Safari Academy



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THIRD QUARTER
HISTORY NOTE FOR GRADE 12

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May, 2020

Addis Abeba, Ethiopia

Dear students, I hope that you have already read your textbook on the issues that are treated below. Now move on reading this note and make an attempt to respond to the following brainstorming questions.

- **Brainstorming questions**
- What were the steps taken by the Hailesellassie government to consolidate his personal rule or autocracy in Ethiopia?
- How do you understand the Ethio-British relationship in the decade after the liberation of the country from Italian occupation?
- Give analytical expression on the Ethio-American relationship in the post-liberation period.
- What were the major reasons that forced the Hailesellassie government to abolish slavery from Ethiopia?
- Write the achievements of the aborted coup of 1960.
- Why did students up rized against the regime? What were their successes and failures?
- How did the Derg aborted the students demand and formed the military dictatorship in 1974?
- Why and how did the Eritrean and Tigrean peoples took armament against the regime? What were the basic reasons for their use of force?
- How do you understand Red and White Terrors, villagization, resettlement programs of the Derg?
- Give analytical expressions on the Gojjam, Gedeo, Bale, and Woyane rebellions. What were the major causes of these rebellions?

Consolidation of Autocracy

- After the liberation of Ethiopia in 1941, the country failed under the British domination. In spite of this foreign influence, Haile Selassie worked hard to strengthen his absolutism that he already started since 1931.
- What were steps taken by the Emperor that helped him to consolidate his autocracy or absolutism?
- He restored the ministerial government in 1943. The office of prime ministers and 11 ministers were established.
- Hailesellassie preferred to assign at ministerial level men of low background. Loyalty was the basic criteria for the recruitment to the ministerial position than aristocratic background.
- During the time of Hailesellassie I, two personalities filled the gap of prime minister. These were Ras Bitwadad Mekonen Endalkachew (1943-1957) and Tsehafi Tezaz Aklilu Habta Wold (1961-1974). The ministers were given nominal power, not real.
- He did his best to expanded education.

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- In 1955, he revised the constitution of 1931. There were two reasons that necessitated the revision the 1931 constitution.
- These were: changes in international relationship during the cold war and to conform with the more advanced Eritrean constitution.
- Like the 1931 constitution, the 1955 constitution was a legal document for the consolidation of absolutism.
- He modernized the apparatus of coercion. The Swedish reconstituted the imperial body guard in modern way in 1942.
- In the same year in 1942, the British began to strengthen the police force. The British initially tried to train the army but the Americans replaced them.

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- In spring 1941 the Italians were defeated by British and Allied forces (including Ethiopian forces). On May 5, 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie re-entered Addis Ababa and returned to the throne.
- The Italians, after their final stand at Gondar in November 1941, conducted a guerrilla war in Ethiopia, that lasted until summer 1943.
- After World War II, Emperor Haile Selassie made numerous efforts to promote the modernization of his nation.
- The country's first important school of higher education, University College of Addis Ababa, was founded in 1950.
- The Constitution of 1931 was replaced with the 1955 constitution which expanded the powers of the king. While improving diplomatic ties with the United States, Haile Selassie also sought to improve the nation's relationship with other African nations.
- To do this, in 1963, he helped to found the Organization of African Unity.

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- In 1961 the 30-year Eritrean Struggle for Independence began, following the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I's dissolution of the federation and shutting down the Eritrean parliament.
- The Emperor declared Eritrea the fourteenth province of Ethiopia in 1962. The Negus suffered criticism due to the expenses involved in fighting the Nationalist forces.
- By the early 1970s Emperor Haile Selassie's advanced age was becoming apparent. The nature of the succession, and of the desirability of the Imperial monarchy in general, were in dispute amongst the Ethiopian people.
- Perceptions of this war as imperialist were among the primary causes of the growing Ethiopian Marxist movement. In the early 1970s, the Ethiopian Communists received the support of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. This help led to the 1974 Marxist coup of Mengistu.

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- The government's failure to effect significant economic and political reforms over the previous fourteen years created a climate of unrest.

- Combined with rising inflation, corruption, a famine that affected several provinces (especially Wollo and Tigray) but was concealed from the outside world, and the growing discontent of urban interest groups, the country was ripe for revolution.

- The unrest that began in January 1974 became an outburst of general discontent. The Ethiopian military, with assistance from the Comintern, began to both organize and incite a full-fledged revolution.

Abolition of slavery

- Slavery as practiced in what is modern Ethiopia and Eritrea was essentially domestic. Slaves thus served in the houses of their masters or mistresses and were not employed to any significant extent for productive purpose.
- The first attempt to abolish slavery in Ethiopia was made by Emperor Tewodros II (r. 1855–1868), but the slave trade was not abolished completely until 1923 with Ethiopia's accession to the League of Nations.
- The slave trade had already been banned unsuccessfully by his predecessors Tewodros II, Yohannes IV and Menelik II.
- Beginning in 1924, Haile Selassie I began doing everything possible to liberate all remaining slaves in Ethiopia, enrolling many of them in education programs.

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- The institution of slavery was again abolished by order of the Italian occupying forces. On 26 August 1942, during the Second Modernization, Haile Selassie issued a proclamation completely outlawing all slavery.
- Following the Second World War, Haile Selassie opened Ethiopia's first university.
- The University College of Addis Ababa was founded in 1950. In 1962, it was renamed Haile Selassie I University but is currently known as Addis Ababa University.
- In 1955, the 1931 Constitution of Ethiopia was replaced with the 1955 Constitution of Ethiopia, extending the power of Parliament.
- Haile Selassie improved diplomatic ties with the United States, as well as Ethiopia's relationship with the rest of Africa. He initiated the Organization of African Unity in 1963.

Ethio-American Relation.

- Before the onset of the Ethio-American relation, the British signed two agreements with Ethiopia. These were the 1942 and 1944 treaty. The 1942 agreement apparently reduced Ethiopia's independence.
- But in 1950 the British military mission in Ethiopia came to an end. The Ethio-American relationship was initiated by the Emperor as a counter weight to the British domination.
- The 1953 Ethio-American treaty allowed the Americans to use Qagnew communication station in Asmara. In response the Americans sent Ethiopia Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in 1953.
- The USA helped to establish the Ethiopian airline in 1945. It was the Americans that provided managerial and supervisory personnel of the airlines. The first Ethiopian manager was assigned to the airlines in 1971.
- The USA also assisted the Imperial Highway Authority after its establishment in 1951. The Peace Corps Program was implemented to assist the education system in Ethiopia.

1931 Constitution of Ethiopia

- The 1931 Constitution of Ethiopia was the first modern constitution for Ethiopia, intended to officially replace the Fetha Nagast, which had been the supreme law since the Middle Ages.
- In the preface to his translation of this constitution into English, William Stern writes, "It is worthy of note that this was the first instance in history where an absolute ruler had sought voluntarily to share sovereign power with the subjects of his realm." This statement, however, is not completely truthful, as the adoption of a constitution was somewhat pressed by international opinion.
- In virtue of this constitution, Ethiopia, one of the last absolute monarchies still existing, began the process of constitutionalization of imperial institutions, grounding the Emperor's authority on more solid basis, but also allowing some initial forms of limitation and participation; this evaluative process would continue after World War II with a new constitution.

1955 Constitution of Ethiopia

- Emperor Haile Selassie proclaimed a revised constitution in November 1955 of the Empire of Ethiopia. This constitution was prompted, like its 1931 predecessor, by a concern with international opinion.

- Such opinion was particularly important at a time when some neighboring African states were rapidly advancing under European colonial tutelage and Ethiopia was pressing its claims internationally for the incorporation of Eritrea, where an elected parliament and more modern administration had existed since 1952.

- This constitution was suspended by the Derg in their Proclamation No. 1, which was broadcast 15 September 1974, three days after Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed.

- The 1955 constitution consisted of eight chapters and 131 articles. This document was drawn up by three American advisors: A.H. Garretson, John Spencer, and Edgar Burlington who worked with two leading figures of the restored monarchy, Wolde Giyorgis Wolde Yohannes and Aklilu Habte Wold. After each session the two Ethiopian officials would then report to the Crown Council.

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- While clearly not a mirror image of the U.S. Constitution, Edmond Keller notes it contained a number of ideas from that document, such as a separation of powers between three branches of government, and careful attention given to detailing the "Rights and Duties of the People", to which 28 articles were devoted.
- Despite this element, in his memoirs John Spencer lamented that the Crown Council forced the constitution's authors to stress the prerogatives of the crown, giving the emperor the right to rule by emergency decree, to appoint and dismiss ministers without input from the Ethiopian parliament, and to appoint members of the Senate, judges, and even the mayors of municipalities.
- Bahru Zewde stresses the nature of these executive powers in his discussion of this document, noting that it was "a legal charter for the consolidation of absolutism."
- Despite this strengthening of the Emperor's position, the purview of the bicameral Ethiopian parliament was expanded over the 1931 constitution. Although the Senate remained appointive, the Chamber of Deputies was elected.
- In contrast to the legislature under the 1931 Constitution which could only discuss matters referred to it, it now had the authority to propose laws and veto laws proposed by the executive. It could also summon ministers for questioning, and in extraordinary circumstances it could initiate impeachment proceedings against them

The 1960 Coup d'etat

- It was the first open revolt against the Emperor. The two brothers: Mengistu Neway and Girmame Neway organized the coup.
- General Mengistu Neway was the leader of the Imperial Bodyguard whereas Girmame was a foreign educated elite who was assigned to administer Wolayta and then Jigjiga. They made prince Asfawosen head of state as salaried constitutional monarch.
- Ras Imru Hailesselassie was made Prime Minister. They announced the formation of a new constitutional government. The coup, however, was failed.
- Mengistu was wounded and captured and later hanged in 1961. Girmame was killed at the battle field. General Tsige Dibu, the strong ally of the coup was killed while fighting.
- The reasons for the failure of the coup were poor organization on the part of the coup makers and they failed to persuade the army unit.

The Ethiopian Student Movement.

- The Ethiopian student movement was started in 1950. The initial demand of the University Students was to have improved educational fascilities and services. But, gradually their demand was shifted to freedom of press and form student union.
- The influence of foreign educated Ethiopians, students who came from other African countries and were attending their education in Addis Ababa University, the aborted coup of 1960, the introduction of Marxist-Leninist ideas, the one year university service program before graduation were factors that strengthened students radicalism in the 1960s.
- The University Service was started in 1964. USUAA (University Students Union of Addis Ababa) was formed in 1965. The Union had its newspaper called "Struggle". In 1965 students undertook a slogan "Land to the Tiller" in front of the parliament.
- In the years between 1965 and 1974 students raised various radical, political and other issues and challenged the regime. Some of the demands of the students were the right of nationalities to self determination, civil rights and liberties, protest against economic, religious and ethnic inequalities and others.
- But the imperial government was not ready to respond to students demand. These were the factors that led for his downfall.

Peasant Rebellions in Gojjam, Bali, Woyane and Gedeo

Gojjam Rebellion

- The **Gojjam** rebellion was started in 1968 in the provinces of **Motta and Dega Damot**. The introduction of New Agricultural Income Tax was considered as immediate cause for the rebellion. The maladministration that was undertaken by **Tsehayu Enqu Sellassie** was also the other cause for the rebellion.
- Then, the Gojjamese first refused to allow tax assessors in the region and rebelled against the state. They also refused to take their products to market. The rebellion, however, crushed by government force. The government removed unpopular officials, postponed the new tax, exempted peasants from back payment of taxes for the years 1950 to 1968.

Bale Rebellion.

- What were the causes of Bale rebellion?
- Feudal exploitation, corrupt administration, land alienation and religious and ethnic domination were the causes for the rebellion.
- The newly independent state of Somalia supported the rebellion. The rebellion was started in 1963 at **Elkere**. The **Bale peasants** refused to pay government taxes and sell grains at market.
- The leader of the rebellion was **Waqo Gutu**. In 1970 the rebellion was crushed by the government army. Then, the Ethiopian government introduced a Marshal Law (military administration). **Jagama Kello** was appointed to govern Bale. The government cancelled taxes for up to 1970.

Famine

- In the years between 1958 and 1974 there were famines in almost all regions of Ethiopia, but with various degree.
- The famine was so strong in Wollo, Tigray and Lasta areas. The Hailesellassie government gave deaf ears to the famine and tried to hide from the international community.
- It was Jonathan Dimbilby, a British journalist that exposed the famine for the international community. The radical politicians used the famine to strengthen the opposition force against the regime.

Eritrean War of Independence

- The Eritrean War of Independence was a conflict fought between the Ethiopian government and Eritrean separatists from September 1961 to May 1991.
- Eritrea was claimed by the Ethiopian Empire from 1941, after Eritrea was liberated from Italy's occupation since 1890. Ethiopia and some of the predominantly Christian parts of Eritrea advocated for a union with Ethiopia, while predominantly Muslim and other areas of Eritrea wanted a separate Eritrean state.
- The United Nations General Assembly in an effort to satisfy both sides decided to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia in 1950, and Eritrea became a constituent state of the Federation of Ethiopia in 1952.
- Eritrea's declining autonomy and growing discontent with Ethiopian rule caused an independence movement led by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in 1961, leading Ethiopia to dissolve the federation and annex Eritrea the same year.
- Following the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974, the Derg abolished the Ethiopian Empire and established a Marxist-Leninist communist state, bringing the Eritrean War of Independence into the Ethiopian Civil War and Cold War conflicts. The Derg enjoyed support from the Soviet Union and other Second World nations in fighting against Eritrean separatists supported by the United States and various other nations.

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- The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) became the main separatist group in 1977, expelling the ELF from Eritrea, then exploiting the Ogaden War to launch a war of attrition against Ethiopia.

- The Ethiopian government under the Workers Party of Ethiopia lost Soviet support at the end of the 1980s and were overwhelmed by Eritrean separatists and Ethiopian anti-government groups, allowing the EPLF to defeat Ethiopian forces in Eritrea in May 1991.

- The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), with the help of the EPLF, defeated the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) when it took control of the capital Addis Ababa a month later. In April 1993, the Eritrean people voted almost unanimously in favor of independence.

Communist period (1974–1991)

- The Derg ("committee" or "council"), officially the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, was a Marxist-Leninist military junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1987.
- The Derg was established in June 1974 as the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army, by low-ranking officers of the Ethiopian Army and police led by Chairman Aman Andom. The Derg was formally renamed the Provisional Military Administrative Council and in September 1974 overthrew the government of the Ethiopian Empire and Emperor Haile Selassie during mass protests.
- The Derg abolished the monarchy and embraced communism as an ideology, establishing Ethiopia as a Marxist-Leninist one-party state with itself as the vanguard party in a provisional government. The abolition of feudalism, increased literacy, nationalization, and sweeping land reform including the resettlement and villagization from the Ethiopian Highlands became priorities. Mengistu Haile Mariam became Chairman in 1977, launching the Qey Shibir to eliminate political opponents, with tens of thousands imprisoned and executed without trial.
- By the mid-1980s, Ethiopia was ravaged by various issues such as droughts, economic decline, the 1983–1985 famine, increasing reliance on foreign aid, mismanagement, corruption, the after-effects of failed Derg policies, the Eritrean War of Independence, and the Ethiopian Civil War. In 1987, Mengistu abolished the Derg and formed the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia led by the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, with a new government dominated by surviving members of the Derg.

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- The Derg itself estimated that there were more than one million Ethiopian deaths from famine during its time in power.
- After the February 1974 popular revolution, the first signal of any mass uprising was the actions of the soldiers of the 4th Brigade of the 4th Army Division in Nagelle in southern Ethiopia. They were unhappy about the state of their food and water and arrested their brigade commander and other officers.
- When the government sent the commander of the ground forces, General Deresse Dubala to treat with the rebels, they held him and forced him to eat their food and drink their water. Similar mutinies took place at the air force base at Debre Zeit, on 12 February, and at Second Division at Asmara on 25 February. It was these protests that gave rise to a general armed forces uprising.
- The coordinating committee of the armed forces, police and territorial army, or Derg was officially announced 28 June 1974 by a group of military officers. This was done in order to maintain law and order, due to the powerlessness of the civilian government following widespread mutiny in the armed forces of Ethiopia earlier that year.
- When a group of notables petitioned for the release of a number of government ministers and officials who were under arrest for corruption and other crimes, three days later Derg was announced.

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- Derg, which originally consisted of soldiers at the capital, broadened its membership by including representatives from the 40 units of the Ethiopian Army, Air Force, Navy, Kebur Zabagna (Imperial Guard), Territorial Army and police: each unit was expected to send three representatives, who were supposed to be junior officers up to the rank of major.
- According to Bahru Zewde, "Senior officers were deemed too compromised by close association to the regime." The Derg was reported to consist of 120 soldiers, a statement which has gained wide acceptance due to the habitual secretiveness of the Derg in its early years. They assembled at the Fourth Division headquarters.
- The committee elected Major Mengistu Haile Mariam as its chairman and Major Atnafu Abate as its vice-chairman. The Derg was initially supposed to study the grievances of various military units, investigate abuses by senior officers and staff and to root out corruption in the military.
- In the months following its founding, Derg steadily accrued more power. In July, Derg obtained key concessions from the emperor, Haile Selassie, which included the power to arrest not only military officers, but government officials at every level.
- Soon both former Prime Ministers Tsehafi Taezaz Aklilu Habte-Wold and Endelkachew Makonnen, along with most of their cabinets, most regional governors, many senior military officers and officials of the Imperial court were imprisoned. In August, after a proposed constitution creating a constitutional monarchy was presented to the emperor, Derg began a program of dismantling the imperial government in order to forestall further developments in that direction. Derg deposed and imprisoned the emperor on 12 September 1974.

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- **On 15 September, the committee renamed itself as the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) and took control of the government. The Derg chose Lieutenant General Aman Andom, a popular military leader and a Sandhurst graduate, to be its chairman and acting head-of-state.**
- **This was pending the return of Crown Prince Asfaw Wossen from medical treatment in Europe, when he would assume the throne as a constitutional monarch. However, General Aman Andom quarreled with the radical elements in the Derg over the issue of a new military offensive in Eritrea and their proposal to execute the high officials of Selassie's former government. After eliminating units loyal to him, the Derg removed General Aman from power and executed him on November 23, 1974, along with some supporters and 60 officials of the previous Imperial government.**
- **Brigadier General Tafari Benti became both the new Chairman of Derg and head of state, with Mengistu and Atnafu Abate as his two vice-Chairmen, both with promotions to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonels. The monarchy was formally abolished in March 1975, and Marxism-Leninism was proclaimed the ideology of the state. Emperor Haile Selassie died on 22 August 1975, while his personal physician was absent.**
- **After internal conflicts that resulted in the execution of General Tafari Benti and several of his supporters in February 1977, and the execution of Colonel Atnafu Abate in November 1977, Mengistu gained undisputed leadership of the Derg. In 1987, he formally dissolved the Derg and established the country as the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) under a new constitution.**
- **Many of the Derg members remained in key government posts and also served as the members of the Central Committee and the Politburo of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE). This became Ethiopia's civilian version of the Eastern bloc communist parties. Mengistu became Secretary General of the WPE and President of the PDRE, while remaining Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.**

Ethiopian Civil War

- Opposition to the reign of the Derg was the cause of the Ethiopian Civil War. This conflict began as extralegal violence between 1975 and 1977, known as the Red Terror, when the Derg struggled for authority, first with various opposition groups, then with a variety of groups jockeying for the role of vanguard party.
- Though human rights violations were committed by both sides, the great majority of abuses against civilians as well as actions leading to devastating famine were committed by the government.
- Once the Derg had gained victory over these groups and successfully fought off an invasion from Somalia in 1977, it engaged in a brutal war against armed opponents. These groups included guerrillas fighting for Eritrean independence, rebels based in Tigray (which included the nascent Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front) and other groups that ranged from the conservative and pro-monarchy Ethiopian Democratic Union to the far leftist Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.
- Under the Derg, Ethiopia became the Soviet bloc's closest ally in Africa and became among the best armed nations of the region as a result of massive military aid, chiefly from the Soviet Union, East Germany, Cuba and North Korea.
- On 4 March 1975, the Derg announced a program of land reform, according to its main slogan of "Land to the Tiller," which was unequivocally radical, even in Soviet and Chinese terms. It nationalized all rural land, abolished tenancy and put peasants in charge of enforcing the whole scheme.

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- **In addition, Derg in 1975 nationalized most industries and private and somewhat secure urban real-estate holdings.**
- **But mismanagement, corruption and general hostility to the Derg's violent rule, coupled with the draining effects of constant warfare with the separatist guerrilla movements in Eritrea and Tigray, led to a drastic fall in general productivity of food and cash crops.**
- **In October 1978, Derg announced the National Revolutionary Development Campaign to mobilize human and material resources to transform the economy, which led to a ten-year plan (1984/85 - 1993/94) to expand agricultural and industrial output, forecasting a 6.5% growth in GDP and a 3.6% rise in per capita income. Instead, per capita income declined 0.8% over this period.**
- **Although the Derg government came to an end on 22 February 1987, three weeks after a referendum approved the constitution for the PDRE, it was not until that September the new government was fully in place and the Derg formally abolished. The surviving members of the Derg, including Mengistu, remained in power as the leaders of the new civilian regime.**
- **The geopolitical situations turned unfavorable for the communist government in the late 1980s, with the Soviet Union retreating from the expansion of Communism under Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika. Socialist bloc countries drastically reduced their aid to Ethiopia, struggling to keep their own economies going.**
- **This resulted in even more economic hardship, and the military gave way in the face of determined onslaughts by guerrilla forces in the north. The Soviet Union stopped aiding the PDRE altogether in December 1990. Together with the fall of Communism in the Eastern Bloc in the Revolutions of 1989, this was a serious blow to the PDRE.**

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- Towards the end of January 1991, a coalition forces, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) captured Gondar (the ancient capital city), Bahir Dar and Dessie.
- Meanwhile, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front had gained control of all of Eritrea except for Asmara and Assab in the south. The Soviet Union, mired in its internal turmoil, could no longer prop up the Derg.
- In the words of the former US diplomat Paul B. Henze, "As his doom became imminent, Mengistu alternated between vowing resistance to the end and hinting that he might follow Emperor Tewodros's example and commit suicide."
- His actions were frantic: he convened the Shengo, the Ethiopian Parliament, for an emergency session and reorganized his cabinet, but as Henze concludes, "these shifts came too late to be effective."
- On 21 May, claiming that he was going to inspect troops at a base in southern Ethiopia, Mengistu slipped out of the country to Kenya. From there he flew with his immediate family to Zimbabwe, where he was granted asylum and, as of 2017 still resides.

Post-1960 conflicts

- The Ethiopian Civil War was a civil war in Ethiopia and present day Eritrea, fought between the Ethiopian military junta communist governments and Ethio-Eritrean anti-government groups from September 1974 to June 1991.
- The Derg overthrew the Ethiopian Empire and Emperor Haile Selassie in a coup d'état on 12 September 1974, establishing Ethiopia as a Marxist-Leninist communist state with itself as a military junta and provisional government.
- Various left-wing, ethnic, and anti-communist opposition groups supported by the United States began armed resistance to the Soviet-backed Derg, in addition to the Eritrean separatists already fighting in the Eritrean War of Independence.
- The Derg used military campaigns and the Qey Shibir (Ethiopian Red Terror) to repress the rebels. By the mid-1980s, various issues such as the 1983–1985 famine, economic decline and other after-effects of Derg policies ravaged Ethiopia, increasing popular support for the rebels.
- The Derg dissolved itself in 1987, establishing the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) under the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WEP) in an attempt to maintain its rule.
- The Soviet Union ended its support for the PDRE in the late-1980s and the government was overwhelmed by the increasingly victorious rebel groups.
- In May 1991, the PDRE was defeated in Eritrea and President Mengistu Haile Mariam fled the country. The Ethiopian Civil War ended on 4 June 1991 when the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of left-wing ethnic rebel groups, entered the capital Addis Ababa and overthrew the WEP.
- The Ethiopian Civil War left at least 1.4 million people dead, with 1 million of the deaths being related to famine and the remainder from combat and other violence.

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- The Ethiopian Empire became politically unstable during the 1950s under the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, whose administration was becoming unpopular among non-noble Ethiopians at all levels of society. That decline in popularity was due to the actions of the Ethiopian Empire which stagnated quality of life and development, abused human rights, and seen as working backwards overall. This could be seen through Haile Selassie's work.
- Haile Selassie was a popular cultural figure with his attempts at modernizing reforms, though they were ineffective. His rule was increasingly viewed as maintaining Ethiopia's feudal political system that heavily favored the Ethiopian nobility who had routinely rejected his reforms.
- The 1960 Ethiopian coup attempt in December 1960 saw an attempted overthrow of Haile Selassie by a group of high-ranking politicians and military officers to institute a progressive government under his son, Crown Prince Asfaw Wossen, to solve Ethiopia's economic and political problems. However, the coup was rushed and quickly defeated by loyalists, leading to a return of the status quo.
- On 12 September 1974, Haile Selassie and his government were overthrown by the Derg, a non-ideological committee of low-ranking officers and enlisted men in the Ethiopian Army who became as the ruling military junta.
- On 21 March 1975, the Derg abolished the monarchy and adopted Marxist-Leninist communism as their official ideology, establishing themselves as a provisional government for the process of building a socialist state in Ethiopia.
- The Crown Prince went into exile in London, where several other members of the House of Solomon lived, while other members who were in Ethiopia at the time of the revolution were imprisoned. Haile Selassie, his daughter by his first marriage Princess Ijigayehu, his sister Princess Tenagnework, and many of his nephews, nieces, close relatives, and in-laws were among those detained. On 27 August 1975, Haile Selassie died under mysterious circumstances in detention at the Jubilee Palace in Addis Ababa. That year, most industries and private urban real-estate holdings were nationalized by the Derg.

Ethiopian Red Terror

- The Derg did not fully establish their control over the country, and the subsequent power vacuum led to open challenges from numerous civilian opposition groups. The Ethiopian government had been fighting Eritrean separatists in the Eritrean War of Independence since 1961, and now faced other rebel groups ranging from the conservative and pro-monarchy
- Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), to the rival Marxist-Leninist Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), and the ethnic Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).
- In 1976, the Derg instigated the Qey Shibir (Ethiopian Red Terror), a campaign of violent political repression primarily targeting the EPRP and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), in an attempt to consolidate their power.
- The Qey Shibir was escalated on 3 February 1977 following the appointment of Mengistu Haile Mariam as Chairman of the Derg, who took a hardline stance against opponents. The urban guerrilla warfare saw brutal tactics used on all sides, including executions, assassinations, torture and imprisonment without trial.
- By August 1977, the EPRP and MEISON were devastated, with their leadership either dead or fleeing to the countryside to continue their activities in stronghold areas, but despite this the Derg did not successfully consolidate their power as much as hoped.
- Ironically, the majority of the Qey Shibir's victims are believed to be innocents, with the violence and collateral damage shocking many Ethiopians into supporting rebel groups.

Ogaden War (Ethio-Somali War)

- On 13 July 1977, the Ogaden War was triggered when the Somali Democratic Republic invaded Ethiopia to annex the Ogaden, a predominantly Somali populated border region.
- A month earlier, Mengistu accused Somalia of infiltrating Somali National Army (SNA) soldiers into the Ogaden to fight alongside the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), and despite considerable evidence to the contrary, Somalia's leader Siad Barre strongly denied this by stating SNA "volunteers" were being allowed to help the WSLF.
- Although both countries were Soviet-backed communist states, Barre sought to exploit Ethiopia's weakness since the 1974 revolution to incorporate the Ogaden on a platform of Somali nationalism and pan-Somalism.
- Under the Derg, Ethiopia became the Warsaw Pact's closest ally in Africa and one of the best-armed nations of the region as a result of military aid, chiefly from the Soviet Union, Libya, East Germany, Israel, Cuba and North Korea.
- The Ethiopians were able to defeat the Somalians by March 1978, but the war used up valuable resources.

The final years of the Derg

- The Derg fulfilled its main slogan of "Land to the Tiller" by redistributing land in Ethiopia that once belonged to landlords to the peasants tilling the land. However, mismanagement, corruption and general hostility to the Derg's violent rule was coupled with the draining effects of constant warfare and the separatist guerrilla movements in Eritrea and Tigray, resulting in a drastic decline in general productivity of food and cash crops.
- Although Ethiopia is prone to chronic droughts, no one was prepared for the scale of drought and the 1983–1985 famine that struck the country in the mid-1980s. Hundreds of thousands fled economic misery, conscription and political repression, and went to live in neighboring countries and all over the Western world, creating an Ethiopian diaspora for the first time.
- Insurrections against Derg rule sprang up, particularly in the northern regions of Tigray and Eritrea. Hundreds of thousands were killed as a result of the Qey Shibir, forced deportations or from the use of hunger as a weapon under Mengistu's rule.
- The Derg continued its attempts to end the rebellions with military force by initiating several campaigns against both internal rebels and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the most important ones being Operation Shiraro, Operation Lash, Operation Red Star and Operation Adwa, which led to its decisive defeat in the Battle of Shire on 15–19 February 1989.

Conti……

- In early 1978 the Derg launched a resettlement program with, it alleged, the aim of combating drought, averting famine and increasing agricultural productivity, although it was not until 1984–85 that the program assumed massive proportions.
- Its objective was to move 1.5 million peasants from the northern provinces, and by the end of 1986 half a million had been moved, most of them forcibly. Although by the mid-1980s the Derg had lost control of virtually all of rural Tigray, the army continued to attack population centers in the liberated territories until the final days of the war.
- It is virtually impossible to make an overall assessment of the human and material costs of the war, since detailed figures have not been released of the number of fighters killed.
- However, the TPLF has recently revealed that approximately 50,000 people died as a direct result of combat, 99% per cent of them fighters and militia members, and this number also includes those killed in the Red Terror.
- In spite of the military setback caused by the famine of 1984-85, the vast majority of the peasantry were irrevocably wedded to the TPLF and it was clear that the Derg did not have the capacity to defeat its northern-based opposition.

Conti.....

- With the stabilization of the rural economy resulting from better harvests and the return of some refugees from the Sudan, the TPLF was soon able to re-exert its control over the rural areas and resume the siege of the towns.
- Indeed, by 1987 TPLF leadership had reached the conclusion that its forces and those of the Derg were roughly in balance and that a stalemate existed. As a consequence, the Front leadership began preparing plans to break it.
- While the TPLF was able to mobilize growing human and material resources, the inability of the Derg to cause serious damage to the Front's fighting forces led to declining morale among its officers and men.
- In spite of its ability to recruit and field ever larger armies to replace those lost in battle, the Derg was nonetheless singularly unsuccessful in inculcating a faith in the regime, or a willingness on the part of its soldiers to fight.