

**Ethiopian famine**

# More than million peasants die from starvation

(CUP)—More than a million Ethiopian peasants have died from starvation in the past year. Millions more are selling their meagre possessions and are forced to migrate to the cities and towns in the hope of finding relief and employment.

The great majority of these people trapped in hunger fall on the way-side never reaching their destination. Those who reach the towns are corralled into camps which are protected by an army equipped with modern arms but no life saving supplies.

Unknown numbers of peasants who are unable to join this mass exodus, simply perish in their villages. This Ethiopian famine is now three years old.

The plight of the Ethiopian people has not been made public — it has been the subject of a conspiracy of silence. The Ethiopian government

headed by Haile Selassie, has followed a deliberate policy of information repression.

The recent exposure of a small part of this famine by a Thames Television documentary film, produced by four people who were able to penetrate the wall of censorship erected by the Ethiopian regime, provides a stark visual glimpse into the realities of present day Ethiopia.

This film called, "The Unknown Famine" provokes the inevitable question of how such a devastating phenomenon could happen.

Feudalism has been the way of life for Ethiopia for centuries and absolute monarchy has been its government; no hallowed images of exotic untroubled traditions, of peaceful peasant peoples can hide the fact that Ethiopians are under the yoke of a feudal system, perhaps understand-

able in the Middle Ages, but the apotheosis of archaism in the 20th century.

While nominally an independent nation for over 3,000 years, (except for the short Italian fascist occupation from 1935-41), Ethiopia has been and still is controlled by a landlord class in alliance with an emperor and the Church, both huge landlords in their own right.

While Haile Selassie has always had a carefully cultivated good press in the west ever since he spoke at the League of Nations in 1936, his power rests on a regime of unmitigated exploitation and oppression along with enforced backwardness.

What is hidden from public knowledge is the fact that while the Ethiopian people were resisting the Italian fascist conquerors, Haile

Selassie deserted the people and the country and took up residence in a safe sanctuary in England, only to be reinstated by the British government in 1941.

The misery of the people, is covered by a carefully orchestrated veneer of slowly evolving and rationally planned modernness.

After 50 years of such modernness, the Ethiopian people remain 98 per cent illiterate and ravaged by epidemics and life-destroying diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and syphilis. The country's few hospitals and doctors are concentrated in the relatively affluent urban areas while the vast majority of the population has no health care of any sort.

Per capita income in the country is \$35 to \$50 per year. Its small industrial work force of 200,000 is paid, on the average, 40 cents per day.

These facts alone belie any claim by the Ethiopian regime and its image-makers that they are developing the country or assisting its people. Like other backward and reactionary regimes of the present day, it has sold the natural resources of the country and the future of the people to a consortium of foreign investors headed by the United States.

Coffee, the largest export crop in Ethiopia, is wholly controlled by US interests who also maintain on Ethiopian soil the largest American military base in Africa.

The little industry that exists is dominated by US, German, British, Italian and Dutch industrialists.

The present famine is not a sudden nor a passing phenomenon. It is only a more acute expression of the daily, routine condition of the Ethiopian people.

## York Briefs

### Meeting to protest food hikes

A group of York students who are distressed with the prevailing situation in the food services division are organizing a meeting for this Thurs. Feb. 7 at 1 p.m. in Curtis L.H.D. The main objective of the meeting is to bring students faculty and staff together to discuss the recent 10% food price hike, which was imposed on the campus community last week by the administration.

Other items of discussion will include the script issue (thousands of dollars of unused script money now held by residence students will become worthless at the end of term this spring), and cancellation of the 5 percent discount on cash sales of books at the bookstore.

ALL York students, faculty and staff are urged to attend this meeting and discuss these extremely important issues.

### Young Socialist woman speaks

Linda Meisenheimer, editor of the Young Socialist newspaper and former President of Simon Fraser student council, will speak at York next week on Women in Revolt: Strategy for Liberation. The meeting will take place in Curtis L.H.D., on Tues. Feb. 12 at 1 p.m. The meeting is organized by the York Young Socialists.

## Bolivia declares state of seige

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA (CUPI)— In a nation wide television and radio broadcast January 28, Bolivian president Hugo Banzer declared a state of siege throughout the country giving police and soldiers special powers of search and arrest.

Within moments of the broadcast, army troops and armoured cars set out from La Paz to fight rebellious peasants who have joined forces with striking workers in a protest against Banzer's latest economic measures.

Peasants, some of them armed, have barricaded the three main roads linking the farms of southern and eastern Bolivia with the heavily populated upland regions.

More than 10,000 peasants successfully cut off the last remaining link early on the 28th when they set up a roadblock at Cochabamba, an agricultural centre, 150 miles

southwest of La Paz.

The roadblocks have cut off supplies of vegetables, fruit sugar and other supplies to cities already suffering from widespread strikes and food shortages.

The peasants are demanding that Banzer meet with them to debate his economic policies.

Bolivia's troubles began last week when Colonel Banzer doubled the prices of coffee, sugar, rice, wheat, flour and pasta and imposed markups on hundreds of other items.

Workers all over Bolivia went out on strike in protest and have crippled Bolivian industry. The country's vital tin mines were closed down the week of January 21 as 35,000 members of the Mine Workers Union walked off the job. They were followed by thousands of industrial workers and bank employees.

Police clashed with striking factory workers who blocked the streets with motor vehicles. Several people were reported wounded by gunfire and many were arrested.

Banzer responded to the striking workers by appealing to the peasants to be ready to defend his nationalist revolution.

He told the farm workers "you must be alert to take up arms at any moment of danger to the nationalist revolution" and said he would give the signal for peasants, along with the armed forces and political parties of the Nationalist Front government, to "go out and defend the revolution."

Banzer's Nationalist Front government has been in power since a military coup overthrew left wing president Juan Jose Torres in August, 1971.

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