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THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION*

By

Negussay Ayele

Thank you very much for this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on the Ethiopian Revolution with your journal, Ufahamu, which is very widely read in Africa as well as throughout the world particularly in African circles. I speak, of course, not as an official representative of the Ethiopian government but as an academician who has been in Ethiopia throughout the revolutionary period and who has been an active supporter of that revolution; and so I bring with me not so much an official line but rather what you might call an educated perspective of the Ethiopian revolution.

The Ethiopian revolution, I think most of you will agree with me, is one of the most maligned and the least understood revolutions today particularly in the western world for reasons which will be developed, perhaps, as we pursue the discussion. In a recent very worthy study, Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux describe the Ethiopian revolution as "Africa's first major social revolution".** This conclusion has however not been without its

*This is the second in a series of interviews in this volume granted to Ufahamu by visiting African scholars, the first being with Gilbert Minot, (Ufahamu, Vol. 12, No. 2) on the African Cinema. On his sabbatical leave, Dr. Negussay Ayele is presently a Ford Foundation Visiting Scholar at UCLA. He agreed to give us this interview in the form of a presentation followed by a panel discussion with the participation of: Dr. Teshome Gabriel-Professor of Theatre Arts at UCLA and Assistant Director of the African Studies Centre; Dr. Chipasha Luchembe-A Zambian Assistant Professor of History at the California State University, Northridge; Fassil Demissie-Ethiopian Ph.D. Candidate, Urban Planning, UCLA and a member of the editorial board of Ufahamu; Girma Belay-Ethiopian Ph.D. Candidate, Urban Planning, UCLA; Lenard M. Moite-Kenyan Ph.D. Candidate, Economics, UCLA, Assistant Professor of Economics at the California State University, Dominguez Hills; Befecadu Tamrat-Ethiopian visitor. Also present were: Ali Jimal Ahmed-graduate student, African Studies Centre, UCLA; Terfu Asfaw Ethiopian Mathematician; Kandioura Drame-Assistant Professor of French Language and Literature, University of Virginia; Mohamed Farah Abdillahi-Somali Graduate student, African Studies Centre, UCLA. The interview was conducted by Kyalo Mativo and Jacqueline Magro-Ufahamu editors.

**Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux: The Ethiopian Revolution, London, 1982, p. 283.

detractors and opponents, thus the Ethiopian revolution has been variously described or dubbed as "garrison-socialism," "bourgeois dictatorship" or, à la Trotsky, "revolution betrayed," or "fascist military dictatorship" or even just a "coup d'état," reflecting for the most part an interest not in the overall process of the revolution but in the current forms of authority. In a different vein Ethiopia has also been variously nicknamed "Afro-marxist" or "Afro-communist" along with, for example, Angola and Mozambique or part of the new communist Third World, or "scientific socialist" by some. In the literature of the socialist countries particularly in the U.S.S.R. the Ethiopian revolution is referred to as being one of socialist orientations or one which follows a non-capitalist path of development, or one undergoing national democratic revolution. For their part, Ethiopians who are in the main stream of the revolution more often than not refer to the post-1974 developments in the country as "ABIOT" or revolution. However, when and where this indigenous term requires more explicit rendering, expressions such as "socialist revolution," "popular revolution" or "social revolution" are used. As can be judged from the foregoing perceptions of the Ethiopian revolution, these seemingly contradictory labels or nomenclature notwithstanding, the revolution in Ethiopia, which is today nine years young, is in progress. Though in a brief discussion it is not possible to cover all aspects of it exhaustively, an attempt will be made to focus on certain salient dimensions and features of the revolution with the aim of stimulating a meaningful discussion and discourse towards a better understanding of social revolution in Ethiopia, in particular, and social revolution in the Third World in our epoch in general.

Perhaps one of the most widespread and dangerous pre-dispositions in the West is the assumption that one can be objective in the sense of being neutral about a given revolution, like the one in Ethiopia. On the contrary, one way or another, one is drawn to be for or against, in the main, a given revolution. Not to be for or against a given revolution, in the main, is to be irrelevant. Many factors and forces determine one's orientation of being for or against the revolution, in the main. But it is impossible for one to have a view on the revolution in Ethiopia, for example, and at the same time say that one is neither for, nor against it. To be for or against a given revolution, however, does not mean to be for or against it at all times, under all circumstances and in every aspect of the details of its development. It means, rather, to be for or against a given revolution on balance. So, whether one is conscious of one's position or one admits it or not, revolutionary situations force all concerned to gravitate around forces allied for or against given revolutions, and the Ethiopian revolution is no exception. Any revolution is, of course, a product of the juxtaposition and interaction between subjective and objective forces and factors. At the same time, a thoroughgoing social

revolution such as the one in Ethiopia reflects at one and the same time the universals of revolutionary development, on the one hand, and the concrete specifics of given circumstances, on the other. Thus while the objective laws of social development basically govern revolutionary processes in general, the unfolding of revolutionary phenomenon at a given time, in given societies reflect variations of form. Often, confusion about the nature of revolution in general or about specific revolutionary transformations at a given time and in a given space emanates from a lack of understanding of the dialectics of objective and subjective forces as well as from universal laws and their specific applications.

In the case of the Ethiopian revolution, one of its distinguishing characteristics is that it is neither a coup d'état nor a reformist action from above, but a veritable popular spontaneous social revolution along class lines. The objective conditions for revolution underlined by Lenin, obtained in Ethiopia in 1974; that is to say, and I quote, "only when the lower classes do not want the old way and only when the upper classes cannot carry on in the old way can revolution win... Revolution is impossible without a nationwide crisis."* By 1974 the upper ruling classes in Ethiopia had demonstrated a distinct incapacity to rule in the old way. The emperor and his cabinet betrayed the inner corrosion of the system by manifesting the inability to deal with the tragic consequences of the drought 1973-74 which eventually claimed a death toll of an estimated 200,000 people. Following worldwide oil price increases the government could not even sustain a small tax on gasoline when taxi drivers led the revolt against the price increase. The government could not follow up the implementation of recommendations by an educational sector review sponsored in part by the World Bank. The ruling classes could not contain the rash of NCO** -led protests in the ranks of the military establishment of the system. Needless to say, in addition to the above acute signals of system failure, one should also remember the more chronic reminders such as the impasse over Eritrea, the increasingly depressed state of the economy, the deteriorating security conditions of the country vis-à-vis Somalia's threats and increasing capacity to counter those threats. One could go on and on to show the decay and disintegration of the old order at the threshold of the popular revolution. On the other side of the coin, one finds that by 1974 virtually every segment of

*I.V. Lenin, Left Wing Infantile Disorder (1920) Moscow, 1970, p. 68.

**Non-commissioned Officers.

the lower classes as well as the more conscious and progressive elements of the petit-bourgeois stratum showed in even more pronounced and forceful ways that they did not want the old ways. What in many cases started out as an economic struggle: the taxi drivers for reduction of gas prices, teachers for higher pay and better working conditions, rank and file soldiers and NCOs for raises and improved officer-private relations and career, and UN-action veterans for backpay, all this quickly jelled into a more well orchestrated upheaval, and transformed easily into an anti-system movement. Students and teachers broadened their initial protest against the education sector to attack the bankrupt and tottering semi-feudal system itself. Rank and file soldiers and NCOs quickly coordinated their scattered protest and hitched their movement to the national bandwagon. Even clergymen rose against their superiors! Gradually the peasantry was aroused and prepared to deny haven to landlords and aristocrats who thought they could mobilize the peasantry against their challengers in the urban centres. While the masses were being steadily mobilized, the ruling classes were being increasingly and inexorably immobilized. A former courtier in the ex-emperor's palace is quoted as having reminisced

[.....a sort of negativism started to flood over us. I have trouble pinning it down, but you could feel negativism all around. You noticed it everywhere on people's faces, faces that seemed diminished and abandoned, without life or energy, in what people did and how they did it.] [.....people seemed unable to control things]; things existed and ceased to exist in their malicious ways, slipping through people's hands. (The speaker goes on.)

The palace was sinking and we felt it.we could feel the temperature falling, life becoming more and more precisely framed by ritual but more and more cut-and-dried, banal, negative.

This quote, by the way, comes from a recently published book which I would recommend to all of you to read who are interested in the Ethiopian phenomenon particularly at that particular stage of development. It is called The Emperor and is by the Polish writer, Kapuściński*, which actually comprises sets of interviews that he carried out with former valets, servants and courtiers of the emperor. It is one of the most fascinating books to come out so far.

*Ryszard Kapuściński, The Emperor, Downfall of an Autocrat, 1978. Translated from the Polish by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand; Harcourt-Brace Jonanovich Publishers, New York, 1983, pp. 82-83.

The spontaneous and popular movements against the regime of Haile Selassie resulted initially in the resignation of the cabinet, the first in Ethiopian history, only to be replaced by an aristocrat, Endalkatchew Mekonnen, whose facelift changes in the cabinet could not rescue the system against the gathering revolutionary momentum. In ways that are almost indescribable, forces for revolution were quickly and steadily galvanized as the old order was disintegrating and crumbling to pieces. Using rather catchy and appealing phrases such as "*yaale mennem dem Ethiopia tikdem*," or "*let Ethiopia move forward without the shedding of blood*," spearheaded by progressive elements of the armed forces who used what I call "*political acupuncture*" not to resuscitate the system but to administer the coup de grace to the ancien regime. Like Louis XVI who had to be tutored that the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789 was not just a revolt but a revolution, Haile Selassie could not fathom the depth of the revolutionary ferment in the country which he dominated for nearly half a century. Thus in the twilight of his reign, on the eve of his deposing, September 11, 1974, the ex-emperor had been completely isolated, left alone in his spacious palace* [by a group of young officers and NCOs whom he thought, vainly and feebly, were working on his behalf and in his name] with only one servant in place of 30 million servants just a few weeks back. In the course of these tumultuous events of February to September 1974, it became increasingly clear to all concerned that what the objective conditions of centuries of class contradictions in Ethiopia dictated was not a patch up job of reforms but a fundamental social and economic revolutionary transformation. As one observer put it,

*If there was a revolution in Niger everything would be over in one night. Political life exists there among an elite of 100 people. You could change the government and the people wouldn't even notice, but in Ethiopia there has been a class society with well established boundaries between classes. It has been an independent state. There was a nobility which was a landowning class. There was an old monarchy and an outworn church, in other words there was an organic society. A body with a head, trunk, arms and legs. It was not possible to change the head without changing the body.**

By 1974 Ethiopia was a stunted feudal system with a superficial layer of semi-capitalist [mold]. Though in the western world it has become fashionable to engage in debates on whether or not Ethiopia was feudal, the fact is that few people in the world today, save perhaps Saudi Arabia, experience the sort of feudalism the Ethiopian masses were subjected to in the 20th century.

*Cited in Halliday and Molyneux, p. 250.

Feudalism in Ethiopia was both anachronistic and complex. Much of southern and eastern Ethiopia was relegated for the most part to outright tenancy in which the peasant was completely dispossessed of his land and became a permanent tenant with his entire family serving the whims and dictates of the local or absentee landlord. In most of the northern parts of the country the peasant generally claimed hereditary rights over a few square meters of land from which innumerable services and tithes were exacted by feudal lords. It is generally held that for what it is worth feudalism in Ethiopia's north was comparably less worse than in the south, but for the peasants who chafed under feudalism in both parts of the country it would, as an Ethiopian saying goes, be "choosing the prettier one among a group of monkeys." Consider, for example, a sampling of the production relations between landlord and tenant taken from one part of the north, the Gonder region, where in one small locality alone there were twenty types of tithes to be paid by the tenant to the landlord. These were:

- <u>Chiqa mar</u> --	Payment in honey for the appointed Chief.
- <u>Tilosh mar</u> --	Tax levied by local ruler on population.
- <u>Asrat</u> --	One-tenth of farm produce payment.
- <u>Milmil</u> --	One-tenth for sheep and goats stock.
- <u>Amsho</u> --	One-fifth for government land use.
- <u>Tis Chew</u> --	Tithe for fire-smoke of the tenant.
- <u>Chiqa Qolo</u> --	The local chief's annual share of crops.
- <u>Bere Changa</u> --	Grain payment in lieu of services.
- <u>Sar Chew</u> --	Tithe for pasturing the tenant's cattle.
- <u>Gebbar Chew</u> --	Tax payment in the form of salt bars.
- <u>Zelan Geber</u> --	Poll-tax on stock breeding.
- <u>Amet Baal Mewayya</u>	Official's holiday tithe in the form of fattened sheep or cattle.
- <u>Denbegna</u> --	House and fence-building services for the local landlord.
- <u>Das Chew</u> --	Payment for setting a tent by the peasant to give his children in marriage.
- <u>Melmay erat</u> --	Payment in cash for liaison functionary.
- <u>Teshafi Asrat</u> --	One birr per church for the clergy.
- <u>Mar letsehafi</u> --	Similar payment for secular clerks.
- <u>Gulbet eda</u> --	Punitive service performed in the premises of the local <u>Shaleka</u> (landlord).
- <u>Silkegna Qeleb</u> --	Periodic payment to maintain the landlord's messengers.
- <u>Ber Kefach</u> --	Congratulatory tithe to the announcer of new appointments.

And this is only a small fraction of how the feudal system operated and what its impact was on the peasantry in the north, and you can double that or triple that in form and kind to get a picture of how it was in the south.

In the urban centers the picture of feudal exploitation was no less conspicuous. Whatever little surplus wealth was generated in the countryside was mostly used in towns by the landlords in the form of villas for rent to the increasing influx of the foreign diplomatic and international civil servants: the OAU*, the ECA**, the ILO***, etc. and to speculate, as well as to fleece landless urban dwellers. Consequently, according to municipal documents of Addis Ababa revealed during the early days of the revolution, only 60 of the top ruling elements of the ancient regime had monopolised land that could have accommodated 60,000 urban dwellers at 500 square meters per person. Under such conditions a complete uprooting and dislodging was necessary and the revolution inevitably assumed class proportions. It was therefore not enough to remove Haile Selassie and his cabinet but rather to crush the feudal system out of whose ashes emerged the nascent structures of a new social order. What was upside down had to be changed right side up, to paraphrase Marx. At long last the slogan: "*land to the tiller*," chanted relentlessly by progressive youths throughout the 1960's, began to see the light of day. Slowly, but surely, the class orientation of the revolution and its depth and range conditioned the subjective forces of the revolution.

In the absence of a vanguard working-class party to lead the revolution, so many groups of earnest and fake revolutionary elements joined the bandwagon of the revolution and began squabbling among themselves to be the true interpreters, forebearers and guides of the dictates of history emanating from the concrete conditions of the country. While these internal struggles accelerated the left orientation of the revolution, they also resulted in increasing disarray among the ranks of revolutionaries and in the event, also a not insignificant amount of needless bloodletting ensued. Much of the division, in fact, in many ways had preceded the revolutionary developments at home in the form of divisions among revolutionary student movements abroad which was then carried over inside the country at the time of the revolution. There was little or no difference among revolutionaries on getting rid of the decrepit and decadent feudal system which weighed so heavily on Ethiopian people. The question of how to go about it was more or less solved by the logic of the revolutionary ferment on account of which the decayed system in effect was disintegrating, not requiring much energy or struggle. The next phase of the revolution, however, dealt with what to do next and how to take over from the demise of the defunct system was a different matter. In the absence of a vanguard party many difficult questions come to the surface: "*Whic*

*OAU: Organisation of African Unity.

**ECA: Economic Commission for Africa.

***ILO: International Labour Organisation.

should lead the revolution on to a secure future?" "What social economic strategy should be followed?" What should be the objective of the revolutionary order? Since socialism was the more popular social order preferred by most of the revolutionaries, what exactly was meant by socialism by different groups and individuals in the main stream of the revolution? In the context of the revolution in tumult, what does democracy mean and how is it to be attained?

While these and related questions preoccupied the revolutionaries, there was also the issue of who should mind the nitty-gritty business of dealing with the dismal economic conditions of the country; maintaining a viable administration, dealing with the security of the country which was in shambles by 1974, coming to terms with the civil war in Eritrea which, despite the best intentions of the revolutionaries in Addis Ababa, did not dissipate. Not being guided and masterminded by a disciplined and seasoned vanguard party, the spontaneous flow of the revolution had unleashed so many energies and forces that instant revolutionaries mushroomed everywhere taking things into their own hands and interpreting the revolution at times more in terms of their local, narrow interests than in terms of the masses. Following the euphoria of overthrowing the Haile Selassie regime, the hard task of guiding the new social order and determining the strategy and tactics of the revolution hence stared straight in the faces of those who found themselves on the platform of the revolution. A segment of the revolutionary left called for "people's government now," while another called for a "revolutionary government of transition" formed around the nucleus of the Provisionary Administrative Council or PAMC, or Dergue, to consolidate the revolution, to raise the class consciousness of the masses and to organize and arm them so the revolution can rightfully repose in them. To some the idea of a socialist oriented revolution led in part or in whole by elements of the army was not in the books and so they campaigned against the PAMC even more vigorously as one of the major enemies of the masses with the proverbial enemies of the Ethiopian masses: feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism. As noted earlier, much of this kind of debate develops as a function of a defective understanding of the dialectics of a given revolution. It is not the Dergue or any one group of bourgeois revolutionaries that made the revolution, in my view, but the revolution which made the Dergue what it is (author's emphasis). It is the subjective organizational vacuum that created the need for the kind of Dergue leadership that could emerge from the concrete Ethiopian conditions in 1974.

Having said that, the fact remains that while the Dergue and its petit bourgeois class allies have become necessary under the circumstances to serve the cause of the revolution as its scaffolding, it is only through the medium of a bona-fide working-

class party that the ultimate goal of building a socialist society can be obtained. Needless to say, in due course, progressive elements in the armed forces are expected to continue to serve the revolution through the vanguard leadership of the working-class party. So far, however, the non-surfacing of the working-class party after nine years of revolutionary transformation, is the Achilles' heel of the revolution. One can appreciate the extenuating circumstances of counter-revolution in the form of wars of invasion and secession that accounts for this eventuality as well as the fact that one is not looking for an artificial party assembly line just because it is taking too long for the party to emerge. The party should emerge from a solid social, political and ideological foundation and not just be a function of a well-meaning proclamation, otherwise it may only be a joke and a parody on socialism and on marxist-leninist party of the new type as has been the case for instance with the SRSP or the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party. Notwithstanding the less developed state of the subjective forces, such as a revolutionary organization or party, the revolutionary momentum has so far by and large been maintained beyond the expectations of supporters and opponents.

According to R. Ulyanovsky, who recently wrote on the subject, the main contours of a socialist oriented state are: a state which has

- i) *undergone [a change] in the class composition of its political leadership, whereby the national bourgeoisie--containing national-bourgeois and feudal elements--will have lost their monopoly of political power to the progressive forces who act in the interest of the broad masses of the people and will have created a new democratic, revolutionary state apparatus,*
- ii) *abolished the political and weakened the economic domination of imperialism and monopolies,*
- iii) *set up state and cooperative sectors in the economy and promoted their priority development over the private capitalist sector,*
- iv) *instituted state regulation and at a certain stage limited the private capitalist sector to the extent of nationalizing foreign capital or subjecting it to rigorous state control,*

- v) *established and developed all-round cooperation with the socialist countries,*
- vi) *waged an unremitting war on corruption,*
- vii) *carried out social transformations in the interests of the people including such measures as agrarian reform, the abolition of social privilege, the liquidation of illiteracy, the establishment of equal rights for women and the passing of progressive labour and social legislation, fought against the ideology of imperialism, colonialism and racism for the establishment of revolutionary, democratic ideology, which is historically linked with the world liberation movement and the experience of scientific socialism.**

To the extent that the above represent a correct and complete set of criteria, though the question of vanguard party is not indicated, Ethiopia's present condition can reasonably be described to be in an early, if rudimentary, stage of socialist orientation.

Mativo: One of the papers** you wrote for the Journal of African Marxists gives a table of crop production statistics, and looking at it I notice that there was more or less a general decline in crop production, although there was an upward curve from 1974 to 1975. For example, for cereals, production was higher in 1975 than in 1974, but in the year 1977 to 1978 that declined. And there were, in fact, some crops that never reached the level of production of 1974; for example, haricot beans. In 1974 to 1975 production was 50,000 metric tons and by 1977 to 1978 it was 12,000 metric tons. How do you account for this general decline?

Negussay: This period, from 1977 to 1978, as I am sure most of you know, was a period marked by two acute phenomena; one was the internal struggle usually described as "white terror" versus "red terror" and the other was the Somali invasion of Ethiopia in 1977. So much of the population was mobilized largely either in terms of the defence of the revolution and much of the resources of the land was also mobilized on behalf of the defence

*Rotislav Ulyanovsky, Present Day Problems in Asia and Africa, Moscow, 1980, p. 85.

**"The Ethiopian Revolution-Seven Years Young," Journal of African Marxists, No. 3.

of the motherland and therefore this had its negative impact at least in part on the system of production. As a matter of fact, this is of course nothing new, in conditions of war and revolution as the economists among the audience will, I am sure, bear this out. One has to keep in mind that in the process of revolution you have the phenomenon of disrupting, dislodging and uprooting all the infrastructures that existed, the economic relations, everything; then you begin with a process of rebuilding. So for most of this period the revolution has been engaged mostly in changing the old order and therefore, for instance, even in the process of giving the land to the tiller the actual nitty-gritty, the actual moving--having somebody take his ten hectares of land, according to the new proclamation going around and making sure that everybody has his or her share--was not an easy task. So that has contributed to the lag. And then of course there is also this problem: now that most Ethiopians have the capacity to own land, what does that mean? Can they do what they wish with that land or would they have to join together in some form of organized association to utilize the land in such a way that what is good for the peasant is good for the economy and what is good for the economy is good for the peasant? All of this I think has contributed to the lowering of the production of crops in certain periods and the zig-zag in the production system. Added to this, of course, is the problem of nature itself: shortage of rain in certain places and of course the fact that a good deal of population mobility has occurred at the given time. There are populations moving from one area to another as a result of insecurity because of war conditions, or certain people with some technical know-how leaving the country because, for some reason or another, they felt that this was not their cup of tea. All of these, I think, contributed..... and so in a revolutionary situation you cannot have things going smoothly, even under normal circumstances this is not possible This is in part what accounts for it. If you had looked at the crop production figures from 1978 onward you would have seen an upward curve and then unfortunately in the last three years you begin again to see a downward curve; so we are still zig-zagging in our production system. If one reads, for instance, the report of the chairman to the second congress of COPWE* this has been very clearly indicated that those who are leading the revolution are aware of the zig-zag nature of the economic performance at this time. They can account for it in certain terms, but certainly everybody is concerned about it.

Luchembe: You gave the picture of the conditions that were existing during the time of the revolution. To what extent did the existence of socialism in the world affect the revolutionary conditions, the crisis that had to be solved and the way it was

*COPWE: Commission to Organize the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia.

solved?

Negussay: If I have understood your question right, of course, I think without doubt the existence of socialism in the world or a socialist camp in the world had a positive effect on helping the revolutionary momentum in Ethiopia because revolutions are not isolated in terms of happening in each country separately, but it is part of a world wide struggle of revolutionary forces against counter-revolutionary forces. Therefore, just as in the case of the struggle against colonialism for Africa, the existence of the socialist world has been a positive factor in pressing for the independence forces. So the presence of the socialist world has, and indeed does continuously accelerate revolutionary processes. Ethiopia is a good case in point. But we have to make one thing certainly very clear, and that is that the Ethiopian revolution was not organized, or was not master-minded by any outside forces, including the revolutionary forces outside the country. The Ethiopian revolution developed out of the inner contradictions of the system in the society itself, the motive forces within the system itself. However, at certain critical stages when the wave of counter-revolution, internal and external, acted together in a coordinated fashion to thwart it or to derail it, the socialist world has come to the assistance of the revolution and has saved that revolution from collapsing or being nipped in the bud. This is the case, for instance, of the internationalist support given to Ethiopia by the Soviet Union, Cuba, P.D.R.Y.*, G.D.R.** and many other elements of the socialist world that saved us in 1977. So at a certain critical stage, there has been material support given to the revolution, but the existence of moral support overall and the fact that you are not all alone and that there are many others waging the same struggle and there are still others that have succeeded in that struggle certainly has had a considerable impact enhancing the revolution.

Fassil: Throughout your presentation you described some of the changes that Ethiopia has undergone since 1974. I would like to ask you a question regarding the kind of changes that have come about regarding the development of the state. To what extent has the administrative apparatus of the state changed? We know that there has been a lot of shifting of personnel since 1974, but personnel changes themselves do not really constitute structural changes within the administrative apparatus of the state. To what extent have there been significant changes in the organization and structure of the state?

*P.D.R.Y.: The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

**G.D.R.: The German Democratic Republic.

Negussay: This is a good theoretical question as well as an applied question. If you are talking about changes in the administrative apparatus in Lenin's sense of whether the state apparatus has been smashed, no, it has not been smashed or completely dismantled. But to a great extent what has so far been achieved is that those who are at the helm of power do not represent the feudal class, do not represent the comprador bourgeois class, if you will. They do not represent imperialism, in that sense. There is of course a struggle against bureaucratic capitalism; so this is a rudimentary beginning. But, I think as much has been admitted recently, as much as has been said, that the administration today is a carry-over in many ways from the previous system because the party has not emerged* to give the proper leadership, so that workers' government can be established in the way that is desired. There is a problem in the fact that, at least visibly, the military is still the dominant figure in this administration and the military is a certain institution which has its own bureaucracy, its own group interest, and to what extent this can go on is also a matter of concern to most revolutionaries, that is, including those who are now in power. So one can be aware of the problems, but at this given time the alternatives are not clear cut. The system that takes the place of that has not matured. The question is: now what is happening to help mature those elements to take the place of the present administration? That is where we are at right now. So when you come to the question of the speeding up of the party formation hopefully this will do away with the remnants of that contradiction which is still with us. But for now the present administration is needed as a scaffolding even though it has a remnant character from the old one.....

Fassil: And how do you see the interaction between these new emerging institutions and the old structure? Certainly the old structure is going to play some role in either implementing or subverting some of the reforms which have been promulgated, I think, since 1974.

Negussay: Yes. This could certainly have been a problem, but I think one area in which the strength of the revolution is more visible is in the form of the formation of certain mass organizations, of certain revolutionary institutions such as the *Kebeles* in the urban centres, the peasants' association in the countryside and revolutionary Ethiopian youth association. The *Kebeles*, for instance, in the urban centres have grown very strong since the days of the declaration of the national democratic revolutionary programme in 1976. Some seven to eight million peasants are participating in them, and as much as 30

*See Chairman Mengistu's Central Report to the 2nd Congress of COPWE, January 1983.

or 40% of the youth is now in the revolutionary youth association. Maybe about 50% of the women are now involved in the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association. And then there are some professional associations also emerging. Now as we are talking, as you know, there is the National Militia Proclamation. So the process of raising the consciousness of the people, organizing them, arming them to defend the revolution is slow and at times haphazard..... Nevertheless it has continued and, with the establishment of COPWE the hope now is to use these mass organizations as the breeding ground for revolutionaries to become members of a working class party, to use them as an apprenticeship. These organizations have assumed increasingly more and more power and have enhanced political participation of the masses.

Befacadu: We see that since the revolution, and even before that, what looks like a real problem is the inability of the Dergue to prevent all of the secessionist movements....., every province wants to secede....., and then you ask the question, secede from what? The revolution is here for the common good, and yet these localities want to secede..... and the Dergue, the military government, just to justify that point goes out and fights them. What do you think is the problem with the present government and its inability to convince them that this is for the common good?

Negussay: I think first I will have to perhaps differ with you on whether every province or every unit is trying to secede. Certainly the issue of secession is very much in currency in the Ethiopian revolution today. Some of it predates the revolution. Some of it post-dates the revolution. And I am not sure that most of these movements are necessarily movements of secession as such. I think there are movements for other forms of self-determination, for self-assertion. There are movements for better recognition and then there are hard-core movements for secession, quite understandable. So if we were to group the secession issues related to such questions into two; those that predate the revolution and those that have been manifesting themselves after the revolution, we may get a little better picture. Of course when we talk about those which predate the revolution, principally the better publicised one is the Eritrean issue, and to some extent although it is a confused situation, the issue of the Ogaden also, let us say. Briefly, in these two situations, the Eritrean question is certainly something which the revolution has inherited from the old order. It is a bitter legacy which the revolution has inherited and for a variety of reasons, its resolution has not been forthcoming as a function of the revolution, although the Eritrean issue is one of the factors which have contributed towards what has become one of the forces to catapult the revolution itself. One would have thought that, both on the side of the Ethiopians on the mainland and the Ethiopians in Eritrea, that the revolution would afford an

occasion or condition in which to review, to revise, to see anew and to present the question properly under changed circumstances. This, unfortunately, was not the case on the part of the Eritrean elements who felt, apparently, more threatened even by the revolutionary developments than they might have been before. The struggle, therefore, has gone on and we are now at a very curious stage where there is a competition for being "more revolutionary" that we hear now, just as much, if not more especially so, in this part of the world about the Eritrean revolution as you might hear about the Ethiopian revolution. The Ethiopian revolution issues a national democratic revolutionary programme in 1976 and the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front) a national democratic revolutionary programme in 1977, and you establish people's councils in the rest of Ethiopia and the same councils are established in Eritrea. For everything that journalists are invited to see in the rest of Ethiopia they are also invited to see similar ones in some place, in Eritrea, supposedly. Much of the Eritrean revolution, actually, more of it is carried on outside of the country than inside, and it has become, unfortunately, tied up now with the overall struggle between revolution and counter-revolution, so that it is a very complicated situation. It has longevity so that it is now common place to talk about "Africa's longest war" or "nationalist struggle," and so on. You find the curious phenomenon again of anti-socialist, anti-marxist, anti-communist elements preferring what is happening in Eritrea to what is happening in Ethiopia, and contrasting the two saying, "look, there is a real socialist revolution (in Eritrea and not in Ethiopia)". In the Ogaden situation, one of the older ones, you have again another confused situation where one can appreciate, on the one hand, a struggle or certainly a right of self-determination by the Somali-speaking nationality in Ethiopia or for some form of self-expression. But this has always been superimposed, this has always been dominated, this has always been eclipsed and this has, really, been managed, not by Somali-speaking Ethiopians, but by the state of Somalia and all its apparatus. So it has become always a cause of war and tension between the two countries. It has been very difficult to separate what are the rights of Somalis, the rights of Oromos, the rights of Amharas or the rights of Tigri people's in Ethiopia and so on. We have about 60 or 70 or more different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, but the wishes, the claims, the desiderata of the state of Somalia has dominated the scene. So, as you know this has led to numerous wars and conflicts and therefore to a great extent it is still covered up overall by this inter-state struggle for control of a given territory.

Now, of those problems that have really manifested themselves in one form or another since the revolution, it should be said that they may be as much a function of the success of the revolution as they are of its failure, in the sense that those elements that were suppressed, that were muzzled, that could not

express themselves, that could not be known to have existed, pent-up feelings that were kept under the lid for so many years, now that the lid has been lifted off, they are expressing themselves, they are asserting themselves. And the promises of the revolution, the declaration of the national democratic programme, the promise of regional autonomy, the assertion, in marxist terms, of the right to self-determination--all of these have contributed, I think, to a great extent, to the raising of certain expectations and expressions of self-determination. It is in this sense that I say that they are as much a function of the success of the revolution. The revolution has egged them on, has accelerated them. Now, having said that, they would become a function of the failure of the revolution if the end of these struggles veers off from the basic class struggle, from the basic revolutionary momentum to some form of limited, narrow nationality concern only. The nationality concern as a part of the overall class struggle is certainly acceptable and is something that has to be accepted and encouraged, but to interpret what is going on in the revolution in Ethiopia as being the case or opportunity for the masses among the different ethnic groups to break themselves apart only on the basis of ethnicity, that would certainly not be interpreting the revolution in the proper way. And now there, I think, we are beginning to have some problems. Incidentally, I might also add that, for instance, as in the case of certain movements that we hear about openly, like, for instance, the Oromo movement, you will have seen that in the first two or three years of the revolution there was not so much of an assertion of a certain Oromo movement for separation, it was very much integrated as part of the class struggle. It was only after two or three years into the revolution that now one begins to hear more and more prominently about an Oromo nationality and struggle for secession. So this emerges out of a certain internal power struggle. There were certain elements during the early stages of the revolution representing Oromo nationality who were at the helm of power and when they were up there they carried the whole thing as class struggle along class lines, so it appeared. But then as a result of certain power struggles they fell off. Now you begin to see more and more the idea of an Oromo nationality going its own separate way. So the dialectics of the revolution is such that it has turned many tables. It has generated many developments, I think, of assertion. And, I think, in some cases too much has been said, too early, too fast that could not have been attained. Therefore, what has been said, what has been promised has, I think, created some false notions and some people cling to that and if the government fails to achieve that, it is held accountable. For instance, to take a case in point, in 1976 the idea of regional autonomy was very high on the agenda. A concrete proposal was made that the Afar people of Ethiopia would be the first ones to have regional autonomy; so naturally everybody was looking to see how that would work. Well, it hasn't happened. There was no specific

time table anyway, but nevertheless it was issued and therefore the expectation was heightened, but it never came off. Then with regard to Eritrea, regional autonomy has always been mentioned and a number of hopes have been expressed, but nothing has come out. So, I think, that one can see, to some extent in Eritrea as well as in other areas where there is a similar social composition, the problems in the early stage of the revolution and how this narrow interpretation of the self-determination issue sometimes clashes with the overall class revolution that one wants to carry out.

Befacadu: What are the concrete gains of this revolution and what are the dangers? I don't mean dangers for the people in power, but for the movement itself.

Negussay: It's a good question. It's a broad question. Let me just cite a few that come to mind. One of the major gains of the revolution is definitely the overthrow of the feudal system. I don't think it is an easy task. It is a great, a gargantuan task. For Ethiopia, for the future, I think that this is the first place to start and that is certainly the main gain of the revolution. I think that land to the tiller, because of our feudal, socio-economic level of development and the importance of land and relations based on land, the change of ownership of land, the fact that the masses now do have their land, this I think is a major gain, although it has to be managed properly as we are finding out. I think, stemming the tide of what I call imperialist exploitation is another gain. In the Third World we know of the many subtle, sophisticated ways of exploitation by imperialism and in Ethiopia, at least for what it's worth, the rudimentary social economic development level has not made it as a prime a target of exploitation as many other areas, for instance, as mineral producing areas in the rest of the Third World. Nevertheless, stemming the tide of that exploitation, halting it, arresting it, is, I think, a major gain of the revolution. I think that in terms of its impact on the Third World, in terms of its impact on Africa, I would like to hope that Ethiopia, which has historically been the bastion of independence, the symbol of independence, of Black freedom, now perhaps, has the chance to be the vanguard for revolution and progressive development for Africa and beyond.

I think that, in terms of weaknesses, in terms of setbacks, certainly, although the revolution has maintained itself so far without the leadership of a marxist-leninist vanguard party, the absence of this party is still one of the major weaknesses of the revolution. The militarization of not only Ethiopia, but the entire Horn of Africa and the state of war and peace and the obsession with security issues is, I think, another of the weaknesses, and, I think, one of the things that saps the energies of everyone in that area and therefore makes us, perhaps, more

dependent on outside support than we would have liked to be, and forces sometimes such dependence not on our wish or choice but at the whims of circumstances like the invasion by Somalia in 1977. I think, though to some extent nature is to be blamed, to a great extent we are to take the blame for our lack of sustained economic development with all the reasons that have been indicated earlier. These are some of the weaknesses that we can identify now.

I think there have been perhaps a few too many of what I would call fake "revolutionaries" that have implanted themselves and played havoc with the revolution, too many. And as a result, perhaps, of certain types of unnecessary power struggles a few too many innocent people have died, or left the country, or don't go back to their country for one reason or another. All this hurts. I don't mean to say that in every case it is justified, but there are certain cases in which the situation could have happened otherwise. I think that certainly in a revolution like ours, in the kind of society that we have, it definitely has its problems and nobody would ever think of casting the Ethiopian revolution as something immaculate with no problems or shortcomings. We have our share of shortcomings, but I think the balance is more on the positive side.

Teshome: I want to pose a theoretical question since you're a political scientist and theorist. I think that one of the major conclusions, perhaps, following your paper on the relationship of the Ethiopian revolution to the marxist-leninist revolutionary movement in the world is that of a unique case of a peasant class, jumping from feudalism straight to socialism. Very unique: unheard of in the annals of revolution which I think maybe a major sort of phenomenon. What are the theoretical implications of this particular revolution, therefore, to the marxist-leninist strictures? It's in a sense revising the fundamental tenants of marxism. I think perhaps that it is also there that Ethiopia's major contribution will be felt in Africa.... and in the Third World in general. The question is really addressed to the revolutionary intellectuals in Ethiopia. Now if the editor will allow me, I would like to pose a couple of questions. They're not my questions, but questions requested by a friend. He is interested in finding out whether there is any policy by the government about Ethiopian foreign nationals. Quite a few in fact who have gone to visit have been impressed by the socialist reconstruction. The other question, in which I am also personally interested is about cultural policy; because I think that a revolution that's directed only on the political angle is only half complete. There are various kinds of changes that have already taken place, that have more or less broken the sort of cultural format in Ethiopia. What has replaced this format, or is it just socialism from a more political angle and the rest is expected to follow suit?

Negussay: Before I come to these questions, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to add one more thing to the earlier question about the successes and shortcomings. I think that among the successes that should be cited definitely are in the area of social services. I have in mind, in particular, education. If you look carefully at all the statistics, not only those given out by the Ethiopian government but also by outside observers, you'll have seen that in the area of education, particularly, great strides have been made. In most cases most of the figures are doubled from pre-revolutionary times, sometimes even more than doubled. The more conspicuous achievement, therefore, has been in the field of literacy. The struggle against illiteracy, in less than five years, has reduced the rate of illiteracy from about 93% before the revolution to about 35% at this time. I think this is one of the most striking social achievements of the revolution. Now, to come back to Teshome's question.....

Girma: Before you go back to that question, I would like to follow up on this. Most people when talking about the progress made by a given revolution or any kind of revolutionary situation, it seems that they're talking in terms of some kind of quantifiable progress, like income, employment and production. So I think he's referring to that specific point; that is, since the revolution, are the people better off comparatively speaking than under the previous conditions in terms of income, employment and production?

Negussay: I think we have talked about production. The only thing I'd like to add on production is that sometimes it may not be a question of production per se, rather it may be a question of measuring that production accurately which is a problem in a real revolutionary situation. And the other thing is making the fruit of that production reach the consumer. Generally in the rural areas one doesn't go around taking the statistics but waits til the produce comes,....., and you use some sort of raw estimate. So production has been maintained and in some cases has even grown, but its computation has not been accurately measured. However, the basic position that I mentioned earlier holds, that the production has zig-zagged, generally. Now, on employment I think it can be said that prior to the revolution the total employment was estimated to be less than 100,000 in the modern sector. Whereas, after the revolution the estimate now is about 400,000. In fact it is increasing every day. However, because of the increasing educational opportunities, the demand for employment also keeps increasing. This is the non-agricultural sector. Now when we go to the agricultural sector, one is not talking about employment, since people here are mostly self-employed. One is probably talking more in terms of the quality of life. There is a qualitative difference in the lives of these people. I think it's generally agreed by observers from outside, to take only their points of view, that the average

peasant in Ethiopia lives much better, consumes a little more and perhaps more than a little more. Certain services now reach him, whereas he used to have to go and reach those services: education, medical services and other social services. For instance, if you have some adjudication problem and you have to go to a certain urban centre which may be quite a few miles from you, you have to leave your work behind. Now you have your own association right there which deals with many adjudicatory issues.

Teshome: You should specify that you are talking about a certain region of Ethiopia and not the entire country. You're talking mostly about the southern part of Ethiopia.....

Negussay: I'm talking about most of Ethiopia. The possible exceptions are Eritrea, for obvious security reasons, to some extent now Tigri and a few pockets of areas here and there, but what I am talking about applies to most of Ethiopia.

Teshome: What do you have to say about the drought regions?

Negussay: Well, in the drought regions, obviously, you're not talking about the social system or revolution, you're talking about drought and drought doesn't choose the system. If it comes, it comes. However, and this is attested again by independent observers, the revolutionary government has done much more to prepare for this drought than was the case ten years ago by the Haile Selassie regime. However, when judged against the gravity of the situation, the same sources which responded during the Haile Selassie period to the drought victims are not, for understandable reasons, responding as enthusiastically now. But I think that one has to appreciate that the drought is not to be related to the social system....generally speaking..... And I have gone outside. I have gone to the countryside. I have seen how peasants live. I have sent students to do some research on peasants' associations and they have come back with their reports. And I think there is no question about the fact that the average peasant in Ethiopia today lives much better after the revolution than he did before. In the towns there have been shortages, for understandable reasons, because the peasant consumes more than he sells or brings to the towns as tithe, or in lieu of it, to exchange for certain needs. And so we in the towns sustain shortages. Certain commodities like tef, which is a staple for many people, is now in much shorter supply, but it would not be proper to judge the success or failure of the revolution by how much tef is available. It's just one commodity among many.

Fassil: I think that one can also look at the situation that existed between urban and rural areas in pre-revolutionary Ethiopia and how the urban areas consumed a large part of the surplus produced in the rural areas.....

Negussay: Exactly.

Fassil: The people who live in the urban areas came to be much better off than the people in the rural areas. And so, what happened after the revolution was that there was a change between the relations between the urban and rural areas. And the government has made specific policies that tend to favour agriculture more than the urban areas.....

Moite: I feel a little bit suspicious about your statistics on employment in the modern sector. You said that it was 100,000 and that it went up to 400,000? They seem to be highly inflated. Unless the output grew that fast, if you can say that output grew by 400%, I can't see that correlation at all. I don't understand it. It doesn't seem to be sensible that you can increase employment in the modern sector in such a short period of time.

Negussay: Is your suspicion based on knowledge of the situation or just on axiomatic grounds?

Moite: Purely on the basis of what the employment and output are in developing countries. That is going to be very interesting theoretically because I don't.....

Negussay: What one needs to keep in mind is that.... a number of new institutions have been established since the revolution. Many of those concerns, agencies, factories and other income producing centres before the revolution were nationalized and therefore now they have fallen under the state employment system. Also, to a great extent, the services required, for instance, to manage 300,000, 400,000 military establishment.... have also expanded. And, as I said, because of the educational system that has churned out more and more young people, the system had to employ more and more of them. Now, in terms of the productivity, also, to sustain these at the social economic development level of Ethiopia, it doesn't take very much, you see. A person, for instance, on the average, earns maybe 200, 250, 300 birr, let's say, which comes to about \$150* per month. Now, those who have finished High school are hired for less than 100 birr. So it doesn't really take that much. Now if one looks at the level of productivity, to determine the required minimum wage of whatever level, then one can have a problem. But in the pattern of production, income and consumption, which we have in our economic system, at our level of economic development, it is more easily understood than in a capitalist system, for instance, like in the United States where an increase in employment has to be understood in terms of increasing productivity. It would have a

*One Ethiopian birr is roughly equivalent to \$0.50C.

causal connection. But not for "subsistence" living or a hand to mouth kind of existence where the monetary value to the employed person is not that high. The other thing the government has done is to apply wage freeze measures on higher incomes. So since 1976, I think, a wage freeze has been instituted. So those with higher income levels do not get any more raises, so that the money that would have gone towards raises now goes towards hiring new employees.

Girma: Tell me also whether one of the factors affecting employment is the fact that surplus income used to go to the unproductive consumer; in fact to the landlords, Now the government is using that income in order to hire more people and to expand the productive sector. Today this regime has been able to extend this income to other productive sectors, so that income is not related as such to raising the level of productivity as you have indicated in your statement.

Negussay: Yes, and the development of state farms employ workers.

Fassil: (To Moite): The concept of employment in developing countries is very questionable. I think that you are assuming that employment under conditions of a market economy, I don't know which country you have in mind, is applicable under the conditions of developing countries. The question of employment itself has to be thoroughly analysed as to whether it is applicable to developing countries.

Moite: My only feeling was that 400,000 from 100,000 people is a lot.

Teshome: Moite is an economist, by the way.

Moite: But your argument could be very good if you argue on the basis that some private farms probably did not report employment because they are probably exploiting them, and all that, to claim government funds. Therefore the public sector has expanded and you are now including people who are previously not included in employment. I can see that. So you can look at it in terms of the growth of the public sector,..... the so-called state farms.

Negussay: Yes. We understand each other. Thank you.

Now let me go to Teshome's questions. In the rhetorics of the revolution, a notion has emerged that Ethiopia is jumping from feudalism straight to socialism. That may be the impression, but in reality this is not possible. This is not possible in practice. Neither Ethiopia, nor any other country can jump from feudalism straight to socialism. This is why in the cases and experiences of many socialist oriented revolutions in the Third

World the concept of non-capitalist development, or the concept of the national democratic revolution as a phasing stage that would break, that would end the contradictions of the feudal order or the semi-feudal order in a given society, that would set the stage and the infrastructure for socialist transition, would be needed. And therefore, in reality, Ethiopia is in that phase: a transitional phase moving away from feudalism on the way to socialism via the stage of national democratic revolution, or of a non-capitalist development; but Ethiopia is not a socialist society. I quite appreciate the import of your question because in the rhetorics of the revolution, the way some of the revolutionaries have been talking about this, it appears almost as if Ethiopia is jumping from feudalism to socialism. It is not possible theoretically and it is not possible actually, and it is not happening in Ethiopia. Scientifically you can not do it although at the same time, this does not mean that you have to be capitalists before you become socialists either. The implicit question, according to some, is this: How could Ethiopia be socialist if it hasn't even achieved a level of capitalism? Because Marx said that the stages of historical development are from primitive communism to slavery, from slavery to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism, from capitalism to socialism and then to communism. This is not the case. You can, but you have to go through this phase of a national democratic revolution.

Teshome: One can raise the issue of Asiatic mode of production.

Negussay: The Asiatic mode of production may or may not be applicable in its entirety to the Ethiopian situation. The idea is not to find ways of shying away from socialism by finding longer and longer roads. The idea is to find as fast and as direct a route as possible towards socialism.

Now on the question of policy by the government. I think the question is more or less answered in the way it was posed. That is, if you say, as you have said, that there are many genuine, nationalist Ethiopians who want to go back, the question is not whether the government has a policy or not but rather why are they not going back. The burden seems to be on them rather than on the government. I do not know of any situation where genuine, country-loving Ethiopians have wanted to go back and they have been turned away at the port, airport or some place else. As far as I know, in the early stages of the revolution, there were calls for all Ethiopians who had gone abroad for any reason to come back now, to make peace with themselves and join the revolutionary process. I do not think that there is any proclamation or law regarding this, because I don't think there is a need for it. Now, at the same time you should all be realistic. The fact is that if any revolutionary Ethiopian, any nationalist Ethiopian feels that this is his land, this is his country, then the

revolution is for him, and the sooner he comes to play his proper role the better for the country, for the cause of the revolution. There's no question about it. I think the signs are that more and more Ethiopians, after their sojourn outside, are beginning to realize there is a course open that should be taken. There are some cases and there are some situations where people may have left the country; behind them, they may have left some problems. These things might follow them, or former political squabbles in the diaspora may have created complications for some.

Teshome: The question is really broader than that. Most countries have policies about nationals in foreign countries. The thing is that there are Ethiopians residing in foreign countries, professionals who would stay there, but they want perhaps to make a little bit of a contribution to their own country. People here want to know, especially in the interest of saving time, whether if they go back, they would be asked to join the army or can they come back and resume their work here outside the country?In the absence of policy the fear of some of the people who really do love their country and are very patriotic, actually, is that when they go there the policy can change, since there is nothing written. I think it is a very legitimate question. I think it's something that should be addressed to the general Ethiopian audience abroad.

Negussay: I think the policy, whether it is informal or not is a policy of welcoming all Ethiopians of goodwill, all revolutionary, nationalist, patriotic Ethiopians to come back to their home. I don't think you need to write it. To write it might even raise more questions of why it's needed in the first place to say that legally and formally. I think it's assumed that this is open. All the provisions are there. It's very simple to read a proclamation and see if it applies or not. If somebody is afraid that it might apply to them and therefore they do not want to go, then that's that. In that instance the proclamation it's out.

Now I think the more important question you have asked is the one on cultural policy.....

Moite: Can I say something about that..... Probably I don't know much about what the Ethiopian government has done towards her nationals abroad but clearly when you have a revolution, and there is a tremendous social disequilibrium, a lot of people run away from home. I think it is a kind of responsibility of the government to try to send missions abroad, to try to recruit these people and try to explain to them Ethiopia's need for manpower, much more now than at any other time. I never heard of a mission coming to recruit the professionals from Ethiopia to go back because they are needed by the government.

It's not that they have to..... but that's not very bad either. I know quite a lot of countries like Kenya that used to come and recruit Kenyan nationals continuously. They're still doing it..... I think that is needed very much once you have a revolution, if for no other reason than to explain the revolution.

Teshome: It's a very serious question, serious in the sense that there are lots of Ethiopian professionals who are in one way or another misinformed about the situation. Now there are Ethiopian professionals in the west who have never lost linkage with Ethiopia. They might have certain differences obviously in terms of their definition of socialism. The issue is that there are circumstances that keep certain people outside and not inside, but the burden is really with the government and not with the individuals, I think, to explain the revolution, to show people that, in fact, there has been misinformation about the revolution. This is the way it is and let it go at that, in other words, no country can live without a policy about its nationals outside.

Negussay: Just to wind up this question, your point is well taken and there should be some effort on the part of the government, and that effort, I think, has been made. There have been missions, not very frequently perhaps, but occasionally, to the United States. They have gone perhaps more frequently to Europe, perhaps because of the proximity, and have tried to hold sessions with Ethiopians in the diaspora and in fact to entice them to come back home. And this effort continues. And I think embassies have standing instructions to facilitate the return of any Ethiopians who want to go back to their homeland. But what I would like to say is that while I agree with you that the government has its responsibility, I would also like to say that if one considers oneself a revolutionary, considers oneself patriotic, I think that one should also do one's revolutionary and patriotic duty to take the steps necessary, whether or not the government has taken its step. I think that would be a definition of a revolutionary patriot. Now I think that we are talking not about the patriotic and the revolutionary, but of other types of Ethiopians who need more services, a different kind of care and attention. If we are talking about patriotic and revolutionary Ethiopians it is incumbent upon them to take that step.

Befacadu:The country needs technicians; it should be able to attract them. Let the revolution be done by those who do it and then let them attract technicians for economic and other requirements. If they don't get them they'll have to hire some.

Teshome: Personally I don't distinguish between the Ethiopians residing in Ethiopia and the Ethiopians residing outside Ethiopia.

Negussay: I agree. But may I add here that it is a little ironic

in a way that I think it was at the end of 1981 or beginning of 1982, the administration in this country (USA) had decided that the situation in Ethiopia is now stable, that Ethiopians who had stayed here temporarily because of the instability can now go back! [Laughter from audience.]

Moite: That was a racist attitude. When Ethiopians try to apply for permanent residence and they don't want them, they say the situation is calm.

Negussay: Anyway, I think to wind this up the responsibility belongs to all, not just to one side. And, like I said, I don't know of any particularly specifically written policy. I know that there is a general policy of welcoming all Ethiopians, particularly as you mentioned, our patriotic and revolutionary Ethiopians, Ethiopians with technical know-how whose technical know-how is very much in need in these times of revolutionary struggle and reconstruction.

Fassil: Just to respond to some of the issues that Teshome raised, I think that many Ethiopians should reflect on this question of service, and we should not necessarily direct it to the government per se. I think that the question has to be looked at in terms of its content. You can not ask a question simply for the sake of it. I think that question has to take full account of the circumstances from 1974 to 1977. I think there was an enormous political and security problem. So for the government to cater to the interests of Ethiopians abroad would be out of the question. And I think that this kind of question would not have been posed by an Ethiopian at that time because there were enormous problems, I think, in the urban areas: the in-fighting that was going on..... So since 1977 the normalization process has steadily increased so that this kind of question can now sensibly be asked. Even then, the enormous problems that the government is facing right now make it too much to ask of the government, really in my view....for Ethiopians abroad while, at the same time, I certainly recognize some of the problems. Any government, regardless of its ideological orientation has to be aware of those political and economic difficulties which could be aggravated by massive immigration of Ethiopians from abroad. And I think that the government has to have some kind of a policy on whether they can economically....., whether it would be feasible to physically absorb all these people at one time. It has to be done I think.... and with caution..... And at the same time when you have a large influx of Ethiopians coming at one time from abroad they will certainly affect the structure or the balance which the government is trying to create in terms of their ideological and political orientation. So the government has to be very careful in balancing out the interests of the country and the interests of the individual.

Negussay: The last question that Teshome asked was on culture. Certainly, as we all know culture is important, both, as an index and agent of revolutionary development. And in all revolutions the question of culture, the need for a cultural transformation has been very important. It is no less important in the Ethiopian case. That is, in place of the feudal culture you have to have a mass culture. Perhaps at this moment we can not talk about a proletariat culture in Ethiopia, but we can talk about a mass culture. And there have been provisions for culture from the early stages, especially after the announcement of the national revolutionary, democratic programme, which also contains in one of its points, a statement on culture. There has been due emphasis on cultural questions and cultural policy of the revolution. A ministry of culture was established to take up this question itself. And within it there were a number of departments that dealt with nationalities, that dealt with literature, that dealt with theatre and other manifestations of cultural development. Any of the hitherto forgotten or neglected or suppressed cultures, started surfacing. And every annual celebration of the revolution is one of the most colourful events to see what this Ethiopia is composed of, to see all its beauty in all its colours, at all its levels, coming from all the tiniest corners of Ethiopia, coming and displaying this culture. This is just one aspect of it. And then linguistically, the idea of having more and more of the languages used in classrooms, on the radio and in the papers as we never had before. And also the de-emphasis of the Christian church, the neutrality between the Christian church and the Muslim mosque of the state in terms of a more and more secular orientation, thereby trying to advance mass values, trying to propagate class values in place of the feudal and religious oriented values. This is being done through what is known as the *Kinet*, which is one of the sparks of cultural development of the revolution. This is what is now "the in-thing" in most localities, the *Kinet*, in the schools and in the peasants' associations. Everybody has their *Kinet*, their cultural group, spearheaded by young people singing the songs of revolution, singing the hopes of the future. So there is an effort, though it is still at its rudimentary stages. I don't think that this is something that has been neglected by the revolution. It's very much emphasised. The literacy campaign is part and parcel of the cultural struggle. Perhaps it is a measure of how serious this matter is, perhaps that explains why one of the places where there has been a relatively high degree of turn over of ministers is the ministry of culture.

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