

Federalism or Internal Colonialism-the Ethiopian situation.

By Yilma Bekele

"The tragic reality of today is reflected in the true plight of our spiritual existence. We are spineless and cannot stand straight." Ai Weiwei - Chinese dissident.

As a concept there is nothing wrong with Federalism as a system of government. There are plenty of examples of such arrangement like as in the USA, Canada, Germany, Mexico and India among others where it has shown to work. That is the system TPLF under Meles and company told the Ethiopian people that they are attempting to construct. It has been over twenty years now since the work has started and the question in front of us is, how is it going?

How is Federalism working in our country? I will tell you about a specific powerful institution in Ethiopian and you the reader, be the judge. The governmental body I have in mind is one of the most important and key sector of our economy and it is currently named Ethio Telecom. Here is a brief description of the history of the telephone in Ethiopia.

The first telegraph line was between Harar and Addis Abeba in 1889. Emperor Haile Sellasie established the Imperial Board of Telecommunications of Ethiopia in 1952. Derge reorganized it as Ethiopian Telecommunication Service and later on as Ethiopian Telecommunications Authority (ETA) in 1976 and 1981. In 1996 TPLF replaced that with Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation. It was born again as Ethio Telecom in 1990. The Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation is the oldest Public Telecommunications Operator (PTO) in Africa. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telecommunications_in_Ethiopia)

In our country Ethiopia the Federal Government owns the country including resources, land and most of the vital economy. Communication tools such as television, radio, telephone and Internet are fully owned and operated by the Federal Government. The Ethiopian government is the number one employee in the country. Controlling all this assets give the Federal Government total power on every aspect of the people and country. For the Woyane regime Ethio Telecom is a weapon to amass large amount of money, spy, control, create anxiety and bully the citizen. How TPLF was able to control ETC is the story of what happened to our country. The group known to us as TPLF organized as an ethnic based party took over the political, economic, security sectors of the country called Ethiopia in a very systematic and deliberate way. This assertion can be proved in more ways than one cares to count. Please read Ginbot7 publication on the domination of the military by Tigrean ethnic group. (<http://www.ginbot7.org/the-ethiopian-military-leadership-under-haile-selassie-and-derg-regimes/>)

Ethio Telecom is another key sector of the economy and a very powerful weapon that was targeted by TPLF for complete take over. How they were able to do that is the history of what happened to the rest of the country. Ethio Telecom encompasses the trial and tribulations of our country and people. In my opinion Ethio Telecom is where Weyane's star shined.

It took TPLF for years (1991 -1995) to figure out the inner workings of such a large and old organization. In 1996 they restructured it as a Corporation and were able to get rid of 'trouble makers' and install their own people in key positions. Its importance did not manifest until around 2000 with the advent of the World Wide Web. Before that TPLF was content collecting spare change. The Internet changed the whole ball game.

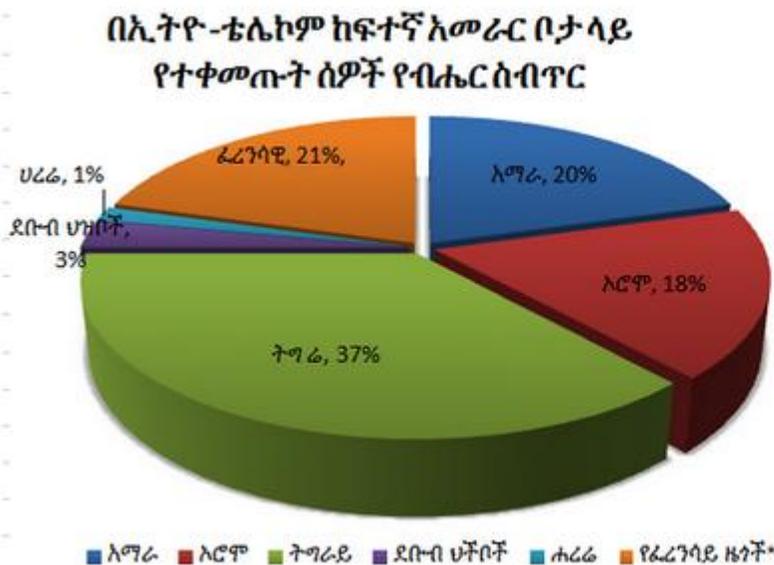
Communication became the driving force of change. As a totalitarian regime highly motivated to control the flow of information the TPLF saw the dangers of unrestricted access to information and knowledge.

In 2010 Ethio Telecom emerged. The birth of Ethio Telecom was a painful moment in the history of our country. People were played upon, dangled around, set against each other and humiliated. Such a powerful and modern organization in the life of our country was made to look like a failed and useless outfit. The twelve thousand strong body was completely dismantled by the TPLF. Guess who was in charge of this tragedy. None other than current Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Debretsion. He was the architect and enforcer of this desecration of an Ethiopian home grown building block.

To avoid doing the dirty job TPLF gave management services to a subsidiary of French Telecom – Orange (telecommunications). Orange is a third rate multi-national corporation and an easy prey for TPLF to push around. Without input from the workers, without consulting those affected Orange and the TPLF Politburo said ‘we got a deal you cannot refuse.’ They created five categories named N1-N5. N1 included the French team and Ethiopian management personnel. Over half of the twelve thousand employees were dumped on the road side. There was no explanation, no discussion and no review. One of those that was found to be superfluous was the head of the Union Ato Adisse Bore. You see the beauty of Woyane justice? There was no one left to speak for the workers! You can tell the whole idea was nothing but a naked assault on our people when you see that among the personnel the new organization is purported to keep the list included some dead and some on exile. This is how Ethio Telecom was born.

Why do you think Ethio Telecom is a prized asset of the minority TPLF regime? It is because communications is the key to the future. The media opens our eyes to situations and places we will not even dream of. The media is the first causality of a repressive regime. Do you notice the first target of any coup d’état is the control of the radio and television transmission sites? Ethio Telecom is the gate keeper. Ethio Telecom sustains the dictatorship.

Thus they got rid of half of the employees of ETC and made it in their own image. They trained a few, they imported a few of their own from the Diaspora and they either blackmailed or bought the rest. Today Ethio Telecom is a cash cow to the dictatorship and a very powerful security apparatus to safeguard a few while abusing the many. Here is the composition of the N 1 Group managing the enterprise they established.



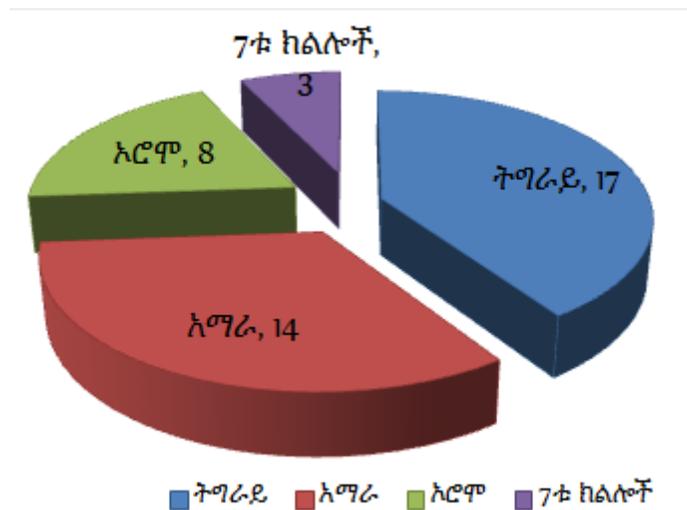
ብሔር	ብዛት	%
አማራ	14	21
አሮሞ	12	18
ትግራይ	25	37
ደቡብ ህቸቦች	2	3
ሐረሬ	1	1
የፈረንሳይ ዜጎች*	14	21
ጠቅላላ ድምር	68	100

Please let us keep it real here. This is not some one's imagination gone haywire, nor a just made up figure. It is real and we treat it as such until proven otherwise. Is this what federalism is all about? Ethnicity is the corner stone of Woyane rule. The above chart is based on Woyanes' own classification of our people.

This investigative study at its best came out two weeks ago. Fellow Ethiopians took time and effort to find and compile such information so we can have a clear view of the actual situation in our homeland. As they say talk is cheap but facts speak for themselves. After all is said and done the above picture does not lie. It is based on the TPLF's definition of who is who in today's Ethiopia.

Why do you think the TPLF regime under Debretsion finds communications important enough to control as a monopoly? It is because communications is the key. Leaders like Meles and now Debretsion are aware of the value of information. They are spin doctors. When it comes to a closed society like ours they make sure they are the only source of information. Our country Ethiopia is the last in any measure of technological advancement, why do you think that is so? They don't allow it, they don't foster it, and they don't encourage it because the more we know the less we think of them.

The Federalism TPLF is building in our country is Apartheid. In the former South Africa the 9.6% white ruled over the 79% black population. In Ethiopia, today the 6.1% from Tigray region are dominating the economic political and military life of the country. This is a very difficult statement to make and it is a very ugly thought to cross one's mind. But it is also unfair and being a coward not to face reality. The situation in the military, the situation in Ethio Telecom is not something to ignore. It did not happen by accident. The TPLF party in a deliberate and callous manner created this Apartheid system in our country. The above pie chart showed the so called N 1 group in higher management what do you think N 2 looks like?



Knowledge is power. Knowing what the TPLF party is doing to our country and people helps us realize the problem, discuss the ramifications if left to continue and find a lasting solution so we can all move forward as one people. Uncovering such crime is not ethnic bating. Discussing such unfair and ugly reality is not hating on individuals or groups. It is real and it has to be dealt with. Dr. Debretsion and his friends have to answer why there is such naked discrepancy in the organization they are entrusted to administer in the name of the people. They have to explain to us the people why there are more from their own ethnic group in position of real power and influence than the rest. Is it because they couldn't find a Gambelan, a Sidama, a Kenbatan, an Oromo or an Amhara to fill such slots? If there is a reasonable explanation we are all ears but changing the subject or accusing one of ethnic bating is not the way to go.

Now they have inserted their own people in key positions what do you think they are doing with the new and improved Ethio Telecom? Are they using it to connect the country, use the new found digital technology to jump start our economy and education system and usher an era of peace and prosperity? I am afraid a mind that relies on ethnicity and village mentality to get ahead cannot be expected to soar like an eagle but slither like a snake biting all that crosses its path. That is exactly what Ethio Telecom is, a venomous snake attacking our people and country every chance it gets. Check out our double digit growing economy.

Country	Population	Mobile Phone	Internet users	%population
Ethiopia	90 M	18 Million	960,000	1.1
Kenya	43 M	28.08 Million	12 Million	28
Ghana	24.6 M	21.1 Million	3.5 Million	14.1
Sudan	34.2 M	25 Million	6.4 Million	19

It is clear the regime is not interested in using the new technology to help our country join the community of nations. No question ethnic mentality and government monopoly stifles innovation, kills individual initiative and keeps our people in darkness. Here is a finding by Reporters Without Borders (RWB).

“Ethiopia’s only ISP, State owned Ethio Telecom has just installed a system for blocking access to the Tor network, which lets users browse anonymously and access blocked websites. In order to achieve such selective blocking Ethio Telecom must be using Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) an advanced network filtering system.”

Think about it, the ruling junta is willing to invest such huge amounts of money to spy on its citizens instead of using the money to wire schools and libraries. They use Chinese technology to block any and all Internet, radio and our ESAT news broadcast. The few decide what is good for the many. It is not healthy. It does not end well. We have seen what a single ethnic domination does to people and country. Rwanda was just yesterday and South Africa will suffer the legacy of Apartheid for decades to come. The current arrangement in our country will not ensure a strong and vibrant Ethiopia where her children will prosper under one roof but rather a weak and divided Ethiopia that one day will fall prey to outsiders that will exploit the division.

At the beginning of this article I quoted the Chinese dissident Ai Weiwei speaking about the character of his people suffering under the totalitarian system. We in Ethiopia should know exactly what he is talking about. Under the weight of TPLF abuse we harbor deep seated animosity towards each other, instead of fighting the common enemy we point fingers at each other. There is no association, organization club where we Ethiopians relate to each other with respect and dignity. Our political organizations have become places of division. Even our church is not immune from this sickness. We see our Muslim brother resisting and we learn the power of steadfastness and unity of purpose. That is one group of citizen with anti Woyane virus shot.

One fact that should be made clear is that the TPLF party is not practicing this criminal behavior all by itself. We have to look at the enablers that grease the wheels to hurt our own people and destroy our country. Those Amharas’, Oromos’, Wolaitas’, Tigreans’, Hararis’ and others in position marginal power and the willing Diaspora that invests on stolen land and fake buildings are part of this national degradation. What are going to tell your children when Ethiopia becomes another Somalia, the future Iraq or a dying Syria? When they ask you why didn’t you do something daddy or mommy how are you going to answer? You cannot say I did not know because that would be a lie. You cannot claim I tried because that would not be true. No one would say I did not stand up straight because I am spineless. When you go to sleep tonight think about it, please?

This article is based on the following works:

<http://abbaymedia.com/2013/01/19/ginbot7-exposes-the-weyanes-ethnic-aparthied-in-ethiopian-telecom/>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-11/zte-huawei-to-be-awarded-ethiopian-telecommunications-contracts.html>

<http://www.redress.cc/global/gpeebles20120619>

<http://apperi.org/2013/01/14/world-bank-advised-ethiopia-to-audit-large-telecom-agreements/>

<http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/38649>

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>

<http://www.thereporterethiopia.com/News/ethio-telecom-layoff-union-president-employees.html>