

try, but increased control and security, policing of the producers and repression. As has been evidenced in the urban areas (through the Urban Dwellers Association) "villagisation" is intended to serve the political and ideological control of the state rather than to induce rural productivity.

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DEFECTIONS CONTINUE ...

The latest in a long series of defections that have been going on for some time came from Czechoslovakia on March 26 when the first secretary of Ethiopia's Embassy in that country, Mr. MESFIN MEKONNEN, announced in Bonn that he will not return to his country because of his opposition to the government and the regime's attempts 'to force him to join the WPE'.

In February, WPE central committee member and Ethiopia's Ambassador to Japan, Mr. ABEBA KEBEDE announced his resignation as a gesture of opposition. He pointed out that the policy pursued by the government had plunged Ethiopia into an economic and social crisis and added that it was not his wish to serve a government that had bowed to Soviet pressure. Mr. ABEBE had previously been Minister of Domestic Trade.

Late last year another Ambassador, this time to Sweden, General TAYE TILAHU, announced that he had left his post because "the Mengistu regime had betrayed the revolution and was consolidating its own power with Soviet help at the expense of the Ethiopian people". The Ambassador, an Air Force general who previously served as Minister of the Interior and Defense, said that his decision to break with the government was due to "an ideological and moral gulf" and because the policies of Mengistu were "precipitating war and famine instead of peace; disharmony and disunity

instead of reconciliation."

"VOLUNTARY" DEPORTATION FROM DJIBOUTI

"The repatriation of Ethiopian refugees will in the future be conducted on a regular basis until almost all of the refugees have been voluntarily repatriated". This is what Djibouti's Minister of the Interior, Yousuf Ali CHIRDON, declared at a press conference on 18 December 1986.

A few months before, a deadline had been set for all Ethiopian refugees to register for 'voluntary' repatriation. But as thousands refused to be pressured out of Djibouti, the government extended this deadline beyond 31 December and continued its call for registration adding that after this date "all illegal immigrants would be rounded up and deported to their countries of origin".

The central argument of the Djibouti government is that all this is on a voluntary basis even if one fails to see how and why there is need to 'round up and deport' people who are after all supposed to voluntarily leave the country.

The fact of the matter is that thousands of Ethiopians, specially in Djibouti city have refused to be 'deported' and have even threatened to resort to mass suicide if the government persists in its inhuman policy.

Six young refugees are already known to have died by jumping out of the train bringing them back to Ethiopia and the Dergue. Many independent observers have blamed the UNHCR for its complaisant role in this affair and have called for a stop to this mass deportation which is contrary to all international conventions and practice concerning refugees.

As for the Ethiopian government the 'benefits' to be drawn from

this operation are clear. Politically, the regime will get hold of activists that are already known to its security forces and above all the exercise is meant to discourage other opponents from leaving the country. The material advantages cannot be overlooked either. It is known that by February the total number of those "repatriated by train since December according to figures disclosed by the Djibouti government was about 2,500. For obvious reasons, the government was quick to come out with wild claims concerning the number of returnees. On 2 February, Colonel Berhandu Jemberre, the Commissioner for Relief and Rehabilitation, stated that there are currently 400,00 compatriots who have returned to their country and who need emergency assistance". Even accounting for the few thousand refugees who returned from Somalia, the least one can say is that this claim is highly extravagant. But it helps to extract funds for the regime's "villagisation" programme in the Ogaden and in other parts of eastern Ethiopia.

For a regime which has never recognized even the existence of a refugee problem and for which those who left the country are 'a handful of exploiters adversely affected by the revolutionary changes' the claim of 400,000 returnees comes as an unwitting recognition of the fact that hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians had been forced to leave their country in search of peace and security in foreign lands.

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