

Eritrea: Dissidence, Detention, and Diplomatic Chess

By Hayward Allen (Harar 62–64)

Inside

Eritrea news	5
The Press	6
The Peace	8
Ethiopia news	12
Helping	22
Peace Corps	25
NPCA	25
40 + 1	28
E&E RPCVs	29
Books & writers	33
Film & theater	37
Seeing the sites	39
Editorial	44
On the web	45
Contacts	46

IN JULY, 2001, BEREKET HABTE SELASSIE published on the Internet a highly incendiary criticism of Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki's treatment of the country's constitution. Bereket Habte, a key author of the Eritrean constitution, challenged the creation of a special military tribunal to prosecute certain governmental charges. "It is hard to understand why a special court with draconian powers would be needed for the task of combating corruption when a division of the high court could be assigned the same task," he wrote in his scathing report, according to the United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network and distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com).

With the new ruling, all governmental and private institutions are required to cooperate with the military tribunal or face three years of imprisonment and a heavy fine. There is no path of appeal of the special judicial body's judgements.

Bereket Habte called the court a "travesty of justice and an offence to reason and fair dealing The special court is dismal testimony . . . to things

gone wrong in a country that started with great promise."

A member of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and former Ethiopian attorney general, Bereket Habte Selassie chose the Internet to broadcast his analysis of what would continue something more than just a contentious issue among lawyers and the Eritrean government.

Some recent history

In October 2000, thirteen Eritrean professionals and professors, including Bereket Habte Selassie, sent a private letter from Berlin to President Isaias. It soon became a public communication. According to Charles Cobb, Jr, reporting for allAfrica.com, "It was a cautious letter, written at the end of the two-year war with Ethiopia. It was supportive of Isaias' leadership . . ." The letter noted, as well, the support given to "our government in its defense of our country's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

In its seemingly conciliatory opening paragraphs, the letter also carried warnings. "It is our firm

belief that the military threat posed by Ethiopia cannot be dealt with separately from the political and economic challenges that confront us a new nation," said the G-13, as they came to be called.

The momentum of the letter gathered speed with questions about the causes of the war, about the need for a profound review of "post-independence development," and "has raised grave questions about the conduct of Eritrean affairs both domestic and foreign, and about the nature of our leadership in the post-independence period."

[The] G-15, which had influential members including former ministers and the security chief of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, wrote again to the president. Their letter accused the president of "conducting himself in an illegal and unconstitutional manner."

...

On September, 11 of the G-15 were arrested

President Isaias invited the group to meet with him, although in an interview he noted that the critics did not know what was going on. "They know it, and I know it," he said, "... these are completely detached people from the reality and who have never been here. They came up with their opinions. I respect anyone's opinion. I do not see any substantive issue on the [letter] outside the publicity given to it."

Nearly two months after sending the letter, the group met with the president. They explained that they had sent the letter to him registered mail and one copy to

the Eritrean ambassador to the US and they did not leak it to the press.

President Isaias then took a letter from his pocket, and read it to the group. Bereket Habte was not one of the attendees, but he later reported that the president admonished his visitors and sought for their admission that they had made a mistake. "We all make mistakes," he wrote. He also noted that he didn't have to defend himself about anything his government had done. While he did agree with the issues raised in the group's letter, he said he did

not want to get into political "*enkili*" [talking in circles] according to Dawit Mesfin, another of the group.

The president's attitude hardened and dissent built

Following the end of the war with Ethiopia, the president's attitude and demeanor hardened as the National Assembly began to consider laws for regulating the formation of political parties in Eritrea, Cobb reported. Dissatisfaction and disagreement began to foment. Dissent grew. "We shall be obliged not to continue being tools of this incorrect administration," stated one leader of the Assembly and cabinet minister in a letter to the president. Cobb related that the leader received a terse reply from the president: "I will patiently avoid any invitation to an argument. But if, by continuous provocation, you want to escalate problems by exaggerating nonexistent issues, it is your choice."

In February 2001, the critic was removed from his ministerial post and his Assembly committee was told not to distribute its position on the creation of political parties.

In April 2001, during an interview with the Voice of America, the president stated, "I do not see the direct relevance between elections and political parties. I do not expect to see political parties mushrooming overnight. This is a very mature society. . . . I do not see why they should be directly linked to elections."

One month later, a new dissident group, called the G-15 which had influential members including former ministers and the security chief of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, wrote again to the president. Their letter accused the president of "conducting himself in an illegal and unconstitutional manner," according to a Cobb article.

Dissent began to snowball. Other dissidents emerged. Statements were issued, comments noted, and the government was not pleased. On September, 11 of the 15 were arrested, and charged with plotting to create "political cells" throughout

Eritrea and conducting illegal activities with “established regional countries.” It was threatened that group members might be charged with treason.

At the same time as the G-15 arrests, the eight independent newspapers in Asmara were shut down and their editors detained. [See “Problems With/Of the Press” on page 6]

University students protest

On September 20, Asmara University was not allowed to open. The reason given was that 2,100 students were still working in a program in which all university students are required to participate. The students had been sent to work in the eastern lowlands of Eritrea, a hot, arid desert on the Red Sea coast. At least two students had allegedly died and many hospitalized due to heat-related problems. The students’ work/aid requirement was extended, according to journalist Alex Last, due to

several hundred protesting the program itself. The student union leader, Semere Kesete, was arrested for criticizing the government for its running of the university.

It was stated that the university would be shut down for one year.

Among the protesters back home was a group of students’ mothers and families. According to Last,

eyewitnesses said that the police used batons to break up a gathering of concerned parents.

The students involved in the work program were then paid \$15 per month for services rendered, and ten days later, according to the Press Agency of France, the university was allowed to reopen. Many of the work program students, although their work period was extended, returned to register — the work program had been cancelled. At last report, Semere Kesete was still in prison. The government had no comment.

Protest in London

In London, in late October, a meeting of Eritrean dissidents was disrupted by a pro-Isaias faction. According to the BBC, about a dozen members of the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PDFJ) shouted during the dissidents’ speeches and threw chairs at the podium when former Minister of Defence Mesfin Hagos rose to speak. The police were called in, and the meeting was cancelled.

Mesfin Hagos was one of the cofounders and a leading commander of the liberation forces, members of which now make up Eritrea’s government. Mesfin was one of the G-15, but he was in the US for medical treatment when others of the group were arrested.

Although accused of treason, Mesfin announced that he would return to Eritrea. He accused the president of “becoming an old-fashioned dictator.” The government rescinded his diplomatic passport, a factor that would delay his return to Eritrea.

According to the pro-government *Shaebia News* [www.shaebia.com], those not arrested in the G-15 roundup have come to the United States to organize a “clandestine” oppositional group to the existing government in Eritrea. The group sought to establish a website, Eritrea1.org [http://eritrea1.org/] and is seeking connections with UN organizations, governmental entities, dissident groups, “secret contacts . . . with regional countries,” and any group working for rights of the Eritrean people. They will also establish a “front” organization as a human rights organization to qualify for NGO funds.

Another opposition website is Awate.com.

Where the US stands

The United States protested the arrests and detentions, as well as the closing of the doors of all private, independent publications. Part of an official release from the American Embassy in Asmara stated: “These individuals have called for

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the government to move faster to create a multi-party system, implement the constitution, and hold national elections.”

The Eritrean government’s response reiterated its need to protect national security and integrity, thus mandating the detention and arrest of individuals accused of advocating creation of opposition cells and being in contact with opposition groups in Ethiopia.

In late July, Donald J. McConnell was named US ambassador-designate to Eritrea. He presented his official credentials to President Isaias Afewerki in September. McConnell is a career diplomat, most recently deputy assistant secretary for plans and policy of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at the Department of State. He also served as one of the US members of NATO in Belgium, and from 1993–96 was chief-of-mission in Burkina Fasso.

In his acceptance statement, McConnell expressed the US government’s appreciation of statements made by the Eritrean government to our nation and the victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks. President Isaias commented that he was looking forward to a “deepening of relations of friendship and all-around cooperation between the two countries.”

Ambassador McConnell was not in place long before two Eritrean nationals working at the US Embassy in the economic and political sections were arrested. They were charged with translating “sensitive” documents and reports in local independent newspapers, and “giving away too much information from local sources.”

A government spokesman said the arrests had nothing to do with recent American criticism of Eritrea’s handling of opposition and the press. The ambassador has sent a diplomatic note to President Isaias Afewerki.

Italy enters the mix

Meanwhile, Italian diplomacy was challenged on September 28, 2001, when Italy’s Ambassador to Eritrea and European Union Representative

Antonio Bandini was expelled from Eritrea. President Isaias gave no reason for the expulsion, but during the previous week Bandini had protested the Eritrean governments crackdown on political opposition and suspension of the independent press. The Eritrean government explained: “His expulsion was a personal matter, and not linked to the presentation of the EU demarche [protest],” said Semere Russom, director of European affairs in the Eritrean foreign ministry. “Eritrea’s historic relations and ties of friendship with Italy should not be affected. It is not about Italy and Eritrea, it is about one man.” (Note: Italy is the largest provider of aid to Eritrea.)

On October 2, the Eritrean ambassador to Italy, Tsegi Mogos, was given three-days to leave Italy.

“The European Union deplores the decision of the Eritrean Government to declare *persona non grata* H.E. Antonio Bandini, Ambassador of Italy in Eritrea and representative of the presidency of the European Union in Asmara,” an EU statement of October 2 related. Furthermore the Union stated that the actions of the Eritrean government are undermining commitments of support for human rights, good governance, rule of law, and in favor of democracy.

By October 9, members of the EU had recalled all their ambassadors to Eritrea. The diplomats’ return to their home countries was expected to be immediate, and ostensibly was to provide time to review conditions of, relations with, and assistance to Eritrea. By October 10, the chief diplomats were gone. Their missions were left manned and open for regular interaction with Eritrean citizens.

Other Eritrea News

Once-Upon-a-Time Headlines, but Real Nonetheless

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Mogadishu claims Eritrea supplying arms to Somali faction

A faction leader in Mogadishu, Usman Hasan Ali Ato, accused the Eritrean government of supplying weaponry to Somalia's Transitional National Government. Usman Ato told the UN Integrated Regional Information Network, through the AllAfrica Global Media, "Eritrea is supplying an assortment of weapons that would ignite renewed bloodshed in Somalia, and this has already hampered efforts for reconciliation. Ato is a key leader in factions opposed to the TNG.

His also claimed that Eritrea had been involved with Somalia's internal politics ever since the outbreak of fighting with Ethiopia. Eritrea does not stand alone as a target of these claims, for Egypt, Yemen, and Djibouti are also accused of supplying arms to the Transitional National Government.

Both the Eritrean government and the TNG deny any cooperative arms agreements.

Fishing Rights

Eritrea has accused Yemen of ignoring a decision by the Hague Arbitration Court that settled a charge of fishing rights in the Hanish Islands, claimed by both nations.

One of the world's smallest wars was fought in 1996 between Eritrea and Yemen over the control of the minuscule Hanish Islands. It took three years of international arbitration to settle the issue — which called for Eritrea to withdraw forces from areas within Yemen's territory. The agreement, of course, was almost immediately ignored, protested and fighting resumed between fishing fleets. In July, Eritrea was accused of seizing 106 Yemeni fishing boats. Eritrea denied the action.

At the crux of the issue, if there is one, is that the Hague said fishing rights were given to Yemeni fisherfolk, while Eritrea maintains that traditional fishing rights belonged to both countries to which Yemen's fisherpeople said, "Balderdash," or the Arabic equivalent.

Neither nation is happy with the situation of the Hanish Islands' fishing rights.

Editor's note: Look up the Hanish Islands on a very detailed map of the Red Sea; glimpse the minutia of international disputes which matter little to big nations and not that much to smaller ones, but constantly exist between all nations.

Saudi Arabian Assistance

An agreement was signed by Eritrea with Saudi Arabia for a \$16.6 million development loan. It will be used for constructing of the Mendefera/Barentu road, increasing the generation of electricity, and making agricultural advances.

Stop the Presses!

Reports that part of US efforts for normalization of relations between Addis and Asmara, regarding Ethiopia's lease on the port of Assab, are false. "The government of Eritrea has not held any such discussions with either the government of the United States or the government of Ethiopia. The media reports are baseless and pure fabrication. I don't know the motive behind such reports," said Girma Asmerom, Eritrean ambassador to the US.



Problems with/of the Press/s

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The Daily Monitor

In 1993, the new Ethiopian government enacted a Free Press law. That September, a new newspaper, *The Monitor*, went to press. Published three times a week, the paper was a new voice in a wilderness that had lost the freedom of expression. Publisher Fitsum Zaeb Asgedom had returned to his native land to invest in the return of independent economic development.

Seven years later, the newly named *Daily Monitor* became Ethiopia's first privately owned daily newspaper. Over the years, Fitsum Zaeb had not taken a birr in profit, instead feeding his journalistic enterprise with needed funding.

In September, 2001, the publisher was accused of questionable, unsubstantiated corruption: the Anti-Corruption Commission suspected Fitsum Zaeb Asgedom of illegally buying public entities that were to be privatized. Three months earlier, he was jailed for "publishing an erroneous story and misleading the public."

In the *Daily Monitor's* first anniversary issue's [September 12] op-ed page, the editor documented his faith in freedom and justice. He recounted the support given the *Daily Monitor* during the yearlong troubles between the government and the paper, which included shutting it down and freezing all accounts "only six days prior to pay day."

"We are certain that justice will soon be served and our publisher and Ethiopia's true son will soon be released from prison. Happy New Year to all of you! The Editor"

On October 26th, the Ethiopian Supreme Court ruled for the immediate release of Fitsum Zaeb

Asgedom citing his right of to not be detained illegally.

Journalists Flee

Garuma Bekele, Tesfaye Deressa, and Solomon Namera, who had worked for the Amharic newspaper *Urji* were released in June after nearly four years imprisonment, and immediately fled to Kenya. According to the Media for Democracy in Africa in Nairobi and the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists' Association (EFJA) in Addis, with distribution by the International Freedom of Expression Exchange, the three journalists left because they felt they would not receive a fair trial on terrorist charges.

They were arrested in 1997 and accused of disseminating "false information." As newsmen, they covered the killing of three alleged members of the Oromo Liberation Front, a separatist organization. They were held two years before their case came to trial.

The trio was convicted in 1999-2000 of the "false information" charges and given one-year sentences. Under ordinary circumstances the two years served would have been applied to the one-year sentence. However, while in prison, they were charged with terrorist activities, which carry a fifteen-year sentence.

Those charges, however, were eventually dropped due to lack of evidence. In June 2001, the three journalists were set free. Almost immediately, they jumped bail and fled the country.

More Press Arrests

The arrests of independent, private-sector weekly editors-in-chief Merid Zelleke (*Satanaw*) and

Mengistu Wolde Sellasie (*Moged*) have been criticized by the French-based Reporters Without Borders. The group has sent a letter of complaint to Ethiopian Information Minister Wolde Michael Chamo reminding his agency of the violation of a January 2000 UN resolution regarding freedom of opinion and expression. The editors had been detained and interrogated for several days by police, and denied bail.

In early July, the editors of other privately owned weeklies, *Netsebrak* and *Netsanet*, were also detained and questioned.

Even the chief editor of *The Kicker*, a sports weekly, was jailed and fined for not renewing his press license on time. Another editor, representing the publication *Atkurot*, was held in prison indefinitely due to his inability to raise bail.

"We ask you to release [the] journalists immediately," pleaded the Reporters without Borders chairman.

There has been no further comment by the Ethiopian Ministry of Information.

Journalists Arrested in Eritrea

The BBC's Alex Last reported that in late September "At least seven journalists who had worked for the independent newspapers in Eritrea have been arrested . . . according to diplomatic sources."

Three journalists said their homes were visited by security forces and they expected to be jailed also. "Some of those journalists who have not yet been picked up have been making last minute financial arrangements for their families in case they are detained," Last reported.

There was no official confirmation at the time, but a presidential advisor, who did not know if there were arrests, noted that if it had happened, "It was probably a result of them not having permission to be away from national service," according to Last. The same reason has been given for detaining other journalists who were released after proving their having permission to travel from their homes.

One of those picked up is a photographer who had served during the war with Ethiopia and is exempt from further military obligations. Among those expecting arrest also were in the war, and one jailed editor of *Tsegenay* was deemed too old to serve.

"The situation this time is different," according to the BBC report, "not least because the private press has been completely closed but also because of recent reports that two other journalists . . . have escaped to Sudan fearing arrest."

US Protests Eritrean Ban

"As friends of Eritrea, we call upon the Eritrean government to restore freedom of the press as soon as possible . . ." read a statement released in mid-October by the United States Embassy in Asmara.

Eritrea's eight privately owned newspapers were closed by the government and several journalists were being detained in an action to silence critics of governmental treatment of dissidents.

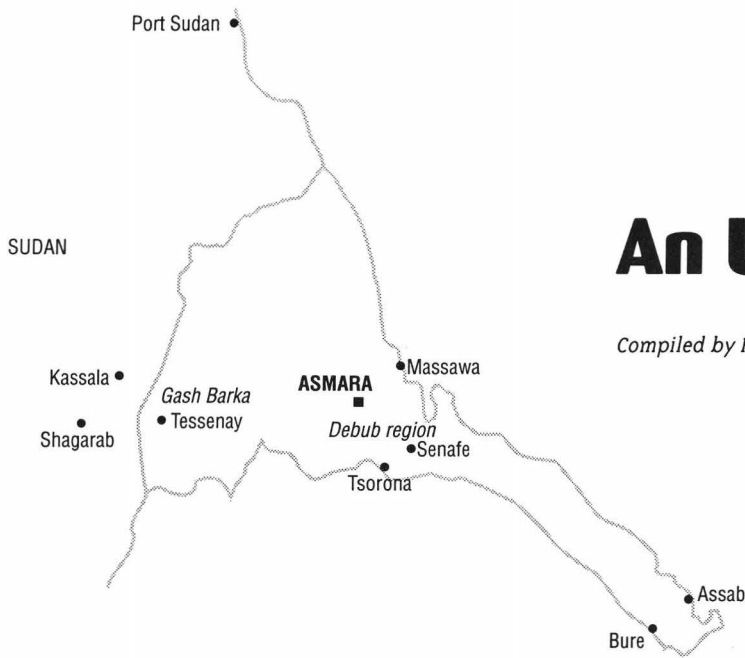
Additionally, eleven senior government officials were arrested after making comments advocating democratic reform in the new government's policies. [See cover story.]

"These individuals have called for the government to move faster to create a multi-party system, implement the constitution, and hold national elections," the US statement said.

The government asserted the right to arrest those who jeopardize national security and were organizing "opposition cells" that were advocating reform and were also contacting Ethiopian dissenters.

The private press argued the issues and were closed down as supporters of reform. All newspapers at this time are under the control of the government.

Ethiopia and Eritrea



An Uneasy Peace

Compiled by Hayward Allen (Harar 62-64)

Land Mines*

Part 1: The return home in Eritrea

While more than 100,000 internally displaced people living in 10 camps in the Debub region have returned to their villages, some 13,000 others were unable to do so because of land mines and lack of basic services. The latter group was dispersed to 10 new, temporary camps near Tsorona and Senafe in southern Eritrea. It is estimated that half of the detained people could return to their homes if land mines were extricated.

In western Eritrea, where nearly 90,000 refugees were relocated to a camp near Gash Barka, at least half have been able to go home. Another 5,000 were expected to be able to return to Tokombia and Shambiko. The camps in Metete and Jejah will then close.

* To learn about the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and what you can do to urge the U.S. to sign the Mine Ban Treaty, go to www.icbl.org.

Those unable to return will be relocated to camps in Korokon and Adi Keshi and to Dembe-Doran. The strategy was to get the refugees nearer their villages once mines were removed and services restored.

Land Mines, Part 2: Ethiopian victims

The World Health Organization and the US-based Center for Disease Control held a workshop in Addis Ababa last summer to request more thorough collection of land-mine victim data in order to better develop the public awareness campaigns warning Ethiopians of the mines' presence. A CDC representative said that the current programs have not produced the expected diminution of deaths and injuries.

The Ethiopian ministry of health is the government institution responsible for the data collection and prevention campaigns.

Most seriously affected by the remaining land mines of previous conflicts between Ethiopia and

Eritrea is the eastern zone of Tigray. Farmers and herders are the primary victims of the buried explosives.

The Ethiopian Physiotherapists Association is promoting the placement of an integrated national system of land-mine injury or fatality data-gathering. Information as to where and how these occur is available, in many cases, at local health posts and hospitals; however, there is no coordinated system in place to integrate and share the information.

Land Mines, Part 3: Going to the Dogs

In Washington DC, the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI) sponsored a demonstration at the Woodrow Wilson House showing how dogs may be utilized to detect mines. An estimated half-million land mines and unexploded ordinance lie buried in Eritrea, according to Georgetown University Prof. Chebre Selassie Mehreteab.

The Institute intends to raise \$200,000 to send a dozen specifically trained dogs to Eritrea. Once the MLI reaches its goal, the US State Department's Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs will match the amount.

The dogs are trained at the Global Training Academy in Somerset, Texas.

The Cost of War

It is estimated that the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea cost the Ethiopian government \$2.6 billion in expenditures and displaced or discontinued development funds. According to the *Daily Monitor* in mid-July, at a two-day forum on the postwar economic conditions, the president of the Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development, Kinfe Abraham, stated that although the war ended in favor of Ethiopia, there was "massive devastation with staggering human cost and diversion of the economically active population. . . . Despite the relentless efforts of the Ethiopian leadership to resolve the conflict peacefully, the recalcitrance of the Eritrean government was a roadblock to peace."

The economic advisor to the prime minister assigned the \$2.6 billion price tag to the war. The loss of unpaid loans to 393 Eritreans was also cited as a reason for the wartime costs.

UN, Sudan and Eritrea Resume Repatriations

It is estimated that more than 160,000 Eritreans are refugees in Sudan, including some who have been in exile since the 1960s.

The process of repatriation, which had begun in May, ceased during the heavy rainy season that caused major flooding in Gash Barka, where most of the refugees were going.

In late October, a 20-truck convoy carrying more than 200 refugees left Shagarab, southwest of Kassala, to travel to a repatriation center in Tesseney. There they will be registered, provided with land-mine information, and then taken to their chosen destinations.

"Some of the refugees, who have lived in exile for decades, have no homes to go to," said a UN spokesperson. Families will be given two hectares of land by the government, as well as a cash grant and enough food for two months, plus household supplies and agricultural tools.

At the time of the resumption of repatriation, 15,000 had signed up to go home. This number included 2,000 refugees from the Port Sudan region; they will be taken back to Eritrea by ship.

The UN High Commission for Refugees had set a goal of 62,000 voluntary returns by year-end and expects to reach that number. The repatriation program is expected to continue through 2002, thereby ending one the United Nations' longest-running refugee actions.

European Union Envoy Visits Eritrea and Ethiopia

A special representative of the president of the European Union visited Asmara and Addis for four days in July. His mission was to explore "ways to encourage and support the normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea" and be

briefed at the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea in both capitals as to the situation in the Temporary Security Zone.

Once More to the Map

Eritrea and Ethiopia continue to disagree about the borders between the two countries on the final map of the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ). Ethiopia maintains that there is an eight-kilometer (4.2-mile) disparity in the zone at one point and insists on a uniform 25 km (15-mile) separation across the 900 km (55-mile) demilitarized line. Eritrea rejects the proposed TSZ map because it is different from the one presented in January 2001.

The United Nations monitoring force has accused the Eritreans of failing to provide numbers on local militia and police in the TSZ, now estimated at close to 10,000 men. The UN has protested several deployments and violations of the protocol agreement by the Eritrean local forces.

UN Secretary General Wants Troops to Remain Longer in the TSZ

Kofi Annan has advocated a six-month extension of the presence of 3,870 peacekeepers monitoring the cease fire between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Forty-five nations have contributed troops to the operation. Annan's request was based upon the successes of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea force (UNMEE).

The armies are separated, he noted, with some soldiers even going home. Ethiopia has demobilized about 100,000 soldiers, while Eritrea awaited a World Bank loan to release 200,000 troops in October.

"Fields that had remained untended are being ploughed, and everywhere people are seeking to rebuild their lives," Annan said.

"The likelihood of another war at this point is almost nil," said Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, the UN's special representative overseeing the peacekeeping forces and diplomats.

So Much for Peace . . . Once More

Three days before Kofi Annan praised the peace existing between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the Eritrean government accused the Ethiopian government of an attack on an Eritrean police post on the Assab/Burie road. The representative said that the Ethiopian troops attacked with two light machine guns, eight AK-47 assault rifles at 22:50 hours. A policeman was injured in the melee. The spokesperson said that the UN peacekeepers should tell Ethiopia that "Enough is enough."

Peacekeepers Restricted

According to a BBC report, two weeks after Annan's report to the UN, the UNMEE expressed growing concern about the TSZ. Neither nation has complied nor adhered to the treaty between the two. Although the cease-fire has been relatively respected, there have still been attacks on one another.

Now the problem the UNMEE faces is the obstruction or restriction of movement of its peacekeeping forces, and minefield maps are not being provided in accordance with the agreement.

Meanwhile Ethiopian officials expressed their government's concern over the UNMEE's toleration of Eritrean violations of the agreement. UN Security Council representatives are expected to visit the region in early 2002.

The TSZ Remains Very Temporary

In an October report to the UN Security Council by its president, Richard Ryan (Ireland), "The UNMEE is experiencing increasing difficulties in its operations in the Temporary Security Zone and in adjacent areas north of the zone.

"Members of the Security Council call on the parties to further engage in constructive dialog within the framework of the Military Coordination Commission to facilitate the UNMEE's work, including through any further consideration by the Government of Eritrea regarding the possibility of establishing sectoral coordination commissions.

"Members of the Security Council note with concern that the parties have not yet resolved the issue of the air corridor between Addis Ababa and Asmara . . .

"Members of the Security Council express their determination to monitor closely political developments in the region with the view to assessing possible impacts on the peace process."

Ethiopia Says Eritrea Building Up Military

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin told the five permanent members of the UN Security Council that his government believes Eritrea is making preparations to begin a new border war. He noted that the Eritrean army was on "high alert," and troops had been dispatched to a particular area under dispute within what he called "a transitional security zone," as opposed to the UNMEE's designation of the Temporary Security Zone.

Some analysts believe that the reminder of a potential resumption of a border war is taking off pressure from the critics of the Ethiopian government. Meanwhile, Eritrea's government is also under pressure to explain the prosecution of dissidents, students, and journalists who have been accused of challenging the Eritrean political leadership.

UN Special Representative Legwaila Joseph Legwaila has investigated the charges that Eritrea is preparing for "full war," and in October announced that he had found no evidence for the charge. He did report that UNMEE troops are in a state of vigilance to make sure there are no military problems in the TSZ.

POWs Released

Eritrea has released two dozen Ethiopian prisoners of war, signaling a return to the POW release process. The action ended a month-long protest by Ethiopia regarding the capture of an Ethiopian air force pilot by Eritrea. Since the Algiers peace agreement was put into effect in December 2000, 856 Eritreans have been repatriated and 653

Ethiopians. UNMEE believes there are still 400 POWs in Eritrea and 1,800 in Ethiopia.

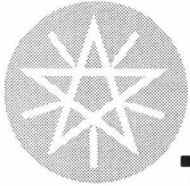
The War Dead

The UNMEE has requested Eritrea and Ethiopia to collect the bodies of hundreds of soldiers that still remain on the edges of the TSZ. An estimated 100,000 were killed in the war, and many of the dead are still scattered in the zone. The UN says there is a serious health threat from the estimated 300 rotting corpses in the Bure-Assab territory the UNMEE patrols.

There have been no responses by either country, other than insisting they have retrieved their dead from the fields of battle.

"These are the remains of human beings, who had families, who had countries, and who were people. They deserve to be given all the respect that they deserve," said a UN spokesperson.

After a year's exposure, it is noted, there is significant difficulty in even identifying the army in which the men served and died.



The Unofficial Ethiopian news

Compiled by Hayward Allen (Harar 62-64)

Economic Development: Is the Glass Half-empty or Half-full

A "Puzzling Notion"

"Contemporary Ethiopia moves along in an ambiguous market economy," states Dr. Zelalem Teferra in an op-ed piece for the *Addis Tribune*. "There is indeed always much wrong with Ethiopia, but it seems that there is something extraordinarily unsettling about our current plight."

Dr. Zelalem goes on to note several factors that lead to this economic confusion:

- ≥ No free movement of commodities
- ≥ Lack of movement of labor
- ≥ A multitude of languages
- ≥ Ethnic differences
- ≥ Legal and institutional barriers
- ≥ Political instability
- ≥ Lack of infrastructure
- ≥ Inadequate health care
- ≥ Increasing foreign debt
- ≥ Low confidence in public education
- ≥ Environmental degradation
- ≥ High national deficits
- ≥ AIDS
- ≥ Need for housing
- ≥ Corruption

- ≥ A disenfranchised lower class
- ≥ The obvious wealth of certain groups and party members

"The essences of our problems are economic, political, social and even cultural. Therefore they need a complex approach and systems vision," he states. He equates the "crisis of governance" with an accelerated crisis in systems development, for it is "a single part of crisis management."

Zelalem's conclusions are aimed at the government, noting that "current political leaders need to know . . . that managing the social system is not simply controlling and decision-making . . . [I]t requires process of governance with both demand and reward of such qualities as honesty and integrity, respect and tolerance, fairness and compassion, and individual and corporate responsibility."

Prof. Zelalem's provocative and articulate opinion appeared in the July 2, 2001 issue of the *Addis Tribune* and was distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com).

Economic Development Forum

In July, a conference sponsored by the Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development

and Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation, was held in Addis Ababa to evaluate ways that postwar economic challenges could be faced. Also considered was the \$26 million decrease in development assistance, while there was an \$80 million increase in relief aid over the same period. Humanitarian assistance represents 25 percent of external aid.

The keynote address by a UN official emphasized that there was difficulty in linking the decline in economic growth to external financial support. The UN maintains that due to the fact that 40 percent of the government's budget is in social assistance, it is difficult to say that a three percent decline between 1996 and 1999 is connected.

There is substantial evidence that the recently concluded war between Ethiopia and Eritrea cost both countries significant development assistance. Bilateral donors held back funds; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as well as other global financial institutions either stopped or slowed down payments. Private investment fell appreciably. Humanitarian aid increased to help the civilian populations of each country, for both the ongoing war and the long drought.

Editor's note: An official press release from the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington noted that between 1991 and 1999 the nation had received US \$9.9 billion in "concessional loans and grants from multilateral and bilateral donors."

GDP To Grow in 2001

Ethiopia's ministry of economic development issued a statement in July that the national economy could expect to grow as much as nine percent in 2001. During the war, the gross domestic product grew only five percent, according to official estimates. The causes of the growth, according to the vice minister of the department, are attributed to an increased harvest, as well as an increase in the transportation, industrial, and trade sectors.

Agricultural Development Leads the Way

In an opinion piece of the *Addis Tribune*, Tekola Yeshewalul, author of *The Puzzling Paradox of the African Food Crisis: Searching for the Truth and Facing the Challenge*. [Addis Ababa: UNECA, 1997] draws attention to the role of agriculture in Ethiopian economic development and stability. He points to the data that agriculture accounts for about half of the gross domestic product, 70–80 percent of export earnings, and that 85–90 percent of the country's population depends upon the agricultural sector for their living. An estimated 65 percent of the country's work force is employed in the agricultural sector.

Perhaps more important, Tekola points out, is that it is possible that half of those involved in agriculture are "leading a life of misery and destitution . . . [and] that the plight of women is very pathetic and horrifying, although they perform most of the activities."

A diminishing agricultural work force is due to aging and migration from countryside to city. Tekola notes that the population of Addis in the 1970s was about 800,000 people, and that two decades later it had ballooned to 3.2 million.

Tekola's conclusion is that in an interdependent economy, where agriculture provides many resources to the commercial and industrial sectors, it is also dependent upon the services of health, education, transportation, finance, and trade factors. There is a need, he believes, for synchronization of the various elements of the economy, as well as a flexibility of policies, an "inter-sectoral" attitude, and "inter-country" cooperation.

Chat Production Expanding

In the southern Tigray zone, there is an "alarming" increase in the farming of chat, considered "a green leaf stimulant." The Raya Valley Integrated Agricultural Development Office and the Worenda police have reported the crop has increased due to new land being cultivated with irrigation.

The Worenda police chief said that as recently as five years ago, chat was an unknown crop, while now there are at least 54 hectares under cultivation (one hectare is 2,471 acres). He said that chat fetched a significantly higher price compared with the traditional cereal and other produce.

The police also note that crime is also on the increase because of local public consumption of chewable chat.

In a personal comment, Walta Information Center news agency reporter Simon Stefanos expressed his hope that the Ethiopian government would do something to block the use and exportation of chat. "It is only a matter of time before Mafia-type shady businesses start cropping up in the state. . . . Today it is chat, tomorrow it will be hardcore drugs such as cocaine and the mayhem that is associated with it. . . . Put a stop to this madness before too late or you will suffer the consequence for generations to come."

Editor's note: In Harar, one of the leading provinces farming and exporting chat in the 1960s, we Peace Corps Volunteers joked about seeing the goats teeter-totter in the downtown square as they ate the rejected tougher leaves, and the greenish lips of the consumers hanging around the ancient city's first gate. And more than one C-47 passenger flight to Djibouti was cancelled in favor of one carrying bales of chat destined for Yemen and points eastward. Most PCVs who tried the chewable entertainment found it bitter and weird-tasting, like munching on an oak leaf with no apparent personality changes.

Rains that Fall, Always at the Same Time

In the northern Ethiopian town of Himora, more than 2,500 residents were forced to flee the flood of the Tekeze River. In South Welo zone, sixty-five drought relief trucks were bogged down 25 miles short of their destination, and even the people about to receive the contents couldn't extract the vehicles from the mud. (In western Eritrea, flooding of the Gash River not only closed roads but stranded 174,000 Eritrean refugees reentering the country from Sudan.)

The Ethiopian ministry of water and natural resources has announced that the Big Rains have made for the highest water levels of the country's major rivers and reservoirs.

Kidane Aseta, head of the ministry's hydrology department, also disclosed that increased rainfall was also impacting upon the Rift Valley. Other reports include heavy flooding in southern Ethiopia as the River Omo overflowed. Ten thousand residents were displaced there. In South Omo zone, it was reported that at least five people and several hundred livestock were washed away by the floodwaters. Three thousand residents needed to be evacuated by helicopter.

British Air Flies Back to Addis

Ethiopia's independent economic weekly, *Capital*, reported in October that British Air commenced bi-weekly commercial flights between Addis and London. A BA subsidiary, British Mediterranean Airways, will operate the flights out of Cairo, Egypt. Outgoing flights from Addis will leave every Monday and Thursday, with returns from London on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Demands of the World Bank

Both Eritrea and Ethiopia requested that each would like their World Bank accounts to be handled separately, instead of through a Horn of Africa division. The Bank said that working out the specialization would mean delaying a second set of loans, including a \$500 million loan to Ethiopia.

According to the BBC, which quoted the *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, the Horn division had been dismantled. The Bank's Kenya department will be given the Eritrean account, while a new department will be developed for Ethiopia and Sudan.

Meanwhile, two senior Bank officials spoke optimistically of Ethiopia's future economic development during a three-day visit. They spoke with Ethiopia's cabinet about Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's proposals to parliament regarding a proposed five-year plan to address questions of "good government," to reduce Ethiopian poverty,

long-term growth, social empowerment, significant infrastructure improvements and restructuring and strengthening the Council of Ministers and local councils or groups at several levels.

Humanitarian Aid or Lack Thereof

2000's UN Famine Relief Inadequate

There is an argument going on between the UN World Food Program (WFP) people and those of UNICEF. The August edition of the *Journal of American Medicine* carried an article suggesting that officials had sadly underestimated both delivery time and adequate food relief tonnage to Ethiopia. WFP officials maintain that "a timely intervention" averted a major natural disaster. UNICEF hired experts from the Center for Disease Control to study the emergency service's effectiveness.

The Gode area of the Somalia region was one of the areas worst hit by the famine that began in 1999, and the CDC experts examined the conditions there between December 1999 and July 2000. Within the 4,000 households studied, 293 deaths had occurred, more than 50 percent were children under five-years-old.

When extrapolated to cover the entire region, the examiners estimate that nearly 20,000 people died. "Most deaths were due to wasting and major communicable diseases," research indicated. Seventy-seven percent happened before humanitarian aid was received.

The problems with the aid distribution included the setting up of inadequate distribution from central locations, rather than smaller, broader provision. According to the report the centralization of the distribution centers not only kept people away, but those who gathered were exposed to communicable diseases, such as measles. The measles inoculation program was launched only after appreciable numbers were infected.

A WFP spokesperson defended its humanitarian efforts and challenged UNICEF's data as being unverifiable. "We did the best we could with what we had," she said.

Rain: A Boon and a Bane in Afar

While a federal crop assessment of the Afar region was offering a positive outlook, Ethiopia's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission, along with the Labor and Social Affairs Bureau, noted otherwise. A representative was quoted as saying the population of needy Afarians had tripled due to uneven and erratic rains. Cattle were dying and people needed food relief.

Habitat for Humanity in Ethiopia

In 1998, Habitat for Humanity (HFH) began building houses in Ambo. In August 2001, as part of the "World Leaders Build" celebration of the 25th anniversary of HFH, ten more dwellings were dedicated, bringing the number to 20 houses thus far. Another 40 are planned for next year. Each unit costs approximately \$1200 to construct to be paid back in ten years.

The leaders bent on building were Ethiopian officials, international organization representatives, and religious leaders. The VIPs also planted 426 trees and carried building blocks for the foundations of five more houses. "They will put on their work boots and get their hands dirty. They will construct simple, decent houses for low-income families," said the HFH-Ethiopia spokesperson.

Worldwide, during that week, more than 1,175 houses were built in 43 countries by very important people, including 28 heads of state, and the inspirational ex-President Jimmy Carter.

Jimmy's mother, don't you know, was a Peace Corps Volunteer . . .

USAID Title II Grants Total \$2.4 Million

US Ambassador to Ethiopia Tibor Nagy signed eight grants under a \$1.5 USAID Title II program that will

benefit 736,000 people in the eight regions of Ethiopia. An additional \$871,223 will be provided by cooperating institutions. Funds will be divided among Africare, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Food for the Hungry International, the Relief Society of Tigray, Save the Children, and World Vision.

The grant's focus will be on agricultural, environmental and natural resource management, micro-credit, HIV/AIDS, population, child survival, micro-nutrient and primary education programs. The program is currently valued, according to a report of the *Addis Tribune*, at \$38.5 million and includes nearly 100,000 metric tons of commodities. In 2001, the US provided a 250,000 tons of aid through the World Food Program and other NGOs, a total distribution that translates into \$128 million.

Other USAID Assistance in \$\$\$\$\$

Ethiopia and the USA recently signed a six-year aid program, through 2006, that will add up to \$155 million. The funds will go to basic education, democracy and governance, health, food and agriculture, and "a special project targeting pastors," according to a US Embassy news release.

The breakdown of the USAID package:

- ≥ \$53.5 million to primary education (on top of the \$80.5 million already provided)
- ≥ \$71.5 million for health care of mothers and children, including nutrition, AIDS, polio, family planning (added to the \$106 million already provided)
- ≥ \$17.5 million to increase market integration and competition, support cooperatives, and micro-enterprise development nationally and in the Amhara region (to date, the US has provided \$27.5 million in this sector).
- ≥ \$5.6 million for judicial training and the extension of regional civil service reforms (added to the \$27.5 million already provided).

≥ \$6.7 million for the Southern Tier Objective Agreement to support outreach education, health services, child nutrition, and livestock management for nomadic peoples.

Africare in Gambella

Since 1976, Africare has been implementing a variety of aid programs in Ethiopia. In 1984, the organization signed an agreement with the federal government as an international NGO. Since then, Africare has been involved in many projects, including water resource development, food security, distribution of pharmaceuticals, reforestation, and child survival.

Recently, the senior VP of Africare went to Gambella where the NGO is conducting a \$2.6-million, three-year food project and a \$1 million child survival program. She said she was impressed by the farmers' planting of improved varieties of maize and sorghum.

The Amhara region will be the next area to benefit from the Washington-based organization that serves the needs of 28 African countries.

Health Issues and Support

Anthrax and the Ethiopian Mail

Three items thought to contain anthrax and posted in Ethiopia's mail system are being held for tests by the government's department of disease control and prevention.

The Health Ministry, has formed a committee to examine precautionary measures in case of an anthrax outbreak. National Health and Nutrition Institute systems are being put in place that will examine postal parcels and envelopes that might contain the deadly spores.

Ethiopia RPCV Interviewed about Smallpox

From 1972 to 1973, 21-year-old John Scott Porterfield served with the Peace Corps in Ethiopia as part of the Smallpox Eradication Program. Porterfield was interviewed by *Biohazard News* in 1996 about his

Peace Corps experience. The interview, which includes his statement that it was the best job he's held, can be read at www.biohazardnews.net/porterfield/index.htm. The interview has been augmented since 9/11 by additional questions on the possibility of the use of smallpox as a bio-weapon.

Tele-Medicine to Have Its Ethiopian Premiere

Tele-medicine is technology that enable doctors, researchers or medical students to witness procedures via the Internet or television. A coalition has begun to link Ethiopian hospitals with a worldwide tele-medical system. The first institution to receive the system will be the Dejazmach Balcha Memorial Hospital in Addis.

As part of the system, a computer tomography scanner has been given the hospital by the Russian Red Cross Society, according to the *Addis Tribune*. It will be the first in Africa.

A delegation from the Russian Red Cross will go to Ethiopia to help the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation (ETC), the medical faculty of Addis Ababa University, and related organizations construct the system. "ETC should prepare the ground to help implement the system and the Pushkin Foundation will also support the cooperation between the two countries in the areas of communication and medicine," said the foundation's president, Helina Mamo.

AIDs Cont'd

The Ethiopian Ministry of Health has stated that there are a quarter-million Ethiopian children under five-years-old who are HIV-positive. The Agency of French Press and the World Bank also report that at least three million Ethiopians are HIV-positive. The country's population is 62.8 million.

In July, 2001, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Tibor P. Nagy, Jr, announced that a US\$165,000 grant that will assist in the renovation and expansion of a shelter for AIDs-infected women and children orphaned by the disease.

The expansion of the center, already overpopulated, will provide 100 women and 400 children with testing, counseling, medical care, and food. The center, which is near Sidist Kilo, is part of the worldwide organization founded by Mother Teresa.

Seemingly Small, but Still Serious Stories

Genocide Charges Dropped

Four Mengistu-era officials were acquitted of charges of genocide due to insufficient evidence. According to a BBC report, the four were facing punishment for genocide and crimes against humanity. Those released included the ex-commander of the eastern provisional military government, another general, and two corporals tried *in absentia*.

In October, 23 others charged with war crimes were acquitted and released for lack of evidence; two detainees were each sentenced to 16 years. All were charged with carrying out summary executions, torture and unjust imprisonment.

The individuals were accused of participating in the 1977-78 Red Terror. Trials of the terrorists began in 1994 and are expected to continue until 2004.

Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam lives in exile in Zimbabwe and is being tried *in absentia*.

Ethiopians Die on 9/11/2001

Three Ethiopian citizens fell victim to the terrorist catastrophe of September 11. Eskedar Melaku, a graduate of Queens College in New York, was working in the north tower of the WTC. Dr. Yeneneh Betru was on AA flight 77; he was the director of medical affairs for a California-based hospital management firm. Jemal Legesse was the third victim, but details about his life and occupation were unavailable.

No US Marines at Addis' Bole International Airport

Following the 9-11 attack, rumor had it in Addis that the US Embassy had stationed security personnel at the capital's airport to monitor the twice-weekly flights scheduled for America. It was said that the Marines were working with the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority.

The story was denied by the US Embassy spokesman, Karl Nelson, "The security at the airport is the responsibility of the Ethiopian government.

Ethiopia Bans Women's Lawyers Association

The *Addis Daily Monitor* reported that the nationwide Ethiopian Women Lawyer Association (EWLA) has been barred from operation by the Ministry of Justice. The reason stated was "the government has found the association engaged in activities different from those it was mandated by law." No specifics were cited.

The association saw its mission as helping women who were abused, raped, and suffering violence in silence, according to the *Daily Monitor* reporter. "They helped such women receive legal assistance, free counsel, as well as sensitizing society about the plight of women in Ethiopia."

Addis Women's Association Protests Rape and Abuse

There was a public demonstration against rape, harassment, and abuse of women and children. Addis Ababa Women's Association vice-chair Tigabu Senbet accused Ethiopian judges of not strictly implementing laws against such actions. The public protest, she said, was to provide the people with an awareness of the problems faced by women and children.

According to the *Addis Tribune*, "Demonstrators carried banners demanding life sentence and death penalty sentences for criminals found guilty of rape and sexual abuse."

EWLA Director Meaza Ashenafi said that, according to the Ethiopian constitution and international

law, legal protection must be given to abused women and children.

Ethiopia's New Government Roster

Here is a list of Ethiopia's new government, following a reshuffle ratified by parliament on Tuesday, October 16, 2001:

Prime Minister: Meles Zenawi

Deputy Prime Minister: Addissu Legesse
Ministers:

Rural Development: Addissu Legesse

Capacity Building: Tefera Walwa

Infrastructure: Kassu Ilala

Foreign Affairs: Seyoum Mesfin

National Defense: Abadula Gameda

Information: Bereket Simon

Trade and Industry: Girma Birru

Economic Development and Finance: Sufian Ahmed

Federal Affairs: Abay Tsehaye

Health: Kebede Tadesse

Education: Genet Zewdie

Water Resources: Shiferaw Jarso

Agriculture: Mulatu Teshome

Mines: Mohamed Dirir

Labour and Social Affairs: Hassan Abdella

Youth, Culture and Sport: Teshome Toga

Justice: Harika Haroye

Revenues: Getachew Belay

Ethiopian News – On the Brighter, Lighter Side

Nuruiddin Farah in *The New Yorker*

In the October 15 issue of *The New Yorker*, Ethiopian Nuruiddin Farah wrote a short essay, "Land Beyond," of his youthful discovery of the American fashion world's *marakaan*. To a boy about ten-years-old living in Kallafo, "a farming town in the backwater of the Somali-speaking region of Ogaden, in Ethiopia. . ." he discovered America via a brassiere.

Nuruddin had no idea what “the material . . . intricately joined together” was. His two buddies, who were sophisticated — one had been to Mogadishu and the other raised in Addis — wouldn’t tell him.

It was a time of great change, even in the Ogaden. “We were all aware that we were living in momentous times, that our way of life was being altered by forces we could only dimly comprehend. We were abandoning our eating habits, giving up our milk- and meat-based dishes in favor of easy-to-prepare meals like rice, spaghetti, and other starch-based foods. Our vocabulary was enriched daily by new words of foreign derivation” So *marikaan* — it was, after all, America — stolen off a clothesline, or seen in an ad, had entered the Amharic dictionary, and joined *muckafutcha* as imported words. For Nuruddin, the *marikaan* took on almost mythical characteristics: “I viewed the world of the brassiere with ominous foreboding, a double-edged seduction through which our bodily desires were being refashioned, thanks to these accoutrements of American modernity.”

Nuruddin was not content to simply long after the contents of the *marikaan*, he wanted to see the woman whose clothesline was robbed. She lived across the river on Government Hill in the American compound where there was a missionary-sponsored school. She proved to be the director’s wife.

“Curious, I bravely made my way out for the first time to the American compound, taking a boat between our side of the river and hers And before the year was out [I was] enrolled in the American Missionary School”

First Chess Tournament

A three-week-long chess tournament concluded in Addis in September, after nine rounds of matches with more than 100 players taking part. Ethiopian Chess Federation Secretary General Tsega Kumlachew stated in his ceremonial address that Ethiopia was showing “encouraging development.” The Chess Federation vowed to improve and to give support to the players. Women who

participated were given special “encouragement certificates” by the PR manager of the Sheraton Addis, where the competition was held.

One year before, in an Istanbul chess championship, the Ethiopian chess team registered an impressive score, which then motivated Ethiopian chess players to organize.

Honors for Ethiopian Laureates

The American Biographical Institute and St. John’s College at Cambridge presented awards to two Ethiopians, Afework Tekle and Tebebe Yemane Berhan, at the 28th International Congress on Arts and Communications. Master Artist Afework Tekle was honored for his achievements in the arts and global culture; it was the first time the award went to someone outside Europe or America. Dr. Tebebe Yemane Berhan received the American Order of Excellence for his contributions to science, specifically his work in dermatology. In addition Dr. Tebebe was made a Life Patron of the organization’s research institute, a rare appointment, according to the *Addis Tribune*.

The Happiness of Long-distance Runners

The legend of Abeba Bikila began with a bare-footed marathon in Rome for 1960 Olympic gold. Since then, Ethiopian runners — men and women — have covered the world’s tracks and roads with amazing speed and fabulous endurance. In early December, a TV news segment was shot in Addis showing hundreds of runners of all ages — with and without shoes — running a training course, proudly continuing the tradition and the hope of running for their country, near and far, now and somewhere down the road.

At the ninth track and field World Championships, held this past August in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Ethiopian runners did not disappoint track fans, at home and abroad.

Gezahegne Abera, 23-years-old, finished ahead of Kenya’s Simon Biwott, after passing him on the final curve with only 600 feet to run to the tape. It represented as close to a photo-finish in a 26.2 mile race, the closest finish ever in the world

championships. Gezahegne's time was 2:12:42, while Biwott's was 2:12:43.

Gezahegne's previous claim to marathon fame was at the Sydney Olympics — despite falling halfway through the race, he won the gold medal. He is the only male runner to capture both the World Championship and the Olympic gold.

Meanwhile, Haile Gebreselassie, called "the greatest middle distance runner of all time" by sportswriter Peter Njenga of Kenya's *Nation*, was warming up for the 5,000 and 10,000 meter races. He had won five consecutive 10,000-meter world championship races. "Victory is addictive," he said. Sad to say, Haile finished third in Edmonton.

Ethiopian women, on the other hand, cleaned up in their 10,000-meter finals, as they won all the metal medals available. Deratu Tule took home gold, Berhane Adere grabbed the silver, and Gete Wami found bronze her mettle.

In all, the Ethiopian team brought to their homeland two gold, two silver, and four bronze medals, the highest number the country has earned in international competition.

"Our athletic gems filled us with pride with their spectacular wins at Edmonton. Over-joyous, we went out in droves [to the airport] and welcomed them heroically as never before," said Ezedin Ali, appropriately Ethiopia's minister of mines and energy.

The Human Race in Really Slo-Mo, Especially the Dentist

Thanks to modern dentistry 5.8 million years ago, a forest-dwelling being died and left his bones and teeth to 21st century science. Now the question — was the patient an ape or a humanoid or maybe a bit of both?

Science, through molecular biology, has found that maybe there was an evolutionary fork in the road somewhere between 5.5 and 6.5 million years ago, one that led to man and the other that led to chimpanzees.

In July's *Nature* journal, Kent State paleontologist C. Owen Lovejoy and UC-Berkeley doctoral student Yohannes Haile Selassie note that the fossilized teeth found by an Ethiopian fossil hunter "was phylogenetically close to the common ancestor of chimpanzees and humans," while the toe bone was evidence of "a biped when on the ground."

Yohannes' mentor, noted hominid hunter Tim White of UC-Berkeley, and their team, found the fossils in the Middle Awash River Valley, "the badlands," not far from where "Lucy" was discovered. Lucy, a being 3.2 million years old, returned to the present three decades ago and changed the overall history of hominids and their difference with "ancestral pongids."

The latest discoveries, which include remains of 11 specimens on the Horn of Africa, are major bones of at least five individuals. Only pieces and parts have been found, with no skulls and other significant identifiable remains. Thus, the collection is referred to as *Ardipithecus ramidus kadabbe*. Scientists are fascinated by the evidence that these beings lived a forest life instead of one of the savanna grasslands — the use of which goes back eight million years ago.

Meanwhile in Kenya, last spring another of the Leakey clan, Dr. Meave G. Leakey announced the discovery of a 3.5 million-year-old skull, *Kenyanthropus platyops* — KP in his high school yearbook — who seems to have his own branch of the human family tree, close to Lucy's.

Not to be outdone, which is hard when one's discovery is noted in February and Leakey's in March, the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, plus the College de France, reported finding 6-million-years-old fossils of an even earlier and maybe the earliest of hominids.

"The times, they are a changing . . ." a compatriot once sang. Prof. White noted in the *New York Times* that there is significant change represented in the new research and discoveries. "Less than a year ago, it was a black hole beyond 4.4 million years ago. Now we're nearly to six million. That's one

giant leap for human paleontology, however these fossils end up relating to each other.”

Ras Tafarians: Sirie Man, Come Home, O-yeah

Surrounded in a cloud of the classical gange, dreadlocked, and speaking with Caribbean and California accents, a group of Ras Tafarians sang a homecoming song as they arrived in Ethiopia. According to *NY Times* writer Norimitsu Onishi, one sang “We’ve come to our ancient land! Ethiopia!”

E&E RPCVs, I would suspect, have long looked askance at the social movement named after Prince Menelik’s guardian, Ras Tafari Makonnen, soon-to-be His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie. Maybe I’m wrong, but is it difficult for any reader of **The Herald** to imagine the impact of Ras Tafarians upon the Ethiopian culture? Even though, the King of Kings gave them a patent on his own royal land in Shashemene, south of Addis and did attract estimated thousands “home.” Among the few magnanimous qualities the emperor did not assign to his glory was considering himself divine. He was an Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox Christian. His tiny gift to the RTs was merely part of a policy to be nice to people of African heritage outside the ancient boundaries of Ethiopia.

During the Red Terror the RTs were allowed to stay, but the group lost nearly all of its royal gift. Although the original land grant has shrunk from 500 acres to about a dozen, and the RT population diminished to about 500, there was an impressive turnout for the Lion of Judah’s 109th birthday on July 23.

Almost needless to say, the RTs’ philosophy and religious and social practices fly in the face of the ancient culture of Ethiopia. At the RT church, for example, according to the *Times*’ feature, native Ethiopians find the doors closed and the barbed wire up.

One elder of the Western church recalled that Jamaica was going through a terrible drought when HIM went there in 1966. There was a miracle.

As soon as the EAL plane landed, there was a major rainstorm not long after the RT movement and reggae emerged.

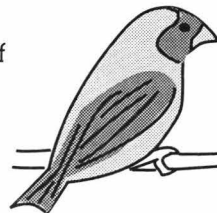
Still, they consider Selassie a deity. Critics believe the RTs are exploiting the Ethiopian people through land ownership and sales of medicinal products. “These Rastafarians,” said one businessman, are just getting what they can out of Babylon before coming home here.”

This Isn’t Amusing , But It’s Bad News to those who Suffer

There are three major migratory creatures that challenge Ethiopia’s farmers and the agri-economic base on a regular basis: the red-billed quelea, the desert locust, and the army worm. Each one has its own time and place of attack.

The bird

The quelea hits the Rift Valley, as well as south and central Ethiopia, on their migratory, southbound flight. They land in and rapidly consume fields of sorghum, wheat and millet — flocks of more than 100,000 birds can decimate tons of grain daily.



UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s Sisay Gebreghiorgis says, “Surveillance and control measures are planned well in advance to prevent any outbreak from getting out of hand. It’s

expensive, but the benefits outweigh the costs.” The huge flocks of birds begin to arrive in August, tracking the development of sorghum fields. In the Big Rains, between August and September, the plants are very tasty and green and milky.

The bug and the worm, too

Although identified as a major Ethiopian plague on its agriculture for three decades, the Desert Locust Control Organization, which also deals with the army worm and the quelea, has long suffered funding difficulties.

Helping

The American Friends Foundation For Childbirth Injuries

Fistula obstetrica: Unknown in the West, Well-known in Africa

Editor's note: This is an open solicitation for funds and support for the American Friends Foundation for Childbirth Injuries which supports the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Ric Haas (Dembidolo, Addis Ababa 67–69) is president of the non-profit foundation.

Dear Friends:

I would like to share with you a true story that I believe will be of interest to you. It is important because it affects the lives of thousands of the world's poorest women.

In rural Africa, early marriage, lack of nutrition, and the absence of accessible hospitals all converge to perpetuate a horrific problem for women who suffer from obstructed labor. When a woman cannot successfully deliver her baby vaginally, and the nearest hospital is a multi-day walk away, she may labor for up to ten days as her body tries to expel the stillborn fetus. The pressure of the baby against delicate tissues creates a hole

between the vagina and bladder (and/or the rectum). The result is a constant leaking of urine, and sometimes feces, through the vagina. A woman with this injury not only loses her baby, but her productive life as well. Since she cannot bear children in this state, her husband usually "returns" her to her family. Constantly wet from urine, she smells bad and is isolated from others, typically not even being able to go to the market. She is an outcast, and her life is in ruins.

Fistula obstetrica has not been a problem in the developed world for over a century. But in sub-Saharan Africa it still destroys the lives of thousands of women each year. Unbeknownst to the American public, a nonprofit hospital in Ethiopia, founded 25 years ago by a husband-wife team of obstetricians, has restored dignity to over 15,000 women whose lives had been destroyed by this childbirth-related injury.

Dr. Catherine Hamlin arrived in Ethiopia in 1959 with her husband, Dr. Reginald Hamlin. They worked at a government hospital where they noticed a significant number of patients with this type of fistula. Over the years they refined a surgical technique that could repair the woman's

injury, allowing her to not only stop leaking, but to bear children again.

In 1975 they left the government hospital and opened The Fistula Hospital of Addis Ababa, a private nonprofit hospital that has treated over 15,000 women since it opened its doors. No woman is turned away. No woman pays anything for her surgery, care, food, etc. In addition, the Hamlins have trained over 120 Ethiopian doctors, and 90 surgeons from other poor countries, in this incredible surgery.

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital operates on between 1,000 and 1,200 women per year, all on a budget of about \$350,000. My daughter, Shaleece Haas, and I had the privilege of visiting Fistula Hospital when I returned to Ethiopia last November, thirty years after leaving duty there as a Peace Corps volunteer. We met Catherine Hamlin (her husband died several years ago at the age of 84), who at 76-years-old is still the head surgeon and instructor at the hospital. She has now dedicated over forty years of her life to helping these unfortunate victims of fistula. The hospital receives funding from World Vision, and the Hamlin Churchill Childbirth Injuries Fund, but it barely has enough.

Shaleece and I decided that the work this hospital is doing for some of the world's poorest women is too important to let slip away. We have created a public charity here in the US to develop an endowment for this hospital and its efforts to help these women, and in the long run hopefully eliminate the problem.

Although I have made donations to many nonprofits and have helped many people set up their own family charities, I have never before felt strongly enough about any cause to become involved in major fund-raising. There are thousands of worthy causes, but few that give this much "bang for the buck." Giving a woman back her life for less than \$300 is an incredible gift. I hope you agree.

We would appreciate any consideration you could give us and would be happy to provide you with any additional information you might desire. Your gift will be fully deductible. We intend to operate a "bare bones" organization so that the maximum is available to help Fistula Hospital continue its incredible success. In addition, if you agree that this is a unique and worthy cause, please let us know if we can approach your church, temple, or other organization of people who might care enough to help.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Haas, President
(Dembidolo, Addis Ababa 67-69)
The American Friends Foundation For Childbirth Injuries
4030 Moorpark Ave, #105, San Jose, CA 95117
(408)261-7600
E-mail: richaas@earthlink.net
website: www.fistulahospital.org.

Save the Children/Ethiopia

Change the future for Ethiopia's children . . . one school at a time.

You can help children in Ethiopia through a new and unique program — Save the Children's eProjectEthiopia. You will be sponsoring a specific community school project with your monthly contribution of \$24, and will be able to monitor the project's progress simply by logging on to a "Sponsors Only" website. There you will see the people served, the project planning and implementation, the successes and challenges, and most importantly, the real and lasting change for children of the community.

At the present time eProjectEthiopia is working in the following communities in the Woliso (that's Ghion to some of you) area: Tombe Wolle, Sambo Yabeta, and Kegnera Lebu.

Go to eProjectEthiopia.org for details.

eProject/Ethiopia is being managed by RPCV Bruce Schlein who writes: "We have a great group of RPCVs and others (Rick Stoner [Addis Alem 68-70, 72-75], Earl Moran, Andrea O'Meara, Sara Carpenter, Susan Bergson) here working on this project in Ethiopia as well as in Bangladesh and the Philippines. Interested parties should feel free to contact any of us with questions or suggestions on how to improve eProject. All of our email addresses are first initial first name + last name @savechildren.org. Rick Stoner's email address, for example, is rstoner@savechildren.org

Incidentally, Rick will shortly be going to Ethiopia for four months for Save the Children, and hopefully he will report to **The Herald** about his time there.

A Glimmer of Hope

Provides basic social services such as health, education and water for needy Ethiopians

"A Glimmer of Hope seeks to provide long term, self-sustainable aid for women and children in rural Ethiopia," said Donner Berber, Glimmer of Hope Foundation co-founder and president. "This national aid package has been divided up based upon the population distribution across all eight regions. It's the fairest, most equitable, simplest way we know how. We are looking to support humanitarian, development and enterprise projects, such as HIV/AIDS, water, education, training and health."

The Texas-based foundation believes that the twelve-month distribution of funds is a new model for international, NGO aid. Between \$200,000 and \$500,000 will be given to the regions. "We are working with and through regional and local groups because they know best what their local people need and want," Berber said.

Dembi Dollo has been selected as a test village for AIDS projects that will be given \$1 million of the total package. A K-8 school has been built, and an area hospital, established by missionaries 70 years ago and serving 1.5 million people, is being rebuilt

and supplied with the first of needed pharmaceuticals and supplies, as well as recruiting additional medical staff.

For more about A Glimmer of Hope, go to www.aglimmerofhope.org/.

Institute of Ethiopian Studies

Preserving Ethiopia's heritage

The Institute of Ethiopian Studies, housed in Emperor Haile Selassie's former palace, is visited by innumerable students, teachers, foreign researchers, citizens and travellers. It maintains a museum that contains a vast collection of anthropological exhibits, works of art, religious artifacts, musical instruments and objects of daily life, as well as a library with extensive collections of books, periodicals, and articles about Ethiopia, as well as rare manuscripts, archives, microfilms, and photographs.

Founded in 1963, the institute has now outgrown the Palace and, with the leadership of the Society of Friends of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (SOFIES), has begun a fundraising campaign to build a new library. Among those on the fundraising committee are former ambassador to Ethiopia David Shinn and his wife, Judy Shinn.

If you would like to support this effort to preserve Ethiopia's heritage, you are invited to make a tax-deductible donation by sending a check to SOFIES, PO Box 15438, Washington, DC, 20003-9998. If you would like more information about the fundraiser, write to sofiesnl@yahoo.com.



At the Peace Corps

Sarge Nominated for Gold Medal

While it's not a done deal, House Resolution 2949 seeks to honor the founding director of the Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver with the Congressional Medal for services rendered to the United States and our government, as well as the world. Six RPCV congressmen — Sam Farr (Colombia), Chris Shays (Fiji), Jim Walsh (Nepal), Tony Hall (Thailand), Mike Honda (El Salvador), and Tom Petri (Somalia) — co-sponsored the resolution.

The Resolution currently has 96 co-sponsors and needs bipartisan support with 290 co-sponsors to clear the House. Please contact your House members and urge them to sign on as cosponsors and support the Resolution with their colleagues.

For additional information and how to contact one's representative, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d107query.html> looking "Search Bill Summary and Status," and in item #1, type in "Shriver." For your particular representative, contact www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW.html.

Senator Chris Dodd (Dominican Republic 66-68) has sponsored a similar bill in the Senate #1853.

Coyne's Courageous Campaign

At first, the Committee for the Future of the Peace Corps (CFPC) was an ad hoc group headed by John Coyne (Addis Ababa 62-64). But a groundswell of interest built to first questioning the nomination, then to defeating the appointment of the Bush

nomination of Gaddi Vasquez to be the next director of the US Peace Corps.

The challenge was launched because of Vasquez's record as being at the epicenter of the first American county's declaration of bankruptcy, Orange County, California. Also, while in a position of power, he voted to deny housing and employment services to HIV/AIDS clients in the county. The *Orange County Weekly* came up with details few knew outside Orange County and California.

Editorials denouncing the nomination appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, and the *Boston Globe*.

With the clock ticking and the alarm set for mid-December, Coyne and his hardworking cohorts, plus a cadre of concerned RPCVs and the powerful support of Jack Hood Vaughn, the second director of the Peace Corps, fought to block the nomination. The CFPC went on the attack with every possible weapon in politics, from letters and calls and emails to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which would vote on the nomination and to RPCVs' local congressional representatives. They participated in discussions on talk shows and in other media coverage.

The Senate hearing

After opening remarks by Senator Chris Dodd, Gaddi Vasquez was introduced by Sen. Barbara Boxer. He then made a presentation to the commit-

Shortly after 9/11, David Letterman asked his guest, respected newsman Walter Cronkite, what can Americans do to make the larger world a better place. Cronkite replied without hesitation, "Join the Peace Corps."

tee. Particularly galling to CFPC campaigners was Vasquez's inability to describe the history and mission of the Peace Corps, as well as his lack of plans for the agency following his ascension to the post.

Vaughn testified for the CFPC and opposed the nomination. And he knew how to-walk-the-walk-and-talk-the-talk before one of the national government's most powerful congressional committees.

"The new Peace Corps Director must possess a depth of knowledge about the democratic and economic transitions in the countries Volunteers serve. The director is the key person, not only repositioning the Peace Corps to play new roles in the transitions underway in country after country, but in inspiring Volunteers and staff to the maximum effort . . . This nomination is incompatible with a forward vision of the Peace Corps," said the former Nixon-appointee and retired ambassador to Colombia.

The vote

Coyne sent out the following message after the vote by the Committee was made public:

For the first time in Peace Corps history the nominee for Peace Corps Director had votes cast against him in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The discussion of his nomination in full committee became very heated with strong opinions on both sides. In the end, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the nomination of Gaddi Vasquez for Peace Corps Director by a vote of 14 for and 4 against.

Not one to end a debate easily, Coyne has forwarded a December 15 *Orange County Weekly* article reporting about those accusing the opponents to Vasquez's nomination of racism. Check out: <http://www.ocweekly.com/ink/02/15/news-arellano.shtml>

The full Senate recessed for the holidays without having voted on the nomination. They were

expected to do so shortly after reconvening January 23rd.

Vazquez confirmed

According to Coyne, Vasquez's approval was not a defeat for the Committee for the Future of the Peace Corps: "We clearly won the battle and lost the war," he commented after he was confirmed January 25 "in a heap of other nominations."

The Committee's tally for successful opposition included "an unprecedented four Senators voting against a nominee" in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "nearly 200 negative press articles" and the creation of "an incredible knowledge base among 535 members of Congress" due to the "daily, dogged emails, faxes and phone calls" of many concerned RPCVs and others.

For more about the Vasquez nomination, go to:
www.PeaceCorpsWriters.org and
www.PeaceCorpsOnline.org.

Editor's note: As this editor approaches Christmas, and this protestation, as the Bible notes, "kicking against the pricks," as it were, inevitably will continue, I would be remiss not to say that the Peace Corps on earth will continue its mission of goodwill toward women and men and children and all those who need help that we Americans may provide regardless of who is at the helm of this generation's Peace Corps.

Peace Corps Fellows

Peace Corps Fellows/USA works with more than 30 universities that offer financial assistance to RPCVs who wish to attend graduate school in a variety of subject areas. Through internships, Peace Corps Fellows work in under-served U.S. communities. Find out more at: www.peacecorps.gov/fellows, call 800-424-8580, ext. 1440, or write to: fellows@peacecorps.gov

Hey, RPCVs, our Dad's Talking. Shhhhhh . . . listen to a great man think.

On September 22, 2001, Sargent Shriver, the founding Director of the Peace Corps, spoke at the Peace Vigil held with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC and admonished RPCVs "to serve!" as their contribution during the present crisis. His complete remarks follow:

I'M GLAD MOST OF ALL to see all of you. You, after all, are the heart, the soul, and the brains of the Peace Corps. So — much as I love you and admire you — I think now we have reached a point where every one of us, me included, have great responsibilities facing them in the immediate future. First of all however, I would like to thank everyone who is here. I would also like to thank all those persons who would like to be here. I pray also that my few remarks may be helpful to us all.

I begin with a few sentences I spoke long ago but I think they are still accurate and important, I believe, for our thinking today. These are the sentences:

I recommend that we remember the beginning of the Peace Corps. We risked everything at our beginning in a leap of faith. that the Peace Corps would succeed. We started in 1961 — 40 years ago We risked everything in a leap of faith that the volunteers would respond favorably to our call for peace. We opposed the idea that war is inevitable. We believed that with God's help we can rid of war.

We were a corps — a band of brothers and sisters — united in the conviction that if we worked hard enough to eradicate our fears and increase the outreach of our love — we truly could avoid war — and achieve peace within our own selves, within our nation, and around the world. How and why could we hope and dream for such results? We could do so, I believe, because the Peace Corps seeks peace through service, not through economic strength or military power.

Service is at the heart and soul and substance of the Peace Corps. Service, however, is a discredited word these days. Who wants to be a servant? No one. Service implies servitude — failure to achieve equality — let alone domination. Yet the Peace Corps exists to serve — to care for our fellow human

beings regardless of race, color, education or power.

The Peace Corps works its magic from below not from above. It concentrates on basics — food, health, education, and community. Peace Corps Volunteers rarely see in capital cities what's going on with the potentates. They are almost un-American in their willingness to serve in the boondocks as Peace Corps Volunteers. They come home to the USA realizing that there are billions, yes, billions of human beings, not enraptured by our pretensions, or our practices, or even our standards of conduct. Billions with whom we must live in peace. Peace Corps Volunteers learn that there is more to life than money — more to life than the latest styles and clothes, cars or cosmetics.

SUDDENLY I REALIZE I do have a response to the original title given me to talk about — the title was "the challenge of the Peace Corps". The challenge I believe is simple — simple to express, but difficult to fulfill. That challenge is expressed in these words: PCV's — stay as you are. Be servants of peace. Work at home as you have worked abroad. Humbly, persistently, intelligently. Weep with those who are sorrowful, Care those who are sick. Serve your wives, serve your husbands, serve your families, serve your neighbors, serve your cities, serve the poor, join others who also serve. Serve, serve, serve. That's the answer, that's the objective, that's the challenge.

The reason that service is vital is because it will be the servants who end up by serving us all — and I mean everybody on earth serves in all the nations, serving even in the nations that are at war almost with us. Service. Service is the only thing that is going to keep the new world as we grow closer and closer together — the only thing that will keep us together and not add more is service — service of us all — and that's the Peace Corps.



Sargent Shriver speaks to PCVs in Addis, Fall 1962 — Photo MH Beil

40 + 1 Party

It's Now the "40+1" Conference

"40+1" is what the National Peace Corps Association has retitled the celebration of the founding of the Peace Corps, cancelled after the 9-11 attack. (Now for those of us who are Ethi Ones, it means it is our 40th birthday, since our joining the human race began in the summer of 1962.)

In fact, the new dates of the "40+1" convergence are June 20-23, 2002, which is about the time when Ethi Ones were getting used to eating in the cafeteria with the training camp of the Redskins. The football players had heaps of steaks and stuff, and we were griping about high school menu selections But never mind, it was a great season for each team.

According to Marian Haley Beil, the Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs Steering Committee Chair, and publisher of this magazine, E&E RPCVs had the largest number of registrants for the September gathering. So, there is no reason even more of us folks shouldn't return to the Nation's Capitol in June. It is June and the perfect time for grandparents to take grandkids to incredible places and a time in history unrivaled.

As of this time in mid-December, the NPCA is working hard to handle the cancellations, the donations, the registrations. The NPCA refund coordinator, has taught us of the Nepali phrase "Ke Garne" which means "What to do?" She reminds

E&E RPCVs that there is probably an appropriate saying for us. **The Herald's** editor recalls "*tenish bi'wala*" or "a little while" or forever, or whatever, is maybe our version. Any suggestions?

If you have questions about cancellations, the donations, the registrations, Amanda's email address (be nice and patient) is fortyinfo@rpcv.org.

To date, neither E&E RPCVs nor **The Herald** have been informed where our birthday or anniversary party will be held.

More to come in the spring issue of **The Herald**, as the spectacle rolls forward, upward and onward.

E&E RPCVs

Rest assured that E&E RPCVs will again plan to provide our members with a variety of enjoyable and thoughtful options during the conference.

Note: Information about the conference will be sent out via email as soon as it is received. If you have an email address and we don't know it, send it to mhbeil@rochester.rr.com.

Our website

New URL

The website of E&E RPCVs has a new URL —

www.EthiopiaEritreaRPCVs.org

Please bookmark it and visit often.

Recently, the website was redesigned. It contains all the features that it previously had, but now navigation should be easier and download times faster. Additionally, the listings of PCVs by training group have been improved, and with each name there is space to have a live email link — we hope you will send yours to be added.

A new addition to the site is an alphabetical listing of PCVs. If you have a website, we can list it here.

These list changes have already generated an increase in friends looking for and reconnecting with friends.

A New Map Project — Our Other Hometown

Marian Haley Beil is assembling a map of the nearly 200 communities in Ethiopia and Eritrea in which we have served that will be posted at our site. She has been able to locate all but the eight towns listed below on the maps she has. Can you drop her a note and tell where the following are?

Adi Gawel, Eritrea
 Bolki
 Debarola, Eritrea
 Henna
 Seddo
 Sinane [Bale], Ethiopia
 Wetet Abay (Bikolo Abay) Ethiopia
 Yorbameda [Sidamo], Ethiopia

The map will be part of E&E RPCVs website efforts "to bring the world back home," as well as our efforts to aid in reconnecting with friends. Marian notes, " It will have links to pages for each community, which, in turn will have a description of the community, photos of the community and its people and list those who served there. You are invited to send descriptions now to

Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs Cash Flow Report

1/1/01 through 12/31/01

Income	
Dues	1,050.00
Gifts	100.00
Rebated from NPCA	4,585.00
Rebates to NC	-425.00
Hats	70.00
Total Income	5,380.00
Expenses	
Affiliation fee	330.00
Bank charges	123.00
Hats	338.00
Hospitality (refund fr.2000 reunion)	-220.12
Library	197.62
Misc	5.00
Postage	771.02
Supplies	344.17
The Herald:	
Postage	902.30
Reproduction	1,348.44
Return postage	34.20
The Herald - Other	26.71
Total The Herald	2,311.65
Website	69.30
Total Expenses	4,269.64
Balance	+\$1,110.36

mhbeil@rochester.rr.com. Once the new pages have been posted at the site, a request will be made for photos.

Do you have a slide scanner?

Would you like to help with the "Our Other Hometown" project? Many of the photos taken by PCVs are on slides, and Marian doesn't have a slide scanner to digitize the photos. We need someone who would receive the slides, scan them, return them to the sender and send the files of the

scanned photos to Marian. Expenses for postage and mailers would be reimbursed. Write mhbeil@rochester.rr.com to volunteer.

News service

The contributing editor of **The Herald**, Shlomo Bachrach, culls through online news from Ethiopia and Eritrea and sends out selected articles of special interest via email. And in fact, he provides the sources for much of the news reported here in **The Herald**. If you are interested in being added to Shlomo's mailing list to receive these news articles, drop him a note at: shlomo@catiusa.com.

Thanks, Mark

Mark Lewis Brecker (Asmara 64-66) has made a generous and unsolicited contribution to Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs.

Bet'am tru no, Maricos Samiel K'han.

Looking for . . .

Please send contact information for the following to E&E RPCVs so that we may facilitate their reconnecting.

Send to:

Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs
c/o Marian Haley Beil
4 Lodge Pole Road
Pittsford NY 14534
or email: mhbeil@rochester.rr.com



Bob Dodds and Steve McCarthy

Richard H. Cuenca (Asmara 71-73) would like to reconnect with Robert Dodds (Makele 71-) and Stephen McCarthy (Adwa 71-74).

Roger Chafee

Anne Desgranges, nee Huseman, would like to reconnect with Roger Chafee, (Addis 63-). Anne, who was in Gabon II, trained at Oberlin College (Ohio) in 1963 with Ethiopia II.

Aaron Greenberg

Mary Catherine Hinds is looking for a PCV in her Eritrea 3 group: Aaron Greenberg. She writes **The Herald**, "I have some of his belongings in my parents' attic that I have since evacuated . . ."

Aaron Greenberg —

Jo Polk-Matthews wrote: "I'm an RPCV (Namibia Group 14) who shared a taxi with an RPCV in Philadelphia on September 18, 2001. We had a great discussion about our service and discovered many parallels in our experiences. He told me his name was Greenberg, that he had served in Eritrea during the Shriver period teaching English. In my rush to make my train connection, with all the post 9/11/01 security changes at the station, I could not give him contact information about me."

Sally Bernard

Peter L. Sissman is looking for Sally Bernard, (Addis '64-'66); she trained at UCLA in June 1964. She taught 7th grade history, geography, and English at the Empress Menan School in Addis.

Now it gets a bit complicated, for Sissman is a Virginia lawyer, and his request includes the words, "If anybody knew or knows her, or knew her or knows somebody that might have, or has some information on the Addis Ababa folks at the time, or knows of any records, including press releases or reports that may mention her, I would appreciate it, if they would either contact me with the information or otherwise put me in touch with that person who has it...If it would be more comfortable to ask that person, especially Sally Bernard, to contact me, please ask them to do so..."

Editor's note: **The Herald** receives many requests for information about RPCVs and former students, and vice-versa. This is the first time, though, when the plot-line might appeal to Kinky Friedman.

Richard Trebath

Asheber Gebrahamichael is would like to contact Richard Trebath (Makelle 69-69). Trebath taught English at the Atse Yohannes Secondary School.

Cheryl and Colin Rule

Paulos Zaid, a teacher in Decamere, Eritrea, is now in the U.S. and would like to connect with Cheryl and Colin Rule (Decamere 95–97).

Patricia Johnson

Ben and Linette McCune (Goba 64–66) would like to reconnect with Ethiopia III, Patricia Johnson (Debre Berhan 64–66).

Jackie and Scott Billings

Tesfaye Kiros has written from The Netherlands: "I have been desperately looking for Jackie and Scott Billings (Koream 66–68) for the last 20 odd years. This may open the way to find my friends after a very very long time."

Marcia Eleanor Lawrence (Debark 68–)

Mulugeta Wudu wrote: "I will very much appreciate your help reconnecting me with Marcia Eleanor Lawrence who educated a generation and who is unforgotten by many of her pupils. Many of the students Miss Gwen taught are here in the US. Some are businessmen, some Engineers, some Doctors and some Scientists. I contacted some of them and all want to meet her. Please help."

Adi Caieh PCVs of the '60s

Seltene Abraha would like to hear from those who served in Adi Caieh in the '60s. He writes: "They are people whose great assistance in my childhood is unforgettable and I want to get in touch with any of them to at least say 'Thanks' for everything and you're always in my mind!"

Contact at: seltene@ecdf.org.er; Tel. 291-1-151593 [Office], 291-1-151041 [Residence], Fax 291-1-151585; Eritrean Community Development Fund, P.O. Box 1067, Asmara, Eritrea.

PCVs from groups XI, XII and XIII

I was a language instructor for PCVs in groups XI, XII and XIII (1971-1973) My Name is **Fikre M.**

Tsehai. I would love to reconnect with all those who I was teaching Amharic in Awassa, Dire Dawa, Yirga Alem, Nazareth and Bahr Dar. Contact at: clwr@axionet.com; (604)435-9750; 5429 Keith Street, Burnaby, BC V5J 3C4 Canada.



Be hip, too

John Coyne — who must be getting hipper that his teenage son can bear — has alerted us to the new self-titled CD "Gigi" (Palm Pictures). Gigi is in fact Ejiyayehu Shibabaw, a young Ethiopian woman. And according to one music muse (and the record's producer), this is "the worldbeat release of the year." All customers who rated the CD at Amazon.com gave it 5 out of 5 stars! Backed up by an international group of musicians, Gigi's music is said to be a mix jazz, folk and Ethiopian pop. Lyrics in Amharic with translations included. If your computer is so equipped, you can listen to samples of the songs at Amazon.

In Memorium

Dennis Ekberg (Ghion 62–64)

Dennis died on December 18th following a battle with cancer. As the first webmaster of Ethiopia & Eritrea RPCVs' website, Dennis made an invaluable contribution to our group. The site that he and his son designed and implemented, paved the way for many to learn about our group, for visitors to learn about our second countries, and for friends from the past to reconnect. Dennis's commitment to the task was constant and he was always eager to perfect and update the site.



These efforts were not the first of Dennis's on behalf of E&E RPCVs — for years he received multiple cartons of the printed copies of **The Herald** and took them to a post office near his home so that the group would have access to lower postage rates.

And in fact, his was a life of generosity. While living in northern Virginia for many years, he was very active with his local historical society. Upon retirement and a move to Oregon, he became a committed volunteer in support of the local community center for seniors.

Once Dennis became ill, he loved receiving and sending jokes to cheer the spirit and was lucky to have his wife, Cynthia, at his side throughout with her strength and good humor.

To offer your condolences:

The Ekberg Family
3130 NW Nyssa Court
Beaverton OR 97006

Dennis Bethea

Via the labyrinthian paths of the web, in this case, Google, **The Herald** has learned that *Dennis Bethea*, who served in Harar and Addis (74–76) has died. Notes sent **The Herald** by Susan Foster, chair of the department of international health at Boston University reveal that "Dennis was one of Philadelphia's premiere advocates for housing for low-income people, becoming executive director of the Tenants Action Group and the Tenants Rental Assistance Corporation . . . Under his leadership, AIDS rental assistance program increased by five hundred percent in 1993."

Our thanks to Dr. Foster for looking for the E&E RPCVs Association; her interest as a non-RPCV endorses the heritage of those who served in the Peace Corps and continued on in humanitarian cause.

Books + Writers

Nega Mezlekia

Nega Mezlekia, the author of the memoir, *Notes From the Hyena's Belly*, which was published in Canada in 2000 and won the Governor General's Award, that country's highest literary honor, has just published a novel entitled *The God Who Begat a Jackal*.

In an interview entitled "Out of Ethiopia," published in the January/February 2002 issue of *Poets & Writers* by Therese Eiben, Nega talks about the West's relationship with Africa, saying:

Q/ You've lived a remarkable life full of challenge and heartbreak. What is it that you hang on to?

A/ I want to try to effect some sort of change in Africa. When I arrived here I read about a fellow who tortured a cat and was sentenced to three years in jail. I thought it was a joke! The rights that animals have in this country are much greater than I had in Ethiopia. I know the purse strings are in the West. The money the West sent used to go to dictators in Africa. There was a reluctance on the part of the West to truly see what was happening in Africa. Expatriates are hoping to raise a ruckus and shame the West into taking the right course.

There is a huge void in me. There is no clear ideal I can hang on to. But writing this novel is something. I hope it conveys some kind of truth. I hope readers in the West will see this as an exotic work and that it will stir their consciousness. There have been a few individuals in America, members of the Peace Corps, for example, who have made a difference to the plight of my people. Individuals can make a difference. I hold on to that.

To read the full interview, go to:
<http://www.pw.org/mag/index.htm>

Ryszard Kapuscinski, Author

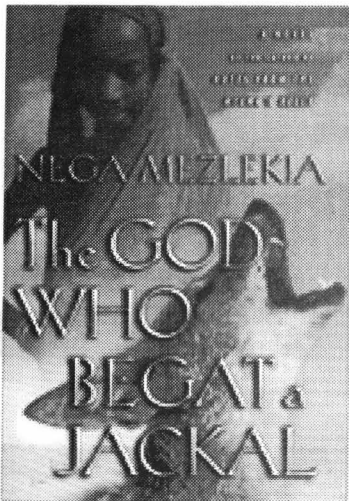
The author of the notable account of the fall of Haile Selassie, *The Emperor*, has compiled a book based upon his travel recollections in Africa that began in 1957, *The Shadow of the Sun*.

There have been several praiseworthy reviews of the book by the Polish journalist, and excerpts have been published in such magazines as *The New Yorker*. Kapuscinski's vignettes, sketches, and accounts of adventures travel the continent from east to west, north to south. There is no chronological or geographic order to the essays, which may or may not be frustrating to the reader.

However, *The Shadow of the Sun* may be one of the finest personal portraits of a gigantic continent with all the problems, and more, of any other region of the world. The articulate translation by Klara Clowczewska makes the man's genuine intelligence and perception come alive.

In one section, the author, who lived in Ethiopia once upon a time, describes driving from Addis to Dessie, visiting Lalibela, down the road to Gondar, along the streets of Asmara, and into the port of Massawa. The reviewer for the *Orlando Sentinel* wrote: "One of my favorite descriptions is of the children who seem to appear out of nowhere whenever or wherever you stop your car. They beseech you for pencils and writing pads, they will follow you about in large numbers talking endlessly as you go. The children are everywhere, and there is a reason for that, as over half of the population of Ethiopia is under sixteen-years-old, a circumstance common to much of Africa."

Interestingly enough, the reviewer does not comment on the fact that the Eritrea and Ethiopian kids ask for pencils and paper more often than *baksheesh*.



Noted Writer Dies

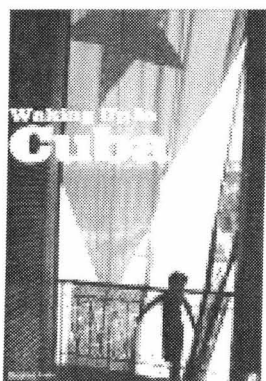
When John Maraitis was five-years-old, his family emigrated to Ethiopia from Greece, and he never left. John Maraitis died in August 2001, aged 96.

While his working life began with the Bank of Abyssinia, it was his establishment of a Reuters bureau in Ethiopia that began his lifelong journalistic career. Among the stories he filed dealt with the Italian invasion and occupation of his adopted country. He sent his messages to Djibouti in Morse code, disguising himself as a Muslim woman.

Italy sought him as an enemy. Emperor Haile Selassie awarded him decorations and a lifelong friendship for his carrying out clandestine services. After the war, he was appointed secretary of the Anglo-Ethiopian Financial Commission. He also redesigned the Tobacco Monopoly and built his own business.

Meanwhile he continued to write for Reuters.

Earlier this year, he published a book, *Ethiopia My Home: The Story of John Maraitis*.



New by Ethiopia and Eritrea RPCVs

Stephen Foehr (Debark 1965–66) has two new books out —

Taj Mahal: Autobiography of a Bluesman

by Taj Mahal with Stephen Foehr,
Sanctuary Publishers, Ltd., \$25.00,
287 pages, August, 2001

and

Dancing with Fidel, a book of Cuban culture and its music.

(title in U.K. — *Waking Up In Cuba*), Sanctuary Publishers, Ltd., \$18.95, 271 pages, September, 2001.

REVIEW: THE PRESS LOOKS AT ETHIOPIA AND WWII

Abyssinian Stop Press

Edited by Ladislav Farago

London: Robert Hale & Company, 1936

Reviewed by John Coyne (Addis Ababa 62–64)

Abyssinian Stop Press was published in England early in the Second World War. It is a collection of six reports by western reporters in Ethiopia before and at the beginning of the war between Ethiopia and Italy. As Patrick Balfour, war correspondent to the *Evening Standard*, wrote in his account, "The Correspondents and other vultures, smelling war, began to arrive in Addis Ababa in June [1935]. By August they numbered fifty. By October, when the war started, they had topped the hundred and fifty press [ID] cards issued: yellow cards, decorated with the Lion of Judah and an unrecognizable Armenian photograph of [a purported journalist] which, in Amharic, requested whom it might concern to grant you every facility to move and photograph freely."

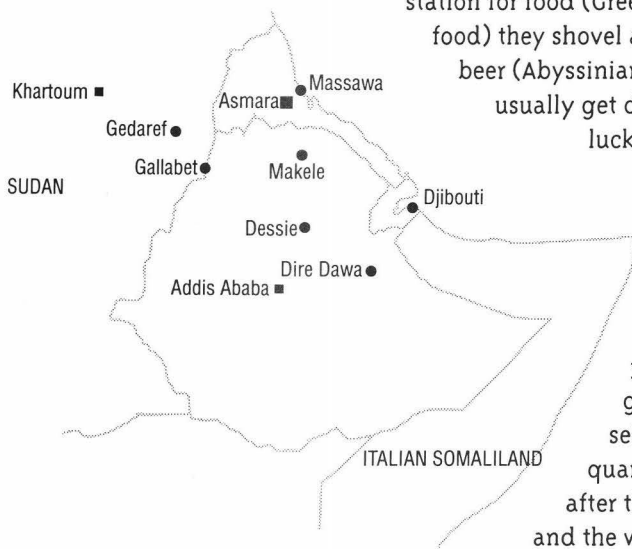
Balfour entitled his essay, "Fiasco in Addis Ababa." It is one of six in this collection of correspondent reports published by Robert Hale & Company. Others in the collection are by Major-General J.F.C. Fuller, military correspondent to the *Daily Mail* who was with the Italian army in Northern Ethiopia; Mortimer Durand, war-correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph*, with the Italian army in Makale; Edmund Demaitre, a French war-correspondent with the Italian army in what was called, "Italian Somaliland;" Stuart Emeny, of the *News-Chronicle*, with the Emperor in Dessie, and Ladislav Farago, who wrote for the *New York Times* and was with the Ethiopian army in the North.

These are fascinating accounts. There is the expected racist attitude towards the Ethiopians

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* This book is in the E&E RPCVs library. Contact Librarian Joe Ciuffini to borrow it at no cost. (See page 46 for contact info.)

(and Italians), and the expected injurious comments about the conditions of the country. Patrick Balfour, taking the train from Dire Dawa to Addis Ababa, starts with, "Usually you get dysentery on the way up. Parched by the sand and the heat and the early morning start, you shovel far too much ice (bad ice) into your mineral water from your large Japanese thermos; and when you stop at a

station for food (Greek food: too much food) they shovel a lot more into your beer (Abyssinian beer). So you usually get dysentery. But I was lucky. I only had my passport stolen." You get the picture.



Reading these accounts of 1935–36, we can catch glimpses of ourselves in Ethiopia a quarter of a century after the fighting stopped and the war correspondents went home and the world, for

the most part, forgot about Ethiopia. More importantly, we catch glimpses of an age long gone, lost forever, a time and an Empire we had the opportunity to experience in its last, flickering moments, in the fading years of His Majesty's long reign. More than a few of us remember Italians who had stayed on in Ethiopia after their defeat, lingered after the shooting stopped when His Majesty forgave the Italians, and asked them to stay and help build his nation.

Once in 1962, riding rented bikes from Asmara down to Massawa with Ernie Fox, Charlie Mitchner, and a few others Ethi Is, we stopped on the lowland road at the bottom of the escarpment and there in the middle of this desert furnace was an Italian, his Eritrean wife, and a scattering of kids. He was making a living selling cold cokes and beer, bread, tinned food, and petrol at the edge of that narrow highway which led across the lowest place on earth to the Red Sea. The image of that old man living a meager existence in self-imposed exile has

stayed with me all these years. What brought him to Africa? Why did he stay? War and politics do, in fact, make bedfellows. Strange or otherwise.

So do war correspondents. There is Stuart Emeny's account of "Under Fire With The Emperor" — his report from Dessie where the Emperor had made his last stand against the Italian. Here, on the grounds of the former Italian Consulate, four silver-winged Caproni bombers crossed Dessie, flying from the north to the south at 5,000 feet. As they dropped bombs, the Emperor ran into the garden of the consulate and opened fire with an anti-aircraft gun. The planes flew in formation over Dessie, turned and then, splitting formation, criss-crossed backwards and forwards, dropping bombs. And all the while, the Emperor went on firing his anti-aircraft gun.

There's another intriguing incident that Emeny reports. It's his encounter with one of the great travel writers to report on Ethiopia, Evelyn Waugh, who visited Ethiopia for Haile Selassie's coronation in 1930, then again in 1935 at the outbreak of the war. On this second trip, Stuart Emeny is traveling up to Addis Ababa from Djibouti with Evelyn Waugh.

Emeny barely mentions Waugh in his account; he is more amused by F.W. Rickett, "who in a few days," Emeny writes, "was to startle the world and embarrass the British diplomats by coolly announcing that he had purchased a concession to exploit oil and minerals throughout half Abyssinia-half the territory which Mussolini coveted."

Waugh in his account of Ethiopia in '35, which is in his collection of travel essays, "When The Going Was Good," is amused by Stuart Emeny. Waugh writes,

"There were six of us, sipping iced Vicky water from our thermos flasks and gazing out bleakly upon a landscape of unrelieved desolation.

"One of them had been my companion from London, a reporter from a Radical newspa-

per. I saw him constantly throughout the succeeding months and found his zeal and industry a standing reproach. I did not know it was possible for a human being to identify himself so precisely with the interest of his employers. The situation, obscure to most of us, was crystal clear to him — The Emperor was an oppressed anti-fascist.”

All of this is rather fascinating (or boring) as it depends on whether one wants to peel away the history of this special moment in time, the war between Ethiopian and Eritrea. I find it a lot like watching the History Channel, all those gray figures in smoky black-and-white film. The images come across as if from the other side of the moon. Still, I find it compelling and keep watching and reading. I am connected to it because we shared a generation, and an understanding of the landscape. The names are familiar. Black-and-white photographs in the book are vivid reminders of the place. I think: I was there. I drove on that narrow strip of highway.

The war goes on. Or rather, the war gets started. The final essay “The ‘Busu Tshiki-Tshik” written by Ladislav Farago. His title comes, as we might remember, from the Amharic “the great war” where “busu” means great and “tshiki-tshik” means quarrel. This essay is perhaps most illustrative of how difficult it was to “cover” the war. There were problems for the war correspondents first getting to Ethiopia, then living in Addis Ababa, and finally reaching the front, and filing stories from the war zone. No CNN in those highlands. No pictures beamed to satellites. No phones. No telegraph. Here’s how Ladislav Farago got his story out:

“In Gallabat I employed two reliable runners who accompanied me on the journey and ran back from time to time to Gallabat with my post. From there letters were taken by the post office to Gedaref. Gedaref is connected with Khartoum by a twice-weekly train service and the Imperial Airways takes letters and pictures from there to London.

“My telegrams were sent to Gallabet and from there they were wirelessly to Gedaref. Gedaref wirelessly them onto Khartoum, Khartoum telegraphed them to Cairo and from there they were sent to London. The runners took four days to get from North Abyssinia to Gallabet and another four from Gallabet to Gedaref. Once Gedaref has been reached everything goes much quicker and if the runner reaches that town on Friday evening, London receives them on the following Saturday forenoon.”

What is evident in these essays is how the world was waiting for word (any sort of word) from Ethiopia. Evelyn Waugh would write in his collection: “In the summer of 1935 . . . Abyssinia was News. Everyone with any claims to African experience was cashing in.”

But the interest passed. Waugh writes later, “Meanwhile in Europe and America the editors and film magnates had begun to lose patience. They had spent large sums of money on the Abyssinian war and were getting very little in return . . . I received my dismissal by cable on the day . . .” the coverage of the fighting ended.

The same fate awaited the war correspondents. The war ended quickly for all of them. Patrick Balfour writes, “The exodus of correspondents began about the beginning of December . . . The newspapers began to realize that the game was not worth the candle.”

The war was elsewhere. In Europe and Japan. Ethiopia, Abyssinia then, slipped away to become a footnote in the long course of War World II. But for those of us who knew the Highlands, knew the Empire, knew, at least from a distance, Haile Selassie, how can we forget those days, the war, that time in our lives when we were a very small part of another history in the Horn of Africa?

John Coyne (Ethiopia 1962-64) is the editor of PeaceCorpsWriters.org and is the Manager of Communications for The College of New Rochelle.

Would you like to review a book for **The Herald**? Contact Editor Hayward Allen. We currently have a couple of travel books available for review. We are also interested in hearing your suggestions of titles that would be of interest to our members — either for you or others to review.

Film & Theater in Ethiopia and Eritrea

The White Hotel

available at Amazon.com on VHS, 90 minutes, \$34.95

A 1996 film about the AIDS crisis in Africa, "The White Hotel," is beginning to make a critical splash in what used to be called "art houses." It gets its title from a rundown hotel where journalists stay in Eritrea. The documentary deals with the work of directors Dianne Griffin and Tobi Solvang and their up-close-and-personal examination of the AIDS crisis in Africa, as personified in Eritrea.



Film critic Elvis Mitchell is not kind to the film. "Ms. Griffin's rambling narration is self-absorbed, sounding like stream-of-consciousness meanderings from a therapy session," he wrote. One of the major problems Mitchell points out is linking the harrowing and horrific story of an African doctor moving from rage to forgiveness — which is quite powerful, to Griffin's recollections of her late father. It "is utterly inappropriate."

"White Hotel," ranges from a documentarian's view of social and cultural practices such as female circumcision to unsafe sex, AIDS prevention misinformation, and homophobia. Perhaps the oddest element of the film is Tobi Solvang's sexual relationship with one of the directors' guides, unprotected and therefore "suicidal given what the filmmakers know about the country."

Noting good vs. bad results, Mitchell notes that the film is not poorly made, and an obvious empathy is felt by the two women toward the victims of AIDS, as well as their understanding that Western influences are in part responsible for the plague. However, the selfish quest of the two is a primary focus of the film, and "this aspect of their mission can be maddening, an unintentional tribute to the subversion of good intentions."

Another critic, Mark Holcomb, wrote: "The duo's hubris is particularly galling in light of their subject matter and the impoverished, war-torn setting. The patience and quiet resolve of the Eritreans further highlight Griffin's and Solvang's obliviousness, and the filmmakers' habit of mugging condescendingly while conducting

interviews doesn't help either. The insights they do manage to uncover seem purely accidental. In the end you wish they had taken the relationship between forbidden homosexuality, female circumcision, and AIDS in Africa as seriously as they take themselves."

Editor's note: Elvis and Mark seem to give "The White Hotel" a thumbs-down or whatever. The film is probably not going to come to your local theater anyway and will be awesomely difficult to find at Blockbuster, so you can decide for yourselves.

And Now for Other Serious Filmmaking

Earlier this year, "The Father," was released and premiered at Addis's National Theater. It is a film directed by Ermias Woldemlak, written by Manyazewal Endeshaw (see below, "Theater for One Man in Addis"), and produced by Magida Abdi. The cast and crew were Ethiopians, the language is Amharic.

Manyazewal did his degree at Addis Ababa University, with graduate work at Germany's Humboldt University, and has lectured on and directed numerous plays. Ermias also graduated from AAU and attended Ghana's National Film and Television Institute. Magida grew up in Nairobi, went to school in Canada, and met Italy's revolutionary Bernardo Bertolucci hiking through Asia.

"The Father" was part of a three-film production initiative of M-Net and New Directions, a British charity that supports new filmmakers. The two other films produced were "Surrender" from Tanzania and Nigeria's "A Barber's Wisdom."

"The Father" is described as a "domestic thriller." It is much more than that, for the 28-minute film tells a part of the story of Mengistu Haile Mariam's "Red Terror." The movie's subtitle is "Waiting to be Executed."

"The Rwandans are talking about the genocide, the South Africans are talking about the apartheid era, and so Ethiopia has to talk about the Red Terror," said 37-year-old director Ermias in a BBC interview.

"The Father" won "Best Debut Movie" at a recent Ghanian film festival and a silver medal at the Zanzibar Film Festival.

There is a certain irony about the success of this homegrown film. During the Red Terror, Mengistu supported a federally sponsored film industry. In 1991, the new government stated that moviemaking should be a privately funded industry.

That is not to say that talented Ethiopian directors are not still making movies. Howard University Prof. Haile Girima has made several very critical and financially successful films, including "Harvest 3000," "Adwa," and "Imperfect Journey." Solomon Bekele has won awards for "Aster," the story of love crossing the walls of class and wealth.

Not many, but the dance must start with a violin and a drum . . .

A Lucky Young Ethiopian

In 1979, Mekbib Gemedra was a theater student at Addis Ababa University. The Red Terror carried him in its bloody flow, and he lived in constant fear and tried to stay invisible. Twenty-two years later he told his story to John Mackey for the July 1 *New York Times Magazine*.

The article tells of a terrifying and dramatic series of events and conditions. Mekbib describes how daily he saw bodies on the streets with slogans like "This is an enemy of the people." People never knew when that might be their fate. In an attempt to escape the terror, he applied for a government scholarship to study film in Yugoslavia.

One day, while visiting a friend, "they" came to arrest the friend, and they took Mekbib as well. He was beaten often as the authorities tried to get him to admit he was part of a conspiracy to overthrow the government. Sent back to a holding cell, he waited for midnight, for that was the time when they came to take away those to be executed.

But he was taken to the central prison, originally built to hold 500 prisoners but then was filled with thousands. Among the inmates were the Emperor's

grandchildren. Within the yard that had been turned into a shantytown, he met old friends; they talked and had tea. "It was a madhouse but also the freest place in town."

Somehow he learned that he had been given the scholarship. Unexpectedly, three months later, he was freed and went to the Ministry of Education to find out if the scholarship was still valid. It was.

He was picked up again. This time he knew someone in power and was cleared for an exit visa. Still he feared having this dream turned into another nightmare. Then one day he found himself at the airport, saying farewell to family, boarding an airplane and flying over the northern highlands. "That's really it. I am never going to come back to this place again," he said to himself.

Today, Mekbib is a filmmaker living in New York City. His first film, "Zen Stories," was recently produced.

Theater for One Man in Addis

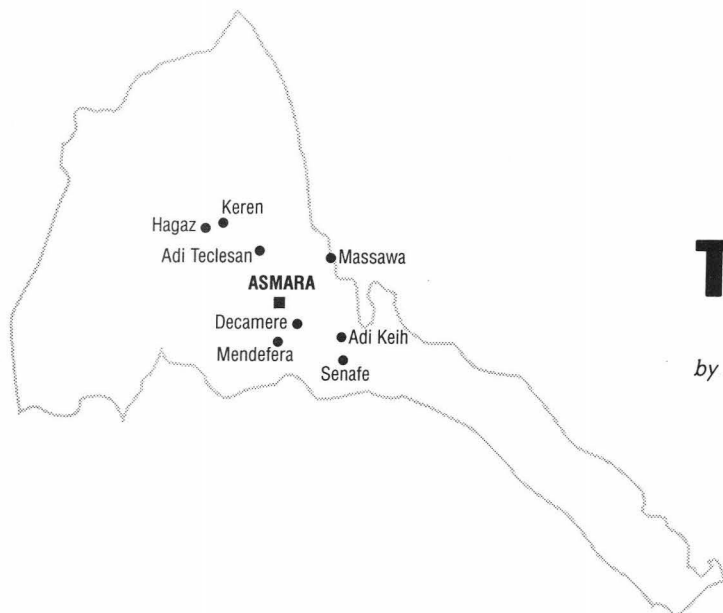
"I still dream of directing 'Waiting for Godot,'" Ethiopian director-writer Manyazewal Endeshaw told the *Addis Tribune*. He had seen German and French productions of Samuel Becket's absurdist play, and eventually translated it into Amharic.

"Now the hottest director in town" as described by the *Tribune*, Manyazewal has directed nearly two dozen plays at Addis Ababa University, the Ethiopian National Theater, and City Hall. At the time of the interview he was directing "Negus Aramah," a play set in 7th century Ethiopia.

He has directed several Shakespearean tragedies, and one of the plays he translated into Amharic is Thornton Wilder's "Matchmaker." Manyazewal has also written for theater and screen, most recently the film, "The Father."

The last two decades have seen Manyazewal grow as only an extraordinary theatrical person can. "So be it, I will live the days as they come," the multitalented Manyazewal concluded.

Seeing the Sites



Touring Eritrea

by Laurie Kessler (Adi Teclesan 1964–66)

LATE OCTOBER AND ALL OF NOVEMBER 2001 were rich travel times for us, partly because friends from the States have been here. Margie and Gene Elliott, Laurie's girlfriend since 1951 and her husband, whose only other trip out of the USA was to Lithuania three years ago, visited for two weeks. Van and Nancy, who had lived here for over three years while Nancy did her Ph.D. research and who had adopted a two-month-old baby, Saba, who is now five years old also spent time with us.

To Massawa with the Elliots

The Elliots exclaimed over the fantastic beach at the Hamasien Hotel in Massawa, where we took them after two nights in Asmara. We usually stay at this funky hotel because it has the best beach and is quiet, but it's getting funkier. The beds are soft and saggy, the air conditioning didn't work in our room, only one of three women's toilets had a seat, and a family of goats explored the hallway at dawn. While staying there in 1996, a bat died in the corner of our room after being hit by the ceiling fan; in 1997, we had a rat munching on things in the night. The Elliots were good sports and, later in their visit, said, "After the Hamasien Hotel, nothing will surprise us." We enjoyed luxurious breakfasts on the terrace, drinks on the patio extending into the surf, and swimming

several times a day — once by the light of the full moon. We gawked at camels and admired the lovely arched buildings of old Massawa, some of them built ages ago by the Turks. (The Torino Hotel, known during our Peace Corps days as "four floors of whores," is still there.) We observed five ships in the port, and had fish and flat bread cooked in tandoori ovens at the Selam Restaurant where tables are set up on the street. Now and then, Margie or Gene would say, "Nobody will believe this!" In 1997 — the year of the rat — a friend had said, "Just think, when I'm back in California, all this will still be happening." We lucked into a tour of Seawater Farms, which will integrate the production of tons of shrimp, the growing of salicornia [a plant that can be grown in saltwater and which can provide more high-quality vegetable oil per plant than soybeans] and mangrove trees away from the sea with water recycled from the shrimp ponds, and a bird sanctuary and rookery — already over 100 species have been identified. We were lucky to see a large osprey and lots of smaller birds.

North to Keren

Keren was our destination twice, once with each set of friends. Both times we stopped en route in Adi Teclesan, where we were PCVs from 1964 to 1966, to

have tea with the woman who had been our housekeeper. In Keren we browsed the market for clay coffee pots, baskets, vests worn by Moslem men over their long *jalibias*, and gold and silver jewelry, and gawked at camels again. We relaxed in the vine-shaded patio of the Sicilia Hotel where we usually stay (and stayed in 1966!) and where Wayne played chess with the owner's son, and we visited the shrine of Mariam Da'arit inside a baobab tree that in 1941 protected soldiers when a mortar bombardment cut through the tree. It's a lovely site, with avenues of trees and a view of citrus orchards.

We took a side trip to Hagaz to the impressive Agricultural Technical School established a few years ago. The oddest experience was having lunch of "fool," a bit like refried beans, with Van, Nancy, and Saba. We sat in the spacious Mona Lesa restaurant, surrounded by Moslem men in turbans and *jalibias*, while the TV broadcast a program from Sudan showing the bombing of Afghanistan. We were very self-conscious, but the restaurant host and other guests were very gracious and we certainly weren't in any danger. Wayne says this was similar to the time he was eating in Keren three years ago, with the TV broadcasting about the bombing of the pharmaceutical plant in Sudan; the viewers got tired of the haranguing of the Sudanese commentators and turned off the TV.

South to Mendefera

Mendefera was a great destination for two reasons: it happened to be Nigdet, the annual festival of the church of St. George, and we entered the church to observe the priests drumming and chanting ("They'll never believe this," again from Margie and Gene), and the landscape had unexpectedly large areas of flat farm land that was lovely with various colored crops ready for harvest. We had tea at the Embaba Hotel with Memher Iyob who remembers John Rude (62–64) and Beany Wezelman (64–66), and lunch at a new hotel with an elegant upstairs dining room and the best WCs we'd seen on any trip. Good pasta, too. On the way back we stopped at the relatively new Green Island Hotel/resort for delicious, ten-cent cappuccino at

poolside. Since the swimming pool was green with algae and other plants, Wayne suggested to the managers that they raise tilapia instead to feature on the dining room menu.

Historical sites around Senafe

Historical sites south of Asmara and Decamhare attracted us for a bus trip with the staff of the Asmara International Community School, where I had been director until last July. Our guide was Peter Schmidt, an archeologist and husband of one of the teachers. This trip reminded us of one organized by Neil Kotler (64–66) that visited Kohaito (lots of walking!), Metera, and Yeha in 1966. Because it's now a military camp, Kohaito was off limits, but we did go into the Temporary Security Zone established by the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, past coils of razor wire and the vigilance of Indian peacekeepers to Metera outside Senafe and to Keskesei. Metera is the site of a whole Aksumite city and was excavated around the time we were in Peace Corps by the "vacuum cleaner" method which virtually destroyed the usefulness of the found items when they were dumped in mounds nearby. Peter said it is perhaps the most important open site in the world. A unique pre-Christian inscribed stele had been deliberately blown up and toppled by Ethiopian troops in the recent war. Between Senafe and Adi Keih, Keskesei appears to be a simple valley, but it features a fallen stele over forty feet long and other large cut stones inscribed with Sabeian writing and mostly hidden among the cactus, as well as a huge mound expected to be covering a palace or temple, all yet to be excavated. Near Adi Keih we saw rock paintings showing solid figures — rather than stick figures — of people, cows, elephants and other animals. Throughout the day, Peter impressed us with the fantastic opportunities to investigate and protect this heritage, saying Eritrean archeologists will be doing so at some of the sites very soon. He has directed the investigations into sites on the Asmara plateau that turned out to be a huge complex of pre-Aksumite towns that date back to 800 BC — much earlier than had been expected.

Now, a P.S from Wayne: Not much is happening with my work, but Laurie's got a business license and is doing her teaching through the British Council, tutoring, and editing — earning money. The English edition of my chicken book will be sent to the printer this week, finally. The Tigrinya edition is already out. I'm planning a training-the-trainers course for technical teachers, a how-to-start-a-small-business course, advising on a plan to set up a chicken raising demonstration unit at the Hagaz Agro-Technical School, advising on correcting a disastrous business plan for a poultry farm where the investors, following the Ministry of Agriculture's advice, spent over a million nakfa on a few buildings and ran out of money before they got any chickens (the fifth case like this I've seen here), and waiting around for a couple of more things to fall into place, like a micro-credit project with Catholic Relief Services and a staff development plan for the shrimp farm in Massawa. No money yet, but . . .

Now we hear from NPR on our satellite radio that the second stage of the war on terrorism will be surrounding us here in Eritrea! Meanwhile, life goes on, and even though Eritrea is experiencing internal political tension, we are safe.

Laurie and Wayne have lived in Asmara since 1992.

Ethiopia — One Monolith and Many Monasteries

***National Geographic's* Love Affair with Ethiopia Continues**

National Geographic's July 2001 issue* carries a photographically wonderful set of pictures taken for "The Legacy of Aksum," as well as a well-written essay about the kingdom that existed in northern Abyssinia at least two millenia ago.

* This magazine is in the E&E RPCVs library. Contact Librarian Joe Ciuffini to borrow it at no cost. (See page 46 for contact info.)

Legend has it that the Queen of Sheba lived in Aksum in the 10th Century BC.

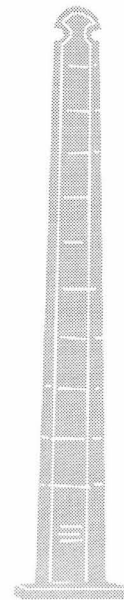
RPCVs from Ethiopia and Eritrea were taught in training about the Christian legacy beginning under the rule of King Ezana in the 4th Century in Axum. It was during his reign that the fabled Ark of the Covenant traveled to the place for safekeeping. There, as story goes, is where it is to be found today, under the guardianship of Coptic priests.

The *NG* issue also has pictures of Lalibela, remote Aksumite churches, Coptic art with Geez inscriptions, and even an ancient plow used in fields of teff.

Aksum's Stolen Stela Still in Italy

In 1937, Mussolini personally ordered the transport of one of Aksum's fabled monoliths to Rome to commemorate a special event in Rome. In 1947, in Article 37 of the peace treaty signed by Italy, Italy agreed to send the stela back to Ethiopia within 18 months. In 1997, an Italo-Ethiopian agreement included the promise that the obelisk's return to Ethiopia would soon be forthcoming.

To date, it still stands on its well-known Roman site. Addis Ababa University Professors Andreas Eshete and Richard Pankhurst have written Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi requesting the return. The European Parliament has tabled the questions raised about the return of several icons and artifacts taken by the Italians to Rome in the 1930s.



EU Parliament member Richard Balfe has also asked the Italians to state when the sacred stela will be returned to Aksum. In response, Italian Cultural Ministry has said that because the obelisk has been in the country for 73 years it has become "naturalized and Italian." The spokesman continued, "Returning the obelisk to Ethiopia would be inopportune because at its age it would arrive broken."

Ethiopia's Island Monasteries

On fifty islands on Lake Tana — the fabled source of the Blue Nile — there are monks and nuns living in gender-specific monasteries, as they have for centuries. In 2001, two reporters, one working for the *Ethiopia Journal* and the *New York Times*, and the other for the BBC, revealed the continuing fascination in the West over these ancient indigent, island, religious communities.

Reporting for the *Journal* and the *Times*

As reported by Norimitsu Onishi, there is a 70-year-old ex-farmer on Ebran Gabriel Island who left his land and his family 20 years ago to take on the simple trappings of a monk. Brother Gabriel said his wife and children do not know if he is alive or dead. Today he is with about two dozen other monks— women are not allowed — living lives of contemplation, religious study, and the protection of 18th Century frescoes, crosses, crowns of past emperors, and a three-century-old book bound in goatskin that illustrates the four gospels.

The monks are not out of connection or communication with the outside world. In their corrugated-walled shacks, there are ads from Ethiopian Airlines, English cigarets, and other distant and useless products and services. Local merchants ply the waters in papyrus boats hawking firewood and coal to the monks or to the nuns living on a nearby island.

Younger monks have come to the monastery, and they have started selling produce grown on the island. The output is marketed in Bahr Dar and the business has been successful enough for the monks to consider buying a boat with a motor.

The other conversational monk on Ebran Gabriel Island is 47-year-old Brother Takele, who mentioned to the reporter that some monks go to the desert to fast for 40 days and 40 nights. "Most of them die," he said.

He described their life on the island, occasionally in English. "The life of a monk is very hard," he said. "Outside you eat three times a day, but in the monastery you eat only one time. You see a lot of

things outside, but here in the monastery you have only God. You sleep eight hours, we sleep only four. And women are not allowed here. 'The tiger and the goat cannot live together,' he said, "The lion and the cow cannot live together. Danger, no good."

Meanwhile, a short paddle away is Ientelos Jesus Island, where a dozen nuns live. What is immediately seen as a difference is that there are also five men — priests and deacons are there to lead to church services.

Rev. Kebran Gabriel was called to serve the nuns' church when it was established three years ago. "Here I am an advisor to women, because women are weak," he said. "So I am acting like a father."

One of the nuns, fifty-year-old Sister Mulunsh, had been a mother of eight children before she received her call to serve. She also admits that she was having mental health problems at the time. Now she feels fine. "God was calling me," she said.

Another, Sister Asedu Selassie, who is 25 years old, said she had always liked church. At 16, she decided to become a nun. She left home, never to return. She also pointed to her neck to a scar that ran almost ear to ear. She pointed a finger at her temple, reminding visitors to remember her.

The Urai Kidane Mihiret monastery

A British Broadcasting reporter first traveled from Bahr Dar to the Zege Peninsula to visit the six-century-old Urai Kidane Mihiret monastery. Nita Bhalla, BBC's person in the field, was taken to the center of the church, the Holy of Holies, where a monk in yellow robes pointed to the 12 doors surrounding the sacred circle, representing the dozen apostles.

There the reporter was shown a replica of the Ark of the Covenant. "Every one of the 30,000 churches and monasteries in Ethiopia keeps a Tabot," his guide said. The viewer was impressed by the multitude of iconographic illustrations and murals upon the ceilings and walls. Stories of the Bible are highlighted, as well as St. George, Ethiopia's guardian saint. Mary is depicted holding Baby

Jesus in her arms; Jesus is shown as he pours water on lepers at his feet. The bright but disintegrating paints used were created from animal blood, flour, and natural colors.

The British correspondent also went to several of the island monasteries. "Many . . . are dilapidated. The paintings are in desperate need of restoration. Years of dampness and decay have taken their toll on these magnificent paintings as the walls peel, the paintings fade, and the dyes begin to run."

"These monasteries are our history and our culture. They are what make us Ethiopian. It hurts to see what is happening to them," said Ethiopian tourist Yohannes Wolde-Mariam.

Tourists contribute gifts, which are shared by other monasteries, but the Addis Coptic Orthodox Church skims 20 percent off of all donations or funds raised to preserve the antiquities.

Editor's Note: Once upon a time, many years ago, several male PCVs, including myself and one or two Ethiopian tourists traveled to Ebran Gabriel Island from Bahr Dar in a boat. I don't know what I expected, save what we had heard that all the crowns of all the emperors back to the first were on display. My first memory of the island was watching a guide stomp and beat a six-inch snake with a rock. In a minute or less its bite would have killed a person, he said. We immediately began to watch our steps up the trail to the austere and dilapidated monastery.

The guide described that it was a male-only place and that all female elements, four-legged and such, were not allowed. Secretly, I wondered what about the birds and bees that landed on the trees. I didn't ask. I was content that all egg-bearing hens were eaten and eggs hatched . . .

I recall being shown around the thatched, circular monastery, with old men and young boys circulating around the edges. No one held out a hand and asked for *baksheesh*. No one passed a cup to ask for help. It was a quietly disappointing experience, being a witness to the decay of a centuries-old place of the religious spirit of Ethiopia.

While other artifacts were shown, we didn't see the crowns. They were someplace else.

We watched for snakes as we went back to the tourist boat and pushed off for Bahr Dar.

Lalibela, Ethiopia's Rock of Ages

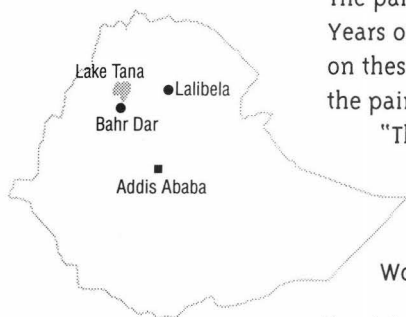
Norimitsu Onishi, of the Times, following up on his article about the island monasteries on Lake Tana, turned to Lalibela. As we all recall, the churches of Lalibela, carved through solid stone, 800 years ago, still stand and are revered by all. Indeed, the Ethiopian Coptic Church considers them at the apex of Christian dedication in Ethiopia.

Onishi describes hermits and white robed priests moving between the eleven carved churches to venerate their faith. In Lalibela, "The rituals seem frozen in time. This is a place with more donkeys than cars, and not a single bank."

According to the reporter, Ethiopians will not comment on the financial troubles that the Lalibela churches and ministry face. Pentacostalism is a serious threat to the Coptic Orthodox Ethiopian churches. Lalibela, one guide said, is out of bounds for these converts.

The Lalibela priests blame the crisis on foreign Protestant missions spending foreign funds to fuel the divorce from the traditional Ethiopian Christian church. On the other hand, there are those who say the Coptic priests are trafficking in religious relics in antique black markets. The priests deny it and blame it on Muslims. Priests are paid \$20 per month; deacons get \$2 and pay is irregular.

One of the major income-generators in Ethiopian religious tourism is Ethiopians travel to these destinations. "It is rare to see Africans (even those in places that are wealthier than Ethiopia," the BBC reporter notes), "visiting sites in their own countries." At least one-third of the 100,000 people visiting Lalibela in the past seven years were Ethiopian. Besides, there are thousands of nationals who make an annual pilgrimage to the sites during the Ethiopian celebration of Christmas.



A Winter of Discontent

HARDLY AN INTELLIGENT CONVERSATION fails to include something about 9/11 and its aftershocks and counterattacks. The theory of "Six Degrees of Separation" seems to apply to so many of us. My son's medical partner's uncle was incinerated in the South Tower of the WTC. He was a regular investment kind of guy with a prestigious firm. I didn't know him, but I know his nephew.

You'll note in the Ethiopia news section at least three Ethiopians who were obliterated by flame and concrete: Jemal Legesse, Eskadar Melaku, and Yeneneh Betru. They were all of age groups that we could have taught long ago.

We have said a silent farewell to hundreds of our students and colleagues who were destroyed by the Red Terror and the wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea. We don't know their names now and never will, but we wonder and worry.

And I would like to see a roster of RPCVs who did not get home September 11. Were any of our colleagues and friends in Ethiopia and Eritrea?

In a nation which values intelligence and power built upon data bases, especially government and business, there should be a list of survivors, or even more meaningful, the names of those who did not survive 9/11.

Meanwhile, Happy 2002 to all. It's our 40th birthday! Doesn't it seem somewhat irrelevant that for so many of us the last two years' beginnings were hinged upon the swinging of the doors of international computer anarchy and collapse of the world economy?

This year the focus will be upon a different kind of world war than any we have ever known. What has been happening over the past two or three decades in dozens of Third and Fourth World nations has been a microcosm of what is now blossoming in a garden of poison flowers and fatal herbs.

Now is the time to plant, more than ever, the blossoms of peace that has been the Peace Corps for 40 years.

Gaddi Vasquez, do your job as we have done ours.

On the Web

www.anythingonethiopia.com

A very exhaustive site that not only includes current news, but click the "Travel & Tourism" tab for info on hotels, flights, sites, etc.; the "About Ethiopia" tab for sections on history, culture, environment, society — and on and on. You will be able to get lost here — and learn a lot you didn't learn in your two years in-country.

www.waltainfo.com

Walta Information Center is a pro-government news and information service located in Addis Ababa with a network of reporters and stringers in dozens of towns throughout Ethiopia.

www.shaebia.com

A pro-Eritrean government site with news and commentary.

Awate.com

"Champion of Eritrean Reconciliation" Its mission statement that expresses the resolve to promote democratic dialogue among Eritreans by focusing on reconciliation and unity in the arena.

eritrea1.org

"... founded to become another stage where all citizens can engage in discourse and argument, to help in the transition toward the Eritrea we wish for, the land of peace, justice, democracy..."

www.sonic.net/~tenn/LettersFromEthiopia

Joe Tenn (62–64) invites all interested in those 40-year veterans, and their descendants to check out the his letters and photographs he's put on-line. "I do not consider the site public yet," Joe writes **The Herald**, "as there are no links to it and so no search engines can find it, but I may make it public depending on comments received."

www.shamabooks.com

Shama Books publishes "high quality books for both the local and international markets... to showcase and highlight the rich culture and history of Ethiopia."

In January, 2002 they published *Ethiopia: Off the Beaten Trail* by John Graham. For several years, John has written wonderful "off the beaten trail" travel articles for the *Addis Tribune* that we have highlighted both in **The Herald** and at our web site. In the U.S. the book can be purchased by writing orders!@transactionpub.com.

THE HERALD

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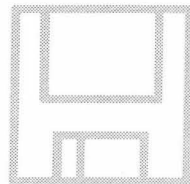
Sources for other articles include: the Peace Corps, the National Peace Corps Association; PeaceCorpsWriters.org.

If you would like to submit an article to be considered for publication, it would be appreciated if it is submitted digitally — via email or on disk (labeled as to software and computer used and with a hard copy).

Photo submissions are enthusiastically welcomed. They should be clear, with images large enough to be easily discerned. All photos will be returned.

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NOTE: All materials in the E&E RPCVs library can be borrowed at no cost by members of the group. Go to our website for a listing of the library contents — or contact Joe if you are not online.

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“Trial #24,” indicates we thought you might be interested in learning what the E&E RPCVs group does and in seeing our newsletter. Perhaps you’d like to join us?

Married couples — One of your names has been arbitrarily selected to receive the newsletter to save duplication. Please don’t feel left out if you name isn’t on the label unless you have separate addresses.

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