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**From
Autocracy
to
Bourgeois
Dictatorship**

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A Special Note To the Reader

The present brief analysis would have been - had situations allowed - an introductory chapter to a fully revised, updated and detailed analysis of chapters 5 & 6 of an earlier work⁺ : what is here defined and outlined as the transitional social formation - post-1960 Ethiopia. Thus the reader would come across scattered and repeated references to the main chapters, not included here - eg. right at the outset one reads : "This essay /ie. the projected analysis/ attempts to trace and analyse the fundamental causes, the development and the orientations of the February 1974 Movement. And the purpose of this introduction is to present the quintessence - argument and perspective - of the essay: defines the significance of our historical period and the conceptual-theoretical framework" (pp.1-2) and . . .

We intend and hope to present the projected complete analysis as soon as circumstances allow. In the meantime we have presented the introductory chapter with the firm hope that it could be read and discussed as a brief and integral essay in-itself.

March 16, 1976.

Addis Hiwet.

⁺Addis Hiwet, ETHIOPIA : FROM AUTOCRACY TO REVOLUTION; Published by Review of African Political Economy (Occasional Publication No. 1) (London, 1975).

Argument And Perspective

It is exactly during revolutionary situations - decisive breaks in the continuum of the historical process - when the hitherto accumulated and pent up contradictions of a social formation are released and fought out in the field of open class struggle that conditions for a scientific understanding of that social formation -- backward and forward in time -- become exceptionally propitious : previous conceptions of that formation stand or fall, original and hitherto elusive and dormant aspects of the formation find their clear social articulation. As new and original questions are posed, questions hitherto posed to reality get answered by reality itself.

Since February 1974 Ethiopia has entered (and still finds itself in the throes of) a very complex and rich revolutionary process. The definitive revival of revolution on a world-scale in the seventies has rendered the Ethiopian revolution a specific world-historical significance. The February Movement has posed (and continues to pose) fundamental and original problems which will perhaps pre-occupy Ethiopian revolutionaries for years to come.

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argument and perspective of the essay : defines the significance of our historical period and the conceptual-theoretical framework.

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The history of 20th Century Ethiopia is a history of the process of its 'integration' into the world-capitalist system : the pre-war (1900-1935), the war (1936-1941), and, the post-war (1940s-1950s) periods are significant and crucial moments in the process of that 'integration'. However, the period 1960s-1970s constitutes the most decisive moment in the process of integration of the country into the world-capitalist system. In other words it is at this stage in the general process that onetime feudal Ethiopia was turned into a 'semi-feudal and 'semi-capitalist' society - hence the concept - the transitional social formation. And the February Movement is the logical and inevitable result of that historical process. What it (the February Movement) has posed is the liquidation of dependence, exploitation and underdevelopment that the world-capitalist system generates. In other words, the

I. For the historical development of the world-capitalist system see, O.Cox, Capitalism as a System(N.Y. 1964), for the creation of the world economy - and an analysis of Imperialism - at the turn of the century, see the brilliant work of Bukharin, Imperialism and World Economy (London,1972)

issue of (the new-democratic revolution growing into) socialism is on history's agenda.

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The essential contradictions of the transitional social formation could be conceptualized in the following terms : the disintegration of the feudal mode of production in the context and under the impact of widespread development of commodity and capitalist relations, and the systematic onslaught, penetration of Imperialism into the Ethiopian social formation. We cannot conceive of any other theoretical perspective that could claim to be scientific. In fact it will easily be recognized and established in the course of this essay that a clear and scientific grasp of the decade of the sixties - the formative period of the transitional social formation - is indispensable for a scientific understanding of the February Movement and the stage the country is passing through. In order to achieve that vitally needed conceptual grasp we have abstracted and focused on the three most decisive instances of the transitional social formation : the economic, the ideological, and the political. It is here where the Absolutist State is presented and analyzed as a typical State of the transitional social formation. We argue and develop a fundamental thesis : the contradictions of the economic and ideological instances will eventually have to be fought out in the field of the political class struggle, hence the February Movement.

The 1960s were indeed the decisive link in the chain of the historical process (of the integration of the country into the world-capitalist system). For Ethiopia of the sixties and seventies is in many decisive respects different from that of the forties and even that of the period of the fifties. The description : the transitional social formation reflects, accentuates that difference conceptually.

The preceding paragraphs define the core of the conceptual framework of the present essay. We do not intend to leave the formulation at that. What precisely do we understand by such analytical conceptual tools like social formation, mode of production, the transitional formation, the Absolutist State . . . etc?

Marxism has always recognized a sharp conceptual distinction between a social formation and a mode of production.¹ The determining factor in the distinction is, however, the conceptualization of the social contradictions.²

1. see Mandel: The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx (London 1972) p.132n. Especially Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes (London 1973) pp.15-16, et passim. Louis Althusser & Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (London, 1970)

2. see one of the best writings of Mao Tsetung, 'On Contradiction', in Selected Readings (Peking, 1971)

A mode of production represents the production and social relations of two fundamental classes - ie. slaves and masters (the slave mode of production), landlord and peasant (the feudal mode of production) labour and capital (the capitalist mode of production).

The status of a mode of production undergoes and exhibits different phases and forms.¹ And, moreover, the relation of production between the two fundamental classes in a mode of production does not exhaust the contradictions in that particular 'society' : other forms and modes of production do play their role in the determination of the social contradictions. The co-existence, the specific articulation of different modes and forms of production is specifically phenomenal of a transitional social formation.²

1. For example, this point, and the larger relationship between social formation and mode of production, does not seem to have been adequately grasped by Mikael Ståhl in his otherwise remarkable work : Ethiopia : Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development (Uppsala, 1974)

2. Etienne Balibar, op.cit. Lenin's magnum opus The Development of Capitalism in Russia Vol:3 (Moscow, 1964) is excellent example. That post-Reform Russia was a transitional social formation in which the feudal, petty commodity, obshchinacapitalist modes and forms of production were articulated, and, in which the capitalist mode of production was gaining (almost had already gained) dominance.

But, however, these forms and modes of production do not occupy the same place in the social formation : one of them is dominant. The relationship between the dominant mode of production and the other forms and modes of production develops unevenly.^I The process of disintegration of the hitherto dominant mode of production poses the problematic of transition -- of dominance.

How does the Ethiopian reality relate to the above theoretical, conceptual framework? Post-war Ethiopia has been characterized by a social formation mainly constituted by : the feudal mode of production, petty commodity production, and, the capitalist mode of production. In this social formation the feudal mode of production held dominance over the other two. In our period (post-1960) the contradiction of the social formation -- besides the presence of the Monopoly form of production -- transformed and rendered the social formation a typically transitional character : in the face of the widespread development of commodity and capitalist

I. "In any contradiction the development of the contradictory aspects is uneven. Sometimes they seem to be in equilibrium, which is however only temporary and relative, while unevenness is basic. Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is the one playing the leading role in the contradiction, The nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect which has gained the dominant position." Mao Tsetung, 'On Contradiction' in Selected Readings (Peking 1971) p.II2

production and property relations the hitherto dominant feudal mode of production entered - especially in the second half of our period - an accelerated phase of disintegration - ie. the social formation fully and acutely posed, at all levels, the tortuous problematic of dominance. The February Movement erupted at a particular moment in the exacerbation of this problematic of dominance - and as such posed : whither Ethiopia!? Currently the most burning aspect of the class struggle.

The historical stage the country has been (and is) passing through has been one of the major issues which has engaged the Ethiopian Left over the past five years in a lively - though at times stunted - discussion: Especially in the wake of the February Movement this very issue has come to assume an immense and decisive significance which might determine the alignment/re-alignment of forces within the Ethiopian Left. The contradictions, the differences have only recently started to distinctly clarify themselves. By presenting an unambiguous and coherent analysis on this most fundamental question the present essay hopes to seriously advance the discussion. Therefore, we intend and hope to accomplish two things : 1) pose the complexity of the problematic, and, 2) present what we believe - and uphold to be a correct analysis.

Up until recently, say, pre-February 1974, the historical stage the country has been passing through

was characterized as : 'the final disintegration of feudalism and the rise of capitalism'. This perspective was (and is) commonly shared by the different tendencies within the Ethiopian Left. But, however, this essentially correct broad generalization covered, tended to disguise and blur fundamental differences. The real problem arises when the general is related to the particular, the concrete. The concrete, the particular, is not the reduced, dwarfed, condensed image of a correctly formulated generalization, neither is the latter the enlarged, inflated, grandiose (as in a photographic process) image of the former. Their relationships **are** dialectical.

Does the above correct generalization : 'the final stage in the disintegration of feudalism and the rise of capitalism' - necessarily mean that Ethiopia (and especially now that the revolutionary mass movement has overthrown the feudal landed aristocracy) is undergoing an independent -- ie. from Imperialism -- indigenously generated Capitalism in other words, leading to capitalist industrialization? The negative was - albeit the absence of a correspondingly rigorous analysis -- generally accepted to be true. But of late -- in the wake of the February Movement - a specific tendency has arisen that answers the above question in the affirmative:

Before and in order to answer the question we should briefly examine the theoretical and historical prerequisites for the transition from feudalism to capitalism. It is only then that we can grasp the nature of capitalism in Ethiopia today.

The publication of Maurice Dobb's famous and important work - Studies in the Development of Capitalism (1946) - generated in the fifties a lively discussion among prominent Marxists. The discussion is available in a collection of essays : The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism (1954). The latter could be a satisfactory premise for our own discussion which concerns three fundamental issues : 1) as we believe that the category feudalism is relevant to Ethiopian studies we need a scientific definition of it as a mode of production, 2) the transitional phenomenon - the disintegration of feudalism - ie. the negative aspect of the process, and, 3) the rise of a new mode of production - capitalism, in particular, capitalist industrialization. The implications of the last perspective - related to the last two items - will be clearer in the course of the following discussion.

Feudalism Defined

John Markakis, in one of the few interesting and critical books on Ethiopia written by liberal academics, contested, without argument, and, strangely enough, contrary to the facts he himself presents, the relevance of the category feudalism to Ethiopian studies. Despite the interesting insights that

abound the book -- an assessment of which is not our concern here -- nonetheless, the whole perspective of the book is well within the Parsonian-Weberian school. Markakis writes :^I

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...Consequently/!!!/it is not strictly appropriate to speak of these social groups, in retrospective, as classes, although they impressed most foreign observers as a typically feudal arrangement. Nevertheless, land --- and the manifold relationships based on it --- is the fulcrum of the traditional social structure in Ethiopia.

I. John Markakis, Ethiopia : Anatomy of a Traditional Polity (London, 1974) p.74. Marc Bloch's description of the 'classical trinity' : those who fought (the later day nobility), those who prayed, and those who tilled : Feudal Society, Vol 2 (London 1962) pp. 291-92: But Markakis' statement that "it is not strictly appropriate to speak of these social groups as classes" could have some relevance in another context and only if the class nature of that society is accepted - which Markakis denies. The feudal character of Abyssinian society is well investigated into by Allan Hoben, Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia (Chicago 1973) See also the brilliant article by Donald Crummey, Society and Politics in Ethiopia 1769-1868 : some preliminary observations (Univ. of Illinois, 1973) (mimeo)

The contradictions in the above quotation are obvious : either the author does not have a valid conception of feudalism, or, the society he thus describes, depicts, does not exist. However, Edward Ullendorff, the British Ethiopicist, and as a very good Tory fighting concepts that tend to conjure up 'incendary ideas' picked up the above self-contradictory quotation and 'congratulated' Markakis for having 'exonerated' the ancien régime of any feudal heritage and character.^I

It is this 'original sin' (among others) - ie. the denial of the reality of feudalism to Ethiopian studies - that resulted in the recourse on the part of the author to such obscure and hazy terms like : 'traditional Ethiopia' 'the polity' 'traditional versus Western practice' besides the usual Parsonian/Weberian terminologies : 'social conflict and social cohesion' class conflict and class cohesion' (emphasis on the cohesive side). An autarkic conception of Ethiopia - detached, isolated from the world reality of which it is part and parcel - is very conspicuous of the book therefore of the author's perspective.²

I Edward Ullendorff, in the Times Literary Supplement (September 20, 1974)

2 These remarks - though crucial - by no means deny the solidity of Markakis's book.

Mikael Ståhl, in his otherwise remarkable work on the agrarian structure and policies of the ancien régime, despite his recognition of the reality of feudalism (and his attempts to situate the latter within the conceptual framework of a social formation) is, theoretically (and historically too) inadequate. According to Ståhl 20th Century Ethiopia has evolved 'from' a "tributary mode of production" to a feudal mode of production.^I The attempt to raise a form of feudal extraction of surplus - ie. tribute - to a level of a mode of production unto itself is, theoretically, to say the least, untenable.

Like any other mode of production the feudal mode of production defines the social/production relations of the (two) fundamental social classes the peasantry and the landlord. The mode of extraction of surplus varies : tribute, corvée. . . share-cropping, etc: "Accordinging to /Samir/ Amin", writes Ståhl, "a tributary mode of production refers to a structural relationship where peasant communities are in the possession of the land they till, but their production is controlled by outside /not necessarily/ rulers who appropriate portions of peasant surpluses by exacting a tribute. The tributary mode of production becomes feudal when the land itself is appropriated by the rulers and the peasants are reduced to tenants, each peasant family becoming directly subordinated to a landowner. The peasant communities can no longer protect their individual

I. Ståhl, op. cit. p.68

member families. In the feudal mode of production, surplus appropriation still takes place under tribute forms."^I But this does not warrant the identification of a separate tributary mode of production. In fact it is not at all difficult to imagine in a feudal relationship where the tenant still retains nominal possession and usufructory rights of the land he tills. The most important aspect of the relationship is the personal obligation of the peasant to the lord and the advantages accruable to the latter therefrom.

But, however, the difference between the two tenure systems - peasant communities still in possession of their land, and, landless peasants - ie. tenants tilling the land that is actually owned by the landlord class - become clearly pronounced in the development of commodity production and, especially the penetration of capitalist relations. As we shall see in the discussion on the economic conditions of the transitional social formation below, the land tenure system in the South was more favourable

I. Mikael Ståhl, op.cit. p.10. For example Marc Bloch's characterization of European feudalism could be accepted as the characterization of Abyssinian society until the pre-war period. Bloch, op.cit. Vol.2, p.446. Peasants could have nominal, even actual (as free-holders) possession of land, but the fact that they exist within the fiefdom of lords, there develops a feudal relation between the latter and the peasants. The difference between a bonded tenant - ie. the serf, and the free-holding peasantry is, at times, a matter of degree.

to capitalist penetration than that of the North. Otherwise, the claim for the existence of a tributary 'mode of production' is not, theoretically, convincing.¹ Whatever the case for a tributary 'mode of production' - in fact, a semi-feudal society - elsewhere, its application to Ethiopia is not tenable. However, we should also guard ourselves against the more tendentious perspective that tends to readily evoke feudalism as an explanation of every and any country's past just preceding the latter's capitalist present : this forms part of the un-marxist unilinear schema - 'from primitive communism . . . via feudalism . . . via capitalism to higher communism.'

The participants in the discussion on the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism : A Symposium² are generally in agreement as to what they understand by feudalism. Even here the particular emphasis one puts on this or that aspect of feudalism does affect one's interpretation and explanation of what actually brought about the disintegration of feudalism and the birth of capitalism.³

1. This applies no less to Samir Amin's own formulation : for Amin the 'tributary mode of production' is another ("preferred") name for the Asiatic mode of production. But the Asiatic mode of production is much more than that. see, Mandel, op.cit. (chap. 8)
2. Paul M. Sweezy, H.K. Takahashi, Maurice Dobb, Rodney Hilton, Christopher Hill (An Arena Publication, not dated, 1954?)
3. For example Sweezy confining himself to a narrow definition of feudalism as "production for use" considers feudalism as incapable of internal dissolution and therefore poses long-distance trade -

As remarked earlier feudalism as a mode of production represents, defines the social and production relations of the two fundamental social classes : the land lord class and the peasantry. Feudal production is generally geared to consumption and whatever accumulation exists is in the form of use values. Unlike the capitalist mode of production the feudal mode of production is characterized by the organic relationship of the instances : the political, the ideological and the economic. In this organic relationship of the instances the political is dominant.¹

The extraction of peasant surplus takes different forms (expressing the strength of feudalism at any particular phase in its development) : labour service tribute, rent payment in kind and/or in money, etc. These, then, are the fundamental characteristics of feudalism. So, we conclude this section with a definition of feudalism as, we believe, correctly formulated by Maurice Dobb :

The emphasis of this definition will lie, /Dobb goes on/ not in the juridical relation between vassal and sovereign, nor in the relation between production and the destination of the product, but in the relation between the direct producer (whether he be artisan in some workshop or peasant cultivator on the land) and his immediate superior or even overlord and in the socio-economic content of the obligation which connects them. /A marxist definition of feudalism will consider the latter as/ virtually identical with what we

-ie. an external factor - as the decisive dissolvent of feudalism, op.cit. chap. I

I. see Takahashi's concise and luminous discussion, op. cit. pp. 33-35.

generally mean by serfdom : an obligation laid on the producer by force and independently of his own volition to fulfill certain economic demands of an overlord, whether these demands take the form of services to be performed or of dues to be paid in money or in kind - of work or /tribute to be paid to the lord/.I

Having defined some of our conceptual tools and categories (others to be elaborated and defined in the main body of the text)we now move to the second - and more crucial - stage of our discussion : the problematic of transition in Europe and in Ethiopia.

I. Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism (London, 1963) p.35. (emphasis added)

The Transition To Capitalism : Europe

The expression — the transition from feudalism to capitalism in fact involves not two but three phenomena . 1) the disintegration of feudalism, 2) the transitional form of production, 3) the rise of the capitalist mode of production. Somehow anticipating further discussion : what 16th Century Europe and 20th Century Ethiopia 'share' is simply this extremely broad theoretical generalization : the transition to capitalism. However, the two world-historical conditions are qualitatively different and so are the two capitalisms, to use Samir Amin's very fruitful terms : in the earlier case it was a transition to capitalism of the Centre, in the latter case it is transition to peripheral capitalism - ie. integration into an already existing and highly developed world-capitalist system - Imperialism. The demonstration of the last point is the very object of the rest of this introductory ~~chaptre~~ chapter.

The decay, decline and disintegration of feudalism in Western Europe was a protracted process and, above all, and this is a very important point, such a process did not, spontanea, result in - though it was the pre-requisite for - the birth of the capitalist mode of production. What the period of feudal disintegration gives birth to is the commodity form of production. But commodity production is not capitalist production and it could even co-exist with feudalism. But the increasing independence from

feudal relations and generalization of petty commodity production, in agriculture and in crafts industry, led to the increasing social differentiation and therefore disintegration of petty commodity production itself. It was out of this advanced social differentiation "during a transitional period of feudalism-in-decline"^I that the capitalist mode of production was born. It is the generalization of the production and circulation of commodity that

signifies the birth of the capitalist mode of production - ie. the consummation of the transition to and actualization of capitalism. A social formation in which the production and circulation of commodity (labour-power, means of production and subsistence . . . all now being converted into commodities) are generalized is a capitalist society.

In Western Europe feudalism was, in the 14th and the 15th centuries, undergoing generalized crises. The rise of corporate towns initiated a whole set of new social contradictions - between town/industry and countryside/agriculture. The impact of this fundamental contradiction on agriculture was to generate

I. "Precisely because this process of social differentiation within the petty mode of production had to mature before the capitalist production was born, an interval was necessary between the start of the decline of serfdom and the rise of Capitalism." Dobb, in Symposium, p.57. It is important to note here : for Dobb the decline of serfdom is not analogous with the decline of feudalism.

a general commutation of labour services (marking the decline of serfdom) to rent payment in kind or in money. It was this process that created the counterpart of the urban-industrial petty-bourgeoisie in agriculture - viz. the agricultural petty producer. On the other hand, the spread of money economy had already impoverished significant sections of the feudal nobility who could no longer maintain their old pompous, lavish style of life. It should also be noted that it was not merely the immanent forces of a money economy that prompted landlords to undertake the commutation of labour services : the great peasant uprisings of the 14th and 15th centuries themselves had played a decisive role in that.

The then increasingly expanding local market stimulated agricultural productivity and therefore created the real possibility of converting a portion of surplus - after rent payment - into commodities. Some prosperous peasant petty producers (and the small gentry) started expanding their cultivable land (and even renting additional ones). The availability of cheap labour (evicted tenants, impoverished poor peasants, disbanded feudal retainers etc.) favoured the emergence of a kulak class. These kulaks more and more combined agrarian capitalism with commercial capitalism and very soon constituted a formidable challenge to the monopolist merchant bourgeoisie, which was allied with the feudal monarchists. (These kulaks were the staunchest partisans,

the backbone of the bourgeois revolutions in England and in France.)

The other fundamental aspect of Western European history in the 14th and in the 15th centuries was the emergence of the centralised, territorially-defined State. This period witnessed the decline of warlordism, principalities and dukedoms. With the revival of long-distance trade and the rise of merchant capital the centralising feudal monarchies increasingly incorporated the merchant bourgeoisie into their social-political structure.

Nicos Poulantzas, in his remarkable theoretical work, Political Power and Social Classes attributes to the Absolutist State a typologically bourgeois character. Poulantzas considers petty commodity production as the transitional (to capitalism) form of production. He focuses on the future of petty commodity production : its 'inexorable', 'inevitable' disintegration and transformation into capitalist production. And hence he concludes by characterizing the Absolutist State as typologically bourgeois.

Poulantzas writes : I

The function of the Absolutist State is precisely not to operate within the limits fixed by an already given mode of production, but to produce not-yet-given relations of production (ie. Capitalist relations) and to put an end to feudal relations of production, its function is to transform and to fix the limits of the mode of production. The function of this transition state during primary accumulation depends on the specific effectiveness of the political in the initial stage of

transition. Thus the degrees and the forms of this intervention of the absolutist state depends chiefly on the concrete existence of the historical conditions of capitalism in the various social formation.

Though Poulantzas' assertion that the Absolutist State needs for its continued existence to generate "not-yet-given relations of production" (and hence its disintegrative function on feudalism and the resulting superstructural dislocations) is defensible, however, his characterization of the Absolutist State - despite "the presence of the capitalist type of state" in the latter - as typologically bourgeois is theoretically and historically debatable. The capacity of the Absolutist State to generate, produce, the "not-yet-given" capitalist relations of production is decisively limited. And therefore, despite the function Poulantzas attributes to the Absolutist State - the latter is never its own grave-digger.

On the other hand, Dobb and Takahashi leave no doubt as to the still feudal - though a mature stage of "feudalism-in-decline" - character of the Absolutist State. And, the weakness, in fact, defect (somewhat reflecting a structuralist bias) of Poulantzas' perspective is that he simply does not reckon with the peasantry - granted that the latter was undergoing various forms and degrees of social differentiation, but, as yet did not lose its overall peasa-

I. Political Power and Social Classes (London, 1973) pp. 160-161 (emphasis in the original).

nt character. Takahashi is quite categorical in his characterization of the Absolutist State as feudal :^I

In feudal society . . . productivity develops as the productivity of the direct producer himself, and therefore the law of development in feudalism can only lead in the direction of the liberation and independence of the peasants themselves. It is clear that . . . absolutism was nothing but a system of concentrated force for counteracting the crises of feudalism arising out of this inevitable development.

The two conceptions of the Absolutist State are significantly different : the first does not pose the bourgeois revolution whereas the second does.

If the 14th and 15th centuries revealed the profound crises of Western European feudalism the ensuing centuries witnessed the increasing generalization of commodity production, the penetration of money economy into agriculture, the widespread social differentiation among agrarian and urban petty producers - ie. massive impoverishment of poor urban crafts (wholesale transformation of journeymen and apprentices into wage-labourers proper) and the massive eviction of poor peasants and the yeomen from the land as a result of the development of the enclosure system. This - the separation of masses of people from their means of production and subsistence - was by far the most important decisive pre-requisite for

I. Takahashi, op.cit. pp.46-47 (emphasis added). For a masterly study of the Absolutist State see Perry Anderson's latest work, The Lineages of the Absolutist State (London 1975)

the birth and consolidation of the capitalist mode of production. But, however, until the rise of industrial capital Western European society faced chronic underemployment of its labour force.

In this respect, equally decisive factors for the consolidation of Western European capitalism were taking place in the 16th and 17th centuries and on a world-scale.

One of the greatest historical missions of capitalism has been the transformation of the histories of peoples, countries and regions into world-history. Marx must have had this mission of the capitalist system in mind when he declared : "World history did not always exist; history as world history is a result."

One of the fundamental and in the long-run decisive conditions for the consolidation of European capitalism was the international division of labour in the 16th century (and ever since) that favoured Western Europe. This pre-requisite and, the internationalist, at birth, character of capitalism is now sufficiently substantiated in documented studies. As one prominent Marxist historian tells us : "the history of /capitalism/ cannot be written simply in terms of Europe, still less of any single country." Then developing the theme of the international division of labour that favoured Europe right at the outset of its capitalist transformation the historian goes on:

From the 16th century on . . . the regions of developing capitalism could establish three major zones of economic dependence, the formal and informal empire : the Americas, directly conquered and administered, the 'East', initially exploited by maritime operations, controlled trading posts and later partly (as in India, Ceylon and Indonesia) by direct occupation, and agrarian Eastern Europe, which became a major supplier of food and raw materials for the urbanised and developing West. These dependent regions were essential to capitalist development but did not undergo it. On the contrary, and with the exception of some small patches of European settlement, they were 're-feudalised', turned into plantation economies on the basis of slavery or forced labour, or otherwise made complimentary to the 'advanced' economies.¹

The international division of labour at the dawn of the capitalist era was initially the work of outright, unbridled violence, plunder and loot. It was much later that it was 'replaced' by the mechanism of immanent market forces. Ernest Mandel, paraphrasing a famous formulation of Marx on the decisive role played by the non-Western European world in the period of 'primitive accumulation' of capital, explains :

. . . all through /the 16th to the 18th century/ of the birth of capitalism the two forms of surplus-value appeared at each step. On the one hand, it was the outcome of the surplus labour of the wage workers hired by the capitalists; on the other, it was the outcome of values stolen,

1. E.J.Hobsbawm, in Marxism Today (Aug. 1967) p.241, col.I (emphasis added).

plundered, seized by tricks, pressure or violence from the overseas peoples with whom the western world had contact. From the conquest and pillage of Mexico and Peru by the Spaniards to the sacking of Indonesia by the Portugues and the Dutch and the ferocious exploitation of India by the British, the history of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries is an unbroken chain of deeds of brigandage which were so many acts of international concentration of values and capital in Western Europe, the enrichment of which was paid for, in the literal sense of the word, by the impoverishment of the plundered areas.¹

What the epoch of Monopoly Capitalism does is to further deepen and crystallize the division of the world into its present centre (metropolitan) and peripheral (satelite) structure, or the development/underdevelopment dichotomy.²

Thus the two most decisive factors that determined the birth and development of capitalism in Western Europe (and therefore that determined the character of modern world history) are : i) the organic, pro-

1. Ernest Mandel, Marxist Economic Theory (London, 1968) p.443. (emphasis in the original).
2. For Latin America see the two widely read books of A.G. Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America (New York, London, 1969) and, Latin America : Underdevelopment or Revolution (New York, London 1969). Robert Owen, 'Egypt and Europe : from the French Expedition to British Occupation', and Prabhat Patnaik, 'Imperialism and the Growth of Indian Capitalism' - both in Studies in the Theory of Imperialism (ed. by Robert Owen & Bob Sutcliffe (London 1972)). Paul Baran has discussed in a luminous way how the industrialisation of Britain had for its other face the de-industrialisation of India, Political Economy of Growth (London 1973) pp.277-285.

tracted disintegration of Western European feudalism and, 2) the loot, plunder of the non-Western European world and the international division of labour that had all-along favoured Western Europe.

All transition epochs pose as never before the accumulated contradictions of the decadent, stagnant, moribund system, and the latter is revealed for what it is - a fetter on the development of the new, dynamic and living reality. Hence transition epochs are also known for the vividness and generalization of the class struggle. And the overthrow of an old order is the responsibility of strategically placed class/classes in society. In an oft-quoted statement of Marx : "Force is the midwife of an old society pregnant with a new one." The classical bourgeois revolutions played such a midwifery function in the transition to capitalism. For example, the role played by the English Revolution of the seventeenth century - especially that of the Cromwellians - is well recognized : Christopher Hill, the leading Marxist historian of the revolution, makes the following authoritative judgement :

One way of appreciating the impact of politics on economic development is to ask whether the course of English history could have been different. Such a question is worth asking now that we can see western imperialism as a brief interlude in human history. Suppose the little England of the early years of Elizabeth had continued, suppose the outcome of the English Revolution had been a victory for the radicals who so nearly

captured control of the army in 1647-49; that in consequence the proletarianization of small masters in industry, the disappearance of the yeomanry had been very much slowed down; that Leveller opposition to the conquest of Ireland had prevailed in 1649; suppose . . . merchants /were persuaded that it was wrong/ 'to rob the poor Indians', to make slaves, or for governments of the rich to use the poor to fight their battles for them. Suppose there had been no Navigation Acts, no powerful navy, no colonial monopoly empire, no commercial revolution. Dutch merchants would have continued to carry /English/ trade, capital accumulation would have been far slower, there would have been no industrial revolution in England in advance of the rest of the world.¹

Definitely such a historical process - of capitalist development and bourgeois revolution - is non-existent in Ethiopia : the disintegration of Ethiopian feudalism takes a completely different process and meaning from that of 14th and 15th centuries Western European feudalism, and, what is in question is the very prospect of an independent Ethiopian Capitalism. And Ethiopia has no 'era of rising capitalism', instead it becomes absorbed into the world-capitalist system assuming a defined peripheral structure. The absorption of pre-(non)- capitalist societies into the global market system has always been and is one of the fundamental conditions for the continued survival of Imperialism (of the capitalist mode of production)

I. Christopher Hill, Reformation to Industrial Revolution (London 1969) p. 15 (emphasis added)

The only other experience that might be presented in the present circumstances is the so-called 'revolution from above' or the Junker/Meji path of capitalist development. Though there are undoubtedly certain elements of resemblance between the Dergue and the 'Prussian way', again, the two experiences are fundamentally different. The most conspicuous and decisive element in the 'Prussian way' is the 'proper utilization' of the resources of the State. But the State is not a supra-historical category : its capacity and forms of intervention in social development are decisively determined by its specific class character and the specific world-historical situation. It is only when considered from such a perspective - of class and world-historical character - that the association of the Dergue with the 'Prussian way' turns out to be an analogy between a historical reality and its mirage. This point will be discussed at some length in the next section where the role of the Dergue in the present transitional phase in Ethiopia will be discussed.

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Transition to Peripheral Capitalism : Ethiopia

With the problematic - the stage the country is passing through - we are dealing with the most fundamental and the most burning broader theoretical-historical question which the Ethiopian Left has yet to answer.^I

One fundamental aspect of the complex problematic of the stage the country is passing through is whether an independent (from Imperialism) Ethiopian Capitalism is possible or not. In this chapter we shall answer this question in the negative : the conditions of feudal disintegration in Ethiopia will be discussed, solid theoretical arguments explaining the impossibility of an autonomous capitalist development for Ethiopia will be advanced, further on the exact relationship between the present 'Corporate' State and monopoly capitalism, and, the nature of the 'Corporate' State itself, will be duly defined and analysed. These theoretical arguments will then be substantiated in the main body of the essay.

I. After two years of a truly earth-shaking revolutionary movement the Ethiopian Left has not yet produced the analysis worthy of the revolutionary experience. The absence and delay of such an analysis remain one of the factors for the persistent disarray and confusion that still beset the ranks of the revolutionary movement.

As remarked earlier the history of 20th century Ethiopia is a history of its 'integration' into the world-capitalist system. One of the decisive and active agencies of that process of integration has been 'the modern State'. The origin and the rise of the Ethiopian 'modern State' could be traced to the pre-war period.^I After a brief break and interlude marked by the Fascist Occupation (1936-'41) - and under the impact of the latter - that State was consolidated in the immediate post-war period. Here the briefest survey of the process of consolidation of that State is in order, both as an essential historical background to the main essay and for an analysis of the issue at hand : the absence of conditions for an independent Ethiopian Capitalism.

The so-called Italo-Ethiopian war ended in 1941 and Italian imperialism lost its East African Empire : Eritrea and 'Italian'-Somaliland and Ethiopia. The whole of the Horn of Africa (excepting the French colony) then passed under the military domination of British imperialism : Eritrea was subjected to a British Military Administration, 'Italian'-Somaliland was annexed to 'British'-Somaliland, and, the Ethiopian Autocrat was restored to power. In view of the fact that the second world war was, in 1941, still

I. See Pankhurst, Economic History-1800-1935 (Addis Abeba, 1968). Addis Hiwet, Ethiopia : From Autocracy to Revolution (London, 1975) esp. chap. 3.

raging the British had an immediate military strategic interest in the whole of the Horn of Africa. The political alliance between the Autocrat and the imperialist victors - Anglo-American - of world war II was immediately cemented by binding treaties and agreements. This alliance had serious and fateful consequences for the structure and orientation of the State.

And very soon the Yankee colossus emerged as the uncontested leader of a reconstituted and war-ravaged imperialist system.^I The displacement on a world-scale of British imperialism by American imperialism also reflected itself, or better, coincided with its early displacement in Ethiopia. As the British retreated the Americans stepped in. However, both of them had played an active role in the consolidation of a client Absolutist State in Ethiopia.

The consolidation of the 'modern State' in the '40s and '50s initially and in the short run meant the strengthening of the hegemony of the landed aristocracy while it also meant, implied, the eventual undermining of that very hegemony : for the 'modern State' **cannot but** produce non-(and anti-) feudal social classes, and, the very administration of the modern State suggests that feudalists needed a (non-feudal) sub-altern class that could administer the state 'on their behalf' : in fact, the formation of

I. see Harry Magdoff, The Age of Imperialism (New York) 1969). David Horowitz, Imperialism and Revolution (London, 1969).

a sort of power-bloc, though not at the outset. However, in the '40s and '50s the landed aristocracy had an undivided hegemony, domination, over the State: they dominated the latter at both levels - State power and State apparatus. It is in our period (post-1960) that serious structural dislocation overtakes the State and the other dominant aspects of the transitional social formation: the endemic structural dislocation resulted in the loosening of the grip of the landed aristocracy on not only the State apparatus but also on State power as well.

Italian Fascism left behind considerable investment, especially in infrastructure, and the impact of this on the economy was not negligible. As part of its war strategy of conquest and subjugation of Ethiopia Italian Imperialism completed, in the first two years of the occupation, over 2,000 miles of roads, and of the total of over 4,000 miles of road built by the Italians about half were macademized. They also left behind a considerable number of buildings, some of which housed the chief ministries in the post-war years, while it was also true that Ethiopian ruling class grandees took over the "amenities and conveniences which the Italians had prepared for themselves."¹

In 1941 Haile Selassie needed the British as they needed him. The Agreement signed between the British and the Autocrat imposed on the latter: "clauses which gave the British armed forces wide powers of

¹ I. Perham, The Government of Ethiopia (London, 1947) p.185.

action of control of their cantonment and of freedom of movement and immunity from Ethiopian jurisdiction."¹ And, in fact, the country remained under British military domination until 1942, when the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement was signed. According to the most important aspect of the said agreement: Haile Selassie agreed to give priority, in the appointment of senior government advisers, to British nationals, and in the appointment of others to gain the prior consent of the British Government, in return the British agreed to establish a military mission for the training and organisation of a central army. (The British Military Mission remained in the country until 1951, the date of its withdrawal, when it was replaced by an American Mission) Accordingly, British advisers were appointed to nearly all of the ministries: interior, justice, education, communications and industry, posts and telegraph, and they were even dispatched to some of the provinces as administrative advisers. In the field of military organisation they trained and equipped - mostly with Italian war booties - 10 infantry battalions, an artillery regiment and an artillery of armoured cars, and they also organised the police force. The newly created and organised battalions were strategically stationed in the country: Gojam, Begemdir, Tigre, Harar, Sidamo and Jimma. It was also at this time that the old Imperial Body Guard was reorganised

¹ I. op.cit. p.169.

2. It should also be noted that it was with British assistance that Haile Selassie was able to suppress the

Thus with the consolidation of the repressive organs - the army and the police - of the Absolutist State, the latter was assured a firm domination over the social formation as a whole. But to play the role of 'organiser' of the social formation the State needed more than repressive organs. So, in the '40s and '50s the provincial administrative and bureaucratic apparatuses of the State were streamlined and centralised : by far the most important measures were - the imperial decrees of 1942 and 1943 related to provincial administration and the creation of the Council of Ministers, respectively, and, of the decade of the '50s by far the most important is the so-called Revised Constitution of 1955. The implications of each of these measures could be briefly explained.

The 1942 Decree reorganised and centralised the pre-war fiefdoms of warlords and other feudal grandees. First, of all the fiefdom administration was 'abolished', in fact superseded, and the numerous fiefdoms were reorganised into larger administrative units of 12 provinces and the responsible officials of each administration were directly appointed and made answerable, responsible, to the central State.^I

A year later an Imperial Order established the Council of Ministers. This Order is in line with the

Weyane and Ogaden revolts, both of them in 1943.
see Perham, op.cit. Gilkes, The Dying Lion (London, 1975)

I. Markakis, Anatomy of a Traditional Polity(chap.I2)

explanation suggested, advanced, above; the feudal autocrat and the landed aristocracy as a whole, in order to run a 'modern State' needed the active assistance of bourgeois bureaucrats. The Council of Ministers, of which both ministers and vice-ministers were made members, was merely an advisory body to the Autocrat.^I

The third measure - the so-called Revised Constitution of 1955 - had a double significance. After the withdrawal of the British from Eritrea, in 1952, the latter was made by a United Nations resolution, to enter into a federal union with the empire-state. The very notion of federal union was anathema to the Autocrat but, nevertheless, given the political conditions of the early '50s he had but to accept it:² of course, as a matter of necessity and not of preference. However, for the Ethiopian Autocrat the transition from federation to annexation was a rather easy business, and, indeed, the federation proved an ideal Trojan Horse of Autocracy. No sooner the federal union was established than the Autocrat

- I. In our period this relation between the Autocrat and the bureaucrats as individuals would change into a veritable, de facto, power-bloc between the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy. The power-bloc was the ruling class in the transitional social formation.
2. 'On December 2, 1950, Aklilu Habtewold/the late/ had remarked in the General Assembly of the United Nations that "Ethiopia wanted outright annexation but accepted federation in a spirit of compromise" in Greenfield, Ethiopia : A New Political History (London, 1967)p.303.

started to undermine it.

In the '50s the unevenness in political and economic development between Eritrea and Ethiopia was distinctly sharp : whereas feudalism was relatively intact in Ethiopia, Eritrea had already been integrated into the world-capitalist system and this had created, politically, however deformed and fragile, but nonetheless bourgeois democratic structures : exercise of basic civil liberties, political parties, trade unions, etc. So, the federation was, from the outset, flawed with fundamental contradictions : either the Eritrean political structure would have to be made to conform to the principles of Autocracy or, the Eritrean political structure would have to be extended to the rest of the empire-state. There was, indeed, no third path, and for Autocracy the second was out of the question. And the first meant the updating of the 1930 Constitution so that the latest territorial acquisition of the empire-state and certain important post-war political realities were 'duly' considered. It was in this condition that the so-called Revised Constitution was promulgated : the re-strengthening, consolidation of Autocracy!

The gradual and open undermining of the autonomous status of Eritrea quite logically incensed a number of Eritreans of petty-bourgeois mould into launching a liberation struggle and ever since the Eritrean question has remained one of the fundamental political questions in Ethiopia. However, on the other hand

the federation also meant the accession of the Eritrean bourgeois bureaucrats into the Ethiopian power structure. And this consolidated the enlarged Ethiopian bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Besides, the second half of the '50s is also important for other essential developments : the first influx of the post-war educated 'élite' entered the State apparatus the period also saw consecutive ministerial reshuffles, undoubtedly indicative of the political instability at the centre of government. This was, in fact, the most untenable period since the war^I. It was, in fact, the then developing relative fragmentation of political power within the ruling class that was the fundamental cause behind the December 1960 coup attempt.

The other important aspect of the '50s that needs proper understanding and emphasis is the growing American presence (since the late '40s especially since the early '50s). The growing domination of Ethiopia by American imperialism fits logically into the shift in the hegemony of the world-capitalist system from the Western to the Eastern Atlantic. West European and Japanese imperialisms emerged from the devastating war with ramshackled economies. Even the relatively intact British Imperialism could not completely withstand the serious dislocations subsequent upon the war : its world-wide empire began to roll back under the barrage of anti-colonialist movements of all sorts. The absence of an American

I. Clapham, Haile Selassie's Government, pp.23-24

colonial empire disguised the rapacity of its imperialism and even giving it the deceptive image of leader of a 'free world'. In general: in the consolidation of the global domination of American imperialism 'aid' - military, economic, cultural ,etc. - played a very important role. American military bases dotted the landscape of the 'free world'.^I It was in this way and in the course of the war that the U.S. started its policy of domination in Ethiopia. Since then American imperialism has dominated the most decisive region of the social formation - viz. the State.

The main feature of American imperialism in Ethiopia has been politico-military. Indeed, in a part of the world where American domination was uncertain or not yet firmly established Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, besides, of course, the Zionist State, proved a lasting and reliable beachhead of U.S. imperialism. It is this global strategy of American imperialism that explains the fact that the largest amount of U.S. military aid to Africa has been directed to Ethiopia. And, this is a crucial corollary of the above : the presence of American imperialism in Ethiopia became the alibi for the penetration of

I. By 1959 the U.S. had a total of 275 major base complexes in 31 countries and more than 1,400 foreign bases, and these bases were manned by about a million American troops. Baran and Sweezy, Monopoly Capital (London, 1968) p.190. For further analysis see Harry Magdoff, op.cit.

foreign capital - British, French, Dutch, Japanese Indian, etc. during our period.

In 1942 the American government gained - with the full consent (perhaps invitation) of the British - a first foothold in the Horn of Africa and took over a British-built radio station near Asmara, in Eritrea. This radio station was later converted into the famous Kagnev base. Exactly ten years later the British withdrew from Eritrea. By then American imperialism had already forged a lasting alliance with the Autocrat's regime : in 1951 the American Mission replaced the British Military Mission in Ethiopia, and it was the consolidation of this alliance that was to dictate America's policy on the question of 'the disposal' of Eritrea. And a year later, after the withdrawal of the British from Eritrea, America had already signed the secret - now public - military treaty with the Autocrat's regime. (The treaty still stands!) In the late '40s Americans began more and more to replace the British advisers in the court of Haile Selassie : the latter's advisers on foreign affairs, education finance, communications, State Bank, etc. were all American nationals. An American was appointed, in 1943, governor of the State Bank and was able to arrange for 1945-6 an American loan of U.S. \$3,000,000 : the loan was principally meant "to raise the volume of trade between America and Ethiopia."^I

I. E. Luther, Ethiopia Today, (London, 1958) pp.121-22

1950 is another important date . In that year the regime announced its foreign investment policy. In that same year American policy in Ethiopia assumed a clear shape. To take up the first : the fact that the regime was ready, by 1950, to announce its call for foreign capital was a good indication of its relative consolidation. This was by far the first official overture of the regime to foreign monopoly capital. In view of conditions in our period - as far as the penetration of monopoly capital - it is worthwhile to postulate the main points of the Statement of Policy for the Encouragement of Foreign Capital Investment in Ethiopia¹: tax exemption for the first five years after the beginning of production, customs free importation of machinery, repatriation of profit guaranteed, the complete withdrawal of invested capital was also allowed. (It is interesting to note that the same terms will be restated in the mid-'60s.)

1950, as stated earlier, is also a crucial date in the periodisation of American domination in Ethiopia. The agency of American penetration in the '50s was later to become infamous 'aid'. And American 'aid' had a specific objective. In the 1950s 'aid' was di-

1. In our period the conditions - the 'investment climate' - will significantly and increasingly become general - irrespective of form and type of nationality of company. Gilkes, The Dying Lion (London, 1975) pp. 121-22.

rected to two specific and related areas : the consolidation of the State, and, the development of infrastructure. For example, the Imperial Highway and the Imperial Board of Telecommunications were established in 1950 with loans from the IBRD. Point Four, which was established in 1949, one of the earliest forerunners of American policy of domination, began its activities in 1952, in the words of the Autocrat's American adviser during the greater part of the '50s : "to develop a native corps of trained technical and administrative personnel capable of assuming, eventually, full responsibility for the operation and management of development /sic/ projects. In addition to on-the-spot training, the program attempts to achieve this long-term objective by helping to expand and improve the country's existing institutions which can provide such training. If facilities for training are not available within the country, promising young native personnel may be sent abroad for study."¹ Indeed a whole strategy of American imperialism is summed up in this quotation. The "expansion and improvement" of the country's "existing institutions" is no other than the consolidation of the bureaucracy as a bourgeois category, as the development of "a native corps of trained technical and administrative personnel" is none other than the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. That the latter could be a more conscious and therefore more efficient ally of imperialism could be considered one of the dominant features of American policy

1. (See p. 42 for reference)

in Ethiopia in the '50s. But, however, as the real potent political force was represented by the feudal nobility it was with the latter that American imperialism forged a lasting alliance. In 1953 an agreement between the regime and the U.S. government was signed : the Americans leased the Kagnew station, and undertook to train and equip a 12,000 men soldiery. Up to 1972 U.S. military aid to Ethiopia had totalled U.S. \$187 million - ie. over 60% of all U.S. military aid for Africa, over the years 1963-'70 nearly 3,000 Ethiopian officers attended various training courses in the U.S. Indeed, the Ethiopian military structure is almost an appendage of the American military structure. In conclusion : 'aid' has been one of the most effective methods by which American domination in Ethiopia has been established. And, now, the creation of a 'Corporate' State in Ethiopia specifically favours American-dominated multi-nationals. Therefore American domination in Ethiopia might enter a new and more crucial phase.

The socio-political and economic conditions in our period will be fully examined in the next chapter. After the above brief and general description of post-war conditions we must now analyse what the role of the Absolutist State in the Ethiopian social formation had been. This being a fundamental theoretical

I. Luther, op.cit. pp.132-33.

question with direct relevance to the contention that conditions for an independent (from imperialism) Ethiopian Capitalism do not exist, a rigorous analysis is absolutely essential. Continuing our analysis : though the Ethiopian social formation has been (and is) undergoing significant changes - and these would be duly considered - however, our contention on the impossibility of an indigenous Ethiopian Capitalism still stands. Despite the really radical measures of the Dergue the 'Corporate' State it is well on the way of setting up is by no means the agency of independent Ethiopian Capitalism.

To start with the first : the Absolutist State and its role in the Ethiopian social formation.

The Absolutist State - in our period - had, with one important, fundamental, difference, all the characteristics of a transitional State : from feudalism to capitalism. And that fundamental and decisive difference lies in the character of our epoch : the age of imperialism and the struggle for world socialism. It is the latter qualification that decisively transformed and differentiated the function of the Ethiopian Absolutist State from the Absolutist States of the pre-Imperialist epoch. It is this difference in historical epoch that rendered the Ethiopian Absolutist State compared to its 'counterparts', say, at the dawn of the capitalist era, with more-bourgeois characteristics than is 'usual' in an Absolutist State.

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It was only by assimilating some bourgeois State characteristics that the feudal landed aristocracy could consolidate the Absolutist State as the organiser of the Ethiopian social formation. This assimilation of advanced bourgeois categories was bound to render the subsequent structural dislocation ever more profound and sharp features. At the level of the ruling class this takes the form of an ever developing and sharpening crisis of hegemony and general fragmentation of power, ie. one of the constitutive elements of a revolutionary situation.

And as the hitherto dominant mode of production within the social formation undergoes disintegration the capacity of the Absolutist State (and therefore its very raison d'être) to organise the social formation thereby becomes decisively undermined and this further aggravates the contradictions within the ruling classes and propels masses of people into active struggle against the social system : repeated and sporadic peasant uprisings, the militant democratic intelligentsia, the rise of a youthful working class movement, oppressed nationalities and other social groups are increasingly politicised.

If one of the characteristics of the Absolutist State is "not to operate within the limits of" the feudal mode of production, it is also true that its capacity to transform the latter is decisively limited. And in this respect it plays, objectively, disintegrative role in the social formation. But,

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to the extent that it opts for a sneal-slow, gradual decomposition of feudalism and the shift in the dominance of the mode of production to capitalist, and the realisation of such an option being impossible, the Absolutist State eventually leads the social formation to an impasse. That such were conditions in the early '70s will be easily substantiated.

The disintegrative function of the Absolutist State on feudalism and its incapacity to transform the latter was actively revealed in our period, more especially since the second half of the sixties : the pêle mêle growth of urbanisation, monetisation of taxation and development of cash economy, the encouragement of agrarian and commercial capitalism, the encouragement of foreign capital penetration in Ethiopia . . . It is this total situation that created a new process in the production and reproduction, and commutation/disappearance of social classes in our period. Thus the Ethiopian Absolutist State mediated and organised the alliance and interests of the feudal landed aristocracy, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, and of foreign capital.

The fundamental reason why the feudal aristocracy could have played such a role is not very far to seek indeed, simple and clear enough : it was the absence not only of an Ethiopian industrial bourgeoisie but also the absence of a well developed commercial

bourgeoisie that gave them (the feudal landed aristocracy) such a long historical respite and therefore enabled them to retain decisive political initiative for so long. In short: there was, until recently, no class of any significance, be it within the power-bloc or at the lower levels, that actively threatened to dislodge them from power, and hence they (the landed aristocracy) proved indispensable to organising and mediating the interests of foreign capital and of the bureaucratic and comprador bourgeoisie. This was the role played by the feudal landed aristocracy in the transitional social formation, disappearance and commutation of social classes. The organising and mediating role played by the landed aristocracy could be illustrated by the following.

A Government report undertaken in 1967 indicated: of the 489 commercial and industrial enterprises surveyed, with at least \$10,000 paid-up capital, no less than 385 of them were under the control - management and ownership - of foreign capital, predominantly Italian, Greek, Indian and Armenian; the rest, 104, were found to be under local control. Even as late as 1974 the import-export business of the top 25 importers only 2 were Ethiopians; and of the same top 25 exporters only 2 were government firms.¹ The alliance between the landed aristocracy and medium-comprador foreign-capital is a story that goes back to the pre-war period, and, indeed,

one of the main themes of Ethiopia's political economy this century.

After remarking that 19th century China already contained, sporadically, elements of early capitalist relations and that China could and would have, on her own, undergone capitalist transformation, Mao also remarks that the coming of Imperialism had a contradictory, distortive effect of further 'stimulating and arresting' capitalist development.² That was exactly the role played by Imperialism in

1. This, the extreme weakness of the domestic bourgeoisie, explains the nationalisation measures of the interventionist State (the Dergue). And, henceforth the State will play a direct role, as an integral moment of the social formation. This latter aspect is what decisively distinguishes the present bourgeois State from the ancien regime - the Absolutist State.
2. "As China's feudal society had developed a commodity economy, and so carried within itself the seeds of capitalism, China would of herself have developed slowly into a capitalist society even without the impact of foreign capitalism. Penetration by foreign capitalism accelerated this process. Foreign capitalism played an important part in the disintegration of China's social economy, on the one hand, it undermined the foundations of her self-sufficient natural economy and wrecked the handicraft industries both in the cities and in the peasants' homes, and on the other, it hastened the growth of a commodity economy in town and country. . . . The emergence and development of capitalism is only one aspect of the change that has taken place since the imperialist penetration of China. There is another concomitant and obstructive aspect, namely, the collusion of imperialism with the Chinese feudal forces is to arrest the

Ethiopia in the last twenty or so years. Though its domination by the feudal landed aristocracy and its alliance with Imperialism precluded capitalist transformation, nonetheless the Ethiopian Absolutist State had to, and, indeed, did promote and encourage capitalist relations. That was why the Ethiopian Absolutist State was characteristically transitional. In this context the landed aristocracy no longer maintained its one time homogeneity. That is why the Absolutist State represented and posed the persistent fragmentation of the power of the hitherto politically dominant landed aristocracy : the crisis of hegemony.

However, the 'absence' (the belated development of) even a well-developed commercial bourgeoisie offered members of the landed aristocracy in the post-war period an additional source of exploitation : commerce. The examples of the Ethiopian National Corporation (E.N.C.) and that of the Ethiopian Society for Commerce and Transport (E.S.C.T.) are well described by Patrick Gilkes.¹ The Autocrat and other ministerial grandees set up the E.N.C., in 1943, with the express purpose of engaging, under monopoly conditions, in the export of cereals. Very soon the E.N.C. development of Chinese capitalism." Mao Tse-Tung, in Selected Works (vol. II) pp.309-10 (emphasis added). The concept of disintegration-&-modification of the social formation in the wake of the latter's integration into the world-capitalist system is a subject hardly posed, considered, in radical literature in Ethiopia.

I. Gilkes, op.cit. pp.152-53.

was granted monopoly in the distribution of sugar, and, still further made its incursions in the cotton trade as well. In 1945 the E.N.C.'s total profits were, indeed, scandalous : between £1,200,000 and £1,800,000. When one considers this really scandalous sum against the total revenue for the country as a whole, say, for 1943-44, which amounted to £3,170,256 one can realise the scale of the robbery. And yet an official investigating commission had the audacity to sanctify this robbery when it "exonerated /the E.N.C./ from any malpractice."¹

As this - the '40s and '50s - was a period when foreign capital had not yet touched the country, the control of commerce - imported manufactured goods and the export of agricultural products - was an extremely lucrative business, and therefore the representatives of the Absolutist State made full use of it. Especially the Autocrat had monopoly control of whatever small industries that existed in the first post-war decade.²

The coming of foreign capital, since the late '50s offered the representatives of the Absolutist State additional and still more fabulous sources of income. The H.V.A. (Dutch) was invited to Ethiopia after its expulsion from Sukarno's Indonesia and thus was one of the earliest beneficiaries of the 1950 proclamation on foreign investment. In the mid-1950s Indo-Ethiopian textile industry was set up.³

I. ibid. p.153. 2. lo. cit.

3. How the Autocrat managed to acquire a 'gift'

The growing presence, since the late '50s, of foreign capital in Ethiopia and its co-existence with the feudal mode of production could not but have decisive effects on the orientation and structure of the country's political economy.

The historical process is rational. Understanding of it demands correct, scientific periodisation, and the latter is nothing but the precise identification of the temporary ~~but~~ nonetheless crucial breaks in the continuum of the historical process. In the case of Ethiopia there is every reason and justification for approaching our period (post-1960) as a unity in itself: It is well-nigh impossible to analyse and comprehend Ethiopia today without the fullest appreciation of this fact: for Ethiopia of the sixties and early seventies is radically different from that of the forties and even of the late fifties. (We cannot, in the limited space of this essay, pursue the logic of this perspective.)

After the effective political centralisation of the empire and the consolidation of the Absolutist State and with the necessary and vital infrastructure - administration and communications - sufficiently prepared in the late fifties, foreign capital started to penetrate the country. And hence the State assumed a more complex structure and function, though still dominated by the landed aristocracy (could tribute be a better usage) of 1000 shares in 1959 in Indo-Ethiopian, see, *ibid*, p.154.

cracy the State represented and mediated the interests of the bourgeoisie and imperialism. The bourgeoisie - bureaucratic and comprador - developed and strengthened itself as a class and thus one of fundamental features of the political history of our period is the de facto existence of a power-bloc between the bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy. This power-bloc constituted the ruling class of our period: And this State pursued a definite political economy: viz. the disintegration-&-modification ('dissolution and conservation') of the hitherto dominant feudal mode of production. It is this that rendered the post-1960 Ethiopian social formation (and therefore the State) a characteristically transitional^I function.

The contradictory process of 'dissolution and conservation' which the transitional State pursued sprang, fundamentally, from its association with Imperialism. In order to illustrate the subject we will examine three principal constitutive elements of the political economy pursued by the Absolutist (transitional) State: i) the creation of further openings and for foreign capital, ii) the creation of a new class of landed oligarchy, iii) the promotion of agrarian and commercial capitalism. All the

I. Hereafter, unless otherwise explicitly identified, all references to the State, the Absolutist State, the regime, etc. are to the State of the transitional social formation (post-1960).

'modernisation' policies of the Absolutist State were expressions exactly of such a political economy : the 1960 Civil Code, the 1966 order proclaiming the abolition, at any rate legally, of rist-gult, the order empowering the PM to select his ministerial colleagues, the re-statement of an earlier invitation of foreign monopoly capital. . . the 1973 tenancy regulation and the so-called local self-administration bills . . . The significance of these measures - bills, orders, proclamations and regulations - will be examined at the appropriate places in the next chapters. We should here pursue our analysis of the three constitutive elements of the political economy of the Absolutist State.

The alliance with (especially American) Imperialism lifted a weighty burden from the shoulders of the Absolutist State : the enormous cost of maintaining a sprawling and ever expansive bureaucracy (civil and military). The amount of U.S. 'aid' - 60% of total U.S. 'aid' to Africa - speaks out for itself.

American Imperialism's role as 'international policeman' (more so in the 'cold war' and the sixties) - defence of the global imperialist system as a whole, the assurance of its hegemony in our part of the world, besides the need for opening of new markets and investment fields^I impelled U.S. Imperialism to cater, through 'aid' the enormous cost of maintenance of the repressive organs of the Absolutist State. In the absence of this 'aid' the enormous

cost of maintaining the State could only have been generated internally, within the country, and, this would, per force, have necessitated, at least, an 'Emancipation Act' - the limited 'anti-feudalism' of the Absolutist State. The orders, bills, and proclamations cited earlier are themselves sufficient indicators as to what the situation could have been in the absence of the alliance with Imperialism. Thus, having turned its back on an 'Emancipation Act' - in a period glutted with peasant uprisings and of militant democracy - it (Absolutism) opted for the most passive and imperceptible change : the 'gradual modernisation of traditional Ethiopia.'

In the mid-'60s the State renewed its invitation of foreign monopoly capital : Eth. \$200,000 was set as the minimum invested capital for launching an enterprise. And enterprise which met this amount was offered propitious advantages : exemption from payment of income tax for the first five years - dated from the commencement of production, tax exemption, remittance of foreign exchange, imported machines and implements exempted from most taxes; extension and expansion of enterprises also entailed specific privileges, eg. the exemption of income tax payment for a period of three years. And latter the eligibility for expansion was reduced from Eth. \$0.5 million (1961) to Eth. \$0.4 million (1963).

I. It is important to note that a treaty signed in 1962 assured American investors of immunity from expropriation in the event of "war or revolution"

The further empowering of the Investment Commission significantly ameliorated the 'investment climate' for foreign capital to the extent that there was "no requirement that company should be new or even necessary to the economy."¹ As though in recognition of the extreme hopelessness of and as though dismissing all hopes of overtures towards domestic capital the investment condition is totally committed to foreign monopoly capital. And, the Investment Commission is very illustrative of the 'comprador' role to which the bureaucratic bourgeoisie was reduced?² Such an ideal investment climate combined with the existence of extremely cheap labour, denied of basic trade unionist and political rights by Absolutism, assured monopolies of fabulous profits. As foreign capital was under no obligation to plough back the superprofits it had easily garnered foreign investment became the means by which Ethiopia began to be pillaged.

The State in fact wholly and directly collaborated with foreign capital. It is this collaboration that significantly contributed to the strengthening of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie as a class. It should be noted that the Absolutist State had various stakes in most enterprises : in 1969, for example, it had 18% holdings in Indo-Ethiopia, 38% in Ethio-

1. Gilkes, op.cit. p.150.

2: ibid, p.285 where a list of members of boards of directors of major enterprises is given : very prominent names appear and re-appear!

Japanese - both of them textile industries, 100% in Debre Berhane Wool and the Bahr Dar mills.¹

Thus the penetration of Imperialism, the damping of the cheap manufactured commodities, the new and sumptuous mode of life and consumption habits that contact with Imperialism induced in the landed aristocracy, the growth of urbanisation, the insatiable needs of the Absolutist State for cash ... all these stimulated the development and spread of money economy. It was in response to this process that the Absolutist State sought to create a new class of landed oligarchy, or, phrased differently

(and also, a more correct perspective) the Absolutist State itself saw, in its own way, the limitations of the feudal mode of production and accordingly sought to modify the existence of the latter. The furthest it went on the path of modification was the promotion of agrarian and commercial capitalism : the 1973 'tenancy regulation' - as correctly defined by the Absolutist State itself - bill was supposed to have consecrated this form of capitalism. In short : if agrarian and commercial capitalism expressed, on the part of the Absolutist State itself, the recognition of the limitations of the feudal mode of production and its (the State's) answer, response, to that limitation, the class

1. This list could be extended to include other enterprises. See, Gilkes, ibid, chap.V. However, the point we would like to make here is that the capitalist structure for the present 'Corporate' State were already present within the Absolutist State. See further discussion below.

that was to be associated with this sort of capitalism and therefore serving, subsequent upon its consolidation, as the new bulwark of Absolutism was to be the landed oligarchy. (As we now know the 1974 revolutionary upsurge intercepted this process and such a class did not consolidate itself)

Any superficial examination of the land grants since the war, and especially during our period, leaves no doubt that the creation of a new landed oligarchy as a new bulwark of Absolutism was what was actively sought. (This, by the way, could also be by far the most important reason why the Ethiopian Absolutist State never developed any relative autonomy from the feudal nobility.) The promotion of a new class of landed oligarchy went hand in hand, and, in fact, implied the promotion of agrarian and commercial capitalism.

It was the consistent policy of the Absolutist State since the last war, to associate the rising and expansive bureaucracy with landownership. As we have remarked earlier, members of the 'feudal landed aristocracy dominated all aspects of the State. This was the period - the '40s and '50s - when the rist-gult and gult system was the very basis of administration. But, however, as we have also remarked, the emergence of the bureaucratic-bourgeoisie in our period could not but create significant structural dislocations. As the Absolutist State relied on both the gultegna/rist-gultegna

and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie it sought to associate the latter with landownership and thus promote a new class of landed oligarchy. Thus, for example, a 1951 (E.C.) and another one in 1959, orders allowed "members" of the repressive organs (army, police, Imperial Body Guard, air force) and 'civil servants' land grants. As Cohen tells us : "while the grants since the Italian occupation have averaged 60-70,000 hectares per year, grants since the 1960 coup d'etat attempt have averaged 150-175,000 hectares per year."¹

From the above, two extremely important conclusions could be drawn : i) that our period saw unprecedented concentration of land in ever fewer hands. (In fact, less than 1% of the population owned about 70% of the arable land.) ii) the formation of a new landed oligarchy : feudalists turning capitalist farmers, bureaucrats (civil and military) and even some bourgeois elements.

At the outset of this chapter it was noted that the definitive integration of the country into the world capitalist system belongs to our period. This periodisation would assume immense and crucial significance in any scientific inquiry into the development and structure of the Ethiopian social formation this century, which inquiry is not the objective of this essay. Nonetheless one has to be

I. John M. Cohen, 'Ethiopia After Haile Selassie : The Government Land Factor' in, The Journal of the Royal African Society (London) vol.72, no.289.

clear on what integration into the world-capitalist system entails. A certain degree of disintegration -&-modification ('dissolution and conservation') of the hitherto predominantly pre-capitalist mode of production is sine qua non for an effective integration of a social formation into the world-capitalist system. We attach immense significance to this premise in the present discussion and in the rest of this essay : the Absolutist State and the present 'Corporate' State represent, according to our analysis, two distinct stages in the integration of the country into the world-capitalist system. Therefore before and so that we pass on to an analysis of the present 'Corporate' State let us examine the third, and, perhaps, the most important constitutive element of the political economy of the Absolutist State : viz. agrarian and commercial capitalism.

The active promotion of agrarian and commercial capitalism on the part of the Absolutist State represented, in fact, that necessary degree of 'dissolution and conservation' of the feudal mode of production that could have brought the country into the ambit of the world-capitalist system. So that the crises of the latter could not but affect and therefore aggravate the crises of the former. (This last point occupies a central place in our analysis of the causes of the 1974 revolutionary upsurge.)

Let us briefly substantiate the above perspective : what agrarian and commercial capitalism meant in

the 'disintegration-&-modification of feudalism, and, how it represented the last alternative of a moribund Absolutism in its desperate search for a new lease of life.

The disintegration-&-modification of the hitherto dominant feudal mode of production subsequent on the promotion of agrarian and commercial capitalism can be analysed in terms of : i) the direct intervention of the Absolutist State in the establishment of such corporate bodies like the Awash Valley Authority, so-called agricultural development units, the promotion of a money economy (eg. monetisation — of taxation) , ii) the modifications in land tenure.

According to a 1969 official report over 40% of the total area of the empire was claimed and classified as State (mengist)land. And the size of this type of land was increasing as it was the policy of the Absolutist State to confiscate the land of peasants who defaulted the payment of various taxes : this type of land was known as gebretel land. In general : the lowlands, the valleys, a greater part of the southern provinces were classified as mengist land, (for example, nearly 79% of Hararge and 75% of Sidamo provinces belonged to the State, almost the whole of the lands inhabited by the nomadic nationalities was classified as State land.) It is in these areas where the State had a free hand in its policy of promoting plantation economy. And in these plantation economies the State and foreign capital

collaborated, the establishment of some commercial farms, which also stimulated the shift from feudal production to capitalist farming among feudalists, and, the direct intervention of the Absolutist State in the establishment of plantations.

The effect of the development of agrarian and commercial capitalism was quite wide spread : the massive eviction of tenants (in one area alone in the South the rate of eviction subsequent on the spread of mechanized farming was more than 200 tenant families a year). This ruthless displacement of the Afar nomadic nationality from their best grazing lands so that foreign-owned plantations could be set up, accelerated, indirectly, the dissolution of the rist system in the North, while it also resulted in the fairly general disappearance in the South of corvée labour and the commutation of tribute payment to that of payment in kind and/or cash.

In our period the communal character of the rist system was more of a myth for that system was at its most vulnerable : consolidation of holdings was fairly wide spread, that is, subdivision of land had gone to its limits, real population pressure on the land, and, even the stable holdings were in many respects non-viable as they were fragmented and scattered. To these should be added the multiplicity of extraction of peasant surpluses through various State taxes - land tax, health tax and education tax the spread of usury and merchant capital, incapacity

of maintaining the cultivation of the same plots by poor ristegnas for lack of instruments of production, and hence the more prosperous ristegnas both hired the labour of their poorer folk and rented the latter's plots. This is besides the fact that Tigray and northern Wello, known for their rist system, had an estimated tenancy rate of 25% and 40% respectively. So, therefore, the social differentiation of the rist system must have augmented, as in fact it did, the landless class and the fact that these two regions could supply a large part of the seasonal, migratory working force - cotton and coffee pickers and cane cutters - is a very good indicator of the double effect of the development of agrarian and commercial capitalism. The present great famine has fully exposed the stage of dissolution of the rist system.^I

Though the alliance of the Absolutist State, with, especially American, Imperialism was a significant element in the consolidation and maintenance of the State such an alliance could not resolve the fundamental problems of that State. It was obvious that, sooner or later, the State would have to come to terms' with the contradictions of the social formation. This was exactly what was happening since the mid-sixties, that is, when the Absolutist State it-

I. For the preceding four paragraphs, see Gilkes, op.cit. Ståhl, op.cit. Lionel Cliffe, 'Feudalism, Capitalism and Famine in Ethiopia' in Review of African Political Economy, no. 1, 1974.

self, albeit in its own way, recognized the rigid constraints of feudalism, that is, the necessity of modifying the latter. The Agricultural Income Tax of 1967 and the Tenancy Regulation of 1973 are illustrative of this recognition on the part of the Absolutist State.

It was essentially the State's insatiable need for revenue that prompted it to initiate the measures cited above. That the greatest and most notorious dodgers of taxes in general were the landlords was a fairly well known phenomenon. That land tax, legally imposed on the landlords, was, in fact, reimposed on and borne by the peasantry was the mark of the landlordist basis of that State. That such a situation, besides reinforcing the exploitation of the peasantry, also adversely affected the revenue that should otherwise have gone to the State was a well known fact as well, indeed, constituted one of the fundamental contradictions of the State. The Agricultural Income Tax was an attempt to 'resolve' this limited but none the less real contradiction between the State and landlordism.¹ The proclamation was also intended to lend legal credence to the privatization of landownership in the rist areas in the North (for the State, tax payment entitled one to landownership) where a characteristically feudal taxation structure - the consolidated/provincial tax -

1. See Peter Schwab, 'The Agricultural Income Tax and the Changing Role of Parliament in Ethiopia' in Geneva Africa, vol.viii (Summer, 1969)

was well entrenched. A whole cumbersome feudal administration, from the hamlet right to the provincial level, was set up on the consolidated/provincial taxation system. The rapid development of agrarian and commercial capitalism in the late sixties and early seventies posed the necessity of modifying feudal relations. The Ministry of Land Reform/sic/¹, established in 1966, introduced, in 1968, the first draft to "regulate" tenancy. For the next five years even the insignificant and inoffensive suggestions of this preliminary draft were to undergo strange mutation in the Council of Ministers and then in Parliament. It should be sufficiently emphasised that none of the drafts ever contemplated land reform, they in fact fell terribly short of that, indeed, accepted the feudal statusquo, their sole aim being the "regulation" of tenancy.² In short, the 1973 Tenancy Regulation, while 'fully' maintaining feudalism also gave its blessings to the development of mechanized farming whereby the feudalist could in good time turn into a successful capitalist farmer. It was, in fact, in the development of such a Junker class that the Absolutist State saw the condition for its continued, sustained survival. Judging from the rate at which mechanized farming, agrarian and commercial capitalism in general was spreading and given,

1. As Ståhl has correctly noted : the correct name of the Ministry, following its Amharic, was - Ministry of Land Tenure and Administration.
2. For a detailed discussion of these drafts see, Ståhl, Ethiopia : Political Contradictions in Agricultural Development (chap.eleven).

say, half a decade of 'social peace', a Junker class could have emerged.¹ As we shall see this was not what actually happened : the exacerbated and mature contradictions of the Ethiopian social formation burst asunder as the Absolutist State was trying to effectuate its deadly crippling 'modernisation' measures.

Before we go into a discussion of the final and most decisive issue - the 'Corporate' State - we must sum up the foregoing discussion on the role of the Absolutist State. The Ethiopian social formation of our period had all the characteristics of a transitional social formation : the feudal mode of production which was, in the forties and fifties, more or less, still intact, entered, in our period (post-1960), a process of disintegration-&-modification thus creating the problematic of, the crisis of, dominance. The other important feature of the transitional social formation was the significant presence of foreign monopoly capital. The political economy of the Absolutist State epitomized all the fundamental contradictions of the transitional social formation : its encouragement of and committed alliance with foreign capital, the promotion of agrarian and commercial capitalism while still retaining the whole essence of feudalism. Though this State mediated and organised the interests of Imperialism, the landed aristocracy and the bourgeoisie (comprador and bureaucratic), however, the continued political dominance of the landed aris-

I. How such a class was emerging in the early '70s but as by 1974 did not yet consolidate itself, *ibid.*

ocracy - effete and reform-resistant - created within the ruling class and the State in general an ever acute fragmentation of power - ie. the problematic of hegemony. Moreover, the crystallisation of the non- and anti-feudal social classes : the youthful working class, the petty bourgeoisie, the landless peasantry, etc. created, for the first time, the prerequisite, in terms of class forces, for the revolutionary overthrow of Absolutism. The total incapacity of the Absolutist State to assuage the interests of these fundamental and decisive social classes by means of even palliative reforms while exacerbating the class contradictions speeded up the Dooms Day of Absolutism. So, therefore, in the early seventies the Absolutist State had little resilience to withstand any generalised crisis.

It was, then, the convergence of by far the most serious Imperialist crisis since the last war and the greatest agrarian crisis in the country's history that finally brought the whole social formation to a thaw in February 1974.

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Since its seizure of State power in September 1974 the Dergue has wrought two important but interrelated changes into the social formation : i) through the 'Corporate' State it is currently consolidating it has re-organised, re-structured the class forces within the ruling class and the State in general, ii) has raised the relationship between Imperialism and Ethiopia to a still more decisive stage. The agency of this double task is exactly the Exceptionalist State.^I

It is possible to argue - and there is sufficient plausibility for this - that the Dergue represents both a continuity and a break from Absolutism. But, the break is more important than the rather superficial and even real element of continuity. In any case what interests us here is the break rather than the continuity. In fact, the full recognition of the last point is an essential condition for any scientific analysis of the Dergue. This we should examine closely for it is in the totality of the measures it has taken so far (despite its unquestionable anti-feudalism) and in its present set up that we see the Dergue's incapacity to act as the agency of an

I. The development of the Exceptionalist State will be dealt with at some length in a later chapter in the context of a correct periodisation of the class struggle. An incorrect periodisation of the class struggle and a somewhat vulgar conception of the latter has resulted in wrong conceptions of the different roles played by the military in the revolutionary process and on the form of the

independent (from Imperialism) indigeneous industrial capitalism. At the same time we should define the peripheral, dependent nature of the capitalism it is spearheading.

'Corporatism' is at the very centre and the ubiquitous feature of social-political life in present day Ethiopia. This is the result of the passage of the Ethiopian State to a new form of regime : the Absolutist State, as analysed earlier, which was based on a 'coalition' of the feudal landed aristocracy and the bureaucratic and comprador bourgeoisie was overthrown in the 1974 revolutionary upheaval. The present regime, which is the direct product of an unfinished, incomplete, uneven revolutionary movement has raised a 'new' class to a position of hegemony. The 'Corporate' State is indeed the very condition for the rise and consolidation of the State-bourgeoisie as the ruling class in Ethiopia. An examina-

present exceptionalist state. Currently the Ethiopian Left finds itself in a theoretical disarray and confusion. It has failed to grasp the exact nature of the Ethiopian exceptionalist regime. As though one has "to create a monster" - to borrow the apt expression of one clandestine leaflet - in order to justify revolutionary struggle and as though there are not sufficient class contradictions that justify revolutionary mobilisation the best organised and advanced clandestine groups are engaging themselves in theoretical and therefore political travesty by characterising the existing regime as fascist - whereas it is not, in any case not yet. The agitprop currently being conducted on the subject of fascism is devoid of a correct Marxist theoretical perspective. Agitprop is the vulgarisation, popularisation of a correct theoretical analysis. The latter lacks and therefore. . . .

tion of the 'Corporate' State as the promoter of the State-bourgeoisie to the status of a ruling class should start with an examination of the most important measures undertaken/promulgated so far, which are, generally, the following :

1. 'Economic Policy for Socialist/sic/ Ethiopia' - December 20, 1974.
2. Nationalisation of rural land - March 1975
3. Nationalisation of urban land and extra houses/buildings - July 1975.
4. The role of private investment - Dec. 1975

It was noted earlier that a certain degree of disintegration of the pre-capitalist mode of production is sine qua non for the effective integration of a social formation into the world-capitalist system. And this integration is, in fact, the minimum condition for the penetration of Imperialism. We have also suggested that the political economy of the Absolutist State - the transitional state - represented that necessary condition for the effective integration of Ethiopia into the world-capitalist system. The policies of the Dergue would further advance and deepen the process of integration into the world-capitalist system - ie. ever more propitious conditions for the penetration of Imperialism are being created. This would be demonstrated by a closer analysis of three of the most important features drawn from the major policies of the regime listed above : i) the political overthrow of the landed aristocracy and of feudalism, ii) State

Capitalism and the State-bourgeoisie, iii) the new relationship with Imperialism.

One of the most important political measures undertaken by the Dergue - the revolutionary pressure of the dominated masses always present - before the formal overthrow, deposition of the First Autocrat of All-Ethiopia was the suppression and dissolution of a number of feudal institutions : the Crown Council, the Imperial Court of Justice, the Imperial Military Advisory Council, etc. . . the confiscation and expropriation of the assets and real estates of the Imperial family and that of other feudal grandees . . . These measures sounded the definite political death-knell of Absolutism. Thus began the process (still going on) in which the State power and the State apparatuses are becoming increasingly bourgeoisified : the wholesale re-organisation, streamlining, further and unprecedented extension in the functions of the bourgeois State. Of all other aspects this - the overthrow of Absolutism and the emergence and consolidation of a bourgeois State - is by far the clearest and the most distinct : eg., the wholesale replacement of feudal provincial governors by more efficient petty bureaucratic administrators along and with the concomittant re-placement of the feudal appellation like 'governor-general' by apparently more bourgeois appellations 'regional administration' . . . unprecedented extension in the functions of the State apparatuses - Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Youth and Culture, Ministry of

National Resources and Development . . . etc. . .
Rampant bureaucratism as one of the dominant aspects
of the 'Corporate' State!

The proclamations on rural land, urban land and housing consummated the political overthrow of landlordism. If the dissolution of the feudal institutions marked the overthrow of feudalism at the political level the nationalisation of all land marks, in any case politically-legally, the overthrow of feudalism at the socio-economic level. (The final and the conditions of the overthrow of feudalism will, like all other aspects of social contradictions, depend on the course of the class struggle.) In any case the overthrow of feudalism is a fundamental condition for the consolidation of a parcellar peasantry as the fundamental social class in rural Ethiopia. This Leviathan rentier State will henceforth directly and in a generalised and systematic form appropriate the surplus of the peasantry, turning the latter into its, sort of, 'internal colony' - ie. in the process of State capitalist accumulation. As a matter of fact the peasant associations are for the State-bourgeoisie, nothing else except institutions mediating this direct relationship between the State and the peasantry. It should be remembered that though the Absolutist State could not have survived and therefore was inconceivable without the peasantry, and though it made those well known but notoriously crude attempts to 'rationalise' the exploitation of the peasantry, nonetheless the

problem of that State was not that it exploited the peasantry but that it did not exploit it properly and systematically. The present bourgeois State will do. But, however, the same chronic problems of the unproductive utilisation of the peasant's surplus still remains: the army, the ever sprawling bureaucracy, merchant capital, etc.

The peasantry will no doubt be drawn into market relations and would even witness relative accumulation but by no means to the extent that could warrant, justify the grand illusion of revisionists who have the temerity to entertain that rural Ethiopia is undergoing "a phase of primitive accumulation" or, in other words, Ethiopia's own 'era of rising capitalism'. Hitherto the feudal landowning classes were the largest appropriators of the peasantry's surplus and thus had a decisive influence on the continued existence of the peasantry within a, generally, subsistence economy. Now that the feudal landed aristocracy is overthrown the peasantry would be ready for commodities - production and consumption. The development of infrastructure - roads, administrative, the co-existence of pre-capitalist and capitalist markets, the growth and development of towns, etc. in the post-1960 period - will undoubtedly assist in the development, production and circulation, of commodities. This would further advance the social differentiation of the 'peasant economy'. However, as the cheap manufactured commodities from the advanced capitalist centres will soon flood in the newly

opened rural market, and the indigeneous petty bourgeoisie unable to withstand this flood, that differentiation would be distorted. That is why the peasantry will increasingly relate with the world market and not simply with the 'home market'; the spread and development of merchant capital will see to it that the newly opened, almost virgin Ethiopian 'home market' becomes the appendage, the adjunct of the world-capitalist market. The absence of an indigeneous industrial bourgeoisie to, as it were, conquer the newly opened 'home market' leaves the latter a dumping ground for the manufactured goods from the advanced capitalist countries. It is, also, the same absence of the indigeneous industrial bourgeoisie that constitutes one of the fundamental weaknesses of Ethiopian State Capitalism.

The destruction of another bastion of landlordism - urban land and housing^I - was one more significant and decisive stage in the consolidation of Ethiopian State Capitalism. Here too the State declared itself the sole owner and therefore sole disposer of urban land : the previous relationship between the urban landlord and the tenant having been declared terminated and to be replaced by direct relationship between the tenant and the State. Thus one of the important new additions to the ever expansive State

I. It was reported in the official press in March 1974 that, for example, in Addis Abeba, a city of just over a million inhabitants : the largest proprietors of urban land numbered only 6000; and on 40% of the urban land no land tax has ever been paid. And that the Addis Abeba Master Plan

apparatuses - the Ministry of Housing - is entrusted, among others, with the collection of urban rent.

If the political overthrow of the feudal nobility was decisive in the creation of State Capitalism it was the state take-over of industries and major enterprises and the state's overtly and wholesale interventionist policies that has further strengthened the state-bourgeoisie. Here one, it seems to us, extremely important, point has to be suggested : that the establishment of State Capitalism in Ethiopia did not involve any significant conflict with Imperialism in general add with American Imperialism. In view of - future developments we must at this stage explain this rather 'peculiar', 'smooth' birth of State Capitalism in Ethiopia. If this 'peculiar' reality is sufficiently recognised, then, we adduce the following explanation : i) as to the traditional areas of U.S. domination in Ethiopia - military, 'aid', foreign trade, and all the treaties entered into by the ancien régime - remain untouched (there is even talk that the Americans are in the process of establishing a military base in eastern Ethiopia). And the fact that the main 'victims' of the nationalisation were Italian, Dutch, Indian, British, etc. monopolies, helped the Dergue to stave off American Imperialism's resentments and hostility. (When we say that U.S. Imperialism is the hegemonic organiser of the world-capitalist system this does not negate, or dismiss the existence of real, and, in concrete in-
could not be implemented least it antagonised the vested interests of the landed aristocracy.

stances, very important, inter-imperialist contradictions. As a matter of fact the investment conditions, and the very existence of the 'Corporate' State, have already created ever more favourable conditions for the penetration of Imperialism. And especially American Imperialism might even strengthen its domination by moving into new areas of investment. ii) This is a point no less important than the preceding one : whatever capital there was in 1974 was associated with the Absolutist State. Some of the elements of the landed aristocracy, the Autocrat himself, and, above all, the State, were all, in various ways tied up with the comprador and imperialist bourgeoisie. So, the state take-overs were in the nature and, in fact, an aspect of the general anti-feudal struggle,^I and, second, since the Absolutist State had, as we have seen, various stakes in enterprises the take-over was relatively easy. iii) the interests of foreign capital thus affected were guaranteed due compensation. In fact, further investigation might even show that some of these foreign interests preferred the attractive compensation to continued investment.

I. "Before the Declaration /of Dec. 1974/ some enterprises and profit making organisations were brought under government ownership. These are National Resources Development S.C., Haile Selassie I Foundation, Prize Trust, the St. George Brewery, General Ethiopian Transport S.C. (Anbassa), Wabe Shebele Hotel, Ethiopian Hotel and Kaliti Food Products S.C. Although the construction and operation of these enterprises and institutions have been financed with public funds, the scandalously high profits generated

In short, this was the general situation that, as it were, eased the establishment of State capitalism in Ethiopia. The fundamental and deep contradictions, the weaknesses of this capitalism will no doubt reveal themselves in the near future. As its 'Corporate' State emerged with clearer and refined structures the commitment of the regime to foreign capital has become increasingly considerable: . In its first coherent policy statement, December 1974, the regime had already presented in the clearest terms possible its attitude to and relationship with foreign capital. The said document identifies three of the participants in capital investment : the State, private local capital and foreign capital. The State delineated the areas reserved to itself : utilities, gas, electricity, and water, basic industries like iron, steel and cement factories, fertiliser manufacturing, oil refining, drug, medicine, beverages and tobacco, etc its participation in foreign trade being "to diversify" export products and "diversify" markets for imported goods and exported goods. With increase in agricultural production and the commercialisation of more agricultural products the economy would be more and more export oriented and granted difficulties in the organisation of production and the extreme difficulty in winning a stable world market no 'Ethiopian miracle' that could reverse or significantly modify the prevalent foreign trade of by these enterprises had been reaped by the aristocracy only." Declaration of Economic Policy for Socialist Ethiopia (Addis Abeba, 1975)

the country is foreseeable.

Explaining its rationale for befriending foreign capital the document, after stating the usual lamentation about the backwardness of the country in production and technology : "it is therefore self-evident" it 'argues', "that even though the people of Ethiopia will and must rely on themselves as much as possible, there are certain areas, ventures and problems which they cannot tackle alone or without the participation of foreign capital, technology and know-how. Indeed foreign private investment will be given ample opportunities in many areas of economic activity and will be assured fair and adequate returns."¹

Exactly two years later another policy statement further defined the role accorded foreign capital was promulgated. A closer examination of the latest proclamation would throw further light on the relationship between the State-bourgeoisie, local capital and foreign capital. The most important items of the proclamation could now be summarized :

1. an individual will be allowed only one licence for the establishment of an enterprise.
2. a commercial agent, a broker, a commission agent will not be allowed to hold more than a licence each.
3. although all commercial activity is to be operated on a private basis, however, up to, not exceeding five participants, with

1. ibid.

2. Addis Zemen (Addis Abeba, Dec.29,1975)

- the active participation of all five can establish an industrial firm,
4. fixed capital in commercial enterprises "not to exceed" : Eth.\$300,000 in wholesale and Eth.\$200,000 in retail trades. In the case of industrial investment the limit is Eth.\$500,000.
 5. the Ministry of Commerce and Industry could determine the regional distribution of commercial licences.
 6. the Minister of Commerce and Industry is empowered, in the granting of licences in import-export trade, to override/overlook the limitations imposed by item 1, above : ie. can actually issue licences to one and the same investor.

From the above summary the status of the three partners in the system of investment is quite clear and so is the stark reality of domination.

The greater section of the investment structure would undoubtedly be the exclusive and comfortable domain of foreign monopoly capital "either in collaboration with the State or independently, as the case may be." It is only at the lowest level that local capital would be active, and even here the indigeneous productive petty bourgeoisie would be least able to withstand the new onslaught of Imperialism as the latter would further rob it of the traditional market. The only general effect of the investment policy is in the development - 'far and wide' (items 1,2, and 5 above) - of merchant capital. Hence the role hitherto played by Armenian-Greek-Indian 'comprador' bourgeoisie will now be played by Ethiopians, and this on a much larger scale - territorially. In fact, besides the absence of an indige-

neous industrial bourgeoisie to 'compete' with foreign capital and the wide investment margin allowed the latter the spread of merchant capitalism would further intensify the 'penetration' of Imperialism and therefore "shape underdevelopment"^I in Ethiopia: merchant capital as the promoter of the development of the circulation and production of commodities and as an agent of foreign industrial capital. The State though now purged of feudal interests and undergoing bourgeois administrative rationalisation, cannot, does not have the capacity to 'replace' or 'substitute' itself for the almost 'non-existent' native bourgeoisie - ie. industrial. Besides the absence of other important conditions for independent capitalist industrialisation² the regime's committed alliance with Imperialism decisively militates against its capacity to represent an autonomous Ethiopian Capitalism. It is here where the analogy with the 'Prussian way' becomes not only superficial but also ahistorical. The Prussian/Meji States had specific, albeit weak, genuine national bourgeoisie behind them. And, above all, these States 'compensated for' the weaknesses of their national bourgeoisie in a pre-Imperialist world-historical process. The State is not a miraculous entity : its capacity to initiate, in the specific case of Ethiopia, a 'Prussian path' is decisively limited by the extreme "weakness" (if not absence) of the indigenous bourgeoisie.³ An attempt to

I. On this see a most important work, Geoffrey Kay, **Development and Underdevelopment : A Marxist Analysis** (London, 1975)

compensate for the 'weaknesses' of such a bourgeoisie presumes a structural rupture with Imperialism : such a capitalism, presumably outside the Imperialist - ie world-capitalist - system is inconceivable. The dependent Ethiopian bourgeoisie does not contemplate such a rupture. Its role is essentially that of the cleaner of the Augean Stable (the overthrow of the feudal landed aristocracy) and to prepare the ground for the further integration of the country into the world-capitalist system. In other words, Ethiopia has entered an advanced stage in its own process of 'the development of underdevelopment' : its capitalist structures - merchant, industrial and State - become dominated and dependent upon Imperialism. As the dominant and decisive feature of the process of accumulation in our epoch is genuinely global, international, and dominated by the multinationals and the monopolies the very integration of a dependent social formation into the world-capitalist system there and then deprives that formation of an independent capitalist, ie. industrial, development.

In concluding the whole discussion we would like to sum up the most important arguments already advanced

2. See Bob Sutcliffe, 'Imperialism and Industrialisation in the Third World' in Studies in the Theory of Imperialism Bob Sutcliffe & Roger Owen (eds) (London, 1972)
3. Modern capitalism - and therefore the bourgeoisie - is no longer progressive : to be precise, its progressive character is extremely relative, limited.

and further to be elaborated in the following chapters.

The Ethiopian social formation of our period (post-1960) was characteristically transitional : it was composed of the feudal, petty commodity, capitalist and monopoly forms and modes of production. It was transitional not merely because of the specific articulation of these complex forms and modes of production but because the hitherto dominant mode of production - feudalism - was undergoing accelerated disintegration and therefore losing dominance. To this transitional social formation corresponded a new process in the production and reproduction of social classes : It is well-nigh impossible to understand class struggle in Ethiopia today without the clearest grasp of this process : for the articulation of the different modes and forms of production and the transitional character of the social formation could not but articulate themselves in the disappearance/commutation of moribund social classes and the production and reproduction of new social classes:

The February 1974 revolutionary upsurge was born of the developed contradictions of the transitional social formation.

Now, though the greatest stumbling block, the last one, 'superstructurally' - ie Absolutism - to the development of capitalism has been overthrown and, though the agrarian policies of the regime are,

indeed, the most excellent conditions qua conditions for the development of capitalism, nevertheless an indigenously generated Ethiopian Capitalism is not possible : the native bourgeoisie that is capable of transforming these excellent conditions qua conditions into the birth of an Ethiopian Capitalism is just not there. And the truly global process of accumulation with monopolies and multinationals for its dominant elements, and the configuration of the world-capitalist system as centre and periphery has deprived the dominated social formations (in our case, Ethiopia) the protracted process of the disintegration and decomposition of their pre-capitalist modes and forms of production. The committed alliance of the regime with Imperialism simply confirms the impossibility of an Ethiopian Capitalism. The dependent State-bourgeoisie simply put this incapacity on its part to act as the agency of an independent Ethiopian Capitalism in black and white when it proclaimed that it could not exploit the productive forces of the country : "it is therefore self-evident" it proclaimed, as we have quoted it earlier, "that even though the people of Ethiopia will and must rely on themselves as much as possible, there are certain areas, ventures and problems which they cannot tackle alone or without the participation of foreign capital, technology and know-how." This is a characteristic expression of the dependent bourgeoisie though it projects its own dependence, backwardness and extreme weaknesses as the backwardness

and weaknesses of the 'people'. In short : if the Absolutist State represented such a huge break on the development of capitalism the dependent bourgeoisie poses the impossibility of an independent Ethiopian Capitalism. Though the dependent State-bourgeoisie will continue to be incapacitated by the weighty heritage of feudalism - a heritage it cannot fully do away with, perhaps also a heritage it 'needs' - nonetheless the most important factor behind the extreme instability of its dictatorship will spring from the contradictions, the fragility of its State Capitalism : complete commitment to remaining within the world-capitalist system and yet unable to create a viable basis for its own dictatorship. And therefore that dictatorship will never be exercised in its own exclusive behalf. The Ethiopian bourgeois State will henceforth mediate and organise the vested interests of Imperialism and of the dependent and comprador bourgeoisie:

As the Ethiopian crisis continues and until forces of revolution - the working class, the poor peasantry and the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie - emerged with organisational, ideological and political force to destroy Imperialism the Ethiopian crisis will, at different stages, express itself, of course, deceptively, as contradictions within the ruling class : the State-bourgeoisie - 'left'/right-wing coups and different exceptionalist regimes will dominate the political stage and if these continue for any protracted period might even exhaust and,

to a certain extent, even depoliticise the dominated classes. With this one of the vital conditions for the prolonged 'stability' of the bourgeois dictatorship will have been established.

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The Dergue, The Exceptionalist Regime : An Analysis

We should now turn to a brief analysis of the exceptional regime : how it came about and the exact role it is playing, as this would throw further light on the character of the dependent bourgeoisie.

Unevenness is phenomenal in the development of contradictions. In the case of the revolutionary movement in Ethiopia there is a conspicuous unevenness between the advanced development of the revolutionary practice of the dominated classes and the backwardness of theory. To say the same thing in different words : there is a conspicuous and sharp unevenness between the quality of the agitprop and the theoretical analysis being conducted in Ethiopia today. There is no lack of the former and a dearth of the latter.

To the best of our knowledge no Marxist theoretical journal worthy of the name (or for that matter any Marxist analysis of the "February Movement") exists. The absence of such a journal has affected the current class struggle in a double way : i) the rich, complex experiences of post-February 1974 revolutionary process and the fundamental problems of the Ethiopian Revolution have not to date been systematically discussed, and unless the problems, the contradictions, are clearly posed, discussed and grasped the revolutionary movement would be deprived of much needed, indeed, indispensable, theoretical-historical perspective. ii) the very object of revolutionary practice - the State - has not been rendered systematic and scientific analysis. In fact, the regime is trying to canalize the ideological/theoretical discussion through its own official ideological apparatuses : the very fact that the regime is "encouraging" a sort of pseudo-Marxist literature has not been sufficiently grasped by the genuine Marxist elements! A dynamic ideological struggle has become one of the dominant aspects of the class struggle : it is only by defeating - ideologically/theoretically - this pseudo-(or legal)-Marxism that genuine Marxist militants would achieve ideological autonomy and therefore the ideological autonomy of the proletariat.

Having said that we now return back to our analysis of the Dergue as an exceptional regime. According to an established Marxist theoretical perspective the fundamental characteristics of the exceptional state is in the reorganization of the State. Here below we analyse briefly the political role played by the military in the February revolutionary movement, then we attempt a brief analysis of the dangers of fascism in Ethiopia.

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As discussed earlier, and to be substantiated in the next two chapters, the February revolutionary movement was born of the mature contradictions of the transitional social formation. In February 1974 two things were possible : i) the reorganization of the State, taking into full consideration the veritably revolutionary intervention of the dominated classes. ii) the revolutionary overthrow of the State. Here we are concerned with the first : not only possibility but also the actuality.

At least in this section the role of the military in the movement could be periodised as follows : between February and June 1974, between June and September 1974, and, after its seizure of State power.

The first period (Feb. - June 1974) saw the irresistible development of the struggle of the dominated classes : the fall of Aklilu's cabinet - already sounding the decisive threat to Absolutism as a whole. Absolutism was in retreat and therefore quite prepared to make concessions : constitutional conference (constitutional monarchy), agrarian reforms, etc. The mass movement was spreading wide and deep, taking complex forms : the working class staged its first ever and successful general strike, that 100,000 strong mammoth demonstration calling for the strict separation between Church and State and guarantee for the absolute equality of religions and nationalities, anti-corruption campaign within the bureaucracy, peasants taking over the land and overtly moving against their landlords, soldiers fighting not only for better economic conditions but also against feudal practices within the army, women entered the political struggle demanding equality and liberation . . . The February Movement marked the début of the Ethiopian Revolution!

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By June the ruling classes had definitively lost the capacity to stem the tide of the surging mass movement. The irresistible development of the struggle of the dominated classes had already sounded the memento mori of the effete landed aristocracy. And yet the mass movement, in its sublime spontaneity, lacked political-organisational coherence, co-ordination.

In its pitted struggle for survival the State apparatus unleashes all its ideological, political cultural and repressive reserves against the mobilised dominated classes. But, in the end it is only ^{on} the armed organs of the State apparatus that the latter's survival will depend. It is also true that a mass movement, however massive and gigantic, cannot win unorganised, unarmed. It is this simple truth that the February Movement has more than amply demonstrated.

The historic and gigantic intervention of the masses could leave though temporarily, the institutions of the ancien régime into shambles, but no more! The masses could dislocate, disorganise and paralyse the State apparatus but could not smash, overthrow it. Such an attempt would, per force, logically, unavoidably and inevitably have brought about a genuine civil war! armed revolution vs. armed counter-revolution!

The last repository, guardian of the counter-revolutionary State apparatus would have been its armed organs, the military, the police, etc. And the latter (the armed organs) would have inescapably been dragged into that civil war. But the masses were not prepared for this: they had, let alone a proletarian party to lead them, not even a militant democratic political organisation that had organised them, and that could have led them into civil war, if need be. The corollary of this is that the armed organs of the State apparatus posed themselves, in the face of a surging mass movement, and in bonapartist style, as the ideal arm of the interventionist State. In other words: the military assumed not merely its "normal" repressive function, but also an explicitly political role - to use Bekele Anisa's apt phrase "preventive/substitutive" role.¹

1. Bekele Anisa, Military Dictatorship, Bourgeois Rule and the Anti-Imperialist Struggle in Ethiopia (a summary). This pamphlet, though very general ~~nonetheless~~ does contain some excellent thoughts. To date we are unaware of a more elaborate, definitive version of the above "summary" "the detailed paper . . . on the issue of the socialist revolution in Ethiopia" promised in the introduction.

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It was around this time, June 1974, that the Dergue came into being. Since then it has played different roles in the revolutionary movement. (These roles will be analysed at the appropriate chapter below.) But now we should explain the ideological content of its slogans: 'Ethiopia Tiqidem' (Ethiopia Forward).

At the time when the Dergue emerged with its slogan - Ethiopia Tiqidem - though it showed all-readiness to engage in interventionist politics, nevertheless it itself was not, it seems, clear to what extent and in what forms it would be called upon to engage in interventionist politics. But it was already alerted by the class struggle of the dominated classes (the working class, the landless peasantry, the revolutionary democratic petty bourgeoisie) and afraid of them, equally convinced that the feudal nobility were finished, behind its repeatedly stated patriotic allegiance to 'Crown and Country' it gave its political backing, actually, to the bourgeoisie! At one stage the Autocrat was approached if he were willing to place himself at the head of Ethiopia Tiqidem. His answer was outright no! It was at this time: the political immobility of the bourgeoisie and the Autocrat's unambiguous answer, that the final outright seizure of State power posed itself upon the Dergue. They (the Dergue) could no longer compromise with the Autocrat and, in fact, had no other choice but to remove the person who was not only not with them but also against them (and therefore against the dominated masses). The slogan 'Ethiopia Tiqidem' corresponded to this period.

Thus the Autocrat's decisive refusal to move along a Junker path - the Dergue called it the 'Shah's path'¹: i) sealed the Autocrat's own political fate, and, if compromise with the First Autocrat was now impossible, therefore, ii) there could not be any compromise with the landed aristocracy. Thus the ruling classes incapable of further rule, the landed aristocracy finished and the bourgeoisie politically and ideologically too weak and reactionary, and, the forces of revolution politically and organisationally too weak, the political situation posed the Exceptionalist State. For this the militarist petty bourgeoisie - the Dergue - was quite prepared.

1. See interview of a member of the Dergue with a foreign journalist, The Sunday Times, London, Sept. 22, 1974.

At this stage we need a correct conception of the nature of the Exceptionalist State and its forms of regime. It is exactly the absence of such a theoretical conception of the Exceptionalist State that is at the source of the theoretical-political travesty in which the Ethiopian Left currently engages itself. Nicos Poulantzas, in his important theoretical work, Political Power and Social Classes, gives the following lucid illustrative perspective on the phenomenon of the Exceptionalist State :

"The exceptionalist State form is typically marked by a resurgence of organised physical repression. But the total reorganisation of the State results in a new relationship between the repressive and ideological apparatuses and it is this which is important In this relationship, the domination of one or the other specifies the form of regime of the exceptionalist State. In fact, depending on the relation of forces and the distribution of class power within the State system, the dominant position may belong (a) to the repressive State apparatus and one of its branches - the army in military dictatorship, the civil administration in Bonapartism, the political police in the established fascist State, (b) to an ideological State apparatus for example the party of the first period of fascist rule, or the Church in 'clerical-military' dictatorship, like the Dolfuss regime in /pre-WWII/ Austria."¹

Here is the Marxist theoretical perspective on the Exceptionalist State and its forms of regime, and one can therefore easily make up ones mind about the exact form of regime the Dergue represents.

One other fundamental factor in the assessment of the exact nature of the Dergue should be kept in mind : that the Ethiopian exceptionalist regime was born not of counter-revolution but of the unevenness of in the development of the revolutionary movement of the dominated classes. It is this unevenness that gave the regime sufficient relative autonomy in undertaking certain radical measures : in so far as and every time it undertook radical measures it had the backing - active/passive - of the dominated classes, though the latter were (and continue to be) subjected to repeated and ruthless fascist-repression by

1. p. 318.

the junta. Without the revolutionary pressure and the backing of the dominated classes these radical measures are inconceivable!

To sum up :

1. Since its seizure of power the Dergue, in its task of reorganising the forces of the ruling class and the State in general - has undertaken the drastic measures already cited and others. Having achieved the overthrow of the landed aristocracy and in the course of the reorganisation of the State, which is still going on, it has raised the State bourgeoisie to the status of a ruling class.
2. In the drastic reorganisation of the State the "dominant position" still belongs to the repressive State apparatus, and more specifically, in terms of its branch, the army. Though the "civil administration" too is actively playing its repressive role, nonetheless as the object of reorganisation it therefore remains under the guidance/domination of the army. In this sense the exceptionalist regime is a typical military dictatorship. Though one might also add : the increasing participation of the "civil administration" and the consolidated reorganisation of the latter could transform the character of the regime from its present military dictatorship to bonapartism or a combined/joint bonapartist-military dictatorship. Even now a bonapartist element in the military dictatorship is quite clearly discernable.

Though relatively "mature" conditions for a fascist State do exist, though the regime itself does reveal certain fascist overtones and tendencies we are not yet confronted with a fascist regime, properly so called.¹ However, there does exist the danger of fascism in Ethiopia!

1. It is here where the best clandestine revolutionary literature reveal their theoretical lacunae. Though they are absolutely right in raising the issue and therefore the danger of fascism (and therefore conduct the political class struggle on this basis) however, their characterization of the Dergue as "a consolidated, actualized fascist regime" does not stand to serious theoretical criticism. An incorrect and erroneous assessment of a regime in power would undoubtedly reflect itself in incorrect handling of the class struggle! Unfortunately, DEMOCRASIA, undoubtedly the best organised and otherwise serious revolutionary publication, is associated with this erroneous characterization of the regime, see DEMOCRASIA (vol.2,no26)

§ The nationalisation of the major, dominant means of production - land and industries, and the full-scale intervention of the State in the social-political life of the 'society' has afforded, given the State bourgeoisie immense social-political power. The ruling class currently consolidating itself - the State bourgeoisie - being a more homogeneous class is trying to organise the 'society' around its own State. Thus the dependent bourgeoisie is trying to impose its State as "the State of the whole people". It is in this context that the slogans of the regime, especially 'hibretesebawinet' do contain certain corporatist conceptions/connotations of the State: the attempt, not only to present but also to impose the bourgeois State as "the State of the whole people", in other words, the attempt to dissolve all possible/conceivable contradictions between State/'society'. It is only a regime born of the revolutionary struggle of the dominated classes (trying to consolidate its power against the very classes which prodded it to power),

Fashizm - Tintem yaw Ahunem yaw! Tiglem Indezihu. Despite the analogies it attempts to draw between the 'classical' Fascist States (especially Italo-German) DEMOCRASIA fails to offer a theoretical perspective on fascism. Another Marxist group has made, to our knowledge, the most serious attempt at theoretical analysis, in a series of brilliant leaflets, dealing with the roles, conditions and responsibilities of the "educated élite" the working class and the peasantry, respectively, in the process of fascistisation in Ethiopia : I. Fashizimin le-mattenakir ye-mirtt mehurane teqbarat. II. Fashizimin le-maderajit ye-serko aderu gedajoch, III. Fashi,iminle-maderajit ye-arso aderu gedajoch, IV. Ye-Fashizim Teyakké (On Fascism). Though these leaflets are by far the best attempts at theoretical analysis on fascism in Ethiopia they lack clarity and explicitness. Unlike DEMOCRASIA they do not actually and explicitly characterize the regime as "a consolidated fascist regime". They are more in the nature of analysis of the process and conditions and therefore danger of fascism in Ethiopia, though they have not made this explicitly clear either. It is indeed a sign of the maturity of the group to remark that : though the issue of fascism is raised/posed it remains to be rendered "satisfactory and scientific analysis" (leaflet IV) For the time being and in the limited space of this essay we have confined ourselves to the above brief analysis. For an excellent analysis of the 'classical' fascist States (Italo-German) see, Nicos Poulantzas, Fascism and Dictatorship (London, 1975).

taking full advantage of the political-organisational weaknesses of the latter (and even to perpetuate those weaknesses), that could develop such ideological phantasies!

§ After two years of revolutionary struggle the whirlwind in the alignment and re-alignment of social classes has not yet settled! This indicates that the fundamental contradictions of the Ethiopian social formation have not been/and are not easily resolvable!

Important data and attempted analyses lack. And from afar only the main contours of the ongoing re-alignment of social classes are discernable.

The regime seems to have succeeded in, or is in the process of, organising the petty bourgeoisie - old and new - on a vast scale, one hears of the creation of associations of this or that petty bourgeois elements/fractions : eg. weavers, tailors traders, etc. How far the bourgeoisie will succeed in creating a supporting class out of this class or fractions of it is yet to be seen, but the process and the orientation is there. The same could be said of the attempt/the process in the consolidation of the parcellar peasantry in the rural areas - in the 'legendary' South. A fascist regime, if and when it comes, will have to rally the petty bourgeoisie - in any case some fractions of it - against the working class and the revolutionary movements. A prospect is not a pre-determination! It is also perfectly possible (a prospect), depending on the course of the class struggle and the maturity of the leadership of the revolutionary movements for the petty bourgeoisie to emerge as one of the active forces that could stave off an overt fascist onslaught. So, the class struggle is open to many prospects : did any genius predict the birth of Soviets . . . or the Jimma Commune . . . or

§ The attempts by the regime to organise both Labour and Capital under a legislation that smacks of corporatism is being resisted by the increasingly militant working class. The increasing organisation - politically and ideologically - of the working class is one of the decisive factors that could narrow down the relative autonomy of the regime and that could revive and sharpen the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class and therefore contribute to the revival of the general political struggle in the country as a whole. In any case : a fascist regime will have to destroy, pulverize the working class and the revolutionary movements as a condition for its own stability. The ultimate creation of a fascist

regime is itself an expression of the development of the class struggle. To our knowledge such a class struggle has not yet been fought, but the ongoing, existing class struggle could lead to this, and it could also lead to the strengthening of the forces of revolution: winning ever new victories. One does not have to declare oneself defeated before the battle is met!

3. The present political class struggle, especially the hard resistance still put up by the working class and the revolutionary Left, and the lack of the necessary "ideological State apparatus" for a fascist regime, has not enabled the veritably fascist forces to consolidate themselves into a fascist regime. A fascist regime will have to create that necessary "ideological State apparatus".

In the meantime, and as a matter of fact the ideological State apparatuses, especially the newspapers, continue to spread their "demagogy" and in so doing have posed a fundamental question of class and ideology. The newspapers are in fact engaged in an ideological struggle against the revolutionary Left, discoursing in the ideological terms of the latter. But the revolutionary Left cannot return in currency just because the exercise of freedom of expression/authorship is denied them. Therefore the revolutionary Left is unable/constrained to conduct an uninhibited ideological class struggle against the bourgeoisie and among themselves.

It is in this extremely unequal situation: with freedom/democracy for the supporters of the regime and repression against the revolutionary Left - that the hired collies of the regime continue to invoke and quote the names of Lenin, Marx and Engels . . . etc. . ie. the very names a fascist regime would ostracize; they continue to refer to "class struggle" etc. . . the very concepts a fascist regime would have to banish. It is not that the hired collies of yesterday's Absolutism and pseudo-revolutionary petty bourgeois ideologists have overnight transformed themselves into disciples of the historic leaders of the international proletariat, far from it, but it reflects: i) the ideological bankruptcy of bourgeois ideology in general and the extreme backwardness of the Ethiopian bourgeoisie ideologically. In this period of revolutionary struggle the dependent bourgeoisie, which is trying to consolidate and stabilize its rule, is currently using not merely, not only, its own ideology, which is too reactionary and backward for a revolutionary period like the present, but - this is the point - also certain terms and aspects of the ideology of the most

advanced class - the proletariat! ii) the slow and historically belated merger/fusion between the socialist intelligentsia and the working class movement in Ethiopia has offered the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie a wide margin of relative autonomy - politically and ideologically.

As a matter of fact the regime seems to have succeeded in creating a sort of pseudo-marxist (or legal-marxism) - ie. revisionism legalised. It is this sort of "demagogy" that is aimed at blurring the, above all, ideological class autonomy of the proletariat. That is why the struggle against all sorts of pseudo-marxism, official and otherwise, has already assumed the dominant aspect and therefore the major task of genuine Marxist-Leninists!

4. We believe that the political situation in the country, in and around the regime, is characterized by instability. We also believe that Ethiopia still finds itself in the throes of the revolutionary process created by the February 1974 Movement in which case a re-edition of the latter is still possible. There are therefore sufficient contradictions between the junta and the dominated classes, and contradictions within the ruling classes to trigger off another edition of February 1974.

Therefore: the problematic of transition still poses itself: towards the resumption of the February revolutionary struggle and towards New-Democracy, or, the victory of the counter-revolution in, possibly, the establishment of a fascist regime, properly so called. In any case Ethiopian Marxist-Leninists and genuine revolutionary democrats need, more than ever, the most sober theoretical perspective: FOR WHAT IS AT STAKE IS NOT SIMPLY THE PRESENT BUT ALSO THE FUTURE COURSE OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION! It is only a correct Marxist-Leninist assessment of the situation that could better prepare them for any eventuality while remaining ever alert, ever vigilant, and as Lenin would teach: "keep a careful finger on the pulse of the country's whole political life, and especially the state of the movement and of the mood of the mass of the proletariat." Marxist theoretical perspective. . . the pulse of the country's political life . . . the mood of the dominated masses, the mood of the proletariat. . . .

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1. "In every country there has been a period in which the working class movement existed apart from socialism, each going its own way, and in every country this isolation has weakened both socialism and the working class movement. Only the

fusion of socialism with the working class movement has in all countries created a durable basis for both. But in every country this combination of socialism and the working class movement was evolved historically, in unique ways, in accordance with the prevailing conditions of time and space." Lenin, Urgent Tasks of Our Movement.

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