

Ethiopia's capital, Adis Abeba, was founded in 1887 and named „New Flower“ by the Empress Taitu. When I arrived by Ethiopian Airlines in 1964 for the Ciba Symposium, there was one new magnificent building in which our symposium was held, but otherwise none of the housing, vehicles and streets, were neither new nor did they resemble a flower. I was disappointed.

More than 30 distinguished scientists, engineers and medical men had been invited by Ciba from Africa, India, Europe and the USA. The concept of the Symposium was to consider Africa as a unit, as a continent without political borders, and to explore during a week of private discussions, how science and medicine could improve by the year 2000 the generally acknowledged primitive conditions of most of the African Continent. It was an imaginative attempt to introduce the Scientific Temper, through an interdisciplinary discussion, to a country in great need of it.

This grand concept was due to Dr Gordon Wolstenholme, the Director of the Ciba Foundation in London. He was also responsible for the establishment of the Haile Selassie Foundation in Adis Abeba, named after the Emperor who had in the previous year, 1963, played a major part in the creation of the Organisation of African Unity and in bringing his country into the modern world. The concept of this Ciba Symposium was inspired by him, and he gave a magnificent reception in his Palace for the participants.

But was it just another dream? When the Africa of 2000 is considered with its horrific tribal warfare and its examples of genocide, the continent is just as far away from a political unity with Scientific Temper as it was in 1964. Naturally I watched scientific progress closely during some of the intervening period and could only report a few isolated instances in agriculture. Neither South Africa nor Algeria were represented at the Symposium.

A welcoming address by the Ethiopian Prime Minister transmitted the good wishes of the Emperor. The Symposium was held in the Africa Hall and began with perhaps the most important problem, Africa's human population. But lack of reliable statistics made discussions difficult. Racial, tribal and religious differences were not easier to solve then, as now in 2000 AD. Mental health, in Africa an almost completely neglected aspect of health, epidemiology, water resources, agricultural potentialities, the conservation of natural resources—African minerals only mined since about 1910—economic and industrial growth, and electronic communications—all these subjects were reviewed, but most expert speakers regretted the absence of sufficient basic data. Everyone urged that these must be provided on a priority basis and that the desperate planning needs could then be considered by politicians and implemented as soon as possible.