

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopian war will determine Red Sea's future

*GERARD CHALIAND WENT TO ERITREA LAST spring and wrote a report on his stay there. Chaliand is author of the recently published **Revolution in the Third World** and of books on Vietnam, the Palestinians, and Angola. In the first part, Chaliand sketches the historical background; in the second and third parts (which will appear next week and the week after) he describes what he saw in Eritrea. The translation is by Helene Ibert.*

The Red Sea is today the epicenter of great power rivalries. The October 1973 war demonstrated once again that the eastern Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean share a single strategic gateway, in military as well as economic affairs. The USSR enjoys friendly relations with Aden and formerly did with Somalia. As the U.S.'s privileged ally, Ethiopia used to receive half or more of American military aid to Africa, and 20 percent of American economic aid to that continent. But in spring 1976, the military junta headed by Mengistu Hilic Mariam has become one of Russia's principal allies. U.S. ally Saudi Arabia wants to turn the Red Sea into an Arab Lake—to be rechristened "Peace Lake" for the occasion. It remains to be seen what sort of peace is referred to.

The new balance of power being sketched out around the Red Sea, more precisely on the eastern horn of Africa, depends on the immediate future of Ethiopia. Frozen into an agrarian structure as archaic as it was confining, dominated by an aristocracy composed mainly of the Amarha people and opposed to all change, Ethiopia began to break out of its imperial mold with the death of Haile Selassie in February 1974.

Ethiopia launched a revolutionary campaign that swept all this out of its path. The Amarha leadership has been severely shaken, while a petite bourgeoisie, originating mainly among the Galla people, began its social ascent, most notably in Choa.

In the long run, Ethiopia's future will be determined by an alliance between the Amarhas, who account for 25 percent of its population, and the Gallas, who account for 40 percent. In the meantime, a chaotic transformation, rendered the more brutal by armed opposition from both the left and the right, and by secessionist movements in Eritrea and Ogaden, is bringing down in bloody confusion the apparently immutable structure that once held the Negus empire in its vise-like grip.

Out of a total of 14 provinces, seven are in varying degrees of rebellion and opposition makes itself felt even in the cap-

ital city. The Ethiopian regime has undertaken a campaign to mobilize popular patriotic fervor through the creation of "revolutionary committees" to combat the enemy from without and within. The resultant atmosphere is one of profound polarization.

Ethiopia's internal evolution will depend on a series of factors: on the internal cohesion of the Dergue, the ruling party, on the potential support for the regime from the Gallas majority, which has benefited greatly from agrarian reform, and on the role to be played by foreign aid.

The current regime faces armed rightist opposition from the Ethiopian Democratic Union (UDE), composed of dispossessed landowners and conservative military and civilian elements. On the left, the administration must counter the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary party (PRPE), a largely urban movement that lost much of its leadership in the student massacres at Addis-Ababa. This clandestine movement receives support from students, unionized workers and certain factions of the petite bourgeoisie and the military.

Beyond all this, the present government in Ethiopia must deal successfully with the two separatist movements linked with the history of the Ethiopian empire: the Somali secessionist movement in Ogaden and the movement for Eritrean Independence.

The last movement is divided into three main groups, and forms a very powerful opposition, even if it is split by internal factions. The PLFE is the strongest organization. It controls the border with Sudan on the north side of Ethiopia. Young women and men take part in the guerilla activities and have organized a new revolutionary social structure. Up to now the army of Ethiopia has never really threatened the life of this movement.

The PLFE, an authentic revolutionary organization, is fighting against a government that claims to be Marxist-Leninist. Both sides are strongly entrenched in their positions and negotiations are necessary. The only real answer will be given by the internal evolution of Ethiopia. ■



A young fighter for the FPL.

Photos/EFNLA

Background to war

Secessionist Movements

I N E R I T R E A

FLE (Eritrean Liberation Front), known as the Revolutionary Council. Created in 1961, led by Abdel Nasser and Ibrahim Totil. Controls provinces of Barka and Gash. Has units in every other province except Sahel. Its weak point: the high plateau. Estimated at 10,000 to 12,000 men.

FPLE (Popular Liberation Front of Eritrea). Created 1970, led by Roman Mohamed Nur and Issaias Afe-ferki. Controls Sahel, including the provincial capitol. Has battalions in every province except Barka. Particularly strong in Senhir, Hamassien and Samhar. Its weak point is Dankalie. Estimated strength: 10,000 to 12,000 men.

FLE-FPLE (Eritrean Liberation Front, also known as Popular Forces for the Liberation of Eritrea). Created in 1976 and led by Osman Sabbe Salem. This movement, whose principal strength lies in the connections and personal charisma of its leader, has recruited most of its estimated 2,000 followers among the Eritrean refugees in Sudan, and so far has not extended beyond the far side of the Sudanese border.

I N S O M A L I A N P R O V I N C E S

FLSO (Western Somali Liberation Front). Made up of Somali guerillas in Sidamo, Bale and Harrar, fighting to annex these provinces to Somalia.

The Ethiopian Opposition

PRPE (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party). Essentially urban, composed of intellectuals, students and extreme-left syndicalists, relatively well established and supported by workers from various sectors. Force unknown.

UDE (Ethiopian Democratic Union). Antimarxist front, formed in 1975, composed of extremely diverse elements including dispossessed landowners, military opposed to the Dergue, etc. Established in the provinces of Gondar, Tigre and Godjam. Led by General Ilyassu Mengesha. Estimated following: 10,000 men.

History of Eritrea

It was the Italians, in the 19th century, who first defined Eritrea as a territorial entity. Although historically the Tigrinyan plateau belongs to the Abyssinian mountains, the Ethiopians never controlled the lowlands, where the Islamic movement prospered.

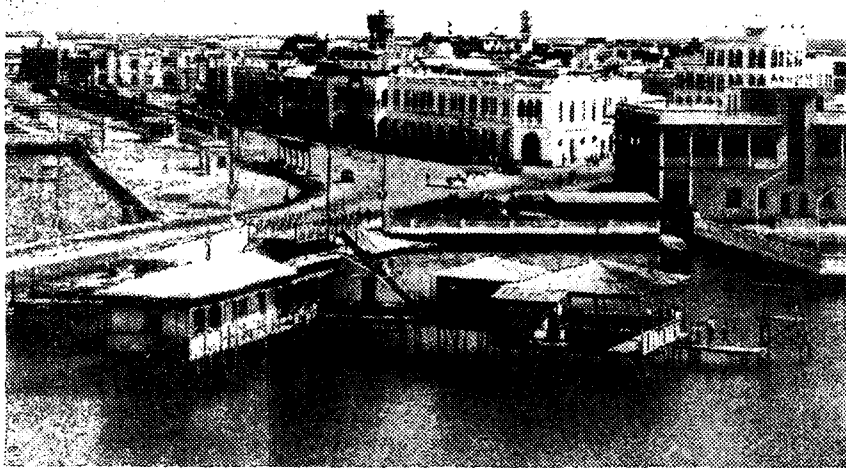
In the 16th century, the Turks occupied Massawa and the northern coast of Eritrea. Egyptians took their place at the beginning of the 19th century. From 1885 to 1941, the territory was an Italian colony. Under the Italians, Eritrea was provided with a good communications network, a modern agricultural system, a centralized administration, and the beginnings of industry. A modern intelligentsia began to take shape in this period even before its appearance in Ethiopia.

In 1941, the British took over and managed the country until 1952. The project to divide Eritrea (giving the Muslim territory to the north and west to Sudan, and turning the Christian plateau over to Ethiopia), was foiled by the very political parties the British had allowed to emerge. These parties, although founded on religious lines and bitterly hostile to one another, united in their opposition to the dismemberment of the colony.

After inquiries by two separate UN commissions, whose conclusions were contradictory, Eritrea was federated to Ethiopia as an autonomous entity with its own parliament, hymn, flag and official languages (Tigrinyan and Arabic). The British supported this solution.

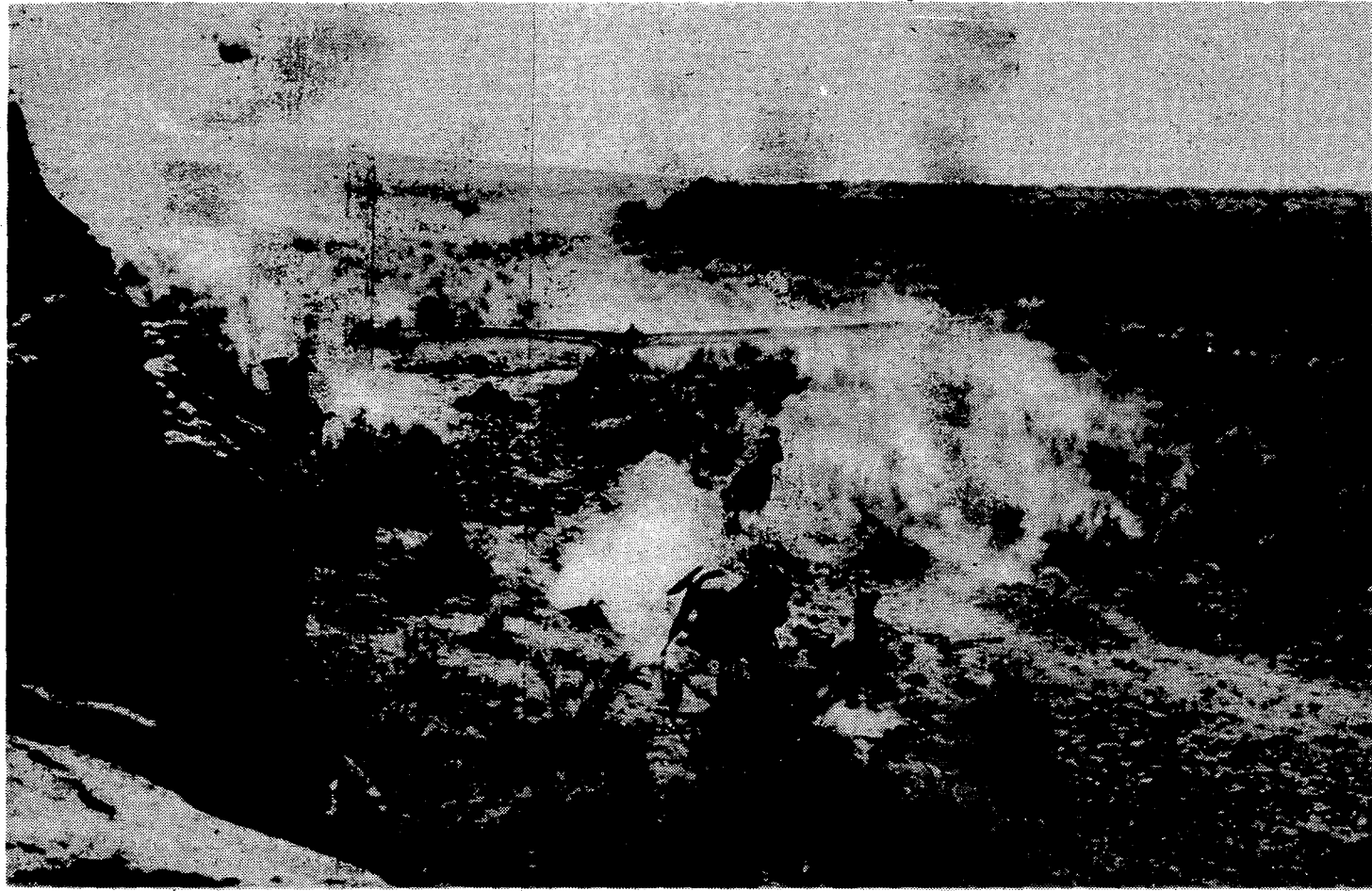
The federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia marks the beginning of 20 years of American-Ethiopian alliance. The Ethiopians put the military base of Kagnaw at the disposal of the Americans in Eritrea, and received in exchange 20 percent of U.S. economic aid and almost two-thirds of all U.S. military aid to the continent of Africa.

All the prerogatives of autonomy were gradually taken away by the Emperor Haile Selassie. Eritrean political leaders, who had not ceased to protest before the United Nations, took the road to exile, and armed struggle broke out in 1961. The following year Ethiopia annexed Eritrea outright. ■



Massawa, Eritrea's third largest city.

Wild, Wild



Today's roundups utilize both mounted horsemen and modern helicopters.

BY CHUCK FAGER

TWIN SPRINGS, NEVADA—FOR some wild horses, keeping their freedom is worth risking anything, even life.

Recently at the Palomino Valley holding corral northeast of Reno, a stallion, captured in a government roundup, furiously and successfully resisted three attempts to get him up a chute and into a truck waiting to take him to a new, adoptive home. Then, on the fourth try, he forced open a side panel of the loading chute, broke out and eluded pursuers with lassoes during three frantic circuits around the corral's outer perimeter. Finally the stallion charged the high chain-link outer fence, battered down a post far enough to leap over, and then galloped triumphantly off into the surrounding mountains.

"He's up there now," said one government wrangler later, gesturing past the new subdivision real estate signs toward the dry, tawny foothills dotted with juniper trees. "There's a band of 30 or 40 of

them up there, and he's probably taken charge of them by now." He spoke of the escaped horse with obvious respect.

A few days later, on the dusty sage-covered Owyhee Desert 70 miles northeast of Winemucca in north central Nevada, a mare who showed equal determination was not so lucky. One of 1,200 mustangs gathered there by the Bureau of Land Management of the Department of Interior to reduce pressure on the desert ecology, she had just been captured with 40-odd others and herded into a small holding corral before being trucked off to Palomino Valley.

While the other mustangs huddled in one corner of the corral's high board fence, the mare suddenly turned and made a mad, full-speed dash at the lower aluminum pipe gate at the opposite end. Maybe she mistook the daylight showing between the gate's slender, flattened X to mean no barrier at all, or thought she could force it open. She crashed into the gate head-on. Her wind-

pipe snapped like a dry twig and she recoiled into a trembling, unnaturally-angled heap, the grey dust of her collision swirling around her. Neck broken, she died almost instantly, eyes open.

As much as they crave their freedom, the mustangs here, like the rest of the wildlife on the Owyhee Desert, need other things even more—food, for one, and above all, water. Although recent rains have promised at least temporary relief, the two-year old western drought has posed serious problems for the wild mustangs. Waterholes have coagulated into flat platters of dried, wrinkled mud; creeks have become powdery gullies. With the vanishing water has gone much of the more delicate vegetation that the horses prefer. Only the pungent sagebrush remains seemingly unaffected: deep-rooted and ubiquitous, it is barely green anyway.

Ron Hall is the federal government's wild horse specialist here. His job is part of the preservation, management and control of "wild, free-roaming horses and burros" on public lands mandated by Congress in 1971 when it unanimously declared these animals a part of the national heritage.

Before then, mustangs had been gathered by the hundreds of thousands and sold, most ending up as dog food. Their advocates argued persuasively that without federal protection, the bands of wild horses, which had roamed the west since the days of the Spanish explorers, were in danger of extermination.

The 1971 legislation banned sale of wild horses taken from public lands; since most of Nevada, and huge chunks of other western states with significant wild horse populations are made up of public rangeland, the law put the "mustangers" largely out of business.

Since then the depleted bands have grown rapidly, at an estimated rate of 20 percent a year. Now some are competing with cattle grazed on the same land by ranchers with permits from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The ranchers, who don't have much use for the horses anyway, have complained loudly. And all the range wildlife, because of the drought, is competing with nature.

In response, for two years now the Bureau has been rounding up selected numbers of horses in areas where the pressure on the ecosystem is determined to be greatest. Ranchers are also being required to decrease livestock grazing in the same area.

The captured mustangs are put up for adoption by citizens who have filled out a simple application and paid the horse's transportation from the holding corrals. But since the animals cannot be sold, the federal government retains formal title to them. If an adoption doesn't work out, the animal goes back to the Bureau's custody.

Ron Hall has spent many hours cruising above the Owyhee Desert in a small helicopter, tracking and counting the herds, watching the water disappear and cataloging its effects.

On a flight last fall Hall pointed out one of them: the mud-limned silhouette of a dead colt in a nearly dry pond. "The colts will wade right into the mud, trying to absorb moisture through their skin," he said. "And then some of them get stuck in it. That happened to four colts at the waterhole by Twin Springs where we have our trap. We managed to pull two of them out in time."

Hall is stocky, with red hair and a curly beard. He has worked with wild horses for five years and doesn't like to see them die. He took the mare's suicidal rush into the gate of the corral personally, as if the animal had been in his care for months rather than minutes. "We've lost four like that in transit," he explained grimly. "One got trampled in a truck going to Palomino Valley, a colt got squeezed to death in the loading chute, and another mare broke her leg in the corral. That's not a lot considering the number of horses we're moving, and the fact that they're wild. But it's too many for me."

IT'S ALSO TOO MANY FOR SOME ORGANIZED horse lovers. Joan Blue of Washington, D.C., is one, and she's president of the American Horse Protective Association. She wants the government to stop the roundups.

"We don't trust these guys," Blue says of the BLM. "We've taken them to court about the wild horses five times and won four times. We stopped a roundup planned in Idaho by court action, and tried to stop the Nevada roundups. Why? The cruelty to horses involved in these roundups, particularly the ones with helicopters, is beyond belief: they are winding the horses, stampeding them, separating mares from colts."

"The roundups are done we believe mostly for the benefit of ranchers in the vicinity, who don't like the horses. We feel that ranching is a subsidized industry, because they're using federal lands. We would rather see the livestock removed and the land turned over to the wildlife."

Blue doesn't like the adopt-a-horse program either. "Many adoptions are ending in much cruelty to the horses. The animals are given to people who know nothing about horses. And the BLM is not supervising the adoptions as it said it would."

Blue's sentiments are not shared, however, by Dawn Lappin of Reno Nevada. Lappin is adoption director for Wild Horse Organized Assistance (WHOA),

Before 1971 the wild mustangs were rounded up and sold for dog food. Now they're protected, and excess numbers are rounded up for adoption.