

References

Williams R 1975 The Country and the City, Paladin, London.

National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa, John Markakis, African Studies Series 55, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987 (314pp, price not stated). This may become the standard work on the Horn of Africa. It demonstrates painstaking scholarship and mature thought. John Markakis surveys the nations and classes of Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia and surrounding areas. He shows how colonialism radically tipped the rural-urban balance in favour of the towns. Imperial rule gave way to nationalist control of the state; radical soldiers took over from the nationalists; the soldiers turned to socialism; rural and other dissident nationalists rebelled unsuccessfully. War and famine were the result of national and class struggle in unforgiving terrain.

Chapter one surveys the material base and the institutions humans built upon it. The natural endowment was parsimonious. "Conflict was the inevitable concomitant of scarcity and mobility, with land and water as its primary objects" (p24). Chapter two treats the brief but shattering colonial period. Agriculture was transformed, and the towns became supreme over the countryside. Pastoralism was economically, socially and politically marginalised. Subsistence cultivation was irreversibly debased. Nevertheless, there was some indigenous rural support for the resulting post-colonial state.

Chapter three argues that anticolonial nationalism was not a mass crusade. It mobilised the group's spawned by the new economy and state. Colonial denial of access to the state was the mainspring of nationalism. The victorious nationalists therefore preserved the colonial economic and state structures once they had achieved access. Chapter four treats in fine detail the attacks on the state in post-colonial times. Uneven development exacerbated material and social disparities. Disadvantaged groups fought for access; the nationalist rulers fell back on the armies; eventually the military took control.

The fifth chapter is the longest, and chronicles 'the Eritrean revolution'. Temporal considerations lay beneath religious mobilisation. Some muslims, lacking access under the *ancien regime*, opposed Ethiopian rule of Eritrea. Other Muslim notables hoped to regain lost fortunes, and supported Ethiopian rule. Initial Christian support in Eritrea for Ethiopian rule dwindled when federation gave way to a provincial system with control held in Addis Ababa. Christian support for Eritrean nationalism grew; but that nationalism was riven by fractional splits. Each fraction wanted preferential access to the nascent Eritrean state. Some fractions sought Arab support; others did not. Eritrean identity became primarily a site of struggle between fractions.

By contrast, as chapter six explains, dissidence in the southern Sudan seemed less nationalist. The goal seemed merely regional recognition. Nevertheless, Markakis argues, the dissidents wanted control of the state in the southern Sudan, and were thus the same as any other nationalist movement in the Horn. Again, the dissident movement was highly fractionalised.

Somalia at independence lacked three regions which it coveted: the Ogaden, the northern Kenyan frontier, and Djibouti. Uprisings in these regions sought Somali

support, but the Somali state was ill-prepared to help. In chapter seven Markakis describes three futile rebellions, one in the Ogaden in 1968, one in the northern Kenyan frontier from 1964 to 1967, and one in Bale and Sidamo in Ethiopia from 1965 to 1968. Pastoralists and subsistence farmers could not resist the modern state, but the conditions that led them to rebel did not disappear.

Chapter eight depicts the seizing of power by radical military regimes in the Sudan (May 1969) and Somalia (October 1969); it leads on to the rash war with Ethiopia. By 1980 in Somalia, "the promise of the October Revolution had turned into a nightmare" (p234).

In Markakis's view, a "striking aspect of radical military rule is the espousal of socialism, an ideology the soldiers try to blend with nationalism in order to shore up the foundations of the new state" (*ibid*). Markakis believes socialism in professional soldiers is the outcome of "idealism, naïvety and opportunism" (p235). After a century of capitalist imperialism the only credible alternative is socialism, and the soldiers are 'seduced' by the promise of socialist transformation. Socialism rallies the discontented and gives sole legitimacy to the state as the champion of the masses. The labour movement comes into conflict with the soldiers, who strive for productivity in the state sector. The labour movement promptly loses autonomy, "allegedly because in a socialist society there is no need for autonomous organisations to defend class or corporate interests" (*ibid*).

The radical soldiers claim that ethnic and regional splits have no basis once class contradictions are resolved. When such splits persist, wars of suppression result. The soldiers end up in a struggle for survival like that of their predecessors, and are capable of complete political somersaults. These, and the changing of foreign patrons, mark, not autonomy, but the nadir of the state's fortunes, according to Markakis.

Haile Selassie's fall in 1974, chapter nine tells us, was rather different. The Dergue's "members shared a mutinous disposition and the desire to hobble the ruling clique of aristocrats and imperial retainers, but had no idea of how to replace them" (p237). They proclaimed a specifically Ethiopian socialism, which "was hardly Marxism-Leninism, but was a start". The economy was nationalised, displacing foreign managers by the Ethiopian intelligentsia; and land ownership was radically reformed without compensation. This creative phase of the revolution, in Markakis's opinion, served the social classes which stood to gain from it. However, opposition from the left pulled the regime in a more radical direction still. The Dergue purged the opposition and instituted two internal purges of its own. Colonel Mengistu took power and conducted an official campaign of 'Red Terror' (p243). At this Somalia invaded the Ogaden; the United States cut off assistance; and the Soviet Union promptly helped the Ethiopians. War disadvantaged the opposition. The people supported the state in expelling the Somali invaders.

The Ethiopian government then turned to the problem of dissidence in Eritrea, and after sustained conflict managed to splinter the Eritrean movement into rival fractions. The Ethiopian state had then also to contend with young radicals in Tigray and Oromo. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian government entrenched its rule, and sustained a vast military effort, despite the famine of the nineteen-eighties.

In 1974 Haile Selassie had been criticised because "drought is natural, famine is man-made". In 1984 "the Dergue blamed the famine entirely on the drought"

(p269). The tenth anniversary of the revolution was celebrated. "Foreign guests flocked to Addis Ababa to be fêted in grand style, and to applaud the self-praising rhetoric of the country's rulers who barely mentioned the famine. This, while the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse rode through the countryside" (p269).

Both the opponents and the supporters of the Ethiopian state embraced socialism, Markakis tells us, but socialism "defends the state by denying legitimacy to those who seek its reform" (p270). Moreover, because of its thoroughgoing land reform, the Ethiopian state was able "to raise peasant armies and fight multiple wars for a decade" (p270).

Markakis's concluding chapter is a powerful synthesis. States in Africa have created nations, rather than vice-versa. State- and dissident-nationalisms have the common factor of exclusion from (or access to) power and its perquisites (p273). When they clash, the one has the power and the other does not. The roots of power in the post-colonial state lie in the towns, not the countryside. The state is "an institution for which the traditional pastoralist mode of production has no need. In the Horn, pastoralists were fighting primarily against the existing states, rather than for the states of the future envisaged by the dissident nationalists" (p275).

Socialism, in Markakis's view, was used to prop up the state when nationalism proved too weak by itself. "The choice of socialism was not made arbitrarily by the few who wielded power. It was dictated by desperate need and popular expectation. Indeed, no other option was considered credible at the time: a telling verdict on the failure of conventional development strategies" (p275). In this, Markakis is patently correct: conventional economics has little to say and no support to show, in the Horn of Africa. Yet Markakis is too cynical about socialism in general and Marxism in particular, in the Horn. There was and remains a substantial popular support for socialism, which goes well beyond any supposed desperation or lack of alternatives.

Markakis understandably seeks to champion the starving peasants and pastoralists. Collapse of production in this sector has no impact elsewhere, because it has long since ceased to feed the urban people. "Awareness of famine reaches the towns only with the arrival of starving humanity from the countryside" (p275). The lack of impact on the towns "explains the indifference of the townspeople and the callousness of rulers" (*ibid*). The Sudan directed lorries from famine relief, to supply Khartoum with sugar for the Ramadan celebrations.

Markakis concludes that modern military and administrative resources give no recourse to the peasantry; moreover, the peasant ranks are always ethnically fragmented. On the other hand, he claims, peasants and pastoralists join dissident movements that sometimes transcend ethnic divisions (p276). This conclusion is romantic: there was and remains substantial rural support for Addis Ababa, as the peasant armies demonstrate.

Markakis begins by showing that force was the only means of securing claims to pasture and water, and was a constant factor in nomad life (p16). The root of war is the parsimony of the material base. If the towns now have an alternative base it is not surprising that they are callous and aggressive towards the starving. Amartya Sen's law holds: there is food adjacent to every famine, but the starving do not have the economic or political power to eat it (p xv).

The problem remains: the pastoralist and peasant economic base is long since

destroyed. Their mode of production is invalid. The future has to lie both in urbanisation, and in rural revival, built on very different productive forms. The Horn of Africa is in no hurry to discover these new forms. It may well be that in socialism some of the answers will be found, despite Markakis's doubts. The vast intellectual and economic powerhouse of the west will undoubtedly play a part too. The solution will still be African. Until then, Markakis's description will hold true: the "starving, homeless multitude were now counted in millions" (p xv).

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Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees, B E Harrell-Bond, OUP, Oxford, 1986 (440pp, price not given).

This book is an appraisal of assistance programmes to Ugandan refugees who crossed into Southern Sudan in 1982. The publication of the book was very timely in view of the currency of refugee issues in Africa, and the rapid increase in the incidence of forced migration. The vast majority of refugees and displaced persons in Africa are in rural areas and had, until recently, escaped the scrutiny of researchers and academics. This book is one of those rare instances of such scrutiny.

Although many voluntary humanitarian aid agencies have rallied to help in instances of tragic involuntary mass movements of people, the assistance offered in such cases has rarely been questioned. Usually, questioning such seemingly necessary aid could be regarded as inhuman, since one would be asked whether one would rather see death due to hunger than humanitarian aid. What is being questioned in this book is definitely not the advent of aid itself, but how it is delivered and the extent to which the recipients are involved in decisions that affect their lives.

The title of this book is most telling and makes no pretence to neutrality. The stance taken, right from the start, provokes even the 'converted' to further question the benefits of aid. The perspective adopted is clear and the frankness is humbling.

The book is divided into two parts. The introduction (27 pages) gives a clear and succinct background to the study and clearly exposes some of the assumptions that have hitherto dominated discussion on the behaviour of refugees and responses to need by aid agencies. The introduction, therefore, puts the reader in a frame of mind to absorb the remainder of the detail.

Part of the book describes the 'patterns of flight' by Ugandans, the characteristics of their settlements and the demographic features of the refugee population. Part two of the book looks at the reaction of aid agencies and the impact of the delivery systems. In this book, the author destroys the major assumptions on refugee behaviour and exposes the subtleties of human need in contrast to the intentions of aid agencies. The revelations from the study could be quite disturbing to those who believe strongly in the intentions of humanitarianism and those who have given selflessly to this cause.

The book is of practical value not only to researchers (who could find inspiration in the innovative methodology) but also to practitioners and implementers of aid agency policies. For the latter group the book may be threatening in that it questions their selflessness. The writer, however, maintains that this was not the major intention of the book. It is stressed in several parts of the book that if cutting back of