *The Washington Post*, March 26, 1985.
113. *Ibid.*
114. *Daily World*, January 24, 1985.
115. *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 5, 1984.
116. *The New York Times*, January 3, 1985.
117. *Daily World*, January 17, 1985.
118. *The New York Times*, November 27, 1984.
119. It is probably a faction of the PLO that is referred to here. Otherwise, the umbrella organization, PLO, had good relations with Ethiopia and even an office in Addis Ababa.
120. *The Washington Post*, January 30, 1985.
121. Peter Schwab, "Political change and famine in Ethiopia," *Current History*, Vol. 84, No. 502, (May 1985), p. 228.

Chapter 12: Nimeiri Overthrown: EPLF-TPLF Alliance Shaken

1. See Michael Prest, "Sudan on the brink," in *Middle East International*, London, April 5, 1985.
2. *The New York Times*, March 7, 1985.
3. On the views of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha and the Republican Brothers, see *Middle East International*, January 25, 1985.
4. "Sudan: Clampdown on the Brotherhood," *Africa Now*, April 1985.
5. For a short historical outline of the southern problem and the positions of the various political parties on this question, see "A Sudanese Activist," "Party Strategies on the Political Crisis in the Sudan and on the Southern Question," *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 32, (April 1985).
6. Some of the measures are discussed in *The New York Times*, April 5, 1985.
7. *The Washington Post*, April 3, 1985.
8. *The New York Times*, April 2, 1985.
9. *The Washington Post*, April 3, 1985.
10. Quoted in *The New York Times*, April 5, 1985.
11. *The Washington Post*, April 3, 1985.

12. See *Africa Now*, May 1985.
13. *The New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1985.
14. Carl Bloice, "Reflections on the Coup in the Sudan," *Daily World*, April 20, 1985.
15. *Africa Now*, April 1985.
16. *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, April 22, 1985.
17. This is actually the title of his book which, it was announced, would be published in March 1985.
See his interview in *Africa Now*, Feb. 1985.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *The New York Times*, April 7, 1985.
20. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 8, April 10, 1985.
21. *The New York Times*, April 8, 1985.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Quoted in *The New York Times*, April 8, 1985.
24. Quoted in *Ibid.*
See also *Guardian* (New York), April 24, 1985.
25. Quoted in *The New York Times*, April 8, 1985.
26. *The Washington Post*, April 9, 1985.
27. Conn Hallinan in *People's World*, Berkeley, May 11, 1985.
28. This was a statement made by the Secretary General of the Lawyer's Union, Mustata Abdelkadir, as quoted in *The Middle East*, June 1985.
29. As quoted in *People's World*, May 11, 1985.
30. Quoted in *The Middle East*, June 1985.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 9, (April 24, 1985).
33. *The Washington Post*, April 9, 1985.
34. *The Middle East*, June 1985.
35. For a list and background of the cabinet members see *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 9, (April 24, 1985).
See also *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1985.
36. Quoted in *The Middle East*, June 1985.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Quoted in *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1985.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Quoted in *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1985.
41. Quoted in *The New York Times*, April 15, 1985.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Quoted in *Ibid.*
44. *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1985.
45. *The Guardian* (London), April 22, 1985.
46. *The Guardian* (London), April 10, 1985.
47. *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1985.
48. *The New York Times*, April 23, 1985.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Quoted in *The Washington Post*, April 23, 1985.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1985.

53. *The Guardian* (London), April 18, 1985.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Quoted in *The New York Times*, April 11, 1985.
56. Quoted in *The New York Times*, April 14, 1985.
57. As reported in *The New York Times*, July 10, 1985.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *US News and World Report*, July 22, 1985.
60. *The New York Times*, July 10, 1985.
61. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 10, (May 8, 1985).
62. *The New York Times*, April 9, 1985.
63. Quoted in *The New York Times*, July 14, 1985.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *The New York Times*, July 10, 1985.
67. *The New York Times*, July 21, 1985.
68. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 13, (June 19, 1985).
69. *The New York Times*, July 21, 1985.
70. Peter Woodward, quoted in *Ibid.*
71. The new Sudanese regime, it is said, sought to arraign such individuals currently in the U.S.
72. *The New York Times*, July 15, 1985.
73. C. Legum in *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 13, 1984.
74. P. Henze in *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 1984.
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 14, (July 3, 1985).
77. *Ibid.*
78. EPLF's capture of Barentu was hailed in both the big business and some "left" papers in the West. See for example *The New York Times*, July 15, 1985 and *Guardian* (New York), July 24, 1985.
79. EPLF's capture of Barentu was short lived. The town was retaken by Ethiopian forces in early September. According to some reports at least hundreds of EPLF fighters were killed.
80. In April 1985 the TPLF declared it:
believes that the formation of a United Democratic Front (UDF) comprising of all democratic forces in Ethiopia fighting against international imperialism including Soviet social-imperialism, bureaucratic capitalism, represented by the fascist dictatorship of the state bourgeoisie, the Dergue, and feudalism is paramount and the only way out for the Ethiopian Revolution to victory.
Joint Communique of the Oromo Liberation Front and The Tigray People's Liberation Front, April 1985.
81. James Firebrace and Stuart Holland, *Never Kneel Down: Drought, Development and Liberation in Entrea*. (Trenton, New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 1985). (The interview with Isayas is included as Part III of the book.)
82. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

88. *Ibid.*
 89. *Ibid.*
 90. *Ibid.*
 91. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
 92. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
 93. *Ibid.*
 94. *Ibid.*
 95. *Ibid.*
 96. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
 97. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
 98. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
 99. *Ibid.*
 100. *Ibid.*
 101. *Ibid.*
 102. *Ibid.*
 103. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
 104. *Ibid.*
 105. P. Henze in *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 24, 1984.
 106. See for example, Jack Wheeler, "Fighting the Soviet Imperialists: The New Liberation Movements," *reason*, (Santa Barbara, Cal.), Vol. 17, No. 2, (June-July 1985).
 107. See *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 25, No. 15, (July 18, 1985).
 108. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 109. See *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26., No. 11, (May 22, 1985). See also the OLF-TPLF *Joint Communique* of April 1985.
 110. An example is the pamphlet by H.Q. Loltu, "On Adding Insult to Injury: Adulis on the National Question," in the *Kindling Point* 8 (1985).
 111. *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 26, No. 14, July 3, 1985.
 112. *The New York Times*, Aug. 30, 1985.
 113. It handed the communique containing the disclosure to several news agencies including the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) which broadcast it on Sept. 23, 1985. For a transcript of the broadcast see *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, (Washington, D.C.), "East Africa," Sept. 25, 1985.
 114. For a transcript of the interview see *Ibid.* All the subsequent quotations are from the same interview.
 115. EPLF, Central Bureau of Foreign Relations, Paris, France. *Press Release*, August 29, 1985.
 116. Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE). *The Sole Truth and Only Solution*. Addis Ababa, August 1985. The quotations reproduced here were taken from the English version.
 117. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 118. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
 119. *Ibid.*
 120. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 121. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 122. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 123. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 124. A transcript of President Reagan's address to the UN General Assembly was published in *The New York Times*, October 25, 1985. All the quotations from his address are taken from the transcript in NYT.

125. *The New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1985.
 126. This was widely disseminated in the US media. See for example, *The Journal Courier*, (New Haven), Nov. 21, 1985.
 127. *The New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1985.
 128. One of these ultra-right leaders is Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). In an Op. Ed. article in the *Wall Street Journal*, he charged that the Ethiopian government "has implemented a Stalinlike reign of terror," referring specifically to the resettlement program, agricultural policy, and "disregard for human rights."
 The Senator accused the Reagan administration of an "on again, off again approach" to Ethiopia—an approach which, he said, "reflects the influence of the doctrine in the State Department," and "seems to be implementing the Brezhnev Doctrine . . . as opposed to the Reagan Doctrine (which seeks to aid democratic resistance groups fighting communist oppression)." He acknowledged the role of "a number of Marxist-oriented resistance groups . . . such as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigre People's Liberation Front," though he seems to regard the Ethiopian People's Democratic Alliance (EPDA) as being "potentially" most "effective" against the Addis Ababa regime.
 See, Orrin Hatch, "Keep Ethiopia Part of the Reagan Doctrine," *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 1986.
 Responding to Orrin Hatch's article, Hagos Ghebre Hiwet, a spokesman for the EPLF in New York, wrote a letter to the *Wall Street Journal* in which he agreed with the Senator's charges about "the forced resettlement and suppression of all democratic rights in Ethiopia." But he pointed out that the Senator was "mistaken" in characterizing the EPLF as "Marxist." The EPLF, he said, is an organization whose members are "of all ideological persuasions united for independence," a movement which "seeks to establish an independent, multi-party state with basic democratic rights such as freedom of speech."
 The EPLF spokesman then proceeded to remind the US (or the Reagan administration) of its "responsibility" today "to work for a peaceful solution to the (Eritrean) problem."
 See, Hagos Ghebre Hiwet, (letter to the Editor), *Wall Street Journal*, April 25, 1986.
- Chapter 13: Self-Determination: Meaning and Content**
- Articles 1(2) and 55 of the UN Charter.
 - Clause 2, Resolution 1514(XV) of 1960.
 - For example Marx and Engels gave considerable importance to the questions of Ireland and Poland. See V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 435-442.
 - Ibid.*, p. 435.
 - Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, (San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, 1975), p. 36.
 - Gleb Starushensko, *Abolition of Colonialism and International Law*, in G. Tunkin, (ed.), *Contemporary International Law*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), p. 81.
 - The example of the internal aspect of national oppression are taken from J. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," Op. cit. p. 34.
 - V.I. Lenin, quoted in G. Tunkin, *Theory of International Law*, (Translator: W.E. Butler), (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 9.

9. This is the definition of colonialism accepted in UN resolutions. See, for example, the resolution on decolonization — Resolution 1514(XV) of Dec. 14, 1960.
10. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 146.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
14. *Ibid.*
15. V. Shevtsov, *National Sovereignty and the Soviet State*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), p. 17.
16. *Ibid.* Shevtsov restating Pyatakov's argument with Lenin.
17. Lenin as quoted in Shevtsov, *Ibid.*, p. 17.
18. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 22, Op. cit., p. 146.
19. J. Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, (New York: International Publishers, 1932), p. 84.
20. Lenin, "The Discussion of Self-determination Summed Up," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 292.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 293.
23. *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism* (Manuel), (Second Revised Edition), (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1963), p. 401.
24. Lenin, "The Right of Nations to Self-determination," *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, Op. cit., p. 436.
25. Marx's letter to L. Kuglemann in Hanover, Nov. 29, 1869, in *Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondences*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1965), p. 230.
26. Shevtsov, Op. cit. p. 18.
27. J. Stalin, "The Foundations of Leninism," in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, Op. cit., p. 286.
28. J. Stalin, "The Social-Democratic View of the National Question," in *Works*, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1952), p. 31.
29. S. Gilirov, *The Nationalities Question: Lenin's Approach*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983), p. 37.
30. Lenin, "The Pamphlet by Junius," *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 204.
31. Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea: Selected Texts*, (New York and London: Monthly Review, 1969), pp. 50-52.
32. This clause was used by Lenin to describe the degeneration of a "national" (progressive) war into an "imperialist war." See "The pamphlet by Junius," Op. cit., p. 203.
33. Roza Ismagilova, *Ethnic Problems of Tropical Africa: Can They Be Solved?*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), p. 191.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
35. *Ibid.*
36. G. Galperin and V. Sharayev, "Ethiopian Revolution Stands Firm," *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 10, 1985, p. 42.

Chapter 14: Eritrea and Self-Determination: Reflections on Some Issues

1. Mengistu Haile Mariam in a "Nationwide Radio and Television Address," June 7, 1978; reproduced in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 12.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
3. "Marxism and the National Colonial Question," in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., pp. 81-82.
4. M. Nikitas and A. Omid, "The Question of Eritrea," in *Ethiopia: Revolution in the Making*, (New York: Progressive Publishers, 1978), p. 48.
5. See Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, Op. cit., p. 36 and p. 22.
6. V. Shevtsov *National Sovereignty and the Soviet State*, Op. cit., p. 20.
7. V.I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism," *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 29.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
9. *Ibid.*
10. V. Shevtsov, Op., cit. p. 20.
11. M. Nikitas and A. Omid, for example, have argued not only that Ethiopia is a nation but also that "Eritrea forms an integral part of the Ethiopian nation. Eritrea and Ethiopia possess a common territory . . . (and) share a common economic life as well . . ." "The Question of Eritrea," Op. cit., p. 44.
12. "Marxism and the National Colonial Question," in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 84, 89; See also, "Genesis of the Problem in Eritrea," in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 129.
13. This argument is substantially implied in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., pp. 12, 87-88.
14. V.Y. Chirkin and Y.A. Yudin, *A Socialist Oriented State: Instrument of Revolutionary Change*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), pp. 95-96.
15. This phrase is now frequently used in Ethiopian writings describing the nature of Eritrea's composition.
16. A work which supports this view is L.A. Madzhoryan, "The breakup of the colonial system of imperialism and some problems in international law," in *Soviet Year Book of International Law*, (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1961), p. 46.
17. According to Soviet international lawyers such a violation raises the question to the international level. See, for example, D.B. Levin, "The Principle of Self-determination of Nations in International Law," in *Soviet Yearbook of International Law*, Op. cit., 1962, p. 46.
18. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Op. cit., Vol. 22, p. 329.
19. For example, a Soviet writer, Vladimir Simonov stated:
The separatists have no alternative to the programme offered by the Provisional Military Administrative Council which proposes regional autonomy as a way of solving the Eritrean problem.
20. V. Simonov, *The Seething Continent: The Soviet Viewpoint*, (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1980), p. 35.
20. Even in 1974-75 some Eritrean leaders were aware of this point. For example, Mohamed Said Naud, a veteran of the Eritrean movement, had said in an interview:
Our claim is for self-determination and independence. Eritreans must have the right to decide their own future; and, if afterwards, they decide to be Ethiopians, then we accept that. But this cannot be decided for them, nor can it be imposed by military aggression.

AFRICA (London), No. 44, April 1975, p. 15.

21. See, "The Ethiopian Revolution and the Eritrean Question," in *Eritrea Then and Now*, Op. cit., May 1976, p. 24.
22. Sentinel, "Ethiopia and Eritrea — Reflections on Separatism and the National Question," (*African Commentary*), in *African Communist*, No. 63, fourth quarter, p. 85.
23. This fear is shared by many in the progressive movement. See, for example, A. Azad, "The Horn of Africa — Defeat for Imperialism," *African Communist*, No. 74, third quarter, 1978, p. 46.
24. For an explanation of ELF's position that Eritrea was a "special colony" see *The Eritrean Revolution: A Programmatic Declaration*, 1971, Op. cit., pp. 18-24.
25. Jack Woddis, *Introduction to Neo-Colonialism*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1967), p. 14.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
27. See the discussion in Chapter 1.
28. A. Nikanorov, "The Eritrean Problem," *Izvestia*, Feb. 9, 1975. (reproduced in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. XXVII, no. 6, p. 20).
29. One of such Eritreans, Bereket Habte Sellassie, clearly indicates this intent to absolutize the right of separation when he says:
 ... the UN must openly and emphatically recognize its past failure and recognize the right of the Eritrean people to self-determination and independence. There can be no 'reversion' to 'federation.'
- Bereket Habte Sellassie, "Eritrea and the United Nations," in *The Eritrean Case*, (Rome: Research and Information Center on Eritrea, [RICE], 1982), p. 163.
30. A. Nikanorov, "From British Rule to Federation and Annexation," in *Behind the War in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 45.
31. Abdul Rahman Babu, "The Future That Works," reprinted in *Adulis*, (organ of the EPLF), Paris, Vol. III, No. 1, (1986), p. 11.
32. Abdul Rahman Babu, "Giving the Left a Bad Name," *Africa Now*, Sept. 1983, p. 89.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Abdul Rahman Babu, "A Resounding 'No!' to Military Rule," *Africa Now*, August 1983.
35. See Michael Chege, "The Revolution Betrayed: Ethiopia 1974-9," in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1979).
36. A few Western journalists with "an enduring 'dislike' of Marxism" have acknowledged not only that what took place in Ethiopia is a revolution but that the achievements of the new regime are unparalleled in other African countries where the ideology in power was/is "African Socialism." Conor Cruise O'Brien, editor of the British daily, *The Observer*, who is disenchanted with what various African regimes had done in the name of "African Socialism," wrote the following:
 I had seen that designation (African Socialism) masking rip-off racketeering (Ghana), apathy pushed to the point of catalapsy (Mali), and laudable but unfortunately non-existent phenomena (Ujama villages in Tanzania) ... I expected to find that the "Ethiopian revolution" would turn out to be no more than an officer's putsch, wrapped up in Marxist verbiage. What I saw and heard convinced me that profound social changes have happened and are happening in Ethiopia, and that the term "revolution" can be appropriately applied to these changes.
 In the Ethiopian revolution, as in all others, there has been much that is dark and bloody ... But there is also an impressive volume of positive movement and achievement. That is mainly what I found there.
- Quoted in Azinna Nwafor, "Revolution and Socialism in Ethiopia," Op. cit., pp. 50-51.
- Another writer who seems to have noticed that the achievements in Ethiopia exceed those in other African countries is Marina Ottaway. See her article, "The The-

- ory and Practice of Marxism-Leninism in Mozambique and Ethiopia," in D.E. Albright, (ed.), *Communism in Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).
37. Even the unarmed groups like Herouli Tedla's so called Eritrean Democratic Movement (EDM) besmirch the PMAC as "fascist." See *The Declaration of the Provisional Central Committee*, Eritrean Democratic Movement, Oct. 1, 1983, pp. 19, 22.
38. The following are some of the articles discussing the stages of the Ethiopian revolution and its achievements:
 V. Sharayev, "Milestones in Ethiopian History," *International Affairs*, (Moscow), No. 10, (October), 1984.
 Gesahen Gebre, "The Stages of the Ethiopian Revolution," *World Marxist Review*, Vol. 27, No. 9, (Sept.) 1984.
 Shimeles Mazingia, "The Road to a Vanguard Party," *World Marxist Review*, Vol. 27, No. 11, (Nov.) 1984.
39. Wilfred Burchett's 11 series of articles on Ethiopia and Eritrea appeared in the *Guardian* (New York) beginning Nov. 15, 1978.
40. Dan Connel, "Eritrea and Self-determination," *Guardian* (New York), Feb. 21, 1979.

Chapter 15: Conclusion

- For example, see A. Azad, "The Horn of Africa—Defeat for Imperialism," Op. cit., pp. 45-46.
- Ibid.*, p. 50.
- R. Ismagilova *Ethnic Problems* . . . , Op. cit., pp. 196-7.
- Jack Woddis, "Political Strategy in the Third World," in *Marxism Today*, August 1980, p. 12.
- Mengistu Haile Mariam, quoted in H. Erlich, *The Struggle Over Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 114.
- G. Bimbi, "Interview with Pajetta," *New Left Review*, No. 107, (Jan.-Feb.), 1978, p. 44.
- Ibid.*
- Roberto Aliboni, "Eritrean Independence in an International Perspective," in *Lo Spettatore Internazionale*, Rome, Vol. XIV, (July-Sept. 1979), pp. 170, 172.
- Mengistu Haile Mariam, in *Ethiopian Herald* (Addis Ababa), May 3, 1983.
- Ibid.*
- On the sui generis character of the Eritrean question, see Addis Hiwet, *The Nationalities Question in Ethiopia and the Horn*, Jan. 1978, p. 35.
- An example of such a contention is the following statement made by Mengistu Haile Mariam in June 1978:
 ... the people of Eritrea . . . rejected the federation imposed on them without their consent and opted for full integration with Ethiopia. The people of Eritrea and the rest of Ethiopia view the federal relationship as one instance among the various attempts by imperialists to undermine the historical unity of oppressed peoples.
 Nationwide Radio and Television address, in *Class Struggle and the Problem in Eritrea*, Op. cit., p. 10.
- For example, see F. Halliday and M. Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, Op. Cit., p. 192.
- Elizabeth Bryant, in the *Guardian*, (New York), April 21, 1982.

15. Addis Hiwet is one of the writers on this subject who seems to realize this point. See his work *The Nationalities Question in Ethiopia* . . . Op. cit., p. 33.
16. Misinterpreting the rationale for the change of position by the USSR, Bereket Habte Sellassie says:
 But recent events in the Horn of Africa have proved that the Soviet Union is not immune from charges of inconsistency or duplicity. In 1950, when the future of ex-Italian colonies was being debated, the Soviet Union supported the legitimate rights of the Eritrean people to complete independence, whereas the Western powers led by the United States sacrificed the Eritrean people (and with them the principle of self-determination) on the altar of power politics. Yet in 1977 the Soviet Union reversed its position for political strategic considerations.
 Bereket H. Sellassie, "Evolution of the Principle of Self-determination", in *Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., Vol. 1, No. 4, Oct./Dec. 1978, p. 6.
17. For this episode in Soviet policy on the Eritrean question, see R. Greenfield, "Pre-Colonial and Colonial History," in *Behind the War in Eritrea*, Op. cit. p. 30.
 For the reasons underlying Truman's position on this question in 1948, see F. Halliday and M. Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, Op. cit. p. 217.
18. This is noted in Robert Gorman, *Political Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (New York: Praeger, 1981), p. 213 and note 23 on p. 220.
 See also Marina Ottaway, *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa*, Op. cit., pp. 138-139.
19. Examples of such lies are those included in an article, "Escape from Ethiopia," featuring a certain Eritrean affiliated with the Christian Solidarity International of Zurich but residing in the US. On the basis of his stories, full of blatant lies, the article makes horrifying charges against the USSR including those of persecution of Orthodox Christians. Trevor Armbrister, "Escape from Ethiopia," *Readers's Digest*, Dec. 1983.
20. In October 1985 two Soviet experts on Ethiopian affairs briefly remarked on the shortcomings in the handling of the national question before the formation of the WPE:
 The WPE is tackling complicated problems in the field of national relations. It should be said that the search for the right ways of solving the national question was adversely affected by the political and ideological immaturity of a certain part of the revolutionary activists, the poor understanding and at times incorrect, mechanistic application of some Marxist-Leninist concepts to the specific conditions of Ethiopia, and, needless to say, the far-too-long absences of a vanguard workers' party in the country. Relations among ethnic groups, though considered as part of the general problem of social development and revolution, were nevertheless often viewed from non-class positions.
 G. Galperin and V. Sharayev, "Ethiopian Revolution Stands Firm," Op. cit., p. 42.
21. Provisional Central Committee, EDM, Declaration of Oct. 1, 1983, Op. cit., pp. 3-4.
22. Ibid. p. 22.
23. For this propaganda from ideologists of neo-colonialism, see T. Johnson and M. Johnson, "Eritrea: The National Question and the Logic of Protracted Struggle", in *African Affairs*, (Oxford) Vol. 80, No. 319, (April 1981) pp. 182, 184-185.
 The Johnsons say that the position of the EPLF on the Eritrean question is Leninist while that of the Ethiopian government is Stalinist. In a horrendous falsification of Stalin's writings on the national question they say, ". . . the fact remains that Eritrea does not have a common language or culture, and this, according to Stalin, means it has no right to self-determination." pp. 184-5
 From a different perspective some in the World communist movement have also referred to differences between "Leninism" and "Stalinism." For an example see G. Bimbi, "The National Liberation Struggle and the Liberation Fronts," in *The Eritrean Case*, (RICE), op. cit., p. 200.

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