

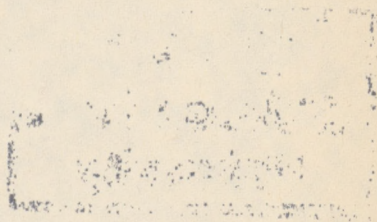
Mengistu Hailemariam

**Interview Granted to
the New York Times**

November 26, 1988
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

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Question:

You sent a message of congratulations to president elect Bush and mentioned that his election should herald a new chapter of U.S.-Ethiopian relations. There have been serious differences between the U.S. and Ethiopia. What changes do you see that warrant a change in the relationship ?

Answer:

Thanks for your question. Let me say at the outset that nothing in the world is constant. Things keep on changing, including interstate relations. History is nothing more than the record of these endless changes.

At one stage relations between Ethiopia and the United States were very close. But which of us stood to benefit from that closeness and at whose expense ? Not we, anyway ! Meantime, significant changes were taking place in our country which led to our people's adoption of a socio-economic system — a system which the United States vigorously disapproved. It expressed its mood through a sustained disinformation campaign and, at times, even through blunt pressure of varying intensity. No U.S. administration is on the record to have favourably viewed the path of development we have adopted. As a free people we are entitled to choosing the development path we believe is good enough for us. It is not our concern if any one country is pleased or displeased by our decision.

We are for cooperation with all countries, whatever the socio-economic system they pursue, with the proviso that such cooperation is on the basis of mutual benefit, equality and respect to each other. This is and will continue to be our policy in our relations with all countries including the United States. I believe that the United States and some of its allies had enough time to say what we are or rather what our Revolution stands for

We are the first to admit that our Revolution has not achieved all the objectives it has set for itself. And how could it—quite honestly — with all the series of devastating natural disasters and other interfering factors the country had to go through? However, much has already been achieved in spite of it all. Anyone, unless down right prejudiced or hostile, can appraise and objectively judge for himself our achievement.

Speaking of Ethiopian-U.S. relations I believe that the election of George Bush presents a new opportunity for Ethiopia's improved relation with the United States and for the new Administration's fresh perception of our country. I want to assure you of my government's commitment to work towards an improved relations with your government.

Question:

What would you like, what do you want out of the relationship with the United States ? Do you want economic assistance ? Or would you like the United States to play a role, perhaps, in mediating the war ? What else would you like out of your relationships with the United States ?

Answer:

There is a whole spectrum of preliminary issues in our relation that must be solved step by step. Let's both admit the crisis of confidence between our two countries. We must solve this crisis before we think of anything else, even before the resumption by the U.S of economic assistance to our country. The first step towards this goal should be for the United States to ban all anti-Ethiopia propaganda it is known to conduct. The second step would be for the United States not to condemn but rather condone the ties we have forged with all countries, particularly the Third World or the socialist countries.

Question:

And how would you propose going about this ? Do you propose an exchange of senior-level ministers as a first step ? And your Foreign Minister has met Undersecretary Armacost in New York. How would you expect to build anew ?

Answer:

Exchange of senior-level delegations is one of several ways towards restoring of normal relations. Another channel could be the exchange of Shengo (National Assembly) and Congress delegations to be followed by meetings between heads of state. There is a whole spectrum of channels of contact that can be utilized, including contacts between labour unions, youth organizations, universities and the like.

Americans are no strangers to us and nor are we to them. The whole exercise is really to restore the traditional relation of cooperation between our two countries.

Question:

Would you think of visiting the United States ?

Answer:

Why not! I'd wish to visit the United States and for the U.S. President to visit Ethiopia. This could concretely contribute to a better understanding between our peoples and would be in the mutual interest of our two countries.

Question:

But realistically speaking, do you think this is likely in the foreseeable future ?

Answer:

To be realistic, considerable groundwork will have to be done first. That is what I have been trying to emphasize.

I was once scheduled to address the U.N. General Assembly in my capacity as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of African Unity. But that plan could not materialize because of the great deal of anti-Ethiopian feeling that was allowed to surge in the United States. The groundwork I have referred to could have helped reduce the level of passion. That is why I underlined the need to applying ourselves to the preliminary groundwork leading to a better mutual understanding of the two countries.

It's not only that. We dispatched a cultural troupe (People-to-People, Ethiopia) for a good will tour of many countries including the United States. I must say that the attitude of the U.S. administration and the security force of the country was extremely unhelpful in creating the necessary conditions for our cultural troupe to show and express our friendship to the people of the United States. I believe much preliminary exercise would be needed before exchange of visit at the head of state level. We hope the Bush Administration will have a positive attitude to Ethiopia.

Question:

As some one who has been briefly educated in the United States, what kind of personal sentiments do you have towards the country ?

Answer:

On the whole, our attitude to the people of the United States is one of respect, affection and even of indebtedness. This is the shared feeling of all Ethiopian including those trained in America. But it is unacceptable to us to do America's biddings. We are a sovereign state and accept orders from none but our own people. The United States must realize that failure to understand this basic fact has led to strained relation between our two countries.

Question:

Do you have any particular kind of memory from your period in the United States ?

Answer:

Quite a lot. First, I had a number of good friends in America, people with whom I have worked closely and of whom I still have memory. Some were close enough to invite me to their homes. I viewed with a sense of admiration the material, cultural and intellectual achievement of the people of the United States.

I have also witnessed events about which I have a sad memory. You see, I was in the United States precisely in the period when the civil rights movement was at its height. It was a paradox, nay a shock, to me to note that a significant sector of the people should be denied of its civil right. How was that possible, particularly in the United States a country with highly developed production forces and enlightened society ? It was something that outraged my sense of human dignity. Of course I am talking about my experience of the bad old days of many years back. Things have changed now, haven't they ?

Question:

I just like to clear one thing. In some books written about Ethiopia and the Revolution it is mentioned you were in the United States twice. Once I think they say in Alabama and another short time at Fort Bening. But the official biography of the Department of Foreign Affairs says you took a two-year course in Industrial Science at the University of Maryland; perhaps, you can tell me very briefly what period you were in the United States ?

Answer:

I stayed in Aberdeen, Maryland, for a year and half. I went there for an advanced military training which also included special university courses for members of the armed forces from the countries with military alliance with the United States. And in my free time, I followed a University course in Maryland.

Question:

Just one last question on the United States and Ethiopia. The United States has a number of issues that they would like to discuss with Ethiopia before relations can be improved greatly. Are you willing to discuss, perhaps be flexible on some of those issues? I think they include some movement towards resolution of the problems in the North. And I think one should add that the United States has never deviated from its position, that it respects the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. That is one issue, I think, on their list that they would want to discuss. And I think what they call a more pragmatic economic policy in Ethiopia is another issue they consider to be important to discuss. Just taking those two among others: is the door open to discuss those issues, to find some way to better understanding?

Answer:

The door has been and will continue to be open to discuss those and other issues. We have always declared ourselves ready for talks and demonstrated flexibility in such talks. It must be noted however, that every state has its own policies to pursue and the interest of its citizens to defend. It knows its problems better than anyone else and allows no interference in its internal affairs. Ethiopia is no exception to this. No talk can be fruitful if it disregards these basic realities.

Question:

Turning to the Central Committee meeting you just concluded, talked there, your 13 points Resolution included a statement that there would be an effort to obtain foreign loans and that the proclamation on joint ventures will be amended to encourage mutually acceptable participation of foreign capital. Where do you expect this foreign capital to come from? What kind of ventures you are expecting to introduce?

Answer:

Let me first give you the background of the issues discussed at the 9th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of our Party. We introduced some years after the Revolution the Ten-Year-Perspective Plan to provide us an overall orientation of our development endeavour. The plan was to be implemented in two phases of five years each. We are now completing the first phase. The Plenary Session's total focus was on our performance in the first five-year plan. It was essentially to pin-point shortcomings and introduce readjustment measures where this is justified.

Question:

I have read the English translation of the report. It is frightening to see agriculture decline and the population increase; unhealthy trend in defence expenditure, unhappiness with the agricultural sector.

Answer:

The performance of the agricultural sector of our economy was poor, to say the least. It could be much better. Blunt criticism was at times levelled against our agricultural performance. But the main discussion centered on a thorough analysis of the way the agricultural economy is handled. It must be noted however that the major thwarting factors of

agriculture continue to be the vagaries of nature and the externally instigated civil disturbance in our country.

Question:

In fact there seem to be more shortcomings than present accomplishments ?

Answer:

I would't say that. If one takes the totality of the plan and not just agriculture, one could say that the performance was on the whole good. This can be gathered from a careful reading of my report. The whole point is that we didn't find it proper to be complacent about our performance at this stage, particularly when we take into account that much more could have been achieved.

It is wrong to consider us as full-fledged socialists. We are still on the democratic stage of the Revolution one of whose implication is mixed economy: state, cooperative and private sectors. In the agricultural sector, the first two sectors together account for less than 10%. So, not less than 90% of our agriculture is privately owned. The question is basically one of finding ways and means to promote productivity in all the sectors. That would involve up-graded skill, planned execution of work, optimization of production forces and an equitable redistribution of national wealth.

The allegation that our society is communalized is totally absurd. It is equally absurd to attribute the sluggishness of the economy to state policy. To say that the state sector of the economy is significant is not to suggest that it is at once the lion's share. In fact, the public sector in the economies of some western countries is proportionally greater than ours.

The 9th Plenary Session got together specifically to assess our performance in the implementation of the development policy we had formulated. This is what we have been doing routinely in the past. That renewal or restructuring has been

introduced and that new ground has been struck is totally in the realm of speculation.

Question:

I think this idea of new ground having been struck comes because of the wordings of one of the resolutions that the proclamation on joint-ventures would be changed to allow foreign capital and I think there was also this idea because there was mention of private enterprise in the areas of large scale agriculture, livestock, service and so on.

Answer:

In the earliest economic policy guideline formulated just after the Revolution, we had provided for foreign investment in joint-ventures with the state. But for some reason, the policy made no provision for Ethiopian nationals to enter into joint-venture arrangement with the state or among themselves. We thought this must be corrected now.

Question:

That is a new ground for me.

Answer:

You may take it as such if you really think it is.

Question:

How many Ethiopians do you think there are that have enough capital to invest in private enterprise or joint-venture?

Answer:

I doubt whether local private capital would be available for investment in large-scale enterprises given the underdevelopment of the economy. But there is a significant private capital potential for investment in selected fields, for example in the

tertiary sector, small-scale industry and in agriculture either privately or in partnership both among entrepreneurs or with the state.

Question:

So does this mean that someone who is farming now in state farm will be able to purchase the land, or has he leasehold?

Answer:

Land can neither be purchased nor sold, it is under public ownership. Contractual holding is the most probable modality under the new arrangement. No limit is set on the size of land that can be held. It all depends on the extent of resources people can invest.

Question:

So they might be able to have it under contract for five, ten, fifteen years?

Answer:

The contract may run for as long as the contracting parties wish it to last. There is much land (some 60 million hectares) still lying fallow, enough to accommodate any number of prospective investors.

Question:

But this fallow land is quite difficult land to cultivate. It has to be cleared, made ready for agriculture that takes large-scale machinery. Who would have the machinery, or bring in the machinery to cultivate the land? It takes a lot foreign exchange to buy the machinery.

Answer:

Let me give you a glimpse of our development strategy which I hope will answer your question. Industry is to be developed in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the agricultural and construction sectors of the economy. Simultaneously, the mining sector will be developed in order for us to develop our own capability in the chemical, metallurgical and engineering industries. These are the areas on which our task in the next years will focus. We plan to produce all the modern inputs our agriculture needs: farm-machinery, implements and fertilizers.

Question:

Do you mean you will manufacture these machines here in Ethiopia?

Answer:

We are preparing the groundwork for that. (As a matter of fact our agriculture is already beginning to rely on locally assembled tractors and a range of irrigation equipment totally manufactured here). Obviously, we shall continue to rely on import until such time as we have fully developed our farm-machinery production capability.

Question:

I heard that you had interesting session with former President Jimmy Carter. You had many memories. Did you both express some regrets?

Answer:

I have expressed those regrets and I believe the ex-president has realized that.

Question:

Because the change in relation between this country and the United States occurred when he was President of the U.S.

Answer:

Yes it was. The change occurred in the midst of difficult choices that had to be made. The attitude of the United States was entirely unexpected even though we no longer wish to harp on it. But such incidents are common in the relations of states as they are in the relations of members of the same family. Closer contact and better communication could have made the occurrence impossible. We'd never thought that the United States, our traditional arms supplier, would impose an arms embargo on us precisely at a time when our country fell victim to enemy invasion. That was a big blow for us, something we smarted under for a long time.

Question:

Are you getting over the smarting?

Answer:

We are. It is time enough now to let by-gones be by-gones. We immediately realized at the time that the task of guaranteeing the safety and security of the country was ours in the final analysis. We were forced into seeking - and finding - another solution.

Question:

You said you found another solution. Does that solution exclude better relation with the United States?

Answer:

No, the course of action we had to take at the time should not exclude better relation with the United States. As I said a

little while ago, we are for an international relation based on equality, respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and mutual benefit. Our foreign policy is oriented by non-alignment. We are ready to cooperate with all countries including the United States within the policy option we have adopted.

Question:

I do not think the United States would consider your foreign policy outlook as non-aligned. As a matter of fact I think one of the aspects they would like to discuss, if there are to be improved relations, is perhaps a reduced relationship with the Soviet Union, one they consider places Ethiopia on a more than non-aligned position.

Answer:

It seems that we hold basically different perceptions of what non-alignment really means. In the first place, every country has sovereign right to enter into a relation of cooperation with any other country it chooses. It was on this principle that we have developed a good relation with the Soviet Union which provides us both with military and economic assistance. In like manner, we maintain very good relation of cooperation with Italy and Canada to mention only a few of the Western countries.

Question:

On the subject of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union seems to be going through a period of re-evaluating its relationship with many countries. In particular, one might say it is re-evaluating its relationship with Angola and Afghanistan. This is not to say it is going to cut its relationship with them all together. How do you evaluate your relationship with the Soviet Union today and how is it different, may be from two years ago?

Answer:

You singled out just two countries with whom the Soviet Union is said to reevaluate its relationship. Without trying to challenge your conclusion, I see nothing to suggest that it is. The point you have underlined does not apply to Ethio-Soviet relations. Indeed, relation of cooperation between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist countries is growing from day to day.

Question:

There is a word that is being used along with the Soviet Union in the last year or so, that is, the word perestroika. Does perestroika have an application here in Ethiopia?

Answer:

Perestroika is a universally recognized phenomenon to which we owe some of the major achievements of recent years: elimination of a category of nuclear weapons between the superpowers and growing cooperation between East and West. This is in the interest of world peace. On the other hand however, *perestroika* has more relevance to the Soviet Union, a developed socialist country, than it has to a developing country like ours. We have sets of peculiar problems which can only be overcome by solutions tailored out for our needs. There is no doubt however that the experiences the Soviet Union goes on accumulating in the course of the application of *perestroika* will constitute a common legacy to all of us.

Question:

Just to go back to the private initiatives in the 13-point resolution. When do you think they will be able to take place? I understand you have to develop some new directives and lay down precisely the terms. When will this be issued and when will they take place?

Answer:

As I have earlier pointed out, we have our Ten-Year Perspective Plan and the Party programme by which our future tasks will be guided. The 9th Plenary Session of the Central committee in assessing the implementation of the plan introduced some readjustment measures where these were felt necessary. The terms and the directives of the 13-point resolution will be issued shortly to be integrated in the next 5-year plan to be launched in September of 1989.

Question:

Ethiopia has improved its relations a great deal with its neighbours-with Somalia and Sudan. Yet the troubles in the north continue as you put it in your speech, at a great cost to your country-which is 50% of the budgets and this is unhealthy trend. Given the length of the war, do you think that the United States and the Soviet Union as powerful members of the United Nations could be helpful in resolving the situation?

Answer:

I am sure you are familiar with the Theory of Regional Conflicts put forward to provide package solution to conflict situations in selected regions of the world. I am referring to Angola, Afghanistan and Kampuchea where one of the components of the conflict was the presence of foreign troops in these countries.

Another basic feature of the conflicts in the regions just mentioned is which of the parties in conflict has the best claims for state power.

The situation in Ethiopia has nothing in common with the above cases. It is a situation in which one of the parties in conflict, against the will of the entire people of 47 million, violently promotes secessionism precisely in the heartland of the country which was the cradle of the Ethiopia nation and state.

Ours is therefore a legitimate struggle to defend the territorial integrity of a sovereign state. It is against this background we reject the Theory of Region Conflict as inapplicable to our case.

We are a multi-nationality society. In view of this basic condition of our society, we have come up with and implemented a democratic system which accommodates the interests and aspirations of all sectors and creeds of our society within the framework of the fraternal cooperation of all nationalities based on mutual respect and benefit. We shall not therefore allow any force, internal or external, to disrupt this pattern of democracy.

We are often accused of seeking to solve the conflict in the north of our country solely by military means. Nothing is further from the truth. In fact records have it that we have made repeated peace proposals for the peaceful solution of the problem, all of which were met with a rebuff.

There is a significant role which both the United States and the Soviet Union, as indeed other peace-loving countries, can play to bring about peace in this part of Africa. One way to encourage peace would be for some countries currently providing material and moral encouragement to the secessionists to refrain from doing so.

Question:

The United States, as I said from the beginning, has always respected the Ethiopian territorial integrity. There has never been any argument about that. When you talk about material support and moral encouragement, are you talking about a few pounds of food that goes to the cross-border operation?

Answer:

Cross-border operation of the type you have referred to is one way of violating the sovereignty of a country. Would the United States tolerate such a violation against its national

territory? This is one of the typical manifestations, but there are more important things than that.

Question:

Tell me what is more important than this and what is the United States putting in terms of material or moral encouragement.

Answer:

We appreciate that the United States administration and people have consistently respected our territorial integrity and sovereignty. We don't complain that the United States has been directly involved in providing our enemies with material assistance which can contribute to the violation of our national territory and sovereignty.

Pressure in a direct form comes from countries around us—countries which are traditionally hostile to us. They give sustenance, solace and material support to our enemies. These countries have contacts with the U.S. administration and particularly with prominent politicians as evidenced by some of these politicians' move to internationalize the Ethiopian situation or tried to brand it as a regional conflict. What the United States is doing in encouraging the action of some of these countries or in echoing their views is not helpful.

Question:

I assume you are referring to the Sudan?

Answer:

It's one of them.

Question;

And what else?

Answer:

Of course I can give you a whole list of countries if that is useful. Some European countries are also involved in the act.

Remark by J.P.

I see, I thought you said neighbouring countries.

Answer:

To be more direct, some Arab countries are investing more of their oil wealth in subversive acts against Ethiopia than they do in their own constructive development. There are also cases of parties in some European countries providing assistance to our enemies. We are surprised that such hostile acts should go on unabated particularly in the context of recent world events where the trend is increasingly for harmonious international relation and cooperation. You can guess for yourself the real purpose behind the idea of questioning the sovereignty and national integrity of a country as ancient as ours.

Question:

To turn to the military situation in the North, it was commented many times that the situation used to be often a stalemate and often the Ethiopian force mounting offensive and were able to push back the Eritreans, but not defeat them. How can this war be won militarily?

Answer:

I have earlier said that Ethiopia has never been known to have endorsed the view that the problem in the North can be solved solely militarily. We are, of course, defending ourselves against the war imposed on us. But it's not our wish to see our people locked in an endless fratricidal war. We want to solve the problem peacefully and democratically, but we got no construc-

tive response from the other side. In the absence of any prospect for a constructive response, however, the defensive effort will continue, whatever the cost.

Question:

Even if it goes beyond 50 per cent of your budget?

Answer:

Yes, undoubtedly. But it is our wish that the problem be solved peacefully. It should not be assumed at the same time that we have used all our military potential. We have not.

Question:

So, what is in store?

Answer:

We're waiting for a peaceful response.

Question:

You never get a peaceful response, what should that change?

Answer:

We shall continue to wait and see with the hope that we will some day.

Question:

Meantime the expense may go beyond 50%?

Answer:

There is no price we are not prepared to pay for Ethiopia's unity and sovereignty. I want to be quite clear. It is none else but the Ethiopian people that can decide the situation. Let me remind you of one fact. Ethiopia has been the only black nation

in the world which for centuries successfully defended its independence. Expansionist and colonialists, for all their military and technological superiority, have failed in their attempt to subjugate this country. We did not allow them. Nor will we now allow local mercenaries to impose their will on us.

Question:

Just a couple of more things. The need for emergency aid is subsiding, it seems. At the end of this year the harvest would be good and there is more grain on the market. Do you see a lessened role for the Western aid agencies that are headquartered here in Addis and elsewhere in the country.

Answer:

The natural disaster that we had to go through was of huge dimension. The situation was made worse by a series of cumulative factors. A proper conservation and utilization of natural resources could, of course, have helped lessen the devastation. The impact was cushioned by humanitarian assistance from many governments and non-governmental organizations for which we are thankful. Emergency aid is of course useful but provides no lasting solution. Nor is it our wish to continue to be assisted indefinitely in this manner. Our agricultural activity in the coming years will give more emphasis to producing enough at least to overcome the present food-deficit. The activity will include long-term projects: land rehabilitation and the conservation and proper utilization of natural resources. Fresh assistance to supplement the new emphasis would be most welcome.

We have created the necessary condition for the success of this objective. One of these is the regrouping of scattered homesteads into properly laid-out villages. This is what we call *villagization* scheme, one which is unfortunately viewed with much suspicion in the West.

The purpose of villagization is to help peasant communities pool their limited resources and facilitate the judicious utilization of limited inputs which the state will provide in the

form of farm machinery, fertilizers and social services. The scheme will also help develop intensive farming which is one way of ecological rehabilitation.

Another condition we have created is the Resettlement Scheme. The long-term objective of the scheme is to lessen the burden of over-population and land degradation in parts of our country. As I said earlier, there are some 60 million hectares of fallow land suitable for agriculture. Most of this land is in the south-western part of the country which enjoys an average rain-fall of 1000 m.m. per year. Stable weather predominated here throughout the period of ten years when northern Ethiopia was struck by an unprecedented drought spell. Moreover, the area is endowed with fertile soil and huge water resource suitable for irrigation and other purposes. We have introduced the scheme to help improve human lives and ease, if possible reverse, ecological degradation. What is wrong in that? What ails the West about that?

Question:

Well, I think you have heard many times, I don't have to tell you what the West complains because they say that many people are given no choice. Is the resettlement programme voluntary?

Answer:

Yes, it is voluntary.

Question:

Has it now changed in that way?

Answer:

Supposing it was not voluntary? The choice people had was to shrivel up to death on parched land. Would it be right then to watch compatriots die? Would it be right to watch people panhandling indefinitely for alms when they could very

well work and earn their bread. Are we leading or destroying people? What is the purpose of a government or a party unless it provides the necessary guidance to its people?

There is fear in the West that groundwork is being laid for an eventual socialization or cooperativization of the society. It is alleged that resettlement and villagization are the first step towards that end. Cooperativization can only be implemented if the people voluntarily decide for it and feel that their welfare is best safeguarded by it.

Now, to come back to your question, as you said there are many non-governmental humanitarian aid organizations headquartered here in our country. To be honest, not all of them can be said to be pursuing only the objectives they have come here for. Nevertheless, we have accommodated them all and created conditions for them to carry out their task. We appreciate the assistance they extend to us but we cannot rely on that indefinitely. The ultimate solution for us is to stand on our own feet.

Question:

So, do you see that you will be asking some of them to leave gradually?

Answer:

Only if the need arises for it.

Question:

Just to get back to resettlement for one minute. Early in the programme the West gave you a tough time about it, they were very critical. Do you think some mistakes were made and it is now going along with better procedures?

Answer:

The catastrophe was of a huge proportion. It was a

widespread drought which engulfed the good part of our country. Millions of lives, both human and animal, were affected. In order to save threatened lives, we had to launch a large-scale emergency operation. It involved the relocation of people from the affected areas to more amenable parts of the country.

An emergency operation of that magnitude cannot, obviously, be flawless. Transportation facilities might not have been adequate. In the long distances that had to be covered, some of the aged and the starved might have perished on the way. In crossing many climatic areas on the way, quite a few might have fallen sick. In spite of the odds, however, the operation was on the whole a successful one.

A number of preliminary tasks had to be fulfilled before the operation was underway. First, the choice of site, then a series of other jobs to make the site habitable: bush clearing, construction of access roads, provision of clean water - which involved the sinking of wells -, the building of temporary shelters and the setting up of health and educational facilities. A great number of construction and social workers were deployed, not to mention the thousands of earth-moving and bush-clearing machinery that were involved. The operation cost us, among other things, millions of units of hard-won foreign currency. What was more, the operation was completed in a record time. Had we not done that, many of the people who are now healthy and engaged in production would have long perished.

I doubt whether any other country in Africa or elsewhere in the developing world could have conducted an emergency operation of this magnitude and in such a brief span of time. In just under a year's time, 150,000 hectares of virgin land was developed and cropped to feed millions of lives.

The wish to save the lives of our people was the only motive that led us into launching and successfully conducting the operation. One has to be only callous to human sufferings to doubt our motives.

But our people never doubted our motives, and particularly the drought victims who stood to benefit from the operation. They know that we have no other wish than to see the welfare of our people improved.

Question:

So, how many people do you think would be moved from the dry, climatically difficult north into the southern resettlement scheme?

Answer:

Many more people would eventually have to be relocated. The process is still going on. The rehabilitation of degraded land and the easing of over-population in some parts of our country depend on the success of the resettlement scheme. All in all, the scheme might involve the relocation of some 7,000,000 people. Obviously, the relocation involves all parts of the country where this is justified as has been the case so far. There is nothing new in the scheme. International organizations operating in our country had recommended resettlement as early as before the Revolution.

Question:

Just give me some idea as to how many people you resettled so far.

Answer:

Some 600,000 house-holds, that is about 1,500,000 individuals have so far been resettled.

Question:

Is there anything else you would like to discuss? Particularly, I just want to get clear on the subject of relations with the United States. You seem to get a very major response and this

will take sometime to restore.

Answer:

One cannot off-hand set the time-frame for the total restoration of friendship. To start off with, a change of attitudes is needed. Now, attitudes may change tomorrow or a year or so later. But what matters is essentially the compatibility of wishes of the two countries on the issue. On our part, we are quite sincere in our determination to work towards the normalization of relations between our two countries.

Question:

What do you want from it?

Answer:

Good will.

Question:

Let me raise the question of economic assistance, even though the United States is going through a very tough budgetary time as you know, or increased student exchanges like before the revolution many students were sent to the United States.

Answer:

We want the United States to put and end to the anti-Ethiopian campaign which is misleading the American public. Ethiopian-U.S. relation is the oldest in Africa. It predates American relation even with any country in the Middle-East. We should not allow the current anti-Ethiopian campaign to damage our relation.

Relation between our two countries were at their height during the previous regime. In fact there was a case of Ethiopian and American soldiers fielded together against what

was then a common enemy. That exceptionally close relation lasted for 30 years. Despite that closeness however, our country could not be said to have benefited from it. It received the least economic assistance of all the countries enjoying similar treatment with the United States.

Question:

Which period you are referring to?

Answer:

The period before the Revolution when the two countries were close allies. As I said, we did not stand to benefit from that closeness. Indeed, our country was branded as an American client state which led to our isolation from Africa. That was precisely the period when African countries were in the midst of their anti-colonial struggle.

Do you realize that America was one of the factors for the emergence of the problem we are grappling against now in the north? These same people who claim to be liberating the people of Eritrea resorted to arms among other things to liberate Eritrea from American occupation. (The United States maintained a communication base in Asmara at the time). It was also claimed that Ethiopian-U.S. -Israeli alliance, designed against the Arabs, was in the making. Such claims rallied Arab and international feeling against us.

Ironically, the West is now supporting the same people that owe their existence as a front precisely to their animosity to the West.

There were times when interaction between Ethiopia and the United States was intense. Thousands of Ethiopians went to U.S. for training as Americans came to Ethiopia to work. Why didn't the United States put up an amharic programme on the Voice of America then? What prompted U.S. to start an amharic programme precisely now? It is to promote friendship or conduct psychological warfare on us? In whose

service is the programme? To be sure, it is not in the service of the Ethiopian and American peoples. The programme was started for and put at the disposal of anti-Ethiopian elements, which had been completely discredited by our people.

There are more important issues in the world today that should engage the attention of the United States. I am surprised how the U.S. Congress, in the midst of the cluster of urgent national and world issues awaiting its attention, could find the time to deliberate on imposing embargo on Ethiopia.

Question:

I understand the bill says that the President is urged to sign the bill. It isn't a mandatory embargo. And nothing is being done, the trade still goes on, doesn't it?

Answer:

Why consider an embargo, in the first place, on a country still in the grips of natural calamity, war and the effects of underdevelopment? Is it supportive of the normalization of relation? Is it logical or humane? Is it a measure becoming a great nation like the United States?

Remark by J.P

I understand that this measure was debated because they were mad at you for throwing out Western aid workers from the North.

Answer:

This reminds me of the need for both U.S. and our country to work towards the elimination of issues blocking good relation between us. It should be our historical responsibility to apply ourselves to the task of laying now the groundwork for a better relation between the coming generations of Ethiopians and Americans. The truth is that none of us stands

to benefit from this state of strained relation. The will to do so will in itself be a step in the right direction and one opening up the prospect for a phased restoration and further development of traditional ties.

Question:

You may be mad at the American Congress for debating sanction or trade embargo against Ethiopia. But President Reagan hasn't sent support to the Eritreans as he sent to the Contras. What do you say to that?

Answer:

That I appreciate the position the President took on this issue as I've said earlier.