An analysis of the causes of the Downfall of Haile-Salassie's Regime 1965-1974

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE DOWNFALL
OF HAILE-SALASSIE'S REGIME 1965-1974

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INTRODUCTION

Any approach to the study of a country and of a people and their livelihood, if it is devoid of the mode of production will not give us a clear picture and understanding of the people and the society that is the subject of study. For instance, Christopher Clapham in his book Haile-Selassie's Government states "...The government is basically an Amhara one, and that even among the Amhara's those of northern Shoa are very much in the majority."¹ Lumping all classes into one, as Clapham did, prevents us from understanding which class is governing. The contention by Clapham rules out the existence of classes within the Amhara nationality and makes it look like every Amhara, despite his or her class position, is a member of the ruling class. Leon Trotsky said, "According to Marx, the government is the executive committee of the ruling class."² This position is also supported by Allen Hoben when he said, "social status, as well as political authority has always been closely related to land tenure in Amhara Society."³

³Allen Hoben, Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia (Chicago -
Clapham further says, "the weakness of communal bonds makes it fairly easy to cut oneself off from society altogether by becoming a monk or hermit or taking as outlaw to the hills." This assessment, I contend, is wrong. It is not due to the "weakness of communal bonds" that people cut themselves off from society to become "monk or hermit" as Mr. Clapham suggests. In a class society not everybody is the owner of the means of production (in the case of Ethiopia land). It is those who do not own land and who cannot afford to own it - according to Allen Hoben low caste artisans or ṭayb - and/or those who have been evicted off the land they were working on that tend to become "monks" and "outlaws."

Though based on subsistence agriculture, the economy of the northern highlands produced a surplus and thus sustained the development of social differentiation and stratification. . . . The social structure of traditional Amhara-Tigre society represents the classic trinity of noble, priest and peasant. These groups are distinguished not only through the division of labour, distinct social status, and a clear awareness of such distinction expressed and justified in ideological terms, but also through differences in their relationship to the only means of production, that is land. 5

Clapham, on writing on the relation of "society" to "authority" says, "These authority figures, ranging from minor chiefs to the emperor himself, hold the society together, and when the bound of authority is snapped, as happened in Addis Ababa after Haile-Selassie's flight in London, 1973), p. 7.

4Christopher Clapham, op.cit., p. 5.

5John Markakis, op. cit., p. 73.
May, 1936, anarchy results. This is contrary to Historical Materialism which teaches us that, men enter into relations, without their conscious will, in order to produce. And as long as their survival depends upon production their relation is in fact strengthened depending upon the development of the productive forces.

The productive forces are the content of social production and the relation of production its necessary material form. The relation of production is determined by the productive forces characterize the principal type of human activity which is aimed at the maintenance of human existence. . . . After all, man enters into definite relations in order to maintain their existence.

Margery Parham, when writing the forward of the book entitled Haile-Selassie's Government by Christopher Clapham said, "here is a fascinating analysis of the ways in which a great ruler with an immense historical inheritance has tried, with much success, to bring state and people into active relationship with the modern world." (Author's emphasis)

I am convinced that, Haile-Selassie's personality has to be studied in conjunction with what he has done for his people, what he has tried to do, with what he has accomplished and with what he has failed to accomplish. In short, what has he done to further the material needs and cultural aspirations of his people?

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6 Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. 6.

7 V. Kelle and M. Konalson, Historical Materialism (Moscow, 1973), p. 54.

8 Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. xi.
It is contended here that it was the failure of Selassie's leadership, the feudal mode of production and the neo-colonial economy of the country that failed to meet the needs and demands of the people and triggered the February popular uprising which led to the downfall of his regime.

Historically, the bourgeoisie, the one time middle-class, have been responsible for the overthrow of the Absolute Monarch along with its economic base, the feudal mode of production, and the emergence of parliamentary republic in some and Constitutional Monarchy in other countries. This was, of course, a result of the economic development which sharpened the contradiction between the Aristocratic class and the church on the one side against the growing bourgeoisie on the other.

The bourgeoisie, which was the progressive class during this particular epoch, was the agent, agitator and the vanguard of the movement and was able to rally and muster the support of the proletariat, the peasantry and the general mass in the name of "Equality, Fraternity, and Unity." 9

However, this is not the case with Ethiopia. In the case of Ethiopia, a former feudal 10 and a neo-colony which lacked the national

9 The French Revolution of 1789 is one beautiful example.

10 Note - I used the word "former" for the simple reason that, at the time of writing this paper, Provincial Military Government had just nationalized all lands - "breaking the backbone of feudalism."
bourgeoisie, the abolition of the Monarchy and the church as a State Power came by the petty-bourgeois strata of the military in coalition with the police force, workers, peasants, students, teachers, etc.

In brief, the contradiction between the material needs and the cultural aspirations of the general mass and the decadent feudal mode of production which could not satisfy the needs of the people, the contradiction between the landlord and the landless peasants, the contradiction between church and the landless peasants, the contradiction between the Comprador bourgeoisie (agent of imperialism) and the working class were glaringly seen during the upheaval. While this is the basis of the change that was to take place, the overthrow of the feudal regime along with its reactionary ally, the church, and the feudal mode of production on which they rested, was made possible by the external condition which kept the United States (busy in its "Stagflation," Watergate, the Middle East, and particularly the Greek-Turkish conflict on Cyprus, the Vietnam War, etc.) ignorant of the whole development that was taking place in its client state. As a result, the U.S. could not extend its hands to rescue its puppet regime par excellence on the Continent of Africa as it once did in the aborted coup of 1960. Vernon Mackay wrote: "Many Americans ask . . . Others were uneasy when our assistance was instrumental in putting down the palace revolt in Ethiopia in December, 1960, which was in part a libertarian reaction against semifeudal regime."11

11Quoted in R. Greenfield, op. cit., p. 413.
This assessment and contention of the situation - that is: "the basis of change" and "condition of change" in Ethiopia is supported by Chairman Mao's dictum:

Changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradiction in society, that is, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relation of production, the contradiction between classes and the contradiction between the old and the new. . . . Does materialist dialectics exclude external causes? Not at all, it holds that external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and the external causes become operative through internal causes.₁²

The primary purpose of this study is to give the February popular uprising and the overthrow of Haile-Selassie's regime and the feudal order of Ethiopia a genuine and authentic interpretation in line with contemporary world history.

In addition, this study will attempt to reveal to its readers in general and to some intellectual-adventurists in particular who tend to view and consider Ethiopia as a country of "medieval time" that viewing Ethiopia as such is in fact forgetting the imperialist stage of the world. It is tantamount to saying that Ethiopia is not a victim of imperialism when she in fact is. It is very undialectical to assume the economy of the country to be static. This view neglects and refuses to see the neo-colonial economy of the country.

Hopefully this paper will, if not overtly, covertly and subtly reveal

₁²See The Wisdom of Mao Tse-Tung, specially the part on Contradiction pp. 29-64.
one basic and important factor (that is the life long debate that has been going on between the materialist and idealist) whether or not consciousness precedes existence or existence precedes consciousness. In the case of Ethiopia, practice would suggest that existence preceded and in fact determined consciousness.

Had it been otherwise, the role of the standing army and the police force (in a class society) would or should have been to remain loyal to the "State" by alienating themselves from the myth and superstition-ridden populace who wished the downfall of the socio-economic-political order of the country. The problems that were proliferating and being propagated as a result of the inefficient and anachronistic feudal order threatened and/or claimed not only the lives of the populace minus the armed forces and the police force, but all the inhabitant of that country. Thus, existence and the conscious need to exist overwhelmed every other thing--"responsibility" and "loyalty."

For better understanding of the reasons for and the process of the fall of Haile-Selassie's regime, I put forth three major hypotheses with complimentary sub-hypotheses. The major hypotheses, however, will be discussed in chapter forms with of course the sub-hypotheses playing a major role in the respective chapter.

**Hypothesis A**

It is my contention that, the anachronism of the feudal mode of production is the major cause for the crumble of Haile-Selassie's
regime. All the ills and vices and the class contradictions were contained and were indeed fermenting within the feudal mode of production only to explode at the opportune time.

Sub-hypotheses

a1 - The unprogressive nature of the feudal regime and its inability to reform were instrumental in the downfall of the regime.

a2 - The reactionary nature of the Church - (which was part and parcel of the state) which controlled 20 percent of arable land was a contributing factor to the demise of the regime.

a3 - The reactionary and conservative nature of the Parliament which had been blocking the "Land Reform Bill" for more than a decade also hastened the demise of the regime.

Hypothesis B

Since Ethiopia's economy is tied to world imperialism, its subservient nature has made it inefficient and dependent upon "foreign aid" by at the same time orienting its production for the world market rather than for internal consumption.

Sub-hypotheses

b1 - The control of the modern agricultural and mining sector by foreign capital were basic to economic crisis.

b2 - Fear of the irredentist Government of the Republic of Somali and the "National Independence" demand of the Eritrean Liberation Front (E. L. F.) which forced the feudal regime to allocate "relatively high defense expenditure." To developing and aiming the armed forces added to the problems the feudal regime.

13 Irving Kaplan, et. al., op. cit., p. 487.
Hypothesis C

The natural calamities like drought and famine and epidemic diseases that result from it are problems mostly faced by countries whose socio-economic development is very low leaving them at the mercy of other countries.

Sub-hypotheses

c1 - The highly heralded drought and its consequence the famine which claimed more than 100,000 lives is responsible for provoking the following:

(i) Peasants expressed their dissatisfaction and opposition to the landlord by burning land and farm produce.

(ii) The indomitable spirit and commitment and the uncompromising attitude and stand of the Ethiopian Student movement which brought or made available itself, as never before, to teaching the masses and demanding a change of government.

(iii) The Armed Forces movement which started as opportunistic and sectarian, ended up coordinating and harmonizing the demands of the general masses.

For this cumbersome and complex study, we need to have a clear systematic methodological approach. As methodology is the "process, techniques or approaches employed in the solution of a problem or in doing something,"* the methodology employed herein is hopefully precise enough to enable us to accomplish our goal.

My ideological commitment and my resentment of lukewarm and superficial analysis have convinced me of the need to take a definite position

regarding this study. It seems clear to me that scholars of any of the
schools of thought are not above society, but members of it, and thus
there is no way they could or should avoid taking a position and/or a
stand when the time calls for it.

My approach to the study will be empirical with of course an objec-
tive analysis of the sources, data and information at my disposal. The
scarcity of books and articles directly related to the topic at hand has
forced me to use generalized works on Ethiopia. These books depict more
or less the problems facing the country. In addition, government publica-
tions, journals, articles and newspaper clippings have been used for the
purpose of documenting the study. All of the sources have been subjected
to content analysis and have formed much of the supportive data for con-
clusions reached in this study.
CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Present-day Ethiopia, a country of multi-nationalities,\(^1\) contrary to the writings of Homer who "thought that there were eastern and western Ethiopians,"\(^2\) and Herodotus who conceived of Ethiopia as a country "where the south declines toward the setting sun,"\(^3\) is found in the eastern part of Africa "covering an area of some 457,000 square miles, equal to the combined areas of France and Germany."\(^4\) "The Empire of Ethiopia including in its northern section, the former Italian Colony of Eritrea, occupies the major portion of the easternmost landmass of the African Continent known as the Horn."\(^5\)


\(^3\)Ibid.


Ethiopia is bordered by and "shares with the adjacent. . .Somali Republic and with the French Territory of the Afar and Issa (sic), formerly French Somali Land. . .on the north and northeast by the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, on the west by the Sudanese lowlands, and on the south by Kenya."  

Regarding the topography of the country, Edward Ullendorff notes,

The physical configuration of the country is marked by a vast mountain massif with a mean height of between 7,000 and 8,000 feet. It rises from the torrid plains abruptly and almost perpendicularly, and this steep escarpment has had a profound influence on the course of Ethiopian history in its deterrence of the would-be conqueror.  

The geographic location and its topographical diversities account for three distinct climatic zones. According to Robert L. Hess, the Dega zone is defined as any area over 8,000 feet in elevation with the temperature rarely rising above 60 degrees (F). The Woinadega has an elevation between 5,000 feet and 8,000 feet above sea level with a mean temperature range between 60 and 68 degrees (F). And the Quolla zone includes areas below 5,000 feet.  

"Ethiopianists" and interested writers on Ethiopia agree that Ethiopia has been "isolated" from the rest of the world for many many years. "Natural obstacles worked in the past to sustain Ethiopia's  

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political isolation and made it difficult for Ethiopia to maintain contact with the world beyond its immediate neighbors." And in the words of Edward Ullendorff, "The expulsion of the Jesuits had brought about the withdrawal of Ethiopians within their inaccessible mountain ranges and had caused a wellnigh complete severance of relations with the outside world." Another "Ethiopianist," John Markakis suggests that, "Despite its renown, relative isolation has relegated Ethiopia to a peripheral position as far as general knowledge and interest in Africa are concerned."

In addition to scholars, film makers have also contributed to the popularity of the contention that Ethiopia was and is in fact isolated from the outside world. The film entitled "The Hidden Empire" is an indication of this contention.

However, the important question that has to be addressed is whether or not it is irresponsibility and negligence on the part of these scholars which prevented them from acknowledging the relationship of Ethiopia to the rest of the world when they had in fact documented this relationship in their books. The question of Ethiopia being "isolated from the rest

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9Ibid., p. 7.

10Edward Ullendorff, op. cit., p. 11.

of the world" has provided some writers with an excuse to unjustly and unwarrantedly label the country a "medieval type." A short historical summary of the interaction of Ethiopia with the rest of the world is exceedingly important to counteract these misconceptions.

Christianity is not an indigenous product; i.e. it did not grow out of the daily experience of the people of Ethiopia. Tadesse Tamrat, in his book *Church and State in Ethiopia* says,

The triumphant establishment of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire gave an impetus to the religious efforts. . . in Aksum, and Ezana's conversion may not have been totally free of diplomatic and political consideration. . . . Because of the lack of books in Ethiopia at the time, Greek was probably the major language of the Church. Most of the Clergy may have been of foreign provenance.

This was in the fourth century.

While writing about the introduction of Islam into the country, Tadesse Tamrat notes,

It is apparent that the first serious blow to Aksumite economic and political interests in the Red Sea was inflicted by the Persians during the ephemeral success over the Byzantine Empire. Nascent Islam continued in this course and in time ensured a more permanent withdrawal of effective Christian power from the coastal areas.

This was the experience of the seventh century when Islam was growing

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12 Hess concluded, Medieval or Byzantine all amounts to constitutionalized absolutism. p. 125.


14 Tadesse Tamrat, op. cit., p. 31.
strong.

In the 15th century, Ullendorff writes, "The growing menace of muslim invasion made it imperative for the King to summon Portuguese assistance from abroad . . . Contact between Europe and Ethiopia was thus established."\(^{15}\)

He also states, "While the Portuguese were working in Ethiopia, proselytizing the people and exploring the country, the study of Ethiopia had begun in Europe. The centre was Rome."\(^{16}\)

It is Ullendorff again who says,

All these works had received their impetus from the only source then available in Europe, the little convent behind St. Peter's. Some of the basic tools had been made available to a wider circle, and Ethiopic scholarship could thus be established in other Centres as well. Brian Walton (1600-61) in England included in his study . . . a section which dealt with the Ethiopic alphabet, pronunciation of consonants, accent. . . . \(^{17}\)

With the advent and development of Capitalism in Western Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries the nature of the relation of Ethiopia with the outside world, and in particular Western Europe, started to change. It changed from that of a "civilizing mission" to that of a rape and plunder mission. Ullendorff notes,

In January 1809 Salt was sent to Abyssinia (the then name of Ethiopia) for the second time, but now on an official mission for the

\(^{15}\)Edward Ullendorff, op. cit., p. 4.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 7.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 9.
British Government to carry gifts and a letter from King George III to the King of Abyssinia, to make a report on the country and to explain the importance of trade to the tribes along the coast . . . He handed his gifts to Ras Wolda Sellassie, thus establishing the first official communication between Britain and Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{18}

However, the friendship was later to be tarnished when there arose a conflict of interest between Theodor, Emperor of Ethiopia, and the British government.

Theodor II, who ruled Ethiopia from 1855-1868 is considered to be the most progressive of all the Emperors that ruled before him and even after him, of course, with the exception of Menelik II. His effort in reforming the state administration and finances and legislating against banditry, and slavery\textsuperscript{19} should not be passed without mention.

In his foreign policy, he had the reputation of adroitness and "shrewdness."\textsuperscript{20} He has been quoted as saying:

\begin{quote}
I know the tactics of European governments when they desire to acquire an eastern state. First they send out missionaries, then battalions to support the Consuls. I am not Rajah of Hindustan to be made a mock of in that way. I prefer to have to deal with the battalions straight away.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

However, this unflinching and daring attitude was later to lead

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Edward Ullendorff, op. cit., p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Irvic Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 45.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Richard Greenfield, \textit{Ethiopia A New Political History} (New York, 1965), p. 78.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Quoted in Richard Greenfield's \textit{Ethiopia A New Political History} (New York, 1965), p. 79.
\end{itemize}
him into an uncalculated risk against the British. Irving Kaplan and his co-authors reported that,

The denouncement of Theodore's reign arose from his reaction to the failure of the British Foreign office to reply to a letter from the Emperor requesting an exchange of embassies that the British knew would result in Ethiopian efforts to get support against Turkey and Egypt. When in 1864 he discovered that the British consistently failed to reply, he reacted by imprisoning the European diplomatic community including Captain Cameron, and many other Europeans in his fortress at Makedella. . . . When Theodore refused a British request to release the prisoners, they replied by sending a military expedition from India under Sir Robert Napier.

The Emperor's forces were routed in a battle at Arage on April 10, 1868. Theodore retired to Magdalla where he later committed suicide after releasing his prisoners to Napier as the British forces took the fortress.

The virginity of Ethiopia which was ready for plunder and its strategic importance, Suez Canal and Red Sea, lured and attracted not only Britain but also France and Italy which were competing for markets, resources and strategic positions on the horn of Africa.

In the early part of the 19th century, when and after Italy assumed Eritrea, its voracious nature tempted her to expand its colonial territory into the hinterland which was met by a strong resistance from Emperor Yohanis of Ethiopia. In 1887 Ras Aloula, the leader of Tigre, demanded that Italy withdraw from the areas claimed by Ethiopia. The refusal of Italy to meet the demand precipitated a war at Dogali ending in the annihilation of the five hundred Italian soldiers.\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\)Kaplan et al., op. cit., p. 46.

Emperor Yohanis died in 1889. Thus Manelik of Shoa proclaimed himself the Emperor of Ethiopia. Menelik II, who ruled Ethiopia from 1889-1913, was, and still is, considered to be the architect and the "chief creator of modern Ethiopia." Unlike Theodore who was very suspicious of the European powers, Menelik's "preoccupation was developing relations with outside powers, principally Europe."

It is well documented that, Menelik's intention was to first consolidate his power by "ending feudalism" and introducing a centralized government. Thus, in order to achieve his goal, Menelik started building his power in the south. He equipped his soldiers with the weapons that he had been given by the Italians to consolidate his rule. In the meantime, Menelik signed the "Treaty of Ucciali" with the Italian government. As could be detected from the internal situation and external development, the signing of the Treaty by Menelik was and is still considered to be for tactical reason than for anything else. Aklog Birara contends that, "The treaty of Ucciali (1889) was signed at a time when Ethiopia was at the mercy of French, Italian and British colonialism following the death of Yohanis IV and the unrest and political uncertainty it then caused."

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25 Ibid.
26 George W. Baer, op. cit., p. 2.
As a result of the controversial Article 17 which in the Italian version of the treaty awarded Ethiopia to be a protectorate of Italy, the Amharic version did not and does not relegate Ethiopia's sovereignty to a protectorate status. Article 17 reads, "His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia consents to employ the Government of His Majesty, the King of Italy in treating of all matters that may arise with other powers and governments."\(^{28}\)

The refusal of Italy to accept and abide by the Amharic version created a split between the three colonial powers. England which had Kenya, Uganda, the Sudan and British Somaliland as its colonies supported "Italy's claim to a dominant position in Ethiopia."\(^{29}\) However, Menelik's protest was "supported by the French who were the main rival of the Italians in Ethiopia."\(^{30}\) Thus, this misunderstanding which was nothing but a disguised conflict of interest was later to be settled in the battle of Aduwa in 1896 which then marked the second defect of Italy in about seven years. George Baer notes:

On March 1896, the Italian Army, prodded by the home government into an incautious advance met Menelik's troops at Aduwa, the old capital of Tigre. There an Ethiopian army of some 100,000 routed the Italian force of 17,700 metropolitan and colonial troops, 10,596 of whom were Europeans. Italian casualties amounted to some 6,000 men killed, 2,000 wounded and 2,000 taken prisoners. For the Italians,


\(^{29}\)George W. Baer, op. cit., p. 3.

\(^{30}\)Ibid.
Aduwa was the greatest military defeat incurred by European nation at the hands of Africans in all of nineteenth century.31

The indomitable spirit and the will of the people of Ethiopia was again to be tested by the same country, Italy, highly organized and militarized, when the crisis of world capitalism was intensified reaching its highest point transforming itself or giving rise to fascism. Emile Burns contends that,

Although the ruling class of Italy was unable in 1925 to embark on another Abyssinian adventure, it never lost sight of its goal; the place in the sun for Italian finance capital, freedom for Italian finance capital to build a projected railway through Abyssinia West of Addis Ababa, to drain off the trade of that area, and to open up the great mineral wealth which is believed to exist there.32

Since this venture requires the conquest and total subjugation of Ethiopia by Italy, this was made to be possible when and after France agreed to be of no obstacle to the interest of Italy in Ethiopia. This position was taken by France as a result of the would-be threat and collaboration of Hitler and Mussalini to the European Security in general and to France in particular. G. M. Gathorn-Hardy documents that, "In the Rome conversations Signor Mussolini obtained at least an assurance that the direct interest of France would not stand in the way of the establishment by Italy of a predominant economic influence in Abyssinia. . . ."33

31Ibid., p. 4.
32Emil Burns, Ethiopia and Italy, p. 41.
33Ludwig F. Schaefer, ed., The Ethiopian Crisis Touchstone of
Thus the success of Italy in 1935 in its campaign against Ethiopia was made possible, one can say, as a result of the sense of unconcernedness from the French and the British part, and most of all, a fear of one's national security and national interest that was threatened by the eventual collaboration of Hitler and Mussolini.

Ethiopia's contact with the outside world was not limited only to Western Europe and North America. For a brief period, contact with Russia was made early in 1887, and Russian adviser had served in the Ethiopian government in the 1920s. 34

The fight amongst the European colonialists and the ultimate decrease and deterioration of their power gave way to the strong and growing American imperialism. However, the encroachment of U.S. economic interest into Ethiopia, which begun in 1903, did not come via colonialism but through a modest and new phenomenon called neo-colonialism. According to Challenge, January 1971, Robert P. Skinner, the head of the first American mission to the Court of King Menelik in 1903 wrote the following:

The purpose and interest of the U.S. in Ethiopia are so patent without definition that they may be dismissed with a few words. Waiving all regard for the probably important future of Ethiopia as a consuming nation, we had enjoyed for years a trade in certain of our goods, notably cottons, more valuable than any other important trade in the Empire. . . . To investigate and report upon the trade

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possibilities of Ethiopia, to safeguard our existing interest by the negotiation of a commercial treaty - those were the motives which had prompted the organization of the American mission and concerning our policy we had nothing more to disclose and nothing whatever to conceal.\textsuperscript{55}

American neo-colonialism in Ethiopia was later seen glaringly when, after the end of the Second World War, it replaced Great Britain as a lone supporter of the feudal regime in every field. As a result, U.S. imperialism was awarded a military base in Eritrea which increased its interest. Thus, the interest of the feudal regime became the interest of U.S. imperialism, and the survival of the feudal regime with its socio-politico-economic order became of paramount importance to the survival and domination of U.S. imperialism in that part of the world. Mr. Newsom, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs told the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee the following: "We have always considered that the general importance to us of the Emperor, of the key position of Ethiopia, the need to keep it friendly in the total African context were justifications for our programs in Ethiopia."\textsuperscript{36}

One of the common characteristics of the Third World countries is the absence of a full fledged indigenous capitalist class which can compete with, out-hustle and out-wit foreign capital. Ethiopia is no


different from others in this respect. As a result, the commercial agriculture sector is monopolized by foreign capital.

Familiar names are the Tendaho cotton plantation Shore Company controlled by British Capital, the National Meat Corporation of Ethiopia also British owned, the Methara Shore Company and the Sabean Utility Company with its subsidiary, the Cotton Company of Ethiopia, dominated by American and Japanese Capital. But most widely known in this "agro-dustrial" is HVA, which, among other things operates the Wonji Sugar Plantations and factory.

HVA was established in Ethiopia in the early 1950's with Dutch Capital and by Dutch Expatriates. . . . 37

This interaction with Western Europe, Eastern Europe and America has been a reality in Ethiopia for a long time. However, despite such documentations, Ethiopia has been characterized as a "Hidden Empire" and as "medieval type" country. Ethiopia has been portrayed as a country from a different universe with a "unique culture" and "different history." This kind of conclusion or a start must arise from the unobjectiveness and myopic outlook of the writer. At the same time, it is hard to rule out the existence of the apologists of neo-colonialism who are trying to cover up the victimization of the Third World countries. Ethiopia's culture and history, although of its own peculiar type, have suffered underdevelopment just like the rest of the Third World countries.

CHAPTER II

THE ANACHRONISM OF THE FEUDAL MODE OF PRODUCTION

The existence and predominance of a feudal mode of production in the 20th century has been found by some people hard to understand. It is not that it is difficult to understand but it is that people believe that when the epoch changes so also the mode of production. However, this could be true only and only when the basis of change is ready. Unless there is a change in the productive forces and the production relation, there won't be a change in the mode of production.

In order to aid us to understand as to what feudalism is all about and how it contributed to the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime, I would like to pose the following questions. What does feudal mode of production mean? How did it contribute to the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime? As these are the basic questions, I understand, adequate answers have to be obtained.

In order to give us a general overview of the feudal country, I have presented the following.

Article 27 of the Constitution states: "The Emperor determines the organization, powers and duties of all Ministers, executive
departments and the administration of the Government and appoints, promotes, transfers, suspends and dismisses the officials of the same.  

Article 126 of the Constitution declares: "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, founded in the fourth century, on the doctrines of Saint Mark is the established Church of the Empire and is, as such, supported by the State."  

In 1964, Haile Selassie reminded the members of the Parliament of their responsibilities. He said: "Laws proposed to you have been prepared by experts, reviewed by the responsible Minister and the Council of Ministers as a whole and approved by us. Only when they have been found to serve the interest of the nation are they submitted to you."  

In light of the above questions, we can witness not only the autocratic nature of Haile Selassie's rule but also of the marriage of the State to the Church whose "political power . . . is latent . . . but a vital element in the Ethiopian state. . . ."  

In addition to these, we are witnessing the non-functioning institution the Parliament which was nothing but a pawn and an accomplice of the feudal regime. What else could it be? Even though formed in the  

1Quoted in Robert L. Hess, op. cit., p. 130.  
2Quoted in Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 229.  
3Quoted in Robert L. Hess, op. cit., p. 149.  
4Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. 2.
bourgeois sense, the reality of the country and the feudal mode of production on which it was based would not tolerate ingenuities and legislative minded people. These can be seen by the composition of the representatives and their class backgrounds. John Markakis points out that, "Former government employees including teachers, form by far the largest group elected to the lower house. The second largest group is made up of landowners. It should be kept in mind, however, that most of the others also own some land." 

Thus one can say that, it is not without reason(s) that they (members of the Parliament) blocked and/or killed the Governmental bills of the 1960's.

In three of these cases the members largely landowners themselves . . . sought to protect the interest of the landowners from higher or improved forms of taxation, demonstrating a performance for lower taxes instead of the social welfare measure such as improved local medical service, that the government sought to finance with the added revenue.

The misery and harsh exploitation of the peasantry is not their concern. To try to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry never crosses their minds. Even though they are Parliamentarians and are there to "legislate", their outlook of life, their philosophy, is not that of a progressive legislator but of a victim of idealism and

\[5\] John Markakis, op. cit., p. 284.

\[6\] Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 298.
metaphysics. This in fact reflects the socio-economic and political culture of the country. In a feudal country, the materialist conception teaches us, one can only have an outlook and philosophy depending upon the development of the productive forces. It is generally assumed that the level of technological advancement usually determines the outlook or philosophy of the people. In the case of Ethiopia, low-level technology, which usually results in reduced productivity, has given rise to religious, superstitious and even mythical interpretations of realities. Kaplan and his companions corroborate my contention when they state, "The attitude of the deputies towards their office are formed by the same traditional values and attitudes that guide the peasantry and most of the nobility."7

Coming back to the gist of the matter, the term 'feudal' came into use, I presume, in the 18th century. It is a socio-economic and political set-up of a society at a specific and particular epoch in the history of the development of the means of production. Carl Stephenson points out that, "Neither the English word 'feudalism' nor its equivalent in French seems to have come into use until the latter eighteenth century after the Revolution of 1789 had turned scholarly attention to certain prominent features of Old Regime."8

7Ibid.

After having established the origin of the term, we need to define and/or give the characteristics of feudalism. Mauric Dobb gives us a "concise outline" of feudalism which has been endorsed by Paul M. Sweezy. He points out the following:

1. A low level of technique, in which the instrument of production is simple and generally inexpensive, and the act of production is largely individual in character; the division of labour . . . being at a very primitive level of development.

2. Production for the immediate need of household or village community and not for a wider market.

3. Demense-farming: farming of the lord's estate, often on a considerable scale, by compulsory labour-services.

4. Political decentralization.

5. Conditional holding of land by lords on some kind of service-tenure.

6. Possession by a lord of judicial or quasi-judicial functions in relation to the dependent population.²

It is argued that Dobb considers a system which has the above characteristics as the "classic" form of feudalism. Be that as it may, we should not be shocked and/or intrigued when we discover, if not all, most of the characteristics in the present-day Ethiopia, with one main exception. And that is, Ethiopia's Government is very centralized.

Christopher Clapham wrote:

When Haile Selassie returned to Ethiopia /from "exile"/ his position

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was therefore in many ways stronger than when he had left, and he consolidated his advantage by changes which cut at the roots of the nobility's administrative control over the provinces. Its military functions were removed by training a professional army, under the Emperor's command, which replaced* the feudal levies and private armies of pre-war days; its power to raise tribute was severely reduced by creating a centralized system of taxation administered by the Ministry of Finance; and the old provincial boundaries were systematized into a hierarchy of province, sub-province, district and sub-district, which was controlled from Addis Ababa, and to which appointments were made directly by the Emperor. . . .

The consolidation of Haile Selassie's power in 1941-42 and the development of the government's infrastructure were facilitated by the British Military administration who remained in the country until the end of World War II.

It is wise to have pointed out the neo-colonial legacy that had been left to Ethiopia. No wonder why the Constitution of the country (both the new and the old) does not portray the reality of the country. In a country where the feudal mode of production is dominant, we find a centralized government which Lenin said is the characteristic of a bourgeois country. He wrote: "The centralized state power that is peculiar to bourgeois society came into being in the period of the fall of absolutism. Two institutions most characteristic of this state machine

*The phrase "replaced the feudal levies" should not deceive us into thinking that feudalism has been replaced. What in fact it did was, it centralized it and strengthened the feudal mode of production.

10 Christopher Clapham, op. cit., p. 21.

are the bureaucracy and the standing army."\textsuperscript{12}

While pointing out the discrepancies and contradictions of the politics of the country, Robert Hess wrote:

Realities of political life in Ethiopia contrast sharply with the formal structure of Ethiopian politics; the Constitution of 1955. This basic law gives Ethiopia the appearance of constitutional monarchy guaranteeing the fundamental human rights so often mentioned in western liberal constitution.\textsuperscript{13}

However, "the Constitution borrows freely from European and American models."\textsuperscript{14}

After having pointed out the discrepancies and inconsistencies, it is my bounden duty to get engaged in the discussion of the mode of production in Ethiopia. Joseph S. Murphy and Tadesse Araya (in their article "Ethiopia Exploits Itself" published in the journal \textit{The Nation} on September 14, 1974) point out that, "Indeed there are more than thirty different land tenure systems in Ethiopia. . . ."\textsuperscript{15}

Since the origin and the citadel of the present-day Ethiopia was in the north (Aksum) the land tenure system of this part of the country as a whole is different from the ones that have been conquered and


\textsuperscript{13}Robert L. Hess, op. cit., p. 125.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 126.

incorporated in the 19th century. "Practically" says John Markakis, "all the Amhara-Tigre peasantry in the northern provinces hold rist*."16

Until the conquest in the south, people lived on their own land by cultivation. But the expansion of the northerners to the south by conquest and the eventual dispossession of their land by the conquerors left them landless and relegated them to the status of gabbar**. It is the custom of the country that all conquered land become state property making the Emperor the sole disposer.17 Thus,

portions of land selected for fertility were reserved for the needs of the palace . . . Such lands were worked by gabbar peasants under the supervision of an imperial representative called mislenie ('as myself') and produce from such lands were delivered to the palace.18

The other recipient or claimant of the conquered land were the victorious generals or other nobles of Menelik who were also given the rulership of the conquered provinces.19 It is argued that, until the middle of our century, the nobility continued to monopolize control of the administration and military of Ethiopia and thus enjoyed predominant authority in the society.20

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16 John Markakis, op. cit., p. 79.

*rist land - heritable property of the owner, **gabbar tenant.

17 John Markakis, op. cit., p. 108.

18 Ibid., p. 110.

19 John Markakis, op. cit., p. 106.

20 Ibid., p. 87.
Like the true aristocracy of any feudal society, this class in Ethiopia did not and does not produce. However, they surely exploited the peasants to death. Their status and their political power have accorded them immunity from anything. Markakis points out that,

According to the principle of the complex taxation system, as it existed until 1967, the landholding class was not being taxed on either its holdings or the revenue derived from them. On the contrary the landholding class continued to appropriate part of the tax revenue . . . The political power of this class guaranteed its exemption from taxation. The largest landholders are also the most eminent members of the ruling group. . . .

The third biggest group that received a share was the Orthodox Christian Church.

The clergy was another group which received a large share of expropriated land in the south. . . . On Menelik's orders, generous portions of land in each district were reserved for the Church. *Samon* rights over such land were granted to the clergy in the manner customary in the north, while Church officials received grants of rist guilt in the same manner as the nobility.

It is an indubitable fact that the relationship of the Church with the State is based on reciprocity. It is not without a purpose that Article 126 - quoted earlier - promulgated it as the established Church of the Empire. Out of the many responsibilities that it carries, giving legitimacy to the "Solomonic Dynasty" is the paramount one. In

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*Samon* - land held only by the Church.

21 Ibid., p. 122.

22 John Markakis, op. cit., p. 111.
addition, it has defended the traditional values and upholds the social order.  

The state in return makes sure that the interest of the Church is supported, protected and advanced at any time. "When an agricultural income tax law was finally passed in November, 1967, the Orthodox Church, which had received 11.5 percent of the total revenue from land taxes was excluded from payment of the new taxes."  

The Church not only helped in preserving the interest of the ruling class by preaching "love" and "peace" and tampering the consciousness and potential revolutionary zeal of the people by saying our position in a society is destined by "fate," but has also been part and parcel of the feudal order in exploiting, tormenting, enslaving and murdering the people of Ethiopia.

Lenin notes:  

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weigh upon the masses who are crushed by continuous toil for others, by poverty and loneliness. The helplessness of the exploited class in their struggle against the exploiters inevitably generates a belief in a better life after death, even as the helplessness of the savage in his struggle with nature gives rise to a belief in gods, devils, miracles, etc.  

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23 Ibid., p. 102.
24 Robert L. Hess, op. cit., p. 149.
26 V. I. Lenin, Religion, p. 7.
The Church which holds 28 percent of the arable land of the empire could only give an insignificant amount of money to the drought victims. A.F.P. (Ajance France Press) on May 21, 1974, reported: "The powerful Ethiopian Orthodox Church has made a gift of 4,500 U.S. dollars and six tons of flour to aid drought victims."

This reactionary and conservative institution which had never spoken out for the downtrodden and for the oppressed was later to say the following when the peoples' movement was scoring victory over the landlords and threatening the interest of the Church. The New York Times of August 19, 1974 reported the statement made by the Church. It read,

... the Coptic Church had since ancient times been 'a guardian of justice, morals, and cultural heritage'. ... a Church with a history of 1,600 years, a Church whose uniqueness is characterized by the fact that it is purely Ethiopian, should not be relegated to the status of a mere spectator in the affairs of its followers.

The other group, this time indigenous, that received land or who were allowed to retain what they had were the traditional chiefs and those who proved themselves to be trustworthy and of big help to the conquerors. They were Christianized and deculturized and were obligated to change their names - for instance Kumsa of Wallega after baptism changed his name to Gebre Egziabher - and were made balabbats.*

27 Robert L. Hess, op. cit., p. 147.
28 For more see John Markakis, op. cit., p. 105-107.

*Balabbat - vassal lords.
John Markakis points out,

The balabbats proved themselves indispensable as intermediaries between the northern governors and the southern masses. In return they were accorded status and privileges and gradually emerged as a distinct group associated with the northern ruling group and emulating its dominant characteristics.²⁹

That is why it has been argued by Marxist-Leninists that, in a country of multi-nationalities, self determination has to be subordinated to class struggle. As it has been made crystal clear in the above quotation, the balabbats have joined the "foreign intruders" in exploiting and subjugating the peasantry.

Moreover, those peasants who found themselves on land taken by the balabbats as their personal possession became the chief's tenants, while those who cultivated land within his jurisdiction rendered tribute and services to him in the manner of gabbar.** Furthermore, the peasants were required to cultivate the balabbats' land . . . Thus the position of southern peasants who cultivated land not expropriated by the state nor granted as personal holding to the balabbats, was not materially different from the position of those who cultivated land expropriated by the state and granted to landholders from the north or reserved for the balabbats.³⁰

Challenge of November 1973, Vol. XIV, No. 1 issue, contends that over 85% of the Ethiopian people are peasants. According to the Ministry of Land Reform, out of a total rural population of 17 million, 8 million or 47% are tenants and out of these 8 million 75% and landless. Furthermore, in provinces where tenancy is predominant and prevalent, most


**Gabbar - tenant.

peasants are sharecroppers. For example 80% of the tenants in Arussi, 90% in Shoa and 40% in Wallega are sharecroppers. Most tenants surrender 50-75% of their crops to the landlord. In addition to this, many landlords require additional services and also demand fees when they rent the land.

As one can see, in this kind of relation of production, the misery and the exploitation of the peasantry by the landholding class is beyond comprehension. The exploitative nature of the class relation, however, has been played low and totally undermined by John Markakis when he said: "It should be noted further that while class distinction and social distance separate the nobility and the peasantry hierarchically ordered relationships produced vertical integration which tends to diminish class antagonism to a vanishing point."

This contention of John Markakis should neither be supported nor be passed without being commented on. How would he answer to this testament put out by A.F.P. on July 2, 1974. It read,

The old land-owning families have lost much of their authority in

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32 John Markakis, op. cit., p. 127.

33 John Markakis, op. cit., p. 88.

34 While being grateful for his compiling of facts which have helped me a great deal in my study, I think there should be room for disagreement especially when distortions and blunders of that caliber and degree are made.
the past four months. In some areas peasants have reportedly refused to hand over the portion of their crops to which landlords were entitled, and the traditional feudal laws of Ethiopia.

Could one rule out the antagonistic contradiction that exists between two and diametrically opposing classes as John Markakis did? If John Markakis had been open-minded and had seen the Gajam and Bale uprising of 1967-1969 respectively\(^{35}\) he would have enlightened himself as to the nature of the antagonism that had been existing between the classes in Ethiopia. Marx had long time said:

> No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economist the economic anatomy of the classes. . . .\(^ {36}\)

Mr. Markakis does not seem to be a good representative of his school of thought. He should be aware of the fact that whenever and wherever there are classes - especially the kinds of classes that existed in Ethiopia - there is always antagonism of the highest degree. Sometimes they are suppressed and become latent, but this does not mean there are no antagonisms. In fact, one can say that the contradictions are fermenting to detonate at the opportune time.

On October 31, 1969, His Imperial Majesty Haile-Selassie, while speaking about The Third Five Year Plan said the following:

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Understanding the fact that Ethiopia's economy is based on agriculture, our government has given priority to improving and expanding this field for a long time. In trying to change the traditional way of farming in one generation, one faces lots of problems. While lack of capital being the biggest problem, changing our people's attitude is the other problem.37

It is understandable why the Emperor shuns the discussion of land-tenure in the country - which has been found to be the cause or source from which the problems emanate - for he is the number one landholder in the country. A reform in the land tenure system would mean a weakening of his power which is solely based on landholding and a creation of animosity between himself and the nobilities and the landlords. This would also mean a polarisation of the monarchy and the nobility which would expose them to any kind of threats as it has been exemplified in the "creeping-coup," which first neutralized the monarchy from the nobility by imprisoning the latter made the former ineffective and totally "paper tiger". Thus, one can conclude, the survival of the nobility meant the survival of the monarchy and vice versa.

The problem of lack of capital had been pointed out, by the Emperor, as the biggest problem. However, this would have been plausible - although postmortem - if we had not been informed about his accumulation of wealth in Swiss banks. UPI (United Press International) on 11-28-74 reported that, "Selassie signed a document two weeks authorizing the

37 Translated (by me) from the Amharic "The Third Five Year Plan".
transfer to Ethiopia of part of his personal fortune in Swiss banks estimated at millions of dollars." (emphasis mine)

Changing the peoples' thought had been found by the Emperor, to be the other problem. Peoples' thought, outlook, philosophy, etc., is dialectically related to the mode of production. Change in the outlook, philosophy, presupposes change in the relation of production and the productive forces. The relation of production can only be altered by the development of the productive forces. Thought cannot be altered in the abstract but by concrete change in the reality of the means of production. It is subject to change when and only when the objective condition is ready.

Productive forces in feudal Ethiopia

As it has been explained above, I contend that, the productivity of the peasant in Ethiopia is equally hampered by lack of sophisticated tools and implements as it is by the land tenure system.

As it has been pointed out earlier by Morris Dobb, of the subsistence nature of the agriculture of a feudal country, Ethiopia's agriculture is primarily subsistence - 95% - and the remaining 5% is commercial agriculture. It is a pity for a country which depends solely on agriculture, and yet whose fertility of the soil, favorable climate, and sufficient rainfall are widely known to be cultivating less than

10 percent\(^{39}\) of the land which does not yield sufficient food for the people.

Unlike George A. Lipsky who accuses the peasantry for reluctance to accept improved seeds and agricultural implements\(^{40}\) John Markakis aimed at the landlords and the nobility, upon whom in my judgement the blame should fall. He says,

Like true aristocracies everywhere, the makuonent in the past had no concern for economic matters and indeed considered any form of labour and any type of productive or profit-making activity as degrading. Its traditional functions were that of governor and warrior.\(^{41}\)

Added to this is the problem of mal-allocation of capital to the agriculture sector "... only about 10 percent of the capital budget and 2 percent of the current budget were expended on agriculture in the middle and late 1960's. The Third Five Year Plan has allotted about 11 percent..."\(^{42}\)

Regarding the development of the productive forces, Kaplan and his co-authors have this to say:

In 1970 there were four levels of farm technology; hoe or other hand-tools, ox-drawn, semi-mechanized, and mechanized. Many subsistence farmers, particularly in lowland river areas and in the south, used

\[^{39}\text{George A. Lipsky, Ethiopia, p. 238.}\]
\[^{40}\text{Ibid., p. 239.}\]
\[^{41}\text{John Markakis, op. cit., pp. 86-87.}\]
\[^{42}\text{Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 359.}\]
only hoes and handtools to plant and harvest their crops. Weed control was difficult, and yields were low. Ox-drawn plans were the primary means of farming the highlands. Sometimes plows had iron tips, but even they did not work the soil deeply enough to permit optimum water penetration. Seeding and harvesting were usually done by hand. Oxen were sometimes used for threshing, but often the sheaves were beaten with sticks. Winnowing was most frequently achieved by throwing grain into the wind and letting the chaff blow away. Milling was often done by hand with a wooden pestle and mortar or a hand stone mill. Although carts, wagons and other wheeled vehicles were in use, oxen, camels, horses, mules and donkeys were the major sources of draft power and transportation.\(^{43}\)

In addition to the outdated and outmoded implements, the peasants' problem is further aggravated by lack and/or sometimes deficiency of rainfall. However, it is wise to point out that, a country which is very famous for its many rivers and lakes has been made, by irresponsible and inconsiderate officials, to depend solely on rainfall for its crops. Yet, it should not be passed without mention that, the famous rivers Blue Nile and Gash river have been very helpful for irrigation to both Egypt and the Sudan respectively.\(^{44}\) Understanding the paramount importance of the rivers to the development of agriculture, the Emperor told the Parliament in 1957 that, "it is Ethiopia's primary and sacred duty to develop the great watershed which she possesses in the interest of her own rapidly expanding population."\(^{45}\) Interestingly enough, 17 years later, nothing has been done to bring the "solemn" words into reality.

\(^{43}\text{Irving Kaplan et al., op. cit., p. 362.}\)

\(^{44}\text{George A. Lipsky, op. cit., p. 226.}\)

\(^{45}\text{Quoted in Kaplan's Ethiopia, p. 226.}\)
Like the countries whose economy is planned, feudal Ethiopia has also been engaged in this phenomenon for the last 15 years to no avail. From what I gather, the primary concern of those countries who plan their economy is self sufficiency and production for consumption internally. Ethiopia's planning, however, is oriented differently from this and full of contradictions and inconsistencies.

"The primary purpose of 'The Third Five Year Plan,'" read the declaration, "is to improve the economy and alleviate the standard of living of the Ethiopian people." However, we see this good intention being in contradiction with the plan which states a growth of 5.7% for outside market and a growth of 1.8% for local consumption. This is further aggravated when production does not equal population growth - 2.3% per year towards the end of 1960. It is a matter of elementary economics which requires growth in production has to always equal, if not to exceed, population growth.

This orientation towards the outside market is in fact one of the many characteristics of a neo-colonial economy of a country. Saving this discussion for Chapter III, I would like to say the following.

As a result of the feudal mode of production, and as a result of

46 Translated (from Amharic by me) The Third Five Year Plan, p. 47.
47 Ibid., p. 51.
the superficial attention that was given to the field of agriculture, as a result of the inconsistencies in the government plan, as a result of the failure of the government to define its policies, 90% of the total population of the country has been made to suffer the consequences.

It has been pointed out and established as a fact that, severe drought has been sweeping across Ethiopia and tormenting its inhabitants since 1965. It reached its pinnacle in 1971 and led to the downfall of Haile Selassie's feudal regime in 1974 and the overthrow of the absolute monarch on September 11, 1974 and the nationalization of all lands in 1975. However, it is wise to point out that, before the famine gave an impetus to the theatrical show that was exhibited, it had already claimed, according to Christian Science Monitor of December 3, 1973, between 50,000 and 100,000 lives.

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49Robert L. Hess, op. cit., p. 87.
It is not unusual for some western social scientists to view and interpret the strong hold and entrenchment of world imperialism, spearheaded by U.S. imperialism, in the Third World countries as a bilateral and/or multilateral agreement made with the concerned governments to develop and promote the economy of those countries. However, when faced with questions like: if that is the case, how and why there has not been an economic takeoff? Why are the countries in fact underdeveloping relative to the imperialists countries? Their response is filled with and based on apologies and is very mechanistic. The usual and obvious answer is: people in the Third World countries are lazy and they do not have the work ethics etc., etc.

The sentiment and understanding and the explanation of Ethiopia's interwined economy with imperialism is not different from the above assessment. And in fact, it is agreed by some writers that since Ethiopia's economy is predominantly feudal and backward, its chance to appeal and lure imperialism is very very small. It is my intention to
defy and negate this contention by presenting a better understanding of how the neo-colonial economy of Ethiopia contributed to the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime.

... the profit incentive—the essence of capitalism is the underlying cause of the present process of underdevelopment. ... And capitalism is, indeed not particularly an Ethiopian phenomenon but a world-political and economic system, which benefits a few and exploits a majority, of which the Ethiopian masses constitute a part. Consequently, the commercial development ... is an extension of international capitalism as such and not isolated Ethiopian case.1

The above quotation does not deny nor negate the fact that 80-90 percent of Ethiopia's labor force is engaged in subsistence agriculture, but enlightens us about the development of the "industrial and manufacturing sector which is predominantly under the control of United States, England, Holland, Japan and the other imperialist countries."2

Although there is no available data as to the overall level of foreign investments in industry, it is believed that private investments exceed government investments and that much of the private investment in industry and/or trade is foreign in origin. It is concurred that in a time span of seven years, that is 1961-1968, a total of Eth. $1733 million has been invested by foreign private investors.3


3Irving Kaplan et al., op. cit., p. 424.
The non-existent of a strong and full-fledged capitalist class is an undisputable fact. And it is equally true that "capital formation does not stem from landed property which is Ethiopia's problem . . . but from merchant and usurer wealth." In the absence of this, indigenous pioneers have been forbidden and neglected by the government which favors the non-nationals over them. As a result says Lars Bondestam* "... more than half of the land is controlled and managed by foreign companies, notably the sugar industry H.V.A.,** Ethiopia (22 percent of the cultivated hectares) and T.P.S.C.*** (almost 17 percent) . . . the director of the five largest holdings are foreigners."^5

TABLE 1

AREA, PRODUCTION AND OWNERSHIP OF THE LARGEST PLANTATIONS 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cultivated Hectares</th>
<th>Value of Production 1,000 Eth $</th>
<th>Administration and Control</th>
<th>Percentage of Foreign Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awsa</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>Sultan</td>
<td>Alimira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.P.S.C.</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**H.V.A. - Handels Vereniging Amesterdam.


^5 Lars Bondestam, op. cit.
### TABLE 1-Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivated Hectares</th>
<th>Value of Production 1,000 Eth $</th>
<th>Administration and Control</th>
<th>Percentage of Foreign Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.V.A. Wongi &amp; Sha</td>
<td>6,840</td>
<td>40,800</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.V.A. Methara</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>17,700</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abadir</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>Israeli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neura Era</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38,840</strong></td>
<td><strong>220,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The ulterior motives of those who favor foreign capitalists to indigenous people who want to compete against foreign capital even on a small scale is explained by Paul Baran whose words I shall borrow:

What results is a political and social coalition of wealthy compradors, powerful monopolists, and large landowners of dedicated to the defense of the existing feudal-mercantile order. Ruling the realm by no matter what political means as a monarchy, as a military-fascist dictatorship, ... this coalition has nothing to hope for from the rise of industrial capitalism which would dislodge it from its positions of privilege and power. Blocking all economic and social progress in its country, this regime has no real political basis in city or village, lives in continual fear of the starving and vestige popular masses, and relies for its stability on praetorian guards of relatively well kept mercenaries.⁶

⁶Paul A. Baran, op. cit., p. 195.
Although Paul Baran's statement is not written as an assessment of the Ethiopian situation, there is no doubt it explains it very well. It is this kind of economic strangulation of dependent countries by the imperialist powers that stunt and thwart the development of indigenous industrial capitalism and which ends up in perpetuating the rule of a monarchy and that of a comprador administration.\(^7\)

This very nature of dependency on foreign capital has been stated in The Third Five Year Plan. Encouragement of foreign capital is required to make sure that Eth. $3,415 million is obtained to expand the economy.\(^8\) However, the experiments and the experiences that have been implemented so far testify to the disadvantage of the economy of Ethiopia. This situation results from the extremely liberal agreement between, for instance, the H.V.A. which has the major share of the sugar plantation and the Ethiopian government which has only 10%\(^9\). H.V.A. has been "allowed to remit 10 percent of its invested capital yearly and 15 percent of its annual profit which implies a guaranteed export of capital of Eth. $8 million."\(^10\) In addition to this, H.V.A. Ethiopia has been excused from paying the usual 2 percent export tax which all imported goods are

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 196.

\(^8\)The Third Five Year Plan (translated from Amhoric by me), pp. 17-18.

\(^9\)Lars Bondestam, op. cit., p. 432.

\(^10\)Ibid.
Thus, Mr. Lars Bondestam summarizes:

The effect of the local production of sugar on Ethiopian economy during the 1957-1971 period is uncertain, but my own calculation indicate that H.V.A. Ethiopia has not had any noticeable effect on the country balance-of-payment during the last 18 years. It is even possible that the net effect has been an outflow of capital.\textsuperscript{12}

This favorable condition has also been exploited by T.P.S.C. which is glaringly and shockingly seen manifesting itself in the field of reward where the average daily salary of an alien is about Eth. $80 and a national with a 12th grade education gets Eth. $3 and the cotton picker gets only Eth. $1.\textsuperscript{13}

The exploitation of the resources of a country should not isolate-

\phantom{\textsuperscript{11}}\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 433.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Lars Bondestam, op. cit., p. 436.

\phantom{\textsuperscript{11}}\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 433.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Lars Bondestam, op. cit., p. 436.
suffered from landlessness. Their eviction, in order to promote and advance the interest of the imperialists, has been explained by Bondestam.

In his words,

With the introduction of cash-crop production, some of the Afar were forced to leave their river-watered pastures—where they had lived more or less permanently since the 16th and 17th centuries—to become increasingly dependent on the availability of rain. This has led to a relative over-population of the less fertile areas to which they had to move with consequent over-grazing and livestock starvation followed by diminishing herds and malnutrition.\(^{14}\)

However, the Ethiopian government did not respond to the misery of the Afar people and that of the workers. Instead of trying to ameliorate the condition of the workers, the Ethiopian government played the drums of complicity and cover-up. By doing this, it invited its readers to dance to the tune of "workers freedom." In its "Trade and Economic Review," the government points out that H.V.A. workers have the "freedom to organize themselves into a trade union by way of protecting their legitimate interests and bargaining power on equal footing with the management."\(^{15}\) Bondestam, however, contends that, "During the 1960's mechanization was introduced in order to increase productivity . . . The capital intensive investments that followed benefited the industrialists in Europe (who exported the machinery and technology) and contributed to the out flow of capital at the expense of increased employment

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\(^{14}\) Lars Bondestam, op. cit., p. 436.

opportunities in Ethiopia."16 Thus, huge reserves of work force were put aside giving rise to the deterioration of the wages of the workers to a bare survival level. "In 1971 90 per cent of the wage earners received 33 per cent of the total emolument of about Eth. $10 million while 2 per cent who were highly paid earned 37 per cent."17 In addition to these super exploited and rejected workers, H.V.A. was able to create the elite class which had little or no interest in the improvement of the socio-economic condition of the workers.18

As Ethiopia is an agricultural country, the government claims that it has always tried to improve this sector. However, the effort has not produced much of anything for the simple reason that the government has failed to bring about land reform which is believed, by some, to be the cornerstone of agricultural advancement. Thus favoring neo-colonialism to land reform, underdevelopment to development, stagnation to progress the government, as can be detected in the study, sold out not only the land but also the labor force at a cheap price. These relegated the country to a subservient status with the repercussion being great.

When outlining the Government's policy to the World Bank at a meeting in Paris in 1971, the Minister of Finance assured them that "the

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16 Lars Bondestam, op. cit., p. 434.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
primary objective was to provide farmers with wide opportunities to produce for the market,"¹⁹ and not for internal consumption as one would assume. This contention could easily be corroborated by pointing out that, a country which consoles and contents itself with having a "sugar plantation," while sugar consumption by its people lags far behind other so-called developing nations. "The per capita consumption of sugar in Ethiopia still stands at 3 kgs. as compared 12 kgs. for Sudan and Egypt, 10 kgs, for Kenya and 30-40 kgs, for Europe as a whole."²⁰

This is in fact the result of the low level of the standard of living of the Ethiopian people whose buying and consuming power is very limited. Paul A. Baran notes,

> It can be seen that approximately two-thirds of the human race have an average per capita income equivalent to some 50 to 60 dollars a year, it needs no explanation that for nearly all areas to which this statistic applies it signifies chronic starvation, abysmal squalor and rampant disease. ²¹

Ethiopia depends on basic commodities like coffee, sesame seeds, ground nuts, lentils, etc., etc. for its foreign trade. Statistics show that "... coffee is by far the largest, most of it going to the U.S. and earning about $30m a year."²² There are those who argue that,

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²⁰ *Ethiopia Trade and Economic Review*, 1972, p. 73.

²¹ Paul A. Baran, op. cit., p. 136.

despite the fact that U.S. takes most of the exported coffee, it really
does not need it for the simple reason that Ethiopia's coffee is of a
low quality and inferior to the Latin America coffee which "sells about
62% of the world exports"\textsuperscript{23} compared to the "2.7% sold by Ethiopia."\textsuperscript{24}
If this is true, how would one explain the continual buying of Ethiopia's
coffee by the U.S.? Well two and distinct explanations could be given.
First of all, since the interest of imperialism is to make profit at a
minimum expense, the purchased raw coffee is exported back to Ethiopia
and other countries after it is processed to make profit. The second
reason is that, the U.S. seeks to strengthen its strong hold in its
client state by every means, be it "loans," "aid," etc. (This aspect
will be discussed later in this chapter.) Ethiopia's economic ties have
not been limited to U.S. alone but involves other imperialist countries
like West Germany, Italy, Britain and Japan.

Since Ethiopia's economy is not diversified yet, it had been made
to depend mainly on coffee for its foreign trade. As a result, it is not
unusual for her to run into deficit for the imports are so expensive that
they cannot be balanced by export earnings. Her largest imports are con-
sumer goods and capital goods with the bulk of it coming from the common

\textsuperscript{23}Ethiopia Trade and Economic Review, 1972, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 79.
market countries and from Japan.  

A clear view of Ethiopia's trade with the imperialist, the socialist and the Third World countries is outlined in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>50.24</td>
<td>59.61</td>
<td>55.16</td>
<td>15.59</td>
<td>14.61</td>
<td>17.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>15.61</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>17.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>5.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Germany</td>
<td>11.52</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td>22.25</td>
<td>23.55</td>
<td>20.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>23.93</td>
<td>29.04</td>
<td>30.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>16.86</td>
<td>25.44</td>
<td>27.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>10.42</td>
<td>12.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afar &amp; Issa</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>7.87</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (CPR)</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total World Trade</td>
<td>119.34</td>
<td>122.73</td>
<td>125.62</td>
<td>155.32</td>
<td>171.64</td>
<td>187.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The balance of trade has never been in favor of Ethiopia which logically cannot be as long as she trades with the imperialist countries.

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And a favorable balance of trade, in the Ethiopian case, does not mean economic growth and/or economic development, however, it means that the price of coffee has gone up. In other words, Ethiopia's balance of trade is not determined by what she presents the world market with, but by the prices set by the world market which Ethiopia and the other Third World countries do not have a say.

Harry Magduff has this to say:

The economic dependency of the underdeveloped countries as the suppliers of food and raw materials to the developed countries result in financial dependency as well. And this financial dependency serves to cement the economic dependency. This process usually follows the following lines: Fluctuations in the demand for and hence the price of the primary products exported by the underdeveloped countries creates frequent deficits. The deficits are financed by borrowing from the creditor countries serving the dept. 26

If this is the price that the Third World countries have to pay for serving the purpose of the imperialists, we ought to ask, why do they not trade amongst each other? Inter-Third World trade might sound easy and efficacious, but it is hard 27 and very demanding and most of all it needs understanding and dedication. For instance, if we take Ethiopia and the other African countries as a case study we would see the


27 I do not want to sound apologetic. However, under the present leadership with the prevalent ideology "African socialism" severing relationship with imperialism is a thing that is unthought of.
following: since almost all the African countries were colonies at one time and neo-colonies presently, their national economies were integrated with the "mother country" and through that to world imperialism long before they got their so-called independence. And even after independence, none has been able to break away from the shackles of economic dependency. Most of the countries concentrate on the one commodity which was the culture during colonialism. One can in fact argue that, it is a legacy that had been left by the colonialist powers.

Coffee figures prominently in the export trade of more than 23 African countries of which 12 are directly dependent on it for their export and earnings. Coffee constitutes 77% of the total export of Burundi, 49% for Uganda, 48% for Angola, 44% for Rwanda, 28% for Malagasi Republic and 26% for Ivory Coast.

In light of the above quotation, there is little that Ethiopia can trade with any of these countries. This is, it seems, the main problem which provoked Walter Rodney to argue for severing relationship with world imperialism and start developing the material and technological base internally.\textsuperscript{29} That those who do not make this will suffer is the implication that is latent in Walter's message. Indications are that Ethiopia suffered enough to provoke its inhabitants to rise against the feudal monarchy and its institutions. This world market oriented economy

\textsuperscript{28} Ethiopia Trade and Economic Review, 1972, p. 78.

of the country did not, nor was its purpose to meet the need or sympathize with the sufferance of the peasant who died from lack of food and adequate care.

The Ethiopian Grain Board had been given the responsibility to see to it that those crops which are in great demand in the world market are sown superflously. In fact the specific assignment and objectives of the Board are:

1. To maximize the exports of grain, flour, pulses and oil seeds from Ethiopia at economic prices;
2. To protect the foreign exchange position of the nation;
3. To improve the quality and grade of grain, flour, pulses and oil seeds exported from Ethiopia.30

This seemingly benevolent concern for the world at the expense of millions and millions starving in Ethiopia could easily be seen in Table 3 which shows the export of food commodities when famine was at its peak in Ethiopia.

In addition to this, A.F.P. on June 21, 1974 reported the confirmation by the Djibouti Port Administration that the Ethiopian Government, while the starving and the dying people were crying for food and help, had re-exported relief wheat and maize that had been procured from different Red Cross societies.31


### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>1969</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Qtls.) Eth. $</td>
<td>(Qtls.) Eth. $</td>
<td>(Qtls.) Eth. $</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neug Seed (Niger)</td>
<td>103,235 3,983,300</td>
<td>71,621 3,001,700</td>
<td>110,180 4,336,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Seed</td>
<td>98,778 1,653,600</td>
<td>75,894 1,267,600</td>
<td>129,820 2,331,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castor Seed</td>
<td>19,617 618,800</td>
<td>7,355 210,600</td>
<td>12,630 340,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Nuts</td>
<td>18,658 822,200</td>
<td>387 18,200</td>
<td>13,280 616,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haricot Beans</td>
<td>166,716 5,042,000</td>
<td>171,340 6,783,200</td>
<td>225,680 10,004,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentils</td>
<td>245,345 9,292,900</td>
<td>157,510 4,915,300</td>
<td>179,010 5,748,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Beans</td>
<td>274,199 5,256,000</td>
<td>156,409 3,520,800</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chick Peas</td>
<td>79,806 1,865,500</td>
<td>21,478 505,500</td>
<td>63,420 1,793,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oilcakes</td>
<td>340,562 4,106,500</td>
<td>267,100 3,393,600</td>
<td>405,260 5,610,386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The neo-colonial nature of Ethiopia's economy has manifested itself in different forms and shapes at different periods of time. The absence of a full fledged capitalist class has meant - to the government of Ethiopia - attracting foreign capital at any cost. An open door policy is one which permits the investment of the U.S. capital without any hindrance and obstacles to ownership, management and operation. At the same time guaranteeing security and safety is the responsibility of the client regime which Ethiopia had been reported to have signed such an agreement. As a result of this unparalleled opportunity, capital from the U.S. started flowing. On June 17, 1967, The New York Times reported, according to Challenge, that American investment ranges "from a spice firm to two of the world's largest oil companies" is engaged in exploiting Ethiopia. It continues to say that, "more than 200 American companies have now agencies in Ethiopia." While the exploitation of copper might have started by now, April 1, 1975, by the Ethio-Nippon Mining Company (Japan) with the initial annual production estimated at 17,000 tons, further exploration for copper and other minerals will take place at Adi Nefas, Woki, Enitch, located in Eritrea province. Similar exploration will simultaneously take place in Wollega province.

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32 Harry Magduff, op. cit., p. 127.


It has been pointed out by Harry Magduff that the drive for colonies and neo-colonies for that matter is not only economic but also involve political and military consideration as well. This contention could be illustrated by analyzing U.S. imperialism in Ethiopia. The location of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa gives it a very strategic importance. Its eastern coastline commands the entire lower Red Sea region. In addition, Red Sea is an important crossroad between Europe, Africa and Asia at the same time linking the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea which has an outlet to the Atlantic Ocean.

Taking the strategic importance into consideration, U.S. imperialism has exploited the opportunity given to it by its client state by building a military base "which is jointly run by the U.S. Nationals Security Agency, the U.S. Army Signal Corps and the U.S. Navy Communication Specialists." The importance of Kagnew Station has been summarized by the U.S. News and World Report, June 19, 1970 as such:

Kagnew Station is the . . . largest frequency radio relay station

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35 Harry Magduff, op. cit., p. 39.


37 Ibid.
anywhere in the world . . . It relays military messages from American bases overseas to the Pentagon from navy ships in the Indian Ocean and diplomatic traffic from U.S. embassies to the State Department . . . and (it) is rumored to be an electronic listening post whose ears extend deep inside the Soviet Union.\(^{38}\)

In return for its services, neo-colony Ethiopia obtains "aid" from the U.S. Agency for International Development, from the World Bank, etc. However, the motive behind giving the so-called "aid" should be explored. Its primary purpose is to keep the recipient country(ies) within the realm of the so-called "free world." This makes it possible for them to be plundered economically and to form a dumping place for the produce of the industrialized countries. In addition to this, politically they are expected to ally or give their support to the donor countries when and wherever their solidarity is needed. In the words of John F. Kennedy:

"Foreign aid is a method by which the United States maintains a position of influence and control around the world and sustains a good many countries which would definitely collapse or pass into the communist block."\(^{39}\)

Joan Nelso, former member of AID, summarizes the military and political objectives of foreign aid as,

. . . continued access to military base and other strategic facilities located in specific developing countries, maintain ties with formal allies and strengthening their defense capacity, delaying recognition of communist China, and its admission to the United


\(^{39}\)Quoted in Harry Magduff, op. cit., p. 117.
Nations . . . more generally encouraging independence or a pro-western alignment in the foreign policy positions of developing countries.

It is an open secret that Ethiopia among all the African countries, has been the favorite and as such the logical recipient of much of the foreign aid from the imperialist camp. For the national budget of the fiscal year 1972-73, the following aid was obtained by Ethiopia:

. . . Eth. $ 5.3 m. from IBRD/IDA for regional development programmes, Eth. $ 9.7 m. IDA loan for education, Eth. $27.4 m. UDAID loan for various programmes of which Eth. $15.0 m. is for agricultural sector. Eth. $ 6.6 m. for malaria eradication, and Eth. $ 3.1 m. for the university. The other big loan is a total sum of Eth. $28.0m. from IBRD/IDA, SIDA and West Germany for road construction and Eth. $ 6.8 m. from UK for ports, airports and road buildings.41

This opportunistic and at the same time hopeless policy of Ethiopian government was not viewed favorably by the communist block. In fact since the completion of a Soviet financed oil refinery in 1967, the small amount of aid that Ethiopia was receiving from the communist block declined.42 However, in October 1971, China offered Eth. $203. m. long term interest-free loan for agricultural development which could be repaid in goods. In addition, China had promised engineers and technicians.43

Despite all the so-called "aid," "loans," and "gifts" that the

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40 Quoted in Harry Magduff, op. cit., p. 118.


government of Ethiopia has received, the condition of the Ethiopian people has not improved. The money reportedly given to Ethiopia by the donors found itself locked up in Swiss banks.

It is obvious that the interest of the government of any neo-colony is to try to perpetuate its leadership. It does this by promising the inhabitants of the country to do its best to bring prosperity and good life, that it would improve the standard of living of the people. However, since the government itself knows that it cannot survive by promises alone, it will start arming its security forces with the sophisticated weapons that are available to suppress every democratic demand, and break any uprisings and/or threat that would or should come from the masses. For instance the Ethiopian government - for its 1971-72 and 1972-73 expenditure - allocated the following sum of money to the concerned departments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>1971-72</th>
<th>1972-73</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Defense</td>
<td>$93.1 m.</td>
<td>$94.9 m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Order</td>
<td>85.9 m.</td>
<td>89.5 m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>13.8 m.</td>
<td>18.8 m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>6.9 m.</td>
<td>8.1 m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>28.0 m.</td>
<td>30.8 m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpts from Government Expenditure - In Eth. $ millions.
In the light of the previous table, we should not be surprised that Ethiopia has been hit so hard by the drought and famine. A country which is predominantly agricultural spends more money on so-called "national defense" and "internal order" than on its agriculture, industry and public health. The last three factors are interrelated. A country which has a backward agricultural and industrial sector also has a very bad health program. The betterment and development of its agricultural and industrial sector will increase the chance to the development of better health care facilities, and the deterioration of the former two leads to the deterioration of the latter. Although there are several international agencies giving aid to the needy, disease remain rampant and prevalent. It is not a secret that life expectancy is low and that infant mortality is high in Ethiopia as in other client countries. Moreover, the non-existence of better means of communication and transportation has escalated the sufferance of the people who are found isolated from the so-called modern sector where a modicum of health care is available leaving them little or no access to its facilities.\footnote{For more see Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., pp. 155-156.}

Taking all these factors into consideration and weighing all the negative circumstances, few would question the authenticity of the assessment that, "government is the executive body of the ruling class." It is only concerned about furthering and defending the interest of that particular
class at the expense of the lives of its inhabitants. It is with this understanding that, the Ethiopian government invests a big sum of money on the "national security" and "internal order." As the Ethiopian society is split into two antagonistic and irreconcilable classes, the establishment and expansion of the police force and of the armed forces was inevitable. It is a recorded fact that in Ethiopia "Generalized crime statistics indicate that the largest number of offenses occur against property."\(^45\) It is not without a definite and convincing reason that Engels said the following:

... The second is the establishment of public force which is no longer absolutely identical with the population organizing itself as an armed power. This special public force is necessary, because a self-acting armed organization of the population has become impossible since the cleavage of society into two classes ... This public force exists in every state, it consists not merely of armed men but of material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds.\(^46\)

Ethiopia is a good sample for the above quotation. With its "approximately 100 prisons"\(^47\) and "national police force of approximately 28,000 officers"\(^48\) and "45,000 men in the armed forces"\(^49\) she has

\(^{45}\)Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 455.


\(^{47}\)Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 455.

\(^{48}\)Ibid.

\(^{49}\)Ibid., p. 479.
suppressed and oppressed all incipient movements, plots against the government, and peasant uprisings in different parts of the empire.

Since it is my contention that "national independence" demands of the Eritrean Liberation Front and the irredentist Government of Republic of Somali have contributed to the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime, a small discussion of their role is very important.

Since the incorporation of Eritrea into the Empire in 1962, the Eritrean people have been fighting for their right to self determination. And in order to counteract this legitimate and democratic demand and suppress the movement, the Ethiopian government has been forced to deploy 20,000 of its 45,000 soldiers in that particular province. The atrocities and the genocide that has been committed by the Ethiopian government against the people of Eritrea is unbelievably and ridiculously high.

Christopher Clapham contends that, "there are ample reports of the Ethiopians bombing or burning villages ... Several thousand western Eritreans have taken refuge in the Sudan."50 The Eritrean people on the other hand, in order to withstand these atrocities and bring their wish a reality have been procuring weapons from the Arab countries - whose motive for the support is defined* bought from the Soviet Union and other


*"It is by no means surprising that the Arabs, concerned about Israeli access to the sea routes of the Red Sea, should be keen to ensure
Eastern European countries. 51

The Ethio-Somali dispute is very much different from that of Ethiopia
and Eritrea. "The object of the Somali government and of most Somalis is
to unite these people under the Somali flag." 52 This meant, to the Ethiopian
government, a claim to "its territory" in which "Ethiopian Somalis" live.
A demand which the Ethiopian government had been giving its deaf ears. Thus
the Somali government had to revert to force. This required a strong,
well trained and fully equipped army. "The western powers to whom she first
applied would grant it only for an army of 5,000 men, enough for internal
security . . . The Soviet Union was therefore able to out bid them with
$32 million/loan and an offer to train a 10,000 strong army . . . " 53

The consolidation of forces by the Eritrean Liberation Front and the
Somali government and their respective weapons accumulation brought a cloud
of fear on the Ethiopian government which convinced it of the need to ex-
pand and arm its military with the sophisticated weapons. "Relatively high
defense expenditure has been especially recurrent since 1963 when the

that the whole of the coast of the area should be in Arab hands, and the
ELF's closeness to the Arab World has a strategic as well as cultural and
linguistic significance." Quoted from Africa Research Bulletin of Feb. 1-

51 Adelphi Papers, "Conflicts in Africa," No. 93 (London, 1972),
p. 10.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., p. 15.
Soviet Union began supplying large amounts of arms aid to neighboring Somalia.\(^5^4\)

Since the signing of the military assistance agreement with the U.S. in 1953, a large number of United States military advisers have been at the disposal of the Ethiopian governments. Although military hard-ware have been obtained from France, Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Italy, the United Kingdom, United States has remained Ethiopia's main supplier.\(^5^5\)

It is in the context of the military picture that I argue that the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Irredentist government of Somali contributed significantly to the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime. These problems aggravated the existing problems that the neo-colony had. It made the government of Ethiopia neglect its priorities.

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\(^5^4\) Irving Kaplan, et al., op. cit., p. 487.

\(^5^5\) Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

DROUGHT AND FAMINE

The points argued and analyzed in Chapters II and III are that the feudal mode of production and the neo-colonial economy of Ethiopia were responsible for the stagnation and obstacle to the development of the productive forces of the country. Further it was argued that feudalism and imperialism were the twin enemies of the Ethiopian people whose fate was left in the hands of selfish landlord-comprador-bourgeoisie government.

As a result of this unrepresentative and unconcerned administration, the Ethiopian people have suffered and have endured many agonizing torture, of which famine has been the most formidable. It has been pointed out that "the cause of famine is partly natural and partly artificial." However, as a result of people's ingenuities and technological development, famine which once was the universal enemy of the world can now be overcome. Russia and Western Europe which were once vulnerable to famine have been able to partially immunize themselves from this human disaster. They have succeeded in doing so because they have been able to develop their productive forces to the point where they may now surmount major
obstacles and conquer the forces of nature.

And it has also been argued in the previous chapters that development in the productive forces will inevitably bring a change in the socio-economic structure of the country. Feudal Europe which once was vulnerable to famine and epidemic diseases has been able to overcome famine under its capitalist mode of production. Feudal Russia has also been able to eradicate this enemy of the people in its socialist mode of production. Thus development of the productive forces are key to overcoming major obstacles and problems.

However, feudal Ethiopia has been left at the mercy of nature. When famine invades the country, priests are told to pray so that the divine punishment stops. The divine punishment, is a result, as often interpreted by the priests, of the unethical conduct and impiety of the students who lost respect and reverence for the "state" and the "church." Reasoning like this is characteristic of many countries whose mode of production is feudal. Their investigation and analysis of any situation and circumstance are not scientifically but metaphysically oriented. The outlook of life and the philosophy of a people reflect the socio-economic development of a country.

Being aware of the prevalent mode of production in Ethiopia, we should not be surprised to learn that, "drought is not a new phenomenon in Ethiopia's northern provinces of Tigre, Wollo, North Shoa, Begemder and the Rift area. In the mid-1960 over 250,000 people are believed to
have died from drought in Tigre alone.\(^1\) Thanks to some international and benevolent organizations, the drought and its consequences, famine and epidemic diseases, have been contained many times, although after having claimed thousands and thousands of lives.

The latest drought which was first exposed by university professors and students\(^2\) claimed, according to one official of UNDP (United Nations Development Program) over 100,000 lives and affected as many as three million people.\(^3\) The people suffering most are the peasantry and the tenant farmers. As was explained in Chapter II, the land tenure system obligates the peasants and the tenant farmers to give 50-75\% of their produce to the landlord leaving them with the remainder to meet the responsibilities of their families and most of the time extended family. For instance, in Wollo, the hardest hit of the drought-stricken provinces, there are, it is estimated, 375,000 landless settlers of whom 150,000 lease land. And over 90,000 of these tenants have to submit 50-75 percent of their produce to the landlord.\(^4\)

The effect of the drought not only hurts the landless and the tenant farmers, but also the small land-owning peasants whose production has

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\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) A.F.P. In its East African Report - June 18, 1974.

been curtailed by the drought forcing them to sell their lands and cattle.

To make matters worse the starving famine victims were often exploited unscrupulously by traders and some officials. They were sometimes forced to sell their livestock, crops or land at rock-bottom prices and then to buy the grain at grossly inflated cost. Some officials sold emergency feeding cards which should have been distributed free. Peasants who were lured away from their land by promises of free food and seed sometimes perished on their journey.\(^5\)

Despite all the suffering and agonizing torment of the Ethiopian masses, the landlord-comprador bourgeoisie government did nothing to alleviate the conditions of the people. In fact the government suppressed any news about the famine until it was exposed by concerned citizens and international organizations. Professors Solomon Inguai, Dr. Seyoum Gebre-Egziaber and Mesfin Wolde-Mariam who were first to expose the existence of drought and the need to take precautionary measure were all thrown out of the university. Colin Legum reports, "the Emperor's response was to designate Wolde-Mariam to be Governor of Jimbe in Wollega Province under a Governor-General known to be strongly hostile to him. Dr. Egziaber was dispatched as a mayor of Gonder and Inguai as a cultural Attache in Moscow."\(^6\)

During this emergency and at these desperate times when giving aid would have counted more than receiving it, the government led by the Emperor himself, was thinking about the land tax they could not collect.


\(^6\)Ibid.
However, the Emperor went on national radio and put forth his program to the drought-stricken parts as a gesture. "(He) singled out for mention as a positive step in this proclamation of cancellation of Land Tax in those areas hit by the drought. . . ." It is the reader's responsibility to weigh the circumstances and conditions the famine victims were in and to see it in relation to the motives behind coming out and announcing the cancellation of Land Tax. Does not this show - despite all the suffering the people were enduring and most of them in their death bed - the government's initial intention to make them pay the Land Tax which was not legal and just in the first place? Does not this also show the pseudo concern the government wanted to portray? It reminded me of the Ras (Duke) who once said, "We (meaning the nobility) don't care about the people but about the land." This assertion is further corroborated by the findings of the commission which was appointed to investigate corruption and abuse of power. The findings read that,

The Government of Wollo Province wrote a letter to the Emperor in August 1970, asking that action be taken to save the lives of thousands of starving peasants . . . The Governor had already pressed the former Premier Mr. Aklilu Habte-Wold and the Crown Prince Asfa Wossen who is the nominal ruler of Wollo province to take action but to no avail.8

This problem was further exacerbated by lack of transport and paved


road which could have made it possible to transport food from one locality to the other. The phoniness of the so-called "centralized government" has also manifested itself here where the infrastructure has not been laid out even for its own purpose and success. It will not be an exaggeration to state that one-third of the Ethiopia's population lives 30 kms. from the closest road. All in all, there are 8,000 kms. of road out of which only one-third of it is tarred.9

In addition to this, Africa Institute Bulletin in its "Facts" and "Figures" points out that,

The inadequate social infrastructure in the country is not only reflected in the field of education but also in the health services which leaves much to be desired. Ethiopia has one doctor for every 65,300 persons and after Upper Volta and Chad has the-poorest doctor inhabitant ratio in Africa. In 1970, there was one hospital bed for every 3,128 persons in Ethiopia which at that stage reflected the poorest position in Africa.10

We should not be surprised when we find out that many of the hospitals and clinics are in the cities, serving a small minority leaving the great majority - the country people - at the mercy of local and indigenous medicine. This often results in either the deterioration of the illness or the death of the person under treatment. In any case, it can be argued that, it is the corruption and the mismanagement of the famine relief which exposed the inability of the government to cope with

10Ibid.
the problems leaving it discredited in the eyes of the students, workers, peasants and soldiers.  

Although the cause celebre was the famine that incited the people, it would be wrong to assume that it is the only cause that prompted the populace to rise up. For instance, the drought and its consequences have to be studied in relation with the sky rocketing prices. While this enlightens us as to the base of the internal development, we should question the outside conditions that facilitated and increased the antagonism internally. The blockade and then increase of oil by the Arab countries must have some effect on Ethiopia's economy as it had all over the world. A study like this will help us maintain the dynamic and dialectical nature of the problems.

Newsweek reported:

Just how ineffectual Selassie had become was demonstrated by the government's ineptitude in dealing with the drought that swept across the country . . . Millions of cattle died, crops were decimated and perhaps 100,000 starved to death . . . As a result of the drought food prices rose abruptly. Then because of Arab oil politics the cost of gasoline skyrocketed.  

As a result of ineptitude, lack of effervescence and good intention from the government part, the downtrodden and the oppressed masses were forced to go on a street demonstration to protest their life long sufferings under the autocratic rule of Haile-Selassie. Desperate and


12 Newsweek, March 11, 1974, p. 42.
frustrated peasants refused to hand over the expected 50-75 percent portion of their crops to the landlords. This instance spread over to every sector of life in the country.

Although, due to the nature of the prevalent mode of production, the number of the working class or the proletariat is small and thus its historic role is curtailed by this very nature, its participation in the February popular uprising and its contribution to the downfall of Haile-Selassie are very big. As it is always the case with a Trade Union, the reformist demands of the labor union were regarded by the government as revolutionary and detrimental to the established constitution of the country.

The first trade union strike with demands not only for substantial wage increase but for fundamental reforms embodied in a 10 point manifesto ... It included demands for a new constitution, land reform, improved labor laws, free education and opportunity for all, price controls, political parties, a free press and vocational training for soldiers.

At this opportune time, the dedicated Ethiopian students who have been playing a catalytic role since 1965 by raising the level of the political consciousness of the people - with of course a lot of sacrifices in lives and imprisonment - came out asking for "land to the tiller" and "Representative Peoples Government." In addition to this, "the student body at the University of Addis Ababa decided to forego their breakfast


demanding that the savings should be used to provide drought relief and that a national state of emergency be declared to help the victims."\textsuperscript{15}

As a result of the death of cattles and decimated crops, the money-lovers and get-rich-fast traders, despite the inability of the consumers raised the prices of butter and other food stuffs to a height beyond the reach of an ordinary citizen. In addition to its contribution in facilitating and further shaking of the tottering regime, it helped the students to gain respect and sympathy from the consumers when they acted as inspectors and self-appointed police of the people. "They would go up to a trader and ask him how much he charged for such foods as butter. Faced by their intimidating number, the trader would quote a figure much below the going price."\textsuperscript{16} The protracted and effectual contribution of the Ethiopian students is beyond comprehension and parallel. Not only have they helped in street demonstrations, but they have also helped in writing leaflets and articles exposing the social problems that needed measures be taken. They have specifically and strongly argued against a mere change in personalities. For instance, the replacement of Aklilu, the former Prime Minister, by Endalkatchew, an aristocrat, was, to them, a sour pill to swallow. "About 300 students marched on the office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Endalkatchew Makonen shouting slogans for his removal

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

and carrying imitation gallows."\textsuperscript{17}

The non-existence of a party, in this case a revolutionary socialist party, had burdened the Ethiopian students to play the role to a degree and ability they could. It had convinced the students of the need to raise certain social issues and demands and try to find solutions to the problems that were facing the society. However, one could argue that, due to their class status—petit bourgeois and as such unproductive—their role as the vanguard of the movement had been curtailed. Had there been a revolutionary socialist party which could have combated the spontaneity and the trade union demand of the working class and then directed the movement, the result would have been much different from what it is now.

As the prices were rapidly rising and the purchasing power of the consumer was deteriorating, the need to protest grew sharply. The unrest spread to civilians. There were strikes by the taxi drivers protesting against the increased petrol prices. Teachers and students also protested against increasing prices.\textsuperscript{18}

This crawling but poisonous protest movement was later to engulf the military and the police who were beating, bayoneting, murdering and imprisoning the protesters and demonstrators. This action should not surprise us for the fact that the police and the army in a class society

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{African Recorder}, April 24-May 6, 1974, Vol. XIII, No. 9, p. 3679.

are, is the case of Ethiopia, the guarantors and protectors of the feudal order. However, it should be mentioned that, in the final analysis they had joined the movement and helped in overthrowing the feudal order.

Their initial demand was sectarian and very opportunistic.

The dissident troops in Asmara and other centers have made a point of pledging their loyalty to the Emperor but as well as demanding pay rise for themselves . . .

The military unrest came after serious riots in Addis Ababa earlier in the month against unemployment and soaring cost of living.19

The demand of the army, an unproductive institution, was quickly met by the Emperor who gave them 37% raise20 at the expense of the peasants and the workers who were and are the only productive sections of the society but incessantly growing poor as a result of the drought and high cost of living.

However, it is the uncompromising stand and the unflinching spirit of the masses of Ethiopia which involved, I would say, the military and the police force to the need of changes in the society. Women marching on the street of Addis Ababa asking for an end to male supremacy and domination which is in fact the ideology of the ruling class and at the same time asked for equal right.21 Priests parading the street asking for


a pay raise and better living conditions; and the hitherto downgraded and rejected Moslem population came on the street calling on "their Christian brothers to stand together and work in unity for the progress of the motherland." This was the tide the military could not help but join to affect change.

Thus on July 2, 1974 they declared their intention. "The fight against feudalism was now on and the Armed Forces would pursue the objectives they set out to fulfill during February when the current military and social upheavals began. . . . With their motto "Ethiopia First" they pledged that, "Ethiopia must reach the level of progress other countries of the world have reached and it is not the intention of the Armed Forces to isolate it from the rest of the world community. . . ."

In order to accomplish what they proposed, getting the feudal nobility or "the enemies of the Ethiopian people" as they called them out of the way was of paramount importance. This was also found to be very effective in neutralizing the Emperor leaving him in a precarious

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22 Ibid.

23 B-B-C, April 22, 1974, ME/4580/8/3.


position and ultimately leading to his easy deposition.

At this stage it is necessary to quote the Emperor who told Dr. Milton Obote (the previous president of Uganda) in February 1971 when the latter asked him of the possibility of the military coming to power. "As far as Ethiopia is concerned, it is the will of the people that matters and not the leaders themselves." Well it is beyond any doubt that it is the iron will of the people that ended his autocratic rule.

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CONCLUSION

The contention by some Ethiopianists regarding the isolation of Ethiopia from the rest of the world and its repercussion on some other writers which convinced them to uphold and advance this thesis without questioning its authenticity persuaded me to attempt to refute and negate this thesis while at the same time presenting the true history of Ethiopia. In short, the distorted history of the Ethiopian people required extensive correction.

As presented, it tries to cover up the incursion of Christianity and Islam religions into the country from foreign land. However, it is wise to note that these two religions are not indigenous products but of European and Middle-East origin, which found their way into Ethiopia. Since the introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia in the fourth century and that of Islam in the seventh century, Ethiopia has had contacts with different countries, experiencing the imposition of foreign culture at the expense of its own. Islam's experience in Ethiopia was not that of a voluntary conversion but that of invasion and war which convinced the Ethiopian kings to, at times, summon help from foreign land. On the other hand, Christian missionaries, in order to make it easy for them to convert people peacefully started studying Ethiopia and helped in dealing with the
Ethiopian alphabet, pronunciation, etc., etc.

However, this early approach eventually changed after the success of the industrial revolution in Europe. In the epoch of capitalism in Europe in the 17th and 18th century, the nature of the relation of Ethiopia with the world, especially Western Europe underwent a qualitative change. It changed from that of a "Christianizing" and "civilizing mission" to that of rape and plunder which can easily be corroborated by sighting the first official communication, in January 1809 between Britain and Ethiopia with the paramount intention of trade between the two countries. In addition, the 1903 American mission to Ethiopia with the same intent, trade, is another supporting evidence.

The thesis that Ethiopia has been isolated from the rest of the world renders non-existent the Napier's expedition which had left an unforgettable memory in the minds of the Ethiopians, such as in April 10, 1868 Theodore took his life instead of submitting to his enemies. Not only that, it also obviates the first two defeats that Italy, a strong European country, sustained in Ethiopia. The first one being in 1887 when Ras Aloula defeated the Italian forces at Dogali and the second - that received a lot of attention and press coverage - is the one at Adowa where the Italian force of 17,700 metropolitan and colonial troops got defeated by Menilik's troops. This being the result, the causes in both instances and the ventures themselves were the imperialistic nature of Italy's economy which convinced the bourgeoisie of that country to acquire
as much colonies as possible by any means necessary. The thesis also obviates the split of the three imperialist countries in their drive to colonize Ethiopia. Britain supported the demand of Italy while France gave a verbal support to Menelik resenting Italy's claim to dominant position in Ethiopia.

That very thesis also covers up the fascist expedition in Ethiopia in 1935 where uncountable numbers of lives were lost. This success of Italy in 1935 was a result of the sense of unconcerned from the British and French part, and most of all, a fear of one's national security and national interest that was threatened by the eventual collaboration of Hitler and Mussolini.

As a result of this rapacious nature of imperialism which continually disrupted and hampered Ethiopia's economic development and progress, the socio-economy of the country remained at a low level of development. The prevalent mode of production in Ethiopia was feudalism. A society where the means of production, land, was owned by the palace, the nobility and the church and the great majority, the have-nots being the tenants working on the land giving between 50-75% of their produce to the unproductive section of the society.

With the help of the British Military advisors, Haile-Selassie not only regained his throne, but also consolidated his administration and bureaucracy to create a bourgeois-like society in the absence of the productive forces. This pseudo-bourgeois-like society has manifested
its phoniness in many forms. The constitution which freely borrows from European and American model has been functionless and frivolous.

The Parliament which was constituted of landlords was another interest group which was powerless vis-à-vis the throne but powerful vis-à-vis the government. As a result it had blocked all the governmental bills which could have lent, as some contend, a longer life to the already tottering feudal regime. While this has been the view of the reformists, the revolutionists have, after analyzing all the forces that were working against the feudal regime and after studying the situations and the conditions scientifically concluded that it was a matter of time and strategy before it falls.

As a result of the land tenure system and the low level of the tools and implements used by the people, the tenant farmers were forced to produce only for subsistence. Despite the country's dependence on agriculture, the feudal regime had not, while it could have, done anything to better this sector. Not more than 10\% of the budget was expended on this sector. Thus, we should not be surprised when drought and famine invade Ethiopia and kill its inhabitants. This has been the case with Ethiopia for a long time; and despite its recurrence the feudal regime had not done anything to alleviate the suffering of the peasants. And in fact the emergency aid that was procured from international organizations was either shipped back for profit by some government officials or sold to the needy who were supposed to receive free of charge.
However, for the sake of formality and style, the government was engaged in a phenomenon called "Planned Economy" to no avail. In a feudal and neo-colonial society, there cannot be planned economy for the simple reason that the nature of the mode of production and the strong hold of imperialism are contradictory to planning for the benefit of the masses. Planning which benefits the masses can, to my understanding, only be carried out and succeed in socialist countries where the effort to eradicate classes and the war against imperialism is continually waged. This means that, socialist mode of production and severance of relationship with imperialism are the unquestionable prerequisites for planned economy to succeed. However, the reality of the country showed that, Ethiopia was very far from doing that. And, in fact, the modern agriculture, the industrial and mining sectors are all under the control of international capital.

This is indeed a result of the non-existence of a full-fledged capitalist class that could compete against foreign capital. In addition to this, the weakness and as a result the subservient role that was being played by the government has a lot to do with the incursion and entrenchment of imperialism in the country making Ethiopia a neo-colony par excellence on the soil of Africa.

The entrenchment of imperialism, particularly of U.S. imperialism meant, to the feudal regime, an allying force that could put down any rebellion or any kind of threat. In other words, the survival of the feudal regime with its socio-economic order depended upon the existence of
imperialism. It is not without satisfying reason that I argued that the enemies of the Ethiopian people were imperialism and feudalism.

Orientation of production for world market, in the case of the Third World countries, is a big and important instance of their neo-colonial economy. In addition to this, being dependent upon one commodity for its trade without diversifying its economy is the other factor that perpetuates not only dependency but also stagnation of one's economy which definitely hinders trade between Third World countries.

These two factors, production for world market and depending upon one commodity for its trade have contributed significantly to the downfall of Haile Selassie's regime. At the expense of the masses, the Ethiopian government had been inflating the already inflated world market with the commodities that could have helped in relieving the suffering of the people at home.

The people do exist. And their conscious desire to exist would not allow them to tolerate business to go on as usual. Thus they ended Haile Selassie's regime.

However, the end of Haile Selassie's regime does not yet mean bright future, more food, employment, etc., etc. The "Ethiopian Socialism" that was declared by the Provisional Military Government does not give us a conscience and specific program of its socio-economic assignment. It in fact conceals the class struggle and the nationalities question that need major and painstakingly worked out programs. It masks the
influence of imperialism, despite its nationalization of some industries, banks, insurances, etc., etc.

A country is socialist or capitalist not because of the ideas or intentions of its government, but because of the social structure which characterizes it, and the nature of the classes which play to deceive role in ruling it. ***

Charles Bettlheim

In this analysis of the cause of the downfall of Haile-Selassie's regime much more could have been written. The scope of the study was curtailed by a number of factors. However, it is hoped nonetheless, that the thesis has aided in destroying some past myths about Ethiopia and in placing the downfall of Haile-Selassie's regime in proper perspectives.

***Quoted in Pan African Notes, "Tanzania - the Silent Class Struggle."
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