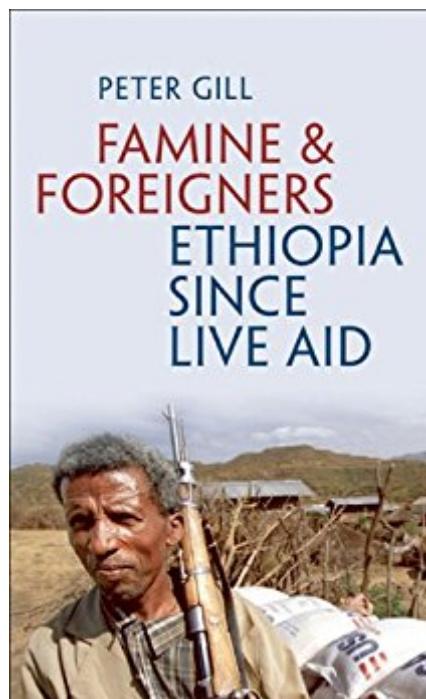


The book was found

Famine And Foreigners: Ethiopia Since Live Aid



Synopsis

The terrible 1984 famine in Ethiopia focused the world's attention on the country and the issue of aid as never before. Anyone over the age of 30 remembers something of the events - if not the original TV pictures, then Band Aid and Live Aid, Geldof and Bono. Peter Gill was the first journalist to reach the epicentre of the famine and one of the TV reporters who brought the tragedy to light. This book is the story of what happened to Ethiopia in the 25 years following Live Aid: the place, the people, the westerners who have tried to help, and the wider multinational aid business that has come into being. We saved countless lives in the beginning and continued to save them now, but have we done much else to transform the lives of Ethiopia's poor and set them on a 'development' course that will enable the country to do without us?

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Customer Reviews

I found Peter Gill's book of Famine and Foreigners as an objective view that looks at famine from all angles (political, social, economic). He provides great insight to the cause of famine and to anyone who takes time to read this book realizes that the solution to Famine is neither simplistic nor

accomplished in short sprints. His presentation of three regimes handling of famine (Haile Selassie, Mengistu and the current regime.) His analysis of these regimes handling of famine provides an interesting insight as to how closely related is solving the problem of famine and the political policy of the regime in power. He lets his readers see what was important to the Haile Selassie regime (denial of its existence at the expense of the lives of millions is preferred than the embarrassment of admitting that one's citizens need outside help). He juxtaposes this with Mengistu regime that was willing to spend 1.2 billion dollars in importing arms from the former Soviet Union at exactly the same time as its nation's citizens were dying at a rate of 100/day. He contrasts the number of dead in the 1984 famine in which 600, 000 died (not to mention the 50,000 that died in resettlement) versus the one in 2003 where 300 died even though 13.2 million faced the prospect of famine. Despite pointing to this progress he directs his reader the current regimes suppression of free press and the rounding of journalists to prison and the excessive use of force during the 2005 election. To do that he presents the views of both the regime as espoused by Meles in his conviction that a regime might suspend democracy for a while as it implements sound economic development for its nation side by side with those who challenge the regime as being extremely repressive.

An illuminating report from a beat reporter whose beat is Ethiopian famine. I benefited from Gill's knowledge of the peoples, politicians, and geography of Ethiopia, and his dogged attempts to be fair to almost all sides. I say "almost" because he offered neither wisdom nor fairness toward anything American, governmental or otherwise, and because he obviously had his pet charities (whose rivals had little or no room to respond). Moreover, what hooked me into buying this book was the chance of a follow-up on the whole global charity phenomenon that surged in the 1980s: what did it leave behind? Is it still active in Ethiopia? Can I look inside its 21st-century progeny? How did it change (or not) westerners' desire to help the hungry, how did it spawn compassion fatigue, did it eventually shake off charity dilettantism or is that plague still with us? Gill has a fine sense of irony, so it was disappointing to spot the places where he didn't employ it. As in his efforts to parse the Meles government and its progress toward feeding people, reforms and techniques and strategies and so on, without once confronting the question of whether this is a land that could EVER feed itself, and if not, what the clear-eyed response should be. Maybe a country that endlessly perfects its ways of collecting and channeling aid from better-fed countries is not actually solving its problem. What could Ethiopia do, anyway, to bear itself up in a globalized world? Should we make a fetish of these scrawny, unreliable, tiny farms and their inevitable seasonal failures, or does Ethiopia need an

injection of something entirely different that could pull it into the world economy? Is Ethiopian subsistence -- spotty subsistence -- enough for us all to feel smug and happy about what we've helped bring about there?

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