

ERITREA: INDEPENDENT OR A NEO-COLONIAL POST?

“If you want peace prepare for war.” 2,500 year old Greek maxim

PART 1

It is of strategic interest, for Ethiopia to have a peaceful and democratic Eritrea. Chaos and bloodshed from internecine wars are catastrophic by their very nature, and will directly and indirectly affect Ethiopia. Above all the heavy toll that will be paid to clear such a mess of human tragedy leaves the whole society in tangible agony. It is not about who suffered or lost most. One loss is too many for all. Otherwise, conventional war with the inevitable collateral damage is devastating especially if logged with modern weapons of mass destruction. However, the Eritrean regime through its mercenary partners (Genbot 7, OLN, OLF, etc) is continuously becoming provocative in semi clandestine activities along the border and certainly seems to be asking for trouble.

Molla Asgedom and his compatriots' decision not to spill their fellow countrymen's blood in vain, and rightly deciding to pack and go back home, had above all, important messages. Primarily, the Eritrean regimes' intention of destabilizing Ethiopia is not a dream but a reality. Secondly, the Tyrant Isaias will go to any length to attempt to implement his evil intentions. However, the dictator cannot see 'the wood from the tree'. The ex-combatants of the Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM), verified to the whole community that the Eritrean regime is squashed with crisis and left between the dead and the living and its demise is imminent. The regime seems to be sleep-walking into its final resting place. While gasping to survive, Isaias is selling Eritrea bit by bit to Saudi Arabia and Qatar at give away prices. The Eritrean Army, which was sold to Shia Iran are now gone to the opposing Sunni camp of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The security system is basically defunct. Isaias cannot salvage the sinking ship no matter what he does, simply because the remaining army is not fit for any purpose and are dumping the regime, while the rest of the population is trekking to where ever they could get temporary respite.

EGYPT:

On June 13, 2013, someone by the name Wadi Keren, wrote a comment in one of the web sites. He said, *“Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of Egypt, is really the father of our country. He conceived the idea of Eritrea; he executed it by convincing us Eritreans (that) it is our idea. He really deserves credit by our country even if he did it to protect the Nile, he used us cleverly, but it is okay. We will make him a monument when we become rich.”*

Nasser, the yesteryear villain and renowned dictator has become a hero in the blinking mind of the above individual unless, of course, it is taken as sordid and

sarcastic comment. Nasser was not confined to Eritrea. He was interfering in sovereign states across the Arab world, like Libya, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, etc. He was vigorously involved in getting rid of the reigning monarchs in the above countries. It seems Eritrea was also programmed by Nasser's long term objective to become another region to frustrate peace and development in Ethiopia, at best and land-lock Ethiopia at worse. In case Egypt failed to destabilise Ethiopia directly, it created Eritrea and Somali to fill the Egyptian boots to threaten the very fabric of the Ethiopian society. This was the dynamite hatched in the Egyptian foreign policy of Nasser. At the centre of the self imposed Egyptian mixed phobia and arrogance is the unrealistic belief that it is going to lose the flow of the Nile. The wars that was waged against Ethiopia, thereafter, became the cause for millions of Eritreans, Somalis, and Ethiopians to perish and many more millions were and still are displaced from their home and, and yet the gloomy saga continuous with no end in sight. While implementing this diabolic Egyptian policy since the 60s, not a single Egyptian life was lost in pursuing this diabolic policy. On the other hand, Egypt continues to transform the desert into fertile agricultural land enough to feed the Arab countries, while, we the victims and owners of the precious liquid-gold are often struggling with primordial survival methods and at the mercy of the unpredictable climatic condition.

Aklilu Habtewolde, in his UN debate said, *"It is clearly known to the Soviets that the region was always used as a base to invade Ethiopia. I still want to stress that Eritrea cannot become an independent state; otherwise it would only serve as scaffolding for other governments who want to invade us."*¹ The prophetic words of Aklilu Habtewolde were true in the 1950s and are glaringly true today.

Let us call a spade a spade. Eritrea is neither liberated nor independent; it is doing what Eritrea is designed to do. It is a Trojan horse of Egyptian foreign policy to deter Ethiopia from having peace and unity within itself. Egypt, the neo-colonial "empire" is in complete control over the Eritrean regime, despite its internal instability. Egypt mollycoddles Isaias to use him against Ethiopia. Myopic as he is, Isaias is happy to serve the paymasters even if Eritrea implodes in his face. The slow demise of Eritrea is not Isaias's concern.

Prior to 1993, for many forward looking Eritreans the notion of Independence was a negotiating card and not an end in itself. Serious questions were not discussed concerning the final destiny of Eritrea. The pre-colonial history of Eritrea was distorted at will in order to manufacture a fake story instead. Thus, "independence" became a rallying point, rather than a decision based on sober theoretical and practical implications. It became an emotive denominator that

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gravitate the majority of the population into the struggle. The Reporter interviewed, the strident Eritrean dictator Isaias Afewerki, after all the bloodshed, and to the surprise of his own supporters said, ***“I do not believe that Eritrea was directly colonized by Ethiopia. After all Ethiopia was created after Second World War”***.² (My translation) An Eritrean minister recently also reiterated similar statement saying that the *‘idea of Eritrea being colonized by Ethiopia was a ludicrous concept’*. He was right. The ‘colonial question’ issue served its purpose in deceiving and confusing millions. He was bragging to indicate that civilised Eritrea could not have been colonized by a backward society. The Eritrean fronts went to the extent of obliterating thousands of years old history and social relationships to serve their neo-colonial masters.

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PART 2

Nobody knew how the whole narrative was going to end. Eritreans after 1981 did not know then that the remaining front (EPLF) was tyrannical, vicious and self destructing. All followed the wagon emotively for another 24 years until the whole chronicle was partially exposed. Subsequently, every sector of the Eritrean society is suffering from the indignation of slave labour, mass exodus, and indefinite imprisonment, a state without constitution, national budget, and rule of law, indefinite military service imposed by the rule of thumb of one man and his handpicked implementers, a shoot to kill policy on anyone crossing the border, etc are few of the disastrous policies of the Eritrean dictatorial regime. These are some of the issues that are hammering the final nail on the dictator’s coffin. Many should enquire why the Eritrean regime is isolating the population, fighting with all its neighbours, and destroying what it claimed it fought for the previous 30 years of armed struggle at a heavy cost of tens of thousands of young Eritrean lives?

It seems that the yesteryear supporters of the regime have lost the will power to amend the monumental bungles committed by the so-called “liberation” front(s) mainly the EPLF. Even if they have the will, Isaias is hell bent not to listen to anyone for the celestial order comes from Cairo, and it is beyond his remit.

The notion of liberation was construed and misplaced to mean entirely different as a concept and as a reality by the EPLF leadership. There was no indigenous demand for independence. It was concocted by outside powers to serve themselves more than the people of Eritrea. To begin with, the fronts were

² Tesfa (Ethiopia) Aletaseb: Yeqen Gerdosh, Renobot Publishers, Addis Ababa, 2006 P:40

wittingly inflicting damages on the natural relations of the Ethiopian and Eritrean people's by creating rifts with heavy dose of hatemongering culture. The Eritrean elite never coherently challenged the EPLF's visionless road to disaster from day one except few and far ineffective and sporadic remarks. No one had inkling as to how independent Eritrea was going to survive, economically, although it was 'written on the wall', that the future was blink, and the disaster was imminent. The hypothesis of breaking up Ethiopia and living on the spoils of weak and fragmented nations and nationalities could not materialise. The frustration of this impossible and unrealistic hallucination led into further irrational action of war in 1998 to simply learn that political flag weaving does not bring about either political might or economic independence.

The question of democracy was never hijacked by Isaias and his cahoots, for it never existed in the first place. The instruction that was given from the very commencement of the struggle was "independence" from Ethiopia. Democracy, was never an issue. Thus, "Independence", "liberation", and "self reliance", were intermittently used as value loaded concepts, driving the armed struggle to absolute dictatorship, and eventually to social fragmentation and exodus. In hindsight, these and many other factors should have been addressed and tackled from the very commencement of the struggle. It was not meant to be.

After all the bloodshed and sacrifice of the people, and aggression committed on neighbouring states by the EPLF later / PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice, Isaias has been slowly but surely asphyxiating the flagellant state for premature collapse. As a result, the Eritrean regime is wheezing for survival. Against all odds, out of desperation Eritreans, young and old are today escaping the hell that Isaias and his few lieutenants created.

As the problems are mounting, the Eritrean state is plunging into dipper crisis. From selling kidneys, the state has gone up into selling soldiers for the highest bidder. (Eritrean soldiers were previously sold to protect Kaddafi of Libya and now it is both the land and the soldiers that are sold to fight for Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the civil year of Yemen). On the one hand the danger of statelessness is looming, while on the other, power struggle is raging to replace the aging tyrant Isaias among his subservient confidants. As it is, the situation in Eritrea is volatile while many veteran Eritrean soldiers are also seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, at an expected rate. Due to the ominous uncertainty, lack of hope, young and old are abandoning their home and families in thousands per week to escape the 25 years reign of terror of Isaias. (Conservative UN report gives 5000 per month while BBC reporter head-count only in North Ethiopia few months ago was 500 per day i.e. c15000 per month) The ordinary people, undeterred by the intensive EPLF's parochial propaganda

on Ethiopia for over two decades are escaping to the ‘enemy territories’ of Sudan and Ethiopia while risking the “shoot to kill” policy of the Eritrean regime.

The contending but aging soldiers of the establishment who are brandishing their guns for final onslaught to replace the dictator Isaias, namely Hagos Kasha, Fillipose and Wadi Efreme (and their respective gangs), are not endowed with good names to solve the complex and unique problems of Eritrea. To begin with, they are part of the problem and they cannot be part of the solution, simply because no one will trust them and are all implicated in creating the mess anyway. They would not have a solution different from that of the current regime other than following orders from Egypt. Instead of showing maturity and an overriding responsibility to the Eritrean people that they claim to have struggled for, the old guards are still wanting to spill more blood of innocent people as if what was done in the past was not enough. For sure, Isaias’s survival mechanism is foundering from every corner. Like Somalia’s Said Barre, Isaias would love to inherit the coming generation nothing but chaos and civil war in the society. Thus, it needs a broad based alliance of all peace loving Eritreans to salvage what is remaining, for Isaias’s chapter is fast coming to an end. Out of desperation, the regime is selling the last national assets and his obedient soldiers to the highest bidders. It should also be the beginning for peace loving Eritreans to initiate their strategic interest in the Horn of Africa. Peaceful co-existence, inclusion in the dynamic economic development of the Horn of Africa, strong inter and intra nation building based on fraternal relationship of equals with the rest is the only way forward from the gloomy decades of Isaias’s reign of terror. Or else, as the exodus continues, Eritrea will be left with no one but marauding camels and reckless bandits killing each other. On the other hand, the most powerful international military machines on earth are scrambling for strategic location and parading on the Red Sea to protect their geo-political interests, while the rightful owners of the land are either dormant or fleeing in disarray.

Observers, including Molla Asgedom who witnessed the scenario, indicated that there is no foreign currency to buy diesel, and other essentials, consequently there is a continuous shortage of everything. Out of the required 120mwh, less than 60mwh are available most of the time. Hospitals cannot function without electric supply. Residential homes are pretty much in darkness every night. Shortage of food is ominous. Bread queues are too long for the healthy person, let alone the weak and old to stand for long hours, if at all they are available. Food supply is intermittent. In short, the economy if at all was functioning, had been tatters long time ago. What is sad is that, it was a foregone conclusion that

Eritrea was not able to sustain economically by itself. The charade of "self-reliance", was only necessary for self-deception. A front that was fixated to foreign donations cannot have the stamina to stand by itself. It needs, above all, the support of the populous, a supreme constitution, a democratic institutions and the backing of skilled human and material resources to change the status. Emergency Relief Desk (ERD), a consortium of 12 (mainly) European NGOs, donated a large sum of money to REST and ERA between mid 1980's and 1993. ERD said, **"The total value of ERD's cash and in kind assistance was in the region of \$350 million."**³ To Eritrean fronts, this was a small donation in comparison to the cash that was flowing from Arab countries, USAID, Sudan Council of Churches (SCC), etc, who were other heavy weight donors that were lubricating the war. All for their ulterior motives, were competing to dump their excess resources to inflict lasting damage on Ethiopia. Hence, the addiction of dependency has no remedy, but only to get cash whether by selling soldiers as mercenaries to the highest bidder (e.g. Libya, Iran, Saudi Arabia & Qatar) or sell chunk of land, e.g. Aseb and Dahlak to whoever can afford the price.

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PART 3

One of the main reasons why the UN decided to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia in the 50s was that it was assessed that Eritrean economy could not sustain its survival independently. Even Kennedy Trwaskis, British local administrator during the interim period before federation stressed that 'the only advantage of Eritrea is its geographic location'. However, geographic location by itself does not mean a lot, unless there is good governance, respect human and civil rights, mutual cooperation with all neighbours, as well as many other complementing factors. To have delusions of becoming the Singapore of Africa is one thing. To actually convert the dream to reality needs far more imaginative discipline, and dedication, as well as the availability and efficient management of human and material resources, etc. if at all there is a competent leadership which can transform the dream into reality.

The EPLF engages its supporters hypothesizing on absurd analysis. The most preposterous idea of the Eritrean regime is Eritrea will be an industrial hub while divided and poor Ethiopia will provide raw materials to be processed in Eritrea. Hence fragmenting Ethiopia serves the illusion of Isaias to be the Singapore of Africa. "Fragmenting Ethiopia" could not be an original idea of

³ Mark Duffield & John Prendergast: Without Troops & Tanks, he Red Sea Press, DC, 1994 P:6

the EPLF. Since the EPLF is a messenger of terror, it trains, advises, harbours, and mentors other docile and dependent terrorists like Genbot 7, Arbengoch Genbar, OLF, ONLF, etc. The EPLF is implementing whatever its foreign masters order it do. Egypt had attempted to dismantle Ethiopia over 100 years ago, with the intention of controlling Nile from the source to the mouth.

The regime in Eritrea neither has strategic ideas, with concrete pragmatic solutions to come out of poverty, nor a semblance of plan to invest in its people, but only envy based on daydreaming. It needs raw materials, long and short term investment (foreign and local), skilled human, and material resources, peace, and other milestones. Even then, these may not work for myriad of reasons. One cannot expect to develop, if the leadership is engaged in destructive activities with its neighbourhood. If the Eritrean youth are all engaged in forced labour under the enigmatic scheme of national service indefinitely, it is certain that the regime is destroying another generation and living Eritrea with no hope whatsoever.

To understand where the source of the problem is, let us juxtapose the roles of Said Barre and Isaias in the Horn of Africa. To start with, their mentor is the same. Their source of war machinery was the same. Their justification for initiating war and destruction against Ethiopia was unwarranted and similar. Their missions of destructing Ethiopia by military means were identical. Either directly, waging and campaigning conventional war or through their stooges inflicting low intensity violence, so as to destabilise Ethiopia from short and long term development engagements. For over two decades Somalia was anarchic and stateless. Said Barre waited till Somali disintegrate and was forced to flee. It seems Isaias is following the footsteps of the Somalia dictator only waiting Eritrea to implode hoping that may bring instability in Ethiopia. Peaceful Eritrea is against the interest of the Arab master planners, especially Egypt. It seems Isaias is also obeying foreign pay masters instructions. The selling of Aseb to Saudi Arabia and Qatar is nothing but a camouflage for Egypt and the rest of its followers to use it as a stepping stone for a final offensive against Ethiopia at its worst. At best, is to ascertain their military and political superiority and deflect Ethiopia's attention, as it is happening, as a civil strife from within and military overt operations from external forces are insidiously synchronized for maximum effect. While Ethiopia is fixated with a yesteryear deceased idea of "no peace no war" policy, our enemies have gone by far into a superior position, at least in military terms. They are on the offensive. The idea of 'No war No Peace' above being absurd and absolute, gave the tyrant Isaias time to rearrange his priorities.

Politically, Eritrea was a fractured society from the start. The aspiration of the highland population was different from that of the lowland population. The hostility between the fronts, (EPLF & ELF) created further deep social rift, which still reverberates. Like Somalia, Eritreans are not homogeneous in their response to the dictator. The low land Muslims are more subservient to Cairo than the highland Christians. Somalia was divided on clan lines and Said Barre was as vindictive as Isaias for anyone who stands in front of him.

The paranoid regime of Isaias, has been orchestrating vitriolic hate against the Ethiopian public from the beginning. (It seems the doctrine of animosity was what Jamal Abdel Nasser taught the ELF leaders from day one and the EPLF have followed it with vigour up until now.) Said Barre's hate towards Ethiopians was also as poisons as that of Isaias. The purpose of this seems, of course, to widen the rift among the peoples of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. Pursuant to their indiscriminate revulsion, both liberation front's of Eritrea were torturing and killing shepherds, farmers and the vulnerable Ethiopians near the bordering areas for decades. One wonders why the ELF and EPLF had been exterminating innocent civilians, with outmost cruelty along the length of the boarder for so long. The persistence of Isaias's belligerent regime to delineate the boarder before any talks is simply in order to keep conflict alive and punish the Eritrean public for having lax attitude towards Ethiopia.

No one would belittle the calamities suffered by the Eritrean people during the armed struggle, committed by both the Derg and the Eritrean fronts. After the ELF was decimated by the joint forces of the EPLF and TPLF in 1981, the EPLF, thereafter, had the complete monopoly of Eritrea. There were many individual and collective tragedies that people had gone through particularly during the Derge's reign of terror that would shiver the spine of the ordinary person even today. Unfortunately hating the Derge as a brutal regime is quite different from hating the Ethiopian people who were equally victims of all the previous regimes. How are we going to compare the Ethiopian people's sufferings with that of the Eritrean people's agony? The brute force of terror was directed against the ordinary people in every direction wherever the regimes were threatened. The 1st Woyane revolt, The Arsi peasant uprising, the Gojjam upheaval, were all dealt with brutality by the state. The 1989 single most barbaric act on market day in Tembien, Tigray, took the lives of over 2,500 people. Do the people of Tigray hate the Derge regime? Most certainly, that is why they fought the regime to the bitter end. Conversely, did the people of Tigray, despite the atrocities suffered, differentiate the Derge from the rest of the Ethiopian people? Of course they did. They strongly believe that they are

part and parcel of the Ethiopian people and the solidarity shown before and after the Tembien tragedy proves it so glaringly.

To come to the point, the EPLF & ELF were misdirecting the Eritrean public for frivolous reasons from the start. The orientation of indiscriminate hate led by the fronts did not serve either the short or long term interest of the Eritrean people. It was intended to erode the millennium old fraternal relationship among the peoples. The so-called liberation fronts were only serving the interest of the pay master, Egypt who organized, politicized and armed the ELF, and later the EPLF, against the interest of the Eritrean people. The hate directed against the Ethiopian people was neither proportional nor meant to build bridges among the brotherly peoples but only to inflict social segregation permanently. No doubt it has been inflammatory and pernicious to enhance such a divisive wall of hate among peoples who shared history, culture, economy, genealogy, etc for millennia. The wider political and economic interests of Eritreans were concealed under the dishonest pretext of “self-reliance” where there is none. While the Ethiopian people were indiscriminately considered as the prime enemies in order to widen the barriers of dissimilarity.

Originally the idea of Independence was concocted by the British in order to convert the Protectorate administration of Eritrea into permanent neo-colonial domain. On the East, the British were also trying to create Greater Somalia out of adjacent territories including the Ogden. As Bevin informed Aklilu Habtewolde,ⁱ **“After consultation with our ally countries, we have the intention to merge the various parts of Somaliland with the Ogaden and create Greater Somalia and put it under British Administration.”**⁴ Italy abandoned its colonial repossession claim of Eritrea after it realized⁵ it was impossible to go against the British and Egyptians demand for Eritrean independence despite the few Italian subjects wanting Eritrea to continue as Italian colony.

In 1789 Turkey appointed an Albanian, who grew up in Cairo, called Mohamed Ali Pasha, to be the governor of Egypt. To reinforce what Herodotus said, “Egypt is the gift of the Nile”, as Turkey’s empire started to dwindle it began to reenergize itself by controlling of the Nile from source to mouth. In 1821 Mohammed Ali Pasha, conquered Sudan. His son Said Pasha opened Suez Canal with the help of British, French and Suez finance in 1861 and the geo-political importance of the Red Sea became even more imperative. Ismail Pasha, Grandson of Mohammed Pasha, following the dynastic ambition with a

⁴ Aklilu Habtewolde: Aklilu Remembers, Addis Ababa University Press, 2010(reprinted2015) P.148/149.

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slogan and grand design, of ‘Egypt belongs to the Nile and the Nile belongs to Egypt’, started his fateful military expedition to Ethiopia. (Dr. Deg.Zewde Gebre Selassie (P.91).

In the 1950’s, Egypt for an opportunistic reasons claimed that Eritrea was its colony before Turkey occupied Massawa and wanted its colony back. When this false claim failed, Egypt endorsed the British and Italian demands. Eritrean Independence became a fitting event to have a foothold near the Nile River and to permanently engage in destabilising Ethiopia that contributes 87% of the water.

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PART 4

Deluded Approach

Few, including Professor FesehaTSION, repeatedly reiterated that Isaias is an Ethiopian doing the dirty work of Ethiopia from within Eritrea. He and others stress that Isaias is destructive because his lineage is from Ethiopia; therefore he is anti-Eritrean. They, of course, inadvertently assume that there is as such “pure” Eritrean blood.

1. Can genealogy be a proof of nationality? Ato Wolde-ab Wolde Mariam was originally from Aksum. He struggled for Eritrea throughout his life for the principles that he stood for, irrespective of whether those ideals were right or wrong. If Wolde-ab Wolde Mariam is recognised as an Eritrean, (although recruited to oppose the major pro Ethiopian Unionist Party by the then British administration to prolong their stay in Eritrea,) why is Isaias, born and bred in Asmara not accepted as an Eritrean? Why was a half Nigerian member of the leadership the ELF not taken as an “outsider”?
2. History shows us that, since the Axumit period, there were political, military and commercial expeditions from the centre to all corners of the Empire that included the Wollega gold mines in the south West, Wolayta and the Gurage settlements in the South, incense trade from Somalia, Ivory trade in parts of today’s Kenya and further south, Moreow in the North, and Yemen in the East, etc. For millenniums there were no boarder limitations, nor intermarriage barriers within Ethiopia proper. For

centuries people migrated freely from central Ethiopia to north Ethiopia, Bahere Negash (Eritrea), and vice-versa. There were movements of people from southern Ethiopia, i.e. Tigray, Gojjam, Agaw, Begemeder, etc. who settled in highland Bahre-Negash (Eritrea). Free movement of people occurred for one reason or another. During periods of famine or war, people move from one region to another as a natural deterrence or escaping of calamities. They settled where ever they get respite and protection. For example, Richard Pankhurst estimated that over 100,000 Tigreans migrated to the north (Eritrea) just before the Italian advent at the end of the 19th century.

3. Since many enemies of Ethiopia were creeping through the northern frontiers of the country, almost all the wars fought against the foreign invaders were fought in defensive wars by great military Generals like, Ras Alula Aba Nega, Rasi Mengesha, Dgazmach Sebagades, Dejzmach Webe, Emperor Yohannes, Emperor Menelik, etc, had all fighting army composed of all Ethiopians in hundreds of thousands defending the sovereignty of Ethiopia for decades. Emperor Yohannes had well equipped mobile army of about 150,000-200,000 when he was in his Northern territories of Ethiopia (in today's Eritrea) just before marching to Metema to fight against the Derbushes (1881). According to tradition, the mobile militia army was obliged to practice abstinence for 80 days while on duty wherever their camp was stationed. After the expiration of the 80 days, the mobile militia army can merry local women wherever their camp is, as long as the initial restraint period of 80 days is served.⁶ Hundreds of thousands of young mobile militia army were crisscrossing Ethiopia from North to South, East to West and vice-versa. Besides the army, many more civilians freely travelled from area to area in search of new settlement. Thus, intermarriages become a norm than an exception. Rasi Alula and his 100,000 mobile militia army settled and established Asmara as his military base. It does not mean that his army was insulated or solitary by any means. For the above reasons, one cannot claim that his/her family lineage is "pure", unless one is either naïve or in self-denial.

With all the constant movement of army and people, across the width and breadth of the country for millennia, one would only appreciate the harmony and fraternity it reinstates, rather than focus on parochial genetic purification.

⁶ I was informed by two Mekelle University Professors during the Diaspora Conference in August 2015 in Addis Ababa.

There was no artificial or natural boundary to segregate people from one constituency to the other. There was no need either. This attitude is a new phenomenon only likely implanted in the mind of some enchanted Eritreans by both Italian and Egyptian colonizers, which the current regime is actively reinforcing the idea on the people, to perpetuate narrow nationalism. If it was due to intermarriage, Eritreans would be a better representative of Federal Ethiopia than the rest of the Ethiopian states put together.

As a recent article from an Eritrean insider explained, after the Badem war (1998-2000) and subsequent abrupt withdrawal of the Ethiopian army from Eritrea, Isaias order to imprison all Ethiopians from Asmara, Keren, Massawa, Aqordet, Barentu, Mendefera, Dekemhare and other towns. All civilian Ethiopians were shackled in hot containers. The Eritrean said, *"We were informed at the time by Woldezi, and Yemane Afeworki that the order of mass genocide on Ethiopians came from Isaias Afeworki himself. Our civilian brothers and sisters' all innocent Ethiopian were summarily executed in cold blooded as retribution for our failure in Bademe."*ⁱⁱ

If Isaias was, as these speculators imagine, he would not kill just because they are Ethiopians. He would have done what Molla Asgedom did.

Eritrean tragedy

It is not pleasant to envisage the human calamity that is hanging over Eritrea be it now or after the demise of the tyrant. On the extreme, the end of Isaias' era could be the beginning of another explosive episode totally unpredictable by any stretch of human imagination. Another well groomed disciple of the old tyrant may want to continue the reign of terror like his predecessor. There may be an exodus of epic proportion even worse than what we are witnessing today. Then again, a power struggle may ensue to unleash an internecine war. Either way it becomes everybody's problem on every aspect of the field be it on political, economic, or humanitarian grounds. If neighbouring countries and concerned international organizations do not get prepared for such eventualities now, tomorrow will be too late either to help or avert the calamity. The problem of refugees is overwhelming, for any one country to handle as it is now, late alone when the regime collapses altogether. However, this may be a walk in the park, in comparison to what may happen if another failed state is replicated on the Northern frontier of Ethiopia. It is also possible, outside these doomsday scenarios; situation may culminate in a diametrically opposite conclusion. It is unpredictable and all eventualities are possible.

The anxiety is similarly felt by many Ethiopians. There should be a reign of uninterrupted tranquillity, and prosperity in the region if the Horn of Africa is to

qualitatively change for the better. Peace is a priceless commodity which is one of the essential ingredients and a prerequisite for development and progress of any society. This necessity is even more so in the Horn of Africa today. Sooner than later, Eritreans should sort out their internal political problems and catch up with the dynamic and tangible economic transformation of the region. The alternative is to be a failed state and become self-destructive. This is only when Eritreans realize that their vested interest is inherent in the mutual coexistent and positive relationships with the rest of the Horn of Africa, and particularly with Ethiopia. As they say blood is thicker than water. It seems the iron curtain of Isaias's hate reinforced by narrow nationalism is prohibiting many from acquiring clear vision in deciding the future of Eritrea.

The arch enemies of Ethiopia are positioning themselves to protect their perceived and real interests in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea is becoming a stepping stone for their short and long term strategic interests. The use of port Aseb as a military post by Saudi and Qatar (Egypt) implies Ethiopia will never have a say on what happens in the most sensitive geopolitical region of the world. We cannot expect the interest of 90 million Ethiopians to be served by other powers. The big powers with vested interest in oil and geopolitics of the area are flexing their military muscle even more so than ever before. The race has started in earnest. The Chinese, US, French, Britain, Russia are all suddenly scrambling for military base in the Red Sea.

What precipitated this situation, in the first hand? Did the tyrant Isaias designed and implemented such a horrifying regime to punish the people as some imagine? Or, during the transition period from being a confidant of the CIA to serving the secret service of Egypt, the dictator become a psychopath and followed the ideology and practice of Islamic terrorism? Isaias has been leading, mentoring, arming, financing, training, initially, the Islamic Court of Justice (ICJ), Al-Qaida, and later Al-shebab. In his repository of terrorists, the master mind of terrorists Isaias has been nurturing and training Ethiopian terrorists of all hues. According to **Ethiopian Review** Editor, in a recent interview he said, Isaias gets a budget of US\$50 million per year from Egypt to run terror against Ethiopia.

The naïve and the versed will equally be mystified and enquire why is Egypt acting like a bully boy of the neighbourhood? The query is also, why should Egypt be undertaking this on broad day light against innocent and peace loving people of the Horn and against sovereign state of Ethiopia? Is it not in contravention of International Law? It is obvious; the enemies are hiding behind the veil of Independent Eritrea.

Egypt, the unrepentant leading nemesis of Ethiopia!

“There is already evidence of steady Egyptian infiltration into the area by means of teachers and advisers, and Egyptian propaganda is very active in Somalia.”⁷

The naked ambition of Egypt to control the Nile river from beginning to end, irrespective of the millions of lives that depend on it, have been the kernel of the problem that forced it to linger for centuries. The succeeding military defeats that Egypt suffered at the hands of Ethiopians in the 19th century, gave her a lesson that direct confrontation with Ethiopia was not an option to be contemplated. Their contending partner in crime, the Italians, also suffered similar humiliating defeats despite their superior armoury, and colonial motto of so called “civilizing mission” which was exposed then as, nothing but, shackles for servitude. The Egyptians used variety of other methods to attain at their objective. When war was not succeeding to bring the wanted result, diplomacy, and religion were expected to bring Nile under the total control of Egypt.

Since 15th century, the Patriarch, head of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, was sent from Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Egypt. Thus, Egypt literarily impeded Ethiopia spiritually and culturally for nearly five centuries. Christian Ethiopians were both their hands tied up and blind folded to prevent them from working and thinking freely. While Islam was expanding and had an upper hand in the low land areas, Christianity was confined in the plateau circumvented from progress in order to contain society in the dark ages. We were culturally glued in with 365 days dedicated to every saint and angel known to Christianity so as to ritually enjoy an orgy of feasting and drinking with the inherent mission of de-motivating society. European Christian churches were changing the culture of their people with ‘Christian work ethics’ to bring about social and economic changes, through discipline and hard work. Many Liberal thinkers emerged from the pulpit of the churches and brought about significant social and political transformation. On the other hand, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was unable to find its own indigenous rhythm. The church that gave Yared, Zerayakob, and many pioneers slowly retreated to oblivion.

The Egyptian Orthodox Patriarchs (some of them unrepentant Muslims) were truly covert politicians doing what they could not do by hostile means. The direct military expansionist policy on Ethiopia in the 19th century, was changed into proxy wars after 1960’s in Somalia and up until now, in Eritrea.

⁷. (P 135 February 1957 *British Government assessment in the late 50s.*)

When the Italians were defeated by the combined forces of Ethiopia and British forces in 1941, under UN mandate the British took over Eritrea and governed it as a protectorate for ten years before Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia. The double edge sword initial British solution for Eritrea was:

- a) (Bevin & Sforza plan of 1951)To divide Eritrea into two sections. They designed highland Eritrea which is predominantly Christian to be part of Ethiopia and the lowland to be part of the Sudan.
- b) Suddenly, to prolong their rule in Eritrea, the British encouraged independence of Eritrea as their final resolve of the problem. It is plausible that Egypt may have influenced, but due to Suez Canal which British had substantial share and the uninterrupted supply of King Cotton, may have influenced the British for Eritrean Independence. But Britain wanted Italy to be its junior partner, to fend off France, the real contender in the region. The Italians, the British and the Egyptians united for independence at the same time to serve their separate ulterior motives.

Egypt's dream was realized as a power vacuum was created; it grabbed the opportunity without hesitation. In 1955 Egypt aggressively occupied Yemen. Jamal Abdel Nasser started a provocative campaign against Ethiopia. He propagated stating that Ethiopia was an anti-Muslim country. Meanwhile, Egypt was working hard to convince the UN saying Eritrea was its own colony before the Italians, thus Eritrea should be awarded to Egypt. (Aklilu Habtewolde's Memoir) The barrage of propaganda was to convince Arab opinion and make them an accomplice to Egypt's evil scheme. Hence, repetitive radio broadcast that stated Ethiopia is anti-Muslim country was working in the Arab communities. Thus, Cairo became the new recruiting home of all the dissatisfied Eritrean and Somali Muslims. (Shake) Idris Mohammed Adem, the first President of the Federal Eritrean government was among the first to settle in Egypt and with few other Muslims he formed the ELF in 1961. Egypt subsidised disgruntled Muslim Eritreans, who were later joined by few high land Christian Eritrean rebels. In any case, liberation was never the objective. Liberation was purposely confused with independence as they are synonymous in Tigrigna. The Eritrean rebellion was baptized as a struggle for independence from Ethiopia. Egypt, under Jamal Abdel Nasser, formulated the prescription for Eritrea and hence-forth became the insignia of struggle for independence. Experienced Algerian guerrilla fighters were training Eritrean Muslims paid by Cairo, through Tunisian Banks to disguise the origin of the source and to clear Egypt from directly implicated in the act. Fund was raised in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi, etc to keep the armed conflict raging for as long as it takes.

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PART 5

Hasty Decisions

After the Federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia, on the other hand, Emperor Haile Selassie was expediting the reunion of Eritrea to amend the messed up years of his father Ras Mekonen and Emperor Menelik II who was suffering from multiple stroke, paralyses and syphilis, created in his reign. The internal power struggle had forced them to make historic mistakes in appeasing the antagonists of Ethiopia. To pacify the enemies, our leaders were cutting chunks of territories and throwing it to the hyenas. Naturally, the hyenas kept on asking for more. The double edge objective was also, it seems, to weaken the north and punish the people while getting rich and strong militarily, at the expense of the disunited and fragile Ethiopia. The boarder maps were made only by Italian cartographers and had the opportunity to draw the boarder wherever, and whenever they want. In all the treaties, Italians refused to demarcate the boarder, as their intention was to swallow the whole country. From their intelligence headquarters, in **Let-Marefia Village**, in the Ankober area, the Italian Oriental Intelligence centre for all their colonies, (Somalia, Eritrea, and Libya), were able to swindle, bribe, and influence Meneliks' and his bureaucrats at ease.⁸ Thus with Italy's plan to occupy the whole country, it did not need to demarcate the boarder. It was creeping from time to time to enlarge its colony.

Dr. Zewde G. Selassie's recent book, The Causes and Solutions of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Conflict, 2015 (my translation) indicated that Menelik had given chunks of territories from Tigray and South East Somalia worth millions of Lire secretly. Dr. Zewde G. Selassie, exposed the agreement between the Italian intelligent officer, Cicodicola stationed in Addis Ababa and Emperor Menelik. Cicodicola sent a telegram to Italy and to the governor of Eritrea Martini stating that **“As long as we pay him 5,000,000 Lire, Emperor Menelik has agreed to give as the land up to Mereb-Belesa-Muna. But this has to be kept top secret. March 23, 1900.”**⁹ Furthermore, Dr Zewde divulged another top secret letter of agreed between Emperor Menelik and Cicodicola, He said, **“The border between Ethiopia and Somalia former Italian colony (was signed on**

⁸ Lapiso G. Dilebo: The Italo-Ethiopian War of 1887-1896 (from Dogali to Adua, Artistic Printin Enter.AA. 1996 P.53

⁹ Dr. Zewde G.Selassie:: The Ethiopian and Eritrean Conflict Causes and Solutions. Addis Ababa Press, 2015 P30/31.

April 15, 1908) an agreement was reached that Ethiopia will give a large chunk of land, while in return, Italy will give Ethiopia 3,000,000 Lire (3million Lire). (The amount of money paid is included in the agreement.)¹⁰

At the time this was kept secret from the Ethiopian people. These historic monumental tragedies were not even amended after the Great victory of Adua led by Emperor Menelik (1896) either, where Ethiopia gained a clear and decisive military victory over the Italians. Instead of victory's agreement, Ethiopia had even lost more territories both in the North and South East. Thus, Italy resuscitated from the brink of disaster, gained momentum to bully the bedridden and debilitating Menelik who sold even more territories. Thus, Menelik left Ethiopia with more people and land sold and lost to foreign invaders. Inevitably, Ethiopia was politically and economically weak, and divided while it was left socially and militarily in disarray. The Italian well organized covert operation centre near Addis was very successful. They infiltrated in the centre, and expanded their territories through bribes, deceit, outright buying lumps of land through conniving as well as pitting. It seemed Emperor Haile Selassie had one ambition and that was to rectify over-night the wrongs done by Emperor Menelik and Ras Mekonen.

Eritrea was used as a principal weapon by the Egyptian led Arab proxy wars on Ethiopia when the Italians were kicked out after nearly 5 decades from their colony by the joint force of Ethiopia and Britain (1889-1945). Eritrea was legitimately federated with Ethiopia by UN resolution for that was the natural progress and a rational conclusion. However, Britain, Egypt, and Italy were contending as the rightful owners of Eritrea by other means.

The irreconcilable gulf created by the dissolution of the federation and swift unification which was too hasty for many Moslems while, ironically, it was then an overdue issue for most high land Eritreans. The seeds of hate against Ethiopia were firmly rooted by Britain, Italy and Egypt for their ulterior motives. The lowlanders were embracing their old suspicious position on Ethiopian. In the late 50's, Egypt started to instigate fragmenting Ethiopia to pieces by every means possible at its disposal. Isaias was not the original thinker with an ambition to fragment Ethiopia. He is just a foot soldier only obeying orders from his main funders. It started supporting Eritrean Muslim dissenters politically and materially, way before Wadi Awate killed innocent people in 1961. Above mentoring the malcontents, Jamal Abdel Nasser was openly gathering support from the Arab countries to implement his strategic objective. It was a well calculated move to insight rebellion in Ethiopia by supporting Eritreans, in order to do their dirty job which the Egyptians failed to

¹⁰ IBID: Dr. P.70

do on many junctures. Egypt controlled Yemen, and was claiming Somalia through various channels. It was haggling with Britain and trying hard through the UN to gain foothold on SomaliLand and Somalia respectively. Before the independence of Somalia was declared in 1960, the British Government assessed and said, **“There is already evidence of steady Egyptian infiltration into the area (Somalia) by means of teachers and advisors, and Egyptian propaganda is very active in Somalia...These factors with the growth of political consciousness among the Somali peoples to create a danger (which could be accentuated by propaganda playing on religious views, economic needs, and anti-colonial sentiment) that Somali may fall into the Egyptian orbit..”** (Foreign Office Document 1957 P.135)

The Eritrean population were under the brutal rule of colonial Italy, where apartheid system was practiced, barbaric exploitation, segregation and dehumanization was the order of the day. The benevolent despot of Haile Selassie’s regime, with its feudal administration was inevitably preferred to the ruthless Italian servitude. Unfortunately, in the period 30 years of armed rebellion, there was no page written by the so called liberators on the Italian reign of vassalage and ruthless colonial rule. Ethiopia became the colonizer and backward, above all, savagely attacked with rampant hate, while Italy, the “civilized”, was romanticized by mercenary leaders of the liberation fronts. The dichotomy of interest of the high land Christians bowing towards the colonial masters the Anglo-Italian contenders, while the Moslems were kneeling to Cairo and the rest of the Arab capitals, that became apparent in the infantile stage of the struggle. The birth place and baptism of the ELF, the front that started the rebellion, was Cairo and this was not a coincidence. It was a result of hard work and calculated move to engrain discreetly to the rest as to who the future master designer, and funder of the project was.

Is there a way out from the prevailing crisis of Eritrea? We either do not want to accept the obvious facts, with hazard lights indicating that Eritrea is in crisis which is imminent & inevitable to deteriorate, or we are pretending that nothing will happen?

Ethiopia’s enemies worked hard to keep it underdeveloped, disunited, and backward looking. Berhanu Nega, Chair of Genbot 7 and Arbegnoch Gembar, also admitted in an interview of accepting US\$500,000 fund from Cairo via Eritrea. If these are not an attempt to destabilize Ethiopia and derail the economic growth and overall positive direction of development of the country, what then could it be? It is a miracle that Ethiopia survived as a united country for so long. Unaware of the sinister religious leadership from Alexandria, camouflaged as Patriarchies and Bishops operating in the inner circles of the

Ethiopian state, were creating divisions between state and religion. (This was epitomised during Emperor Tewodros's reign where the state and the church were in open & bloody confrontation). Ethiopia was culturally and spiritually subjugated. Aggressive Muslim expansion engineered from outside, (e.g. Turkey armed and sponsored Ahmed Gragn in the 16th c) religiously shackling the Christians and preventing society from looking in and outside its surroundings to change itself, the so called Patriarchs from Alexandria were doing their political duty serving their state rather than the deity.

In short Eritrea is not liberated in the true sense of emancipation. Likewise, it cannot be independent, for the very reason it was shaped up for. The designers created Eritrea for a mission and it has to serve that roll whenever and wherever it is called for, besides the permanent duty of destabilizing the Horn of Africa. It was not to be liberated nor be independent, but a colonial post for all that hankers of controlling the region with their scheme, and deception, through covert and overt operations. Why would a colonizer, emancipate his colonized people? It has no prior precedence in history where a colonizer let go his possessions. Unless the alternative is better than the formal occupation.

Isaias' insistence on boarder claim and demarcation **which was never demarcated** before, without public participation and negotiation on the ground and peaceful settlement of the issue seems an assignment from Egypt to keep on raging the hostilities on Ethiopia at the expense of the Eritrean people.

OLF, ONLF Genbot 7 & Arbengoch Gembar

The OLF was another organization which became a southern Trojan horse which acquiesced easily to fight against their country for financial and political gains from Egypt. One of the 'give away' agreements of the OLF was to agree to struggle for Oromo Independence, in return to be rewarded with financial support and allocation of time and frequency to broadcast from Radio Cairo of the need to get independence from Ethiopia. Thus, Egypt's instruction to OLF was that the front should aim to struggle for Oromo independence. The leaders of the OLF, of course, for trivial material and propaganda benefits, sold out their demand of democratic struggle. The OLF/ ONLF, Genbot 7, Arbengoch Gembar has all missed Ethiopian people's need and desire of peace and tranquillity.

Ethiopia, has been struggling on many fronts against natural and manmade calamities. If Egypt had not been encircling Ethiopia in all directions, the

natural calamities would have been less challenging in their devastations. As stated above, the Eritrean fronts in the North, ONLF in the East, Said Barre's regime from Somalia, The Islamic Court of Justice, Al Shebaba, were all armed and directed against Ethiopia to serve one and only Egyptian foreign policy of creating permanent instability.

Was Eritrea liberated or was it transferred from one brutal regime Derge to a Tigrigna speaking tyrant who is worst than his predecessor ("Tigrigna Speaking Derge"). Or has Isaias created a gun trotting state which is in an endless war against itself? Thus Sudan and Ethiopia should consider giving Eritrean refugees permanent residency, if they want "No War No Peace" to succeed. After 25 years in power, the Eritrean regime is neither supported by the Eritrean public nor did it bring any semblance peace and progress for the Eritrean society. What other reason could there be for the dictator to cling in power for so long unless it is an assignment from north of the boarder?

In short then, the 1st referendum (1952), was not accepted and took a toll of bloody 40 years war for the 2nd referendum (1993) to take place. Yet again, this last referendum was conducted at gun point with an emotive question which said do you want; "Independence or slavery". People have realized that they were swindled by Isaias and his cliques on broad day light. The Independence they envisioned has become a nightmare of the worst type. The only solution, and binding to all, should be based on a prolonged free and frank debate, without external players involved, mainly on issues concerted on the short and long interest of the Eritrean people. Against all odds, to quench the need of the majority of the population, it seems another concluding referendum is a necessity.

WS Asfaw

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ⁱ (The former Prime Minister of Ethiopia Aklilu Habte Wolde fought vehemently to unite Eritrea with Ethiopia in the 1950's. While in Derge's prison, Aklilu wrote a short but succinct recollection of his remarkable political contribution to consolidate Ethiopia. He, along with 60 other officials, was mercilessly butchered, by an ignominious soldier Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1975.

ⁱⁱ Assenna.com: **Secret Intelligence War** October 1st 2015 P. 7 The writer was a level headed, and well informed person in senior position who put facts coherently, in a distressful time in Eritrea. It is rare to find an objective analysis of Eritrea from the pulpit of a heinous regime.)