

## Paradigm of Poverty and Humanism: Undoing Ethiopia's Modernity<sup>i</sup>

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[This paper is prepared in anticipation of the All Party Conference scheduled for 26 July 2003. The All Party Conference is important to the extent that it represents some structure of unity of political and social concern. Thus, I took it upon myself to try to mold our thinking, so as to face the challenge of the future, our future and the future of Ethiopia, and persuade my fellow Ethiopians to make some creative shift of political and economic goals and methodology. The views presented herein are the views of one individual, not that of a committee or a group.]

### INTRODUCTION

I have read the political programs of almost every Ethiopian political organization that ever reared its head since my school days at Haile Selassie I University. I have also studied the vast body of work (polemic) criticizing or defending such programs. Even more so, in recent years, I was able to reread some of those same programs with far more critical mind than I did before. Specially, in the last ten years, I had the good fortune of reading numerous articles by Ethiopian scholars, visionaries, would-be-leaders, and patriotic Ethiopians of every political color. They all seem to base their work cut from the same political cloth, and seem to have been caught in a web of a single overwhelming paradigm of modernity. The overriding theme in that paradigm of modernity is the imperative for economic development and political reform.

Within such paradigm of modernity, I find their thesis and most of their arguments as rational and as engaging as one would find in any well thought-out coherent political and economic view. However, all that great effort has nothing to do with the people of Ethiopia. The modernity paradigm started out as an esoteric idea in the recess of the mind of a very traditional young man who ended up becoming the longest reigning monarch in the thousands of years of history of the Ethiopian people – “His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Elect of God, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” The greatness of a good leader or government is in what comes after such leader has died or had been replaced. By such measurement the effort of Haile Selassie to “modernize” has resulted in failure. Both successor leaders to Hail Selassie, Mengistu Hailemariam and Meles Zenawi, are not the type of leaders that one is proud of. At any rate, the generations of Ethiopians after Haile Selassie have yet to produce charismatic and creative leaders, who approximate the greater-than-life personality of Haile Selassie, in order to solve our monumental political and economic problems.

As recently as a few weeks back, there were several articles posted in different websites asking elementary questions about choices we émigré Ethiopians have to make between different forms of governments and different ideologies and economic systems. In conference halls we hear from all kinds of political leaders, some with nothing more than their great hate for the current “Tygrean” leadership as a trigger point for their political involvements, about their

political and economic programs for the people of Ethiopia. AAPO has broken up into two contending groups; Medhin has suffered the same fate. Another example of political maneuver is the merging of EDP and EDU to form a new party. All this surge of political reorganization is a harbinger of an impending doom of the current government. The knell of the government of Meles Zenawi is distinct and can be heard all over Ethiopia. Ethiopian politicians are like buzzards with a keen sense of smell of the possible death of a government. I do not even want to discuss the contradictions and the many problems such programs have; I grant them that all of their programs have depth and sufficient knowledge. However, they are all irrelevant to the real life problems and conditions in Ethiopia. They are all menu-like choices offered at a fine restaurant catering to the few and the privileged.

Instead of revisiting the same old political and economic programs that have been the main stay of every political group and aspiring political leader since the 1960s, I suggest that we start with new approach within a rubric of a Humanistic-Poverty Paradigm. A paradigm is not in itself a political ideology, but a way of looking at distilled consistent and compatible ideas. It has the advantage of satisfying all ideas of truth. This in itself is remarkable. It should not come as a surprise to us, for the humanistic paradigm, after all, reflects the ethos or the *zeit-geist* of a people (period). Another additional factor to consider is the fact that the Paradigm is not a liberation movement, but rather a creative process; unlike other liberation movements the struggle is not against the State of Ethiopia but against poverty, ignorance, pestilence, greed, exploitation, dehumanization, oppression et cetera.

We Ethiopians suffer from an acute case of expectations of serendipity on one hand and denial of our deprivation, poverty, and moral decay on the other. As our parents and grand parents have done, we hide our shame or things that are embarrassing in our *majet*. The *majet* is the physical counterpart of the ego/id, a kind of sanctum or a private black-hole for a family or an individual where no stranger outside of very close friends is allowed to enter. It is usually associated with female privacy, a dark place within the inner hidden part of a home, a place with no windows or any form of light illumination. Violating that privacy is a taboo. Even the person whose sanctum it is has to grope around in the dark to retrieve anything hidden there. It is a place where things (some unsavory) are kept out of the prying eyes of neighbors and any one else.

I contend that we suffer from a *majet* syndrome where we try to hide our dirt, our poverty, our dysfunctional family structure, and our moral deterioration within the inner most part of our existence -- in our spiritual *majet*. However, this very fact also tells us that as a people that we are mindful of others, and value their humanity. A person who heeds not others is vulgar. Thus, in case it is simply a question of recasting or redirecting this great quality into a constructive attribute. It is also the foundation of our tolerance of different religion, ethnic groups, multiple cultural norms et cetera, which is the source of our greatest strength and a mark of our civilization.

The All Party Conference scheduled for late July 2003 is not the first such conference organized by Ethiopians. From past experience, I am of the view that the Conference is not going to bring about any concrete immediate solution to our monumental problem. However, I support the conference for it is a vehicle for unity, and physical evidence to our search for solutions. I hope the members of the conference would heed what I have presented herein and the political and

economic ideals I have setup for Ethiopia. My voice is that of a single person, but I am not alone in my hope for the success of the opposition and for the freedom and independence of Ethiopia. The ringing of the bell of change is being heard albeit faintly by all of us at this moment, but soon will fill up our world with its resounding sound of victory.

## **PART ONE**

### **I. Humanistic-Poverty as a Paradigm**

The humanistic-poverty paradigm that I am suggesting as a framework for our thinking, and as political processes, has very humble and realistic attributes. Under such paradigm our aspirations and goals are much closer to the needs and aspirations of the poor people of Ethiopia who make up almost 95% of the population. It is the right framework for our special circumstance, and has as its core the concept of "humanism" as a moral and political force. It is the right paradigm for our survival, and helpful to our monumental task to turn the impending tidal wave of destruction from hitting our fragile Ethiopia broad-side.

It is not the "profit motive," nor the "will to power" that we need in order to pull ourselves from the quagmire of the backlog of unresolved human suffering, but the humanity and compassion that we all have buried under layers of our painful experience of the last one hundred years--legacy of disfranchisement, oppressive culture, and successive failed leadership. What our fellow Ethiopians, standing across from us, destitute, bare-footed, time-worn, emaciated and starving, and utterly humiliated, need is our true human companionship. To reach out and embrace them to our heart, bind up their wounds, dry their tears, share what ever we have even if it means splitting grains. Poverty is going to be with us for a long time. The way to deal with poverty is not by fighting it with grandiose development programs, burrowing billions of dollars from usurious international financial institutions, relaying on experts from developed nations, and participating in numerous international and diplomatic, and sinking such fund in corrupt schemes of quick-fixes et cetera. The best way to solve our numerous economic and political problems is first of all by living a life of poverty.

Fighting poverty with poverty is a paradox. It is an approach that will preserve us and help us weed out the poisonous seeds of tremendous moral decay, blunt our expectations that is far beyond our means, remove enclaves of exploitative wealth, and throw out murderous governments. This is the paradox of the heap of sand. Each act may be as insignificant as a particle of sand, but cumulatively it does create formidable structure. We need no masters, nor slaves, nor experts, nor foreign aid, but each other. Thus, we need to get rid of all ideation or political and economic programs based on greed and private acquisition that is being shoved down our starving throat by foreign national governments and international financial organizations. In short we have to start from zero, and take appropriate baby-steps for some distance, not some giant strides that collapses with its own corruption in a few steps.

Edward Gibbon wrote, "Encompassed on all sides by the enemies of their religion, the Aethopians slept near a thousand years, forgetful of the world, by whom they were forgotten. They were awakened by the Portuguese, who, turning the southern promontory of Africa, appeared in India and the Red Sea, as if they had descended through the air from a distant planet." [Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 2, Chapter

47. Paragraph 37.] I contend that we were better off in our slumber of earlier times than in our waking up in a nightmarish world we live in now. None could sneer at our long standing national identity and freedom, nor undermine the value of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the singular institution that was and still is the only force that ensures our continued existence as a free people and an independent nation.

Within the paradigm of humanistic-poverty there are few core principles we need to follow. Rather than working from grandiose ideological systems or economic theories, we need to adhere to simple and humble objectives built around few core principles of virtue. Some of the virtues such as compassion for our fellow Ethiopians, sharing rather than hoarding, courage in the face of overwhelming adversity, sense of outrage against injustice, and the keen observance of human rights and human dignity need be our guiding principles. In this approach we will not be reinventing the wheel, but simply living within social and economic structures that we can make equitable.

The problem with ideologies and economic theories is the fact that sooner than later they become delaminated from the reality that they were supposed to improve and in time become their own justification. Whereas, the virtues remain as guiding principles under all circumstances fully grounded in the reality of our existence. It is impossible to address the humble needs of Ethiopians while driving expensive imported cars, sipping imported Cognac and Champaign, building four-star Hilton and Sheraton hotels et cetera. Those are the things that poisoned our psych and distorted our priorities. We must burn and destroy by all means those symbols of exploitation and corruption, symbols of all that is wrong with us, and build the new Ethiopia on the ashes of our greed and frivolity.

It is a matter of survival that we establish new nomenclature of the professional and political titles we give our leaders, teachers, et cetera, or the way we address each other. There is much in a name. Language seems to mold our mind and the way we perceive each other. Our concepts develop with the limitations imposed on us by our language. Thus, it is not simple fantasy when I suggest we change our old political and social titles and the way we refer to fellow Ethiopians as individuals and as professionals, there are serious grounds to be gained by such simple change. By so doing we may indeed change the old so called Western concepts of political power and economic development.

In humanistic-poverty, we are acutely aware of the fact that we have limited resources, but overwhelming needs. It is in the nature of our survival interest, at least for a little while, to stretch what ever little we have only to cover the humble needs of our fellow Ethiopians. A mother with several children will not let one child eat all the food to satisfy all his needs, but would apportion to all her children what is available even if each portion is small. Such a responsible and loving mother would ensure the survival of all her children. By the same token, the secret to our survival is to use wisely the limited resources we have and work our way out of our present predicament. We do not have natural resources, such as oil and gold readily convertible to hard currency. However, we are blessed with an array of other natural resource, such as vast land, mighty rivers, and an astonishing variety of seeds for agriculture. We can start out first by meeting our humble needs by using labor extensive programs that would focus on self reliance and sufficiency. Our problems are multilayered and multifaceted: it includes lack of leadership, and depilating cultural practices that we have inherited that we find now

ourselves in a loop from where it has been difficult to escape. Mostly we brought about our own suffering through our own action or neglect. This debilitating situation of political games and maneuvering should be over. It is time to start fresh with principles of virtue.

I advocate dismantling Ethiopian “modernity” and starting from scratch. There is almost nothing that could be salvaged in Ethiopia at this moment. Modernity has done us Ethiopians a lot of harm. We urbanites, the educated few, the hyphenated men and women, could only measure its impact by the benefit we have derived from such a system. The scene is quite different from the point of view of 90% of the Ethiopian population living under sub-human condition. All of the leaders of the many governments from the time of Menilik to date have marshaled all of their efforts to sustain their version of the modern life style based on conspicuous consumption of imported goods that touched only a tiny segment of the population. It is impossible to bring about any meaning full political and economic, universally applicable and sustainable, improvement in Ethiopia on borrowed fund, from the back of Mercedes Benz, from palaces and the marble tiled conference halls of Hilton and Sheraton hotels et cetera.

The route to Ethiopia’s development and the enrichment of its citizens could only be traveled through great personal sacrifices by working hard on foot or horse back, wearing locally made cotton clothing, drinking *katikala* for entertainment, in short living within ones own means. The difficult part in this new Paradigm is the establishment of a sate of mind in order to carry out these difficult tasks. One must see this process like a religious journey of faith and salvation. How do we reverse the current modernism’s destructive course? We could start, for example, by limiting our relationship with the outside world by closing down embassies and offices of many of the international organizations, such as those of the African Union and the United Nations et cetera. We could change our import pattern. On the political side, first and foremost, we have to remove the current treasonous Government from power. And on the economic side, we need to start an austere national budgeting, and concentrate on changing our land holding and ownership system establishing full ownership of land by individuals fully involved in food production.

In a way we are fortunate living at this juncture of history, a crossroads where different and opposing political and economic forces are clashing. We are not lost in a sea of overwhelming and insurmountable problems. I believe we have available to us two formidable economic structures initiated by two creative individuals, E. F. Schumacher and Muhammad Yunus that we may consider at some depth. Schumacher has encapsulated his progressive ideas in his book *Small is Beautiful*. The ideas of Schumacher on economic programs designed to fit the village and development with a human face was a reaction to the prevailing government directed grandiose development projects financed by the World Bank. On the side of the individual citizen of poor countries, Muhammad Yunus started the concept of self sustaining development at the level of the individual villager, the Grameen Movement. His vision resulted in the creation of one of our times most miraculous success story, the Grameen Bank (village bank) system of financing the poor, poor villagers that regular banks heretofore had declared credit risks and written off.

The Grameen project was launched in 1976, and transformed into a formal banking system in 1983 owned by the poor (women) making tiny loans to villagers (mostly women) to finance

their small survival enterprises. Though humble in looks and origin, the Grameen Bank is a great economic force. It has to date loaned out about 3.8 billion US dollars to 2.6 million poor people and recovered 3.52 billion US dollars, a recovery rate of 98.74%. This 99% recovery rate is the highest recovery rate of any banking system anywhere in the world. Who said poor people are untrustworthy! Both ideas are not entirely new to us. We have practiced some form of economic arrangements that had some similarities to the ideas of Schumacher and Yunus.

## II. The Source of Modernism in Ethiopia

Maybe I need to define or state my understanding of what is meant by “modern”, “modernity”, and “modernism” in order to establish a clear picture of the goals I have in mind. The Amharic words are “siltun”, “siltena”, and “siletane”. These words are adjective and noun forms of an elastic concept that refers to different definitions within one physiognomy. Western philosophers, like Lyotard at the turn of the Twentieth Century, and Habermas at the present time, have spent considerable time discussing or defending what is meant by being modern. “Modernity” is the state of being modern. In general, the concept of “modern” refers obviously to processes based on two opposed philosophical precepts based on rationalism on one hand and empiricism, positivism (the surge in the sciences) on the other hand, which may be said to have started with Descartes, and best illustrated by the Enlightenment Period. Modernity is a period in Western history, that includes both Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. It is a period characterized by drastic change or transformation and replacement of aristocratic governments and mercantile economic systems by democratic forms of governments and industrial (capitalism) economic system with global expansion. Modernism is a specific movement in art after the impressionists had their heyday, having lasted to the 1970s when it is claimed to have been replaced by postmodernism.

Due to the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth Century, and its imperial ambition to expand south into Africa, and to that end Gragn Mohammed from Adal/ Afar area became one such client strongman of the Ottoman Turks who challenged the Central Ethiopian government. The main factor that made it possible for Gragn to win over a far better established Ethiopian government, but an overconfident and a poorly equipped one, was that Gragn was supplied with Turkish soldiers and modern guns and cannons by the Ottoman Turkish Empire. It is to be recalled that the time of Gragn was the period that Ottoman Turkey was at the peak of its expansion and conquest. It was the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. (AD 1520-66). [Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East*, New York: Simon Schuster, 1997, 113-116] The Ottoman government was more or less in control of the Red Sea, and thereby effectively cutting Ethiopia from contact with the outside world.

Thus, contact with Western Europe by Ethiopian leaders was started over seven centuries ago, as was evidenced by the involvement of Portugal during the time of Libne Dingle and Galawdeios, several hundred Portuguese under the leadership of Christopher De Gama came to the aid of Ethiopians. However, that contact with the West met its first setback when the newly crowned emperor ZeDengil (1596-97) converted to Catholicism and was killed by his Ras. Three years later Susenyous was crowned Emperor; towards the end of his reign, Susenyous converted to Catholicism and was promptly deposed by his son Fasiladas who threw out all Catholics, thereby closing the book on Europe. Ethiopia was isolated from the rest of the world, which resulted in slow entropic breakdown, deterred development, and ultimately the anarchy

of Zemene Mesafint. Such was the situation that plunged Ethiopia for centuries in constant civil strife, war, famine, and pestilence.

Gragn Mohammed devastated Ethiopia, regrettably destroying in a mere twelve years [1523-1535] most of the great Churches and Cathedrals (Debers) and their great libraries depository of knowledge that took over a thousand years to accumulate. [It was during that time that most of the forced conversion of Christian Ethiopians in the adjoining areas to Islam took place. It was also during that period and soon after that Oromos from the South near the present day Kenyan border moved to most of the present day areas designated as Oromo region by the current government of Ethiopia. In most of these areas we can find earlier Christian settlements of remnants of Churches and villages.] I could say the number of books destroyed was no less in importance than the burning of the great Library of Alexandria in 48 BC accidentally by the Caesar's Roman soldiers. Even more important for us to remember is the systematic destruction of all the great libraries and centers of learning in Alexandria by Arab Moslem religious fanatics in AD 642. The wanton destruction of Ethiopia's great Churches, centers of learning, libraries by Gragn is characteristic of Arabs' religion based destructive campaign throughout the ages in Asia and Africa. Ethiopia has not yet recovered fully from that destruction. By contrast Ethiopian leaders were considerate of their actions. As evidenced by the inscription on a stone monument left by Ezana about the conquest of Beja tribes, and all the way to Menilik in the 19th Century, Ethiopian leaders were some of the most merciful and magnanimous leaders that ever walked this Earth.

It is to be recalled that some marauding Bejas coming out of the area now in the Sudan, and some Somali tribal invaders were defeated repeatedly a couple of centuries before Gragn's destructive war against Ethiopia, in devastating battles by Amde Tsion, the greatest warrior Emperor of Ethiopia who spent almost all of his thirty years of reign (1307-1336) on horse-back on battle fields and campaign routes. And those marauders and scavengers of settled civilizations, and slavers of human beings, who destroyed families and devastated the hinterlands of Sub Saharan Africa and the coastal hinterland of present day Kenya, parts of Southern Ethiopia, the present day Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique et cetera continued their raids and looting into the Modern era. They are the same people who later on cooperating with the Egyptians, the Turks, and even the British and Italians in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries became beachheads for African colonialism. Ethiopian Emperors mainly fought in defense of the Christian settled subjects and against marauders and slavers in both northern and southern Ethiopia.

There is no doubt that Ethiopian Emperors were true warrior leaders. They actually lead military expeditions and fought in real battles. In addition, almost all of Ethiopia's Emperors were great scholars and intellectuals trained from their childhood in the history of their people and their faith. It is a fact that some of the great books of philosophy and theology were either written or sponsored by Ethiopian Emperors. Emperor Gebre Meskel was the patron of Yared the greatest Church music composer. As a matter of fact, four or five of the Kings of the Great Zagwe Dynasty (ca 930-1263) including King Lilibela, the builder of several wonderful rock hewn Churches, were addressed by Ethiopians to these day as "**kidus**" meaning the "the holy one" not as kings or emperors. The last of the Great Zagwe Dynasty, Emperor Harbe'i(?) gave up his sovereignty on his own peacefully to Yukuno Amlake (1263-1277) the "rightful

Solomonic" Heir to the Ethiopian Throne in 1263 on the advice of Abuna Teklehaimanot, a revered religious leader.

Emperors Dawit I (1374-1406) and Yeshaq (1406-1421) were patrons of Aba Giorgis ZeGascha, author of over ten great theological books; Emperor Zer'a Yacob (1426-1460) was a prolific author of numerous theological and philosophical books; Emperor Skunder (1471-1487) wrote *Melkae Mariam*. Some Emperors were independent thinkers even going against the grain, such as Emperor ZeDengil (1596-97) a philosopher and great scholar who converted to Catholicism that costed him his life, and Emperor Susenyos (1600-1625) who was forced to abdicate in favor of his conservative son, Fasiladas, because he converted to Catholicism.

As stated above some Ethiopian Emperors were genuinely religious people who would go to the extent of giving up their Empire or their lives for the salvation of their souls and for the glory of God. Emperor Galawdewos (1533-1551) on the eve of his last battle was informed by a "holy-man" that if he fought the next day he will die and will attain martyrdom and Heaven, but if he runs away, he will live to be an old man but would not enter Heaven. He chose to fight the next day, and died in battle believing he will save his soul from damnation. Another example of the religious fervor of Ethiopian leaders is best illustrated by Emperor Eyasu (1674-1698) who voluntarily gave up his Reign and became a monk. Even our last Emperor, Haile Selassie I, whom I have at times overly maligned in articles, which I regret, was a "holy-man" compared to his contemporaries in the rest of the world; he had great self discipline, spiritual strength, and moral principles.<sup>ii</sup>

In other words, most Ethiopian Emperors were not involved in debauchery, over indulgence, sadistic deviant behavior like those of their contemporaries in the Arab world, Asia, Europe, or the Americas. Consider the degree of abuse of women in Palaces of the Ottoman Sultans, in the palaces of the Caliphs in Damascus, Baghdad et cetera; in the Courts of the English Kings where even queens were not spared barbaric punishments. Consider the period of religious persecutions all over Europe, the Spanish inquisitions and other Papal sanctioned barbarity where hundreds of thousands were burned at the stake. And millions of Africans and indigenous people were victims of harrowing brutal slavery practiced by European settler population in the Americas for over four hundred years. By comparison most of our Church leaders and Emperors were exceptionally ethical and principled people. They were not greedy materialist despots either. Their great Imperial and religious power was tempered because of their genuine religious devotion and their Christian upbringing. They had great virtues that we need to remember and base our communal life on.

I am not offering the above examples of the courage, ethics, and scholarship of Ethiopian Emperors with the hope of restoring Ethiopia's monarchy or aristocracy. The Ethiopian aristocracy has limited credibility or future in the present day Ethiopia. It has become the ash after a great bonfire. It is gone, and we are venturing out into a new era. The sooner the few monarchists realize that the better for all of us. We need our past in order to build our future. Thus, the members of the aristocracy and their supporters have a role in the new Ethiopia and in the resurrection of the spirit of our glorious past and in the building of our self-confidence.

Most importantly, one may say that it is in the Nineteenth Century the need for close contact with Europeans was forced on Ethiopia due to the scramble for Africa by European powers. The

French, the British, and the Italians to a different degree were all involved in the occupation of Ethiopian territory. The most blatant was the Italian occupation of the seat of the Ethiopian government in 1935-41. For Ethiopian Emperors it became very clear that a new military armament was necessary to defend and preserve the integrity of Ethiopia. The old weapons of sword, spear, and shield, no matter how courageously welded, were no match to guns and cannons. In such noble act of self defense Ethiopia fought back a well armed Italian military in 1886 totally annihilating it. There were several other efforts by Egypt to annex Ethiopian territory in order to acquire a beachhead close to the source of the Blue Nile. One may say that the moving factor for modernization in Ethiopia was the search for guns and cannons.

It is possible and appropriate to make some distinctions between concepts of civilization, modernization, and westernization. It might even be desirable to make that distinction for a country such as Ethiopia with thousands of years of civilization. This distinction can be observed and properly appreciated the way some Far Eastern countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, even Japan are modernized without becoming westernized. In fact one can say that where Westernization is successfully applied to a community with strong and ancient civilization, the result is modernization, a kind of a synthesis. Whereas, when Westernization is forced on a community with rudimentary "civilization" or on a community at primitive developmental stage whole sale westernization took place thereof.

### **III. Concerning the Great Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church**

Ethiopia is because of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, not because of its warriors or its emperors – not that they did not contribute greatly to our long history of independence and freedom, but without the Church they would have been lost sheep. No other religious institution in the world has withstood the ravages of colonialism, racism, ethnicism, fanaticism as did the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and saved its members as well as all who came under its responsibilities since its establishment in AD 340. It has served us all more than any institution that ever graced our nation by preserving our humanity, our sense of freedom and justice, our concept of individual responsibility as opposed to guilt by association. The fact of the matter is that if it were not for this great Church we would have shrouded our females in garments of oppression, unleashed some of the most barbaric forms of punishment on our people, and would have turned our nation into a land of blood shed and fanaticism. With any other ethical, moral, or spiritual center, there would have been no Ethiopia – we all would have been marginalized, banished to some fractured tiny enclaves of colonial fragments of communities of slaves and house attendants licking the boots of European or Arab masters.

What is disappointing is to see this great Church being attacked from within and from without as if it had committed some grievous crime against society. The attack has escalated and taken especially vicious turn in recent years. It is both alarming and disappointing to read statements by fellow Christian Church members disparaging Ethiopia and this great Ethiopian Orthodox Church as oppressors. Anyone with a sense of decency and some native intelligence to evaluate the history of religion could only be writing in praise of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For example, in a book coming out of Norway, Oyvind M. Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: The Growth & Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85*, (2000) we find such totally misguided and worthless writing. What is ironic is the author has stated with some pride about the monumental growth of the membership of the Evangelical Mekane Yesus

Church in Ethiopia from twenty thousand members in 1954 to over two million members by 1974. The author in his fury, blinded by hate and bias against the Ethiopian Orthodox Church did not seem to have reflected on the absurdity of the thesis of his book since he is on one hand applauding the tremendous Evangelical conversion and membership rate in Ethiopia compared to other parts of the world, but at the same time is attempting to tell us that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church oppressed the Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church. If there was oppression of the magnitude asserted by the author, there would have been no high conversion or a flowering of the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia.

In fact, in the immediate neighborhood of Ethiopia in Saudi Arabia, and other Arab States the Evangelical Mekane Yesus mission would not be even allowed to visit such countries let alone build churches and evangelize the population. In the guise of scholarship, such types of proselytizing books like that of Eide are written and blindly consumed by third rate scholars elsewhere trying to diminish the greatness of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the ethical People of Ethiopia. Eide seems to think “Amhar” corresponds with Orthodox Christian. This is a classic fallacy of composition, such as claiming that all Catholics are Italians. If there was no religious freedom and peaceful coexistence in Ethiopia neither the Evangelical Churches nor Islam would have flourished in Ethiopia. Before condemning Ethiopia on suppression of freedom of religion, people should take a long hard look around in the neighborhood.

We all know how in their home bases, all those Evangelical and other Churches were persecuted by their own people and State Churches, their members burned at the stake, driven off their land, and at times banished across Oceans into unknown lands. When the Prophet Mohammed was persecuted and his small band of followers was on the verge of total inhalation, what did he do? He sent his followers over to Ethiopia where he knew they would be protected. How about latter day evangelists such as the Protestants, the Baptists, Jehovah Witness et cetera and others who came to Ethiopia? They were welcome, and remained unmolested, practicing their religion and freely converting followers. They should all be kissing the ground in Ethiopia rather than bite the generous hands of the people of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Look around in the neighborhood of Ethiopia, observe how Christians are totally banned from worshiping in Saudi Arabia, and how Christians even local ones (Copts) are persecuted in Egypt, the Sudan, Syria and the other Arab countries. Christian Churches around the world including the Catholic Church should be ashamed of themselves, plotting against and discrediting the most generous Church in the World, the Orthodox Christian Church of Ethiopia and the people of Ethiopia.

Even in our Diaspora, for any Ethiopian visiting the many Ethiopian Orthodox Churches and Cathedrals, one is overwhelmed by the type of great dignity, and worthiness our Church and the Church Fathers confer on all of us. The glory of the Ethiopian Church is not just for Christians but to Moslems as well – for all Ethiopians. When one attends Ethiopian Church Services, what is most touching to me is not the great display of tradition that predates any Christian Church in the World, but what the Church Fathers teach. Unlike rabid fundamentalist preachers in the United States or fanatical Mullahs in the Middle-East, our great Church Fathers of the Ethiopian Church teach brotherhood, and tolerance; they pray for the welfare of all people of Earth without distinction by race, national origin, religion, gender, or status. This is not a Twentieth Century phenomenon for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church or for the Church Fathers; throughout the ages, the Church and our religious Fathers tempered the swords of the

Emperors of Ethiopia, preached great ethical principles to all, and held our nation together from falling apart, or falling into the hands of destructive neighboring nations.

I expect much from our Church, and I am confident the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Church will be our greatest shield against all those who desire our destruction. The Church must be more vigilant activist in promoting the unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. The Church should play an active role providing moral guidance to the young people of Ethiopia. It ought to reform some of its ritual and antique liturgy. It should be more involved not only in spreading the word of God but also on matters dealing with social problems. Young Ethiopians may not know that much about the greatness of their own Church. It is the duty of the Church Fathers to encourage evangelism and involvement in the personal and spiritual lives of Ethiopians.

## **PART TWO**

### **IV. The Hyphenation of Ethiopians and the Loss of Self-Respect**

The effort to modernize (even worse to westernize) Ethiopia has resulted in a nightmarish situation at this point in time. For Ethiopian leaders (Haile Selassie, Mengistu, and Meles) went first for quick cosmetic changes rather than for long term structural modifications and adjustments. Haile Selassie started out with the right idea--emphasis on education. However, the type of education sought from the West was the wrong type of education. Ethiopians spent over half a century with such fruitless shallow experimentation as if a whole civilization can be transported with a jacket and a tie or on the pages of ideological books.

The legacy of Haile Selassie's education system, with its emphasis on liberal arts as opposed to science and technology, resulted in the types of social deformities that we are now faced with. The working man who creates and produces consumable products, or the farmer who tilled the land were all degraded or marginalized the emphasis being on white-collar workers and kerie bet owners. Even the prestigious Haile Selassie I Prize was given out to writers and artists not to workers. There was no comparable award to encourage or reward labor and hard work. To a great extent the United States government was a party to the government of Haile Selassie. It had extensive relationship with the leadership and input into the many phases of the development programs of the government of Ethiopia. Thus, the education policy did not lack knowledgeable people if there was real commitment for any program of appropriate education of Ethiopians. Professional associations were not encouraged to promote their respective professions. The School system was inadequate, ill-equipped, and understaffed to be an effective instrument of change.

In a series of articles, Gedamu Abreha and Solomon Deressa wrote scathing, almost hateful, and at times self-mutilating criticism of both their contemporaries, whom they identified with an excellent expressive phrase as "hyphenated Ethiopians," and their forefathers whom they characterized as warring, bloody, insanely individualist peasants.[See Gedamu Abraha and Solomon Deressa, "The Hyphenated Ethiopian" *Addis Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 6, February 7, 1969, p 13- and continuation in Vol. 1, No. 6, February 7, 1969, p 14; Gedamu Abraha and Solomon Deressa, "Non Sequitur: An Historical Experiment," *Addis Reporter*, Vol. 1, No. 27, July 4, 1969, p 14ff, and continuation in Vol. 1, No. 28, July 11, 1969, p 14ff] These articles are superbly well

written, the finest I have ever read in that form of critical essay. The reference to the “hyphen” condenses in one simple but most poignant word all the adjectives used to create new compound nouns needed to describe properly the Ethiopians of our time. The authors’ breadth of knowledge and depth of writing skill is truly astounding. However, in reading these articles, one is also at risk of being seduced by such erudite prose that one might forget or overlook the dangerous subtext or essence of their thesis.

Even though I agree with most of their identifications or descriptions of the problems of the “hyphenated” Ethiopians in their first series of articles, I believe the authors have missed the real issue in that the “hyphenated” Ethiopian is, in fact, a victim of overwhelming forces unleashed at him by those of an absolute monarch and those of the decadent of western culture; therefore, the hyphenated Ethiopian deserves more of our sympathy and less of our ridicule. I strongly object to Gedamu Abraha and Solomon Deressa’s characterization of our ancestors, and their analysis and judgment of Ethiopian history and sociology in their second series of articles. Their characterization of Ethiopians as opportunist individuals prone to fighting at a drop of a hat simply is too broad a brush stroke that could easily define any individual in the world. Furthermore, the authors have a propensity of judging contextual behavior by some universalized standard. At times their arguments are non-sequitur, and also suffer from what logicians identify as fallacies of composition. For example, in trying to convince us how independent and autonomous Ethiopian women were within Ethiopian culture, they went far to the extreme by giving examples of females’ suffering in other cultures, such as the tying of feet. In pointing at others they forgot the incalculable harm a number of Ethiopian females suffer with genital mutilation. I do agree with their valuation to some extent about the relative independence and freedom Ethiopian females have compared to their counterparts in the rest of the world.

For any person who sees such human shortcomings as something particular only to traditional Ethiopians, breaking away from such presumed past is reasonable and maybe even a lifetime goal. The problem is in the standard of valuation of what Solomon Deressa and Gedamu Abraha claimed to be characteristic of Ethiopians and not in the facts the two authors narrated to us. We all suffer in our tendency of falling into similar trap of naturalistic fallacies.

The hyphenated Ethiopian is an individual caught in between social forces and is being torn apart in different directions. He/she is a victim of forced modernization by a system of dictatorial power far beyond his/her control or reach. This brings to my mind how Peter the Great, the Czar of Russia, tried to impose a way of life on the Russian people, which did not really change the state of mind of his people but only their appearance – less facial hair, for example. Let us assume just for argument sake that I might have undermined the wisdom of Haile Selassie’s persistence on adopting western clothing as a vehicle of modernization, maybe a change of habit would have led to a change of attitude and state of mind; but then, if that was the philosophy behind his actions, why did Haile Selassie maintain the most obnoxious culture of bowing and groveling of subordinates, including requiring his Ministers, highly educated men, to kiss his feet?

There are painful instances where Ethiopians caught at the very cusp between modernity and tradition would choose to affirm their modernity at all costs, which at times resulted in behavior that should make us think twice about the toll modernity did take on a large number

of decent Ethiopians. I have seen clerks in government offices wearing ties that had never seen a day of cleaning, twisted and discolored looking more like greased ropes than ties and around shirt collars wrinkled and badly soiled. Why do people try that hard to adopt Western appearance to such an extent looking ridiculous? It is because the individual would pay a great price if he lets go of those symbols of modernity. To wear something sensible such as kuta or netela would result in swift and violent demotion in social status to a status of being identified as a peasant, and that is worse than death for Ethiopians living at the periphery.

The famous author Hama Tuma wrote a piece titled "The Problem of Modernity" that was posted by Seleda, with great humor and sarcasm worth reading. He too failed to some extent to see the larger detrimental picture of the problem of modernity, and to what length people were forced to act in order to fit or to be found deserving of respect by people who have power to set standards of behavior "at them" not even for them. We are forcing individuals to adopt contradictory positions. On one hand we scorn and persecute individuals we label as "peasants" or "traditional," and when they try to adopt what they think is our standard of modern behavior, we turn around and ridicule them as hyphenated Ethiopians. This is a dilemma that can only be solved not by piecemeal untangling or sifting the good from the bad, but by a drastic action similar as the one Alexander took when faced with the Gordian knot. Blast modernism!

There is a world of difference between a systematic policy imposed on a people by coercive method than letting the "market place of ideas" influence people into adopting a way of life. The "market place" process is evolutionary in the main, and maybe punctuated with revolutionary instances of changes now and then. The modernism imposed by the Ethiopian rulers since the time of Haile Selassie was the forceful one. Reinforced with the acceptance of western education as the only measuring tool and prime evidence of modernity, it was not that difficult for the government policy of modernization to reach every corner of Ethiopia and distort the culture and seed such society with unattainable expectations and discord.

Anyone can see now why I am harsh in my criticism of Haile Selassie for introducing inadvertently or not one more such dehumanization process – modernization. Haile Selassie was the staunchest "modernizer" of Ethiopians. He had said as much about the value of education in numerous speeches over a period of forty years of his long reign. In his memoir (My Life and Ethiopia's Progress) he had stated in no uncertain terms that the goal of education was modernization. Thus, it is only proper to credit him not only with all that benefited Ethiopians but also the problems he left us with from his long reign and also the disaster we have been faced with since his overthrow in 1974. There is nothing wrong in having a goal to educate people, but it matters a whole lot what type of education is introduced into a system. Through proper education, it was assumed, that people would appreciate each other's worth in society, and as a result some form of shared ideals of equality, democracy et cetera would develop among the members of society. The opposite seems to have happened in Ethiopia. Rather than bringing people together, what education did was to expand the gulf between Ethiopians creating even worse barrier between those who are educated and those who are not. It has even created a conflict between two sub-groups of those educated abroad and those educated locally.

## **V. Ye Kerai-Bet Culture and the Sybaritic Lives of Ethiopian Elites**

We, the so called educated Ethiopians, have played our part in the deformity of our culture and the dehumanization of our people. Most of us here in the United States are either children of people with some disposable income, or children of ex-officials of either Haile Selassie or Mengistu's governments – families created by Haile Selassie or Mengistu. The urbanization of Addis Ababa other than the fact of draining the wealth of the nation also created a new subculture I call Ye Kerai Bet culture. The negative side of that culture is the Arada subculture. By the mere fact of having lived in the area and having a piece of land deeded by the Emperor, such people were able to generate income by renting houses, apartments, office buildings et cetera rather than through active participation and production of commodities and services. Among other problems, the kerai bet culture was one of the factors that distorted our understanding of education and the morality of physical work. Most of the Ethiopian émigrés are a product of such subculture; they are a bundle of contradictions--courageous, hard-working, driven, kind et cetera but also shallow, disdainful, over politicized, petty, cantankerous et cetera.

Those who have lived all or most of their lives in that pretentious, sprawling, poorly designed, dirty and stinky Capital City think of their pathetic lives there as sophisticated compared to the lives of people in other urban centers in Ethiopia. Consider the fact that Kera (Abattoir) is right in the middle of the sprawling City of Addis Ababa. It is an area permeated for miles around with revolting stench of rotting flesh and bones of slaughtered cattle heaped in open air year after year. The tragedy in this as well as very many Ethiopian problems is the fact that most of us are in denial. We do not see the filth and degradation our people are living day to day under grinding poverty. Even though such is the reality of our community's abject poverty, and the suffering of so many among us is a daily constant reminder of the serious economic and political problems Ethiopians are faced with, we go about our daily lives as if nothing is wrong with our community.

Ethiopian urban centers have not found the proper method of sanitation, specially human waste disposal system that is appropriate and cost effective. Proper hygiene in any society is not a natural occurrence but a learned behavior. Thus, Haile Selassie and those who followed in his footsteps should have concentrated on solving that one single problem before attempting to transform a little village into a metropolitan center and dream about being an international sophisticated world center. Rather than build the many expensive high-rise office buildings, four-star hotels, et cetera they should have concentrated on solving the humble needs of so many of us.

Another equally devastating neglect in Ethiopia is the lack of serious development of an alternative energy source other than wood. The forest resource of Ethiopia has been wantonly destroyed for firewood over several decades. No serious studies I know of has ever been instituted or conducted so far. Some amateurish effort was underway during Mengistu's reign introducing kerosene as an alternative energy source, but was not properly studied for health and safety as well as supply and distribution structure. In short, there was no national infrastructure for such policy. There ought to be an administrative body to develop vigorously such programs that would include an extensive reforestation program that ought to be run simultaneously.

The worst cultural distortion is to be found also with “urbanized” Ethiopian females who have fallen victim to mass western culture of dress and frivolity. To a great extent some aspect of our pre-existing culture and social condition has contributed to the moral deterioration that one sees in Addis Ababa. Modernity’s most glaring contribution to Ethiopian society is the loosening of moral standards and the proliferation of prostitutes and street walkers in Addis Ababa, for example. All societies control the sexuality of their females. Some communities use subtle systems and some are blatantly vulgar. For example, the United States uses a very sophisticated system of control by discourage its female population from venturing away from their own community for love and sex by portraying the rest of the world as alien and destitute. The Arabs and Jews use religion based harsh sanctions to the extent of execution or throwing out a violator from the community as a non-person. Hindus use a caste system that forbids any liaison between different caste members. In fact, every community has some system to deal with its female sexuality limiting access by caste, class, religious affinity, or by national identity (foreigners or strangers). It seems that where there is some breakdown of control of female sexuality, there is also a decline or collapse of such permissive society.

It is easy to interpret the types of control imposed on females by male dominated community as a simple act of oppression by insecure men, and thereby miss the most important reason for controlling the sexuality of the female members of society that of preserving the unity of the community. Communities with stringent control of their female folks obviously value the role of their female folks in their society. In such communities, sexual favor is too important to be left at the disposal of the individual. The control of female sexuality is aimed at ensuring that no strangers of unknown worth enter the community through such intimate process and endanger the community. It is understandable why some communities had reacted with insane violence with even the remote possibility of female members of their community may have illicit sexual liaison with individuals outside of the community.

In case of Ethiopia, the disastrous breach of the social value of marriage, feminine honor, and general morality on sexual matters was most profoundly degraded during the long reign of Haile Selassie. No home in Addis Ababa was spared, the moral collapse of the sanctity of married life, the honor of Ethiopian females was sacrificed in trying to make Addis Ababa an international metropolis. When you introduce individuals with great wealth in a poor country the first thing that is affected most is the moral content of the poor community. Thus, the problem and danger of social collapse is compounded because of the appalling degradation of Ethiopians due to the proliferation of international organizations and embassies and their staff. Ethiopia is no where near to hosting such large bodies of international personnel. Ethiopia could not even meet the basic needs of most of its citizens. It does not have the economic resources and the industrial or commercial base and infrastructure for such undertaking. Period! We should be focusing inward on ourselves. The tremendous waste of resource and human power servicing those international organizations and their staff is no where compensated by what we can get from their presence in Addis Ababa.

We, the elite Ethiopians have developed one of the most sybaritic life style of any elitist class in the entire developing world. The type of frivolity, imitation, and utter narcissism that we see in our young and old, in urbanite Ethiopian males and females, is a sad indicator of a civilization under tremendous stress and on the verge of collapse. Compared to our gross national product,

Ethiopian bureaucrats are the most expensive in the world. The disparity in life style between the handful well to do Ethiopians and the destitute vast majority is alarming and obscene.

Most of us, if not all of us, led lives in Ethiopia that we ought to be ashamed of, and we should beg on our knees forgiveness from the tens of thousands of Ethiopians we abused and/or allowed foreigners to abuse and degrade. Even those who were mere children when they came to the United States were beneficiaries of exploitative relationship where they grew up watching, and in a way participating, in the degradation of their servants and maids. How many of us had servants and maids who were treated with great abuse and dehumanizing relationships? Before we see ourselves in a mirror in all our deformity, we really have no right to say anything on Ethiopia. Glory has taken a toll on us all. We suffer now because of our own weakness, ignorance, and poor leadership and hostile neighbors who had tried for centuries to destroy us if not to bottle us up.

Children of Ethiopian émigrés, who were either born here in the United States or came to the West when they were very little, undergo terrible processes of growth into adulthood in this country or in the West in general. I know of one little boy who used to ask his father to sit at the back of the auditorium when the father came to attend the school's theatrical production in which the son was performing. The little boy was reacting to the teasing of his classmates because his father was an Ethiopian, though a well qualified professional. The American kids had seen on television pictures of tens of thousands of Ethiopian famine victims and were teasing the Ethiopian kid about his background. The mental anguish, shame, and trauma after our dirty laundry is displayed for all to see in its minute detail is upsetting even to adults let alone children. The constant disrespectful showing of starving and dying Ethiopians every holiday season on television is very traumatizing to anyone.

It should not escape us that the seasonal display of the misery of tens of thousands of African people under sever poverty and unhygienic condition, people who are living skeletons, has other insidious purpose that the white Westerners are carrying out other than using such footage as a mere vehicle for solicitation. First of all, at least here in the United States, it has the effect of slapping African Americans by reminding them that such are the conditions of their origins. I suppose it may be one of the reasons why African Americans as a group have not really warmed up to help famine victims in Africa. And some make pathetic attempt to disassociate from their African origins or their past. These displays of human degradations are not necessary, may even have the opposite effect for the purpose of raising fund, but they have turned it into a seasonal ritual to humiliate, degrade, and dehumanize a whole continent.

Do we truly understand what it means to be an average Ethiopian living in Ethiopia? It means walking barefoot, living in filthy conditions, drinking dirty water, surviving on a fraction of the recommended calories a day, not being able to attend school, and in the rare case one does, being terrorized by sadistic teachers; humbling oneself in front of private and public "big" men and women (teleq sewotch), toiling from sun rise to sun set for pennies et cetera. If what I wrote is upsetting because I wrote questioning the significance and the wisdom of the modernization effort of the last fifty years, I urge you to reconsider my presentation. I know most émigrés are in as much pain as we all are about the future of Ethiopia. We have to take drastic steps of purification and self-extortion to save our country. There are limited options available to us, we need to make wise choices in the best interest of our fellow Ethiopians.

## **PART THREE**

### **VI. Baby-Steps Toward Economic Recovery and Political Maturity**

#### **A. General**

What we need is not some type of a “democracy” from text books and foreign advisors. For the next few years, may be decades, we have to make some very serious choices. We have to choose between some form of sham democracy or the rule of one single enlightened person with specific popular mandate, an individual with a great understanding of Ethiopian history and an incorruptible nationalist agenda. With such single strong man/woman as a leader, I am willing to risk short term tyranny in carrying out profound ground work foundation for a future independent Ethiopia. It should be clear to all people that I am not advocating or defending the establishment of a brutal dictatorship as our government for all time. Harsh situations require drastic measures. What I see in our would be political aspirants is the same old story, promise of democratic government as if such words are sufficient to bring about democratic changes. Gulitcha bilewawet wett ayasemr’ m. There is a disconnect between the millions of Ethiopians and the handful of people who want to lead them. How unrealistic our political leaders are is best illustrated by the recent effort of Meles Zenawi to reconstitute his supporters as a national party. Look at this ridicules scenario being played out by two corrupt groups of losers, the Shoa based corrupt mehale sefaris with Mengistu’s loyal servants in tow and their children allying themselves with another group of equally corrupt leftover Tygreans from the old TPLF. Ethiopia is a place of wonders, but this one tops it all.

On the international scene, we now have the same old political characters redrawing their political boundaries and trying to reinvent themselves under new alliances and recycled political and economic programs. We have former Marxist-Leninists announcing liberal democratic and capitalist programs; former military dictators donning civilian camouflage; medical professionals more adept at making money now suddenly becoming political liberators; yesterdays totally discredited monarchists and aristocrats taking up the role of ‘emeritus’ in clueless organizations. In short, the list of recycled political organizations and personalities is long and exhausting. All these would-be-leaders have one thing in common: absence of vision and lack of singular courage to live a life of poverty in the service of their fellow Ethiopians. None of them would be of any use to Ethiopians.

Let us go back to the far more serious issue of our responsibility to Ethiopia. First and foremost we have to put in place a leadership with a clear mission. The following ten points are the most pressing, but not all inclusive goals that we need to take up:

1. The preservation of the territorial integrity of Ethiopia;
2. Leadership by example: the establishment of local administrative structures based solely on representations drawn from the local population;
3. Reformulation of Ethiopian foreign policy with cutbacks as it goal;
4. Improving the export-import policy to limit conspicuous consumption;

5. Drastically change the education policy and system to reflect the needs of the community;
6. Freeze all payments on loans from international financial centers;
7. Change the land ownership laws and practices, and focus the production of food for the population;
8. Create an efficient core military force dedicated to the preservation of Ethiopia's territorial integrity and sovereignty; 9. Establish a national service system; and
10. Establish a social welfare system.

## **B. Large Cities Syndrome**

The worst problem of developing countries is the ghettoizing of cities of developing countries. Cities, especially capital cities, such as Addis Ababa are black-holes that suck resources with such fury that it is amazing why developing nations kept on pouring their resources into such deficient systems for decades. The more one tries to improve life in cities the more one attracts the rural population to move into town. The means available to provide adequate service to residents is far too short to meet the demands of the ballooning number of influx of additional people into urban centers. This has been the curse of urban development even in the best equipped and abundantly provisioned cities in the developed world. A great lesson should have been learned from all the disastrous mega metropolises around the world, such as Cairo, Lagos, Mexico City before governments of new African nations kept on the urbanization process they inherited from their colonizers. Ethiopia is a unique case; nevertheless, suffer from the same urbanization nightmare.

Let us consider our own sprawling city Addis Ababa, where urban life has become Hellish, brutal and nasty. It is an endless vicious cycle of influx of ever destitute rural people into urban areas, and as a consequence the ghettoizing of the nation continues with no possible end unless we change our primary reasons why cities were developed in the first place. Addis Ababa and vicinity is now estimated to have a population of six million people. Because of poor urban planning and poverty, most people live in subhuman conditions under unhygienic and health threatening circumstances. As could be easily observed, there is no adequate housing even for one tenth of that population. The city's water and sewerage system was designed for not more than half a million people. Electricity was mainly supplied by Koka Dam built over fifty years ago. There has been one modest power source from Muggar added since the building of Koka Dam. Addis Ababa is probably one of the dirtiest urban centers in the world. With the weakness of third world bureaucracy and know-how, it is a logistic nightmare to satisfy the physical needs (housing, utility, food, sanitation) of such a large population center even in the best of times let alone during famine and economic difficulties with declining export of coffee and other commodities.

The creation of urban hells is a result of poor economic systems and oppressive governments where resources are pulled together to provide the needs of government and business personnel at the expense of the large rural population. Whatever opportunities the government establishes, such as schools, colleges, factories, government centralized offices are all

concentrated in such urban centers. It is only natural that people want to move to such centers of opportunities. The new urbanites bring with them their rural behavior and the ghettoizing process is accelerated. Moral decay, crime, hopeless subhuman existence is increased exponentially. The urban rich flaunt their exploitative wealth with their vulgar conspicuous consumption making such depravity even more unbearable. Fed by cheap labor and reckless behavior of few corrupt business and government officials, the exploitation of defenseless poor people further degrades the humanity of such victims.

Politicians, urban planners, and economists argue that having urban centers allows a government to utilize far more effectively the little resource available to it by creating such centers for education, industry, and commerce where there are supporting infrastructure. When a government is burdened with illiteracy, poor pre-existing economic condition, recurrent famine, and out of control population growth, the dilemma of setting priorities is a painful and difficult process even for a benign government. It is this very monumental difficulty to provide services to the general population at a level way outside of the economic and political capacity of Ethiopia that tells us that our development aspiration is unrealistic. What needs to be done is reevaluation of our pressing needs of basic survival items and services. The need to rethink our priorities is not an academic matter but a life and death issue to tens of millions of Ethiopians.

As bad as situations are in Ethiopia, it is not a case where we have no choices. There is an alternative to living under such subhuman conditions and moral and spiritual decay. First and foremost, we need to accept the fact that poverty is a fact of our existence that is going to be with us for some time. We need to rethink carefully the concept of "development" and what our capacity is. We need to set clear goals, goals that are designed to meet the humble needs of most Ethiopians. We need to live within our modest means. In order to undertake such monumental changes of disciplined behavior and lowered expectations, we need to have a clearly spelled out moral code, a foundational bedrock of great strength. Those nations and metropolises that we aspire to emulate were built on tremendous brutality and violence, financed by fortune looted from other peoples from all over the world. Every single one of those cities and metropolises has a history that we as Ethiopians will be horrified to repeat on our people or any other peoples. At any rate, we do not have the military might even if we were willing to compromise our sense of justice and mercy.

The first baby-step to recovery is to redirect our energy and properly use our meager resources to dismantle pretentious slum cities and urban centers such as Addis Ababa and others, and adopt a strategy that would ultimately establish a network of small urban centers and villages based on quantifiable rural economy that reflect the humanistic paradigm that I have identified with its moral and economic/political imperative. There is nothing we can salvage from any of our urban centers without being contaminated in the process. We need to burn down all luxury hotels such as the Sheraton and the Hilton, symbols of what is drastically wrong with Ethiopia. When we are in a position to use such hotels, then we will build them to serve us! Right now we have far more important and serious matter to deal with. If it means we have to live in tents to achieve the basic rudimentary needs of all Ethiopians, we better start thinking to make superb tents.

Urban centers are simply an extension of our rural life. They should not be established to imitate other nation's urban centers. In an underdeveloped economy, such as that of Ethiopia,

urban centers are symbols of exploitation, corruption, and uneven development. In order to counter the devastation caused by the expensive maintenance of Addis Ababa on the rest of the country, I suggest that we approach the problem creatively. My solution is to abandon Addis Ababa as a Capital City and instead create two centers one for the Executive body of government in Arba Minch (South), and another for the Head of State and for the legislative body in Bahar Dar (North). By having two main cities, we are spreading possible economic and political concentration from one area to a larger expanse of our country. Such innovative approach may also affect the way our bureaucracy works.

### **C. Limiting International Relations**

Why do we need to limit our international exposure? Almost every economic and political advice third world national governments receive from both homegrown as well as foreign experts pointedly recommends the active effort of such governments to promote foreign capital investment in their respective countries. And in order to attract such international economic participation, the experts advise that developing nations should open wide their doors to the world at large with all kinds of attractive perks, such as lower tax, free transfer in hard currency of earned income, long term concessions, differential treatment from the local laws and regulations et cetera. I hold the opposite view. I believe our relationship with many nations and international organizations has been a corrupting influence creating artificial needs that should not be there, implanting expectations that are immodest and beyond our means, and morally corrupting our most sacred core. We have to do with what we have, and not involve international investors or financial institutions.

The current overwhelming internationalization of Ethiopia started in the 1960s for the glory of Haile Selassie with the establishment of the headquarters of the OAU in Addis Ababa. No one can show me any hard fact how Ethiopians benefited from such ill-conceived policy that they would not have had if they had followed a modest program of developing their natural resources away from the glare of modernization's neon-light. In my short livid sojourn as high government advisor in 1991, I had a chance to look into the economic as well as social impact in having international personnel in Addis Ababa. I was informed by Ethiopian officials that unpaid bills for utility and rent by the diplomatic and other international personnel was in millions of birr.

The complaint of a large number of Ethiopians, victims of abuse, physical assault, unpaid wages et cetera, who work for such embassies and international organizations was the greatest single problem that the Ethiopian Ministry for Foreign Affairs has to deal with. I learned from informed officials of the Ethiopian government how diplomatic and international organization personnel abuse their privileges by driving fast, going through traffic lights, and by not obeying orders by police. The entire system has become a subverted sub-culture of abuse and lawlessness not to mention the chronic problem of illegal trading of tax-free items such as alcoholic beverage, tobacco products, and other luxury items. Black market exchange of foreign currencies is rampant and foster lawlessness and corruption. In my short lived participation at the inception of the transitional government of Ethiopia in 1991, I tried to solve very many serious problems before I resigned and left Ethiopia in 1992. Our culture of *yul'gnita* is not meant for us to become monkeys performing for others, it was meant to help us smooth out

social frictions between members of our communities. Ethiopians have lost their sovereignty and control of their foreign relations.

All this pain and suffering is self inflicted. We need not invite anyone to establish any diplomatic office in our Capital or international organization to set up shops and proceed to corrupt our people and system. The best route for us to take is to limit drastically our international exposure. A number of Ethiopians believed and defended vehemently Haile Selassie's policy to internationalize Ethiopia. They considered the proliferation of Embassies and international organizations in Addis Ababa as a great achievement for Ethiopia to be such an internationally significant nation where many international organizations and diplomats have their headquarters and offices. I believe that Haile Selassie followed an extremely flawed policy exposing a poor nation to a corrupting international institutions and their touristy personnel. We need to reverse such situation in order to save ourselves from total destruction and breakdown of our culture.

#### **D. Changing School System and the Culture of Education**

To begin with, our school systems are inherently medieval (in the sense of their emphasis on scholasticism and rigid structures reflective of the social class structure of Ethiopia), elitist, and corrupted. The training of children and young adults is not in line with the life-situation of most Ethiopians. There is a huge disparity between the type of education provided in schools and the needs of the community. Changing the school system is not an easy task. There are entrenched interests that would fight to maintain the old school System. With this understanding I have the following very brief suggestions:

1. I believe reinvigorating the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to be involved in educating the young would be a good starting point. I believe that we need to introduce ethics and moral lessons on good citizenship in school systems. Similar program should be also introduced with Moslem schools. Ethiopians future very much depends on the individual Ethiopian moral characteristics. Urbanization with its moral and cultural decay is one of the most challenging problems in Ethiopia.
2. Primary and secondary education should be a community responsibility. Communities build schools and the government assists in terms of standardization, school supplies, books, et cetera. The direct involvement of parents with the education of their children in a community setup is the most responsive form of education.
3. University and college education is organized at the region level. It has to be carefully synchronized with the economic and political development of the country.

The prevailing school yard obnoxious Inatken culture in all of Ethiopia's schools, has diminished the respect we have had for each other. Its impact is far reaching and devastating; Such degenerate trend must be reversed through the collaborative efforts of all. The school yard is where young Ethiopians will pick up moral standards that would last them for the rest of their lives.

#### **E. National Service: an act of love**

The humanistic-poverty paradigm requires great sacrifices from the community as well as from every member of the Ethiopian society. The first step in that enlightened and patriotic set of commitment is the declaration of a state of national awareness (emergency) where everyone is mobilized on massive national service program. It is possible, even at this late stage of our impending doom, that there may be a number of Ethiopians who are not aware of the magnitude of our political, economic, and social problems. Thus, the type of national service program I have in mind is very different than the one launched by the Derg in 1976. The national service program I envision is a voluntary program with future rewards for all those who dedicate themselves in the service of our country.

To a great extent, we really do not have much choice in the matter; either we save our country or we all perish in an ignoble death. We need to launch massive effort of every Ethiopian to change the course of destruction, the course of history and be once more masters of our own destiny. There is nothing that is impossible that we cannot do. We have great expanse of land, great river systems, and a great people. We can level mountains, change the course of reverse, bring down pieces of the heavens with our bare hands if we set our hearts to that task.

The national service program is a tangible act of love of the Ethiopian people for their country and for each other. It is a sacred act of great sacrifice and commitment. It is one sure method of mobilizing the entire nation in one monumental goal. The fact that Ethiopians from all walks of life are focusing on one undertaking is in itself a unifying force. The real task is in fashioning a common project that appeals to all in all parts of the nation. Since the country has different topography, culture and local problems, a national service program would be quite a challenge to design and carryout.

## **VII. Relations with the Arab Nations and the United States**

### **A. Arab Nations**

It is alleged that Saudi Arabia through Sheik Mohammed Al'amudi<sup>iii</sup> and others seems to be on a mission or undertaking in Ethiopia. For some Ethiopians Al'amudi is a decent and generous human being who loves Ethiopia as the land of his mother, but for an increasing number of Ethiopians he personified the greatest danger to Ethiopia's national security and existence as a sovereign country. Saudi Arabia's activity is one of the most well funded subversive involvements against the state of Ethiopia. Its aim is the total destruction of Ethiopia as a sovereign nation, and to change it into an Islamic country under one of the worst oppressive religious order--the Wahabis. The problem is far more serious than any other problem facing Ethiopia. In fact, a direct statement by one of the Arab League support group executives calls for Ethiopia to become a full member of the Arab League.<sup>iv</sup> The nations around us are not reliable communities except Kenya. All have ambition to gobble up large segments of Ethiopia.

There is no need on my part to argue the obvious. The Arab nations despite great oil wealth are the most oppressive governments with the most corrupt leadership in the world. The evidence is all around us in Saudi Arab, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, including the former Iraq. We need not under any circumstance become one such corrupt nation, nor join their league since they are already a basket case. Corruption, oppression, primitive legal system, and disregard of

fundamental human rights are their hallmark in spite of the fact that they own a disproportionate oil wealth.

In terms of their loyalty, look how they betrayed a fellow Arab nation in the trashing of Iraq by the United States. Nor have they been tolerant of each others differences over the years of their violent past. Consider the atrocities they committed against each other for supremacy between the Sunni and the Sha'i. More Palestinians were killed by King Hussein of Jordan than by Israelis. One must not forget the centuries of abuse against Africans by Arabs as slavers and slave-owners, nor their pathological oppressive culture that has become almost a natural fact of the Arab people. Their history, recent or otherwise, is not something that could endear confidence. This assessment has nothing to do with religious affinity on my part. It is a simple evaluation of the situation at hand.

Poor Ethiopia is being destroyed by money thrown with abandon by Saudi government agents, with high profile investment scheme that is lauded in all the media in Ethiopia and websites. The building of Mosque and the bribing of Christians to convert into Islam with money and the promise of a good life is all aimed at destroying the very foundation of Ethiopia, undermining its faith and patriotic zeal. I hold strongly that religion or spirituality is a private matter; however, our political life is a shared life. We have to have a bare minimum, foundational principles that we all share enshrined in our common constitution. No allowance in public law of particular exception or difference to any religion. If people want to arbitrate their monetary, contractual, domestic matters that is not contrary to public policy or universally held sensibility, they may choose to do so without any restriction or interference from the State. Individual human right is another matter.

Ethiopians should never allow any oppression of women, young girls, and children in general, which is promoted in the Arab world in the guise of religious observance. Our respect of the human person, secular authority, and justice and mercy are concepts Ethiopians always had even before Judaism, Christianity, or Islam showed up at our shores. For Ethiopians to allow any form of penal Sharia law to be practiced in any form in Ethiopia goes against the grains of our very existence. Once we allow such practice the deluge would not be too far behind. Look what is happening in Nigeria where some communities are implementing barbaric punishments under Sharia law, including condemning a women to death for having a child outside marriage. Here is a good example of the havoc that may ensue once we head down such slippery slope. One must not forget the fact that both Christianity and Islam are alien religions imported from the outside to Africa. Our African sensibility, which predates both religions, anywhere in Africa will not allow such barbaric punishment on anyone for having produced a child, a wonderful thing in itself.

Human rights and human dignity is not a question of religion, but the basic building block of civil society. Ethiopian society has practiced secular government structure for centuries. Even though the Ethiopian State is identified as a Christian State, Ethiopian governments have been secular governments from the time of our Christian official identity from AD 340 to date. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has provided the moral and spiritual guidance with great tolerance of Islam, unheard of in any other nation through out the ages. By contrast, if we just take the examples of Arab countries even in the Twentieth Century, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria we find Islam practiced as the only official religion. And as a result of such fanatical

religious fervor, Islamic Arab countries have been the most abusive of people with different religions such as Christians, Jews, et cetera. For Example, in Saudi Arabia there is not a single Church or temple where Christians or Jews could worship. One cannot even worship in private any other religion than Islam without being molested, arrested, and imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. There are numerous reported cases of persecution and inhuman treatment of Ethiopians in the Arab world.

Egypt is no heaven for Coptic Christians either. The Coptic Christians in Egypt are one of the most oppressed minorities in the world. They cannot as matter of fact build new Churches nor renovate those falling apart, and if they do they have to go through mazes of bureaucracy designed to thwart and discourage them. It is common knowledge that Coptic Christians in Egypt are on a daily basis harassed, their daughters kidnapped and kept as sex slaves, and their young men limited in their political or social lives. How many Coptic Christians can you find in Egyptian Government and bureaucracy? If truth be said the Christian World should be alarmed by the degree of abuse and oppression Christians and people of other faiths suffer in the hands of both fanatic Islamic governments such as Saudi Arabia and so called "moderate" Islamic governments such as Egypt.

By contrast, Ethiopian Moslems have Mosques built right next to great Ethiopian Churches. No Moslem of any description is ever harassed, his/her daughter kidnapped and raped, his/her family threatened in Ethiopia on account of his/her religion. Ethiopia is a sacred land, a land of tolerance, and a land of good decent people. I do not care to hear this utter nonsense that Ethiopian Moslems do not have religious freedom in Ethiopia. The Arab States are the ones that Ethiopian Moslems should see as abusive and oppressive and not their mother country where they have flourished as part of the Ethiopian family. It is in Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations that Africans are treated like slaves even those that are Moslems.

One should be reminded that it is the Christian population of Ethiopia that has sent its young men to war to fight the many battles fought to preserve the independence of Ethiopia through out Ethiopian history against Egypt, Italy, Sudan, the Ottoman Empire et cetera. This is not to deny the fact that there were many Moslem Ethiopians whose patriotic deeds is legendary in the fight of liberation against the Italians. Nevertheless, the danger of some Ethiopian Moslems being used as agents of Arabs is real. Ethiopians should be very alert not to loss the balance of power that has preserved our beautifully crafted co-existence and freedom, a way of life born out of great sacrifice and high universalistic ethics practiced for centuries. What happened during Gagn's twelve most destructive years in the entire history of Ethiopia should always be a reminder for all of Moslems and Christians alike that Ethiopia is always on the razor's edge. It is to everybody's great benefit to preserve Ethiopia's core civilization and ethics.

## **B. The United States**

The role of the United States has dramatically changed since the late 1980s in world politics. The demise of the Soviet Union, though a good thing in itself, has also freed the monstrous power of the United States to do as it pleases. No nation can out run its past. A violent past means a propensity for violence in the present. This puts us with the dilemma of living with the violence of the West as opposed to the violence of the East. To developing nations, such as Ethiopia, on micro level the emergence of a single power in the world may not make much difference, but on

the international arena where the identity of a nation is defined by its association rather than by its needs and aspirations, it may well be a prism that distorts the nature of poverty and that of political oppression in such developing nations.

Are we better off now with our relationship with the United States than our previous existence in relationships with the United States prior to 1974 or with our relationship with the Soviet Union from 1975 to 1991? Some theoreticians may see a far more progressive and responsible state of relationship with the United States having existed at all times, and the present relationship being the best. I, on the other hand, hold otherwise. I hold that our relationship with the United States does not amount for much, and where it has any significance it worked against our modest interest. Without mutual respect there cannot be any meaningful relationship with any nation or government. Look at the selfish and destructive role played by the United States government bottling up Ethiopia without any sea outlet, destroying the future of our people and nation; that is not the activity of a friendly nation!

The independence of the Ethiopian province of Eritrea, the border arbitration and demarcation that is underway, the blind support of a treasonous government of Meles Zenawi are all the uncouth works of the United States government. It is the deed of an enemy and not the work of a presumed friend. Does a fly on the rump of an elephant have a relationship with the elephant? Not at all, except maybe an occasional parasitic existence that has any effect on the elephant. Neither the United States government nor its allies are friends of Ethiopia. We have different background history and culture. We are ancient, deep, and moralistic; they are transient, shallow, and worldly. We do not have any shared experience even with the disfranchised minority groups within the American population. We have never been slaves to anybody, nor colonial subjects even during the height of the era of European imperialism. Thus, our state of mind is drastically different than any people who have come/gone through the dehumanizing process of slavery and colonial subjugation. The dehumanization we have suffered was/is in the hands of our own leaders and culture. It is inevitable there is deep seated resentment and hostility toward Ethiopians by European Whites and their descendants elsewhere. Metaphysically speaking Ethiopians have no equals anywhere in the world. In a way we are alone with no contemporaries but only in the company of our grandchildren.

There is a folk humor I heard a long time ago about God coming down to Earth to visit from a long absence after He had created all the people and nations of Earth. He moved through space around Earth looking for familiar places and societies. Because the world has changed very much in His absence from the time He created it, He was unable to recognize any of the places, cities, and communities around the world until He chanced upon a place and a people who looked familiar. God exclaimed, "That is Ethiopia!" Other than the obvious slight that Ethiopia has not developed much since its creation, the story confirms also the permanence and uniqueness of Ethiopia.

The recent discovery of the oldest fossil record of the ancestors of human kind from about 165 thousand years ago if read in conjunction with earlier discoveries of hominid fossils from the same area seems to establish the evolution of human kind taking place in the Afar region of Ethiopia, and spreading out to the rest of the world in a couple of waves of migration. Thus, Ethiopia can be considered as the place of the beginning of homo sapiens sapiens. We Ethiopians are, after all, the grand-parents of every human being that had ever existed or is in

existence on planet Earth now. It does not endear us to a number of people around the world who have their own myth of creation and descent as claimed in legend or religious books from the Mahabharata to Genesis et cetera.

One must anticipate a long and hard struggle in our future. We have to imagine a life without having to do with the insensitive, at times brutal, and arrogant wealthy governments around the world. We also run the risk of being ostracized by our fellow African nations. Well, the choice is either we save ourselves from certain disintegration under the present state of affairs, or we reorganize and restructure our selves and our country. In order to carry out such drastic measures it is necessary that we look and focus inward. We may have to redirect our major relationship to few American, European, and Asian countries if we decide to have any major relationships: striking a balance between countries with experience in using highly advanced technology with countries with experience in extensive use of massive manpower (labor intensive). As a matter of strategy in order to preserve our integrity and independence, I do not favor at all any close foreign relationships in our initial undertaking in restructuring and redirecting our future existence. It may be necessary to close our doors and clean our house for few years.

## **PART FOUR**

### **VIII. The Removal of Meles Zenawi and his Government**

#### **A.Meles Zenawi and Associates**

The quick removal of Meles Zenawi is absolutely necessary in order to stop the spiraling of Ethiopia into successive civil wars. I have pointed out in numerous articles and in a couple of books the inherent destructiveness of the leadership of Meles Zenawi and his followers including the twelve dissenters who lost out in their power struggle with Meles. The dissenters' responsibilities for the present condition of Ethiopia is no less than that of Meles Zenawi and his supporters who are still in power. Of course, in the future the dissenters would be able to exonerate themselves from some of the treasonous decisions of Meles Zenawi and his government.

It is repeatedly stated that peaceful transition of change of government is the most desired process in Ethiopia. We have heard from highly experienced Ethiopians and foreigners in interviews and Congressional hearings the desirability of democratic process of change. Even with their hard to swallow "holier than thou" approach, I credit those individuals who reject any use of force in politics for their vision and commitment to the democratic process. In fact Ethiopia's great advocate of human rights, Mesfin Woldemariam, Chairman of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, has advocated a peaceful political engagement through democratic means claiming similar moral foundation as that of Mohandas K. Gandhi and his movement. [Even though one can make a crucial distinction between EHRC's activities from Gandhi's Satyagraha, let us assume they are identical process for the purpose of this essay.] Members of that august body are dedicated Ethiopians for non-violence and democracy. I acknowledge their commitment and respect their position. However, I believe that such approach depends for its success on the existence of a formidable violent freedom movement elsewhere in Ethiopia.

It is not difficult to identify significant and detrimental differences between the condition in the India of Gandhi in the 1940s (before the independence of India 1948) and Ethiopia under the treasonous Meles Zenawi in 2003. At any rate, one trick at one time may not work at a different time. Nevertheless, Gandhi's Satyagraha is not properly understood contextually if one claims that Gandhi succeeded in bringing about the independence of India on a purely nonviolent platform. India's independence was a result of some horrendous violence too. At any rate all violence cannot be ruled out. There are instances where an individual has the moral and legal duty to defend the country if attacked by a foreign power,

Even in a situation where Meles Zenawi is willing to transfer power peacefully if he is allowed free passage and immunity from prosecution, that is a none starter. I am of the mind that Ethiopians should not accept such compromise. The best event for Ethiopians is to force Meles Zenawi out office and arrest him and his Government officials for treason and crimes against humanity. It is absolutely necessary that the activities of Meles Zenawi and his government be criminalized in regards to the Eritrean issue. If there is a peaceful transition of power, it would be interpreted with some degree of authority of international customary law that the succeeding Government of Ethiopia has accepted in toto all of the agreements and activities of Meles Zenawi and his Government.

In recent times Meles and his government have adopted a new "mantra" in regards with the Algiers Agreement and the decision of the Boundary Commission that effectively took away Ethiopian coastal territories and land locked about seventy million Ethiopians. They are now claiming that it is proper to respect legal process and the legality of the Algiers Agreement and the decision of the Boundary Commission over the sovereignty of the State of Ethiopia. First of all, the words "legality" or "legal" is a predicate, and not matter of fact. One cannot assume "legality" simply because there seems to be a "legal process." The legality of an act is subject to contest, challenge, close examination, and reversal. Thus, the new "mantra" of Meles and associates is simply a red herring.

There are also recent agreements signed by Meles Zenawi on the waters of the Blue Nile, agreements dealing with Ethiopian territory ceded to the Sudan that we have to be fully cognizant of when we are dealing with the issue of forcing out Meles Zenawi and holding him criminally liable for crimes against the State of Ethiopia and its People. Thus, it is not merely a question of bringing down a violent dictator from office that is at stake now, but also the very territorial integrity and independence of Ethiopia. Therefore, we have an acute necessity to force Meles Zenawi out of office rather than accept any peaceful "business as usual" type of change of government or any other brokered transition of government, as was the case with Mengistu in 1991, or other leaders in other developing countries.

## **B. What to do with the Mehal Sefaris**

As long as the mehal sefaris are allowed to function and control the Ethiopian government, there will be no salvation for the people of Ethiopia. At this crucial time of our long struggle, it turned out that the main supporters and enablers of Meles Zenawi and his corrupt government structure are the mehal sefaris. They did exactly the same thing for Mengistu, and before that for Haile Selassie. Through intrigue and opportunism they have now Meles Zenawi all to themselves. The dreaded so called Tygrean control of the Ethiopian government is long gone.

The TPLF army is being liquidated further ensuring the continuation of the power of the mehal sefaris.

From public indications and some discussions with some such individuals reveal the sad fact that the mehal sefaris are willing to repeat the treasonous acts of their ancestors who give up Ethiopian territory and Ethiopian citizens in Ethiopian Afar coastal territory, Kunama, Irob and the people thereof abandoning our Ethiopian brothers and sisters of Akale Guzi, Hamassen, Kunama Serie et cetera in colonial bondage even after the victory of the Battle of Adowa where Ethiopians had decisively won the war against Italy. As long as the mehal sefaris are at the center of power, or controlling political and economic power, it matters not much to them how the rest of us Ethiopians, far from the center of power, fare in our miserable lives. Fortified with high walls and barbed wire in their villas, and governmental perks, they spend their time plotting against all Ethiopians and manipulating our needs to their own selfish purpose.

These are a group of individuals easily identifiable coming mostly from one small area in central Ethiopia along with opportunists from other parts of Ethiopia. They are our greatest obstacles to us all from achieving political and economic advancement. They have set us back from being united, productive, and socially responsible citizens for at least a century since the time of Menilik II. They are the cancerous growth in our polis. We must entertain the possibility of moving ahead with our destiny without the mehal sefaris. We are far more powerful and numerous than the mehal sefaris. We can excise them from power, or bottle them up in their own "kingdom" and see to it that they do not any more use us to promote their hold on economic and political power in Ethiopia. Our decision must take into account how we can achieve the greatest good for most people without making too much concession.

## **Conclusion**

Ethiopia is not a transitory nation. It is built around a strong ethical and moral center. It has weathered some of the most formidable adversities in its thousands of years of history. One should not pay much attention to idiotic historians and politicians who are trying to rewrite history in an effort to diminish the greatness of the people of Ethiopia. It is not my wild fantasy when I state that Ethiopia is unique in its longevity as a nation. It is also the longest living secular government in the world. Ethiopia is a literate civilization, with well developed ethical standards of individual responsibility.

Ethiopia is a nation where historic concepts of justice and equity are deeply engraved in ordinary Ethiopians, where individuals are held accountable only for their own individual deeds, and not because of their association. It is one of the most tolerant cultures of diversity of religion and way of life in the world. And that tolerance has been reflected in the way Ethiopian Emperors conducted themselves in utmost discipline and observance of justice.

The effort to "modernize" Ethiopia, has taken us down a road of great destruction. This effort to "modernize" Ethiopia has to be reversed at this point in our history. Starting in the 1960s, the sudden and overwhelming exposure to international organizations, embassies, and their personnel has compounded our moral deterioration and cultural destruction. We have become victims of conspicuous consumption and our young, especially our young females, have become victims of a world and culture alien to our moral standards and way of life. And in

order to finance that type of sybaritic life style for few Ethiopians we had to borrow funds. Such international borrowing and funding has heaped debts on us with no solution to our economic woes. Thus, we need to scrap our idea of “modernity” and start from scratch with our own traditional virtues and social responsibility.

At this moment in our history, we are faced with a formidable enemy within – in the person of Meles Zenawi, a traitor and violent dictator. Our historic enemies who have never stopped plotting and funding mercenaries and bandas among our own brothers and sisters have now mounted a full scale program to destabilize and destroy our country through so called international investors and their locally breed facilitators.

The United States is now showing its true enemy colors and its shallow (self serving) foreign relation policy by its support of the Boundary Commission at work now trying to landlock over seventy million Ethiopians by a newly created nation of “Eritrea” with less than two million people. It has used our diminished capacity as an opportunity to dismember our nation into ethnic based independent holdouts such as Eritrea and others as well in the pipeline. The United States government seems to be behind the shortsighted but elaborate scheme to landlock Ethiopia and destroy us in collaboration with our historic enemies Egypt and the Sudan and all the Arab nations. Our great rivers and great land are the envy of our historic enemies who are all around us waiting to descend on our land once we become a nonfunctional people.

The way to fight back our enemies is not by recoiling back and begging for mercy, but by reorganizing our nation and arming our people, and challenging the aggressors headlong by all means. In order to achieve this, our first duty is to force Meles Zenawi and his Government out of power, and put him and his associates on trial for treason. The idea that is promoted by some opposition groups and political and civic leaders that we can deal with our problems by “legal” means is silly, and at best sophistry and evasive. We need to muster all the strength we can for a long drawn fight. Our strength could only come from within, i.e., from a strong communal bond. We have to change our ways: change the way we have treated each other miserably. It is absolutely important that we reconcile our differences and work for unity, justice, equity, and tolerance.

The law of the jungle is being implemented against us in the guise of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions spearheaded by the United States Government. We do not have to accept any of the Council’s resolutions on “Eritrea” and the Boundary Commission and its work because of violation of numerous customary international law and several Conventions, Covenants, and General Assembly Resolutions dealing with our Sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are also being represented by treasonous leaders, Meles Zenawi and associates, whose criminal activities will not bind us to any agreement entered through collusion and backroom deals. We have every right to fight for our national sovereignty and territorial integrity and the preservation of the human rights and political rights of our fellow citizens.

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Washington DC  
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Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Some aspect of this article is taken from an unpublished book manuscript by Tecola W. Hagos, *Modernity and Ethiopia*, 2003.

<sup>ii</sup> The dates in regard to Ethiopian Emperors refer to their period of being on the Ethiopian Throne. My references are based on the excellent computation and summaries of Ethiopian history prepared by Getatchew Haile, Bahra Hassab, Avon MN: 2000.

<sup>iii</sup> Shiek Mohammed Al'amudi is well known to me. His foundation helped me when I was a fellow at Harvard for two years doing research for my several books. In writing about the role being played by Al'amudi and his investment and generosity in connection with our current political problems, I am not being ungrateful. However, question of national interest is a totally different matter. No amount of money or friendship or power will stop me from fighting to preserve the continued existence of Ethiopia in freedom and dignity.

<sup>iv</sup> IRIN News.Org news page, June 10, 2002. Meki has further stated, "If Djibouti and Somalia are members of the Arab League, why not Ethiopia?" and added further, "Ethiopia cannot escape its destiny."

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