Briefings

CLASS AND REVOLUTION IN ETHIOPIA

John Markakis and Nega Ayele

The following are extracts from a book-length manuscript of the same title to be published later this year by *RAPE*. The book is dedicated to the 'brave youth of Ethiopia' many of whom, including Nega Ayele himself, have been butchered by the Mengistu regime. These extracts trace the rise of Mengistu and the development of the opposition to the military dictatorship which he now leads, spearheaded by the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP). Of further relevance to the current confrontation in the Horn is the author's analysis of power relations in this area, a brief extract from which is included here. With the adoption of a 'Marxist-Leninist' label by the regime and its increasing support from the USSR and Cuba causing some disquiet and confusion among genuine Marxists and progressives, the publication of this book and these extracts here will, we hope, serve to clarify the picture and emphasise the falseness of the progressive label attached to what is a violently repressive dictatorship.

The diverse and growing opposition to the military dictatorship was integrated into the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), a clandestine organization whose formation had been announced in August 1975. Its founders were the same group of radical intellectuals who had consistently opposed military rule from the pages of *Democracia*. When the Dergue's betrayal of the popular movement became amply demonstrated, this group launched the first organization aspiring to lead the movement, and indeed the first political party in the history of Ethiopia. Complete lack of organization and leadership had cost the movement the political price of the revolution, by allowing the military to seize power practically unopposed. Subsequent resistance to the dictatorship was manifested in spontaneous, isolated incidents of very limited impact. Now the EPRP sought to organize the opposition on a mass basis, and to guide it on a coordinated, direct assault against the Dergue. During the early part of 1976, radical activists went underground to lay the foundations of the organization. When the

campaign in the countryside disintegrated, returning students provided enthusiastic recruits. With their help, the EPRP cadre strove to revive the alliance of social groups which had comprised the popular movement. Existing organizations, such as trade unions, professional associations, student unions – now all closely monitored by Dergue agents – were duplicated underground and affiliated to the EPRP. Urban associations, peasant associations, even military units became targets of EPRP infiltration. During the first half of 1976, the party concentrated on organizational and propaganda work, continued its corrosive criticism of the military rulers, and prepared for a forceful confrontation. Its youthful supporters embarassed the authorities by hoisting critical placards at public gatherings, painting hostile slogans, and periodically festooning street poles with red flags. By mid-1976, the party had made its presence felt, though its capacity for action had not been tested yet.

Although the Dergue did not ignore the new threat, it grossly underestimated its potential. Initially, it attempted to blunt the EPRP's political drive by sponsoring a rival group with political aspirations. This comprised the coterie of radical intellectuals who functioned as informal, yet quite influential, advisors to the dominant faction of the Dergue led by Major Mengistu. They had fashioned the ideological rationalization for military rule, according to which military rule was essential for the consolidation of the socialist revolution, which was menaced by a host of domestic and foreign enemies. This basic theme was elaborated and reinforced to serve as the ideological facade screening the raw reality of military rule. Ideological props were essential in order to attract support outside the ranks of the military. They endowed the regime with a purpose, a mission, and a claim to legitimacy which could serve to deflect the demand for popular rule. Without rejecting this demand, the regime's ideologues circumvented it by placing it low on the scale of revolutionary priorities. Highest priority was accorded to crushing the four enemies of the revolution; feudalism, imperialism, capitalism and bureaucracy. In the absence of any existing political organization in the country, this task inevitably fell to the armed forces. They had become 'the vanguard of the revolution' by historical necessity. Accordingly, the soldiers were not solely fighting men, but political activists and leaders of the masses as well. They weren't called soldiers any longer but 'men in uniform'. As one member of the Dergue put it in a public speech, 'men in uniform are not confined to military duties alone, but have also to politicize, organize and arm the masses in line with the programme of the National Democratic Revolution'. The logical deduction was easy to reach; whoever opposed the military government was an enemy of the revolution. The label *adhari* ('reactionary') was applied to all indiscriminately.

The official creed was formulated in the 'Programme for the National Democratic Revolution', announced on 20 April, 1976. It contained little that was new or illuminating. It envisaged a people's democratic republic under the leadership of the proletariat, acting in close alliance with the peasantry and supported by the petty bourgeoisie, and promised the formation of a working class party. At the same time, the first step was taken to construct political organizational supports for the ideological facade. A Provisional Office for Mass Organization Affairs

(POMOA) was created to propagate the April Programme, and to prepare the masses for political action. It was staffed with 15 members of Major Mengistu's radical intellectual entourage. This group had until now functioned in an unofficial advisory capacity, while also sharpening its ideological weapons in a series of turgid propaganda articles published in the daily press. Earlier, it had announced the formation of an All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement, which had failed apparently to capture the fancy of the Dergue. Now this group acquired an official base for its activities, and it quickly expanded in size and influence. Staff was recruited and branches established in many parts of the country. Its cadre were assigned the function of coordinating the political activities of all organizations, including urban and rural associations, trade unions, etc. POMOA's major task was to meet the challenge of the EPRP. In the fall of 1976, this challenge took a violent form, and the radical supporters of the Dergue found themselves involved in a deadly struggle with their erstwhile comrades. Forced to act as an additional security unit, they were given no opportunity to fulfil the political task they had been assigned. Consequently, the attempt to construct a political front for the military dictatorship failed.

The most serious and immediate threat to the Dergue was posed by the offensive launched by the EPRP in the urban sector during the fall of 1976. Regrouped underground, the radical opposition now moved towards a direct forceful confrontation with the dictatorship. The new, violent phase of the struggle began exactly two years following the overthrow of Haile Selassie, when the EPRP called for a boycott of the official celebrations commemorating the event. The urban associations were mobilized to collect an audience for the rulers on this occasion. These units were not able to prevent a wave of labour strikes instigated by the EPRP towards the end of September. The strike wave acquired additional momentum in October, as a result of the change of currency, during which notes of 50 Ethiopian dollars and above were discounted by 20 per cent. Bank, insurance, and supermarket employees joined the factory workers in striking.

At the same time, a series of raids on armouries and police stations for the purpose of collecting weapons, alerted the government of the EPRP's intention to wage urban guerrilla warfare. The prime target of the underground opposition were the radical intellectual contingent of POMOA and highly placed petty bourgeois collaborators of the Dergue. An alleged unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Major Mengistu, on 20 September, is widely believed to have been staged by the dictator himself in order to justify the campaign launched against the EPRP at this time. The EPRP struck selectively, and even gave its enemies advance warning. Letters were sent to numerous persons advising them of the consequences if they remained in their posts. The first victim was a prominent member of POMOA. In the following months, three ministry permanent secretaries were assassinated. Trade union officials imposed by the regime and urban association officials also became targets of the underground opposition. According to one account, 20 POMOA cadre and 20 urban association officials were killed during the month of November 1976. The building of a school for political education operated by POMOA was burned down at the end of October. Sabotage of public installations, transport and communication facilities became routine from now on.

The dictatorship's reaction was immediate, savage and indiscriminate. Declaring war on the EPRP, it vowed to physically exterminate its adherents and sympathizers. The faction led by Major Mengistu prepared to make good on this vow. The 'Flame' Brigade was brought into the capital to provide support. The security unit of the Dergue, commanded by Mengistu's henchman, Colonel Daniel Asfaw, assumed direction of the campaign. It was seconded by the officials and cadre of POMOA who were now armed. Arms were selectively distributed also to groups of supporters in the associations, trade unions and other organizations. Members of the radical intelligentsia who had not gone into hiding, were herded into prisons, where many of them were to be murdered later. Suspected EPRP members were summarily executed, but the campaign had no success in unearthing the underground organization. Unable to strike directly at the EPRP itself, the government forces turned savagely against a group they knew to be sympathetic to the opposition movement, i.e. the students. Their steadfast refusal to resume their studies under military rule, branded this group as an irreconcilable enemy of the regime. Two groups of young people, numbering 23 and 27 respectively were massacred in November. From now on the slaughter of Ethiopia's youth continued unabated. Students were killed on the spot for shouting slogans and painting them on walls and street surfaces, for brandishing red flags, distributing pamphlets, sometimes simply for congregating together. (POMOA managed to recruit a small number of students and put them in charge of officially sanctioned associations. They became a target for their colleagues in the opposition and suffered many casualties.)

A massive propaganda campaign was launched to discredit the EPRP as a counter-revolutionary movement. It was based on an elementary technique, that is, an attempt to confuse the radical opposition with a host of other groups which were fighting against the regime. On the most basic level, the EPRP was simply coupled officially with the rest, and every insurrectionary act was attributed to the 'paid agents of the EPRP, EDU, ELF and CIA'. On a different plane, the ideologues of POMOA, wielding marxist semantics with abandon, classified the underground movement alternatively as an offspring of the bourgeoisie, the right wing of the petty bourgeoisie, or the fighting arm of the bureaucracy. The EPRP was accused of being in league with feudalism through an alleged connection with the EDU, of favouring the partition of Ethiopia because of its support for self-determination in Eritrea, of elitism due to its attraction for the intelligentsia and students, and of opposing popular government because of its attacks on urban association officials. Ironically, the regime's inept propaganda effort gave the EPRP massive publicity, and unwittingly exaggerated the underground party's capacity by giving it credit for every actual subversive incident and a host of imaginary accomplishments. Thanks partly to this effort, the EPRP soon appeared to have become omnipresent.

The manifold conflict enveloping the regime exacerbated the internal strain in the Dergue. It is possible that several influential members did not approve of the murderous tactics used indiscriminately in the struggle against the EPRP. They also realized that the new situation had allowed the aspiring dictator to concentrate his military support in the capital and to arm his civilian followers, thus putting himself

within one step of his goal. Indeed, Mengistu, now promoted to Lt. Colonel, was preparing to take that step. In a secret letter to his supporters in the provinces, dated 1 September, 1976, he accused unnamed members of the Dergue of personal ambition, incompetence, promotion of EPRP policies, susceptibility to CIA influence, and of attempting to limit his (Mengistu's) power. In a subsequent letter, dated 12 September, he reminded his followers they had agreed to make preparations, and emphasized that the only solution was to form a new Provisional Military Advisory Council.

Mengistu's rivals won a first, very brief, round by putting through a plan for the reorganization of the PMAC. Invoking the leninist principle of collective leadership, they argued that since all members of the Council were equal, power ought to be exercised collectively through bodies in which all members had equal voice. Introduced on December 29, the new structure was a pyramid with three levels. Its base was a Congress representing the full membership of the Dergue. A central committee of forty members and a standing committee of seventeen completed the edifice of the renovated PMAC. The plan was attributed to two young capitains, who enlisted the support of General Teferi Bante, and persuaded many of the less influential members to accept the more equitable pattern of power distribution. General Teferi himself acquired new prominence by being named chairman of all three bodies, as well as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He was thus placed directly in Mengistu's path. The latter was sidetracked to the chairmanship of the powerless council of ministers. It was a dangerous setback for the aspiring dictator. If the situation were allowed to last, control of the army threatened to slip from his hands.

This situation was not allowed to last for long. Mengistu's rivals did not press their advantage. They allowed him time to complete his preparations, and then mindlessly walked into a trap that was sprung with characteristic ruthlessness. Barely over one month later, on February 3, 1977, during a meeting of the PMAV, General Teferi and four other officers hostile to Mengistu were killed by the Dergue's security troops. The dead included the two captains who had masterminded the reorganization of the PMAC, a Lt. Colonel who had been chairman of the Press and Information subcommittee, and a captain who had been second in command of the security unit. Reportedly the latter, before being killed, managed to slay his superior, Col. Daniel Asfaw, and two of his men, as well as the vice chairman of POMOA, Dr. Senay Lique. A weird scenario was enacted subsequently to make it appear that a fierce struggle was taking place. Shooting was continued for hours and conflicting announcements were made. It was finally declared that an attempted coup d'etat by General Teferi and his clique had been defeated. The group was accused of being members of both the EPRP and the EDU, and of having conspired to turn over power to those groups. Colonel Mengistu assumed the chairmanship of the PMAC and was acknowledged its undisputed master. The soldiers' revolution had taken almost three years to run its course. The consolidation of the dictatorship dissolved the last contradiction within the military regime. Unrestrained at last, the dictator was able to embark on a campaign of extermination against the opposition. On the day following the purge of his rivals in the Dergue, Colonel Mengistu addressed a mass meeting

in the capital. In a widely emotional speech, he declared war until death against all domestic and foreign enemies, and promised to arm all his supporters and lead them in the struggle. Death became a byword in official statements and speeches, and the slogan 'Revolutionary Ethiopia or Death', was hoisted on the masthead of the newspapers. In an atmosphere of mounting hysteria, the regime's propaganda extolled the use of revolutionary terror and quite openly incited its supporters to murder suspected dissidents. The distribution of arms to the militia units of the urban associations and the defence squads of the peasant associations was accelerated. Armed 'revolutionary defence squads' were formed also in the factories.

When the preparations were completed, the dictator moved against the stronghold of the EPRP, the capital city itself. Addis Ababa was declared the 'last stronghold of counter-revolution', and the regime's forces were deployed for a massive clean-up operation. On 23 March, a strict curfew was imposed, vehicle traffic was banned, places of public entertainment were closed, and a house to house search of a city containing a population of more than one million began. The search was carried out by teams composed of soldiers and members of urban and rural association defence squads. They were given power to administer instant 'revolutionary justice' whenever they uncovered evidence of 'counter-revolutionary activity'.

A wave of unprecedented terror and bloodshed engulfed the capital and spread to the towns in the industrial belt south of Addis Ababa, until it reached the city of Dire Dawa in the south-west. The search teams, and the thugs of the association militia units who manned roadblocks and enforced the curfew, rose to the occasion by killing and looting at will. The first day's toll was five persons killed and two wounded. In the weeks that followed, the newspapers carried daily grisly statistics adding to the rapidly mounting number of victims. Their names were no longer given, nor were their kin notified. The hapless relatives of missing persons haunted the police stations where lists of the dead were posted. In order to get their bodies for burial, relatives were charged 40 Ethiopian dollars to meet the cost of the bullets that killed them. The number of persons arrested rose wildly, and their fate became highly uncertain. Execution of prisoners occurred frequently enough, so that arrest involved a serious risk to life. The victims were never brought before a court, nor were their deaths publicly announced.

The capital remained under siege throughout the spring of 1977. The EPRP suffered heavy casualties, but fought on undaunted. Gunfire echoed throughout the night in the city, as the underground opposition defended itself. Cornered during the search, its members fought until death rather than surrender. Their comrades counter-attacked, taking a heavy toll among the association militiamen and POMOA agents. The struggle was waged in many towns of Ethiopia, and over the countryside as well. Judging from the official announcements about people 'who renounced their mistaken beliefs and joined the ranks of government supporters', the radical opposition had made its presence felt in several southern provinces, particularly Arusi, Sidamo and Gemu Goffa. In Tigre province in the north, a radical guerrilla group led by a university graduate, calling itself the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Army, had been active at least since early 1976.

The students remained in the forefront of the battle and paid a horrible price. Despite intense pressure, the dictatorship had failed to force them to return to school. 'Quite frankly,' lamented the *Ethiopian Herald,* 'the reality in the areas where the process of learning should continue without any obstacles is disturbing, to say the least . . . Days, weeks, and even months of teaching time are known to have been wasted.' Unarmed and uncovered, the students confronted the regime with reckless courage. Their harassment tactics continued without let-up, and their effectiveness as counter-propagandists made them the major identifiable opponent of the military dictatorship. Unable to cow its youthful opponents, the regime seemed intent on exterminating an entire generation of Ethiopians. Group executions of youths, carried out publicly and in secret, continued throughout the spring months of 1977. During the last weekend of April, the students set out to sabotage the official May Day celebration through an overt campaign of propaganda in the neighbourhoods of Addis Ababa. In a paroxysm of savagery, the dictatorship's military and civilian support units machine-gunned hundreds of youths in the streets, hunted them and killed them inside houses where they had fled, and herded an unknown number into a camp. Parents who showed up at the camp with food were told that their children no longer needed it. Indeed, the entire group was massacred inside the camp. Estimates of the number of victims claimed by the dictatorship during that weekend ranged from six hundred to over one thousand. Addis Ababa became a city in mourning as funeral processions criss-crossed the city's streets. The urban associations were instructed to discourage women from wearing black. By way of diversion, the dictatorship announced at the same time the killing of nearly 300 'counter-revolutionaries' in Sidamo.

The marxist element in the radical opposition had the saddening experience of seeing the dictator embraced by the representatives of the world's socialist nations. The first to congratulate Colonel Mengistu for his triumph over his rivals in the Dergue on 3 February, was the ambassador of the USSR. A Soviet journalist's report on Ethiopia commemorated that purge in a single line: 'On 3 February 1977 another counter-revolutionary plot was crushed in Ethiopia.' The same report described the radical opposition distastefully as 'petty-bourgeois, anarchic and leftist groupings'. (Koroniko, V., 'A New Life Comes to Ethiopia', *International Affairs* (Moscow), 3 March 1977, pp.127-134). Closely behind came the ambassador of China and the representatives of Eastern European socialist states. Fidel Castro arrived in mid-March to bestow his own blessing on the dictator. This spectacle was symbolic of a major international power reshuffle in the Horn of Africa, in which Ethiopia figured as a bartered pawn. For reasons of their own – which had nothing to do with ideology – the world's major powers moved to realign their position vis-à-vis Ethiopia. Reversing an initial appraisal, the United States decided that the longtime relationship no longer was worth preserving. The Soviet Union, on its part, rushed in to assume the liabilities just shed by its arch rival.

The disengagement of the United States from Ethiopia followed the rapprochement of this power with the formerly 'radical' Arab regimes in the region, Egypt and the Sudan among them. The restoration of American influence among Arab states of all political stripes diminished

Ethiopia's strategic value for its longtime patron. Ethiopia had become a dispensable ally since the American presence in that country already had been reduced drastically, the giant Kagnew air base in Asmara had been dismantled, and private capital investment had been nationalized. Moreover, Ethiopia had become a liability in the long range plans of the United State for the region. The Ethiopian connection complicated American policy on two volatile fronts. Eritrea was one of them. American aid over many years had enabled the Ethiopians to contain the determined drive for independence in that province, while Arab support, on the other hand, had sustained the Eritrean liberation forces through the most difficult periods of their struggle. The cessation of American military aid to Ethiopia cemented the new relationship of the former with the Arab states in the region.

It was a small price to pay. Despite American support, the Ethiopians were obviously losing the contest anyway. Reinvigorated by the resumption of Sudanese backing and support from many other Arab states, and further strengthened through an agreement between the rival liberation movements for tactical cooperation in the field, the rebel forces launched a successful drive against the smaller garrison towns at the end of 1976. In April 1977, Colonel Mengistu admitted the loss of seven towns in Eritrea and acknowledged that the situation in the province had become critical. So much so, in fact, that his regime was reduced to undertake a second peasant Red March into Eritrea, despite the monumental failure of the first attempt in 1976. More arms and a modicum of military training were counted upon this time to turn the peasant rabble into a victorious legion. In fact, the fate of Eritrea seemed sealed. Facing the imminent collapse of Ethiopian rule in that province, United States policy makers might well have reasoned that a well-disposed independent Eritrea with two Red Sea ports, would make a far more valuable ally than a landlocked Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's hostile relationship with Somalia was the other complicating factor. The latter had been driven initially to seek Soviet support because of the United States' commitment in Ethiopia. American policy makers had long regretted the initial rejection of Somalia, which had resulted in the Soviet Union obtaining a valuable base at Berbera. Now they were hoping, with the assistance of the Arab states, to wean Somalia away from the Soviet patronage. Severing the Ethiopian connection was a prerequisite step toward this goal. At the very least, the United States would avoid being drawn into a potentially violent conflict between the two African states over the disputed Ogaden territory and the port of Jibouti. Somalia was actively supporting insurgent groups throughout the south-eastern region of Ethiopia. These groups included Somalia irridentists in the Ogaden, and Oromo rebels in Bale and Sidamo provinces who had revived a movement that had bedeviled the Haile Selassie regime in the late 1960s. A so-called Western Somali Liberation Front was touted as their common representative. In the east, an Afar Liberation Front, led from Somalia by one of Ali Mira's sons, kept nomad sharpshooters active in raids against traffic on the Assab road and the rail line to Jibouti. Conflict loomed also over Jibouti, which similarly fell within the boundaries of Somali territorial claims. Ethiopia, most of whose foreign trade passes through this port, vehemently opposed these claims. With Jibouti scheduled to gain

independence from France in 1977, the likelihood of adding belligerent actions to words increased considerably.

The Soviet Union rushed into Ethiopia apparently heedless of Somalia's probable reaction. At the end of 1976, it committed itself to underwrite the Ethiopian dictatorship through military and economic aid, and Soviet personnel began arriving in the country. In March 1977, the United States suspended further aid to Ethiopia, citing its concern for the violation of human rights under the military regime. The following month, all American agencies and personnel, with the exception of the embassy in the capital, were ordered to leave Ethiopia at short notice. The announcement of complete cessation of United States aid to Ethiopia followed. On May Day, while the student massacre was taking place in Addis Ababa, Colonel Mengistu arrived in Moscow to sign various agreements. Even before this visit, Cuban instructors had appeared in Ethiopia to train its soldiers in the use of Soviet weapons.

The weapons initially demanded and received by the dictatorship were small arms. Their donors were unmindful of the fact that they were used exclusively against the Ethiopian population itself. Heavier weapons were to be used in the battle for Eritrea. However, Ethiopia's predicament in that province obviously was not caused by a shortage of weaponry. It seemed therefore, that the regime was counting on active Soviet and/or Cuban intervention to retrieve the situation there. Its new patrons appeared willing to try, unconcerned over the impact of their actions on the Eritreans and their Arab supporters. The dictatorship's difficulties were not limited to Eritrea. From Bale in the south to Tigre in the north, from the Afar lowlands in the east to the mountains of Begemdir in the west, rebellion had become endemic in the land. With its forces committed to maintaining a tenuous hold in the cities, the regime had relinquished control over large part of the countryside to the multifarious opposition. In Begemdir province, abandoned garrisons began surrendering border towns to the EDU forces in the spring of 1977. Bereft of popular support in the urban sector, the dictatorship relied solely on massive violence and mindless terrorism to retain a semblance of control in the cities. Incomparably more than the *ancien regime,* the successor military regime required propping by a foreign power in order to avoid imminent collapse. The extent of this requirement provided the standard for measuring the failure of the soldier's revolution to join the popular movement.

Quite obviously, the soldiers' revolution in Ethiopia was not an ordinary military intervention in the political life of that country. Its social basis and aspirations were evident in the spontaneous and sustained role played by simple soldiers and lower ranking officers, the demands made of, and actions taken against, the ruling classes of the *ancien regime,* the elimination of the military hierarchy, and the fact that the revolt was spawned in the womb of the popular movement, many of whose aspirations it shared and promoted. The peasant and petty bourgeois class elements in the social background of the military were identical with the same elements in the popular movement. As was the case with the latter, the petty bourgeois element assumed the leading role in the soldiers' movement, and emerged as the dominant element in the military regime. The congruence of class explains the readiness of this regime to espouse a 'socialist' mode of socio-economic organiz-

ation best suited to the interest of the petty bourgeoisie. Its unwillingness to share political power is a caste characteristic, as is the readiness to use force as an antidote for dissent.

Yet, the regime aspired to win support beyond the tip of the bayonet. It entertained bonapartist aspirations of building a base for its rule which would extend beyond the narrow limits of the military caste. 'Socialism' seemed an opportune, congenial and essential device for this purpose. However, 'Ethiopian socialism' failed to reconcile its major beneficiary, the petty bourgeoisie, to the permanent reality of military rule, and proved unable to propitiate the hostility of the workers, a class that had gained nothing from it. The support of the southern peasantry was gained through a land reform that was radical, though not essentially socialist in nature. As the hope of mobilizing popular support dimmed, the regime was forced to rely increasingly on the sole resource, i.e., brute force, of its natural constituency, the military caste. The ideological device was retained, even elaborated and re-inforced. A savage campaign of repression was advertised as a crusade for 'Ethiopian Socialism'. Since the blows were directed mainly against the vanguard of the popular movement, the campaign seemed designed to bury the vision of true socialism along with its carrier.

In the final analysis, military radicalism does not constitute a distinct political genre. The military caste has chameleonic traits. When it ventures on the political arena, it adopts a protective political colouring. Such ventures occur invariably during times of crisis, when the balance of social forces begins to shift. The choice of pigmentation – which element within the caste takes the initiative, and what political attitude it adopts – depends mainly upon and reflects the dominant characteristics of the social confrontation. It may adopt a conservative hue, if the threatened status quo has staying power, or turn 'revolutionary', if the underdogs appear irresistible. In either case, the goal is power and the advantages it can secure for the caste. When that goal is contested by other groups, the colouring fades quickly, revealing the animal underneath.