

Lacrimosa for Ethiopia

By Tecola W. Hagos

“It is true you cannot eat freedom and you cannot power machinery with democracy. But then neither can political prisoners turn on the light in the cells of a dictatorship.”

Corazon Aquino

“I would rather be an opportunist and float than go to the bottom with my principles around my neck”

Stanley Baldwin

PART ONE

I. Introduction

The events of the last two week in Ethiopia has been painful, but a great example of political betrayal and opportunism of the worst kind. I watched on video the depiction of an open platform of November 1, 2009 attended by Ministers, Dignitaries, Ambassadors from all over the World, and the throng of journalists, at a signing ceremony presided by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the public humiliation and the betrayal of the people of Ethiopia in the person of Hailu Shawel, Lidetu Ayalew, and Ayalew Chamiso, who claim to represent the opposition interest of the Ethiopian people. I ask myself what happened to common decency, sense of self-worth, and communal responsibility for those individuals in attendance of the staging of the signing of the Code of Conduct to stoop so low as complete pawns in the hands of a power-crazed puppet-master.

I cannot afford to lose all faith in my fellow Ethiopians, thus I conjectured the possibility of blackmail by the Government of Meles Zenawi of Hailu Shawel, and to a lesser extent Lidetu Ayalew and Ayalew Chamiso, with some hitherto unknown horrible corruption charges or some sordid video record in order to force them play their dubious role becoming gatekeepers to ward off other opposition parties and groups, such as the Medrek group. I tried also some other explanation to justify such action by the three gentlemen, namely the question of the national interest. But when I examined closely each of the above excuses I was willing to entertain on their behalf to avoid unfounded allegations, I realized that the record of those individuals, in the past several years, indicate deliberate opportunistic and predatory activities. The signing of the Code of Conduct is simply the fulfillment of long drawn processes of marriage with the EPRDF.

I recall Engineer Hailu Shawel coming to see me in 1992 at the new office complex built during the time of Mengistu's administration at the Menilik's Palace grounds. What he wanted was to inform me his desire to cooperate with EPRDF, and he gave me the impression that he was seeking some appointment. [In those days, I was perceived to be some kind of king-maker.] I tried to inform him that the time was not conducive for me to talk about such personal issues and I pointed to him the fact that I was moving to a new office. I talked with him in a temporary little office that I simply used for the moment in order to accommodate his insistence to see me. Trying to cooperate with ones government is not per se evil; however, it is the motive that indicates the character flaw or strength of an individual. My assessment of Hailu Shawel in that brief moment of

encounter was that of a person of opportunistic character—I am vindicated and proven right several times over in the course of the last fifteen years.

During the same period in the 1990s, I watched the birth of the AAPO led by the highly principled Professor Asrat; I witnessed the establishment of the Human Rights Commission, and the infighting of the OLF for political parity with the EPRDF. I am contrasting those developments to point out the fact that Hailu Shawel's interest right from the start was a highly personal one compared to the activities of the leaders of such different political and civic groups I had a chance to know about due to my proximity to the center of power and due to personal acquaintances with many of the players in those organizations. Hailu Shawel played a highly personal political game. He is the quintessential *Mahel Sefari*. He used the frustration and hatred a number of Addis Ababean feel for EPRDF to his personal advantage by projecting himself as a man-of-the-people to the leadership of EPRDF, and not to be trifled with. When he started his All Ethiopians Unity Party, Hailu Shawel was doing that with an approval wink from EPRDF leaders because Professor Asrat's All Amhara organization was gaining tremendous support and was becoming a real threat to the very survival of EPRDF even when the Professor Asrat was in detention. The leaders of the EPRDF needed an organization that will divide and dilute such concentrated challenge to their power.

No matter how hard one may try to change an old donkey into a stallion, it is an impossible task to achieve such fete. Just like nature, society cannot be that easily fooled. Such silly effort to fool society was amply demonstrated to the entire world to see by the event of November 1, 2009 at the Sheraton Hotel. Almost six months ago, on June 4, 2009, I wrote predicting such situation.

As he has done countless times in the past, Meles Zenawi will try all kinds of trickery dividing the opposition and driving wedges in between opposition leaders. It is no secret that Meles and his group have effectively divided and weakened the opposition in the past; for example, AAPO, OLF, CUD et cetera were all victims of the divisive schemes of launching leaders against each other. Thus, it will not surprise me if Meles Zenawi would offer Hailu Shawel the Presidency of Ethiopia in exchange for Hailu's docility and political betrayal of the opposition.

http://www.tecolahagos.com/liberation_ethiopia.htm

What is well camouflaged and effectively hidden from everyone else's scrutiny is the ambition of Hailu Shawel to be Meles Zenawi's *Ye Elfign Askelkai*—a power broker position that is most favored and desired by *Mahel Sefaris*. The political evolution of Kinijit and Hailu Shawel's role in the final political skirmish after the aborted election of 2005 leading to the arrest and conviction of Kinijit leaders was a situation where activities went out of control and dragged many of the leaders including Hailu Shawel into such a situation. However, the moment the Leaders of Kinijit were released from prison the split started with Hailu Shawel disassociating himself and separating his own group from the rest of Kinijit Members.

In 1991 to 1993 when I was advising the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, Ledetu Ayalew was too junior a person for me to know at all, so was Ayalew Chamiso. In fact, I never met those two gentlemen, I only know of them from reports, newspaper articles, videos, and pictures since my second exile (after 1993 to date) in the United States. Based on such reports and documentation, I wrote in a couple of articles expressing my admiration for Lidetu Ayalew as an individual who came to prominence through his own native wits and smarts without the help of any ethnic based hegemonic structure or help from academia or anybody else for that matter. It is no little achievement in a society that is densely stratified in tight hierarchical structure based on ethnic exclusivity, family prominence, and wealth, for a simple born peasant man from Lasta to make such inroad into the power structure of Ethiopia, especially an Ethiopia being ruled by the most rigid and closed Government in the history of this ancient land.

I have pointed out above the diverse personalities and interests of the three leaders who signed the Code of Conduct. Often people have pointed out to me and others that one should not focus on individual personalities when dealing with the political life of a nation. I respectfully differ from such high standard, for Ethiopian politics is driven completely by focusing on the personality of the leaders of Ethiopian political parties. It would be unrealistic for anyone to try to do politics in Ethiopia without first focusing on Ethiopian political personalities.

II. The Game Plan

It is imperative to understand the mind of Meles Zenawi and his close associates in order to understand why the group decided to form close alliance with Hailu Shawel. It is no surprise to me that such scheme would come about at this point. Over ten years ago, in my book Demystifying Political Thought, Power, and Economic Development (1999), I predicted the breakup of AAPO, and that fractured group in time would join forces with the faction of the TPLF corrupt leadership and would continue the repressive Government of the EPRDF under the leadership of Meles Zenawi.

The Amharas will continue in their present status, disorganized and ineffective, incapable to counter or regain the political clout they presumably had lost if the present fracturing continuous... moreover recent development indicate that AAPO officials in Addis Ababa are working together with the EPRDF undermining the very Amhara movement they were elected to lead and promote. [Referring to Qegnazmatch Nekatibeb leading AAPO and the continued detention of Professor Asrat] **It is only a matter of time before the national office of AAPO in Ethiopia fractures and joins the EPRDF corrupt structure. In keeping with such trend, a faction from the TPLF with a section from AAPO, and exofficials of Mengistu's government and the camp started by One Ethiopia will metamorphosis into a support group for Meles.** (84-5)

Tecola W. Hagos, Demystifying Political Thought, Power, and Economic Development (1999), pages 84-5. (Emphasis added)

Meles Zenawi has perfected the art of “divide and rule” and raised it to new heights. Recent books, articles, and book reviews by former members of the TPLF have given us a glimpse of the sordid and corrupt inner workings of the TPLF. We have now a clear

picture of the organizations administration and finance, more importantly the names and roles played by the core leaders responsible for the day to day functioning of the TPLF. Meles Zenawi, Sebhat Nega, Seyoum Mesfine, Abay Tsehai, Abadi Zemu, Brehane Gebrekristos, Tewodros Hagos et cetera played major roles in all the corrupt schemes hoodwinking major international humanitarian organizations and their star fund raisers whereby millions of dollars was deposited in accounts established by such individuals allegedly for the starving people of Tigray and vicinity. There was neither public auditing nor proper accounting ever to this day of all the hundreds of millions of dollars donated and received through charitable fund raising from the West and others. The individuals who had intimate knowledge of the finance and administrative process at the time, such as Gebremedhin Araya, Aregawi Berhe et cetera, have exposed the diabolical secret of the TPLF leaders diversion of donated funds into private accounts that was never audited by the organization.

Those TPLF leaders distributed a minuscule amount to the starving Tigrayan refugees in the Sudan, and kept the rest for their own use in accounts controlled by them. Because of such meager assistance most Tigrayan refugees in the Sudan tried to return to their home base even though it was under the administration of the Military Regime. The attraction was that Regime was providing sustenance far in excess of what was provided by TPLF Leaders even though the donated fund the TPLF Leaders were in charge of was far in excess of the donations that the Ethiopian Government had acquired from international donors. Furthermore, Meles Zenawi as the leader of that pack outmaneuvered Western governmental security and spying agencies by portraying himself and his close supporters as democratic and honorable leaders. The fact is that by the time the EPRDF reached Addis Ababa overrunning the Military Regime, the leaders of the TPLF were already Millioners. They all have tasted the forbidden golden apple from the tree of wealth. By then they were infested like Gollum with obsessive and insatiable appetite for wealth.

The only agenda they had was how best they could use their guerrilla forces to establish and run a puppet government in order to control the resources of a defeated country, and how best to loot it blind. We all have been wrong to a great extent in believing that they were interested in the fracturing of Ethiopia because of their hatred of the very idea of an Ethiopia and the fact that they were against the military dictatorship then in power. Some of us also wrongly believed that they were partial in their love and commitment to see an independent Eritrea. They would not have cared an iota for Eritrea if it were not in their best interest to do so in order to exploit and loot Ethiopia by themselves. For sure, Isayas Afeworki would have objected to such theft and looting of a nation if he had stayed as part of Ethiopia, for he would have wanted to do the same. In that shameful criminal activity of looting and robbery, they found Alamoude, an individual who taught them a thing or two how to move huge amount of money around the world. He also might have personally facilitated the international web of investment and banking of the hundreds of millions of dollars and other hard currency thus stolen effectively hiding such fabulous looted wealth from Ethiopia including gold mined in mines allegedly owned by Alamoude. In short, we are dealing here with a different breed of men unseen in the history of Ethiopia or the World before who held a nation hostage for one purpose only—to loot its wealth.

The true nature of the activities of the Leaders of the TPLF has become far more clearer now than a decade ago, since former TPLF leaders such as Gebremedhin Araya (responsible for the finance of TPLF), Aregawi Berhe (former Leader and Commander of the TPLF guerilla forces) and others have finally started writing and publishing their memoire. It is absolutely clear from such accounts that the main goal of the TPLF Leadership had shifted since 1984 from fighting for the liberation of the people of Tigray/Ethiopia to the acquisition of wealth by using the guerrilla structure that was in place to control the state structure. Meles Zenawi and his select tiny support group having tested of the forbidden golden apple born out of the famine of 1984 and after were simply dedicated to make as much money as possible looting and confiscating the wealth of a nation. They were in fact a group of mercenaries similar in their operation like the Mafia. They used as their foot soldiers naïve peasant boys and girls from Tigray and a few from adjoining Provinces, young men and women who believed in a nationalist cause, to fight the deadliest war against a brutal military regime for seventeen years. Setting aside those patriotic naïve fighters, the leaders of the TPLF were just common criminals then as they are now.

The bond that held tight Meles Zenawi and his group is not patriotism; it is not concern for the people of Tigray; it is not the desire to help Eritreans. The bond is made of gold chain called “Money.” The interest born of money and wealth creates the most enduring and highly exclusive bonding. That is literally what we see in the current leaders of the TPLF. Opposition supporters writing endlessly ascribing the current disastrous Ethiopian government administration to narrow ethnic interest are totally wrong. Any mention of “Woyane” as the target of dissent and derision is like barking up the wrong tree. The people of Tigray are primary victims of the TPLF even worse than the rest of Ethiopia. The affinity between Meles Zenawi and the *Mahel Sefaris* is obvious.

The losers in the current game of the signing of the Code of Conduct and realignment of the EPRDF with its newest Member Hailu Shawel (AEUP) are the people of Ethiopia, not Hailu Shawel and his Party, not Medrek or anybody else. Meles Zenawi has gained another day to prepare for far longer and devastating fight against all those who are concerned about the vital interest of Ethiopia, the Opposition et cetera. He has extended his life to do more damage to the state of Ethiopia entrenching his divisive Killel system, alienating Ethiopian territory, selling/leasing huge chunk of Ethiopian land to foreign investors and states while millions of Ethiopians starve to death. He will keep looting Ethiopia’s gold in collaboration with Alamoudi.

The incorporation of new Satellite organizations, such as AEUP replacing the old ones, such as ANDM, OPDO et cetera that have atrophied over the last ten years, due to serious marginalization of the leaders of such organizations by Meles Zenawi. Starting from the arrest and imprisonment of Tamrat Lyne, all Satellite organizations of the EPRDF lost their political luster. In the guise of the signing of a Code of Conduct, which is a meaningless document in itself, Meles Zenawi is putting in place a blue print for his future. There is some other subterranean purpose in the game that was fully displayed for the World to see on November 1, 2009. The bottom-line is that Meles Zenawi is

replacing his old cronies wholesale with the quintessential *Mahel Sefaris*, who had worked diligently as shadow advisors and yes men of incredibly loyalty to Meles Zenawi in the last eighteen years. The current political development of Meles Zenawi's budding friendship with Hailu Shawel spells doom for the old comrades of Meles Zenawi, such as Adissu Legesse, Teferra Walwa, Kassu Illala et cetera who will soon be retired and replaced by the technocrats that Hailu Shawel would organize after the election of 2010, such technocrats are salivating right now to join the new administration with "Emperor" Meles Zenawi on the Throne for the next twenty years. This is the likely and disgusting outcome of the game plan that could only be conjured up by a sick mind.

Tecola W. Hagos
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Washington DC.

To be continued

PART TWO

III. The *Mahel Sefaris* Back in Power

IV. The Oromo of Ethiopia

PART THREE

V. Medrek and the "Code of Conduct"

VI. What is to be done?

Conclusion