

# The HERALD

Winter 1998–99 — Number 20, part 1

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A publication of **Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs**, an affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association

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This issue of *The Herald* is Part 1 of two parts. It focuses solely on topics regarding Ethiopia and Eritrea. Part 2, which will cover all other topics usually covered in *The Herald* — news of friends, the Peace Corps, books of interest, etc. — will be published as soon as I am able to complete it.

*M Beil, editor*

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## SEEKING PEACE

### E&E RPCVs proposes role in settling conflict

by Leo Cecchini (Asmara 62–64)

**E**THIOPIA AND ERITREA ARE AT war and have been so since last May. There is an informal suspension of hostilities at this moment while the Organization of African Unity (OAU) seeks a peaceful resolution of the conflict. ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVs (E&E RPCVs) is assisting in this effort.

I won't tire you by rehashing the barrage of accusations and counter-accusations made by both sides about who is to blame and who is committing atrocities. Both countries share responsibility and are causing pain. While there is tension along the entire border, focus is an area referred to as "Badme," which is also the name of a village. Apparently the Ethiopians, while Eritrea was a part of that country, administered this area from a town on the Ethiopia side of the historical border set by treaty between Ethiopia, Italy and the UK, when Eritrea was a colony of Italy and Sudan a colony of the UK. After Eritrea independence, Ethiopia continued to administer

this area, although it appears to be on the Eritrean side of the colonial border. In May, 1998, Eritrea asserted its claim to this area by sending armed forces to take it. This sparked a fight with Ethiopian irregular forces that the Eritreans quickly overcame and routed. The Ethiopians then sent regular forces to the border to face the Eritrean forces. The situation now is that the two armies are dug in on both sides of the colonial border, ready to resume a hot war at any moment. Worse, the dispute has spread to several other points along the lengthy border.

The peace efforts of the OAU and others, particularly the USA, are stuck on a key point. Ethiopia insists that Eritrea withdraw its armed forces from the area it occupied by force in May that had until then been administered by Ethiopia. Eritrea insists that its forces are on Eritrean territory and will not withdraw until Ethiopia agrees to a cessation of all hostilities and mediation



or arbitration of the border dispute. Both have valid positions.

## Enter E&E RPCVs

**T**HE ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR TO the USA and the Eritrean Ambassador to the UN presented their sides of the dispute at our reunion. We immediately formally called on both countries to resolve the dispute in a peaceful manner. (See statement on page 3.) We also offered our assistance and support for the peace process. To insure that our sentiments were clearly understood, fellow Steering Committee member Dave Gurr (Addis Ababa 62-64) and I visited the two ambassadors who spoke at the reunion and the Eritrean Ambassador to the USA. We also called on the State Department, mainly Tom Gallagher (Agordat 62-64) — desk officer for Eritrea, the US Congress and others involved in the peace process. We reiterated our hopes and desires. We were told by the Ethiopians and Eritreans that they understand the genuine concern of E&E RPCVs and appreciate our desire to help. All three ambassadors had had close contact with PCVs in their youth.

During our meetings the two sides agreed to define the conflict as a border dispute and as such, a tractable problem. Both sides also referred to the same maps in locating the border. Going a bit further, Dave and I assembled what we gathered from our various interlocutors into a proposal — dubbed the “E&E RPCV Proposal” — by one of our contacts, for resolving the conflict. Essentially, we ask both sides to move their armed forces 25 kms. back from the colonial border. This would establish an “enabling environment” for peaceful resolution of the border dispute and would comply with the Ethiopian demand that Eritrea withdraw from the area reclaimed by force in May. However, the Eritreans will not accept the Ethiopians returning to the

area before the border is delineated and demarcated by the OAU. To solve this problem we have proposed having E&E RPCVs, through enCORPS (E&E RPCVs program for sending RPCVs back to the two countries for short assignments), administer the Badme area in the context of a demilitarized zone monitored and enforced by the OAU. enCORPS would actually run the small community of Badme in conjunction with a council drawn from the local population until the OAU delineated and demarcated the border.

The Eritrean side has given us a written acceptance of our proposal as long as it is accompanied by a formal cessation of hostilities. The US Government finds merit in our proposal and has discussed it with the two sides. However, the Ethiopians have not yet replied. We have been told by many involved in finding a peaceful resolution that our proposal is sound and, indeed, could break the impasse.

The good news is that there is no shooting. The bad news is that shooting can resume at the drop of a hat. The OAU has been successful in keeping the two sides talking to it about a peaceful resolution. However, it has not yet won agreement to resolve the matter peacefully.

## Finland:Russia :: Eritrea:Ethiopia

**ONE OF THE THINGS I HAVE** learned from living in several diverse countries is that there are more similarities between the peoples of this planet than there are differences. It may sound like a far stretch, but this conflict reminds me of Finland and its relationship with its much larger neighbor, Russia. The Finns took advantage of the chaos of the Bolshevik Revolution to proclaim independence from Russia. The Eritreans won theirs in the context of major upheaval in Ethiopia.

The Second World War gave Russia an opportunity to take back Finland. The Finns staved off the invasion but knew that, faced with overwhelming numbers and strength, they could not hold Russia off forever. To avoid Russian domination, the Finns made a pact with the devil — Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, while this protected them from the Russians during the war, they wound up on the losing side. The Finns then turned to brilliant diplomacy, a commitment to staggering war reparations, and an obedient attitude toward Russia, that was known by the pejorative sobriquet “Finlandization,” to maintain their independence.

I wonder what “devil” the Eritreans will turn to to bolster defenses against a more powerful, belligerent neighbor (Ethiopia has 57 million people to Eritrea’s less than three million)? Sudan? Yemen? Iraq? How would this affect Eritrea’s internal struggle to maintain a delicate balance between its Christian and Moslem peoples? Many will reply that Eritrea fought an ultimately successful 30-year war against Ethiopia for independence. The Finns also fought the Russians to a standstill in 1939. However, given the enormous difference in size and power, a neighbor that is 20 times larger will eventually win any armed conflict.

The Eritreans apparently place great stock in their conviction that a new conflict with Eritrea will cause an Ethiopia faced with rampant internal dissension to split into several smaller, and thus more manageable, neighbors. Perhaps, but that is a dangerous gamble. Oddly enough, the Ethiopians harbor suspicions that the Eritrean Government will tumble if faced by a determined Ethiopian assault.

I would urge both sides to follow the Finnish-Russian model. Finland’s careful conduct of its post-World War II relationship with Russia turned out to be productive for both sides. Finland

developed into a modern, industrial country by catering to its neighbor's huge market. Russia had a reliable supplier of high-tech goods for its development.

Eritrea's best prospects for economic progress lie in producing a wide range of goods for its big neighbor. Ethiopia could well use a productive neighbor for its own development. Compromise, not confrontation, is the best remedy for the current border conflict as well as all relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Keep your fingers crossed that the OAU will bring the two side to a peaceful resolution. We may also see the "E&E RPCV Resolution" come into play. Also, be prepared to answer any call we may make for volunteers to help implement a peaceful resolution. Whatever happens, we have been told by our contacts on both sides that they are moved by and are deeply appreciative of our display of continued friendship and interest, as well as our sincere efforts to be of assistance.



*If you would like to submit your name for consideration for a position on the Border Administration Team — should it become a reality — contact: Dave Gurr, 4311 Loyola Ave, Alexandria VA 22304; phone: 703/370-2553 fax: 703/370-186; email: dgurr@cns.gov*

## **E&E RPCVs statement regarding the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia**

*The following statement was drafted by the Steering Committee of ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVs and read at the reunion in Los Angeles.*

Out of deep affection and respect, we the Ethiopia and Eritrea Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, view with distress the current conflict between these two countries.

We lament the horrific human consequences of the conflict, and we are concerned by the bleak prospects offered by attempts to resolve the dispute through force of arms.

We call upon the governments and the peoples of these two beloved countries to put down their weapons, lay aside rancor, and turn their considerable energies and abilities to seeking a peaceful resolution of this tragic conflict.

To this end we stand ready to assist in furthering the peace process.

*The statement was sent to: Isaias Afwerki, President of Eritrea; Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia; Ambassador Haile Menkarios, Eritrean Ambassador to the UN; Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Cristos, Ethiopian Ambassador to the US; Susan Rice, Asst Secretary of State; Secretary General Kofi Annan. A portion of the cover letter that accompanied the statement follows:*

More than 3,200 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Ethiopia and Eritrea since 1962. In mid-August, a reunion of returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV) from Ethiopia and Eritrea was held at the University of California at Los Angeles Conference Center and more than 110 RPCVs attended.

During the reunion, ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVs — the hosting organization — released a statement regarding the border disagreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The statement reflects our heartbreak over this conflict between the two countries we cherish as our second homes, and our willingness to do what we can to bring about a peaceful resolution. A copy of the statement is enclosed.

Please let me know if there is anything that ETHIOPIA & ERITREA RPCVs can do.

With deep regards,  
Marian Haley Beil, Chair

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# Conflict News from the Horn

compiled by John Barnes (66-68)

and Ron Gonella (Adi Quala 66-68)

## E&E RPCVs statement regarding the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia

*Continued from the previous page*

*E&E RPCVs has received the following response:*

11 January 1999

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter to the Secretary-General of 1 September 1998 in which you referred to the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The Secretary-General shares your sense of anguish over this conflict, which has been accompanied by many negative ramifications, and the desire to see its peaceful resolution as soon as possible. To that end, he has been in frequent contact with all concerned since the beginning of the conflict. He has called for maximum restraint on the part of the parties to the conflict and offered his good offices, while supporting the mediation efforts by the other actors. Please be assured that he will continue to do his utmost to that end.

On behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, I should like to thank you for your interest in writing to the United Nations.

Yours sincerely,

Shigeru Mochida  
Senior Political Affairs Officer  
Africa I Division  
Department of Political Affairs



► The OAU Fact-Finding Mission members composed of Burkina Faso, Djibouti and Zimbabwe and OAU Secretary General, Salim Salim has concluded that "Ethiopia was administering Badme town and its environs before May 12, 1998; What happened in Badme between May 6-12, 1998 constitutes a fundamental element of the crisis." Foreign Minister Seyoum noted that the OAU commission conclusion completely refutes the Eritrean claims of administration of the disputed territory. *EthNews* 8-9/98

► 7/16/98 According to the BBC's Brian Johnson, a Ukrainian aircraft crashed near Asmara. It was believed to be carrying arms shipments to Eritrea from Bulgaria. Nine previous flights had brought in 400 tons of arms, according to Johnson. Ten inside the aircraft were killed, confirmed by the Ukrainian Minister of Defense. Johnson also revealed that Ethiopia has purchased arms worth US\$100 million from Garenko, a Chinese company. A Chinese delegation arrived in Ethiopia in late July to discuss economic cooperation issues. *EReg* 9/98

► 7/29/98 Ethiopia expelled more than 11,000 Eritreans despite the fact that many have Ethiopian nationality and lived in Ethiopia for decades. The government claims it has "unlimited rights to expel foreigners if it did not like the color of their eyes." *EriNA*

► 7/30/98 Human Rights Watch Academic Freedom Committee calls upon Ethiopia to release 85 Eritrea exchange students, stating that the action is "fundamentally inconsistent with the principles underlying academic exchange worldwide." The Eritrean government had already allowed the

return of 46 Ethiopia exchange students. *EriNA*

► 7/30/98 Dori Mohammed, Ethiopian UN ambassador, reiterated his government's stand that there would be no direct talks between the two sides "unless Eritrea unilaterally withdraws from the disputed areas." *EriNA*

► 8/1-2/98 The OAU committee met in Ouagadougou to work on resolving the border conflict but failed to bring the foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Eritrea face to face for talks. The foreign ministers did pledge to maintain the current status quo until the heads of Djibouti, Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso could meet. *EReg* 9/98

► 8/3/98 Ethiopia government detains 2,000 Eritreans: cancels the business licenses of those deported; and appropriates properties belonging to Eritreans. *EriNA*

► 8/3/98 OAU Ministerial Committee reviewed the ambassadorial committee report on conflict, including a request for UN-supervised peacekeeping force to be assigned to the disputed areas. *EriNA*

► 8/5/98 The OAU Ministerial Committee acknowledged that the two parties hold "divergent points of view both on the origin and evolution of the dispute; but this "should not preclude a spirit of compromise to prevail." *EriEm*

► 8/5/98 Ethiopian television broadcast the testimony of an Ethiopian woman evicted by Eritrea security forces with her four children and her property, and "dumped her at the border." Other scenes of alleged atrocities were also show. *AfNews*



- ▶ 8/7/98 The Eritrean delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission delivered a lengthy statement describing many incidents directed against Eritrean nationals in Ethiopia along with reasons why the commission should pass a resolution opposing what has happened. EriNA
- ▶ 8/7/98 The U.S. State Department issued a statement reflecting how the government views with deep concern the detention and expulsion of ethnic Eritreans from Ethiopia. "Ultimately a durable peace is the best guarantee of the rights of each other's nationals." AfNews
- ▶ 8/7/98 3,000 Afars from Eritrea "fed up with the injustices perpetrated against them" have fled to Ethiopia. EForum
- ▶ 8/7/98 258 Ethiopia deportees from Assab arrived in Djibouti after a 27-hour sea journey. This brings the total of Ethiopians deported from Eritrea to over 6,000. AddTrib
- ▶ 8/7/98 The Italian government has donated US\$230,000 for assistance for the displaced population of Tigray and the Afar regions. AddTrib
- ▶ 8/10/98 Hundreds more Eritreans have been expelled, bringing the total number of deportees to over 15,000. 178 Ethiopian left Asmara of their own free will. EriNA
- ▶ 8/12/98 Ethiopia exercised its right of reply before the UN Human Rights Commission and criticized Eritrea for its threat to "strike at the heart of Ethiopia: which has been "foiled by the dismantling of its extensive network within Ethiopia." In addition, atrocities against Ethiopia were detailed to show the "extent of cruelty . . . and hypocrisy . . . about human rights and humanitarian laws." AfNews
- ▶ 8/13/98 Amnesty international communicated its concern regarding the deportee situation to the Eritrean government, acknowledging the far greater numbers expelled from Ethiopia. EriEm
- ▶ 8/13/98 Ethiopia has given Eritreans working for international organizations in Addis Ababa one month to leave the country. EForum
- ▶ 8/15/98 Eritrea claims that Ethiopia has expelled over 17,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin including many children, pregnant women, elderly and disabled. ErProf
- ▶ 8/17/98 The Eritrean UN ambassador contacted Secretary General Kofi Annan concerning the expulsion orders made by the Ethiopian government for Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin working with UN institutions in Addis Ababa. EriEm
- ▶ 8/18-20/98 The Union of African Parliaments issued a resolution on the border crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea in Niamey, Niger. The resolutions call for Eritrea to respect the findings of the OAU Ministerial Committee which concluded that Ethiopian administered territories were occupied by Eritrea, and called on Eritrea to withdraw its forces to where it was prior to May 6th, 1998 as was previously recommended by the OAU and the Security Council. Ethiopia has asked the Union of African Parliaments to investigate war crimes in the conflict. EthNews 8-9/98
- ▶ Ethiopia accused Eritrea of involvement in the looting, destruction and forceful closing of nineteen churches including Holy Trinity Church in Adamitu which was shelled. EthNews 8-9/98
- ▶ 8/28/98 Eritrea announced the release of 71 Ethiopian soldiers made captive in the border conflict. ErProf
- ▶ Ethiopia claims that Eritrea has expelled 14,938 Ethiopians to date and that 204,630 have been displaced who were living in the Tigray and Afar regional states. EthNews 8-9/98
- ▶ 9/8/98 Israel plans to sell to the Ethiopian Air Force 10 upgraded MiG 21 fighter jets. Eritrea has objected to the sale due to the border war. Prime Minister Netanyahu decided to go ahead with the delivery within one year. "Israel's official policy is not to sell arms to areas of conflict." (AFP) ERev 9-10/98
- ▶ 9/16/98 Anthony Lake, former US National Security Advisor, will visit Asmara and Addis Ababa in an effort to launch a new peace initiative. ErProf
- ▶ 9/18-24/98 Ato Andeberhan Woldegiorgis, Eritrea's Ambassador to the European Union, attended the EU parliamentary conference in Brussels and gave an interview on National Radio on the resolutions. "The resolutions adopted by the conference reflected basically those already presented by our government . . . . To mention a few, the meeting 1. supported the initiatives taken by the OAU and other international organizations for a peaceful solution to the conflict. 2. called on the UN and EU to convince the two sides to accept peaceful solution to the conflict. 3. called on both sides to reject the logic of force. 4. called on both sides to stop hostilities and start talks . . . . Besides, the meeting condemned violation of human rights with particular emphasis on the violations perpetrated by the Ethiopian government . . . . It seems that the truth is coming out at long last and that the real picture of the situation is now clear to many who had in the past been misled by Ethiopian propaganda. The conference has really been instrumental in clearing the clouds of doubt and misgivings once and for all and has put things in their proper perspective. This is a big moral victory to Eritrea." ErProf

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▶ 7/31/98 Ahmed Abdelkerim, a resigned Ethiopian MP, sought refuge in Britain, claiming that his government was "arming rival factions in Somalia: despite the international arms embargo imposed on that country. EriNA

▶ The Ethiopian New Year was celebrated by Ethiopians around the world. (It is now 1991 Ethiopian Calendar.) EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Ethiopia's long distance runner, Haile Gebre Selassie, won the 3,000 meter race for the Golden League Grand Prix in Moscow with a time of 7:50:00. Ethiopia's Gete Wami won the women's 3000 meter race in 8:40:11. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Ambesse Tolosa won the men's title at the Hokkaido Marathon race at Sapporo, Japan, with a record time of 8:40:11. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Russia has agreed to cancel 80% of the US\$ 5 billion debt Ethiopia incurred during the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime for its massive military expenses. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Japan has signed three grants with Ethiopia totaling US\$37.7 million to be used for urban water supply, power distribution and the Addis-Debre Markos road project. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ The outgoing resident representative of the World Bank for Ethiopia, Fayez Omar, reported that Ethiopia's economy has grown by 50% over the past 5 to 6 years. The projected GDP growth rate for 1998/99 is 9.4%. The World Bank has invested over \$660 million for development projects in the 1997/98 fiscal year. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ 8/7/98 The Int'l Development Ass'n of the World Bank signed a credit agreement for US\$60 million for improved agricultural research, for crop and livestock production systems, and natural resource development in Ethiopia. The Alemaya University of

Agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture and the regional governments will be implementing this project. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ 8/98 Somali faction leader, Hussein Aideed, met with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi about peace reconciliation efforts which were begun in Sodere earlier this year. Mr. Aideed promised that "Henceforth, Somalia will not be used by any terrorist group seeking to destabilize Ethiopia or any other neighboring country." EthNews 8-9/98

▶ The UN Development Program will give grants totalling US\$ 54.2 million for capacity increase (16.9 million), water development (15 million), education, (2.1 million), and agricultural development (10.2 million). EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Nine million additional children under the age of 5 will be vaccinated against polio during October and November. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Seventy thousand new telephone lines were installed in Addis Ababa to increase the capacity to handle business and investors' calls. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ The Ethiopian government has introduced measures to relax the control of hard currency in order to promote foreign trade. Commercial banks will now be able to buy and sell hard currency and issue import and export licenses (except for coffee licenses). EthNews 8-9/98

▶ On 10/15-23/98 Ethiopian will host the Second Global Women Entrepreneurs Trade Fair and Investment Forum in Addis Ababa. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ MIDROC Ethiopia has begun production of gold from a mine in the Borena Zone of Oromia, Southern Ethiopia, which it acquired in the privatization program. Production is

expected to be 2,800 kg the first year. EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Coffee profits for the 1997/98 fiscal year ended in early July were up 15% over the previous year. (Ethiopia is the 3rd largest coffee producer in Africa with \$410.8 million in exports. Uganda is first and the Ivory Coast is second.) EthNews 8-9/98

▶ Taxi drivers in Addis went on strike to protest new regulations of traffic safety imposed by the city officials. They argued that the city must first improve the condition of the roads. EReg 8/98

▶ Ato Kifle Mulat, the Chairman of the Provisional Coordinating Committee of the Eth. Free Journalists Association (EFJA), and the editor of "Ethio-Time" is still in jail in spite of a court acquittal on June 29th. The Acting Manager of AKPAC and three editors of "Toby" are still held without charges since January, 1998. EReg 8/98

▶ 8/3/98 Eritrea and Libya signed an agreement to promote cooperation in trade, customs, investment, education and culture. EriNA

▶ 8/7/98 The National Union of Eritrean Women appealed to the international community to raise its voice against Ethiopia's human rights violations. The National Confederation of Eritrean Workers is seeking employment for recently arrived Eritrean deportees. EriNA

The Population Institute has projected that Ethiopia is one of 13 countries whose populations will *triple* in the next 50 years. *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle* 12/31/98



- ▶ 8/11/98 Radio Ethiopia announced that the Ethiopian Arts and Media Prize Trust has been funded to recognize and honor outstanding performance in the arts and the media. AfNews
  - ▶ 8/12/98 Ethiopia withdrew its team from the African Cup of National soccer tournament to be held in Cairo because of the border conflict and the presence of the Eritrean team. EReg 9/98
  - ▶ 8/13/98 The main office of the Ethiopian Teachers Ass'n was closed by order of the First Federal Court. Some ETA officials were questioned at a police station and then released. EReg 9/98
  - ▶ 8/13/98 A UN AIDS Report estimated that 2.5 million people in Ethiopia were infected by HIV by the end of 1997 and 88% of all infections were the result of heterosexual transmission. AfNews
  - ▶ 8/13/98 Representatives of the World Bank and the Awash International Bank advised that some economic policies (e.g. land policy) of the Ethiopian government should be reconsidered if the private sector is to bring economic growth. AfNews
  - ▶ 8/13/98 199.3 million birr has been allocated to implement a program for expanding universities in Ethiopia during 1998–99. Facilities in all parts of the country will undergo an expansion program.
  - ▶ 8/13/98 The National Coordination Committee of the Somali Republic has accused Ethiopia of "interfering in the Somali reconciliation process," by providing arms to Somali renegades. EriNA
  - ▶ 8/14/98 Ethiopia's import/export ration continues to reveal a much faster rise in imports over exports. This has led to the establishment of the Foreign Trade Promotion Agency. AddTrib
  - ▶ 8/15/98 The Ethio-Djibouti Railway Company celebrated its centennial. The company plans to add locomotives and wagons replace rails. If the Railway Company will reorganize and downsize to 1,300 employees the European Commission will provide \$100 million for improvements. Djibouti is Ethiopia's only outlet to the sea now. Exports through Djibouti have increased from 16th to 45% after the Ethiopia stopped using Eritrea's ports. EReg 10/98
  - ▶ 8/17/98 The IMF reports that the Eritrean government is transforming the economy into a "market economy with a vibrant private sector." EriNA
  - ▶ 8/19/98 Eritrean Finance Minister reported that the GDP had increased by 8% in 1998 while inflation is holding at 4% while attracting many foreign and domestic investors. EriEm
  - ▶ 8/19/98 Eritrea, in a joint venture with a Korean enterprise, has agreed to set up a modern cement factory worth US\$50 million to produce 400,000 tons per year. EriEm
  - ▶ 8/31/98 Hussein Mohammed Aidid agreed to end hostilities toward Ethiopia, and to stop supporting armed groups seeking to overthrow Ethiopia, according to AFP news sources. EReg 9–10/98
  - ▶ The Eritrea Festival 1998 was held in Asmara Stadium amid a spirit of ardent patriotism and unity. ErProf
  - ▶ Eritrea's Finance Minister reports economic growth of eight percent, and an IMF report that hailed Eritrea's economy as exemplary. He stated that Eritrea does not get any loans from the IMF because the government does not want to borrow and then be told what adjustments it must make. Eritrea cooperates with IMF's experts in the economic field. ErProf
  - ▶ 9/5/98 The All Amhara Political Organization (AAPO) reported to the British Embassy that it will not participate in the elections for the year 2000.
- It claimed that 40 of its offices in various regions have been closed in the past five years and its senior leaders have been jailed along with its president, Asrat Woldeyes. EReg 9–10/98
- ▶ 9/10/98 Thirty-one former Derg members who were imprisoned an average of seven years were released for lack of evidence. The Ethiopian government is not trying to reinstate former military personnel for use in its border conflict. EthNews 8–9/98
  - ▶ 9/98 A delegation of 80 Ethiopians living abroad traveled to Ethiopia to give a check totalling \$768,279 for the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission. They visited Aider School in Mekelle, Tigray region, which was bombed by Eritrean planes on June 5th, which killed 54 persons including many children. EthNews 8–9/98
  - ▶ 9/10/98 The Swiss supreme court has stopped the transfer of US\$ 8 million to Ethiopia which is the amount reported deposited in a Geneva bank account by a woman friend of former Deputy Prime Minister Tamrat Layne. The woman is in jail in Ethiopia accused of embezzling US\$ 16 million with the former Deputy Prime Minister. The Swiss court is awaiting a ruling from the Ethiopian court, and requested that the Swiss Ambassador visit the woman to learn about the case and be present at the hearing. EReg 9–10/98
  - ▶ 9/98 Italy agreed to return a silver plate belonging to Emperor Menelik and a gold watch belonging to his daughter, Empress Zewditu. The items were stolen during the Italian occupation in the 1930's. They are now in the National Museum in Addis Ababa. EReg 9–10/98
  - ▶ The famous composer Tezera Haile-Mikhael passed away in September. He wrote many songs for Ethiopia's famous singers. EReg 9–10/98



- ▶ The merger of the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (OLNF) was completed in the Ogaden Region. The new party is the Somali Peoples Democratic Party (SPDP). The government has a goal of creating a single political organization that represents each administrative region. EReg 10/98
- ▶ 9/11–13/98 A new umbrella political organization called the Coalition of Ethiopian Opposition Political Organizations, (CEOPO), was formed. The cochairmen were Dr. Beyene Petros of the Southern Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Coalition, and Ato Merera Gudim, Chairman of the Oromo National Congress. Eight political opposition organizations signed an agreement to create democratic conditions in Ethiopia and to create a favorable environment for opposition group participation in the political process. EReg 11/98
- ▶ 9/18/98 Ethiopia's population has reached 59,882,000 reflecting an annual growth rate of 2.92% and is projected to become 83.5 million in the next 12 years. Ethiopia has the third largest population in Africa. Of the population above 9 years of age, 30% of the males and 17% of the females are literate, according to the central statistic authority. Figures are based on a 1994 population and housing census. (Xinhua News Agency) ERev 9–10/98
- ▶ 9/18/98 A new think-tank organization, the Forum for Social Studies (FSS), held its first workshop in Addis Ababa. The forum was founded by five scholars. The group has been sanctioned by the Ministry of Justice. Its main objective is to "undertake in-depth research on issues of development and social change in Ethiopia, and to provide a public forum for the discussion of such issues". The group hopes to make issues of public policy part of the public debate. The first workshop was attended

by 70 experts from research institutions, governmental and non- governmental organizations. Research papers were presented. EReg 11/98

- ▶ 9/21/98 Prime Minister Meles Zenawi met with a group of Ethiopians from the United States who had come to deliver money collected from Ethiopians abroad to aid the victims of the border conflict who have been displaced in Tigre Region. Ato Meles stated that members of the private press were not in attendance because they have presented distorted views in the past. The private press may be invited in the future, he added. Ato Meles stated that "opposition political forces who have so far lived in self-inflicted exile can promote their political objectives in a peaceful manner inside the country . . . . Even if their aim is to destroy the sky, as long as they do it legally and peacefully, not only will they not face any objection but we will also meet them halfway. We only ask you to respect the constitution and accept it . . . forces who accept the legal and peaceful forum and wish to work jointly can also amend parts of the constitution they don't agree with through peaceful struggle." ERev 9–10/98
- ▶ 9/23/98 Chains were finally removed from Dr. Taye Wolde Semayat's hands in prison by order of the court. Dr. Taye, the former president of the Ethiopian Teachers Association, had been in chains in prison since July 28th due to a miscommunication about what the Judge reported stated and what he had written as to the penalty for protesting that he was not receiving justice in the courtroom. EReg 11/98
- ▶ 9/24/98 The Ethiopian Teachers Association protested the sealing of its Head Office on August 13th, and its meeting hall a week later, which disrupted its National Conference on Education which was sponsored by Education International. EReg 11/98

▶ 9/24–30 A delegation from Libya was in Eritrea for talks about trade and investment in the agricultural sector. ErProf

▶ The Eritrea-Korea household manufacturing enterprise, founded in 1997, is today producing high standard household furniture, kitchen cabinets, file cabinets, doors and office furniture. ErProf

▶ 10/2/98 The Lions Club sight restoration project has helped more than 5,000 patients regain their sight from cataracts since June, 1997. Recently more than 700 cataract patients had their sight restored free of charge in a surgical program held at Adama Hospital in Nazareth. (Reuters) ERev 9–10/98

▶ 10/9/98 An international panel of arbitration ruled in favor of Yemen over Eritrea in their 1995 dispute over the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea. The two countries have agreed to return to normal relations. (Reuters) ERev 9–10/98

▶ 10/10/98 An agreement was signed to build a brewery costing US\$40 million. It would be a joint venture with South African and Ethiopian investors. ERev 9–10/98

▶ 10/12–18/98 Members of the International Press Institute and the Int'l Federation of Journalists held meetings with the Ministers of Information, Justice and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi regarding 16 journalists who are in prison, 26 who are living in exile and 31 others who are the subjects of pending criminal cases. ERev 9–10/98

▶ 10/12/98 Professor Andargachew Tesfaye, Professor of Sociology, at Addis Ababa University, was elected as the Chairman of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO). He replaced Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam who wanted to be replaced but agreed to remain on the Executive Committee. Professor Mesfin has been regularly denounced in





cartoons in the daily papers for criticizing the use of violence to settle political differences. EReg 11/98

- ▶ 10/9–11/98 A reunion of the alumni of Alemaya University of Agriculture, the Jimma Technical School, and former American faculty was held at the Best Western Hotel, Stillwater, Oklahoma. EReg 10/98
- ▶ A malaria epidemic was reported in Debre Zeit, Nazareth, Mojo, Wonji and Wulenchiti which is causing deaths among children and the elderly each day. ERev 11-12/98
- ▶ Haile Gebre-Selassie, long distance track star of Ethiopia, has been chosen as the best male athlete of 1998 by the Int'l Amateur Athletics Federation. ERev 11-12/98
- ▶ Distinguished author and educator Ato Kebede Mikhael passed away at age 82 in November. Ethiopian students grew up reading his poems and books. He served as the Minister of Education in the Haile Selassie government. ERev 11-12/98
- ▶ 10/18/98 Twenty-seven technicians of Ethiopian Airlines were suspended for protesting pay increases of only 36% versus pilots' increases of 100% approved as of March, 1998. The technicians had stayed away from work two days because management had not addressed their grievances. EReg 12/98
- ▶ 10/22/98 Local Ethiopians blamed the Al-Ittihad for an armed robbery attack of two public busses between Harar and Jijiga in which six passengers were wounded and 13 were killed. EReg 12/98
- ▶ 10/28/98 WorldSpace Corporation, founded in 1990 by Ethiopian Noah Samara, successfully launched its first satellite called AfriStar from Kourou, French Guiana. It will serve Africa and the Middle East to transmit

radio programs. WorldSpace Corp. is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has plans to fund construction of 4 satellites. ERev 11-12/98

- ▶ 10/30/98 *The New York Times* reported that US Ambassador to Eritrea John F. Hicks resigned last year after a State Dept investigation determined that Hicks had engaged in sexual misconduct involving two embassy secretaries. Mr. Hicks denied the accusation.
- ▶ 10/30/98 The World Bank approved a loan of US\$ 100 million for Ethiopian's five year health services program. The IMF has approved an additional loan of US\$ 42 million for Ethiopia's economic and financial program for fiscal year July 8, 1998-July 7, 1999. EReg 12/98
- ▶ 12/26/98 The Italians have once again reneged on their promise to return the 1,000-year-old Obelisk of Axum. This time the explanation is that with impending war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the obelisk would be in danger because of Axum's proximity to the border between the two countries. The Italians have been promising to return the obelisk, which had been seized in 1937 by Mussolini's forces, since 1947. Their most recent commitment was made by their president during a visit to Ethiopia in 1997.



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**Print media sources of material compiled by John Barnes (Addis Ababa 66–68)**

*ERev* = *Ethiopian Review* (1 yr/\$29)  
PO Box 98499  
Atlanta GA 30359

*EReg* = *Ethiopian Register* (1 yr/\$35)  
PO Box 580  
St. Joseph MN 56374

*EthNews* = *News from Ethiopia* (free)  
Embassy of Ethiopia, 2134  
Kalorama Rd NW, Washington DC  
20008 (free)

*EBir* = *Ethiopian BIR* (1 yr/\$15)  
PO Box 2334  
Westfield NJ 07090

*EProf* = *Eritrea Profile* newspaper  
PO Box 247  
Asmara Eritrea  
Phone:11-41-14 or 12-77 48x92  
Fax 291-1-12-48-47  
Published weekly by the Ministry of  
Information and distributed by the  
Eritrean Embassy.

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**Internet sources of material forwarded by Richard Crepeau (Dessie 63–65) and compiled by Ron Gonella (Adi Quala 66–68).**

*EForum* = News from the Internet site  
<http://www.ethiolist.com/>  
with special thanks to Richard  
Crepeau (Dessie 63–65)

*Ethiolist* = Internet site <http://www.ethiolist.com/>

*Africa News* = Internet site

EriNA= Eritrean News Agency

EriEm=Eritrean Embassy

AddTrib=Addis Tribune



# AN INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR SHINN

Excerpts from an interview of U.S. Ambassador David H. Shinn  
by Yohannes Assefa, Contributing Editor of the *Ethiopian Review*  
Published in *Ethiopian Review* Sept-Oct. 1998 issue

Edited by John Barnes

*David Shinn became the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia on June 17, 1996, after serving as Director of the Office of East African Affairs and the State Department Coordinator for Somalia.*

*Ambassador Shinn has been an advocate of U.S. foreign aid and investment to Ethiopia, and a promoter of increased trade between the two countries. In early summer 1998 he toured U.S. cities to inform investors of the potential of Ethiopia.*

## **Were you surprised by the current conflict between the governments in Ethiopia and Eritrea?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** Not only was I surprised by the current conflict . . . , but virtually everyone with whom I have been in contact in the region was equally surprised, even shocked. I am not aware of anyone who predicted this conflict although several individuals did point out years ago the possibility of disagreement over delineation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border . . . . Nevertheless, there was a common assumption that any disagreement concerning the border would be worked out amicably by the leadership in both countries. With the benefit of hindsight, it is apparent that the conflict involves more than just a border dispute. All of us who follow events in the region . . . need to review how we analyzed a

series of relatively minor disagreements and how the totality of these disagreements resulted in a full-scale crisis.

## **Has the close friendship complicated your efforts to resolve the conflict in a peaceful manner? Can the U.S. do anything to stop the war?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** The United States, more than any other individual country, has worked hard to defuse this crisis and bring it to a peaceful resolution. The efforts of the U.S./Rwandan facilitation team and the personal involvement of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Susan Rice, in the early days of the conflict constituted an extraordinary initiative . . . . At a number of critical points President Clinton intervened in the dispute and was successful in encouraging a moratorium on air strikes which has continued to the present day . . . in early September, General Tony Zinni, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Central Command, paid a visit to both countries . . . to encourage a peaceful solution. U.S. efforts continue behind the scenes at a high level to bring this matter to a peaceful resolution . . . . It is exceedingly difficult for a third party to propose a solution satisfactory to both parties on a highly emotional problem and not, on occasion, run afoul of both protagonists. This is a risk we are willing to take to preserve peace. . . .

## **What has been the most glaring success or failure of the current government in regard to human rights in Ethiopia?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** While I have been impressed with government efforts to achieve sustainable economic development, in my view, the greatest success has been the totality of its effort to move towards democratization and to improve human rights in a relatively short period of time . . . I do not believe there is any such thing as instant democracy or the immediate end of all human rights abuses. This process takes time to be fully accepted at the top levels of government and then filter down to the mid and lower levels of central, regional, zonal and district governments and the security forces which support them. I believe the two areas which still require the most improvement are the need to increase the capacity of the independent judiciary to ensure due process and to find ways to deal more appropriately with private journalists who run afoul of a very strict press law. In addition, it is time to begin now to lay the ground work for free and fair elections in the year 2000.



**When asked about the U.S.' lack of interest and response with regards to human rights violations in Ethiopia, you said "sometimes the best way to persuade friends is by letting them know our views in private, and not by publicly scolding them." Has this muted policy of engagement worked in curtailing human rights violations in Ethiopia?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** I continue to believe that the most effective way of working with the government on human rights concerns is to do so largely in private. It is also important to help the government build up its own capacity for dealing with issues of democratization and human rights abuses. As a result, the U.S. supports training for members of the judiciary throughout Ethiopia . . . . The U.S. has been vocal in its support of non-governmental organizations and continues to provide funding for a number of these organizations . . . . We have even conducted programs (aimed at increasing the awareness of the need for democratization and improved human rights practices) with elements of the Ethiopian military. Your readers can, of course, read each year the US Government analysis of the human rights situation in Ethiopia . . . prepared for the U.S. Congress.

**Is there freedom of the press in Ethiopia?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** The written media have opened up significantly in the past seven years. Strictly speaking, there is freedom of the written press in Ethiopia although there continue to be areas for improvement in the handling of those journalists who are detained or arrested for violating the Press Law.

**How do you view the so-called "Press Law"?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** First, I am not personally aware that members of the independent press have been beaten. Significant numbers have in recent years been arrested or detained under the Press Law, which gives wide scope to the government to arrest individuals. The U.S. has expressed its concerns in the annual Human Rights Report on the arrest of representatives of the independent press and whether they have been accorded due process under Ethiopian law. We continue to view this as an area in need of improvement. I would point out that some pretty outrageous material is published in the Ethiopian independent press. The question is whether one should ignore this material or arrest the journalists and editors under the Press Law.

**What can the U.S. do to help protect members of the free press and nurture the development of the free press in Ethiopia?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** The U.S. has worked hard to increase the professionalism of both the government and the independent press in Ethiopia. As the press becomes more professional, I believe there will be less tendency to arrest members of the independent press. The USIS, in particular, has gone out of its way to provide training to both government and private journalists. Professionalism in all elements of journalism is the key to reducing tension between the government and the independent press. At the same time it is critical that the government exercise due process whenever it arrests a member of the independent media . . . .

**Finally, do you have any message to convey to our readers?**

**Ambassador Shinn:** This is my seventh posting in Africa; I can say in all honesty that it has been far and away the most challenging of my assignments. There is a tendency by Ethiopians, either in government or out of government, to view policies and opinions as being entirely in favor of their position or entirely opposed to their position. Unlike the United States, there is not much room for middle ground. I have also found . . . that there is very little room for tactical or strategic error as we develop U.S. policy toward Ethiopia . . . . My one big hope is that war can be avoided . . . so that both countries can focus all of their energy on economic development. I sincerely wish that relations between the peoples of both countries will once again be friendly and cordial.

*Yohannes Assefa is currently working on his Doctorate of Law at Northeastern University School of Law in Boston.*



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Crisis Corps: 202/692-2250  
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202/692-1540  
Inspector General: 202/692-2900  
www.peacecorps.gov
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