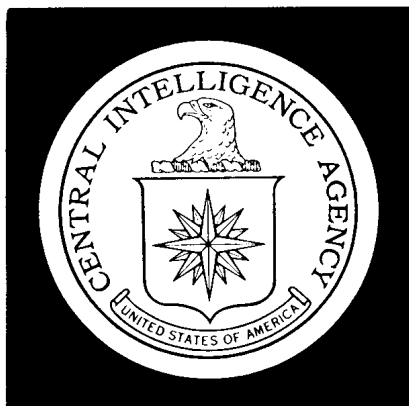


Secret



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Report

Geographic Brief on Ethiopia

Secret

CIA/BGI GR 71-8
April 1971

Page Denied

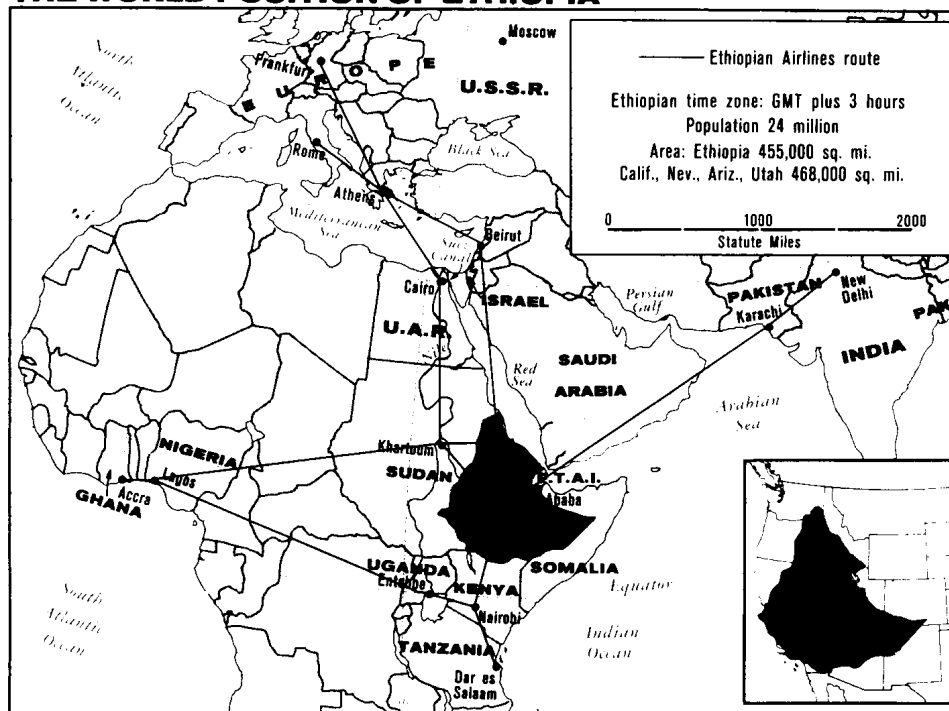
SECRET

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 Directorate of Intelligence
 April 1971

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Geographic Brief on EthiopiaIntroduction

1. The great, high plateaus of Ethiopia set the country apart from its neighbors, and the ruling classes like to refer to themselves as "an island of Christianity isolated in a sea of Islam."

THE WORLD POSITION OF ETHIOPIA

500300 3-71

Note: This report was prepared by the Office of Basic and Geographic Intelligence and coordinated within the Directorate of Intelligence.

SECRET

SECRET

Metaphors aside, the many realitites of physical and cultural isolation that have plagued -- and protected -- this ancient nation throughout the centuries have an important effect on her position in a rapidly changing world.

2. Ethiopia, equal to three Californias in area, has a population of nearly 25,000,000 people (see Map 500300). The surface of her Northwestern Plateau, where most Ethiopians live, lies between 6,000 and 9,000 feet above sea level. It is a cool, well-watered land, isolated from the rest of Africa by great escarpments, rugged mountains, and hot, barren deserts -- and from the rest of the Christian world by the sometimes hostile lands of Islam. The rugged terrain also imposes a kind of internal isolation, and many of the various peoples that make up the Empire are as remote from each other -- in race, language, culture, and religion -- as they are from the peoples of foreign lands.*

3. Although technically a continuous dissected plateau, the high country of Ethiopia is actually comprised of a large number of individual plateaus. These plateaus vary from tens to hundreds of square miles in extent and are separated from each other

* The measurement of time itself in Ethiopia may provide some insight into the effects of long isolation. When, in the 18th century, Western Christians adopted the Gregorian calendar, Ethiopia retained the 13-month Julian calendar; this calendar contains 12 months with 30 days each and 1 month, Pagume, with 5. The Julian calendar is 7 years and 8 months behind the Gregorian; September 11, 1970, was New Years Day, 1962, in Ethiopia. Although the Ethiopian has accepted the 24-hour day, his days are separated at sunrise and sunset rather than at meridian and midnight; thus, when the Westerner's watch indicates 8:00 a.m., the Ethiopian's is 2:00 o'clock daytime. Similarly, the Ethiopian considers the Westerner's 9:00 p.m. to be 3:00 o'clock at night. Although airports and hotels catering to foreign visitors set their clocks at G.m.t. + 3, the rest of the country adheres to the older system.

- 2 -

SECRET

SECRET

by deep, steep-walled canyons and swiftly flowing streams. They contain excellent crop and grazing lands which support surprisingly dense populations of sedentary farmers and stock raisers, most of whom are Christian. There is little communication between neighboring groups. The rims of two adjacent plateaus may be only a few miles apart but the people on one may live their entire lives without visiting the other. The hot, humid valleys, with their strange vegetation, insects, and animal life, reinforcing an almost unique tradition of religious and social conservatism, tend to keep the plateau dweller at home unless some catastrophe, such as war, famine, or disease, forces him to leave.

4. The low, arid regions of the east and north are occupied by a sparse, mostly Moslem, population of pastoral nomads who move with the seasons to seek pasture for their camels, sheep, and goats. In the grasslands and open forests of the southwest and west, the agrarian, animist Shankella, the only true Negroes* in the Empire, live in a sort of buffer zone between the Christian farmers of the highlands and the Moslem herdsmen of the Sudan.

5. The centuries-long record of Ethiopian independence can be ascribed in a large measure to its almost complete lack of strategic value. It contained no critical terrain, controlled neither straits nor important land routes, and it had no resources that European powers considered worth fighting over. It has been landlocked throughout much of its history, and until it annexed Eritrea after World War II, it had been without a coast-line -- the traditional link with the outside world -- for some 300 years. During the carving up of Africa in the latter half of the 19th century the Western Powers, weighing this lack of strategic value and the remote possibility

* US Government publications and maps generally include Ethiopia as a part of "Black Africa." Actually, with the exceptions noted above, Ethiopians are either Hamites or Semites; both groups would bitterly resent being classified "Black Africans."

SECRET

SECRET

of profit against the forbidding terrain and formidable warriors, generally decided to ignore the area. The Italians, having seized Eritrea, made some early -- and clumsy -- attempts to take over the nation, but prior to their successful invasion in 1935, a series of native Ethiopian dynasties had ruled much of the Northwestern Plateau for some 2,000 years.

6. In the late 19th century, Emperor Menelik II expanded his empire to its present size, less Eritrea, and in defending it, wrote a footnote to history. At Adowa, in 1896, he attacked -- and slaughtered -- an advancing Italian force. This was the only battle of this era in which native Africans defeated a large European military force. With the federation of Eritrea in 1952, Ethiopia acquired over 500 miles of coastline and a new strategic significance. She became a maritime power and the only Christian country with a frontage on the Red Sea. In the port of Aseb she acquired a base from which it would be relatively easy to monitor -- or to block -- shipping passing through Bab el Mandeb, the narrow strait between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

7. Ethiopians believe their Emperor is descended from Solomon and Sheba. The more sophisticated of them consider this concept a legend, but to the Orthodox clergy and the Orthodox peasant, it is an article of faith and it is the law of the land.* Lineage aside, however, nearly all of Ethiopia's current influence in African and world affairs has been due to the remarkable mind and great energy of Haile Selassie I, who has made a tremendous effort to modernize his country. At the same time he has retained an institution

* Article 2, Chapter I of the Constitution proclaimed by His Imperial Majesty on 4 November 1955 states: "The Imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of Haile Selassie I, descendent of King Sahle Selassie, whose line descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of the Queen of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon of Jerusalem."

SECRET

SECRET

generally considered inimical to modernization -- an absolute monarch. Despite these efforts he has never been able to control all of the isolated segments of his realm all of the time. Haile Selassie's control of people on the perimeter has been especially tenuous, and many Eritreans, who were made part of the Empire without being consulted less than 2 decades ago, prefer independence. Significant numbers of the Somalis, the Afars, the Gallas, and others of the non-Christian, non-Amhara/Tigrai majority are restive. Although a residual loyalty to Haile Selassie -- the man and the Emperor -- is a stabilizing factor in the country today, this loyalty is evidently eroding. The Emperor is now 78 years old, and it is questionable that his heir apparent -- or any other potential successor -- can maintain the coalition of essentially incompatible peoples making up the Empire.

8. This brief is intended to examine the basic elements of Ethiopia's physical and cultural environment, how they have affected her past, and the possibilities they provide and limitations they impose upon her future.

The Physical Scene

Landforms and Drainage (Maps 500291 and 500301)

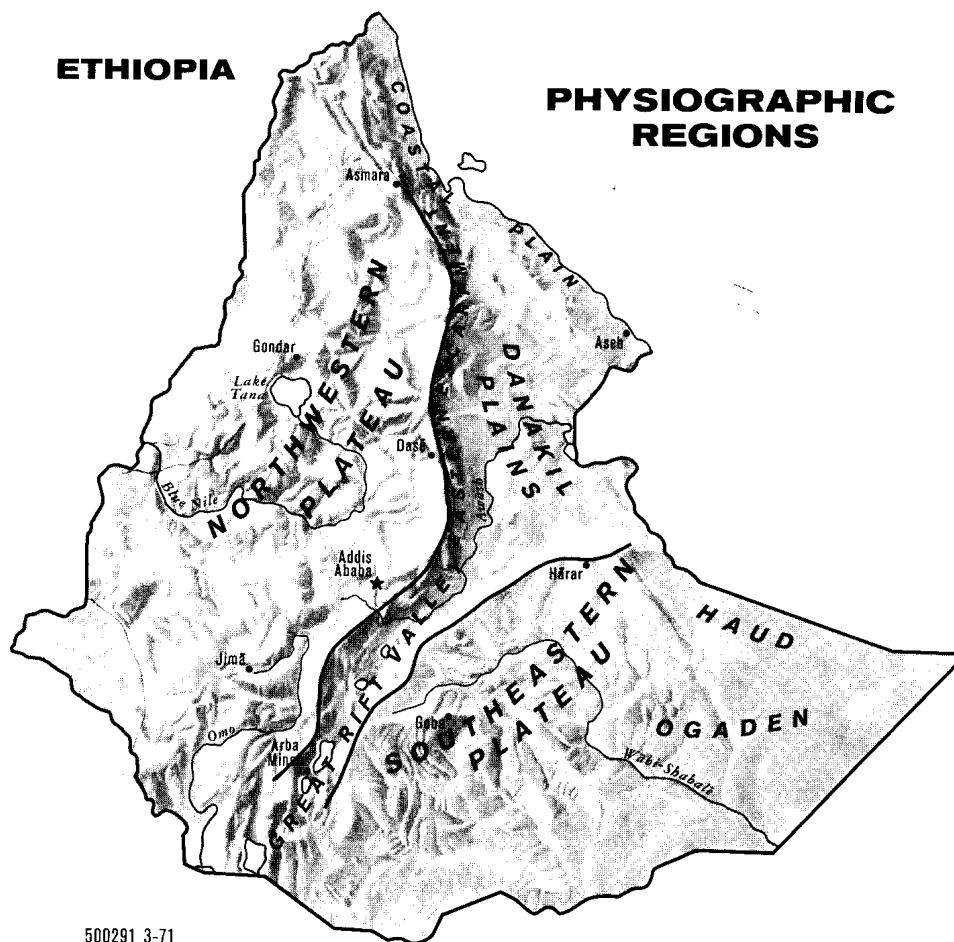
9. A general appreciation of the Ethiopian landscape can be achieved by viewing it as being comprised of two great, slightly tilted plateaus of unequal size, separated by the deep, funnel-shaped Rift Valley. Most of the surface of the larger, Northwestern Plateau, is between 6,000 and 9,000 feet above sea level. Generally highest close to its eastern margins, it slopes gradually to the west where it merges with the low hills and rolling plains of the Sudan. The pattern of the smaller Southeastern Plateau is similar but reversed, with the highest elevations appearing in the northwest and the lowest in the south and southeast. The floor of the Rift Valley is from 2,000 to 5,000 feet lower than the surfaces of the

- 5 -

SECRET

SECRET

adjacent plateaus. It slopes upward from sea level in the northeast to about 6,000 feet in the Lake Zeway area and drops to about 2,000 feet near the Kenya border.



10. The Northwestern Plateau rises abruptly from the Plains of Danakil and the Rift Valley to form a tremendous barrier of rugged hills and cliffs extending from northern Eritrea to the Kenya border. Between latitudes 10° and 15° N this "eastern escarpment" is one of the most spectacular terrain features in Africa. Resembling an almost vertical wall, it reaches elevations that are in many places as much as 5,000 feet above the adjacent

- 6 -

SECRET

SECRET

plains. The escarpment is a true frontier. In addition to forming a great terrain barrier, it is the divide between a lush grassland and a barren desert, a cool land and a hot land, settled farmer and wandering herdsman, Semite and Hamite, Christian, and Moslem.

11. Most of the plateau surface is flat or gently rolling, covered with cropland and pasture, and dotted with small clusters of thatched-roofed, mud-and-wattle houses. Each cluster consists of three or four buildings, and each is marked by a stand of a dozen or more eucalyptus, the fast-growing Australian import that provides both fuel and building material in the fuel-short grasslands. Although rural, the population density is high, and it is possible to travel for a hundred miles without losing sight of people or a house, a herd, or some other evidence of a human presence.



Figure 1. Gorge cut by tributary of Blue Nile near Debre Libanos. Plateau in distance is only a few miles away from point where photo was taken, but most local residents have never been there.

12. The generally level surface of the plateau is cut by many canyons (see Figure 1) and surmounted by a number of hilly and mountainous

- 7 -

SECRET

SECRET

areas; the highest peak, Rasdajan, is more than 15,000 feet high. Lake Tana, generally considered the source of the Blue Nile (Abbai), lies in a depression; its surface, at 6,000 feet, is some 2,500 feet below the level of the surrounding terrain.

13. In the west the plateau surface descends in a series of terraces in some places and in others merges almost imperceptibly with the rolling hills and plains of the Sudan. Although not as abrupt as the eastern escarpment, the hills and terraces of the west also form a frontier, which in the north separates the highland, Christian farmers from the Moslem, desert-dwelling camel herders and in the south the Shankella farmers from the seminomadic pagans.

14. The Northwestern Plateau is deeply dissected, that is, it has been carved by its many streams into a number of smaller, individual plateaus, or mesas, which the Ethiopians call ambas (see Figure 2). Separated from each other by deep, steep-walled canyons, some of these ambas are relatively small, but many are great tablelands, hundreds of square miles in extent. The canyons are structurally similar to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado and some are similar in size. The middle reaches of the Blue Nile, the Takaze, and some of their tributaries flow as much as a mile below the surface of the adjacent plateaus. These canyons tend to isolate segments of the Ethiopian population from each other, and while constituting what a military man might consider to be excellent defensive terrain, they handicap the development of concepts of national unity. The Baro, further south, is not as spectacular as the Blue Nile or the Takaze, but it has the distinction of being, during the May-September, high-water period, the only navigable stream in the country.* Stream

* Until 1964, the Sudan Railways operated some shallow-draft cargo boats along the lower reaches of the Baro between the town of Gambela and the Sudan, but the service was subsequently discontinued because of insufficient traffic.

SECRET

SECRET

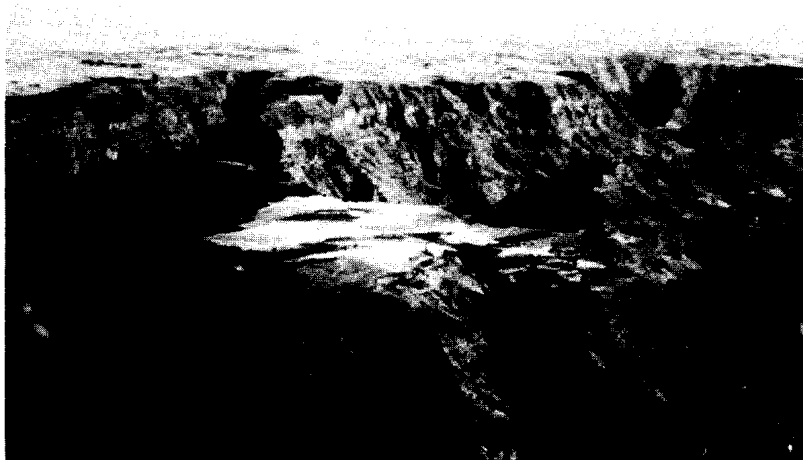


Figure 2. Ambas (mesas) in northern Shawa Province on Northwestern Plateau. Some ambas have played significant roles in Ethiopian history. They have been used, for example, as life long places of exile for those suspected of having aspirations for the throne. Approaches are precipitous, thus limiting access and contributing to amba defense by relatively small groups.



SECRET

SECRET

flow in the entire area is highly seasonal, the upper reaches of many streams drying up during the dry season. At the Sudan border the discharge of the Blue Nile itself varies from between 3,000 and 6,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) during the dry season to more than 25,000 cfs at the end of the summer rains.

15. Only two permanent drainage systems in the Northwestern Plateau are not connected with the Nile. The Omo, which drains a large part of Gamo-Gofa, Kefa, and southern Shawa Provinces, empties into Lake Rudolph. The Awash rises a short distance southwest of Addis Ababa and flows eastward to the Rift Valley and the Danakil Plains. North of the Takaze intermittent streams flow towards the west where they disappear in the sandy plains of the Sudan.

16. The escarpments of the Southeastern Plateau form the eastern wall of the Rift Valley and, curving to the east, they mark the southern border of the Plains of Danakil. In the lakes area they resemble the parallel escarpments of the Northwestern Plateau, in some places rising steeply to elevations several thousands of feet above the valley floor. Where they face the Danakil, the difference in elevation is generally not as great but in many places it is equally abrupt.

17. Except for the Mendebo Mountain complex, most of the rugged terrain on the Southeastern Plateau is associated with the escarpment in a band rarely more than a few tens of miles wide. There are a few deep stream valleys, but none approach the spectacular proportions of those that produced the singular amba topography of the Northwestern Plateau.

18. The eastern and southern slopes of these highlands are relatively gentle, merging almost imperceptibly with the rolling plains of central Bale and Harar Provinces. Patterns of living at the higher elevations resemble those of the corresponding areas of the Northwestern Plateau. In the lower, drier lands to the southeast, however, seminomadic Galla cattlemen graze their herds in

SECRET

much of Bale and Sidamo Provinces, and Somali nomads, with their camels, goats, and sheep, dominate the sparsely populated lands of the Ogaden and Haud areas of eastern Harar.

19. All permanent streams on the Southeastern Plateau flow towards the Indian Ocean, which most of them do not reach. The largest, the Ganale-Dorya, boosted by two perennial tributaries, the Uebi Gestro and the Dawa, is the only stream in the Southeastern Plateau that carries enough water to reach the sea throughout the year. The longest river in the Southeastern Plateau, the Wabi Shabale is an impressive stream in its upper and midreaches during the late summer rainy season, but in all seasons it shrinks as it flows through the dry lands of the plateau. As the Wabi Shabale crosses the border it is still a perennial stream, but from February to April, it peters out in a line of swamps. During the rest of the year, it flows into the Uebi Giuba (Somalia reach of the Ganale-Dorya) and the Indian Ocean. East of the Wabi Shabale there are no permanent streams, the generally dry wadis carrying water for only a few hours, or possibly a few days, after one of the infrequent rains.

20. the Ethiopian portion of the Great Rift Valley resembles a funnel, with the lakes region, lying between parallel escarpments, forming the tube; the Danakil Plains, the cone; and the coast of the Red Sea, the rim. The tube of this funnel, varies from less than 20 to about 50 miles in width. In sharp contrast to the mountains on either side the valley floor is generally flat. Its elevation varies from less than 3,000 feet at either end to about 6,000 feet just north of Lake Zeway. The surface of Lake Zeway, highest of the Rift Valley lakes, is about 5,300 feet above sea level.

25X1

21. The term "Danakil", as used by Ethiopians, refers to the cone-shaped area bounded by the escarpments of the Northwestern and Southeastern Plateaus and the coast of the Red Sea. Most of its surface is flat or gently rolling, descending gradually north and east from elevations of some 5,000 feet at the bases of the escarpments to sea

- 11 -

SECRET

SECRET

level. There are some striking anomalies, however. The Danakil Depression, more than 100 miles long and nearly 40 miles wide, at its lowest point is almost 400 feet below sea level; and between the Danakil Depression and the Red Sea, the rugged, volcanic, Danakil Alps reach elevations of 4,000 to 6,000 feet. The barren surface of the Danakil is composed of a variety of silts, sands, gravels, and bare rock. There are many hot springs and fumaroles in both the Alps and the Depression, as well as a number of volcanoes. Afrera had a notable eruption in 1907, and Ertale, at the western rim of the Depression, was active in the 1920s.

22. The sandy shores of the Red Sea are backed by a narrow line of dunes and a generally flat coastal plain that is 5 to 15 miles wide. A discontinuous coral reef parallels the coast, and many barren, waterless, offshore islands, especially in the vicinities of Massawa and Aseb, lie within Ethiopian territorial waters.

23. Both the Rift Valley and the Danakil are regions of interior drainage but the relatively abundant summer rainfall in the high country provides enough fresh water to keep the higher lakes in the Rift from becoming salty. The Awash, the only major river in the region, rises west of Addis Ababa, pours through a breach in the Eastern Escarpment, and then meanders some 300 miles to Lake Abe, last of a chain of salt lakes on the border of The French Territory of The Afars and Issas. Although partially controlled by dams and canals upstream, the seasonal flow of the Awash through the Danakil Plains varies tremendously. In the spring it may be a few feet deep and less than 50 feet wide, while at the end of the summer rains, channel depths may be measured in some tens of feet. Overflowing its banks, the river may be as much as 5 miles in width at this time. With the exception of the Awash and its major tributary, the Meli, there are no permanent streams in the Danakil Plain. There are no fresh water lakes, and all the brackish lakes and swamps increase in area during the summer and early fall, and decrease -- many drying up completely -- during the winter and spring.

- 12 -

SECRET

SECRET

24. The people in the Rift Valley are settled agriculturalists, much like those of the North-western Plateau. Chiefly they are Amharas, Gallas and, in the south, Sidamos. In the Danakil, however, what might be called the "human landscape" is almost as inhospitable as its physical counterpart. The Danakil people, who call themselves Afars, are nomads. They eke out a bare subsistence from their barren land, and they so distrust and dislike strangers that their territory has never been fully explored.

Climate and Vegetation
(Maps 500292 and 500293)

25. The tropical location and great range of elevations (from 380 feet below sea level to more than 15,000 feet above) combine to divide Ethiopia into three separate zones, which may be roughly delimited as follows: (a) the Quolla (hot) occurs at elevations that are below 5,000-6,000 feet; (b) the Woina Dega (temperate) occupies elevations ranging from 5,000-8,500 feet; and (c) the Dega (cool) is situated at elevations greater than 8,000-8,500 feet. A highly generalized approximation of the three zones is shown on Map 500292. It should be appreciated that in the transition zones, what may be Quolla for one is Woina Dega for another.

Quolla (below 5,000-6,000 feet)

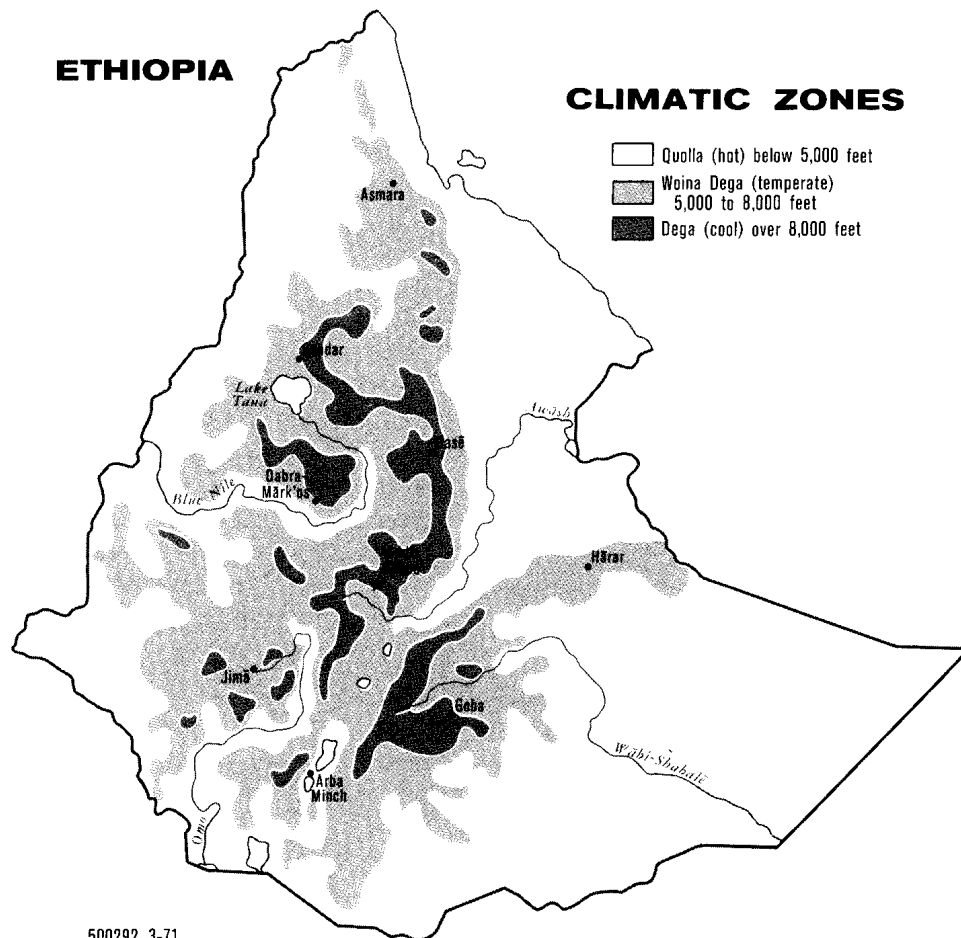
26. The Quolla zone includes all of the country's lowlands and nearly all of its perimeter as follows: the Red Sea coast of Eritrea; the Plains of Danakil; the areas of Harar, Bale, and Sidamo Provinces; and the lowlands bordering the Sudan. The only border areas too cool to be classified as Quolla lie in the northernmost part of Eritrea and in Kefa Province in the southwest.

27. The entire zone is hot, but some parts of it are hotter than others. The range of elevations alone accounts for a difference of 15 to 18° F. This, and a rainfall pattern that varies from less than 5 inches on the coast of the Red Sea to nearly 50 inches per year along the Sudan border, permits considerable variation in the

SECRET

SECRET

vegetation, fauna, and living habits of the various peoples that inhabit the zone.



28. The Red Sea coast, the nearby Danakil, and the lower Awash Valley are always hot, nearly always rainless, frequently humid, and according to climatologists, experience summers that are among the most miserable on earth. Along the coast the temperature on a typical summer day reaches over 100 degrees F., falling off to the mid-80's at night. At Massawa, the mean daily minimum temperature in July is 88 degrees F. In winter, highs are generally in the high 80's; lows in the low 70's. From May through September a hot, damp sea breeze in the afternoons actually increases the heat stress by raising the wet bulb

- 14 -

SECRET

SECRET

temperatures to over 90° F.* This phenomenon interferes with the normal cooling of the body by evaporation of perspiration and thus imposes a continuing danger of heat stroke.

29. In the Quolla zone of Harar and Bale Provinces, temperatures are somewhat less extreme, with daily highs running in the mid-90's and lows in the low 70's or even the 60's throughout the year.

30. Rainfall patterns are variable. Massawa receives more than half of its annual total of 7 inches during December and January; Hadel Gubo, in the middle of the Danakil, with a similar annual total, receives its heaviest rains in August; and in the Ogaden there appears to be what climatologists call a "double rainfall maximum" with the rainy periods, occurring usually in April and October, being separated by long dry periods in which there are merely traces of precipitation or no rain at all. As in all dry areas, the term "rainy season" must be used with caution, as it is essentially statistical; it may or may not occur, and if it does, the season's entire rain may fall during a 2-hour period in an otherwise rainless month.

31. Much of the Red Sea coast (see Figure 3) and the lower-lying lands of the Danakil and eastern Ogaden (see Figure 4) are nearly barren of natural vegetation, with only scattered tufts of bunch grass and spiny shrubs interrupting the monotonous conglomeration of sands, clays, gravels, and bare rock that make up the surface. In the generally dry streambeds and at the higher elevations, approaching the zone of transition between the Quolla and the Woina Dega, there are acacias, an increasing variety of thorn bushes, and bunches of grass more closely spaced than in the lowlands. Euphorbias, including the striking candelabra plant and the "false banana" (Musa Ensete), begin to appear at

* The lowest temperature which can be attained by evaporation of water into the air.

SECRET



Figure 3. Beach north of Aseb on Red Sea. Vegetation is typical of coastal plain.

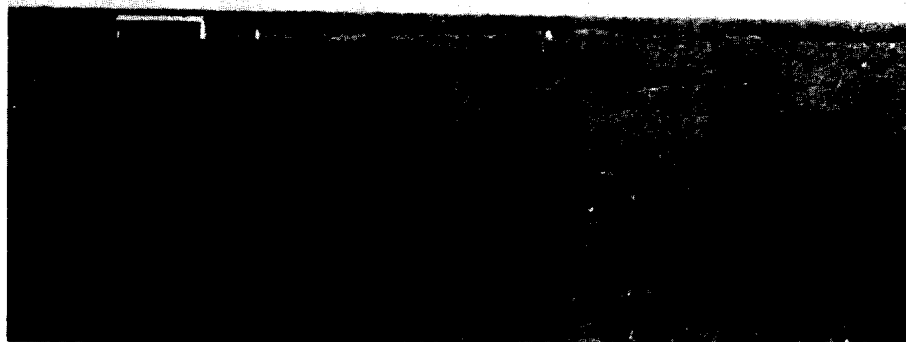


Figure 4. Flat plain, spiny shrubs, and bare ground typical of the Quolla zone in the eastern Ogaden. Near village of Uardere.

SECRET

SECRET

elevations of about 4,000 feet. When it rains the vegetation turns green, blossoms, and grows vigorously, but in most of the eastern Quolla, and especially in the Danakil, rain is a rarity, and such vegetation as is present is dormant for most of the year.

32. The swampy areas of the Danakil expand tremendously during the summer when rains in the highlands cause the Awash and lesser streams to overflow their banks. Here a swamp grass, known locally as bosoka develops new shoots at the beginning of the rainy season and grows rapidly, always keeping its top above the water level.

33. Towards the west, the Quolla loses its desert and steppe characteristics; rainfall increases, and the zone gradually assumes the rainy summer -- dry winter pattern that prevails over most of the country. Along the Sudanese border the annual rainfall varies from 20 inches to about 50 inches, with about 80 percent of the total falling during the months April through September. During the "winter" dry season, maximum temperatures are generally in the high 90's; in the summer, when the abundant cloud cover negates the effects of the overhead sun, they are in the high 80's. Lows are in the high 60's throughout the year. Much of this area is grassland or open forest, dominated by a variety of acacias and including the trees that exude the resins used in the production of the ancient scents, frankincense, and myrrh. Nearly pure stands of lowland bamboo, 20 to 25 feet high, cover many hundreds of square miles of the land between 2,500 and 4,000 feet elevation in north-western Walaga and western Gojam. In the wetter areas of southern Walaga and Ilubabor stands of true forest begin to appear near the midelevations of the zone with the trees increasing in size with increasing elevation. Of the variety of trees growing in these areas, those most frequently mentioned by Ethiopian writers are the zigba (podocarpus pine) and tehd (a juniper). A great variety of shrubs and bushes grow on the forest floors and on the higher grasslands, and there are stands of wild coffee at the higher altitudes.

- 17 -

SECRET

SECRET

Woina-Dega (5,000-8,000 feet)

34. Despite a north-south extent of some 800 miles, the Woina Dega climate is remarkably uniform -- always cool and generally pleasant, except during the rainy season, when it varies between cool and damp and cool and very wet. The weather pattern at Addis Ababa is typical, although that city is somewhat cooler as a result of its situation (at an elevation of about 8,000 feet) near the upper limits of the zone. In January the mean daily high temperature is 76° F. and the low is 43° F. The average rainfall for the month is about 0.5 inch, and a typical January day is much like an exceptionally bright October day in Washington, D.C. In both July and August, however, Addis Ababa receives over 11 inches of rain, and the skies are always cloudy (between 80 and 90 percent of the time) or "partly cloudy". The daily temperature ranges between 69° and 50°, with a mean -- as in January -- of 59°. The low range (19°) is due to the clouds which block out the sunshine during the day and prevent radiation cooling at night.

35. Much of the western Woina Dega is warmer and wetter than Addis Ababa with some areas receiving as much as 80 inches of rainfall per year. As a rule, rainfall increases with increasing elevation up to about 7,000 feet, above which it begins to decline.

36. The Woina Dega lying to the east of the Rift Valley also experiences rainy summers and dry winters, but the total rainfall at corresponding altitudes is somewhat less and the intensity and duration of the rainy season decreases towards the east. However, for the entire Woina Dega, the Ethiopian travel brochures that advertise "Thirteen Months of Sunshine," must be used with caution.

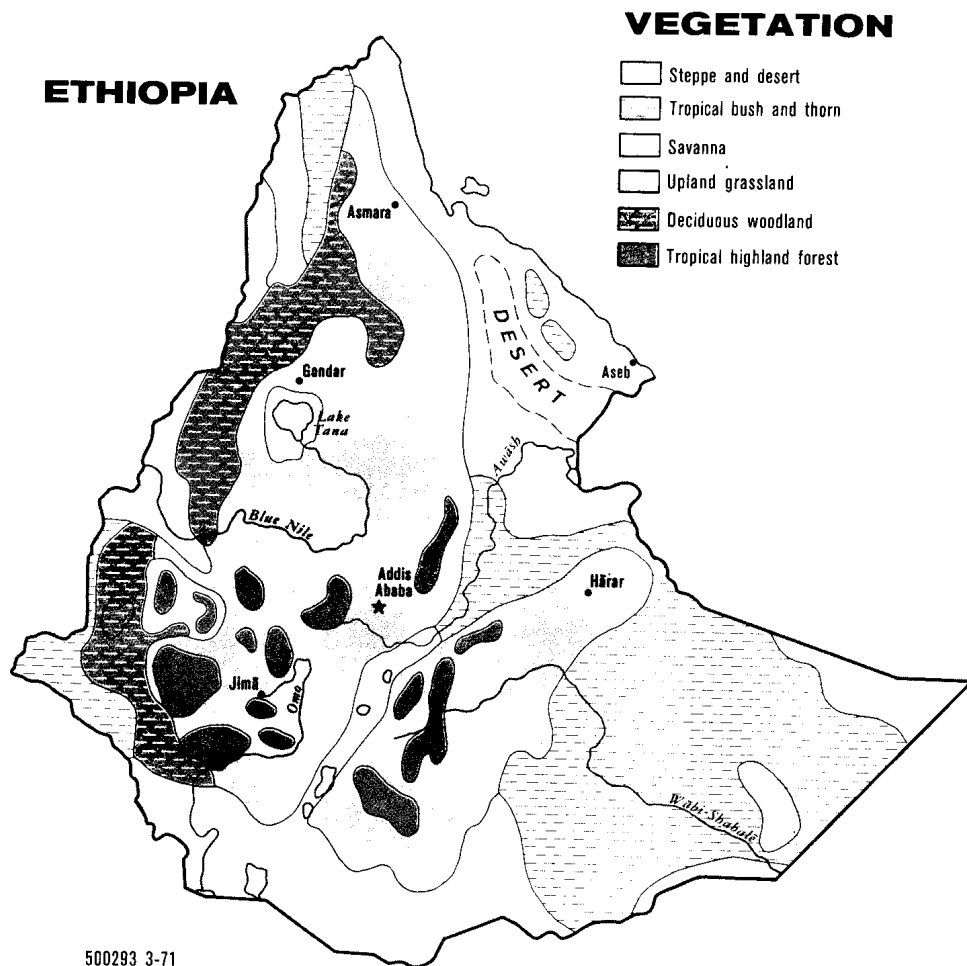
37. The original vegetation of the rolling plateau surfaces in the Woina Dega included both forests and prairies, but at present, after centuries of human occupance, most of the forest has disappeared, and vast expanses of grass and cropland are interrupted only by the small stands

- 18 -

SECRET

SECRET

of eucalyptus planted around nearly every village. Acacia forests, generally open but sometimes having considerable undergrowth, cover much of the drier areas and are especially common in the zone of transition between the Quolla and Woina Dega (see Figures 5 and 6). There are large stands of bamboo in many parts of the Woina Dega, and Arabica coffee grows wild as well as on plantations. Of the some millions of acres of forest lands that remain, especially in Kefa, Ilubabor, and Walaga, most are located on land that is too steep for cultivation or so remote from transportation routes that only small parts have been exploited commercially. Scientists have identified more than one hundred species of timber trees, some of which grow to tremendous size. In this zone the zigbah and tedh may reach heights of nearly 200 feet and the kararo, a broadleaf evergreen, may be 150 feet tall with a trunk diameter of more than 12 feet.



SECRET

SECRET



Figures 5 and 6. Types of acacia forest in the Rift Valley. Located within a few miles of each other, at elevations between 5,500 and 6,000 feet, both are representative of the vegetation in the Quolla-Woina Dega transition zone. Undergrowth is principally grass and thornbush. Photos were taken at the end of the rainy season when the grass would normally be about 2 feet tall. These areas have been overgrazed by cattle and goats.



- 20 -

SECRET



Figures 7 and 8. Environmental contrasts. Figure 7 (top) shows three small households in the grasslands of the Dega. At an elevation of 9,000 feet, each household is marked by clusters of eucalyptus. Pyramidal object in right center is a frame for a new roof under construction. Figure 8 (bottom) is less than a mile away. At an elevation of 6,500 feet, however, it shows an abundance of Woina Dega vegetation, including the musa ensete (false banana) on the left. A portion of the plateau escarpment can be seen at the upper left.



SECRET

Dega (over 8,000 feet)

38. Africa specialists generally believe that all areas of Ethiopia that are higher and cooler than the capital should be placed in the Dega zone. There are a number of large, discontinuous Dega areas, the largest of which covers the eastern part of the Northwestern Plateau in a broad, irregular band extending from the Asmara area southward to the latitude of Addis Ababa. Another such area occupies much of the Southeastern Plateau immediately south-east of the Rift Valley lakes.

39. Temperatures are lower and there is somewhat less rainfall than in the adjacent areas of Woina Dega, but the seasonal patterns are the same. Maximum temperatures range from the mid-60's to the mid-70's and minimums from the mid-30's to the mid-40's. There is a possibility of frost at the higher elevations at any time during the year. Snow has been observed on many peaks over 10,000 feet, but it usually disappears quickly.

40. The vegetation in the lower elevations of the Dega is similar to that of the Woina Dega but it changes rapidly as the altitude increases (see Figures 7 and 8). The proportion of natural grassland becomes greater, and although there are still some notable forest areas, trees are more widely spaced, in many places giving the terrain a parklike appearance. The zigba and tedh grow at elevations of up to 11,000 feet, but they do not grow as tall as they do at the lower altitudes. Woirra a species of wild olive, is found throughout the zone up to about 11,000 feet. The dominant tree in these forests is the Kosso a broadleaf evergreen, that reaches heights of about 70 feet. In much of the area, especially in the north, many of these timber trees have been logged off and only remnants of the earlier forests remain. In the wetter areas, especially in the southwest a highland species of bamboo reaches heights of 50 feet and grows in great clumps from the lower margins of the zone to altitudes of over 11,000 feet. Between 11,000 and 12,000 feet these species disappear or, when they persist to higher altitudes, appear in some dwarfed or stunted form. At higher altitudes the vegetation is similar to that found

SECRET

SECRET

in the cooler parts of the temperate zone; it includes mountain grasses, veronica, and a variety of heaths.

The People

(Maps 500294 and 500295)

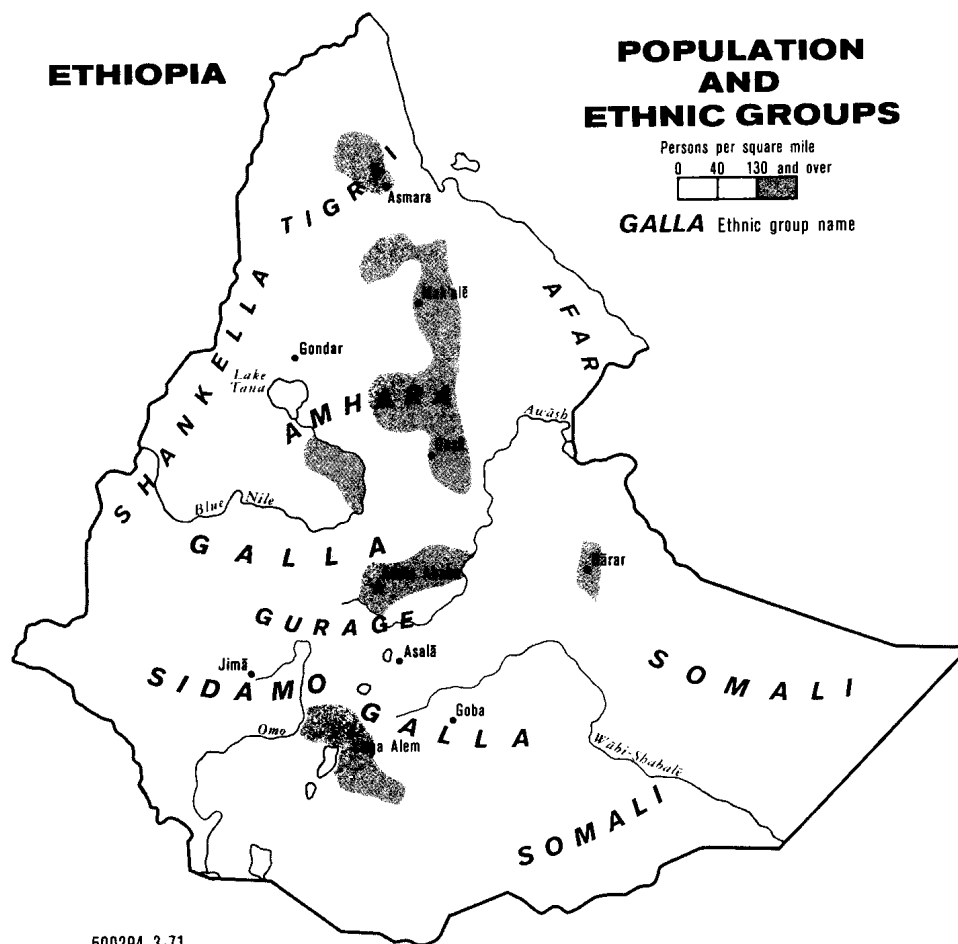
41. No one really knows how many people live in Ethiopia. The United Nations figure for July 1969 was 24,298,000 but there has never been a national census, and the mathematical techniques used to extrapolate from a census taken in some of the central provinces are suspect, even by the mathematicians. Mesfin Wolde Mariam, one of Ethiopia's leading scholars, estimates the population to be much greater -- somewhat over 30 million. There is some feeling that the estimates may have been inflated or deflated as a result of provincial or national pride and opposing points of view. Some are also of the opinion that the figures may have been expanded in order to realize the possibilities of increased weight in world councils, increased foreign aid (based on population), and a natural pride in sheer size. Others think that lower figures may have been recorded to make the embarrassingly low ratio of doctors (one doctor per 60,000 people) and social services appear more favorable. The possibility of some juggling of figures by local officials, tax collectors, and other community or institutional leaders adds to the uncertainty.

42. Nearly all Ethiopians are Semitic, Hamitic, Negroid, or some combination thereof. Some authorities prefer the term Cushite to Hamite, but since Cush was the son of Ham (who was the son of Noah), the difference is academic. Despite the seeming simplicity of this threefold grouping, there are so many subgroups speaking such a variety of languages that some scholars refer to Ethiopia as an "ethnic museum." There are

SECRET

SECRET

literally hundreds of tribes -- many extremely small -- and some 70 languages and over 200 dialects are spoken. Each tribe has its own customs, manners, and way of life, most of which are similar to those of its neighbors, but with a few that are peculiar to itself.



43. The great majority of Ethiopians live in the densely populated farming-grazing lands of the Woina Dega. In the drier, hotter

- 24 -

SECRET

SECRET

lands of the eastern Quolla, the population is sparse and largely nomadic. Population density in the warm, moist Quolla in the west generally falls somewhere between the extremes of the other zones.

44. There are few cities: Addis Ababa has a population of more than 600,000 and Asmara about 200,000; Diredawa, third largest, has fewer than 60,000 people, however, and most other administrative and commercial centers have considerably less. Massawa, the major port, has a population of less than 30,000.

45. Amharic, the official language, is probably understood by less than 50 percent of the population. It is the language of instruction at the primary levels in the new (post-World War II) public school system; English is the language of the secondary schools and the university. The literacy rate in all languages is estimated to be between 5 and 10 percent. Practically no one in the rural areas is literate and most of the languages have no written form.

46. The major ethnic groups, accounting for about 90 percent of the total population are: the Gallas (see Figure 9); the Sidamos; the Somalis (see Figure 10); the Amharas (see Figure 11) and Tigras; the Shankellas; and the Danakil (Afars).

47. The Amharas and Tigras occupy what may be considered Ethiopia's heartland -- the northern half of the Northwestern Plateau. Within this highland region the Tigras are most numerous in the north -- especially in Tegre Province -- and the Amharas in the south and west. Together they make up an estimated 32 percent of the country's population. Physically, they are indistinguishable, both being of medium height and medium build, with skin colors varying from olive to nearly black. Their hair is black, generally curly, and sometimes kinky. Most have long, high bridged noses, thin lips, and small ears. Ethnically and linguistically they are classified as Semites. They look down on their Hamitic and Negroid countrymen, whom they consider inferior, and they would not wish to be

- 25 -

SECRET

SECRET



Figure 9. Galla boy.



Figure 10. Somali girl.



Figure 11. Amhara plowman and friends. In the lower Dega of northwest Shawa Province. Although the terrain is well suited to modern farming techniques, the old ways prevail.

SECRET

SECRET

mistaken for members of what they call the "red" (white) race. The Amharas speak Amharic, the official language of the country; the Tigras speak Tigrinya as a basic language but many also speak Amharic. Both Amharas and Tigras belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and both are intensely proud of their ancient civilization, which predates Christianity by many centuries. Both share the attitude that manual labor, especially if it is not related to farming or stock raising, is to be reserved for the inferior races. They dislike each other. The Amharas consider the Tigras a backward, mountain people, and the Tigras feel that the Amharas have lost much of their racial purity as a result of intermarriage with the Gallas. Together they form the slightly uneasy alliance that rules the country.

48. The Gallas, who make up about 40 percent of the population, are the most numerous and most widespread of the Ethiopian peoples. Speaking a number of dialects of their basic language, Gallinya, they are found in considerable numbers in all the provinces except Tegré and Eritrea. Of medium height, somewhat heavier and darker than the Amharas and Tigras, they apparently moved into Ethiopia some time in the 16th century. They are Hamites, and about 10 percent of them are Christian, 40 percent Moslem, and 50 percent animist. Most of the Christians live in Shawa and Walaga Provinces, and so many of these have intermarried with the Amharas that they are indistinguishable from them. Many have achieved high places in the government, and the late Empress Menen was of Galla descent. Although originally nomadic pastoralists, the Galla, except for those of Arusi and Sidamo Provinces, have adopted a settled, agricultural way of life. Neither Galla Moslems nor Galla Animists are quite contented, however. Although they appear to have some regard for the Emperor, intervening echelons of often corrupt government officials have made insurgency endemic in many of the Galla areas. In 1935 the Gallas in Wallo Province supported the Italian invasion, and since World War II there have been uprisings by Gallas in Wallo, Gojam, and Arusi. Some Amharas refer, probably hopefully, to the settled Gallas along the eastern escarpment as forming a "buffer" between themselves and the desert tribes of the Danakil.

SECRET

SECRET

49. The Sidamo peoples of Kefa and Gamo-Gofa Provinces of southwestern Ethiopia represent about 9 percent of the country's population. They are Hamites, like the neighboring Gallas, but they are shorter and darker and are described by anthropologist Carleton Coon as the darkest of the non-Negro peoples of Ethiopia. They are divided into seven major groups, each speaking a dialect of the basic Sidamo language. They are known to have been a settled agricultural people with a highly developed social structure as early as the 14th century. They have been subjected to many pressures from other societies, including both Amharas and Gallas, throughout their history. As the situation required, they changed from their pagan beliefs to Islam, then to Christianity, and when the occasion permitted, back to paganism. Not much is written about their present attitudes, and they do not appear to play an important part in modern Ethiopian society.

50. An estimated one million Somalis live in Ethiopia, nearly all in southern and eastern Harar and southern Bale. They are a tall, thin people with chocolate brown skin and faces that are so narrow, according to anthropologists, that they "approximate a world extreme." Racially and linguistically they are Hamites, nearly all speaking the unwritten Somali language and being racially identical with the inhabitants of adjacent Somalia. Most are Moslem, although some still cling to animist beliefs.

51. Although less numerous than the Sidamos, and probably no more numerous than the Shankellas, the Somalis cause more trouble for Addis Ababa than do the other two groups together. They are nomads, and for centuries they have moved with the seasons, ignoring artificial, foreigner-imposed international boundaries, seeking pasture for their camels, sheep, and goats. In unusually dry years they move uphill -- into the greener lands of the sedentary Gallas -- and inevitably, this has caused a number of fights. When the Somalis lost in such a venture, they were driven back to their dry lands where they then fought with each other over drying waterholes until the arrival of the rains. If they won, however, they would loot,

- 28 -

SECRET

SECRET

pillage, and feed their herds on the Gallas' crops, returning to their homelands as soon as the first word of rain there was received. In recent years attempts by Ethiopian authorities to collect the gibir -- a head tax on the livestock of the nomad Somalis -- resulted in armed clashes, and the efforts were abandoned. The government considers this suspension temporary, but the Somalis interpret it to be a permanent revocation of the tax. It is almost inevitable that any future attempt to collect such a tax will result in more fighting. Although the great majority of Somalis adhere to the traditional ways, some have become farmers and others have become urbanized to the extent that they work as merchants, craftsmen, or laborers in the towns. A few thousand live in the city of Harar and a similar number in Diredawa. They display a marked and highly vocal hostility toward strangers.

52. Shankella is a general term applied to all the Negroid peoples who live in the lowlands along the Sudanese border. Their numbers are uncertain, with estimates varying between 500,000 and 1,000,000. They belong to a number of tribes, and they speak a number of mutually unintelligible languages. The languages have one thing in common, however: all are Nilotic and thus related to the languages of the Sudan rather than to those of the rest of Ethiopia. Most Shankella are settled farmers, although there are a number of seminomadic groups in the south. Nearly all are animist, although there are some Moslems and a few Christians. It is doubtful if many of them know they are also Ethiopians.

53. The Danakil occupy the low lands north of the Ahmar Mountains between the Eastern Escarpment and the Red Sea, an area generally called "The Danakil." They refer to themselves and to their language as "Afar." Racially they are identical with the Somalis, whose nomadic propensity for ignoring political boundaries they share. Estimates of the number of Danakil vary from less than 100,000 to more than 300,000. Since they inhabit the hottest, driest, most desolate area in the country, the lesser estimate is considered to be the more accurate. Nearly all Danakil are Moslem. Like the Somalis, they have a loose organization of

- 29 -

SECRET

SECRET

extended families, tribes, and clans, but details concerning the structure of their society are not well known. Their dislike of outlanders and their reputation for fierceness are such that even the Ethiopian tax collectors are reluctant to enter the area of the Danakil.



54. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the official church of the Empire. An ancient faith, believed by its adherents to be the only true Christian church, its clergy is notable for massive conservatism and the lack of modern education. The church owns a significant proportion of the country's real estate, and it receives financial support from

- 30 -

SECRET

SECRET

the government. The Ethiopian peasant considers the church and the state to be one and the same. It is not universal, however, and its members number only about one-third of the population (Amharas, Tigras, and some Gallas). Somewhat more than one-third, possibly more than 40 percent, are members of various Moslem sects, and a great majority of the remainder are animists. About 5 percent are vaguely classified as "other". Distribution of the various faiths is shown on Map 500295. Although there are important exceptions, Christians generally predominate in the densely populated, settled agricultural highlands; Islam is nearly coextensive with the sparsely populated arid regions, where pastoral nomadism is the way of life; and the animists, some of them settled farmers, some seminomads, predominate in the mixed savanna-forest complex of the southwest.

Economy
(Map 500296)

55. Ethiopia's economy is primitive and a vast majority of its people live at or near the subsistence level. Economists, using admittedly fragmentary data, estimate annual gross national product per capita to be less than \$70.00, one of the lowest in the world. Agricultural production in the past decade is reported to have increased absolutely by 43 percent over a 1957-59 base, but preliminary figures indicate that the concurrent growth of population has reduced this increase on a per capita basis, to about 7 percent.

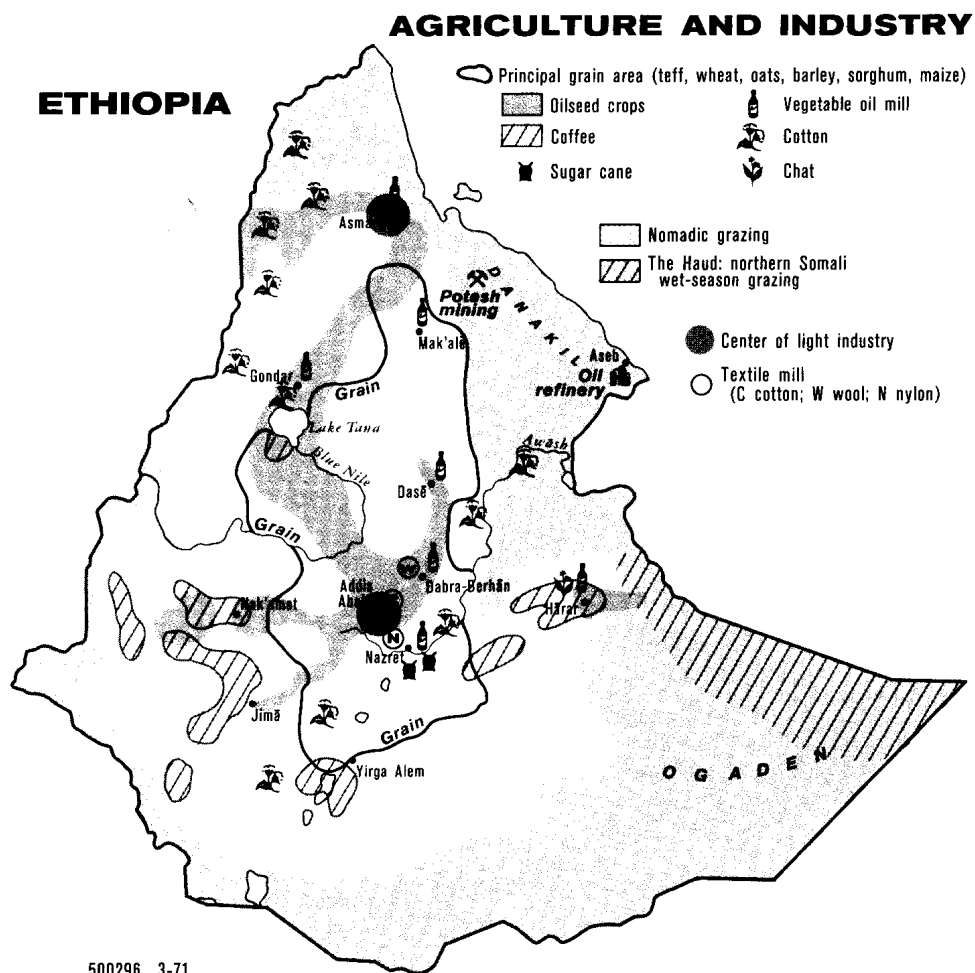
Agriculture

56. More than 90 percent of the people derive their livelihood from the land. Although most Ethiopians live close to a subsistence level, their standard of living provides more than a "bare" subsistence. Operating almost completely outside the cash economy, for example, the Ethiopian peasant is nonetheless generally well fed and famines are rare. While the general use of ox-drawn

SECRET

SECRET

plows (see Figure 11), hoes, and digging sticks makes "deep plowing" difficult, and thus does not lead to high yields, it does assure moderate yields on the same patch of ground for many successive seasons. The farmer is aware of a need for some crop rotation -- and practices it -- but he does not use fertilizers. Dung is generally available, but it is used as a fuel or a building material.



57. The principal food crop is teff, a highly nutritious grain native to Ethiopia. Other grain crops (see Figure 12) include

SECRET

barley, wheat, oats, sorghum, and maize, which may be rotated with a variety of pulses, chiefly peas, chickpeas, and lentils. Most of the food crops are grown in the temperate lands of the Woina Dega, although significant cultivation of teff, wheat, oats, and other cool weather crops extends far into the Dega, and maize and sorghums are cultivated in the Quolla. In southwestern Shawa Province the Gurages, an ethnic group classified by various authorities as Amhara, Tigre, or Sidamo, have an economy centered on a single tree, the Musa Ensete, or false banana. Its bananalike fruit is worthless, but the trunk, leafstalks, and roots produce an edible starch, the Gurages' principal staple, and its fiber is used for making bags and cordage. At the lower elevations in the Ogaden, and in the Danakil, the food supply is somewhat less reliable. The nomads and seminomads subsist chiefly on milk and cheese, grains, and fruits. Date palms and orange and lemon trees are grown at the various oases. In a number of areas, especially in the southwestern Danakil and in the Rift Valley, the people have traditionally fed their herds on the grasses and, as the summer floods subsided, planted a variety of cereals and pulses along the edge of the receding water. As in most such areas the vegetation responds quickly to the first rains; the land turns green almost overnight, and the herdsment drive their animals to the new grass. In bad years, when the rains are late or inadequate, they drive their flocks and herds uphill into the lands of the sedentary farmers, an action that frequently produces some strife.

58. Coffee, the big cash crop, accounts for about 60 percent of Ethiopia's foreign exchange earnings. Only a small amount is grown on plantations, the major proportion being picked from wild coffee trees in Kefa, Sidamo, and Walaga Provinces and in the region of the Ahmar Mountains in Harar. Much coffee is left unharvested because adequate transportation is not available to move it economically to market. Management is generally haphazard, and quality control is

- 33 -

SECRET

SECRET

a vague and distant concept. Some progress has been made in recent years, however: roads are being built, and Ethiopia has become a member of the International Coffee Organization. For the coffee season ending 30 September 1970, Ethiopia was authorized to export 2.7 percent (about 82,000 tons) of the global quota.

59. Chat (*catha edulis*) (see Figure 13), a mild, habit forming narcotic, grows wild in much of the Woina Dega and is raised commercially in the area between the settlements of Diredawa and Harar. It is chewed by a large proportion of the local population, especially the Moslems. (Unlike alcohol, it is not forbidden by the Koran.) It combats the sensation of hunger; produces a mild exhilaration; and enables the chewer to work long hours with little sensation of fatigue. When workers help each other with the crops, chat is provided by the field's owner, and it is served at social gatherings. A true addict is said to require several chews in the morning before he will work, greet friends, or even speak to his wife. Unlike tobacco, the leaf is chewed fresh and a large percentage of the export crop, sold chiefly in southern Arabia, is carried by air.

60. The export of oilseeds, legumes, and occasionally, some cereals, contribute to the foreign exchange position of Ethiopia. Wheat is grown successfully at elevations from 6,000 to about 10,000 feet, but as production is not great enough to satisfy the local needs, it remains the major grain import. The government has tried to encourage wheat cultivation, since it produces more food value per acre than does teff, but the farmers prefer the taste of teff and are reluctant to change.

61. Livestock, in addition to being a major source of food, provides much of Ethiopia's transport and draft power, and it is valued as a symbol of wealth and social status. Statistics on cattle are unreliable, since the Gallas, the

- 34 -

SECRET

SECRET



Figure 12. Grain field in the Rift Valley at end of rainy season (October). Thornbush fence protects crops from grazing animals. Compare protected strip of natural grass in foreground with that appearing in Figures 5 and 6.



Figure 13. Citified Amhara guide holding sheaf of Chat at market in Alemaya.

SECRET

SECRET



Figure 14. Mixed herd. Cattle, goats, horses, and burros are grazed together.



Figure 15. Commercial farming in the Rift Valley. This sisal field extends more than 4 miles along the main road near Lake Awusa.

- 36 -

SECRET

SECRET

principal herdsmen, consider it both bad manners and bad luck to count them, but certain patterns are evident. Of an estimated 25,000,000 head of cattle, mostly of the humpbacked zebu breed, some 25 percent are oxen, used chiefly by the sedentary farmers of the highlands as draft animals. The remainder, a majority of which are grazed on the Southeastern Plateau, provide a surplus of beef and hides for export. An increasing number of dairy cattle are being raised to supply the larger cities. Sheep and goats, totaling about 23,000,000, are raised for both meat and skins throughout the country. The proportion of goats tends to be higher in the more arid lowlands. Approximately 1 million camels provide meat, milk, and transport for the nomads in the dry lands of the east and south. Individual herds are generally small, numbering no more than a few dozen animals, and they are frequently grazed with various combinations of cattle, goats, and sheep (see Figure 14). The Ethiopians eat most of the meat they produce, but hides and skins rank second only to coffee as a source of foreign exchange.

62. A number of agricultural projects in various parts of the country have been sponsored or assisted by foreigners. Their object has been the production of cotton, sisal (see Figure 15), cane sugar, oilseeds, and other marketable crops; even when successful, however, they have affected only small areas and small groups of people, the impact on the population as a whole being negligible.

Industry and Trade

63. Ethiopian industry is of minuscule proportions and, with few exceptions, seems likely to remain so. Nearly 90 percent of the country's manufacturing installations are in or near the cities of Addis Ababa and Asmara, and except for those producing building materials, nearly all of them are based on agriculture. Cottage industry predominates. Such progress as is being made is nearly all in the field of consumer goods, especially food, textiles, and clothing. Most impressive have been the advances in the textile industry, which in each successive year has been

SECRET

SECRET

supplying a larger percentage of the country's total requirements.

64. Frequently a very few units dominate an entire industry. One large sugar enterprise in the Awash Valley accounts for 70 percent of the employment in the food industry and nearly one-half the value of all food processed. A single new factory near Lake Tana is expected to double the country's production of edible oils. Given more efficient management and some modest expansion, a Russian-built refinery at Aseb appears to be capable of supplying most of Ethiopia's petroleum requirements during the early 1970s.

65. Minor amounts of gold, platinum, and manganese are produced, and the search for commercially exploitable mineral deposits has been pressed in recent months, but earlier explorative efforts have not been impressive. Evidence on hand suggests that mineral deposits will not make a significant contribution to the Ethiopian economy in the foreseeable future.



Figure 16. Eucalyptus grove. An import from Australia, the eucalyptus may grow as much as 10 feet per year. It is planted widely in Ethiopia where it is used for fuel and as a building material.

- 38 -

SECRET

SECRET

66. The modern sector of Ethiopia's economy is fuel and power deficient, and the fuel supply for the traditional sector is decreasing. There are no known coal deposits and the supply of wood is diminishing. The peasants use wood (see Figure 16), charcoal, or animal dung for their domestic needs and cottage industries. Holders of oil exploration concessions, after drilling an impressive number of dry holes, are becoming increasingly pessimistic about finding oil in commercially exploitable quantities. The refinery at Aseb is readily accessible to tankers bearing Middle East crude, but it is not served by either a railroad or a pipeline, and its output must be carried inland by tank trucks. Ethiopia has a great hydroelectric power potential, and considerable progress is being made to develop those streams and water bodies that have a significant potential. Water is abundant at high elevations, and power lines represent a form of transportation little affected by the rugged terrain.

67. Ethiopia has long had a deficit in her foreign trade, a situation that has been further aggravated by the closing of the Suez Canal. The shipment of coffee, hides, and other exports that were formerly transported to Europe and the United States via the Canal became less profitable when they were marketed via less economical routes. The trade deficit is expected to continue to grow because growth in exports is not expected to match import growth. The Empire's foreign exchange position appears to be sound, however, for non-trade receipts entering the balance of payments (travel, government services, transfer payments, net capital inflow) are expected to prevent any serious decline of foreign exchange reserves in the first half of the current decade.

68. It is notable that a major proportion of Ethiopia's industrial enterprises have been funded and are now being managed by foreigners. The same situation prevails in domestic and foreign trade, activities which Ethiopians view with disdain. While in other African countries such outside influence might suggest exploitation of the natives by foreign oppressors, this is not the case in

SECRET

SECRET

Ethiopia. Here the lordly Amhara typically looks upon foreign development from a perspective that permits him to say: "These are my lands. I permit these lowly Europeans to exploit them, for such work is beneath me. I do, however, skim a little bit off the top." The cavalier attitude of even the most economically depressed Amhara was illustrated a few years ago when an Israeli group, in part to provide local employment, established a meat packing plant in Gondar. The city fathers, annoyed by the odor, ordered the plant to move out of the city. When it was reestablished about 10 miles away, the local people refused to work in what they considered a demeaning occupation, and the management was required to import labor from Eritrea.

69. Geographic isolation of the country, lack of significant exploitable mineral wealth, dependence on what is essentially a single cash-crop economy, an abysmally low literacy rate, and a medieval system of land tenure combine to provide little basis for hope that the economic status of the individual Ethiopian will change appreciably over the next several decades.

Transportation
(Map 500297)

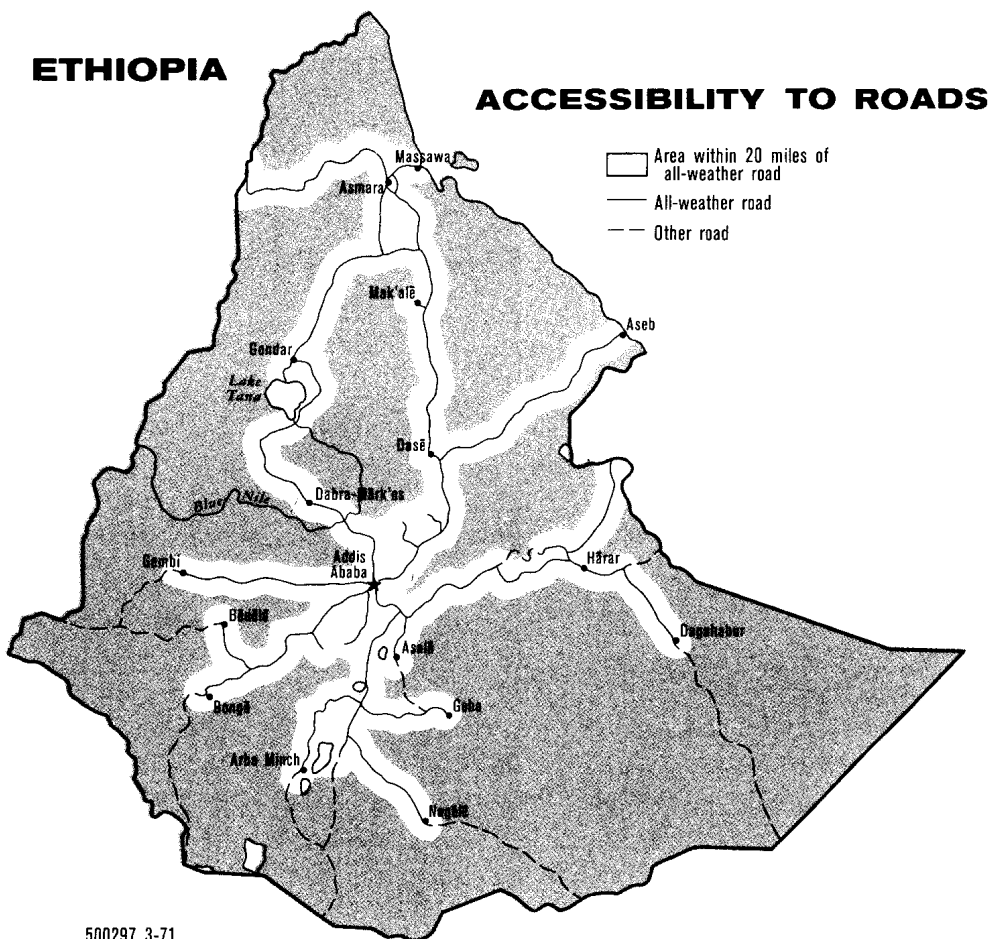
70. The transportation systems demonstrate the incongruities typical of Ethiopia. The government-owned Ethiopian Airlines operates scheduled flights to Athens, Rome, and Frankfurt as well as to 40 airports within the country; land transport within Ethiopia, however, is uncertain at best. This was clearly evidenced at the time of the elections of June-July 1969. At that time less than one-third of the country's 890 voting centers were accessible by motor vehicle. Since the elections were held during the rainy season, some of these polling places were a 10-day trip by foot or mule from the nearest administrative center reachable by road.

71. An estimated three-fourths of Ethiopia's produce is moved by pack animals, mostly donkeys (see Figure 17). Mules and horses are also

SECRET

SECRET

used -- principally in the high country -- and camels are the chief carriers in the Danakil and in the drier lands of the southeast.



72. Nearly all of Ethiopia's foreign trade passes through three seaports: Massawa and Aseb on the Red Sea, and Djibouti (FTAI) on the Gulf of Aden. Two narrow-gauge railroads, one running 190 miles from Massawa via Asmara to Agordat, the other 486 miles from Djibouti via Dire Dawa to Addis Ababa, carry the bulk of Ethiopia's export-import trade and are important in the moving of heavy equipment from the coast to the highlands.

- 41 -

SECRET

SECRET

The ruggedness of the terrain crossed by both lines makes them susceptible to washouts and landslides, but their maintenance records are reasonably good. Both are currently operating at a loss, however, and some economists are advising that they be abandoned in favor of a major effort to develop road transport. Ethiopian civilian and military authorities are greatly concerned about the security of these lines; both are relatively easy targets for saboteurs, and the much busier southern line -- joint Franco-Ethiopian ownership and solemn treaties notwithstanding -- runs for 60 miles through foreign territory to a foreign port. They take some comfort in the fact that, although it has no railroad, the port of Aseb serves much the same hinterland and is becoming increasingly competitive with Djibouti.

73. The road network focuses on the two largest cities, Addis Ababa and Asmara. For some years the Ethiopian Government has been conducting an ambitious program to expand this network, but the formidable terrain and the heavy seasonal rains combine to make construction and maintenance very difficult. Maintenance of existing roads is considered to be fair, however, and in this respect Ethiopia is unlike many developing countries, where funds for construction may be easy to come by but funds for maintenance are not. Construction of feeder roads has lagged, although some real progress has been made in hard-surfacing the main routes. The driving time for trucks on the 450-mile Addis Ababa-Asmara run was reduced from 5 to 3 days between the early 1950's and the late 1960's. Other routes that have been markedly improved include Addis Ababa-Aseb (4 days to 2), and Addis Ababa-Jima (2 days to 1). One of the most spectacular achievements of this period was the completion of the Blue Nile bridge (see Figure 18) and a skillfully engineered road (see Figure 19) that reduced travel time from Addis Ababa to Dabra-Mark'os from 7 days to 1.

74. Road transport, although expanding rapidly, rests upon a very small base. Estimated vehicle registration for 1970 includes about 40,000 cars and 10,000 trucks and buses. These figures

- 42 -

SECRET

SECRET



Figure 17. Donkeys loaded with firewood at Diredawa. Houses in background are of typical mud-and-wattle construction.



Figure 18. Bridge over the Blue Nile between Addis Ababa and Dabra-Mark'os. The river is deep, swift, and non-navigable. At this point its surface is some 4,000 feet below the surface of the plateau. With the construction of this bridge, the driving time from Addis Ababa to Dabra-Mark'os was reduced from 7 days to 1.

SECRET

SECRET

are nearly double those recorded for 1965 and, Ethiopian statistics being what they are, may be inflated. Thus, in a land three times the size of California there are fewer than one-third the number of motor vehicles now registered in Fairfax County, Virginia.



Figure 19. Steel nets protect road from landslides. In the gorge of the Blue Nile.

Boundaries and Conflict
(Maps 500298 and 500299)

75. Although the boundaries have moved back and forth with the fortunes of war, the heart of Ethiopia has remained for centuries in the high

- 44 -

SECRET

SECRET

country of the Northwestern Plateau. Map 500298 shows the expansion of Ethiopia's frontiers during the late 19th century and as they are today. The major change since the turn of the century was the addition of Eritrea to the Empire in 1952. This action, which made Ethiopia a maritime nation for the first time since the 16th century, was taken under the terms of a Federal Act and Constitution approved by the United Nations and only reluctantly accepted by the Eritreans.



76. At the present time, Ethiopia has common borders with Somalia, French Territory of the Afars and Issas (formerly French Somaliland), Sudan, and

- 45 -

SECRET

SECRET

Kenya. Most of these borders pass through barren lands of little intrinsic value, but all are potential trouble areas.



77. Somalia: The borders between Ethiopia and Somalia were established around the turn of the century by treaties subscribed to by the British, Italians, and Ethiopians, with little regard to the wishes of the Somali peoples, who considered the land theirs and who had moved their flocks and herds across its dry, barren plains for centuries. The Somali Democratic Republic does not recognize these boundaries, and its leaders speak of a "Greater Somalia" concept, the implementation of which would entail the Somalis

- 46 -

SECRET

SECRET

taking over all of the Haud and Ogaden areas -- many thousands of square miles of Ethiopian territory. At this time they do not have the strength to do so, but for many years their observance of the boundaries has varied directly with the effectiveness of the Ethiopian military forces on hand. The Somali Army, Soviet equipped and Soviet trained, is a matter of concern to the Ethiopian Government. However, its long range effect on relationships between the two states will probably be considerably less than that of the ancient, nomadic culture of the Somali herdsmen who have been applying their own version of a "Greater Somalia " concept for centuries.

78. French Territory of The Afars and Issas: Relations with the French are good, but with the natives they are mixed. The Afars, who are most numerous in the north, are related to the Ethiopian Afars across the border, but the Issas identify with the Somalis and support the idea of a "Greater Somalia." While both dislike the Ethiopian Government, this common dislike doesn't appear to lessen their dislike for each other.

79. Sudan: The Sudan border generally parallels (but is not identical with) the ethnic boundary between the highland Caucasians and the lowland Negroes. There is little trade or other contact between them -- even smuggling has been inconsequential. There may be trouble ahead, however. In the north, Eritrean rebels have begun running guns across the border while the Sudanese Government obligingly looked the other way, and many Eritrean refugees have fled to the Sudan to escape the Imperial forces "peace keeping" operations. Both Ethiopian and Sudanese farmers have been moving into the fertile lands along the Takaze River and they can't agree on just where the border is supposed to be. There have already been raids and counter-raids, and these will probably continue.

25X1
25X1

SECRET

SECRET

80. Kenya: Official relations across the Kenya border appear to be cordial. There are occasional clashes between border crossers and the police on both sides of the boundary, but at this time such events are viewed as police actions against outlaws rather than as international incidents. Such differences as may develop between Addis Ababa and Nairobi could well be offset by their common opposition to the "Greater Somalia" concept.

81. Eritrea: The Governorate-General of Eritrea includes 10 percent of the Empire's territory, 7 percent of its population, and 100 percent of its seacoast. Eritrea has been part of the Empire at various times in the historical past, but from the 16th century until World War II, it was occupied successively by Turks, Egyptians, and Italians. After being an Italian colony for half a century and occupied by the British from 1941 to 1952, it was federated with Ethiopia by the United Nations in 1952 and, under considerable Ethiopian pressure, it became an integral part of the Empire in 1962. Due in a large measure to the long Italian presence, Eritrea's population and economy are somewhat more advanced than those in other parts of the Empire. The people, not quite as diverse but equally incompatible, fall into two major groups: sedentary Tigres and their Semite relatives in the high country, and a variety of mixed Hamite-Semite, mostly Moslem, nomads in the lowlands.

82. By assimilating Eritrea, Ethiopia acquired some 540 miles of Red Sea coastline and a port (Aseb) close to the Bab el Mandeb -- the narrow entrance to the Red Sea. Also acquired with this assimilation was a strategic significance that has become increasingly apparent with the continuation of the Arab-Israeli confrontation to the north. Normal shipping passes through the 12-mile-wide strait between Perim Island and the African coast. These waters are subject to the rules of innocent passage, but they are also subject to a certain amount of international gamesmanship. When the People's Republic of Southern Yemen achieved independence in November 1967, there were rumors that its first acts would

- 48 -

SECRET

SECRET

be (with Soviet help) the fortification of Perim island and the blockade of all Israel-bound shipping. More recently, Communist press sources have stated that Israel was establishing a military base on an Ethiopian Island near Bab el Mandeb. Neither claim has been substantiated. The possibility of a blockade continues to disturb the Israelis, however. With the exception of Ethiopia, they have no trade with the Red Sea powers and blockade of Bab el Mandeb could isolate their port of Eilat almost as effectively as did the Egyptian's closure of the Strait of Tiran in 1967. Israel's unilateral action solved the problem of the Strait of Tiran, 120 miles south of Eilat, but it would be faced with a more difficult situation at Bab el Mandeb, more than 1,200 miles south of Israeli held territory.

83. Ethiopia has a special relationship with Israel, which she maintains despite the objections of Ethiopian Moslems and the Arab members of the Organization of African Unity, which has its headquarters in Addis Ababa. Israel operates a medical aid program and a military training program in Ethiopia, and it imports a considerable amount of Ethiopian meat. (There is a kosher meat processing plant in Asmara.) If faced with a threatened closure of the strait, the two countries could be expected to coordinate their activities. The coastal lowland of Eritrea is Moslem country, however, and any loosening of the controls exerted by the Christian Amhara might require a reevaluation of the possibilities of a blockade.

25X1
25X1

84. The Eritrean Liberation Front, a predominantly Moslem separatist organization with a small, and apparently decreasing Christian membership, is becoming increasingly active, attacking road and rail traffic, sabotaging water and power installations, and kidnapping travelers. Their treatment of kidnapped foreigners (including some Americans) has been correct and proper, and the kidnapers have been released without harm after having been lectured on the rightness of the

- 49 -

SECRET

SECRET

rebel cause.* ELF actions against natives and counteractions by the Ethiopian military have been characterized by considerable brutality. The rugged terrain is favorable for guerrilla operations and there is evidence that some Ethiopian Army units, arriving at a sabotage site too late to catch the guerrillas, have vented their frustrations on the local population. Many villages have been burned, their inhabitants killed, and thousands have fled to the Sudan. In December 1970, martial law was established in most of Eritrea, and additional army units were moved in to combat the ELF.

85. If Eritrea should succeed in freeing itself from Ethiopian rule, it is doubtful if it could last for many years as an independent political unit. There is little sense of national unity. Its boundaries were established by the colonial powers without regard to the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, or religious characteristics of the inhabitants, and each group could be expected to take such steps as it considered to be in its own best interests. It appears inevitable that these interests would clash. It would seem equally inevitable that those foreign governments considering their own interests to be affected by the trend of events in Ethiopia would make some effort, overt or covert, to influence and control that trend. If the strength of the Ethiopian Government were such that it could not hold Eritrea and its coastline, its strategic value could conceivably revert to the insignificance that has protected it throughout so much of its history.

86. The chief United States' interest is Kagnew Station, the military communications facility at Asmara. A major contributor to the

* An American soldier from Kagnew Station, the United States military communications facility at Asmara, was killed in an ambush in January 1971, but American officials believe that this was the act of a small group and did not indicate a change in ELF policy.

SECRET

local economy and Asmara's second largest employer, it has not been the target of any ELF activity as of April 1971. It is apparent that this is the result of an ELF policy rather than a lack of capability, since the installation is highly vulnerable to sabotage. It is not known how long this policy will be continued. Kagnev's functions can be carried out elsewhere with some loss of capability, but US officials feel that the facility will be needed at least through 1974-1975. It is not yet clear whether the United States will have a continuing need for the facility beyond 1978 when the present agreement expires.

