

On the Identity of PM Meles Zenawi And His TPLF Regime In Ethiopia

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In the previous commentary "[Meles Zenawi and Etrhiitorpeia](#)" posted in www.ethiopians.com (March 20, 2007), with Ethiopia smothered in the title, we scanned the zero sum game PM Meles Zenawi and his TPLF played on behalf of Eritrea at the total expense of Ethiopia. From 1975 to 1991 he and his minions did everything for EPLF/Eritrea culminating in its severance from Ethiopia, including Ethiopia's entire Red Sea littoral, thereby rendering the rest of Ethiopia—the country which he was to lord over from Addis Ababa—landlocked. **For the past sixteen years, the world has been witnessing, tragically, the death of the Ethiopian nation in slow motion. It was first blueprinted and attempted by colonial/Fascist Italy, then revived and pursued by its stepchild Issayass Afewerqi and his ELF/EPLF, and finally being brutally executed by mercenary/askari military occupiers, PM Meles Zenawi and his TPLF, since 1991.** The period from 1991 to the present marks the second phase of the sordid drama of his brutal rule in Ethiopia prompting the question of identity of the ruler and his regime.

Conception and Agenda of PM Meles/TPLF vis-a-vis Ethiopia

In our quest for keys to understanding the identity of PM Meles Zenawi's regime in Ethiopia we begin by asking what his public words and deeds vis-à-vis Ethiopia over the years were. Did he have visions for, commitments to or concerns about the well being of Ethiopia and Ethiopians at large during his sojourn as EPLF-Eritrean mercenary/*shifita*? Were there positive writings, verbal pronouncements, agendas and programs with respect to Ethiopia *qua* Ethiopia in the 1970's and 1980's in the Meles/TPLF repertoire? One searches in vain for positive expressions concerning Ethiopia in the political canons of PM Meles Z. and his TPLF. The reason is as plain as it is easy to apprehend." **By definition, the political education and political culture of EPLF and TPLF was categorically anti-Ethiopia from the get-go. Throughout their sojourn in the bushes, the capos and foot soldiers of patron EPLF and protégé TPLF enunciated nothing positive and nothing redeeming about Ethiopia. Their mantra at home and abroad was bashing and thrashing Ethiopia, its people, its history and anything Ethiopian.** The very name Ethiopia was anathema to them and became a buzzword for any and everything evil, demonic or reprehensible. Therefore, its demise was a *sine qua non* for the "liberation" and the future security of

EPLF/Eritrea and TPLF/Tigrai. Since 1975 PM Meles and his fellow *shiftas* or armed rebels in the TPLF were organized, armed and poised to destroy Ethiopia or at least ensure Tigrai/Eritrean dominance for as long as possible. A subtext of this cabal also called for crushing Amhara political power in the country.

Among other things, unlike a number of his contemporaries or peer groups, PM Meles was not even a part of the Ethiopian student movement of the day. In his study of the TPLF (1975-1991), John Young points out that leading Tigrayan Ethiopian members of the national student movement of the 1960's and early 70's such as Tilahun Gizaw and Meles Tekle did not give

"any indication to their colleagues...that they were proponents of Tigrayan nationalism." In fact, he adds, "given Meles Tekle's high status at the (Haile Sellassie) University, and the fact that the current prime minister (Meles Zenawi) of Ethiopia took Meles's name for his 'field name', it is noteworthy that the original Meles was not a member of TNO (Tigrayan National Organization) nor a known Tigrayan nationalist."¹

In his sophisticated and substantive analytic book² on the nature of TPLF and its fallacious causes, Mr. Andargatchew Tsige who knows the TPLF from inside out, describes the Front as an entity that calls itself "*liberator*" when in fact it is totally clueless as to what liberty or liberation mean." Tagay Gessesse Engida, another former fighter and insider, has also written a book in 2005 on PM Meles and his TPLF titled The Albanian Disciple Who Has Stained History.³ Pointing out that the actions of PM Meles and his TPLF are a direct product of the alien and Godless political socialization including choosing Albania as their model system, they unleashed their brutal, destructive and savage measures against the peoples of Ethiopia.

"From the moment of their formation, the leaders of the TPLF brainwashed the youth with a virus of lies, treachery, denial, theft, betrayal, brutality, obfuscation...Their history, their character, their beliefs and deeds are the diametrical opposites to the wishes and beliefs of the Tigrayan and in general the Ethiopian people. Consequently, they are adept at feeding the people candy-coated venom to hoodwink them and continue to rule and to consummate their hidden agenda and camouflage their crimes and historic denials. It is like telling people 'close your eyes so we can fool you.'

Exposes of the anti-Ethiopian political agenda, culture and desiderata of PM Meles and his TPLF do not emanate solely from former TPLF stalwarts. Either by Freudian slips or by carefree mendacity TPLF elements have revealed what they do and do not stand for. As has been adumbrated in pages of this and earlier

¹ John Young, Peasant Revolution In Ethiopia 1997, pp. 82, 86.

² See Andargachew Tsige, Netsaneten Yemmayawq Netsa Awchi--in Ethiopic; (Liberator That Does Not Know Liberty) 1997 (Ethiopian Calendar) (2005).

³ The Amharic Title of the book is Tarik Agudafiw Ye Albania Debtera. (2005) p.166 & ff. The reference to Albania in the book title harks back to PM Meles's clique within TPLF in their early *shifita* days, saying that they emulate Albania as the model Marxist/socialist polity and aim to adopt Albanian style regime when they occupy a country. Well, the country they have occupied is Ethiopia.

commentaries, the case of PM Meles is well documented over the past 20 years. To mention a few:

- Demonizing and denigrating Ethiopian historical figures, especially Emperor Menelik II and fraudulently dumping any and all historical shortcomings or invented faults vis-a-vis Tigray and Eritrea to him.
- Calling the Ethiopian flag nothing but a “rag” and Ethiopian history full of “debris.”
- Designating only his Tigray/Tigrign (Eritrean) ethnic group “golden” thereby betraying prejudice against, disdain for or outright hatred of other Ethiopians implying also the “golden” group’s right to rule *uber ales*.
- His shameless obsequious service to EPLF/Eritrea’s Isayass Afewerqi and his secession agenda at the expense of Ethiopia and with loss of life and limbs of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians, particularly Tigrayans, to achieve it.
- Pillaging of Ethiopian economic, educational, agricultural, power, communications, industrial resources and military assets taken wholesale to EPLF/Eritrea and Tigray.
- Waging and winning the 1998-2000 war provoked by EPLF/Eritrea--with the sacrifice of 100,000 casualties—and then withdrawing from the outskirts of Asmera without any benefit for Ethiopia and Ethiopians such as recovering the Afar seacoast region of Assab. Why the military campaign? What would have happened if the campaign had not taken place since the outcome of the campaign was *status quo ante*?
- Signing an illegal document in Algiers in 2000 on defunct colonial “treaties” **in advance** of “commission” decisions having stacked the deck in favor of pro-EPLF/Eritrea outcome at the total expense of Ethiopia. No head of state or government **of his country** would do that unless forced to do so. The host, President Bouteflika of Algeria has not done that with Morocco vis-à-vis Saharawi Republic. Yet, he beamed as a peacemaker.
- Stating that the notion of Ethiopia being more than 100 years old is a “fairy tale” but Tigrayan history is thousands of years old.
- Asserting that Eritrea and Ethiopia were both formed a century ago.
- Hating, hounding, killing, torturing, imprisoning, banishing, intimidating, blackmailing and terrorizing patriotic and democratic Ethiopians, especially Amharas, Oromos, Gurages, Somalis, Afars, Southern and Western peoples as well as individual Tigrayans.
- Alienating land, economic resources and businesses from the vast majority of Ethiopians and rendering them as renters, borrowers and beggars.
- Disarming Ethiopians so they will be unable to defend themselves and their families against the terrorism of TPLF/minions and then turning around and accusing unarmed Ethiopians of spawning terrorism and genocide..
- Jailing Ethiopians with integrity, intelligence and dedication to Ethiopia, human rights activists and political personalities and making them and their

families suffer for years on without any due process to vegetate until they die, as was the case of Professor Asrat Weldeyes and many others since 1991. The world has witnessed in askance the current case of the renowned and innocent prisoners of conscience that have been languishing in Kaliti for nearly a year and a half for no substantiated charge and no due process.

- This may be a first time when a regime not only steals an election in broad daylight, but also following that by hauling *en masse* the popularly elected representatives of the people to prison.
- Training and using brutal assassination squads referred to as “Agazi” to make Ethiopians, especially young ones, prime targets for sharp shooting at close range for bull’s eye practice, so bullets land on their temples.
- Using a phony “constitution”, humbug parliament and kangaroo courts to harass and throw out of business journalists, academics and public servants, human rights advocates, students and teachers who try to tell the truth or ask critical questions.
- Cutting up the rest of Ethiopia to pieces bantustans style, thereby creating conditions of internecine ethnic or tribal, cultural, language and/or regional tensions with an express aim of proximate or ultimate imploding and disintegrating Ethiopia.
- Spawning, for the first time, people against people enmity between Eritreans and the rest of Ethiopians as never before—as distinguished from conflicts between governments and armed rebels or *shiftas*, while the civilian populations lived amicably, if on occasion uncomfortably.
- Intervening in the internal affairs of Somalia by invading it unprovoked and thereby arousing dormant Somali antipathy and irredentist claims. The repercussions of this TPLF hubris, which is fraudulently and tragically being publicized as an Ethiopian intervention against “an Islamic threat” is yet to be felt. The net result is actually to pile up the coals of Somali/Islamic antipathy and sense of fury and revenge down the road against Ethiopia and Ethiopians at large, long after the TPLF regime is out of the scene.
- After seven years of saying the Hague decision was wrong and the TPLF will not abide by it—although it had signed in advance that it would abide by any decision—Meles and his TPLF are finally dancing around to accept the loss of Badme, which they knew will happen all along. The Ethiopian people are the only ones that have been fooled and that have paid the price in life, limbs and repression.
- Annexing large chunks of choice fertile land from Gondar and Wello into Tigray without any due process or consent by the peoples of the said regions and—for what it is worth—blocking direct border link between “Amhara” region and Sudan, while Tigray now shares borders with Sudan.
- Many thousands mostly young Ethiopians in all parts of the country have been killed, tortured or languish in local “Gulag” jails outside of public scrutiny.

- Perpetrating fraud at every turn in every way in the nominal “legislative, “judiciary” “executive” and other institutions and functions to hoodwink the international community.
- Declaring the right to “free press”--which operates largely in Addis Ababa so the foreign community, can be impressed--thereby drawing the best and brightest journalists who do their best at their craft. Then the regime keeps putting them on the carpet in its kangaroo courts to levy exorbitant sums of money for its coffers for trumped up charges until they dry up and then thrown in jail or forced into exile. Finally, the regime has incarcerated all the leading journalists and closed down all “free” presses.
- The arrogance and hatred for Ethiopians by PM Meles and his TPLF is such that when confronted by peaceful demonstrators they do not shoot in the air because it is wasting bullets and they do not use other non-lethal methods of containing a crowd because they may be too expensive. So, their gendarmes just shoot to kill.
- Treacherously sowing the poisonous seeds of hatred, enmity and distrust between the people of Tigray and Ethiopians by spreading insidious propaganda that if the Meles regime goes down, there will be genocide against Tigrayans that would make Rwanda’s *interhamwe* slaughter look like “child’s play” as Bereket Semon bellowed.

Mr Sebhat Nega is one of the EPLF/TPLF three amigos--along with Bereket Semon and PM Meles. Mr. Sebhat is the don or godfather of PM Meles and his TPLF, and these days he is stirring the political waters with respect to the vital and perpetual connection between their TPLF and EPLF/Eritrea. Back in 1988, Mr Sebhat is quoted saying that, during their TPLF *shifita* days “the nationality question is the primary issue and **we don’t believe that the unity of Ethiopia should be pursued at all costs**”⁴ (Emphasis added).

Seven years after the EPLF border aggression into Tigray and the subsequent 1998-2000 bloodletting mostly within Eritrea, resulting in casualties in excess of 100,000 people, Mr Sebhat came full circle with more astounding—but not surprising--statement about the special bosom relationship between TPLF and EPLF/Eritrea. In a recent interview with TPLF radio commemorating another anniversary of TPLF’s 1991 occupation of Addis Ababa, Mr. Sebhat was profuse with bravado speaking about what TPLF has done to effect the independence of EPLF/Eritrea, surmounting EPLF prevarications about possibly reaching peace agreement with the Derg.⁵

“We exerted tremendous efforts within and outside of the country and more than any other Eritean political organization that Eritrea must break away from

⁴ Young, Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia op. cit. p.100.

⁵ Part of the interview has been translated by the Ethiomedia.com website. Emphasis is in the script.

Ethiopia—and achieve independence.” “We were suspicious that EPLF would betray the Eritrean struggle for independence. Meles said—given the wavering stand of EPLF—that we may face the danger of betrayal on the part of EPLF.” ... “Shaabia (EPLF) was a well-organized group with a strong army. Politically speaking, however, we never ruled out that Shaabia was a weak, submissive force that could one day give in to the enemy”—meaning Ethiopia.

What is even more telling about the interview is what he says in the present and future tense about the perennial bonding between TPLF and EPLF/Eritrea at the expense of Ethiopia or Tigray for that matter.

“All said, even at the present time, there is no force on Earth that would fight for the independence of Eritrea more than the EPRDF-led (TPLF) government of Ethiopia. Our firm principle on the independence of Eritrea is not what we withdraw when we feel angry, and endorse when we feel good about Eritrea. On our part we believe the people of Eritrea know very well except a few members of the Shaabia leadership—that **the EPRDF-led government of Ethiopia is the one and only force that would defend the independence of Eritrea.** In short, the Eritrean people are very well aware of the fact that no force matches the power of the EPRDF-led government to defend and support the independence of Eritrea. Suppose let us say Eritrea comes under invasion by an outside force. I’ve no doubt the EPRDF government would, along with the Eritrea people, fight against the enemy of Eritrea.”

In other words, in addition to what Ethiopians in general and Tigrayans in particular have sacrificed to attain EPLF/Eritrea’s secession and in the 1998-2000 border war across the Mereb river, Sebhat Nega/Bereket Simon/Meles Zenawi’s TPLF stands poised presently and in the future to do everything they can to defend the political and territorial integrity of EPLF/Eritrea even against the will of EPLF. These anti-Ethiopia diabolical culprits **envisage the Ethiopian people to be cannon fodder askaris in this scenario much like Eritreans, Somalians and Libyans were during Mussolini’s Fascist invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930’s.**

To be sure, PM Meles and his TPLF “liberated Tigray from Derg rule by March 1989 and they helped liberate Eritrea by May 1991. Yet, sixteen years after PM Meles and his TPLF and EPLF overthrew their nemesis, the Derg, in 1991 they still continue to rule Ethiopia in 2007 as a “liberation front.”

1975 to 1985-----**Tigrayan**
1985 to 1995-----**Peoples**
1995 to 2005- -----**Liberation**
2005 to---???**Front**

The difference in the “liberation” status between Eritrea and Tigray is more a matter of semantics and tactical timing to claim membership in the United Nations. For all intents and purposes, TPLF/Tigray is independent vis-à-vis Ethiopia as is EPLF/Eritrea. Tigray is more independent than Ethiopia is today. It has self-

government over which the “federal Ethiopian” State has no power, control or influence whatsoever. Obviously, the opposite is not the case in that the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front rules over the rest of what is left of Ethiopia. At a public function several years ago attended by a large core of foreign diplomats, a former high ranking TPLF fighter and head of “Tigray State,” referred to Tigray and its neighbors “Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia.” It is a curious political phenomenon that students of politics have yet to study and fathom. The difference between EPLF/Eritrea and TPLF/Tigray is that PM Meles or one of his deputies to write a letter to the UN as he did on behalf of EPLF/Eritrea. Through a plethora of development fronts and TPLF parastatals such as the notorious Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT)⁶ headed by none other than Mr. Sebat Nega, Tigray siphons resources from the whole country for itself.

To the Ethiopian people wars and rumors of wars are nothing new and they have all transpired at their expense including internal wars of struggle for feudal, *shifita* and other minority supremacy over them and their resources. Simultaneously, Ethiopians have struggled militarily against external marauders, expansionists and colonialists—thereby sacrificing lives and limbs for the sacred end of protecting their national liberty, dignity and territorial integrity. This is why much of Ethiopian history, including the period that is dominated by EPLF/TPLF, has been characterized by this writer in the previous segment of the commentary as a perennial cyclical syndrome of “culture of violence” spinning into “violence of culture” and then back to square one years later. During most of these Ethiopian wars of resistance to colonialism and regional expansionism, the peoples of Tigray have paid a disproportionate price in blood and tears.

As far as the outside world is concerned, there is not much that is unknown about what goes on in Ethiopia and Northeast Africa at large. In particular, the United States and the Soviet Union of the day, Ethiopia’s neighbors, a few Middle East States including Israel and far away Cuba were, in varying degrees and levels, involved in the political and armed struggles of the region. They helped determine the kind of outcome in Ethiopia including regime change culminating in the secession of EPLF/Eritrea and the occupation of the rest of Ethiopia by PM Meles Zenawi and his TPLF in 1991. From 1945 to 1991 the principal players in the intervention game in Ethiopia were the United States and the Soviet Union.

Obviously, given such premises, it would be contradictory for Meles and his TPLF to visualize and depict the “enemy” i.e., Ethiopia, in positive terms during the

⁶ EFFORT (Endowment Fund For Rehabilitation of Tigray) is actually patterned after the EPLF’s less successful prototype, The Red Sea Corporation. It is by far the largest TPLF business empire that operates without any public accountability or auditing. It monopolizes import/export trade, construction, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, trucking, insurance, travel and tourism, agricultural fertilizer distribution, mining, tannery and textiles. For a brief discussion on the subject see this writer’s “Sow the Wind, Reap The Whirlwind,” [In Search of The DNA of The Ethiopia-Eritrea Problem. \(2003\).](#)

period of their tandem struggles (1975-1991). The TPLF and EPLF—along with their sojourners in the outside world—were, therefore, consistent in their blanket hatred, bashing and trashing, denial, denigration, demonization, lies, and negative portrayals of Ethiopia in general and Amhara Ethiopians in particular during the said period. Young TPLF/EPLF recruits, militants and cadres grew up and operated in such hostile anti-Ethiopian cultural and political milieu. In such state of affairs, PM Meles and his TPLF considered themselves as aliens in Ethiopia or Ethiopia and Ethiopians as alien to them. The net result is that the PM Meles/TPLF regime in Ethiopia since 1991 has certainly comported with alien rule paradigm. Meles and his TPLF did not set up shop for the “liberation” of Ethiopia and Ethiopians at large from oppression, repression, feudalism or backwardness, but for their own tribal “liberation” from Ethiopia at the expense of all the rest. It is important for all concerned to understand this scenario fully in order to come to terms with the real identity (nature) and behavior of PM Meles and his TPLF regime in Ethiopia since 1991.

For Meles and his TPLF, Ethiopia was a target for destruction, not for redemption or reconstruction. Apropos the Swedish saying that *the death of one is the bread of another*, the only way Tigray and Eritrea could survive and thrive is when Ethiopia as the Ethiopia Ethiopians and others know, love and respect is liquidated sooner or later. That is why the Front set up in 1975 is still ruling in Addis Ababa presiding over the demise of Ethiopia. That is why Meles does not refer to Ethiopia or Ethiopian history, unless he wants to denigrate its history or its historical figures and heroes. PM Meles has scoffed at Ethiopian history as nothing but “full of debris.” Predictably, the historical punching bag of choice for PM Meles is none other than Emperor Menyelek II, perhaps Ethiopia’s greatest Emperor.⁷

Do We Really Know the Identity of PM Meles Zenawi and his TPLF?

Along with his mentor Issayas, north of the Mereb, Meles does not recognize or extol even Ethiopian historical figures of Tigrayan vintage such as Ethiopian Emperor Yohannes IV and the brilliant heroic Tigrayan patriot, Ras Alula Abba Negga, the Emperor’s viceroy in Mereb Melash and founder of Asmera in today’s Eritrea. Vestiges of historical memory of these leaders have been systematically eradicated in Eritrea and Tigray. In fact, the headstones in the cemetery of some of the 500 or so

⁷ One cannot devote enough space herein to do justice to the controversy over perceptions of the persona and actions of Emperor Menyelek II. But, allegations by latter-day revisionists that he “sold out” Eritrea and/or that he arrogated to himself “the credit of victory” over the Italians in Adwa in 1896 is one that has so far generated more heat than light. The subject requires rigorous, honest and thorough contextual research to dispel allegations and set the record straight. The reader can, for starters, consult Richard Caulk, “Between The Jaws Of Hyenas” A Diplomatic History of Ethiopia (1876-1896), 2002; See also Paulos Gnogno, Ate Menelik.1992; H. Marcus, The Life and Times Of Menelik II, 1995; see also my “Adwa 1896: Who Was Savage and Who Was Civilized.” Negussay Ayele, Selected Writings On Ethiopia and Ethiopianity” 1999.

Italian colonial soldiers killed in Dogali in 1887 by the forces of Ras Alula⁸, are spruced up, maintained and protected as national shrines by EPLF/Eritrea while Ras Alula's statue marker has been obliterated. As shown in the last segment of the commentary, PM Meles denied Ethiopia's millennia-old proud history reducing it to only 100 years young to make it even with his idolized EPLF-Eritrea⁹. He and his TPLF desecrated the Ethiopian flag-- the most revered independence symbol for Ethiopian, African and the Black World as nothing but a "piece of rag." In fact, TPLF elements purposely used it as trash holding rag during their *shifita* days. And, at least for over twenty-four hours, the TPLF "flag" was flying in the front courtyard of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in place of the Ethiopian flag when they took over Addis Ababa on 28 May 1991. It is to be recalled that in a 1992 interview with Professor Donald Levine, PM Meles had bellowed that: "The Tigreans had Axum, but what could that mean to the Gurague! The Agew had Lalibela, but what could that mean to the Oromo! The Gonderes had castles, but what could that mean to the Wolaita"¹⁰

On the other hand, **PM Meles and his TPLF were first and foremost committed and dedicated to doing anything and everything for the secession of EPLF-Eritrea at the expense of Ethiopia, including the destruction of Ethiopia *per se*.** PM Meles expressed in words and actions this political agenda openly, shamelessly and consistently, despite ungrateful acts by his mentor and capobanda, Issayass Afewrqi. In a brief but pithy 1997 article titled "Ethnicism: The Ideology of a *Worari* State," Dr. Worqu Abera analysed

⁸For more on Ras Alula and his anti-colonial victory over the Italians see Haggai Erlich, Ras Alula and the Scramble for Africa, 1996. See also my "Ras Alula and Ethiopia's Struggles Against Expansionism and Colonialism: 1872-1897" and other articles in Tadesse Beyene, et.al. The Centenary Of Dogali, Addis Ababa, 1988.

⁹ It is interesting, to say the least, that two decades ago PM Meles, had written that Ethiopian history is no more than 100 years old. All of a sudden today, Ethiopia or, more correctly, Christianity in Ethiopia, is 2000 years old and, as these lines are being written, his regime is going helter skelter to organize a millennium celebration in his suzerainty--largely for financial and diversionary reasons. Evidently, PM Meles thinks that over time, people forget what he says and does vis-à-vis Ethiopia, as he somersaults at will and with impunity exhibiting his vintage duplicity, sadistic hatred and willful brutality. But, not everybody, especially patriotic Ethiopians—the ones he hates and fears the most--are forgetful. And, a few expatriate Ethiopianists with integrity are either still around to attest to the pedigree of Ethiopian history or have left behind their considered views on the matter in writing.

¹⁰ Among PM Meles's clever methods of operation is duplicitous opportunism. Shortly after saying that to Professor Levine he swung when he met a group of American Ethiopianists in Washington, D.C. extolling the glories of ancient Ethiopia in history and how proud he was of that heritage. And, later on, when his mentor, Issayass Afewerqi, decided once again to spank him and Tigray in 1998 PM Meles and his TPLF went head over heels to appeal to traditional Ethiopian unity against the "foreign" Eritrean invaders of Tigray. Sure enough, hundreds of Ethiopians at home were ready (including former Derg) to fight the "enemy" and droves of Ethiopians converged in Addis Ababa from abroad with their financial and other resources to fight EPLF/Eritrea that PM Meles and his TPLF had done so much to achieve its secession from Ethiopia.

what he called “the pertinent features of ethnicist ideology”¹¹ underlying the TPLF regime in Ethiopia. He characterized the TPLF regime this way:

Tigrayan dominated, it certainly is; national government, it is not. It started as a “national liberation front” with the political objective of establishing an independent “Democratic Republic of Tigray,” but then proceeded to militarily occupy the rest of Ethiopia....It has expropriated the resources of Ethiopia as war booty and transferred large amounts to Tigray and Eritrea. ... It does not really consider itself Ethiopian because as its spokesman, *Shumbash* Dawit Yohannes persistently maintains, **“Ethiopia does not exist.”** ¹¹(Emphasis added)

All the while, PM Meles posed as an Ethiopian and was naively perceived as an Ethiopian by Ethiopians and—needless to say—by the outside world. After all, PM Meles looks—more or less—Ethiopian; he is said to have been born in Ethiopia and has an Ethiopian name, speaks Ethiopic better than many Ethiopians, went to elementary and high school in Ethiopia and he was riding the wave of anti Derg and anti Mengistu sentiments prevalent in the country at the time¹². His actions, after taking over in Addis Ababa, do not betray his anti-Ethiopia upbringing and political education. He has acted on them consistently and effectively. He has divided Ethiopia into ethnic/tribal/cultural units much like Mussolini tried to do during the protracted 1936-1941 Fascist Invasion.

In a recent communiqué from TAND (Tigrayan Alliance For National Democracy), in another TPLF media interview, Ato Sebhat has derided positive images of Ethiopia and Ethiopianity during the rules of Emperor Haile Sellassie and the Derg including notions like “there are no people and no country as good as Ethiopians and Ethiopia; the country has infinite wealth, unexploited land, civil society, etc...” are nothing but anesthesia for the masses.” He has also taken the liberty and, one might add the audacity for the Amharic word ***Tigab***, to warn, **“if the present Constitution is tampered with, Tigray will automatically secede.”**¹³

Professor Tecola Hagos, who has been writing commentaries on matters Ethiopian for several years on his website stated in an Editorial in November 2005:

¹¹ See [Ethiopian Register](#) May 1997, pp22-25. As far as PM Meles and his TPLF is concerned, there is no such thing as Ethiopia as normal Ethiopians as well as history and the rest of the world have known it. Instead they intend to contrive a political jigsaw puzzle after they are done blowing Ethiopia into pieces.

¹² With reference to his putative “ethiopian” pedigree, PM Meles has also said that he is proud of his “golden” Tigrayan/Eritrean parentage (mother Eritrean and father Tigrayan). He has not referred to any other stock of the Ethiopian people as golden.

¹³ “ It is no wonder that to those who are devoid of sentiments of Ethiopianity, positive notions about Ethiopia are nothing but anesthesia” is the title of the TAND communiqué dated May 2000.

For the last fourteen years the government of Meles Zenawi has committed numerous acts, dehumanized and disenfranchised millions of Ethiopians because of its economic and political policies and activities. Because of its incompetence, it has alienated most of the people of Ethiopia. **Year to year the EPRDF (i.e. TPLF) has become more and more an alien occupation force. Because of its narrow political base it has created a political situation that has further cut it from the type of historical close relationship enjoyed by generations of Ethiopians from different ethnic groups of Ethiopia.** Even more devastating damage is done to an already precarious relationship between Tigreans and other ethnic groups because of Meles Zenawi's polarizing violent steps taken now and in May of 2005.¹⁴

At this point, some hard questions are posed to readers of these commentaries so that a serious and definitive dialogue on a fundamental question of identity of PM Meles and his TPLF can ensue. This writer does not yet have final answers to the questions at this point, but hopes that at least some of the right questions are being asked.

- ❖ If PM Meles never owned up to being Ethiopian from the time that he, Sebhat Nega and a few cohorts took over the leadership of TPLF in 1975 and incessantly disavowed being Ethiopians or working for the good of Ethiopia does he have any obligation to be Ethiopian? More to the point, since he and his clique voluntarily and enthusiastically made the secession of EPLF/Eritrea the prime objective of their deadly struggle what qualifies them as Ethiopians to begin with?
- ❖ If, as should be evident from these and so many other commentaries out there, their brutal, deadly and ghastly actions against patriotic and democratic Ethiopians are consistent with their anti-Ethiopian upbringing and their commitment not to save but to destroy Ethiopia, should they be regarded as Ethiopians who have gone astray?
- ❖ Are being Ethiopian-looking with black/brown skin phenotype, proficiency in the native language/s of Ethiopia, Ethiopian names and addresses, eating raw meat, etc. necessary and sufficient conditions to qualify a person to be certified as an Ethiopian?
- ❖ When political figures like PM Meles and his TPLF make their political program vis-à-vis the "enemy" country (Ethiopia) while still fighting in the bushes, then succeed to take over the country, attain monopoly of deadly force, then show by their daily, monthly and yearly anti-Ethiopia actions, is there any rhyme or reason to regard them Ethiopians?
- ❖ Is it fair to assume that PM Meles and his TPLF do not lose sleep or agonize as we do with these questions, because they consider themselves as successful in implementing their treacherous mission in Ethiopia and as long as they keep their monopoly of force, they will weather any internal

¹⁴ See "The Massacre of Ethiopians by Meles Zenawi" www.tecolahagos.com Editorial, November 2005. Note to the reader: the insert TPLF, is added by the present writer.

storms and external pressures against their murders and repressions of Ethiopians?

How can serious and sincere observers who take note of the words, agenda and acts of PM Meles and his clones over more than thirty years, from their *shifita* period (1975-1990) through their occupation years (1991 to the present) characterize their identity? Does one have to be an alien or an expatriate to do what Fascist colonialists (like Benito Mussolini) did or tried to do to Ethiopia? One has to keep in mind that these are not people who even paid lip service to become Ethiopia's saviors when they went to the bushes as *shiftas*. To be sure, no one can accuse them of inconsistency or self-contradiction.

Another way of trying to determine their nomenclature is to consider them as *banda*. Ethiopians became familiar with this Italian term as a function of long-term conflicts with Italian futile efforts to colonize Ethiopia. Although it has its specialized origins in the hierarchy of native servants, irregulars, often under their own local chieftans in the Italian colonial gendarmes. In due course, Ethiopians settled on its meaning in their contexts. To Ethiopians a *banda* is essentially one who deserted his own Ethiopian ranks and joined the colonial enemy. What, then is the conceptual distinction between a *banda* and a *shifita* (rebel)? Implicit in the distinction is the notion that a *banda* not only serves a foreign enemy but he is also a traitor to his country by deserting it, while a *shifita* is a national rebel fighting to right a wrong or to supplant the overlord. To the extent that this is the way the term is understood in Ethiopia, can one call PM Meles and his TPLF *bandas*? **Since they did not subscribe to Ethiopia and Ethiopianity in the first place, they cannot be indicted as *bandas* or traitors to Ethiopia or its causes.**

Another concept familiar not only in Northeast Africa but also in other parts of British and Italian colonial Africa is *askari*. According to Amanuel Sahle.¹⁵ In the Italian regiments in Libya, Eritrea and Somalia, the askaris were basically servants and/or mercenaries or *ashker* in Amharic. *Askaris* were prominent in all of Italy's failed colonial escapades. However, many deserted the Italian ranks towards the end when Ethiopians were winning anyway both in the Battle of Adwa (1895-96) and in the Fascist invasion of the 1930's. This category of serving an anti-Ethiopian cause can be partially applicable to PM Meles and his TPLF. Although they started out in part as local disgruntled *shiftas* or rebels that sought to right some wrongs within Tigray, they quickly succumbed to EPLF's propaganda and agenda of seceding from

¹⁵ Amanuel Sahle, "A brief History of The Ethiopian Askaris (Native Colonial Soldiers)," Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Vol.1 Ed. Dr Tadesse Beyene, Addis Ababa, 1988. . Amanuel says that "the *Askari* was required to show utmost love for Italy and its king if he wanted to be rewarded."

Ethiopia and with it they were indoctrinated with anti-Ethiopian ideology and program. With that, consciously or unconsciously, they became willing *askari* cannon fodder for Isayass Afewerqi's EPLF/Eritrea. Their slavish *askari* role was not limited to killing Ethiopians and sacrificing Tigrayans for EPLF during the *shifita* (1975-1990) phase of the struggle. As we have seen in foregoing pages of the commentary, PM Meles and his TPLF *askaris* did even more diplomatic, political and economic damage to Ethiopia and Ethiopians for the sake of EPLF/Eritrea after the "liberation" of Tigray (1989) and after the secession of Eritrea in 1991. To be sure, PM Meles and his TPLF have managed the secession of Eritrea and the occupation of Addis Ababa largely by *the ruthless use of deadly **force*** and the unconscionable manipulation of **fraud**.

As Ethiopian looking and Ethiopian sounding, EPLF Eritrea's *askaris*

PM Meles and his TPLF have been committing treachery against the Ethiopian people. In my article, "Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind" in October 2001, I had ended the commentary with these words with a reference to what Diaspora Eritreans characterized their Isayass Afewerqi in EPLF/Eritrea: Their characterization of Mr. Isayass as:

"an evil dictator of our own flesh and blood pales in comparison with what could be said about Mr. Meles—in fact, is being said nowadays by Tigrayans in the Diaspora. The least that can be said about TPLF's Meles is that he is a **treacherous tyrant** in what is left of Ethiopia."

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