

# THE ETHIOPIAN PREDICAMENT

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January, 2013

Selam all,

A foreign expert wrote that what occurs in Ethiopian history is always the unexpected. Although the symptoms of coming disasters were quite manifest long before the happenings; I am not sure if our perception to foresee future events is obfuscated by lack of imagination; or is it because of the Ethiopian, including mine, propensity to leave matters to Divine intervention? Who would have thought that the Imperial reign would crumble? Who would have thought that the Revolution and military pseudo-communist regime would disappear in debacle leaving a murderous trail and disaster? Would have thought that a corrupt and ruthless tribal gang of usurpers would be ruling the country? Here we are now, after four decades painful and humiliating existence, reduced to abject poverty divested of any rights, estranged in our own country, still asking ourselves what to do. All our neighbors are in revolt and fighting for their freedom and for justice: Sudan, Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and so forth. Where are we? What are we doing? Like in Samuel Beckett play: Waiting for Godot?

In the last days we have witnessed an extraordinary spectacle of ordered, organized and enforced mass hysteria ever seen in our poor land. In the reverse sense it is comparable to the extraordinary edict of the Derg prohibiting any wake keeping, crying and holding funeral for the people it murdered and buried in mass graves. Thus, under the pseudo-Marxist regime to cry for your dead was an anti-revolutionary act, while under the pseudo-democratic TPLF regime mass demonstration of sorrow, crying and self flagellation is an obligatory liberal/capitalist conduct.

In our long history self-respect and honor had been principal characteristics of our national ethos. However, these recent developments have been the most self humiliating and self demeaning acts that have ever been inflicted on our people. Even the Italian occupation did not impose such break down of our spirit; patriotic forces combated the enemy until final liberation. Thanks to the great revolution that was supposed to bring equality, wellbeing and happiness in a just world, the Ethiopian people have been subject to the worst abuse and political slavery for the past forty years that is culminating in this sad tragicomedy of enforced mass crying. Not that there was democratic freedom during the preceding monarchies, at least there were moral cannons derived from Christian ethics that defined the rule of the Monarch. Espousing a half-baked modernity has deprived us of any kind of individual freedom, and right of ownership, enslaving us even more than any previous times. Our well being is simply quantified by statistical numbers and not by the freedom of our spirit. Our happiness is measured by the amount of stuff we consume and the garbage we produce. Our welfare is gauged by whatever number regimes in power choose to published, and are considered adequate by the moral standards and incredulity of donors.

By the same token we are told that Ethiopia has undergone a tremendous economic development of 11 percent of GDP increase a year for the past decade. No mention is made that the regime has received about 38 billion US dollars in foreign aid plus another 10 or more billions from China, India and other bilateral grants and investments; neither of the 11.5 billion plus US dollars siphoned out of Ethiopia in the past decade. Yet, the beneficiaries of all this input have been a very small minority composed of the members of the ruling regime and party-cum-state owned businesses and acolytes. The vast majority of the population about 95 percent have been denied property rights and rendered vagrant in their ancestral land; reduced to menial labor, and pariah to state whims and edicts. Millions of people depend on food aid and many still die of starvation. There is no dispute about Meles's flim-flam showmanship, but about his erratic development policies, largely dependent on foreign aid and deficit financing. Therefore, with all that money pouring into the country, supported by the huge presence of foreign investors and personnel, it is not surprising that large projects have boosted the economic development to the highly inflated figures of 11% growth of GDP claimed by the regime. In term of governance cronyism, nepotism, pervasive corruption at all levels; inefficiency and waste have been the trade mark of the regime.

In spite of all odds and the hues and cries of the opposition in the Diaspora, who vainly hopes to share power because of external pressure, the situation in the country seems to be normal, but for some minor flares here and there. In fact the regime has been successful in projecting the image of a real multi ethnic sharing and orderly transfer of power. Just as the commanded mass crying, I assume that the new quadrumvirate (the two killilites plus TPLF), will soon order a multi-ethnic mass laughter. The new Premier has declared that it will be a collegial leadership and not a one man show. Which is to be expected, because I find improbable for the TPLF who has major control over all sector will relinquish power so easily, neither the two new bozos have the experience and the political clout to make fundamental policy changes

Nevertheless, two new elements have been introduced on the political scene, first at least in appearance a new team composed of non-Tigreans has come to the leadership, and second some rift has appears amongst the core leadership of the TPLF. However, none of these factors have shown any change in the behavior of the regime. The new promotion made in the military in the absence of a Head of government and the mere blessing of the putative elephantine President, is a clear indication that the real power still remains with the TPLF leadership.

The exaggerated funeral proceedings, has probably embittered further the mood of the people, who are largely opposed to the regime. Unfortunately, there was no viable opposition that could have demonstrated some action during and since the two months vacuum created by Meles's death. Particularly, in view of the many social, economic and especially political trends that are developing in the country. I have a distinct feeling that there is a serious lacuna within the political dialogue, if not a generational incongruity. With a rather bleak view of the opposition from abroad, and not knowing much about the one in the country, predicting the future is a hazardous task. While the aspiring political leadership is still anchored in the failed history of its own making, the young generation, victimized by the past mess, has no clear ideas about the future. Yet,

there are some ninety million stakeholder in Ethiopia of whom nobody seems to ask their opinion, although they are the ones who should decide about their own future. The 75 political parties registered with the regime of which only one has a sit in parliament, seem to go along with the existing governance, though recently some 34 of them have made demand for free elections.

Whether there will be a change in the TPLF(Eritrea/Tigre) leadership of the regime, the time has come for this governance by terror and corruption to end. This must be done by peaceful or other means, and by ourselves. We must not count on any foreign help to accomplish our own struggle, Why should they? Just look what happening in Syria? What we can do from the Diaspora is help and stimulate the democratic movements in the country, as long as they abide to the core democratic principles that we have adopted. It must be clearly understood that the fate of the nation and its future political development belongs to the people struggling inside the country. There are Ninety million of them who might have something to say about what their future.

As to what is going on amongst the Diaspora we a renewed clamor for united action, just as if the basic nature and behavior of the TPLF gang had not been unknown for two decades, and if similar appeals had not been expressed more than once. I think that it is time to reckon our limitations, and stop dreaming that political movements with hardly any constituency inside the country can jump on power from far away. If we reckon that our role is to help and promote the democratic movements in country instead of seeking political power, our contribution could be realistically relevant and much easier to accomplish than pursuing illusory goals. A strong political system must have its foundation at grass root level and not from the exterior; for instance without the support of the patriotic forces inside the country we could not have regained our independence from Italy and later from British domination.

Indeed it is time for action, and for specific implementation programs, with tangible political and material support, aimed at concrete actions in the field. This must be done by a broad public participation and consultation, and not by self-appointed groups claiming political authority. I recently read a long article appealing to what is now called the Cheetah Generation, the following is my comment:

*“As we well know the Cheetah lives in the land and not in urban dwellings scrapping garbage.*

*The cheetah generation must do the same and face the challenges on the ground. If it wants to grow food it must first plow the land to get the fruit of what it has sown. Commiserating over the sacrifice of a few like Scander Nega is not enough, what is needed is to join them by the thousands.*

*The Lion generation had kept the land free, the greedy hippo generation has emasculated its spirit and wasted its wealth, the Cheetah Generation must roll up the sleeves and rebuild it on its own land. It is not the knowledge or the means that are lacking but the moral fortitude and the courage that is missing.”*

Fortunately, however embryonic, an active opposition is arising, here and there in the country, especially amongst the young generation. Let's help them with all our means to build a New democratic Ethiopia!!!

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