CHAPTER IV


Since 1935, the agrarian transformation in Ethiopia had been an ongoing process but in a very slow way. The introduction of modern economy and money commodity relation, creation of commercial market in the urban as well as outside the urban areas, industrial development and large scale agricultural production (plantation) and introduction of better tools and machines in production sectors created a situation which weakened feudal system. The Emperor introduced reforms for the benefit of new emerging ruling classes. The Emperor himself was a party to share holders in the profit accrued in collaborating with these classes. But he did not allow any significant change in political structure. He was fully circumstance by the old political structure. Therefore, the imbalance between political structure and agrarian reforms created the mounting crisis in Ethiopian society. The motive force of reforms was very weak in political structure (these motive forces were for the neo rich and bourgeoisie, because reforms were beneficial to them only). That is why the reforms did not encompass the entire society.

The peasantry or the forces of change wanted major reforms. Whenever they agitated, it was intended to complete change in agrarian relations and political power.
In such a process of eco-political development, the nature of exploitation did not change rather it increased in comparison to the past. Initially it was feudals who exploited peasantry, later the bourgeoisie also started to exploit. The increasing exploitation and miseries of peasantry, working class and various sections of society were the basic reality of this period.

Central issue

At the peak of pre-revolutionary crisis in 1970s, the average share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 48.4 per cent. Industry contributed a meagre 5.3 per cent while trade and commerce contributed only 5 per cent each. Before the revolution the Government did try to attract foreign investment. As a result, Italian, Greek, Indian, American, Arab and other aliens penetrated into the key branches of the industries. This investment was mainly from private foreign firms. Though till 1960, Ethiopia had no proper manufacturing sector. In 1965, there were only 248 manufacturing units spread all over the country. More than half of it was centred in Addis Ababa. At that time the manufacturing sector employed only 53,538 people. By 1970s only 5 per cent of the labour

2. Ibid., p.134.
force was employed in this sector. The foreign investment stimulated monopolistic tendencies in the primary sector like sugar and cotton. That is why the exports were dominated by primary products like food stuffs, sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton, wood, etc.¹

In that situation, the meagre accumulation of local capital and its unplanned use led to further dependence on foreign capital. In a span of 6 years from 1968 to 1973 Ethiopia's foreign debts doubled became 630 million birrs or 71.5% of the realised loans and credits.² This was perpetuated by a chronic deficit in Ethiopia's foreign trade balance. It caused hinderances in foreign trade. This was the outcome of the domination of the foreign capital.

In 1974 foreign capital controlled about 70 per cent of all investment. More than 70 per cent of the total industrial output was squandered by foreigners. In early 1970s more than 71 per cent of factory and company owners were foreigners. On the eve of revolution more than 43.5 per cent of the paid up joint capital was controlled by foreign share holders.³ The foreign countries also

3. Ibid., p.208.
controlled the industries through banking credits and licensing policies. In terms of technology, consultancy and aid, the Americans, Scandenavians and Europeans strengthened the foreign control.¹

Before the outbreak of the revolution, the industrial development was acutely disproportionate. It was foreign dominated, very small in size concentrated in few regions and employed very small amount of labour force. It reduced profitability and production capacity of enterprises, created the dominance of imported groups of domestic market and evolved an anti-national private sector.²

From the economic point of view it rendered Ethiopian economy largely agrarian in nature.

That is why the whole pressure of the society and economy concentrated on agriculture. At the time of revolution, over 36 per cent of the holdings of the country were tenants operated.³ Covering about 33 per cent of the country's cropped area were operated by tenant.⁴

² Ibid., p.208.
³ Tenant operated land means, the land on which Tenant (the most deprived and the most exploited section in the land holding system) worked. It is not necessarily meant they have full right on land and its production. Tenants were considered to work under various conditions (1) that he gave a major portion of his produce to the landlord in the form of rent; (2) that the form in which rent was paid acted as an obstacle to improvements in his production; (3) that he lacked security of tenure in his holding, and as a result, contd...
Table IV.1
The Pattern of Land Holdings in 1974

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure Type</th>
<th>% of total holdings</th>
<th>% of total cropped area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner operated</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant operated</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owned and rented</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows that a slightly higher percentage of holdings, covering a large cropped area, were operated by owner cultivators. This category was exclusive of partly owned and partly rented holdings. 5

The extent of tenancy differed from region to region and even within the region and localities. This inter and intra-regional variation reflected no endeavour for any positive land reforms before the revolution. On the eve of revolution the peasantry rented 48 per cent of all fertile lands in nine provinces. And the regional variation contd...

became powerless and incapable of making any kind of bargains to improve the terms of his contract, which were often verbal and not written.

4. Ibid., p.23.
5. Ibid., p.23.
was so high that the peasant rented holdings were 17 per cent in Wollo while 73 per cent in Illubabor.1 The following table will give a clear picture about the regional variation.2

**Table IV.2**

**Regionwise Distribution of Holdings (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure Type</th>
<th>Regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenancy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I = North western region (Gondar and Gojjam);
II = Central-western region (Shoa and Wollega);
III = South-western region (Kaffa and Illubabor);
IV = Southern region (Sidamo, Bale, Gomo Goffa).


The table shows that not only in north but south also tenancy was unevenly distributed. In **Bollosso Woreda**, **Wollaita Awaraja** only 20 per cent of peasants were tenants before the land reforms and the rest owner cultivators. Of **Kaffa province**, in **Jimma Awaraja** about 57 per cent of all holdings were rented. In **Manna Woreda** in the same **Awaraja** about 36 per cent of peasants here were former tenants. 3

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On the other hand, the owner-cultivators were fairly distributed in all the four regions, but in southern areas their percentage was not less than 70.\(^1\)

The ratio of rented holdings "increased in provinces with large estates and a relatively high output (cash crops), e.g. in Kaffa, Illubabor, Wollega, Arussi and southern Shoa. The same provinces were also characterised by the highest rents paid in cash. The pattern of crops has influenced this distribution. A large number of exportable and other cash crops like coffee, oil-seeds, cotton, fruits, vegetables, tobacco, chat etc. showed a remarkable concentration in Addis Ababa."\(^2\)

In the first half of 1960s, landowners began to adopt the contract system. This resulted in an increasingly worsening condition of the position of the tenants and small peasants. This led to marked worsening of the position of the tenant-peasants, since rent was established beforehand, irrespective of harvest weather condition, and so on. This caused the tenants to sell their livestock and provide labour services for a usurer (who were usually the lord himself) to meet the rental obligation.\(^3\) Simultaneously, the rich farmers started hiring the holdings of feudal owners. It blocked the improvement in the farming techniques and technology and its modernisation.\(^4\)

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1. Ibid., p.24.
3. Ibid., p.147.
4. Ibid., p.147.
In central and north Ethiopia, in Gondar, Gojam and Tigre and in sub-districts of Wollo, northern Shoa and Eritrea, communal land ownership was very widespread. It was estimated to be not less than one million peasant households. The communal land ownership can be described as the source of family holdings at a given movement. This category of land was subject to redistribution after 7 or 8 years. This was a kind of rotation of lands amongst the family heads. The size of this kind of holding was low. More than 95 per cent of the communal family plots were not more than 3 hectares in size and of this more than 65 per cent were less than one hectare. Very often, the community members mortgaged and re-mortgaged their land. This was so under the pressure of money-lenders. Thus at the time of 1974 revolution in Gondar province 81 per cent of landowners were under the right to bequeath and 43 per cent to mortgage their lands.

The communal lands were passing through a drive of privatisation of the landed property. But its social outcome was the massive impoverishment of the peasantry. The rate of impoverishment in some provinces was as high as of the 50 per cent. The communal property owners...

1. Ibid., p.150.
2. Ibid., p.151.
were also falling in the category of impoverished peasantry. Its number along with the tenant operated holdings continued more than 70 per cent of total households. If categorised separately, the property owners in the process of impoverishment were as 11 per cent land owners, 36 per cent tenants and 24 per cent (of the total 38 per cent) owner operated holdings. These segments thus constituted the central force of Ethiopian society. Before revolution this segment of population was carrying the burden of Ethiopian economy. Therefore the central issue in Ethiopia was the critical condition of Ethiopian industrial and agrarian economy. This criticality was further accentuated just before the revolution. These two economic factors created an objective condition for revolution.

**Objective condition for Ethiopian Revolution**

**Agrarian Scenario:**

(a) There were no basic changes in the land relations and land tenure systems. The land relation and land accumulation remained same as it was in 1935. Of the total arable land of the country, 65 per cent was owned by the members of the Haile Selassie's family and feudal nobility and 30 per cent by the upper clergy of the Ethiopian orthodox church. This left a more 5 per cent to the millions of Ethiopian peasants. It means, the land as the main

source of production and livelihood, was in the control of autocratic feudals. There was no distribution of land. Though there were some changes in land production and land relation due to the introduction of plantation economy, but this change was in favour of bourgeoisie, and not of peasantry. Even this change was very minor.

(b) Most of the income from agrarian production was for the purpose of luxuries of feudal lord. Furthermore, since the main purpose of production was for consumption and not for capital accumulation, the labour of Ethiopian peasantry was squandered just to maintain the wasteful and extravagant living style of the ruling feudal oligarchy. The peasants used to surrender as much as 75 per cent of their produce to this parasitic class.  

(c) A large number of population was involved in agrarian production. Rest of them were involved in other fields. But the production was not benefiting the national economy. The primitive state of national economy could be seen by the fact that 90 per cent of the country's population was engaged in agriculture which was responsible for 50.3% of the gross domestic product. Modern industry, handicraft and small-scale industry, building and construction, and energy production constituted only about 15 per cent of the total output. Transport and communication and

1. Ibid., p.6.
other distribution services constituted only 15 per cent. Other services, such as banking, used to make only about 18 per cent. Further, because of the low level development of the economy, Ethiopia had been depicted as the perfect example of one commodity export economy, i.e. coffee. Since the modern manufacturing industries, that existed in the country, were owned and controlled by foreign capitalists and but not by Ethiopian nationals, the contribution of the capitalist sector to the overall development of the country’s economy had been quite insignificant.¹

(a) The mechanisation of agriculture brought major shift in agrarian transformation. Firstly, the agrarian production emerged as the commodity production. Farms and plantation were created by banking assistance. Banks played role in the interest of bourgeoisie. Secondly, either the poor peasantry and landed peasants were evicted or their lands were purchased. The peasants were deprived of the land which they cultivated for centuries. There emerged a bourgeois class. This class immediately established relation with government and became, its ally. Both the changes—the changes in the nature of production and land relation-laid to a negative transformation in agrarian field. The process of exploitation

1. Ibid., p.7.
was further accelerated by the new mechanised pattern of agriculture.

(e) There was a process of urban development. The urban land was in the hands of feudals and aristocrats. The new emerging capitalist class purchased the land on high rate. The land price became so high that poor people in urban area (who had no land for construction of house) could not purchase land on prevailing high rates. Feudals accumulated surpluses while increasing their high riches on a large scale. These groups continued to maintain relations of favour with Emperor.

Statistical information collected during the first year of the Ethiopian revolution revealed that ten members of the royal family (including Emperor), ten members of the feudal nobility, ten senior government officers with close relationship with royal family and the nobility, and twenty capitalist businessmen owned a total of 2150 hectares of urban land in Addis Ababa alone. Of the 2150 hectares of land in Addis Ababa which was owned by leading members of the royal family, 41 per cent belonged to ten most powerful members of the royal family, 54 per cent was evenly divided between ten members of the feudal nobility and ten senior government officers and rest was shared by the twenty capitalist businessmen.  

1. Ibid., p.10.
(f) When land being the main source of production was in the hand of feudals, the common people had no option except becoming a crop sharer or land slaves or unemployed labour force.

Time to time taxes were imposed and rent was collected forcibly by the government from the peasants. No qualitative changes were initiated. The number of peasantry was increasing but there was no development in agrarian production due to the lack of irrigation and fertiliser facilities.

Before 1974 revolution agrarian situation in Ethiopia was so critical that without a complete transformation of agrarian relation it became impossible to check the agrarian unrest. This unrest was reached on its peak. The objectivity of situation was demanding the complete removal of existing political system.

**Industrial production and working class:**

The industrial production was totally owned by the ruling classes. Emperor had provided concessions to foreign capitalists. He was also owning the shares in capitalist's profits. Out of the total of 273 small and medium and large scale industries which had been set up in Ethiopia by 1970, 100 were owned by foreign capital. In particular 38 out of the 51 large scale factories in the country were owned and run by foreign capitalists. The
profit as well as salaries of the foreign employees were repatriated. The rapid commercialisation of production was only for the profit of a few. The workers had no say in any management and they were provided low wages. Though the national bourgeoisie was very weak, but they were also sharing the industrial profits by trading and house construction etc. The cash crops production and plantation were only for the benefit of foreign capitalists, Emperor and national bourgeoisie.

**Education:**

The pattern of education and syllabus was prepared according to the feudal socio-economic and political interests. 93% people were illiterate. There was massive drop-out in the schools. Only 0.3 per cent were in school at the age of 15. Among them mostly feudal family's children were studying in schools. They were given education according to the need of feudal bureaucracy. The introduction of mechanisation in agriculture accelerated the process of technical education but it was at low scale and only for a few. Rural people could not think of education.


2. Ibid., p.8.
People were suffering from various kinds of diseases. For 350,000, there was only one doctor. There was only one bed in the hospital for every 3,500 hundred people. Even these facilities were availed by feudals only. 50 to 60 per cent children were dying without any medical treatment. 1

Famine and Drought:
In 1973-74, tremendous famine further deteriorated the condition of the people. Due to drought thousands of peasants of Wello and Tigre provinces were facing miseries and death. The government did not care for them at all. Emperor was busy establishing foreign relations and expending huge money on his tours. He totally ignored the possible remedies to get rid of the situation.

Political Scenario:
On political level, to consolidate the feudal aristocracy, Emperor introduced institutions like parliament, corrupt and expensive bureaucracy and organised military structure. Obscurantist and reactionary concept of "Divine Theory of State" was also introduced. In this way, a feudal-bourgeois institution developed in Ethiopia. This institution was totally irresponsible to people. The people's

1. Ibid., p.8.
condition further deteriorated to a very critical point. Feudalism was the root cause of atrocities, exploitation, illiteracy, starvation, superstitions, diseases and other evils of society. The concept of Divine rights of emperor was maintained.

According to Vijay Gupta, "The above conditions gave birth to socio-economic tensions. The major contradictions (i) between the ruling feudals and the landless peasantry; (ii) between the emerging working class and Ethiopian and foreign capitalists; (iii) between Ethiopian feudal system and growing bourgeoisie; and (iv) between the feudal aristocracy and the new educated elite engaged in education, trade, commerce and army. These contradictions resulted in an atmosphere of discontent and political conflict.¹

The objective condition was prepared to remove the government. The objectivity of the situation was waiting for any subjective occurrence. And the subjective factor emerged in February 1974 and revolution knocked the door for its arrival.

February Revolution:

The growing contradiction provided the bases for immediate emergence of February revolution in 1974. Students struggling hard since 1960 once again challenged the

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Emperor in February 1974. "On 16th February they organised demonstrations and were joined by the teachers, workers, taxi drivers, white-collar workers and thousands of unemployed.\(^1\) The Army officers, many of whom during their student days in the sixties had led militant student movements, joined people. The uprising spread widely.\(^2\)

The junior officers arrested senior officers on whom Emperor relied for support. Units of the army revolted one after another.\(^3\) Students, teachers, and workers demanded human rights, social change, agrarian reforms, price control, free schooling, release of political prisoners. Taxi drivers demanded cheaper petrol.\(^4\) The army officers belonged to all shades of opinion, conservatives, moderates and radicals. Their fight was against corrupt forces and feudal exploitation.\(^5\)

In the urban centres, teachers stopped giving lessons and students stopped going to their classes, transport services were halted, workers went on strike and violence


\(^3\) [Ethiopian Herald, 28 Feb. 1974.]

\(^4\) Vijay Gupta, Ethiopian Revolution: Causes and Results, op. cit., p.163.

\(^5\) Ibid., p.163.
erupted everywhere in the country. The situation within the military was not different. Poor rank and file soldiers' uprisings began to take shape in the various divisions and units of the country's armed forces. Although the subjective consciousness of the general masses was not high owing to the absence of a revolutionary party, nevertheless the ripeness of the objective condition was such that a spontaneous revolutionary explosion had to take place. Millions of poor peasants rose and began to seize the lands which they tilled, forcibly took over the landlords' property such as grains, brought animals and farm implements. In many areas, they burned down the landlords' farms, houses and granaries.

February upsurge was the outburst of masses against exploitation. It shocked the entire political system of imperial Ethiopia. But till now Emperor had not been deposed. The Emperor was so disgusted that on 27th February he dissolved the old Cabinet. The Prime Minister, Akliku Habte Wolde resigned and Endelkatchew Mekonnen was appointed as the new Prime Minister.

In absence of political party in February the power could not come in the hands of the new leaders. But the upsurge for a revolutionary change forced the people to

1. Ibid., p.17.
2. Ibid., p.17.
think for an effective leadership and political organisation which could provide the programme with the next agenda of transformation of power from old regime.

Cracks in Military and the Birth of Derqua

Cracks in Ethiopian military is a historical fact deeply rooted in the composition of army structure and a history of long antagonism among them. Common soldiers and the new commissioned officers were normally recruited from among the peasantry, with a large portion coming from the population of the southern provinces. The issue of land never ceased to be of concern to them. Retired soldiers had no other means of subsistence. Despite grandiose promises of land for service it was mostly officers benefited. A soldier's life involved considerable deprivation, often as the result of corruption, incompetence and sheer neglect on the part of superior officers. It also involved frequent exposure to serve hardship and violence in the course of suppression of peasant and nationalist uprisings.¹

Ethiopian mass upsurge had been always inspiring the lower section of the army. They tried many times for coup but the objective condition, as mass upsurge set in 1974

¹ John Markakis and Nega Ayele, Class and Revolution in Ethiopia (Nottingham, 1978), p.103.
February, was never as before. The February revolution was able to inspire the radical section of the army mostly belonging to the lower sections. This confrontative role of army was known to ruling classes. "The ruling classes were of the view that the military hierarchy was no longer in effective command of the apparatus."

The new Prime Minister Endalkatchew observed this development and tried to manœuvre and to overcome the crisis. But he failed in 1960s those lower sections of the army were appointed as soldiers, now in 1974, they were holding some higher posts through promotion. And these armies were holding some influence in army structure. They distributed leaflet proclaiming "Our aim was not to get salary increases." With this proclamation the army revolted in their local units. Later, all the radical group of army started trying for a coordination. By late April 1974, armed forces had reached an advance stage. On 26th April, a committee of the elected unit representatives comprising all ranks was set up under the name of coordinating committee of the Armed Forces, popularly known as Dergue. The Dergue (an Amharinya word) means "the committee of equals. In reality, while all units were called on to elect their representatives (an

1. Ibid., p.102.
2. Ibid., p.103.
An officer who must be below the rank of lieutenant-colonel, a non-commissioned officer and another rank), the elections took place in such confusion and their results led to disputes sometimes so sharp that the Dergue was not, even at the very beginning, a strictly democratic body delegated by all members of the armed forces below the rank of major. 1

On 8th July 1974 Dergue announced, Thirty-point Programme signed 'Ethiopia Tikdem' (Ethiopia First). This proclamation continued loyalty to the crown but broke with the liberal endeavour without going so far as to proclaim the revolution indeed far from it. Dergue was facing an organisational problem. For this, the Dergue moved for a further solution. The 126 members of the Dergue divided themselves into 11 committees: political and foreign affairs, defence, public security, prisons, confiscation, economy, administration, legal affairs, social affairs, culture and information. A new committee was again added to the Zemacha campaign committee. Each committee was chaired by a member of Dergue elected to the position by the Dergue as a whole. Business of it was conducted by majority voting and when there was serious disagreement, it was taken before the general assembly. Finally a superior body, with an ill-defined membership and role, acted as supreme executive.


2. Ibid.
But it remained very informal.\textsuperscript{1} The first meeting of the committee of Dergue was chaired by Major Afnafu Abate. Major Mengistu Haile Mariam, one of the third Division Delegate, won much support in that meeting due to his radical programme for the unity of Ethiopia. He proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Dergue be elected by secret ballot. Afnafu opposed this but the assembly overruled him. A week after arriving from his station in Harer, on 8th July 1974 Mengistu Haile Mariam was put as the head of Dergue. Afnafu Abate was made his Deputy.\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{September Revolution:}

After February the struggle of the masses continued. On 7th March 1974, the first general strike took place and on 8th March there was a big demonstration in which people of all religions and all faiths participated. According to Rene Lefort on 18th April 150,000 Muslims marched, demonstrating the strength of Islam which had for centuries been stifled by the state religion.\textsuperscript{3} Meanwhile the Dergue was in the process to emerge to take over the power. Dergue was able to provide an alternative as discussed above.

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., pp.65-66.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p.66.
\textsuperscript{3} Rene Lefort, \textit{op. cit.}, p.63.
Taking up various programmes, time to time, the Dergue consolidated its position and represented the urge of masses. On 12th September 1974, Haile Selassie was deposed. Parliament was dissolved and 1955 constitution was suspended. The Dergue declared the official establishment of a military government through the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC). After that, on 20th September 1974 the Dergue selected Lieutenant General Aman Mikael Andon as the Chairman of PMAC - a 110-member committee of the Army officers. Aman's selection was due to his popularity and acceptability to Eritreans where the secessionists were fighting a civil war. The name of Chairman was made public on 17th November 1974. Later the Dergue ordered to arrest Andon when he refused to despatch additional troops to Eritrea. He died resisting arrest with two other members of Dergue and 57 leading personalities were also executed on 23rd November 1974. After Andon, Teferi Bante became the Chairman of PMAC and Mengistu became the Vice Chairman. The Dergue carried forward the task of socio-economic and political transformation. The 13 point programme put forth on 8th July 1974 with a perception of Ethiopia Tikdem was again revived in a Ten Point Programme for Ethiopia Tikdem on 20 December 1974.

Ethiopia Tikdem:

With the decision to abolish the 'feud-bourgeois' order, the leaders of revolution made a proclamation known as Ten Point programme under Ethiopia Tikdem on December 20, 1974. This programme was a temporary programme before a comprehensive programme of National Democratic Revolution in April 1976 was announced. The Ten Point Programme reads:

1. Ethiopian shall remain a united country without ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural differences.
2. Ethiopia wishes to see the setting up of an economic, cultural and social community with Kenya, Somalia and Sudan.
3. The Ethiopian slogan, Ethiopia Tikdem of the revolution is to be based on specifically Ethiopian Sovereign Hebbetessebawinet.
4. Every regional administration and every village shall manage its own resources and be self-sufficient.
5. A great political party of the revolutionary philosophy of Ethiopian Tikdem shall be constituted on a nationalist and a socialist basis.
6. The entire economy shall be in the hands of state. All assets existing in Ethiopia are by rights the property

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1. Rene Lefort, op. cit., p.84. Also Lemode, 23 Dec. French Translated version from AFP. Also Kessings Archives, 1974, Translation Notes.
of Ethiopian people. Only a limited number of business will remain private if they are deemed to be of public utility.

7. The right to own land shall be restricted to those who work on the land.

8. Industry will be managed by the state. Some private enterprises deemed to be a public utility, will be left in the private hands until the state considers its preference to nationalise them.

9. The family, which will be the fundamental basis of Ethiopian society will be protected against all foreign influences, vices and defects.

10. Ethiopia's existing foreign policy will be essentially maintained. The new regime will, however, endeavour to strengthen good-neighbourly relations with all neighbouring countries.

This was the most important programme as it set the direction for future socialist society. It emphasised the unity of the nation. The country had been experiencing through various types of ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural differences. The task of the unity of the people and the country was of prime importance. The Ten Point programme emphasised the need of improving relations with neighbouring countries (Kenya, Somalia and Sudan), particularly in the economic, cultural and social fields. The programme mentioned Ethiopian Tikdem as its guiding principle.
The concept Tikdem included Ethiopian sovereignty meaning interests of entire Ethiopia to be placed as first among all other aspects and Ethiopia to be built on economy and polity which could introduce self-reliant independent economy and of ending exploitation i.e. building socialism. The programme to implement the philosophy of 'Ethiopia Tikdem' the need of forming a national party was emphasised. The programme clearly outlined the appropriation of private property and private enterprises excluding the one that served the public interests. The emphasis was on changing the land relation catering to the needs of those who were real producers.  

For the implementation of agrarian reform, the Ten point programme was taken very seriously. The district administrator was sent to look into the matter.  

1. "The Programme reasserted the principle of national unity and based its formation on the rejection of the secessionists and of Amhara supremacy. And above all in point 3 where the word 'Socialism' appeared, immediately preceded by a fundamental qualification, 'specially Ethiopian'. Points 6 to 8 followed from this, asserting the nationalisation of the means of production. The cornerstone of the revolution was laid: land to the tiller, a self-reliant and self-managing people." (Ibid., p.84.) "Points six and seven and eight assert the nationalisation of the means of production, and very central to the programme was the idea of land to the tiller, with a view to create a self-reliant and self-managing society." V. Koronikov, "A new life comes in Ethiopia", International Affairs (Moscow, 1977), p.130.

students were sent by the Dergue into countryside. Tens of thousand peasants flocked into regional capital, Soddo, one fine day in June 1975 to be told that they must take the land from the rich and refuse to give part of their crop to the landlords. The judges in the countryside were elected by the peasants from within their associations. They gave peasants the right to cultivate part of the larger holding of his neighbour. The judges elected by the associations were complete masters in matters relating to land tenure. They could impose up to three years' prison for minor offences. The task of 'egalitarian distribution of land' was completed.

Conflicting issues and the forces of conflict:

After the resignation of Endalkachew, the Dergue assumed all powers of the government. It suspended all imperial institutions, dissolved crown council and imperial court, disbanded the Emperor's personal military staff, arrested Emperor and took over even his palace. Prominent groups amongst Ethiopian intelligentsia welcomed the Dergue policies. Specially the Teachers' Associations expressed its active support. Similarly Confederation of Ethiopian

1. Ibié., p.87.
2. Ibié., p.87.
Labour Union (CELU) extended its total support in January 1975. Large groups of students and youths actively participated in the Dergue programmes.\(^1\)

However, on the eve of the revolution the make up of Ethiopian social structure was more than clear in carrying a futuristic crisis - post-revolutionary crisis. And this is so because the social groupings of Ethiopia still lacked the experience in political struggles which is crucial for the formulation of a political perspective with a tested ideology. That means the resurgence of new social forces in 1974 was at the threshold of a political stage whereby it necessitated the liquidation of the old system, but simultaneously ushered in an era of unstability, which was violently reflected in superstructure of Ethiopia. Immediately after 1974 revolution the political contradictions unfolded a somewhat chaotic process of events.\(^2\)

The absence of a political party which could have provided the mass institutional framework was very crucial in fact. The whirlwind of political events which took over Ethiopia with the process of implementation of socialist oriented programme, was marked by intense conflict among the various forces. This conflict can be broadly

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2. Ibid., p. 19.
clubbed in two categories. One, the conflict among the Dergue's components and the other between Dergue and counter-revolutionary forces.

The Dergue was composed with three groups. These were conservatives, moderates and radicals. The conservatives were led by Amun Andon, the moderates were led by General Teferi Bente and radicals by Mengistu Haile Mariam.  

The three factions differed on proposals to seize private property, nationalise land, urban property education etc. Sharp differences prevailed on the question of punishing the guilty, bureaucrats who were responsible for embezzlement, corruption and crimes which led to the death of thousands by starvation. These above issues were of radical nature. These radical reforms and steps were opposed by conservatives.

The radicals succeeded in awarding capital punishment to the '60 guilty', but compromised with moderates on the question of socio-economic changes reflected in Tikdem vague socialist programme. The radical pressurised moderates to adopt concrete programmes for socio-economic

2. Ibid., p.164.
3. Ibid., p.164.
changes. The moderates were not willing to do so. The pressure was again created on government. They (radicals) organised a mass demonstration in February 1975 demanding an end to "feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism." Ultimately radicals had overcome the situation and emerged as a powerful force in the Dergue in 1977.

The second conflict was between the Dergue and the counter-revolutionary forces led by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and Ethiopian Democratic Union (ELU) in which the latter was defeated.


2. EPRP was the product of ultra radical activities. The process of formation of EPRP started with the incident of hijacking an Ethiopian Air Lines plane by a commando group with the help of Eritrean movement. These men later became members of MEISON (All Ethiopian Socialist Movement) which was founded in 1968. MEISON later became the nucleus (after the formation) of EPRP. Till late these commanders were working as a group inside MEISON. This group always emphasised an adventurist course of action advocating *Atchebuzo* (Short Journey). All MEISON leaders were not agreeable to this advocacy. Then MEISON was branded as *Redmebuzo* (Long Journey), the differences further escalated on the question of characterisation of forces that participated in Revolution. Ultimately these sections broke away from MEISON in August 1974 and formed a new party, EPRP. For the first time in July 1975, EPRP made it self known publicly through its publication. EPRP was supported by foreign powers, CIA and loyalist groups. EPRP was also supported by CELU (Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Union). But later on CELU changed its position. EPRP's main differences with Dergue (PMAC) were the EPRP wanted civilian rule for People's Democratic Republic. It did not say how to remove the feudal aristocracy. But PMAC was strongly in favour of military rule to completely remove the hold of feudal aristocracy.

3. As early as the first month of 1975, the great names among the aristocratic rebels left the country to go contd...
Organisationally, Ethiopian society generated unique problems. The inner contradiction in the Dergue itself and the EPRP-EDU offensive against the Dergue took to bloody and serious over tones in 1976. There appeared unsurmountable differences. With these the Dergue was fully engulfed. As a result, the Dergue had to seriously look into its organisational problems. By 1976 the Dergue had laid the foundations of the new state both in theory and practice. The radical members of the Dergue had been trying to set up political institutions, corresponding to economic changes introduced since the revolution. These institutions were meant to implement economic reforms and provide a mass-based political participation. First of all the Dergue had to find out a suitable democratic...
political structure based on 'one man one vote' and free elections. With this motive the Dergue moved into the direction of providing a vanguard body. According to the new set up at the centre PMAC would be known as Dergue and it would be divided into three organs: (i) a Central Congress (Parliament) comprising all members of the Dergue; (ii) a Central Committee with 32 members elected from the Dergue; (iii) a Standing Committee of 16 members also elected by the Dergue with a Chairman, a Vice Chairman and a Secretary General. The Standing Committee would bear a collective responsibility for all decisions agreed, and guide provisional offices for mass organisations. The Central Congress would play an essentially legislative role, approve the budget and ratify international agreements and declaration for war, martial law etc. The central committee congress would be entrusted with such questions as taxation, diplomatic relations, foreign aid and loans. 1 All other level municipal administrations were to appoint the highest municipal organs, including mayors. The organisational reforms were to grant extensive judicial, administrative powers progressively to the sub-district, district and city level councils. The reforms were expected to decentralise the duties and functions of bureaucratic municipalities by transforming

1. Ibid., p. 169.
Diagram IV.1: Socialist Ethiopia (1977) Political Structure

Figure 3. Socialist Ethiopia (1977): The Political Structure

some of their responsibilities to the urban dwellers' associations at various levels. The Dergue succeeded in influencing some of the above provisions.

At the rural level, the government has created peasants' associations with administrative, welfare and judicial functions. The peasants' associations at rural levels, the urban-dwellers associations at city, sub-district levels. It was also established, along with sector and divisional (provincial) command councils, provide a network for countrywide administration. 1

With the above structure an agenda the PMAC strongly felt the necessity of a party and a programme which could be a guide to transform the Ethiopian society. For this purpose, in December 1975, an organisation named Peoples Organising Provisional Office (POPO) was created. It later changed its name as provisional office for Mass Organisational Affairs (POMOA) in April 1976. It became the highest political body immediately after the revolution. The creation of POMOA was a direct step for the preparation of a new programme. To set up a new national political party POMOA was to work to raise the revolutionary political consciousness of the oppressed masses of Ethiopia

and to help them get organised politically. The radical section of the Dergue has decided to put the scientific socialist programme at the centre of this organisation. POMCA was actively spreading scientific socialism in the factories, in the peasant associations and other state institutions. It also participates in selecting workers, soldiers, and progressive intellectuals for cadre training in socialist countries.

Beginning of Zemacha (National Work Campaign of Development through Cooperation Programme):

Zemacha programme was the most important step to raise the consciousness of general people particularly of the peasantry. It was launched in December 1974. The plan was made to send 60,000 young people, boys, girls teachers and soldiers to 6 regional coordination centres, and 57 provincial coordination sections/517 local stations. The basic units of Zemacha were composed of 30 participants. They carried the task to educate the illiterate peasantry and working class in rural areas. The slogans


were given like "Learn from the Masses and in turn teach the masses." The campaigners built roads, schools and medical facilities. They also campaigned about the idea of socialism and explained to the poor and oppressed landless peasants, the essence of the proclamation of the nationalisation of rural land. In this process many students, youths, and teachers lost their life at the hands of counter-revolutionaries.

The Nationalisation of major means of production:

The nationalisation of all the major means of production and distribution, such as big industries, large commercial farms, banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions was done. Transport and power resources were also nationalised. On the very first day of 1975, all banks and some prominent insurance companies were nationalised. In February more than 70 big industries and commercial undertakings were taken into control by the state and declared public property, though it was not before 1976 that more than two-thirds of all manufacturing units were under the control of the government.

The foreign companies assets valued at banks around Eth

1. Ibid., p. 21.
2. Ibid., p. 23.
3. V. Koronikov, op. cit., p. 128.
$50 million (£10 million) were involved in the nationalisation of banks and insurance companies. ¹ Most of the nationalised companies were foreign owned - British, Italian, US, Dutch and French.² In January 1975 all the means of production and distribution were nationalised.³

Land Reforms:

In Ethiopian upsurge, the land was the central question. Just after Revolution it was nationalised and the slogan land to the tillers was upheld. In the process of declarations and decrees the most important proclamation was the "land reforms" announced on March 4, 1975. The programme of land reforms can be called as the cornerstone of Ethiopian politics. Under the proclamation,⁴ all rural lands were converted into a collective property of the Ethiopian people. The ownership of land on private basis was straight away abolished. With no right of compensation to former owners, all land was distributed to the people working on it. This was the major step towards the abolition of the exploitative land relationship. Discriminatory practices against the women in land use were also abolished.⁵ Simultaneously,

sale, purchase, renting, mortgage and succession of land was also banned. Enlarging the scope of reforms the large-scale cash crop farms in commercial sector were declared state and cooperative property. One category of these farms were also distributed amongst the tenants from labourers and peasants, tilling and working on it before 1974. The maximum limit of a unit of farm in size was fixed at ten hectares. To keep the pace of agricultural productivity the tenants were permitted to retain the implements and working animals mortgaged to the former landlords. The compensation for this was nominal. To write off the bondage in toto it was declared that no one can appropriate or hire the labour to cultivate the landholdings - unless the cultivator is a woman, a sick or old. ¹ With this all former tenants and farm labourers were freed from the bondage.

After the declaration, the land reforms were put into implementation. In much of south, land reform was in any case assured of a welcome because of its abolition of tenancy. In areas where the staple food was enset or false banana, a long maturing root crop, land distribution did not effect each families having enset garden immediately around the house. ²

¹. Ibić., p.132.

The survey of Gojam in the Amhara land area of Bahr Dar province showed that nearly 80 per cent of the pre-revolution cultivators owning some land had gained little from the abolition of tenancy. The same was true in the case of enset cultivation area, a non-commercial crop which supported dense population of Sidamo in the southern province of Wollaita where settler landlords did not take over the land but left it in the hands of local population. By contrast, nearly 70 per cent of cultivator surveyed in the coffee growing province of Jimma in Kaffa and over 80 per cent of those in grain growing province of Nekempte in Weloga, had before the revolution been tenants, wage labourers or landless. These people could gain only from land reform. 1

In the northern region land reform did not face much difficulties. It was because of the peasants' direct control over the high lands. Landlords were not a problem. The new structure was often adapted without great difficulty under the existing rist system. 2

Christopher Clapham pointed out the major changes as: "The main change was that where as previously one could try to establish land rights in any area where one could claim an ancestor, one was now restricted to land within a single association, but though one was denied the right to seek land further afield, one was equally

1. Ibid., p.163.
2. Ibid., p.162.
protracted against incomers, and the abrupt ending of land litigation may well have come as a relief.\textsuperscript{1}

The lacuna inherent in 1975 land proclamation was that it was ill-defined rights of possession. It was shortest and most sweeping of contemporary land reform 'packages', the various forms of ownership were replaced by ill-defined 'possessory rights'. Under Article 4-5 land must be personally cultivated and transfer of land was prohibited except for succession by the wife of children, with children preferred. The proclamation did not, however, go beyond this and dealt with the right and duties of the possessor.\textsuperscript{2}

Critically evaluating the land reforms Colin Legum found that "the land proclamation was contrary to the southern desire for ownership of the land and to the central and northern land tenure system concepts. The legal factor that constituted the theoretical basis of reform - the state as owner of land - required the constant application of coercion in order to give any substance.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Ibid.}, p.162.
\end{enumerate}
In fact in the initial stage, the implementation of land reform was not very effective. This was due to the lack of organisational and institutional forces which could carry the task effectively. Some peasants associations were established in local areas but they were not well organised. Therefore it had partial impact in initial phase.

Realising the inherent shortcomings, the Dergue emphasised the need of organising peasants association on large scale. It encouraged rapidly the participation and politicisation of peasantry in the radical agrarian transformation.

The Peasant Associations - An Important Factor in Land Reform:

To put the implementation in real practice a necessary organisational structure was created through the establishment of peasant associations. The proclamation No. 71, was announced to establish the Peasants Association Organisations. In order to implement the land reform, proclamation decreed the Peasant Associations with elected committees to run them. It was established in every 800 hectare area. Specially to protect the interests of peasants ... with the holdings below ten hectares were supposed to become the member of the associations. The

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peasant households were classified into family units whereby one peasant association was comprised of 250-270 families having the lands not less than 800 hectares. The network of associations was multi-tier from province, district to down-local level. At the apex an All Ethiopian Peasants Associations (AEPA) was established in 1977 after four years of revolution. The Peasants Associations were organised in a pyramid like structure in the following way:

The structural organisation was though hierarchical, but its operational aspect was not one way higher to lower. Rather the decision making process at the highest level was totally based on consultations and feedback. The feedback was expected and ensured right from the village to the regional level. Thus the programme was two way. The respective associations right from the village level suggested their own opinions and views. The main task of Peasant Association was to build up strong cooperative movement with a progressive agriculture productive system.

The major functions of the Peasants Associations were laid down with a view to implement land reforms. In this regard the associations were entitled to take up, the following programmes:

- To distribute land among local peasants on maximum equality basis;
- To follow land use directives to be issued by the governments;
- To administer and conserve any public property within the area specially, soil water and forest;
- To establish judicial tribunal to hear land disputes arising within the areas;
- To establish marketing and credit cooperatives and other associations to help the farmers;
- To build with the cooperation of the government schools, hospitals, clinics and similar necessary institutions for the area; and
To undertake villagisation programme, to work to fundamentally transform agriculture; to organise cultural and political work; and to encourage the process of cooperativisation. ¹

Basically, the Peasants Associations were given economic and political tasks to be realised at local level. Their politicisation in associated culture and cooperation was the major political task. Economically, the Peasants Associations were supposed to articulate a progressive agricultural system growing to become the basis of self-reliant society. With the experience, now these associations have become self-governing bodies at local level. It was the remarkable achievement at the beginning of this decade that there were about 19,600 such associations comprising not less than 5 million households. ² By 1977, there were 24,000 Peasant Associations established with a total membership of 7,000,000. ³

In the process of formation, peasant associations faced many difficulties. The peasant associations were established under the direct control of the Dergue in the beginning. The programme was chalked out in order to

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¹ V. Koronikov, _op. cit._, p.134.


establish it in very hasty way. The students were sent to organise the peasants who had no local supports. The rural elite, feudal landlords and local administration were not cooperatives. They opposed land reform and peasant associations as it was against their interests. The illiterate landless and poor peasantry could not come forward in defence of students involved in Zamecha programmes. Students were lacking training, material and administrative support and basic information.\(^1\) They were unaware of Ethiopian social structure. In this process many students and political activists lost their lives. But gradually they could succeed in establishing the peasant associations on large scale. These difficulties were assessed by NDRP which further emphasised the consolidation of peasants associations providing more perspectives.

The basic thrust of the programme of the associations was addressed to build up a cooperative movement. With the proclamation of land reforms, it had been announced that "no less than three and no more than ten" Peasants Associations should form an Agricultural Service Cooperatives. Basic objectives of Cooperative Service were described as to provide a substitute for the marketing and supplies. That means the service cooperatives were given the task to buy

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the produce of members at fair price, improve supply in agricultural implements, to provide agricultural credit at reasonable rate of interest, to disseminate cooperative, socialist and ideological education. Simultaneously, the cooperatives were entrusted with the task to organise supplies of necessary consumer items. To fulfil these task a massive network of cooperatives was created all over Ethiopia. 

The land reform programme was carried out in stages. With the agrarian reforms some other programmes were also launched with the overthrow of old feudal regime. In March 1975, the Proclamation Number 31, stipulated three basic political ideals namely, equality, liberty and fraternity. The preamble of this proclamation stated that:

"Whereas, in countries like Ethiopia, where the economy is agricultural, a person's right, honour, status and standard of living is determined by his relations to the land;

"Whereas several thousand Gashas of land have been grabbed from the masses by an insignificant number of feudal lords and their families as a result of which

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the Ethiopian masses have been forced to live under conditions of serfdom;

"whereas, it is essential to fundamentally alter the existing agrarian relation so that the Ethiopian peasant masses... may be liberated from age old feudal operation, injustice, poverty and disease, and in order to lay the basis upon which all Ethiopians may henceforth live in equality, freedom and fraternity;

"whereas the development of Ethiopia of future can be assured not by permitting the exploitation of the many by the few is now the case, but only by insti­tuting basic change in agrarian relation which would lay the basic upon which through work by cooperations, the development of one becomes the development of all."¹

Essentially, this proclamation revealed two things. The basic issue after the outbreak of revolution was a new agrarian programme for the new society. This thrust is distinct in a comparison with other countries where socialist revolution has taken place. It clearly highlighted that Ethiopia on the eve of revolution was predominantly controlled by feudal forces. The very basis of survival for feudalism was agrarian system. Thus the eruption of crisis took place primarily in the agriculture sector which was manifested in unrelated sector like army and education. That is why for

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¹. Ibid.
the new leadership the utmost necessity rather exigency was to solve the agrarian crisis and to formulate a qualitatively different programme for the agrarian reforms. 1

Secondly, the necessity to have an economic programme was related with a politico-ideological programme. This element was envisioned through the promulgation of the three ideals i.e. equality, freedom and fraternity as the cornerstone of the new society.

Nationalisation of Urban Land and Property

80 per cent land of urban area was in the hand of feudo-bourgeois class. They were selling the land high profits. 85 per cent of the people were paying house rent to the feudals. To further curb the powers of the feudals and the entrepreneur class, who had huge investments in real estate and property, the Government nationalised all such urban property and assigned the task of looking into the property rent collection to Kebele (Urban Dwellers Cooperatives or Associations). 2 To further reduce the hold of the feudo-bourgeoisie on the Ethiopian economy,


the Radicals forced the Dergue to nationalise the remaining major economic units. As a result, the government nationalised private aircrafts, a number of big consumer-goods stores, and also private schools. The government also changed labour laws giving the workers their rights which had denied to them so far. 

The above discussed achievements of revolution were the landmark in Ethiopian society. The revolution made possible the complete departure from the old aged feudal system. The entire agrarian scenario changed. The reorganisation of productions in both the sectors, industrial and agrarian, were made possible. The agrarian transformation took place in a socialist perspective. The socialistic pattern of agrarian production and agrarian relations were established with a complete departure from the past. The land tenure system and the distribution of agrarian production was transformed from a land of a few to a collective body of society. Therefore revolution was landmark for a radical agrarian transformation.

Though the Ethiopian people gained the fruits of revolution, the success of revolution passed through a very challenging process. The challenges were not only from the side of class enemy of revolution but also from groups in

Dergue. The political relations inside Dergue (PMAC) were very conflicting that led to a state of anarchy in the process of revolutionary changes. Conflict among the groups emerged just after the revolution occurred in February 1974 which proved a tragedy in a way to strengthen the socialist power. In such a situation a concrete programme for further changes was needed and thus the Dergue announced the National Democratic Revolution Programme.

**National Democratic Revolution Programme (NDRP):**

To complete the task of radical socio-political transformation of Ethiopia, the Dergue declared the National Democratic Revolution Programme on April 20, 1976.\(^1\) The NDRP was divided into four sections. These sections referred to the aims and objectives of the programme and defined the immediate task before Ethiopia.

In first section, the NDRP planned to completely abolish feudalism, imperialist linkages and capitalist forces from Ethiopia. This was to be done with the united effort of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces. The purpose was to build a new Ethiopia and lay a strong foundation for transition to socialism.\(^2\) This was to be achieved

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under the leadership of the working class and on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance and in collaboration with the petty bourgeoisie and other anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces. The ultimate aim was to establish a people's democratic republic in which the freedom, equality, unity and prosperity of the Ethiopian people could be ensured, and self-government at different levels could be exercised which could allow the unconditional exercise of human and democratic rights.

The second section of the NDRP deals with the basic contents of the programme which refers to the crucial aspects of the transformation of Ethiopian society. Its emphasis was on the release of the country's productive forces for the massive growth of production and consequently for the development of the National economy. It talked about the centralised economic planning in industry and agriculture to increase agricultural production and develop heavy industries to fulfil the needs of the broad masses. 1

The NDRP proposed nationalisation of rural lands in such a way that the rights of individual owning farmers were not violated. Provision for cooperative endeavours and the material support to all peasant masses was made. In order to increase the total agricultural output of the

1. Programme of the National Democratic Revolution, Basic Documents of the Ethiopian Revolution, op. cit., pp.11-12.
country, the government promised to establish large-scale state farms at different places.

The various welfare measures were considered of prime importance for the all round development of the life of common masses of the country. Scientific education, better health facilities, better jobs and employments, assurance of the welfare of the patriots, proper facilities to the disabled and orphans, relief facilities to the drought, flood, earthquake affected people, etc., were given prime importance in NDRP Programme.

In NDRP the right to self-determination of all nationalities was fully respected. No discrimination on religious and gender basis was allowed in the country. No special privilege on religious and sex basis was given to Ethiopians. The NDRP laid down principle for reservation of integrity and peace. It gave assured respect to the national interest and that of the Ethiopian living on foreign lands.1

The NDRP outlined the immediate tasks to attain the objectives above highlighted. To liquidate feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism the immediate measures were formulated. In this regard the programme says, "It is imperative to put in practice an unrestricted exercise of democratic rights for all-anti-feudal, anti-

1. Ibid., p. 20. Those who demanded self-determination were declared illegal groups demanding secession from Ethiopia.
imperialist and anti-bureaucratic capitalist forces. These forces will be immediately accorded full freedom to speak, to write, to assemble, to demonstrate peacefully, to organise and be organised."¹ NDRP further emphasised the necessity of a political party to guide the socio-economic and political transformation of Ethiopian society.²

In the final section of the declaration NDRP outlined the necessity of a socialist democracy executed through a popular and real representation. The NDRP indicated that immediately after the masses were properly organised and a popular front was given a shape, an assembly which would assume state power, could be established. The programme viewed that such an assembly would be comprised of representative of parties and organisations that had participated in the front. These members of the assembly would be democratically elected through secret ballot in accordance with the constitution approved by the elected assembly of the people's republic of Ethiopia. This process would create a working class party to assume the leadership of the revolution. The NDRP gave the detailed outline of steps to coordinate the dissemination of the principles of

¹. Ibid., p.23. The NDRP made it clear that those who supported feudal and capitalist forces had none of the freedom, stated above.

². Ibid., p.24. The workers' Party of Ethiopia was established in 1984 on the basis of plan worked out by COPWE.
Diagram IV.3: Socialist Ethiopia (1977): A Theoretical Base

scientific socialism and established a **Provisional Office for Peoples Organisational Affairs** (POMOA) to execute the tasks visualised in the programme.\(^1\)

**Programme of NDR and Agrarian Changes:**

(a) NDR programme clearly introduced the land proclamation of March 1975\(^2\) that provided for the rural land to be be nationalised.\(^3\) The full implementation of proclamation was emphasised in NDRP. All rural lands were nationalised and declared collective property of the Ethiopian people.\(^4\)

Private ownership of rural land was abolished. All land was to be distributed, without compensation to former owners, among those who tilled it. Old landlord-tenant relationship was abolished and discrimination against women in land use rights was prohibited. The proclamation banned sale and purchase, succession, mortgage and renting of land. Privately owned large scale commercial farmers were passed into the hands of state and cooperatives and were partially distributed among peasants. The size of one plot was not to exceed 10 hectares. All farmers, tenants and farm

\[\begin{align*}
1. & \quad \text{Ibid., p.26.} \\
2. & \quad \text{Proclamation 31 of 1975. A proclamation to provide for the public ownership of Rural Lands, Chapter 2 (Addis Ababa, 1975).} \\
3. & \quad \text{Programme of the NDR, op. cit., p.12.} \\
4. & \quad \text{Proclamation 31 of 1975.}
\end{align*}\]
labourers received the right to secure for themselves the land plots which they tilled when the proclamation was promulgated.¹ Tenants could retain for themselves, at a reasonable compensation, implements and a pair of oxen belonging to the former landlords. No person was allowed to use hired labour to cultivate his holdings. But this was not applicable in the case of women with no other adequate means of livelihood or where the holder is sick or old.²

Response to NDRP and the Decisive Crisis:

When POMOA started to take up the NDR programme for implementation, the various forces responded quickly. The main currents of these forces were two. One, the forces supporting change and constituent with the PMAC, and two, the forces opposed to change represented in EPRP, EIU, CELU. There also existed a group called the MEISON (All Ethiopian Socialist Movement) which took a changing position in due course of development. From various events discussed earlier there appeared to be some relation between MEISON and EPRP these both were influencing each other from time to time. But the EPRP and MEISON also differed on various questions. The point of differences were on the characterisation of 1974 revolution. EPRP

² Ibid., p.153.
considered the February 1974 revolution unsuccessful because of the way revolution occurred. The military with junta allowed itself to be carried along by the revolutionary wave and took power to hinder the revolution and diverted it to its own ends, asserted EPRP. Indignantly, they protested, "your revolution was snatched from your hands by those who proclaimed themselves its keepers; the revolution was diverted to serve the interests of the ruling class." ¹ This answer was given by EPRP to MEISON when MEISON pointed out the need to strengthen the cause of February Revolution in 1974 and asked EPRP to work for it and thought that "the non-existence of a political line capable of uniting the various progressive groups... has led (the masses) to follow along in the wake of the February movement." ²

When the Dergue started to implement the programme of NDR MEISON supported the PAMOA in launching the plan for land reform where EPRP opposed to it. MEISON position was distinctly more laudatory towards the Dergue. All the great reforms represented a step—a limited one—on the right direction, including the labour legislation which 'certainly had major lapses' but made it possible to give (a new impulse to the workers' movement led until then by

¹. Rene Lefort, _op. cit._, p.159.
². _Ibid._, p.159.
the EPRP. These reforms were, therefore, to be supported, and indeed many MEISON militants had contributed to drawing them. 1

The differences between EPRP and MEISON also emerged on the question of their views on the establishment of government. EPRP was in favour of provisional people's government under the 'United Front' but MEISON was in favour of establishing a "People's Democratic Republic with an anti-feudal, anti-capitalist, anti-bureaucratic and anti-imperialist bias, of which 'the supreme body... shall be a National assembly whose members shall be elected by the people - a people's national congress in which the authentic representatives of the broad popular masses shall participate." 2

The differences between MEISON and EPRP further sharpened in 1976. NDNP (National Democratic Revolution Programme) was supported by MEISON. They sent a representative to the POMOA. The representative of MEISON, Fikre Merid was given an important position in POMOA. 3

1. Ibid., p.163.
2. Ibid., p.161.
3. Ibid., p.169.
With the formation of All Ethiopian Trade Unions (AETU)\(^1\), CELU became very antagonistic to Dergue. CELU openly opposed Dergue and started collaborating with EPRP. That is why in United Front CELU was invited to join. Curiously enough, the EPRP proposed neither to the Dergue nor POMOA to become a part of government. This extreme position against the Dergue was the final breach. But NDR proposed a government and clearly mentioned the alliance of Dergue and MEISON as the official basis of their agreements. Essentially NDR adopted practically all the points in the analysis of programme of MEISON.

MEISON very clearly came out to oppose the EPRP's position. The interests of EPRP pointed to assassinate the MEISON leaders to capture power. In the process of adventurism, a large number of revolutionaries lost lives in an encounter. The EPRP latter started killing leaders and cadres of the MEISON. Then the consistent attempts were made on many cadres of MEISON. These incidents brought MEISON and Dergue more closure.

The alliance between Dergue and MEISON provided the sufficient opportunity for the latter for a rapid growth.

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1. All Ethiopia Trade Union (AETU) was formed in the process of reorganising the trade union movement. CELU became non-co-operative and joined the EPRP adventurism against POMOA and Dergue. Therefore, CELU was disbanded and new Trade Union was organised that was AETU.
It went to the extent that POMOA central committee was dominated by MEISON. It commanded the 15 member central council of the POMOA. In every field of mass organisation MEISON intervened powerfully and established the powerful hold over the mass organisation. Militants of MEISON joined the administration and the mass organisation. The MEISON secured solid position in three sectors: (i) In which the administration and they stood with dynamic and politically competent young cadres, (ii) Then rural areas, but essentially at the level of peasant cadres, trainees of 'Yekkatil-66' school and the POMOA offices in the provinces; and finally (iii) representation in urban Kebeles in the election.

Meanwhile POMOA continued the implementation of NDRP. According to the declared objective of the NDRP, POMOA spread its activities on all fronts i.e. amongst workers, to mass media, students etc. It reached the rural masses in the villages. The apparatus MEISON and POMOA profoundly influenced the committees of peasant Association.

At the same time EPRP started dithering to concretise its opposition of NDRP, the EPRP announced its counter proposals. It promulgated its own programme parallel to NDRP. It demanded the immediate establishment of a

Provisional Peoples Government on the basis of United Front led by the representative of numerous organisations including CELU.¹

The growing process of alliance between MEISON and PCMOA made EPRP more frustrated. The EPRP with CELU and EDU launched a campaign of terrorism against MEISON and PCMOA. On 16th September 1976, the MEISON was declared the 'Enemy of Revolution'.² In October 1976, the prominent MEISON leader, Fikre Merid was assassinated by EPRP.³ This terrorism created a bitter hostility between EPRP and MEISON-Dergue. Between 1976 and 1978 hostility was at the peak and many Marxist revolutionaries lost their lives.

The crisis in Ethiopian politics deepened when an internal strife erupted in the PCMOA leadership on the questions earlier dealt in page 189. One group led by Sise Habte argued in favour of a compromise with EPRP. But the majority of PCMOA leadership supported Col. Mengistu's position of no compromise. The Dergue was also divided by irreconciliable objectives. Many of Dergue's members were

1. As it was well known fact that CELU was born from strikes in 1962 against the Labour Relations Decree. But imperial manoeuvring was successful in imposing on it a leadership that was regularly cooperative with the authorities and management, and strongly influenced by the North American model; organisers from the United States, assisted the cadres of CELU. Ibid., p.26.


3. Ibid., p.169.
Diagram IV.4: COPWE

Chairman (Mengistu Haile Mariam)

Executive Committee (7 members)

Central Committee (117 members)

Regional Committees (14)

Chairmen

Auxiliary Organizations

Meet in plenary session once a year

Figure 6. COPWE

worried over the rise of Mengistu. In August 1976 there were serious differences between Atnafu Abate and Mengistu Haile Marriam. In order to end the hostility, the Dergue set up a committee chaired by Captain Mogus Wolde Michael, to propose reforms in the Dergue. As per the proposed change Teferi Bante became the president of state (Chairman of PMAC), Chairman of the Standing Committee and Central Committees and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Two of the main architects of the reform, opponents of Mengistu, also won key positions. Captain Mogus Wolde Michael took the Chairmanship of the Political Affairs Committee. Captain Alemayehu Haile became secretary general of the Dergue, a post with such ill-defined limits that it could confer vast powers, Mengistu Haile Marriam retained his post of Vice-Chairman but his supporters were removed from the Dergue and sent to the provinces or elsewhere. Dergue thus came under the influence of anti-Mengistu forces. Not satisfied with improved strength of Mengistu, his opponents made a coup attempt on 3 February 1977. The coup attempt failed and Col. Mengistu emerged as victorious.

Mengistu was able to overcome the crisis in Dergue.

1. After the failure of coup attempt, Mengistu addressed a public rally in Addis Ababa at Revolution Square. His speech "lumped all his opponents together: Teferi Bante and his clique, the CIA and the United States, the EPRP, the EEU, the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front), the imperialists and the Arab reactionaries all in league in an attempted fascist coup d'etat." Rene Lefort, Ethiopia: op. cit., pp.198-99.
the assassination of six members including Teferi Bante, Alemayehu and Mogue Wolde, the mentor of coup plan in a shoot out. This coup attempt is told to have a parallel of the CIA supported coup in Chile against the Allende government. This incident was followed by a chain of violent tussle in schools, colleges and universities. Amidst this violence, the EPRP launched a call for general strike in educational institutions. This move again proves to be against them. The strike was a failure. This resulted in escalation of frenzy and frustration in EPRP leadership. Its defeatist tendency caused the brutalisation of EPRP members. According to Fred Halliday, the EPRP became a gang of gendarmes entrenched against the people's power and the revolution. At that stage EPRP decided to concentrate on one point, the assassination of the whole POMOA leadership in Addis Ababa. In this process EPRP and its allies failed to capture the power from the Dergue.

The above response to NDRP was visible as a conflict for power among the various forces. However in reality the NDRP and its implementation was the root cause of the acceleration of conflicts. It was harming the class interests of the forces involved in countering the radicals. The radicals were committed to implement

NDRP, which was anti-feudal and anti-imperialist in nature. The emphasis laid down was that the agrarian transformation in NDRP was the root cause of conflicts. The negative response of EPRP, EEU and CELU disturbed the process of implementation. But radicals succeeded in overcoming the decisive crisis and strengthened the prospects of NDRP.

In the course of implementing the NDRP, the PCMOA was facing the critical situation. To fight the challenging situation PCMOA needed more cooperation from the Dergue. It also needed the close tie-up between mass organisations and the Dergue. Therefore PCMOA needed reform in its structure and functioning.

The Reform of PCMOA:

For this, PCMOA needed a reform to eliminate the MEISON groups who were influential earlier. In July 1977, at the organisational level PCMOA decided to set up mass organisations and to dismantle old state apparatus by the formation of development committees to take over the duties of feudal, monarchical and bureaucratic set up. This process unfolded the scope for mass mobilisation and speedy economic development. The apex of this new organisational structure was constituted by the representatives from PCMOA, PMAC, AETU and the Planning Commission. The functioning of the structure for the first time ensured a coordinated relationship between the Dergue, the army, the PMAC and the mass organisations. A prominent characteristic of these
organisations was the enlarged representation of the people through the mobilisation of various sections of the society. The given figure depicts a clear picture of the newly organised political structures of Ethiopia in 1977. ¹ Now perhaps the Revolutionary forces were better organised to face the EIU and EPRP launched assaults. The Dergue almost eliminated the EPRP and its allies. After the elimination of EPRP, the POMOA stepped up for the formation of a party.

**Step for the Formation of a Party:**

The 1974 revolution took place in absence of political party. The Dergue was functioning in place of a party but was not a party as such. The assumption of the revolution by the Dergue did not settle the question of a vanguard organisation to lead the revolution. The role of the Dergue was to be only temporary. ² The Dergue which assumed the leadership of the revolution cognizant of the experiences of the various historical mass movements which failed owing to the absence of a well organised revolutionary leadership. It came to the conclusion that if, the Ethiopian Revolution were to emerge victorious, it had to have a Marxist

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Leninist vanguard party as its foremost leader. The formation of party became the serious concern for the Dergue. Because this problem was not only political one. It had close link with the economic structure of the country which unleashed political forces in such a way that the need of political party became imperative. This issue had two dimensions: "a consciously built up political process with a precisely envisaged economic programme; and a historicity of the nucleus elements of political economy." Putting the second dimension in more simple words it means the evolution of very basic dynamics of Ethiopian economy.

The Dergue took this task seriously. It gave its foremost attention to the question of forming a vanguard working class party. The task of the Dergue was to create the proper atmosphere in which the political awareness of broad masses would develop and in which all necessary ground for the creation of workers party would be laid. The basic guidelines were provided it for/in the NDRP. The attempts were made to bring Marxist-

3. Ibid., p. 249.
Leninist groups together as the first step in the process of creating a worker's party.

For the formation of party the help was taken from the Union of Marxist-Leninist organisation formed in July 1977, better known as Emaledh. The Emaledh was not a composite group, it had people with diametrically opposite views also. Though there were declarations of unity and ideological similarities, Emaledh was ridden with factionalism. When the need of party became the urgent task for the establishment of socialism, Emaledh was not considered as the basis of foundation of party. It had been realised that it was not the merger of various differing groups but of individual communists, which should provide the basis of a strong party.

This understanding was communicated to the people in a joint declaration of Emaledh. It was stated that before forming a party it was necessary to establish a centre with Emaledh members whose revolutionary merit and contribution qualified them and others, outside Emaledh who fulfilling the same criteria to join. This centre provided...

1. Emaledh: Emaledh was the unions of many Marxist-Leninist revolutionary organisations namely Labour League (League), Revolutionary Flame (Seded), Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Organisation (Malerid), the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) and Revolutionary Struggle of the Oppressed of Ethiopia (Echat). Vijay Gupta, "Ethiopia Lays Foundation of a Mass Party", Op. cit., pp.11-12.

2. Ibid., p.13.
ground ... for the formation of party... and that as the centre advanced in its work of laying down the framework for the party member, the organisation of Emalesh would gradually wither away and eventually lose its existence. It became imperative to establish a Marxist-Leninist organisation, a working people's party, through the unity and struggle of genuine communists. 1

The Union was made of five different groups which at the time professed an identity of views on the most important questions concerning the Ethiopian Revolution and which have fully accepted NDR. The hope then was that within the framework of the union, these organisations would overcome whatever remaining differences of opinion existed among them through joint struggle and democratic discussion, and eventually merge to form a single organisation. But what immediately ensued was an intense rivalry among them and a campaign to discredit one another. Recruiting new members irrespective of their ideological clarity became the central pre-occupation of some of these groups. This was being done with idea of one group emerging as the dominant element that can nominate itself as a full fledged party with or without union. These intensive machinations within the union first led to the running away of the MEISON and secondly to expulsion of the ECHAT, both the members of

the Union. Despite these differences between Emaledh, the differences arose between the Dergue-POMOA perception of party and organisations of Emaledh.

The Dergue characterised the situation as "difficult one". That is why it decided "to follow a new approach to the formation of the vanguard party of Ethiopia". Instead of joining the various existing organisations, it was decided to create a centre to establish an organisation with all the genuine revolutionaries, who had demonstrated their dedication and commitment to the cause of masses in the course of revolution. It was decided that the centre should assemble all those genuine revolutionaries under the leadership of comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam who through his indefatigable work and commitment to the cause of revolution and through his wise and decisive leadership had symbolised the determination of Ethiopian masses to build a socialist society free from all types of exploitation and oppression. On the occasion of Congress of PMAC (Dergue) Mengistu had announced that a correct perspective or outlook necessary in order to change this world of ours had not only been elucidiated by the great teachers of Proletarianism, Fredrick Engels and Karl Marx, but this truism has also been proved by the struggle of the workers of the world... A correct or scientific

1. "The question of political organisation in Ethiopia", MESKEREM, OP. CIT., p.11.
perspective reflects the genuine aspirations and efforts of the majority of mankind for peace, genuine equality and progress... It has been proved in action, time and again, that this correct world view or ideology is Marxism-Leninism. In this respect, if we consider for a while the complex struggle carried out in the process of our revolution, it will enable us to visualise clearly the road traversed and to chart out the future course of action... 

With these ideas and thinking came into being the Commission for Organising the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia (COPWE) on December 18, 1979. Presumably COPWE was augmented to serve as the new centre for assembling the genuine revolutionary of the country.

Structurally, like a vanguard party COPWE resembled any Marxist-Leninist organisation. A Congress at the apex was created to formulate and approve all the relevant decisions that the commission was to carry out in its task of expanding the process of party formation. Next to Congress, there was a central committee that guided the work of the commission in between the sessions of the Congress and next to the central committee there was the executive committee that guided and supervised the day-to-day activities of the commission. In addition to these higher bodies, COPWE had also a network of organisational

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structure that connected with broad masses and were engaged in various aspects of social life. These are the regional, provincial and district committees down to the primary organisations. In its task of party formation, COPWE was supposed to pass through three distinct phases, the first one was the phase of preparation which culminated in the calling of the first Congress of the COPWE which took place from June 16 to 19, 1980. During this phase all necessary rules and regulations that governed the activities of the commission were prepared. These documents were presented to the first Congress of the commission for approval. The second phase was the phase of intensive activities for laying down the organisational structure of the commission. During this phase intensive recruitment of the members was made, the existing mass organisations such as the All Ethiopia Trade Union, the All Ethiopia Peasants Associations and Urban Dwellers Associations were strengthened. The efforts to strengthen these organisations, COPWE, under its guidance, pushed these organisations in the masses directly. Mass organisations and professional associations were made active among workers, youths, women, intellectuals in rural and urban areas. They were all linked with COPWE. Members of associations and organisations were given training in

political schools. Check up of functioning by COPWE's direction made these organisations more active. Time to time leadership of these organisations was replaced on the basis of 'capability and conscious activities'. This turned COPWE into a powerful body. The COPWE and Dergue also established Revolutionary Ethiopia's Women's Associations (REWA) and Working People's Control Committee (WPCC) on the nation wide basis. During this period the organisational structure of the COPWE was extended to two regions, sub-regions and districts with the primary organisation as the foundations.

These organisations were the political fronts to implement the decision of COPWE interact with the masses. COPWE had the direct hold to mould the organisation to act according to its perspective. The ideologically developed and active cadres were recruited for the membership of the COPWE. Through its cadres, COPWE could pass its decision in the organisations and reach to the masses directly. Therefore there was close relation between COPWE and the mass organisations like AEPA, AETA, Kebeles, UDAs, REYA, REWA and professional organisations. Later on these organisations created a favourable condition for the formations of a party—"Workers Party of Ethiopia" (WPE). This phase culminated in the calling of the Congress of the COPWE in January 1983. The final phase during which important document such as programme, party rules and
regulations and other relevant documents were prepared for the most significant purpose that was to call the founding Congress of the Workers Party of Ethiopia in September 1984.¹

Mass Organisations:

(i) The All Ethiopia Peasants Association (AEPA):

AEPA covered the vast strata of peasantry, the most numerous section of the society. It was founded in September 1977 and consolidated through actions in later periods. It represented the membership of five millions, both men and women. They were grouped in 20,153 basic organisations. There were 458,774 peasants, men and women, who were elected to serve on various levels as members of executive committees, judicial tribunals and control committees of their associations.²

AEPA, a powerful forum, assisting and encouraging peasants, contributed to a great extent in the building of new life of peasants in rural areas. They propagated these ideas among the peasants to raise the consciousness for popularising socialist production relation in order to eliminate the exploitation of man by man. It proved


2. Ibid., p.33.
Diagram IV.5: Auxiliary Structures and their connection to the centre

Figure 8. Auxiliary Structures (and their connection to the centre)

a useful instrument to coordinate the participation of peasants for the implementation of social projects. It worked for the unity of working people of other sections. This organisation achieved the marvelous task of integration of more than 11 million peasants with COPWE. It continued to consolidate the land reform programme, task carried forward by the Dergue (PMAC) and programme of NDR. Over 3,500 service cooperatives have been formed and rendered valuable assistance to the farmers that is how the AEPA played a key role in attempting to achieve the success of socialist system.

Though the Peasants Associations (PAs) proved to be an important organisational factor in the agrarian transformation but it carried some critical features also. In the beginning the peasant associations were used as the political apparatus of the government. They were merely bureaucratic set-ups and they had no role whatsoever in matters concerning rural development. Peasants Associations (Kebbelles) turned to the locally based government agencies (such as for instance, the Ministry of Agriculture) on the Woreda administration whenever they needed assistance. The PAs structure above the Kebbelle was not thus organically linked with the fundamental needs of peasantry. 1

1. Desalegen Rahmato, op. cit., p. 84.
Secondly, the leadership of peasants associations were captured by hitherto privileged sections. The leadership of the rural organisations were dominated by those who were previously privileged positions, that was former landlords, or well to do peasants, and that the majority of peasants, who were peasants or poor had been excluded from office. The peasant associations leadership could be considered a distinct group of middle or rich peasants which had benefited the most from the land reform at the expense of the general mass of peasantry.

Thirdly, the leadership of peasants associations were nominated from the above. The local peasants associations were manipulated by district officials. Leaders of peasants associations were not democratically elected from the basic unit existed at local level. The primary organisations at the grass root level were separated by a wide gulf from those higher above, and a healthy inter-flow of ideas and initiatives seriously inhibited. Though the government directives were channelled downwards, hardly any thing of substance transmitted upwards from below.

1. Ibid., p. 86.
2. Ibid., p. 86.
3. Ibid., p. 84.
Despite above criticisms the Peasant Associations remained the basic channel of communication between the state and the peasantry. The problems emerged in the process were solved. Endeavours were made by the Government to check the lacuna.

(ii) The All Ethiopia Trade Union:

The AETU remained close to the centre and spread its work into urban and township areas supervising the labour movement in accordance with the socialist ideas. The AETU was created in 1977 to replace the then existing trade union CELU which was pro-feudobourgeois in character. As per 1975 Labour Proclamation, the AETU (earlier CELU) was a super union constituted of all industrial workers unions. All trade unions compulsorily had to be members of the national union. Its basic task was to articulate socialist values in tune with the hopes of the proletariat. The most active and conscious elements of AETA were recruited with growing emphasis to the membership of the COPWE. The working class was guided by COPWE and the AETU worked as its working class organisation. AETU played a significant role to protect and promote the interests of its members and to develop and safeguard the revolutionary gains. The AETU associated the Ethiopian workers with the struggle of the

world-wide working people through the membership of international organisations and bilateral relations with organisations that struggle for the causes of peace, democracy and socialism. AETU became a member of ILO, the organisation of African Trade Union, and had strong links with the trade unions in the socialist and progressive countries.

AETU came into existence when confederation of Ethiopian Labour Union was disbanded. In the beginning AETU was utilised in countering the influence of CELU. AETU was used as the political weapon to counter the forces against the new regime. It did not perform its work as trade union works in increasing the productivity. It involved more in the functioning of state machinery. It became a sample tool of government. The organised labour movement was reduced to the status of state agency. Theorganised labour movement was reduced to the status of state agency.\textsuperscript{1} COPWE journal Meskerem criticised, "its narrow and cliquish outlooks" and its preoccupation with trade disputes and made clear the need for its thorough reorganisations.\textsuperscript{2}

(iii) The Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association (REWA):

The REWA was created in September 1980. This was basically an attempt to incorporate all women's associations

\begin{itemize}
  \item[1.] John Markakis and Nega Ayele, Class and Revolution in Ethiopia, \textit{op. cit.}, p.186.
\end{itemize}
under one rubric. REWA helped in creating new zeal in the woman. The leaders of the REWA proclaimed that they were conducting a "class struggle" mainly participated by the oppressed women. The Dergue gave REWA the status of a leading revolutionary organisation required to liquidate the horrible feudal biases against the woman in Ethiopia.¹

There were elected members at various levels. It carried the responsibility of mobilising the oppressed women to take part in multiple practical tasks both in urban and rural areas. It worked for the eradication of illiteracy, upgrading the skills of women, expanding various social services and recreation centres. It fights for the eradication of harmful practices and customs that undermine status of women.²

Prior to 1980 all women associations functioned as part of a Kebelle, factory or peasant association but held a status independent of them. They worked with these structures but were separate from them.³ Land reform was one of the important factor in liberating women. It helped a lot in organising the women associations. After the land reform it was much easier to organise the women. When

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1. Ibid., p.323.
the rich families owned the land, women weren't allowed to till the fields... Since they got a percentage of the crop, the landlords only wanted strong men working in the fields, so if the husband died the women had to leave and become either servants, beggars, or prostitutes. But with this land reform every family, whether it be headed by a man or a woman, got the same amount of land to work. 1

In spite of its achievements, it had some negative points. It was also an attempt to deal with this social confusion. Under REWA class rather sex was seen as the primary force of oppression and women's associations worked more in line with Kebeles, factories and peasant associations. Still integration was never to be total and even under REWA women's associations retain a status of limited independence. 2

(iv) The Urban Dwellers Associations (UDAs):

UDAs came into being with the historic proclamation of 1977 that nationalised all urban land and extra houses. This organisation remained close to the central organs of state, despite the fact that they had autonomous and independent social and political responsibility. This made their structure and functioning different from the peasants


2. Ibid., pp.63-64.
UDA association. UDAs mobilised the urban masses numbering 4.4 million or about 15% of the total population of the country. The main aim of UDAs was directed to "provide assistance to rural dwellers to get organised in Kebeles, Higher and Central Associations and run their own affairs, solve their own problems and directly participate in political, economic and social activities.

And the second aim was to enable the broad masses of urban dwellers to be armed with Marxism-Leninism and contribute their due shares in the struggle to liquidate the land of Ethiopian feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism."¹ The UDAs could be able to bring together proletariat and petty bourgeoisie into the revolution through a consistent endeavour of making a pool between thing on the basis of ideological unity.

(v) The Kebeles:

The Kebele was the lowest unit in the structure of the UDAs. It was a very important democratic forum where all the city dwellers in the respective areas meet, discuss and decide on all matters that affect them. Through their Kebeles, Higher and Central organs, the broad urban masses engaged in various political and socioeconomic activities and strive to stamp out social evils and participate in the programmes of social defence, urban development,

1. Ibid., p.38.
establishment of people's shops, cottage industries and other cooperatives. They also encourage urban dwellers to organise themselves and build up their own houses according to accepted plan and to participate in the campaign to eradicate illiteracy.¹

Besides above associations, many more frontal or frontline organizations were created by the COPWE. Among them, the two organisations are well known, one is the Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association (REYA) and professionals Associations.

(vi) Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association (REYA):

Established in September 1980 to organise the Ethiopian Youth and Students, REYA was to serve as front organisations of the COPWE and later of the party. The task of REYA was to mobilise and guide the youth between the age of 14 and 30 to participate in all activities beneficial to the material and spiritual development of youth and society at large. According to the Ethiopian Government report, the contribution of REYA was enormous in the fields of economy, education and culture.²

² Ibid., pp.32-33.
(vii) **professional Associations**:

Professional Associations were set up with similar purposes. They covered the various professional strata involved in the development of society. There were eight such professional associations which were rallying thousands of intellectual around the National Democratic Revolutionary Programme. These included teachers, medical professionals, veterinarians, journalists, writers, musicians, actors and printers.¹

COPWE planned to form the political party with operational capacities in all parts, sections and stratas of the societies. The purpose was to prepare Ethiopia to move to a civilian government from Provisional Military Administration Council.

**Agrarian Reform once again:**

In the process of formation of party the plan of Agrarian reform was simultaneously chalked out. The new emerging situation necessitated tackling again the agrarian problem. The earlier endeavours, made twice in 1974 and in 1977, were not sufficient to accelerate the agrarian production. Land reform had reduced inequalities in the countryside, but it had not removed them altogether. Between the peasant cultivating less than a hectare and one with the ten times more, as the law allowed, there was yawning.

distance between deepest misery and relative ease. Although it was expected initially that the distance would not vary since each peasant could not extend his holding by purchase or hire and had to rely on his and his family's own labour to cultivate it. "\(^1\)

The second problem emerged from the communal (common) land ownership system which was a long established land tenure system in Ethiopia. The previous land reform laws did not affect communal lands on which the herds grazed. There was nothing to stop anyone buying cattle, putting them to graze on the communal grazing land, deriving a double profit by selling them for butcher or by hiring them out to draw a plough. This latter mode of accumulation in fact occurred with most agricultural implements: poor peasant, often without tools, had to turn to his richer neighbour since the landlord was no longer there to hire them. \(^2\)

The third problem emerged from the state controlled system. The state, having taken control of the banks, set up a system of individual loans to peasants early in the revolution. The rich peasants were benefitted from the loans because they offered to Banks the better guarantee of repayment. Sometimes three

\(^1\) Rene Lefort, *op. cit.*, p. 296.
or four rich peasants would get together, within an association, to buy a tractor or to hire it from the neighbouring tractor station. They increased their productivity.  

Fourth problems emerged due to the selection of leaders for the Peasant Associations. The Peasant communities had often put at the head of their organisation those who, by their dynamism and their higher level of education, seemed best suited to defend their interests against the outside world. The higher stratum of peasantry, which demonstrated these qualities more than the others, naturally took the leadership position in the associations.  

Thus emerged a new stratum which had started off from a broader material base and was endowed with more drive - the 'Kulaks'. Kulaks made the powerful hold on peasant associations.  

This situation required all the efforts to implement the agrarian reforms and to put an end to the emerging lacunae. "Mengistu Haile Marriam solemnly used the occasion of fourth anniversary of Revolution to publicly point out the problems while implementation of land reforms faced. He said, "here and there we see individualism on the part  

of the peasant producer. We have to fight against this heritage of the feudo-bourgeois system. This individualism has manifested itself in relation to the food market...

To produce only what is sufficient for one's own family, to refuse to bring crops to the market until price rise, to under-produce in order to maintain prices at a very high level, all these are manifestation of an individualistic and anti-socialist attitude. ¹ In order to fight the anti-socialist tendencies it was decided to move for the collectivisation of agriculture. The government stressed the Dergue's plan of setting up state farms. It was declared "The State farms... should become the backbone of our national economy, they have to be enlarged and be made to increase their yields by several fold." ²

In this direction the state farms were organised and cooperative system was introduced. Agricultural activities were divided into peasant sector, cooperative sector and state farm sector. The crop production of peasant sector and cooperative sector constituted 74 per cent of the country's overall crop production and about 97 per cent of the total cultivated area. Agricultural production from the state sector constituted about 5 per cent of the country's overall crop production. Its farms account for

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1. Ibid., p.248.
about 1.5 per cent of the nation's total land under cultivation. It's main objective was to provide agricultural products for export and local industrial outputs.

To make this plan successful the National Revolutionary Development campaign was established. The campaign was launched with much funfare on 29 October 1978. Its objectives were:

1) To eliminate the current food deficit;
2) To build up and use rationally foreign exchange reserves;
3) To increase industrial output;
4) To bring order to the trading sector economy; and
5) To lay the foundation for the gradual elimination of existing social problems.

Agrarian reforms were given more emphasis in forthcoming period. On 25 June 1979, a Decree was issued, which was a far reaching step. It was not well publicised. It laid down the goal: collectivisation of land, with peasants keeping for their own use only between 1,000 and 2,000 square metres and one or two heads of cattle. And it laid down the path to achieve this: "more producers' cooperatives

2. Ibid., p.163.
based on the 'voluntary' adherence to peasants, common ownership of land and implements, payment based on work done, and the loss of all one's personal contribution in the event of (authorised) departure from the cooperative. It was a war machine directed against 'Kulaks'.  

The Dergue was implementing the above land reform firmly. The resistance came from the provinces like Gojam, Begemder, Wollega, Illababor and Gomo Godfa. But the resistance was coming mainly from Kulaks. Kulaks were supported by counter-revolutionary force but ultimately they were defeated by the Dergue.

Thus the agrarian reform was completed in a revolutionary manner i.e. by bringing qualitative changes.

**Conclusion:**

The period (1974-80) opened a new chapter in the history of Ethiopia. The ongoing political dynamics culminated in overthrowing the feudo-bourgeois Imperial System of Ethiopia in 1974 and established a socialist system in the country. Haile Selassie, the Emperor since 1930, was deposed from the power on 12th September 1974 and the Constitution of 1955 was suspended. The special rights of landlord were abolished and parliament was dissolved. The Dergue took the charge of entire affairs of Ethiopian polity. The new life in Ethiopia begun since 1974 with motto of Ethiopia

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Tikdem. The new regime faced many challenges posed by the traditional exploiting classes and the counter-revolutionary forces with the help of foreign powers.

Ethiopia has an agrarian nature of economy where the main producer comes from peasantry. After the establishment of Ethiopian Tikdem the emphasis on agrarian transformation remained the main political task of PMAC. The entire masses of peasantry, who were exploited from generation to generation by the feudal regime, were to be brought in the process of revolutionary agrarian transformation. Therefore PMAC took up many tasks for land reform. In the programme of National Democratic Revolution the land reform was given supreme priority. The land reforms were opposed by the old feudal landlords, but the PMAC boldly faced this challenge and achieved remarkable success. In the process of revolutionary struggle the EPRP, EDU, EPLF and other organizations played a counter-revolutionary role with the help of foreign hands. PMAC continued its fight against the conspiracy hatched by the counter-revolutionaries.

Since February 1974, Ethiopian politics passed through a phase of political instability and agrarian challenges. It was a herculean task to the forces of revolutionary transformation to overcome such challenges. But the consistent effort of Dergue made it possible. The process of transfer of power from old classes to the oppressed
class still continues. Since 1978 due to difficulties and obstacles in carrying out agrarian reforms a new group, with characteristics of Kulaks emerged. Apparently this group had been eliminated by the Dergue but it is quite feasible that they be waiting for an effective time. Simultaneously the endeavour for economic growth by changing the old production relation continued. Agrarian production, the basic constituent of Ethiopian economy, and agrarian reform, the basic problems of Ethiopian society, remained the prime task of National Democratic Revolution Programme. The Dergue proved greatly successful in its operation to establish the relations between agrarian productive forces and new political structure. This relation attracted the vast section of Ethiopian masses. It was not only a fact that the agrarian production forces were brought in the political dynamism but the agrarian reforms were also given prime importance to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the masses. The dynamics of the forces of agrarian transformation and its relation with political structure became the crux of the success of Ethiopian revolution. The development of both the process, the process of agrarian transformation and the consolidation of political power with the collaboration of agrarian became interdependent, dynamism of revolutionary Ethiopia. The conjugation of these two factors, and the developing political process necessitated the formation of party for which COPWE was
established, with the help of mass fronts organisations like AEPA, AETA, REWA, UDAs, Kebeles, REYA and other professional fronts which led the foundation of strong party in future named as Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) in 1984.

Therefore we see the role of agrarian forces in politics and the role of politics in agrarian transformation and the special features in this period. And this phenomenon ensured the establishment of a socialist state in Ethiopia.