Ethiopia had more than its due share of wars and social turbulence through most of the known periods of its long history (upwards of two thousand years). Particularly in the 16th century, Ethiopia compared the 20th for the extent and intensity of the internal and external wars that the country fought, the populations involved, and the massive destructions of property and national heritage. A considerable proportion of this turbulence and these wars were generated by the revolutionary and social revo-

lution that scholars have compared with the great social revolutions of the world—the French, the Russian and the Chinese. It is argued that revolutions are rare phe-
nomena in world history and that they are even rarer in the African context. It is therefore a matter of great intellectual impor-
tance to understand this phenomenon when it occurred in Ethiopia.

The revolutionary intellectuals did not by any means find it difficult to ‘understand’ it or to account for it. They saw a feudal monar-

chy (or the rebels) when it came. They saw years of economic and infrastructural paralysis as a person, his memory, his en-

ergy, all declined in the years that led to the Revolution. Yet, he continued to inter-

vene in the daily activities of ministers, provincial governors and divisional commanders, let alone of the prime minis-
ter. The country, however, was considered very high, the annual growth rate for the urban population would have to be re-
garded as extraordinary—3.5% from 1938 to 1967 and 7.1% for the years immedi-
ately before the revolution.3

This leads us to the paradoxical conclu-
sion that the background to the revolution saw years of economic and infrastructural stag-

nation (much like the classic French case), which, however, generated popula-
tion growth far beyond the capacity of the economy to feed, to house and to clothe. Urban poverty was born. The govern-
ment, faced with the problem by sharing its re-
sources, with the attendant fragmentation of land. But, the urban centres, particularly the major ones (Addis Ababa, Asmara, Dire Dawa, Harar etc.), could not handle the ris-
ting demand for jobs, housing, schools and other services. Thus, by the turn of the 1970s, the big towns, particularly Addis Ababa, had become combustible material for the intelligentsia’s perception of their own power. Student militants (opposed to the junta) found that the campus was no longer a place that they could dominate because of the outside presence of the military government, which was de-
cided to ally with the military. In a very short time, the soldiers could effectively control students and faculty with the help and sup-
port of student and military party members, re-
spectively. These party activists exercised enormous power due to the overwhelming presence of the state that loomed behind them.

Given the critical significance of a rul-
ing party, why (we may ask) did the impe-
rinal government fail to build it up? This question will help us to gain insight into some of the problems of the imperial state. We readily use the expression that Haile Selassie built up a modern state. This is true up to a point.4 But it obscures the fact that the process of modernization (I prefer the notion of westernization) was not yet completed at the time of the outbreak of the revolution. Thus, there is a need to develop the concept of a traditional state, which was caught unaware by the revolution. Perhaps this factor would guide us in the effort to explain why the army, which had developed strong structures to protect the imperial order, ultimately spearheaded the movement to demolish it.

Yet, the army’s role in the revolution of 1974 was not the only paradox that confronts the historians. The intellectuals and the university students provide the other case. Paulos Milkias proposes precisely to look into the role of this social group. The theme of his book is to explore the role of education as an important variable in the socio-political transformation of Ethiopia which cul-

minated in the far-reaching revolution-

ary upheaval of 1974.

The research was conducted with some basic assumptions in mind. One of the guiding presuppositions was that the intelligentsia’s perception of their own power was a key element in the rise and the fall of the revolutionary movement. The major antecedents of this political movement were the radicalization of the university campuses before the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution. This was followed by the revolution.
sible to conceive of a revolution without an ideology; it is a pity that Paulos did not give it due credit in his narrative and in his analysis.

In spite of this, however, he has written a book that can generate extended debate and discussion. This is commendable. Yet, there are some factual and technical glitches. The late Harold Marcus, professor of Comparative Government at Michigan State University, was never an ‘official’ of the US government and, as far as I know, never ‘worked for the Rand Corporation’ (p.108). Meles Tekerra Teferak, one of the founders of the Derg, was not, to the best of my knowledge, the ‘best man of Mengistu and a godfather to the son of Mengistu’ (p.216). While it is true that the redoubtable Mesfin Wolde Mariam was ‘appointed’ to the government of Ginbi awraja (in the former province of Wellega), he never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.

The problem connected with the Habte Wold ‘family’ is methodological rather than factual. To begin with, the term ‘family’ is debatable, to say the least. Even more serious is the point that the author makes that Meles never accepted the post; he remained Addis Adis (p.167). The statement that ‘...the proportion of Moslems and Christians in Ethiopia stands at 40% to 60% respectively’ (p.1) is false. The last but one census (1994) puts all Christians at slightly over 40% (of which Orthodox Christians were 50%) while Moslems account for 43%. This is 3% of the 25% (p.27) that he attributed to Muslims. ‘The aristocracy, enfeebled by Haile Selassie’s centralisation efforts, was later almost wholly liquidated during the Fascist occupation’ (p.27). Fascists liquidated the Ethiopians’ property quite a few prominent aristocrats, but the greater proportion of the social group survived.