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# ETHIOPIA, TPLF AND ROOTS OF THE 2001 POLITICAL TREMOR\*

Paulos Milkias Ph.D. ©2001\*\*

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**T**he TPLF has its roots in Marxist oriented Tigray University Students' movement organized at Haile Selassie University in 1974 under the name "Mahber Gesgesti Behere Tigray," [generally known by its acronym – MAGEBT, which stands for 'Progressive Tigray Peoples' Movement'.]<sup>1</sup> The founders claim that even though the movement was tactically designed to be nationalistic it was, strategically, pan-Ethiopian.<sup>2</sup>

The primary structural document the movement produced in the late 70's, however, shows it to be Tigrayan nationalist and not Ethiopian oriented in its content. It was also pro-Eritrean independence.<sup>3</sup> The original manifesto was drafted clearly as Tigrayan Ethnic struggle for independence not as one seeking the political liberation of Ethiopia from the dictatorship of the Derg.<sup>4</sup> In fact, this stand did not change until 1984.

MAGEBT, as a movement was based on the Leninist principle of Democratic Centralism. Politburo and Central Committee members were elected by majority of the leadership whose legality was watched by an auditing commission. As Lenin dictated in "What is to be Done," factionalism was strictly prohibited.<sup>5</sup> Ideas would filter upwards but once policies were adopted, power was intended to flow only downwards. Breaking this rule was punishable by severe penalties including death.

As the struggle progressed in the countryside, the name of the movement was changed to "Tegadlo Harnet Hizbi Tigray" [Tigray People's Revolutionary Movement.<sup>6</sup>] Later, it was renamed "Tigray People's Liberation Front" [TPLF.]

In the 1980s, the TPLF received backing almost exclusively from among the Tigrayan population of northern Ethiopia. Nevertheless, it alleged to be devoted to the structuring of one united national front standing for all classes and ethnic groups struggling against the Mengistu dictatorship. A proposal suggesting the formation of a united front grounded on a "minimum program," with the single purpose of smashing Mengistu's dictatorship was released on May 8, 1984. By this time, the TPLF had extended its reach into most of Tigray and adjacent parts of Wallo and Gojam. The guerrilla movement was very clear about the ideology it intended to implement in Tigray and Ethiopia: it was none other than the tenets of the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray bases on the Albanian model.

During the two months following the 1988 New Year, the TPLF was engaged in life and death struggle against the central government army. By 1989, the Ethiopian army had withdrawn completely from the province and the TPLF had seized the entire territory of Tigray, including major towns such as Makale, Aksum and Endaselassie.

When in 1989, Mengistu Haile Mariam slaughtered more than 200 officers including the well trained and most experienced generals that Emperor Haile Selassie government carefully trained in military academies, the TPLF's moved quickly to develop a united front. In January 1989, it entered into an alliance with the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), a breakaway organization of the EPRP constituted mainly

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of Amharas from Gondar, Wallo, and Northern Showa. The EPDM, being militarily in control of some 2.5 million people by the fall of 1989. The two had coordinated their military activities during the previous decade, but they had not formed a political unity. The EPDM's agenda, like that of the TPLF, recognized the right of all nationalities to self-determination up to and including secession and the establishment of a democratic Ethiopia once Mengistu had been deposed.

The TPLF also brought together military captives of Oromo lineage from the war with the Derg, and together with defectors from the Oromo Liberation Front [OLF,] created the Oromo People's Democratic Organization [OPDO] to claim legitimacy in Oromia. Later, the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Front [SEPDF] was added in order to expand into Southern Ethiopian territories that are not populated by Oromos or Somalis. This phantom political party was named the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF.) The EPRDF's charter which borrowed governing ideas almost exclusively from the TPLF manifesto called for the elimination of the relics of feudalism and imperialism from Ethiopia, the establishment of a democratic government system, the creation of a genuine people's government based on people's councils, the guarantee of basic human and civil rights, and self-determination up to and including secession for all oppressed nationalities in the country.

The EPRDF led by the TPLF immediately moved from its bastions of Tigray, Wallo, and Gondar and expanded into northern Showa. As its expansion increased, the EPRDF thrust drove the leaderless and demoralized central government forces. The victory was so complete that the former found it impossible to consolidate the areas it occupied for the purpose of instituting viable political structures. Within a span of six weeks, beginning in August 1989, the EPRDF wounded or captured close to 20,000 government troops, seized immense amounts of Soviet supplied military equipment. In part, these advances were facilitated by the demoralization of the Ethiopian military following defections from the Derg. The EPRDF augmented its military capacities from then on by amalgamating the turncoats into its own army. Soon, the entire provinces of Tigray, Wallo, Gondar, Gojam, Northern Shoa and parts of Wollega were in EPRDF's fold and Addis Ababa was surrounded. Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe to save his life and his replacement, General Tesfaye Gebre Kidan called on the Ethiopian soldiers to lay down their arms and surrender to the EPRDF.<sup>7</sup> Addis Ababa thus fell without much resistance and bloodshed.<sup>8</sup>

Meles Zenawi's major allegiance was always to the north - in particular to the Tigrigna speaking population of Ethiopia and Eritrea. People always remember that the Premier had no qualms about the country he rules because he has repeatedly incensed Ethiopian sensibilities. At one time, he called the Ethiopian flag a mere "piece of rug." At another time, he retorted that the ancient history of Axum has "no real relevance" to the southern people of Ethiopia. However, in the exercise of power, whether in Tigray or in Ethiopia, he was constrained because of the existence of a government within a government. The TPLF Politburo and the Central Committee in Mekele always charted major decisions by which he had to abide. For example, privatisation, including the turning of the government owned Electric Power Corporation was planned for early in the last decade. However, even though the government had passed legislation, and had even printed it in the authoritative Gazette, it could not be implemented because the power centre in Mekele opposed it.

Particularly after the Eritrean invasion, Meles was not trusted. Abay Tsehaye and Alemseged Gebreamlak were left as minders for the TPLF politburo and Central Committee in Addis Ababa where they had to monitor the Prime Minister's activities. As time passed, Meles could not even depend on support from the Tigray regional state because delegates for the TPLF congress are normally picked by conferences held in its four zones - and most of his political opponents in the Politburo and Central Committee spend far more time there in close contact with the party rank and file than himself. Meles had therefore decided to change the status quo ante.

In 1997, at a meeting of the TPLF Central Committee that was convened at the Economic Commission for Africa Hall in Addis Ababa, the Prime Minister dropped a bombshell. He told the members who were hitherto in control of every policy decision not only in Tigray, but also in the rest of Ethiopia that the Mandate of the TPLF was over.

Meles explained that the TPLF as a front had, starting from the beginning, two basic contradictions to contend with. The primary contradiction was, he explained, to neutralize the forces that militated against their avowed aim, to achieve self-determination for their homeland of Tigray. This, he explained, has already been accomplished. Their organization had defeated their earliest rivals, the EDU, the TLF and the EPRP. Then, it defeated another rival, the ELF by coordinating its forces with the EPLF, at that time their ally against the Derg. The TPLF had continued its struggle until it defeated the *Derg* and liberated the entire province of Tigray. It then continued to follow the Derg to its seat of power in Addis Ababa until it crushed its military forces and took over the whole of Ethiopia.

Meles further claimed that a “narrow nationalist” organization opposed to Ethiopia's larger aim, the Oromo Liberation Front [OLF] was also vanquished. He added that the TPLF's avowed aim as a revolutionary guerrilla force, to enable all nationalities to enjoy the right of self determination was achieved. Eritrea, he said was given the opportunity to decide its own fate by a referendum and thus succeeded to declare independence from Ethiopia bringing peace to the region. Furthermore, Meles said, *kilils* [state zones] were drawn to give every major nationality in Ethiopia the right to control its own destiny, to have its own regional government, to advance its own economic and cultural interests, to have even the right to self-determination up to secession - all of which have now been enshrined in the constitution.<sup>9</sup> In subsequent meetings, Meles stressed that the fact that the EPLF had been soundly defeated by the newly created Ethiopian army in the 1999-2000 campaign only puts urgency on the dismantlement of the anachronistic organization - the TPLF.

It should be crystal clear here that Meles' intension to dismantle the TPLF was not motivated ideologically. The truth is that on a personal level, he had nothing to loose. Shifting musical chairs made no difference at least in the short term. He has already lost grip on the seat of power in his Tigray base. He had, of course, none in the rest of Ethiopia. His revanchist instinct was therefore to politically bury his enemies before they buried him. To use Mengistu Haile Mariam's candid admittance of his bloody purge, he wanted “to have for breakfast those who waned to have him for lunch!”

The secondary contradiction according to Mele's speech was bringing a solution to the internal problems of all those engaged in governing since 1991. This involved deviation from the original course of socialist reconstruction, the involvement in corruption and the tendency to adapt dictatorial and bourgeois attitude in the entire leadership of the TPLF and the EPRDF.

Meles suggested that once the TPLF is dissolved, parties would be organized to compete on the basis of ideology not ethnicity. He mentioned the case of Canada as a prime example where Conservative, Liberal, Social Democratic [NDP] Communist [M-L] and even separatist [Block Quebecois] parties compete for national and regional parliamentary seats.

People present at the meeting report that the Tigray nationalists led by the Tewolde-Siye group were astounded by this bold suggestion and argued against Meles vehemently. The dissidents' fear was that if Meles continued in the same direction, the TPLF might loose its grip on Ethiopian economics and politics. It is not surprising therefore that since the rift appeared, they have attacked Meles for undermining Tigray and Tigrayan nationality for which many of their comrades gave their lives.

In order to gain support in their home province, the Tewolde-Siye faction knowing the level of ingrained sentiments of narrow nationalism alleged that Meles attempted to put an end to special advantages accorded to Tigray due to its devastation by war as well as a plan to dismantle a consortium of Tigrayan companies under the Endowment Fund For the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT), which was at that time headed by Siye Abraha. They also harped on the fact that Meles' mother is an Eritrean who voted in the Eritrean independence. Although this may not be a major issue elsewhere, it is a serious matter in Tigray where merchants lost their livelihood when Tigrayan-Eritrean trade was destroyed by Asmara's black marketers and where no family exists that did not loose at least a distant cousin in the war Isaias unleashed on them starting in 1998

During a period spanning a decade, it was the extreme secretiveness developed during the era of guerrilla struggle that kept the boiling cauldron in the chambers of the TPLF organization from coming to the open. The rift became serious in 1994 when Eritrea with whom the EPRDF had signed a defence pact, invaded

the Hanish Islands that belong to Yemen. Although it has been reported by the Western Media that the quarrel between the two TPLF factions emerged because of the border war with Asmara, the most recent rift actually started before the Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 1998-2000.

The first sign of rift emerged when Isaias Afewerki invaded Yemen's Hanish islands. Tewolde, Siye and General Hayelom among others argued that since Eritrea's action was one of invasion, Ethiopia should re-examine its military pact with Eritrea. Meles, Sebhat Nega and the others not only disagreed: they considered Isaias action as legal and just since the islands belonged to Eritrea.

General Hayelom was assassinated under mysterious circumstances. The person arrested in connection with the assassination [Yassin] was speedily sent to the firing squad. And an individual assigned to investigate the assassination was himself gunned down while on a mission to Nairobi. The Sebhat-Meles Faction ignored the Tewolde-Siye group and supplied Eritrea with four helicopters and other war materiel to shore it up in its war with Yemen.

Three months before Isaias' army invaded the Ethiopian territory of Badme, a group led by Siye Abraha sounded a warning that Eritrea seemed to be preparing to launch an attack against Ethiopia. The Tewolde-Siye group, who had always considered Meles soft on Eritrea, warned of an impending military invasion from Asmara three months before the incursion took place. But Meles and his group dismissed the idea as preposterous.

An American strategic affairs analyst notes that according to inside sources, what expired during the time Meles was confronted with the reality of an impending invasion shows that he conducted the Eritrean issue all by himself:

Meles, according to reliable sources, "went into a frenzy" and denied that his old mentor, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki, would be planning such an event. He subsequently went to great lengths to suppress intelligence reports, which gave clear evidence of the Eritrean plan to invade, and to suppress those who brought the information. According to the *Defence & Foreign Affairs* sources, when Eritrea did, in fact, invade Ethiopia in 1998, those in the TPLF Politburo who had warned of the impending attack confronted Meles, who told them that the attack had really been a surprise because [Ethiopia] had a military pact with Eritrea. When his fellow-Politburo members asked who had approved such a pact ("not the TPLF, not the EPRDF and definitely not the Government of Ethiopia and the Parliament which decides on such matters"), he said: "Well, we had one [pact]." The Politburo members insisted that he cancel the pact immediately and take the issue of the invasion to Parliament. Meles resisted and said that the matter should be handled only by the Prime Minister's office.<sup>10</sup>

The Prime Minister thus succeeded to block its discussion in the politburo arguing that Eritrea had too much at stake to try to invade Ethiopia. The Prime Minister instead introduced an agenda that would evaluate the workings of the TPLF and the EPRDF. This agenda was being discussed when war broke out between the two countries.

As the Tewolde-Siye group warned, Eritrea did ultimately carry out an unprovoked aggression. A row emerged again when Isaias whose army took a punishing defeat on the Badme front in February 1999 sought a political settlement and accepted the technical arrangement suggested by the OAU and the US, which it had previously rejected. The Tewolde-Siye group that argued that it infringed on Ethiopia's national sovereignty vehemently opposed acceptance of the document. However, Meles fought for its acceptance sighting possible international sanctions by the major powers, particularly the US and the EU. The Tewolde-Siye group accused Meles of being soft on Eritrea and even suggested he might be committing a treasonous act. When the matter was debated and put to vote in the central committee, the Siye group won 17 to 13. Even though it does not really have any clout, the EPRDF also decided the same way in a bitter debate. The Prime Minister was thus soundly defeated on the issue. This created further rancour between the two factions, a rancour that was hidden from the public because of a need to show unity and resolve in the face of a vicious war taking place in the

North.

The *Gimgema* [Reassessment], which was interrupted by the war, was resumed after Ethiopia's victory against Eritrea in May 2000. But a problem arose when the Prime Minister insisted to discuss a 700-page document at the centre of which was the topic of “Bonapartism”, corruption and anti-democratic behaviour in the TPLF leadership.

In general, there were four main themes presented for discussion. Whereas the first theme evoked the peril of “Bonapartist Decay” and the danger to the Weyane Revolution in general, there was also a motif that the TPLF/EPRDF might be slowly transforming itself into a new aloof, anti-democratic and corrupt ruling class. It suggested that anti-democratic actions and corruption were intertwined and that one necessarily led to the other. It also asserted that the state was becoming a cow to be milked by a privileged but miscreant officials. The document admitted that this situation had already arisen and that the TPLF leaders routinely circumvent the law and violated human rights with impunity. There was a reference to the unnecessary use of force in Walayta district to reverse votes that went to the opposition. The two other themes dealt with democracy and economic development and suggested ways of purifying the revolution in order to save it from oblivion.

The “Weyane Development” strategy suggested the evolution of Ethiopia’s economy first towards full-fledged capitalism without relinquishing the “Revolutionary Democracy” theory by which the TPLF has been guided starting from its inception. In the political arena, the document recognized that the political and economic system now in place is dictatorial and undemocratic and needs “Purification” which can come only through decentralization and liberalization was in line with “Lenin’s New Economic Policy” [NEP.]<sup>11</sup>

While presenting his *Gimgema*, the Prime Minister took a swipe at some members of his party, whom everybody understood to be the dissenters as “Rotten Bonapartists” entertaining anti-democratic tendencies, corrupt practices and aspiring to promote themselves into the level of a ruling class. This, he said, is endangering the political system and the TPLF organizations and should be dealt forthwith.

The Tekeste-Siye group argued that since “Bonapartism” is not related to the concrete problems of Ethiopia, other pressing issues should be discussed instead.<sup>12</sup> The Prime Minister insisted on his own conference schedule - his agenda being a) to discuss “Bonapartism” at the Central Committee, b) to openly examine papers that are opposed to the idea; c) to carry out reassessment, criticism and self-criticism, d) to pass the matter to the party membership where criticism and self-criticism would be conducted; and ultimately e) to finish off the matter in the plenary of the party presidium - all of which follows a Marxist-Leninist conference style.<sup>13</sup> The Tekeste-Siye group argued to defer the question of “Bonapartism” and discuss issues of immediate importance to the country particularly the Eritrean problem.

The Prime Minister ultimately won the day and a discussion on “Bonapartism” and Corruption was unveiled. At this stage, the atmosphere became so acrid and bitter that some central committee members were not happy with the overall atmosphere of the discussion. Suggesting that the debate be postponed to a future date in order to save the TPLF from imploding, the Security Chief, Ato Kinfe Gebre Medhin and Ato Mulugeta (Chaltu,) both members of the Politburo and the central committee removed themselves from the forum.

A month's discussion led to a vote. In the Politburo, Meles had a minority of supporters. At first, even in the central committee, the Tewolde-Siye group had an upper hand. The members consistently voted 17 to 13 against Meles. But through slow erosion Meles succeeded to garner 17 votes to 13 to defeat the opposing faction. But it is interesting to note that the support for Meles was to a large extent a family affair since there happen to be an intricate web of intermarriage among the officials in that camp.<sup>14</sup> Sebhat Nega is credited with invoking family loyalty to twist arms and reverse the vote tally and this suddenly raised Meles’ political fortune.

The Tekeste-Siye group minus one defector [Mr. Kiros] presented a petition to pass the discussion to a party wide congress citing the problem of division within the Central Committee and to drop the discussion of “Bonapartism” that they considered irrelevant to the TPLF and Ethiopia. As regards corruption, they suggested to extend an investigation into the private properties and the sources of the money of each Central Committee member to be conducted by an independent committee.

Meles insisted on continuing with the agenda and refused to allow the creation of an independent commission to investigate corruption because according to him, that would not only take too much time but that the matter required close public scrutiny. Meles further labelled the dissenters' petition divisive. It went, he said, against the Leninist principle of Democratic Centralism. The Tekeste-Siye group considered the PM's stand intransigent and expecting that a legal decision could not be taken with a Central Committee that does not fill a quorum failed to appear for the meeting that was convened three days later.

In breach of the party rules, Meles and his remaining supporters sent the dissenters individualized letters of suspension from central committee. But they did not act before taking vital precautions. The letters were sent only after Meles secured a special guard for his protection, which was rushed to the Palace in Addis Ababa by his trusted army protégé, General Samora Younis, chief of operations of the Ethiopian military forces.

Siye subsequently lost his position in EFFORT. The prime minister's camp brought charges on the former defence minister for having allegedly pocketed undue commissions when he intervened in weapons procurements during military operations in the Eritrean war. His associates, Alemseged Gebreamlak and Abaye Tsehaye were cast off from their prime-ministerial advisorships. Also ousted from their positions were president of the regional state of Tigray, Gebru Asrat; and his deputy, Ms Aregash Adane. The Prime Minister replaced Gebru Asrat with his own trusted friend, Haleka Tsegaye, the brother-in-law of Sebhata Nega. The latter, who is considered by many to be the real God Father of the TPLF, has worded hard to keep Meles' camp on top of the political duel between Meles' and the Tewolde-Siye group. In time all the dissidents were put under house arrest. The suspension was to stand unless the dissenters accepted to involve themselves in self-criticism thus admitting their errors.

The ousted members appealed the decision of the remaining Central Committee officials to the Audit Commission that decided five to two that Meles and his supporters' actions should be considered null and void because the remaining members did not fill a quorum. The action by Meles, they said, was *ultravires* since it contravened the TPLF party statutes. But this did not make a dent with the Prime Minister who was determined to have his way. An analyst, from the Defence and Strategic Policy explains the drama that took place when Meles slighted the TPLF's adjudicating body:

The twelve ...dismissed Central Committee members ... went to the only remaining independent TPLF body, the seven- member Audit Commission of the TPLF. The Audit Commission met almost day and night for a week, speaking with both groups. [It] then ruled that what Meles and his clique had done was illegal, unconstitutional, undemocratic and destructive. They then sanctioned all parties from calling any meeting or activities until the Audit Commission called a TPLF General Assembly, as per the TPLF Constitution. The 12 ousted Central Committee members accepted this, but Meles called the ruling "*segera*" (the same as the French "*Merd!*" in the Ethiopian language) and rejected the ruling, saying that he did not care about the law in such time of crisis, because the party has to be saved." He then said that he did not recognize the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission said that it had been independently elected by the General Assembly; Meles said that he did not care. ...Meles then called a meeting of his Cadres, and at the same time, in his capacity as Prime Minister, stripped his opponents of their government and public responsibilities, ransacked and closed their offices, kidnapped their guards and put them under house arrest.<sup>15</sup>

But the Audit Commission also castigated the dissenters for failing to appear at the meeting. The Tewolde-Siye group proposed the immediate convening of an extraordinary organizational congress of TPLF members that shall discuss the crisis and the presentation to this congress of the results of an independent investigation into corruption, anti-democratic and counter-revolutionary behaviour. Meles refused and continued to charge his opponents of adopting "bourgeois" attitudes singling out Siye Abraha, by charging him with cases of racketeering.

The rivals stuck back by preparing corruption charges of their own, if not against Meles Zenawi himself, [he claims to have nothing other than his clothing and his books] then against members of his inner circle. Among the alarms raised are how the Prime Minister's close associates in TPLF and the EPRDF have used their

political clout to gain advantage in obtaining license, selective reduction of taxation rates, bank loans and winning auctions, benefiting one group and handicapping others. They charged that all of these have been observed to be common practices and should be raised in the plenary meeting.

Meles called up Mekele Cadres most of whom were government and para-government apparatchiks to a conference to discuss the dispute against the opposition of the majority of the Audit Commission. He barred Cadres who openly supported the dissenters from attending the meeting. He ignored the decision of the commission, and at the meeting, the Tewolde-Siye faction tried to present their side of the story even though they considered the meeting packed by potential Meles supporters [almost all of them depended on the PM's government for their own livelihood] illegal. They also charged that having Meles as chairman was not fair. After a verbal confrontation, and quickly observing that the meeting was stacked against them, the dissenters walked out of the Cadre forum.

The Mekele Cadre convention, passed a resolution that denounced the Tekeste-Siye group, ordered their expulsion from the Central Committee and commanded them to return all documents, property and money entrusted to their care in their capacities as party and government officials. The resolution of the Cadres also warned the audit commission that its actions superseded its mandate.

The Mekele manifesto, which was passed on 16 March 2001, was agreed to by a similar Cadre conference in Addis Ababa also packed by Meles' Apparatchiks. When asked about the legality and the popularity of his actions, Meles belittled the influence of the expelled Central Committee members by asserting that they could not garner more than 20 or 30 supporters in the entire TPLF party. He labelled his opponents as a "click," a grave evil in TPLF nomenclature.

The paradoxical effect of the TPLF crisis is that it has forced Meles to fall back on the EPRDF which he had, in the past, taken for granted. With this act, he was deliberately distancing himself from the Tigray People's Liberation Front that had tied his hands for so long. It is true that during the last decade, appendages of the TPLF such as the ANDM, OPDO and SEPDP have proven beyond doubt what they really are - organizational automatons that are manipulated by whoever is in control of the TPLF. This is because as soon as they realized the person or group with an upper hand, they stood firmly in that camp.

But the war had injected a new spirit. It should be clear that for the average Ethiopian outside the Tigrayan *Kilil*, Meles is perceived as just another Tigrayan nationalist who somehow found himself in the uncomfortable position of governing Ethiopia - to which he owes no loyalty nor has an intention of developing one. In that sense, he is not seen any differently from the other TPLF leaders who chose him to lead them politically.

Meles abhorred and still abhors Ethiopian nationalism that he, for some unknown reason, considers "chauvinistic." But to win the war, he reversed gear. The Ethiopian flag that he earlier referred to as just "a piece of rug" all of a sudden became a highly revered symbol that soldiers and politicians passed from hand to hand going on their knees and bowing low. The national TV was suddenly filled with the pictures of victorious Ethiopian emperors from Tewodros and Yohannes to Menelik and Haile Selassie. Axum and Lalibela that he earlier said had no relevance to the people of the south were suddenly transformed into historical treasures that the entire Ethiopian populace regardless of their background and ethnicity had to die for. All this was to combat Eritrean nationalism.

Meles was however not able to employ "Ethiopianism" to beat the Tigrayan nationalists led by Tewolde and Siye because of his previous transgressions vis a vis Ethiopian sovereignty and particularly because he knows that the Ethiopian people do recognize where he really stands regarding "*amore patrie*" that transcends their ethnic veneers. They knew that he was being *Arada* [insidious street-smart] when he was broadcasting *ad nauseum* to remind them of the great nationalistic achievements of former Ethiopian leaders such as Menelik!

Meles still had the institutions he created under the EPRDF which he could impel to flex their muscle and isolate his rivals. That venue, as was seen later, carried its own dangers. The non-Tigrayan nationalities particularly the Oromos and the Southern people as well as the Amharas [despite the subservient attitude of Addisu Legesse and his colleagues in ANDM,] were no longer prepared to play second fiddle to the Tigrayan



leadership. They started to demand a high price for their support, including a much greater role within the EPRDF itself. With that, Tigrayan political domination began to look distinctly fragile. At this stage, so as not to lose his only remaining stronghold, Meles decided to purge the Satellite organizations that were previously brought together by the TPLF leadership to be utilized as a Trojan horse within Ethiopia.

In March 2001, the posture of the opposition in the TPLF cornered the Prime Minister so much that he convened the EPRDF Central Committee meeting. But during the previous months, the Tewolde-Siye group had a majority both in the Politburo and the Central Committee of the TPLF that the EPRDF had gravitated towards the dissenters. This became another obstacle for the Prime Minister's political plans.

The technical difficulties in the EPRDF were not easy to brush away even though Meles had initially desired to use the organisation as a rubber stamp. Legally, the executive committee of this umbrella institution is composed of 20 members with each of the four affiliate parties represented by 5 persons. But since four out of the five representatives of TPLF to the council had already been purged, only Mr. Meles remained.

The council of the EPRDF consists of 60 members with each of the four member parties contributing 15 representatives. Out of the 15 representatives of TPLF, 8 have been removed through systematic attrition, which means that the TPLF is currently represented in the EPRDF council by less than half of its representatives. Therefore, the TPLF could have a say in the council only if it assigns new representatives in place of the breakaway 12 [now 10] or if it lifts their suspension. Otherwise, it was bound to have a meaningless representation in the council's congress. Nevertheless, Meles went ahead with his plans because if he could function without a quorum in the TPLF, no one can stop him from convening the EPRDF in any state.<sup>16</sup>

At the EPRDF Central Committee meeting, the Sebhat-Meles group defended their position by citing the danger the divisiveness of the dissenters posed to the survival of the Party. The Siye-Tewolde group on their part wrote a petition to the members to explain the illegality of Meles' action. The Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) led by Negasso Gidada and the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Front (SEPDF) led by Abate Kisho condemned the "unlawfulness" of the dissenters' expulsion. Of all officials who counted, only Dr. Kassu Illala a member of SEPDF who is the PM's deputy sided with Meles.

The ANDM party that is controlled by Addisu Legesse, a strongly pro-Meles individual supported the decision against the dissenters. Addisu, in order to strengthen his position with Meles went to the extent of labelling the "dissenting" group "tribalists." But here, unlike among the powerful TPLF, Meles could act with impunity. What Abate did not realize was that when he found leaders falling out of line, the Prime Minister either sacked them or even worse, locked them up in jail.

Meles' *gimgema* [Reassessment] in the EPRDF covered all its constituent parts - the OPDO, the SEDPC and ANDM and was held in June 2001 at Central Committee, Woreda [district] and *Kilil* [State Zone] levels. The SEPDF meeting in Awasa, under the tutelage of Meles' crony, Kasu Ilala was actually led by TPLF Central Committee members, Berhane Gebre Kristos, and Mulugeta Gebre Hiwot. In its extraordinary meeting, this body engineered by Meles' men, expelled and jailed the mutineer, Abate Kisho who was President of SEPDF.

The conflict between the TPLF and the OPDO has been simmering for a while. During the last few decades, Oromo nationalists had charged that since the new constitution came into force, the OPDO and Oromo affairs had been "run by assigned TPLF members", and that OPDO members have been victims of TPLF purges.

The OPDO has shown serious concerns regarding the problem of unequal economic development whereby Oromia mainly finances Tigray's. They also stressed that human rights abuses, the role of the TPLF in Oromoland and lack of real autonomy in their *kilil* needed prompt redress. Dr. Negasso Gidada, who was Executive Committee Member of the OPDO, and the Council of the EPRDF, as well as President of the Federal Government of Ethiopia had shown his reservations about all these and was contemplating resignation for the last two years but was convinced not to do so through the advice of many individuals including the German Ambassador to Ethiopia.<sup>17</sup>

It was under the instigation of the Prime Minister that the OPDO's Politburo and Central Committee held meetings in Addis Ababa earlier. However, it was soon moved to Adama, the capital of Oromia *Kilil*. The meeting, which started here on June 4, 2001 in order to discuss the debate over the Meles Zenawi document

castigating the TPLF dissidents, was acrimonious and poisoned from the outset. Meles had sent Sebhat Nega to represent him in supervising the meeting. But Negasso Gidada together with Shiferaw Jarso protested his presence. As the opposition to the meddling by the TPLF members intensified, Shiferaw Jarso made an impassioned speech in which he told Sebhat Nega to his face: "Rather than continuing to cower to you [the TPLF,] I would rather die in order to make sure that my children will have a chance to live in freedom!"<sup>18</sup>

Negasso also presented his grievances in detail. He pointed out among others, that whereas the law stipulates that he has to sign government decrees before they are made public, recently, many of them have been issued without securing his signature - and very oddly with his name on them. He also stated that the OPDO leaders have not been able to freely express their views at EPRDF meetings, and that whenever he and his colleagues tried to present matters important to the Oromos, they were castigated as narrow nationalists and tribalists. After being snubbed, the furious Sebhat Nega left the premises to return to Addis Ababa and report the revolt in the OPDO to the PM.

Following the terse criticism that came from Negasso and Shiferaw, 600 Oromo Cadre met in Adama and talked of what had been in the offing among the leadership of the OPDO - the independence from the EPRDF of the OPDO which is feared by Meles because with its 175 seats [constituting the largest block in the parliament] it may cripple the PM's chances of garnering a majority in parliament and also of the EPRDF as a party competing against him with all the election manipulation techniques it has learnt.

The Adama conference did not come to a conclusion and did not resolve the discord among the leadership. It also failed to fulfil Meles' wishes that the OPDO condemn the Tewolde-Siye faction as Addisu Legesse and Kassu Ilala have done in ANDM and SEPFD respectively. Negasso had earlier refused to sign a letter expelling them from their seats in parliament. Thus, when the OPDO went to the meeting of the EPRDF central committee, it was not in agreement with the other three partners in the EPRDF coalition. In actual fact, it was holding a parallel meeting at night while attending the Central Committee meeting during daytime.

Meles accused Negasso of leading the revolt in the OPDO and Negasso decided to withdraw from the EPRDF council starting June 13, 1983 [June 2001.] A crony of Meles in the OPDO, Girma Biru succeeded to get the other OPDO executive members to condemn and expel Negasso on the threat that if they did not, they would precipitate a crisis that would lead to their expulsion from parliament. Negasso walked out of the ongoing meeting of the council of the EPRDF by stating that he has withdrawn himself from the Council's membership on the grounds that he had come under pressure from Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who was the chair. He soon tendered his resignation and under the instigation of the Prime Minister, the OPDO expelled him from the party's executive body. In banishing Negasso, the council, now gravitating towards Meles, attributed his walkout to his rejection of the *Gimgema* [ongoing renewal movement]. Negasso however denied this. Meanwhile, the Central Committee of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) officially dismissed Negasso from his membership in the Organization's Central Committee as well. In a statement it issued on the 22nd of June 2001, the OPDO charged, again despite denials from the President, that he had aligned himself with the disbanded TPLF splinter group - abandoning his responsibility.<sup>19</sup>

Negasso complained that the government had fabricated facts relating to his walkout, resignation and expulsion from the OPDO. He charged that this act smeared his name and is "destructive ... not only to me ... chosen by the people to serve as president, but also to the constitution, to the government, to the OPDO and to the democracy that we are trying to build." He denied he was a supporter of the dissidents. He admitted that he did point out the various undemocratic nature of actions relating to the expulsion of the dissidents but his aim was only 'to mediate.'<sup>20</sup>

The BBC commented on the matter. .

Political analysts say this recent action is likely to gain Dr Gidada considerable support among ordinary Ethiopians, who already feel that the president was unfairly treated. Analysts say the dismissal of the president is just an attempt by the prime minister to strengthen his position as he faces rising opposition not only from within his party, but also from within the army and the general public.<sup>21</sup>

Negasso's resignation was, however, tactical. His choice was to recant or to continue to confront Meles together with his major supporters, including the president of Oromia, Kuma Demeksa, the President of the House of Nationalities in Parliament, Almaz Mako, and other staunch supporter of him such as Chala Hordofa and Shiferaw Jarso. Negasso was not in a position to recant but if he persisted to be present in the EPRDF Central Committee meeting, he knew who would expose his colleagues to Meles' expulsion.

That helped only to postpone the matter. On July 23 2001, under the instructions of Mr. Meles, the OPDO suspended the President of Oromia and the organization's secretary general, Mr. Kuma Demeksa and other central committee members, namely Chala Hordofa, Diriba Arkona and Yassin Hussein from the organization for corruption, anti-democratic practices, abuse of power and supporting the TPLF dissenters. The organization also prohibited Mr. Kuma as well as the other suspended central committee members from taking part in any forum representing the OPDO.

The OPDO statement said:

If the present dangerous trend goes unabated, it would be absolutely difficult to apply the principles of "Revolutionary Democracy" in the country. The renewal process [Mr. Meles' purge] has become mandatory to clear the path and avoid individuals who could think of and dream about only making themselves get rich quick at the expense of the Oromo people who live under abject poverty.<sup>22</sup>

The statement particularly castigated the expelled OPDO officials for joining the Tewolde-Siye group. It said:

Some anti democratic members who could not continue their struggle for the rights of the Oromo people have joined the group that broke away from the TPLF/EPRDF. The OPDO cannot tolerate self-cantered members who consciously joined the faction by abandoning the causes of the Oromo people [for whom] thousands have been martyred. [The suspended members] have been amassing wealth at the expense of the people through their relatives and under the cover of high-level officials. [They] have taken various destructive measures to disrupt the renewal process and cover up the crimes that they have committed against the country and the people. The OPDO has been committed as ever before to continue the struggle and apply the principles of "Revolutionary Democracy" and build a new Ethiopia that could be home for all nations, nationalities and peoples.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that the leadership of the OPDO including Negasso were formerly members of the OLF did not help. It is with this in mind that Meles had insinuated in a speech: "OPDO members are OPDO's outside but OLF inside."<sup>24</sup> And most importantly, in what has since being dubbed, "the Flies and Bees Speech," Meles had delivered a stark warning that he may bring corruption charges on those who may not fall in line. He admonished:

The class and societal condition in Southern Ethiopia and in Oromia is not any different from those of Tigray and Amhara *Kilils*. Budgetary allocation is the same for all. However, in terms of popular participation and development activities, they are extremely weak. It is hard to imagine that this condition can be corrected soon. The biggest problem in these two regions is that they function within an environment of "Revolutionary Democracy" that is crippled.... This failure arose partly because we had not assumed the necessary task of indoctrination.<sup>25</sup>

The Prime Minister continued to attack the officials of the South as follows:

At the moment, we control power and as can be expected those who are attached to us do benefit because they can advance their own interests. Honey attracts flies in the first instance. By the same token, those who clamour to position themselves in the political arena and the bureaucracy to freely rove in the chambers of power are those who want to advance their own personal interests. When flies and bees alight on honey, the flies may outnumber the bees. And outside the metaphor, those who are corrupt do outnumber those who are genuine and dedicated workers. There

is real danger that situations may deteriorate to such a level that it might become impossible to distinguish between flies and bees. That is the situation in Ethiopian government circles today. ...In Southern Ethiopia and in Oromia, in particular, we have been forced to build and then destroy our organizational work. We recruit large numbers of people in government work. We find them to be like flies on honey. We toss them away. Again we recruit and toss. This condition is still ongoing. We have an urgent business of tossing away in Southern Ethiopia in the not too distant future.<sup>26</sup>

In the last statement, the Prime Minister must have been alluding to his plans to fire Abate Kisho and his supporters from SEPDF, which he ultimately did. After Negasso's departure from the EPRDF, the divided Central Committee of the EPRDF organization endorsed the previous decisions that the Prime Minister had achieved in the TPLF Central Committee. The Prime Minister immediately appeared on TV flanked by the leaders of all the surrogate organizations of the TPLF and claimed victory for himself on March 24, 2001

## “Bonapartism”

Another proof of Meles' commitment to Marxism-Leninism is his repeated use of Marxist taxonomy, particularly “Bonapartism”. But what is “Bonapartism” in Marxist theory and what does it denote for Mr. Meles and in the Ethiopian case?

Marx and Engels used the term “Bonapartism” to refer to a form of regime in capitalist society in which the executive branch of the state, under the rule of a single individual, achieves despotic powers over all other branches of the state, and over society in general. Poulantzas, the well-known Neo-Marxist scholar of contemporary times, recognizes “Bonapartism” as an extreme manifestation of ‘relative autonomy’.<sup>27</sup>

What became an impetus for Marx's theory of “Bonapartism” was an existing regime in his time, that of Louis Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon I, who crowned himself as Napoleon III after staging a coup d'état in December 2, 1851. In fact, it is this very regime that inspired Karl Marx to record with his own interpretation, one of his original and sparkling historical chapters of the day, the *18th Brumaire*. His socialist colleague, Frederick Engels doing his own independent study in Germany had also traced striking parallels between “Bismarkism” and “Bonapartism”.

It was following the strain of the devastating Franco-Prussian War in which France was defeated that Napoleon III's Second Empire crumbled and a bloody civil war emerged. Studying the political and economic situation in France then, Marx declared that “Bonapartism” is the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired the faculty of ruling the nation.<sup>28</sup> Engels had also postulated in *The Origin of the Family* that whereas in capitalist societies the state normally exists for the benefit of the ruling class, ‘by way of exception, ... periods occur in which the working classes balance each other off so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both’<sup>29</sup> In the theoretical constructs of Marx and Engels, therefore, “Bonapartism” occurs when the ruling class in capitalist society is no longer able to assert its rule by applying the normal constitutional and parliamentary processes; but where the working class is also far from being able to establish its own hegemony.

The theory stresses the high degree of independence of the Bonapartist state as well as its dictatorial character. Marx states that this form of government that has a role as an “ostensible mediator” between warring classes, is “not left suspended in mid air.” As well as claiming to speak for all the major classes in society, Louis Bonaparte, professed to represent the most numerous class in France at the time, the small-holding peasantry; and this was not a vain hope, for he had clearly garnered that class's unflinching support. The primary mission of the Bonapartist state, according to Marx, is to create a climate that is conducive to the welfare of a bourgeois society; it is also to clear the way for the rapid development of a capitalist order.

Marx and Engels in their elaboration on “Bonapartism” introduce a crucial Marxist concept, that

whenever and wherever a state exists, it is designed to look after the interest of those who run it. According to the 18th Brumaire, the Bonapartist state is characterized as one enjoying a prerogative with:

... an executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its extensive and artificial state machinery, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which envelops the body of French society like a caulk and chokes all its pores . . .<sup>30</sup>

Max later acknowledged in *The Civil War in France* that under Louis Bonaparte, the state's pores were not after all so totally choked, since it was under its authority that "bourgeois society, freed from political cares, attained a development unexpected even by itself."<sup>31</sup> That, however, he stressed, did not mean that the "Bonapartist state" ceased to serve the interest of capital as well as that of itself.

Prime Minister Meles employed the concept of "Bonapartism" to castigate the opposition in the TPLF whose members he expelled and jailed in June 2001, on accusations of being tainted with the ideology of "Rotten Bonapartism" characterized by "unbridled corruption."<sup>32</sup> After making some errors in explaining the theory, he stated: "I accept the critique of some members of the Central Committee that unlike what I suggested in the previous presentation, Bismarkism is just another aspect of "Bonapartism". But to grasp my analysis, it is imperative to delve into the theory of Marxism-Leninism."<sup>33</sup>

In the corrected version of his theoretical interpretation, Meles said that "Bonapartism" appeared as a pattern of government following the great French "Revolutionary Democracy." An 18 day flame of insurrection led the masses, he said, to air slogans that went beyond the bounds of capitalism at a time when the bourgeoisie which was in its infancy was not in a position to represent its class in the administration of the state and when the masses were found to be incapable of passing that hurdle. The result was, in 1852, a pseudo government system ["Bonapartism"] emerged. Mr. Meles explained to his Central Committee colleagues and the Cadres:

[A Bonapartist] government remains aloft of all classes; holding the freedom that should be the mainstay of social orders where no class is strong enough to challenge it. By its very nature, it keeps itself as the guardian of the bourgeoisie....Corruption does manifest itself in many systems but in "Bonapartism," it is a main attribute both in scope and variety. ...There are two main reasons for this. At the time it emerges, capitalism is at its infancy and capital accumulation is in process. There is no strong bourgeoisie with enough capital networks in place. The classes have not yet ostensibly been divided. It is a twilight zone where in the name of extreme leftism everybody wishes and clamours to be capitalist through the process of capital accumulation. It is a chapter of capitalism in which land has not yet been appropriated and where there is a tremendous amount of looting in the society. The government that is ancillary in power relation is neither in a position to dictate the right course nor is it revolutionary in its vision. As the looting for capital accumulation ensues, government officials use their position to nimble at the society's estates and wealth and jockey for a permanent position of opulence. This becomes so pervasive that it becomes a case of "when you encounter people who loot your father's realm, loot with them;" hence, the major characteristic of the system is corruption.<sup>34</sup>

It is in the decay of "Bonapartism" that Mr. Meles finds a niche for his opponents. The Tewolde-Siye group, he alleged, wanted to enthrone their own "Rotten Bonapartism" with its rampant corruption. As he did in 1996, when he ousted former Prime Minister, Tamrat Layne, Mr. Meles embarked on an anti-corruption crusade of a very selective nature against the dissidents of the TPLF, and their close relatives. By the beginning of June, 2001, some 25 persons were fenced in.

The Prime Minister started his corruption clean up with his major rival, former defence minister, Siye Abraha who is one of the leaders of the TPLF dissidents opposed to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Siye, who was previously expelled from the Politburo and the Central Committee, has been dismissed as EFFORT Chairperson and replaced by Meles' loyalist Arkebe Ouqubye. Furthermore, Siye no longer heads the Ethiopian Airlines. His immediate family whom the Prime Minister put in jail were all accused of financial embezzlement. They include Siye himself as well as his siblings - Assefa, Feseha and Mehreteab. Mehreteab and Feseha were

shareholders in the Mefam Company.<sup>35</sup> Asefa was previously given the lucrative position of the Privatisation Agency with the rank of Minister where kickbacks are not only common but are transferred in huge sums. Trusted friends carried out transactions among themselves with the prices artificially fixed and rolled down from their market value. One case involved the sale of the oldest Royal Hotel in Addis Ababa, the Itege Hotel worth perhaps 20 million birr being sold at a puny price of less than 4 million birr. Siye's elder brother, Asmelash who is a retired soldier and his sister Temnet who owns a company that imports medical products were accused of involvement in the illegal transactions carried out by their brother.

That Meles was very serious in getting his rivals was known when his officials started to probe into their foreign bank accounts. One reliable analyst of the region reports:

The Ethiopian authorities discretely approached a couple of Western embassies in Addis Ababa to try to find the trace of foreign bank accounts that party dissidents might be sheltering abroad. Naturally, the primary suspects are the leaders of the dissidents, starting with former defence minister Siye Abraha, and closely followed by the prime minister's former adviser, Alemseged Gebreamlak, and thereafter, by Siye Abraha's brothers who run businesses in a number of different sectors (transportation, drink distribution) in the North of the country.... Evidence of fraud is also being collected on military equipment contracts involving Siye Abraha, Assefa Abraha, and Fitur Zeab, who [has since] defected to Canada, as well as generals and officers of the air force.<sup>36</sup>

That Meles uses corruption to get his rivals but turns a blind eye to those transgressions involving his friends and relatives became clear when warnings involving massive corruption around him were simply ignored. A report regarding this incident states:

A few months ago, an official of the Société Générale de Surveillance (SGS) unearthed a huge traffic of non-payment of taxes and informed the Ethiopian authorities thereof, but the local official of the Geneva-based company got the impression that nothing came thereof, unless it was the feeling of having mixed into affairs that was none of its business.<sup>37</sup>

Other people who were alleged accomplices of the officials who were accused of corruption and were also incarcerated include - Bitew Belay, former commissioner of regional affairs in the prime minister's office, several high-level management of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and various managers of companies including the Star Business Group, which is an importer of sugar and salt, and an exporter of coffee to the United States whose general manager Worku Merga was accused of benefiting from a near-total monopoly on the importation of sugar to Ethiopia. The SBG is alleged to have profited from predisposed advantages engineered by officials of the regime who have been put behind bars.

The corruption charge did not stop with government officials and their connections in the private and semi-private sector. It extended to the military where there was challenge to Mr. Meles' power. In November; 2000, as part of the reform of the civil service, a central body was set up to coordinate anti-corruption activity. Subsequently, in January 2001, charges were laid against Air Force officers and senior police functionaries in Addis Ababa, four of whom were charged with corruption

Then Meles Zenawi took the high horse to the military that he initially instructed should be outside politics. On March 27, 2001, he met high-ranking military officers [ officers holding the rank of colonel and above, ] in Addis Ababa under the chairmanship of General Tadesse Gawa, head of the army's Educational Administration Department and explained to them that the positions of the 12 dissidents ousted from the central committee of the TPLF had been condemned and that any member of the military who espoused or supported the dissident's point of view would be immediately expelled from the army. Some, including the Army Chief of Staff General Tsadkan Gebre Tensay were not happy that politics was being planted in the army ranks. So the fist casualty in the military was none other than Tsadkan himself. He was soon arrested on suspicion of attempting to stage a coup to overthrow the Prime Minister. Tsadkan was not alone in being detained.

As a first precaution, Meles made sure that members of the military should not join political parties so

as to keep their neutrality in cases of crises in the government. He had also passed an order as soon as the crisis emerged into the open that the army should never take action until it receives orders directly from the Prime Minister and Commander in Chief of the armed forces, which happens to be himself. General Tsadkan took that at face value and showed disappointment when the Prime Minister came to the military to gain support for his side. Meles considered this insubordination. So, General Tsadkan was put under house arrest. Later it was reported that he was apprehended in connection with an abortive coup d'état. He was then charged with getting involved in an unauthorized export of coffee as well as trading in sugar that involved conflict of interest, since he was the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Ethiopian Sugar Corporation. Meles' people accuse him of illegally selling sugar to the Star Business Group (SBG) and businesswoman Yeshareg Zewde, proprietor of the Geta Trading firm. Yeshareg was in addition said to have enriched herself during Ethiopia's war with Eritrea by handling oil transportation for the Ethiopian military forces. She has also been charged for having bought a government flourmill for 41 million birrs, a price reckoned far below its market value. She has since been charged and put under arrest. The police have now closed the offices of SBG and Geta.<sup>38</sup> The SBG, created only in 1995, got a leading position in the sugar trade. The company had 22 branches spread throughout the country. It involved itself in businesses ranging from retail trading and import-export to transportation and the running of repair workshops. It had a leading investment portfolio in the Abyssinia Bank and Nyala Insurance. It also had many other affiliates including the Mina Trading Company, Tis Abbai PLC, the Ajma-Ethiopia General Trade and Industry Company. General Tsadkan's younger brother, Abraham Gebre Tensay, and his half brother Tezera Gesese were accused of having been involved in the importation of trucks that skirted the scrutiny of the taxation office. General Tsadkan's wife has been tied to the Star business Group. All [except Tsadkan's wife who is related to Meles' ally, Sebhat Nega] were put behind bars.

Mr. Meles' vehement opponent in the SEPDP movement and a supporter of the Tewelde-Siye faction, Abate Kisho, and several other directors of his regional administration have also been arrested on corruption charges. Bitew Belay. SBG's general manager, Worku Nega, a big share holder in the Bank of Abyssinia have all been thrown into prison for alleged embezzlement of US\$10 million. It is interesting that, SBG was previously cited by a report of the commerce department of the United States embassy in Addis Ababa as an exemplary new Ethiopian private enterprise. Also included among companies accused of corruption whose chief managers have been apprehended is Mesfin Company.<sup>39</sup>

Meles does not stop accusing his opponents of corruption even if the proof is dubious. For example, as soon as he was at loggerheads with the President of the Republic, the government media accused Dr. Negasso Gidada of refusing to discuss questions of corruption. However, he had actually stated when he was confronting Meles in the EPRDF:

If there is a suspicion of corruption in the EPRDF ranks, let the property of everyone of us .... be accounted for in banks, in our homes, and among our families by neutral persons. And let not officials escape the scrutiny taking parliamentary immunity.<sup>40</sup>

The independent press has pointed out the proliferation of corruption not long after the TPLF came to power. Nevertheless, the warning was never heeded. The Prime Minister however, took the matter up only when he had to face his opponents on March 23, 2001. On this occasion, the Prime Minister publicly castigated the Tewelde-Siye group of refusing to recognize that "the absence of democracy and the existence of corruption" are jeopardizing the position of the political system and the TPLF itself.

Even though Mr. Meles presents the problem only in relation to his rivals in the EPRDF, he cannot escape the fact that some of his trusted friends and members of his family are also suspects. Indeed, this is a matter about which no group, whether the expelled one or the remaining leadership can successfully claim to be clean.

The Meles camp has treated corruption as one in which a person illegally enriches himself or nepotism, or using one's power to harm others. What that means is that it is not simply personal. It can also be

organizational. The Prime Minister may have his proofs against the Tewolde -Siye faction but the vexing question is, can the governing Politburo and Central Committee prove that they are innocent of the accusations against their own group's financial malpractices? In actual fact, the independent press has for long pointed a finger at some of Mr. Meles' government supporters that hold high profile positions that they are prone to nepotism. Among those mentioned often are Dawit Zewde, Genet Zewde and Duri Mohamed.<sup>41</sup>

Meles may also find some of his own family members implicated in monetary scandals. including fraudulent practices such as tax evasion and the resale on the local market of products earmarked for export. There have been reported cases of huge non-payment of taxes that have been recorded abroad and informed to the Ethiopian authorities; but the matter was dismissed as a non-issue. This comes as no surprise because some of the individuals involved are suspected to be members of the prime minister's inner circle.

Those targeted in this connection include the PM's brother, Nikodimos Zenawi, who, in 1991, was just an ordinary employee earning 460 birr a month, but is now considered to be one of the richest men in the capital. The supporters of the dissidents claim that Meles' wife, Azeb [Lemlem] Gola, who was former head of the Mega Net firm, benefited from untaxed imports and currently exchange violations. Foreign minister Seyoum Mesfin's 23-year-old son, Benyam Mesfin, who owns a fleet of Swedish made Scania brand trucks they also charge, has amassed millions of dollars in the last few years and should be part of those to be investigated. <sup>42</sup>

But wielding his whipping instrument, the allegation of corruption, Mr. Meles was determined not to let his rivals off the hook. When the courts released Siye and the other individuals who were sent to jail on bail, he used the Parliament to block the action. The EPRDF dominated Ethiopian House of representatives was presented with a bill that retroactively prevented freeing the dissidents imprisoned on corruption charges. The bill was adopted almost unanimously by the 348 MP's present only four of whom abstained. Siye who was released on bail was again locked up. The Prime Minister has also made parliament pass a proclamation dealing with Ethics and Anti-Corruption that would be run by his office and makes the matter an executive not a legislative matter. Mr. Meles is therefore an autocrat who uses Stalinist instruments only to purge his opponents.

### “New Free Enterprise” within “New Democratic Revolution”

When on May 28, 1991, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front [EPRDF] which was under the control of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, came to power, the government that was created was first provisional and then transitional. A Federal Republic replaced that in August 1995.

Under the Derg, private business was treated like in all other Communist states; it was very limited and whatever was allowed to function was in a very limited sector of the economy. Since coming to power, the EPRDF had abrogated most of the legislation restricting private business. But that is as far as legislation goes.

Mr. Meles' government claims that it emulates the practices of Western parties. It is clear that political parties in the West do not run their own private businesses. Yet, a large sector of the economy in Ethiopian is controlled by the governing EPRDF.

The technique is to control the major economic life of the country through party NGO's and foundations or individuals belonging to the EPRDF holding shares in companies that are indirectly controlled by the EPRDF. The managers and shareholders of these conglomerates are intertwined and the TPLF is the major holder and beneficiary in all this. Mr. Meles explains this:

At present, there are four foundation enterprises under the umbrella of the EPRDF. Some of these enterprises arose during the period of armed struggle. Their purpose was to finance the movement.<sup>43</sup>

Despite official denials, economic advantages such as credit facilities and contracts are diverted to them. It is due to this fact that the EPRDF companies have so far been able to accumulate capital and have grown much faster than private enterprises since the change of policy in August, 1991.



Ethiopian economists who are familiar with the current state of affairs are of the opinion that if the trend continues and the EPRDF persists in controlling the Ethiopian state by frustrating the possibility of other parties coming to power, all the lucrative sectors of production such as trade, services and transport will go under the hegemony of the EPRDF.

The asset of EFFORT is definitely augmented by foreign donor capital. According to a TPLF veteran and one of the first leaders of the TPLF as early as 1978, the leadership had, against his opposition, allocated only 5% of the U.S.\$100,000,000 relief aid to combat drought and Famine in Tigray, the rest going to the TPLF organization. Their revenues came from NGO contributions aimed at feeding the starving peasant masses of Tigray. This is not denied by the PM:

Many [TPLF enterprises] accumulated extensive capital from diverse sources including relief aid given by NGO's and foreign governments to feed famine victims. The funds were slated for buying arms for the TPLF's guerrilla organization with over 100,000 fighters and ultimately to be invested in its enterprises. Whereas the base of the capital of these enterprises is this, they have also since increased their revenue through investment in development projects.<sup>44</sup>

The other sources of TPLF companies before the TPLF came to power in Ethiopia are tax collection from the areas they controlled and from contributions by party members and sympathizers in the name of developing and running Tigray as a potential independent republic; enforced taxation in the form of donations from individuals including the Tigray members of the army usually at public meetings; spoils of war obtained from the *Derg* government; treasury heist including the appropriation of cash deposits in banks, public institutions, development projects and military institutions after taking over a district or town or by carrying out carefully planned raid; keeping income from exchange transaction of REST with NGO's or governments that are not reported to the donors; obtaining income through fiddling with the internal purchase program operated by REST with international subsidies which includes deceptively selling grain already held by the TPLF to REST with its own members posing in front of the representatives of the international donors as civilian grain wholesalers; sale in Sudan of surplus food aid in the form of grain stocks by falsifying the number of persons in TPLF controlled areas that are in need of food aid; generating income by running TPLF-owned garages in the Sudan; earning income from many different types of TPLF businesses in Sudan, in Tigray and in other countries; appropriating refunds paid by international donors for costs of internal relief aid transport; making income from rural credit scheme which was set up with funds from International donors; raising revenue by handling the credit scheme for fertiliser.

At first the major front of the TPLF's conglomerate was Relief Society of Tigray [REST] which, to solicit support from donor NGO's, was officially treated as NGO independent of the party but was in reality the TPLF's major money making organ and was run by a Central Committee member. By manipulating figures, [for example highly inflating the number of the population living in an area,] and transferring money to party coffers and by controlling a fleet of trucks donated to transport food to draught and famine stricken regions, REST became extremely powerful.

That the TPLF still continues to collect money from many of the above sources is undeniable. However, because it now militarily controls the entire Ethiopia, it is in a position to use state power to gain even more money from additional untapped sources. Thus, since coming to power in 1991, the TPLF made substantial amounts of direct transfers of funds from government accounts to its own in payment for services it claimed for TPLF-institutions. Also, when it entered central and southern Ethiopia for the first time after May 28, 1991, it engaged in appropriating cash deposits it found in public institutions. It took possession of customs levied at EPRDF-manned checkpoints as reimbursement for non-specified EPRDF-expenditure. A careful look shows that on the whole, the TPLF saved its own organization's cash by financing its own expenditures out of public funds.

REST was helpful to the TPLF in more ways than one. It enabled it use surplus food to feed its army; it helped it to control the peasants that formed its grassroots supplier of manpower and information; it helped it to

gain legitimacy among the population; it enabled it to use food as a weapon of rewarding supporters and penalizing those who refused to cooperate. In general, it was one factor that enabled it to survive as a guerrilla force and to ultimately triumph over *Derg* forces. After the TPLF took over power in Ethiopia, REST provided the base of the capital of EFFORT. In 1989, the Tigray Development Association, just like its predecessor, REST, was presented as an NGO. Legally, it has been created as being independent of the state but is in reality it an auxiliary organ of the TPLF.<sup>45</sup>

The TDA was launched with the support of TPLF members at home and abroad.<sup>46</sup> Its aim was to bring about rapid rehabilitation and development to Tigray.

REST owned a considerable amount of cash at the end of the war whereas the financial assets of TDA were still quite small. However, within the favourable context created by the take-over of power in Ethiopia by the TPLF-controlled EPRDF both Para-NGOs received large infusions of cash from various sources. In the last decade, the two organizations increased their capital through TPLF backed fund-raising campaigns in the case of TDA and funding by Governmental aid Organizations and NGO's in the case of REST.

Several organizations that work as fronts for the above two foundations run restaurants in Mekele and other places. Dedebit Credit and Savings Institution was created as branch plants particularly with funds from REST that is now the major shareholder.

MEGA Communication, SUR Construction and GUNA Trading are the earliest among such front companies belonging to and run by the TPLF party. Offshoots of these also appear among which are AFRICA Insurance and ADDIS Engineering Consultancy. GUNA itself took over the major shares of UNITED Insurance with its General Manager becoming a member of its the Board of Directors.

In addition, SELAM Busline and SEGEN Construction, were established the exclusive shareholder of the company being TDA. REST also took over the majority of shares of DEDEBIT Credit and Savings Institution SC in 1997. The leading branches of REST and TDA, namely, Tigray Women's" Association [TWA,] directed by a high profile TPLF official.<sup>47</sup> Senior Cadres lead both and the government of Tigray has become minority shareholders of Debebit Credit.

In 1995 the "Tekal Egri Metkal Tegar" [TEMT] [English: Endowment Fund for the Rehabilitation of Tigray (EFFORT) was set up as a foundation of non-governmental public charity. In reality, however, EFFORT is totally controlled by the TPLF party more than even REST and TAND because among its initial board of directors were seven TPLF heavyweights.<sup>48</sup>

A law prohibiting political parties from owning businesses was passed in 1994. Before its passage, the assets of the TPLF and the other three members of the EPRDF were transferred to new NGO-style companies [such as EFFORT, ENDEAVOUR, DINSHO AND WENDO] to skirt the law. Nevertheless, the parties continue to control and run them if only in different guise. EFFORT was the biggest party conglomerate created to skirt that law. Senior TPLF officials who are also on its Board of Directors became major shareholders of this new party conglomerate. Its functions are describes as:

- a) keeping in trust all the economic resources of the TPLF that was in existence before 1991;
- b) employing TPLF property for generating income for the families of those who died fighting during the guerrilla struggle; and; and
- c) promoting the industrialisation of Tigray by investing in the production of goods.

In most cases, the TPLF companies function independently. In other cases, they carry out their businesses through joint ventures with private Ethiopian as well as foreign investors. Those that own companies as a joint venture with the TPLF have preferential treatment while others that are independent have an uphill fight in advancing their business ventures. Mr. Meles has this to say concerning the matter:

There are those who fear that government and party enterprises may use their power to patronize those that work with them and pulverize those that fail to cooperate with them. Coming mostly from comprador quarters, such views are indeed justified. In fact the compradors understand the mission of the enterprises better than some members of our party and it is due to this fact that they vehemently detest them.<sup>49</sup>

Actually, many of the successful businessmen in Addis Ababa have financial connections with the TPLF. If we take EFFORT, we see that it owns 51% share in Addis Pharmaceutical Factory, and Star Pharmaceutical and Medical Supply. Most of the remaining shares are those of Mulugeta Guade Mengiste [an Amhara] who has risen like a rocket in the business circle in Addis Ababa within a span of a decade. Mulugeta is in control of Addis International Trading while at the same time being a major shareholder in the BANK of Abyssinia and NILE Insurance. Yemru Nega Denbel, proprietor of the Yebcimad Construction firm has a multi-million Birr investment with its Denbel Building in Addis Ababa. EFFORT that owns Guna has the single most important block of shares of UNITED Insurance. Gebreyes Begna, the owner of the large private distribution company Ethio-Amalgamated has also a large block of EFFORT shares in his business venture. EFFORT also controls Meskerem and Mesebi Companies with Italian investors to whom the TPLF has provided political patronage. Through aggressive and unfair competition, EFFORT is literally squeezing private businesses out of existence.

It is interesting that despite the restrictions of the law, EFFORT and its branch plants are in every dent of the Ethiopian economy. As a party owned conglomerate, EFFORT is divided into 5 sectors - each having its own share companies headed by senior officials and Cadres. The first area they control is Industry, which is directed by Abadi Zemo. This [industrial] branch has the group companies of Meseo Building Materials Construction, Sheba Tannery, Almeda Textile, Almeda Garment, Addis Pharmaceuticals and Mesfin Industrial Engineering. The second area of control is mining, which is directed by Tedros Hagos, and has under it, Meskerem Investment and Ezana Mining. The third area of control is Finance and Trade directed by Sebat Nega. This branch owns Wegagen Bank, Africa Insurance and Guna Trading. The fourth branch of control is Construction and Transport directed by Arkebe Uqbay which has under it Addis Consultancy House, SUR Construction and Trans-Ethiopia. The fifth area of control is Agriculture directed by Tsegaye Taimyalew. This branch runs Hiwot Mechanisation, Tesfa Livestock and Rahwa Goat and Sheep Export.

The other three junior members of the umbrella organization the EPRDF, ANDM, OPDO and SEPDF have also common as well as their own party companies although on a much smaller scale. For example, ANDM has ENDEAVOUR, the OPDO has DINSHO and SEPDF has WENDO, all of which were created with the help of the TPLF.

Mr. Meles admits the TPLF has a much stronger muscle in this regard, but he denies that they indirectly also work for the good of Tigray. He comments:

One accusation that is aimed at [our ] party ventures is that they are created solely for the development of Tigray in opposition to the declared ideas of the EPRDF to develop all regions of Ethiopia. It is an undeniable fact that from the outset, the Tigray establishments started with a larger capital that they accumulated during the long armed struggle. Since the TPLF team had stronger and much better manpower; they were more successful in their business activities. That is why there is discrepancy in the capacities of the disparate party owned ventures.<sup>50</sup>

A careful look shows, however, that EFFORT has direct control of the major businesses other EPRDF companies are engaged in. For example, as well as being in control of DEDEBIT Credit and Savings Institution which is a share company wholly Tigray owned and set up as a joint venture between the Government of Tigray and the Para-NGOs: REST, TWA, TFA. TYA, EFFORT is the towering single shareholder of EPRDF-controlled Wegagen Bank.

One disastrous result of the emergence of these semi-monopolies owned by the governing political parties is that they chocked out private businesses in almost every sector. Mr. Meles denies that when he says:

There is no need of raising the name-calling regarding the EPRDF's foundation enterprises. But one has to refute the false accusation that these enterprises have been used as

instruments to muzzle in private entrepreneurs.<sup>51</sup>

But Mr. Meles has commented in the Central Committee concerning these investors:

The political forces in Ethiopia ... that have co-existed with three governments are "compradors" and as such have no viable organization; nevertheless, they can contribute to the strengthening of "Bonapartism". As the experiences of the last nine years have manifested, they are the ones that invite potential forces to a system of corruption.<sup>52</sup>

Mr. Meles has suspicions that Ethiopia's private investors encourage "Bonapartism" and corruption and are instruments of international capitalism and world imperialism. As a Marxist, therefore, he cautions about the danger and prescribes vigilance against them. He comments in this regard:

A paramount bastion of "Rotten Bonapartism" is comprador capitalism and its global network. A distinguishing characteristic of comprador capitalism is its nature to march along world imperialism and take control of government coffers and accumulate money through the process of systematic plunder. That is why they would be delighted to find a cooperative government to their illegal activities. By the same token, they would be highly disappointed if they do not. They would, if possible, try to control government coffers, or otherwise struggle to make the government in power a collaborating partner in the ongoing pillage.<sup>53</sup>

A careful look proves that the private investors have been treated unfairly because the TPLF and other EPRDF owned corporation do not function by the rules of a free enterprise system. As party owned companies, they enjoy many economic advantages the others do not have. They have the benefit of preferential access to government controlled credit facilities. They receive special treatment in operational and import/export licenses and custom clearances for their goods. They have preferential treatment over private enterprises with regard to government contracts. REST's transport services are transferred to TPLF companies through rigged governmental auctions. And above all, the TPLF regime puts pressure on corporations, business enterprises international donors, whether they are of private or government source to give preference to EPRDF companies.

The question that may be asked at this juncture is, are they really engaged in development projects or are they competing with private business where development is not the main motive? To answer this, if you take EFFORT's transport, trade and construction companies, they enjoy almost a monopoly status in the country. For example, Guna monopolizes the wholesale and export trade with sesame and incense. Trans-Ethiopia is the only transport company that International donors can use to carry relief goods throughout Northern Ethiopia.

Mr. Meles has this to say about their present status and their future in the "Revolutionary Democracy" system he has charted for Ethiopia:

To those who have long-range vision, "Revolutionary Democracy" will assure that our party enterprises will freely compete with the private sector and use their revenues for the party's political aims.<sup>54</sup>

The restricted documentation this author has consulted to do this part considers the EPRDF Business Empire as being, "by far, the largest concentration of economic power within Ethiopia and one of the largest business groups in Africa south of the Sahara and north of the Limpopo."<sup>55</sup>

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## CONCLUSION

The 2001 rift is an event in a continuum from what was expiring within the TPLF movement from its inception in the mid 1970's when several expulsions from power, many ending in liquidation, had taken place. If ever there is a difference between past purges and the most recent one, the latter happens to be bloodless. The previous expulsions took place in general secrecy and without the world hearing about them. The 2001 purge which was engineered by statesmen running a sovereign nation in glaring view of the international press was as it should be, explicit. Otherwise, as the French put it, "plus ça change plus ques c'est la même chose!"

There is total bewilderment as to what the prime minister believes in. He advocates capitalism when asked by the Western press but at the same time swears by Marxism-Leninism to his TPLF Central Committee comrades and Cadres. Undoubtedly, capitalism as an economic system is put on the agenda by Mr. Meles because there is no other alternative to getting access to the World Bank's and the IMF's funds. And despite the fact that even the director of the World bank himself has recently stated that countries that showed remarkable development in recent years were those who did not rely on international loans, Mr. Meles firmly believes that without such loans, Ethiopia would remain indefinitely among the least developed countries of the world.

As an avowed Marxist, even though he is prepared to dispense with its economic approach, Mr. Meles still clings to its core ideology.<sup>56</sup> Capitalism is a short-term instrument he intends to use, the long-range goals of his regime being to build socialism in Ethiopia. But in applying capitalist ways, Meles cannot imagine accepting liberal democracy. The only way to apply his form of capitalism that is dominated by party owned conglomerates is to follow the dictates of Marxist style "Revolutionary Democracy."

It is important to note that Mr. Meles has not found it necessary to change *Derg* policies regarding land, [which is owned by the state.] The Ethiopian government's policy of land ownership, which allows the peasant to farm his own plot but not own it, is influenced not only by the TPLF's Marxist past; it is also due to fears of leaders of the Oromos and the other Peoples of the south who think that if land is privatised, the peasants may be coaxed into selling their plots to green revolution modern farmers from the urban areas and move into the cities where there are no jobs. There is no question that this is a serious problem to ponder. However, with proper legislation, it should be possible to accommodate the needs of both because after all, famine still continues to stalk the people even though the UN has dubbed Ethiopia the future breadbasket of the Middle East and Africa. It should be kept in mind that in developed countries such as Canada and the United States, only 4% of the people are engaged in agriculture; and they worry only about over production. In the case of Ethiopia, specialists report that ninety percent of the people still live by tilling the soil; yet, only 14% of the arable land is utilised.

The Prime Minister still harbours a utopian view of the future of the Ethiopian peasantry. Like Mao and Enver Hoxa, he does not want to urbanize them. He wants technology to follow them to their own rural villages where his "Revolutionary Democracy" would catapult them within a span of 40 to 50 years to such level of development that they would be the envy of the entire Third World. Here is his panacea

Within the next 40 to 50 years, agro-processing sectors will arise in the rural areas. This sector will be manned not by peasant workers but rather by the proletariat. There will be hired workers, doctors and teachers in this developed region. Most rural inhabitants will continue to till the land but will also partly work in the developed rural villages. .... Since in Ethiopia the people and the government own land, the peasantry is not allowed to sell the land he tills; nor can he mortgage it. Nevertheless, he has the right to rent it as prescribed by law. He can also bequeath it to his children. ...Our rural development strategy is ... not dependent on capital and technology. It aims to use land with intensive labour...[Within a span of 40 to 50 years] the rural areas of Ethiopia will have many villages with populations ranging from 5,000 to 10,000. In the villages, the houses will be chic and modern. Each dwelling will have electric power, telephone and running water. Families living in them will have modern beds, chairs, tables and other household utensils. They will all have radio, television and modern electronic instruments.<sup>57</sup>

Mr. Meles charts both the economic and the political landscape of Ethiopia in his mind and all by himself. If in 40 to 50 years rural Ethiopia can achieve the standard of those in Sweden, Japan, Canada and USA, it would be

one of the greatest development miracles of our era. However how this is judged by Ethiopia's fledgling entrepreneurs and the seasoned Ethiopian economists many of whom are currently working in the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other international institutions is another matter.

Meles' "Y'arada politica" [street smart politics] seems to have already burned out. As a US strategic analyst observes:

Meles moved quickly to suppress his opponents, and may well have secured a respite. However, he succeeded in uniting his opposition, destroying his power base, and opening Ethiopia to the prospect of a new round of unrest. And this time, he does not have the forgiving backing of his onetime supporter, (now retired) US President Bill Clinton, to fall back on.<sup>58</sup>

The TPLF split has already done irreparable damage to Mr. Meles' government. At home, the regime has lost people's trust to a frightening degree. The only enclave Mr. Meles' could rely on, Tigray is already out of bounds to the Prime Minister.

One of the factors that led to the weakening of the Prime Ministers power position is the Ethiopian-Eritrean war in which he was perceived as a reluctant participant. The military that was victorious, but came back grudgingly when Meles stopped it short of its goal – the occupation of Asab is no longer under the grip of Meles. Then came another blow: the assassination of his trusted aid: security chief, Kinfe Gebre-Medhin, Kinfe's death removes his absolute trust in controlling the country's security apparatus with which he could silence his enemies. Kinfe had assured Meles that he did not have to worry about a coup d'état from the armed forces. He had reasons for the reassurance. During the previous ten weeks before his death, Kinfe had actually removed the key opponents of Meles in the Armed Forces and from among opposition groups. Some were arrested, others were killed, and still others joined "the disappeared."

Realizing that unity is important at this time when the system of government has lost its bearing, many opposition groups that used to treat each other as dangerous rivals have started to forge alliances. Many who espoused separatism for decades and fought for it are now reconciled to accepting the idea of forging a post-Meles system of government in Ethiopia that would respect its peoples', individual, social, linguistic, cultural and political rights. Leenco Lata, former Deputy Secretary General of the OLF recounts how he came to that conclusion after agonizing over it for a long time. He believes that as long as Ethiopia subscribes to true equality for its peoples and agrees to "decolonise, decentralize, and democratise," there is no need for the Oromos, who comprise the largest ethnic group, to secede. When he speaks of "decolonisation," he is not speaking only of the ancien regime. His book is replete with examples that can be used to prove Weyane's economic and political control over Oromia. And when he speaks of decentralisation and democratisation, he is again alluding not only to former Ethiopian autocratic regimes but also to the government of Mr. Meles Zenawi that speaks of ruling democratically but 'reigns' autocratically.<sup>59</sup> Even though it has flip flopped on this issue before, the OLF as an organization also seems to have come to the same conclusion. An analyst for *Defence & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* observes:

The split within the TPLF had served as a catalyst for most opposition groups to come together. Even the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had sided with Eritrea during the recent war and which had also fought a secessionist war against what it felt was traditional Amhara domination, had now agreed to abandon secessionist aims and work for a united Ethiopia.<sup>60</sup>

The Ethiopian opposition is extending its reach abroad in order to make its voices heard by the powerful countries of the West. In August 2001, AAPO hired a lobby group to represent it on Capitol Hill and the White House.<sup>61</sup> Ethiopians in the West, that have rarely exercised their ability to influence policies regarding their country have also now started to flex their muscle. This is particularly true of those living in the United States of America. Here, close to 500,000 Ethiopian-Americans live where political lobby is a powerful weapon in

American politics. An Ethiopian community group led by many former Ethiopian political figures including the country's former Defence Minister, Mr. Ayalew Mandefro which rallied Ethiopian-Americans to vote for Al Gore and contributed close to US\$250,000 to the 2000 Democratic campaign, is already seeing its efforts bearing fruit.

On July 3, 2000, a group of senior Democratic Senators, including Joseph Lieberman, [the year 2000 Democratic Vice Presidential candidate,] Edward Kennedy, Christopher Dodd – Patrick Leahy and Dick Durbin wrote to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell to urge the Bush Administration to pressure the Ethiopian Government to improve its human rights record. In their letter that was written after police brutality crushed student protesters and thousands of people were jailed, they stated:

While we are pleased that the two human rights activists, Dr. Berhanu Nega and [Professor] Mesfin Woldemariam, were recently released on bail following a worldwide outcry, we believe their cases highlighted a disturbing pattern of intimidation by the government. ...The Ethiopian government has followed a pattern of rounding up large numbers of people, detaining them without charge, and then releasing them weeks or months later – with no guarantee that they will be free of future charges. This pattern seems to be designed to intimidate opposition groups. ...In 2000, the number of people in prison in Ethiopia for politically related offences is over 10,000, not counting the estimated 2,200 former government officials who are still awaiting trial after almost a decade in prison.... The Committee to Protect Journalists finds that Ethiopia has been Africa's foremost jailer of journalists in recent years. Twenty-seven journalists are in exile because they fear being arrested if they return to Ethiopia.... We ask you to take every opportunity to press the Ethiopian government to change these disturbing practices and respect the human rights of its citizens.<sup>62</sup>

The Prime Minister's control on the Government Cadres who now support him for fear of losing their lucrative jobs is itself extremely fragile. Since the ground seems to be slowly sinking from under him, even those in his camp seem to be scrambling to find their safety niches. For example, on 13 July 2001, seven senior Cadres in Meles Zenawi's government who were sent on a mission to North America defected. The seven high ranking and well respected Cadres are: Girmay Hiluf, Solomon Tekle, Abay Kiros, Hailemariam Araya, Tadese Beyene, Hagos Belay and Berhane Abraha. It was reported that “these seven Cadres were hand-picked for their ability to counter the propaganda against Meles in North America, and to lure Ethiopians of Tigray origin there back to the fold.”<sup>63</sup>

Tigray nationalism is a crucible of the TPLF but the Prime Minister's popularity there has already been dealt a serious blow. Members of the Tewolde-Siye faction are much popular there for their role during the war with Eritrea, for their unfettered Tigrayan patriotism, and for their populist criticism of the Mr. Meles' nomenclature. The Prime Minister is so concerned about security in Tigray that he has in fact taken extraordinary measures. According to a report in a Tigray newspaper, *Wegaheta*, the government has instructed all militias and armed personnel living in Mekele and its environs to surrender their arms and continue their security exercise using clubs. This shows, according to the paper, that “the regime in power has lost its faith in the people of Mekele.”<sup>64</sup> The violent crackdown the Prime Minister ordered during the last riot has also earned him the hatred of the youth and has led the people to suspect that they are under a dogmatic and intolerant autocracy once again. In the Diaspora, Ethiopians originating from outside the Tigray *Kilil* have almost unanimously opposed Mr. Meles' ethnically oriented regime. Their support for the government during the Ethiopian-Eritrean war ended when Meles ordered the victorious Ethiopian army to stop short of occupying Asab. This opposition group has now been augmented by the Tewolde-Siye group's supporters from Tigray who have met the PM's envoys and Cadres with violent demonstrations all over the world particularly in North America.

The first clear sign of a repudiation by Diaspora Tigrayans was observed when US-domiciled Tigrayans rebuffed Berhane Gebre Kristos, [Ethiopian Ambassador to the US and a strong supporter of Meles] as he tried to explain the PM's position at a meeting held at Howard University, in Washington DC. Berhane's audience walked out in the middle of the discussion. Then the Washington Tigrayan community held its own meeting on March 25

and announced plans to organise a public gathering in support of the dissidents. The situation was repeated with Addiselaem Balema in London and Assefa Mamo in Seattle and Washington. They also met a highly hostile crowd

To make matters worse for the Prime Minister, the International Committee of Tigrrians for Democracy (ICTD) was created by the Tigrayan Diaspora (in the US and Australia) to disseminate the dissident's stand by Internet. The opposition to Meles among Diaspora Tigrayans has increased by leaps and bounds and similar explanatory meetings were disrupted in major cities in North America including Boston, Atlanta and Toronto as well as in other places around the world.

Many of Mr. Meles' Foreign Service personnel are also currently abandoning the ship. In June, the Somali born Ethiopian ambassador to Belgium, Peter Robleh Gabriel was relieved of his job but refused to return back to Addis Ababa to take another assignment. He is currently seeking a job with an international organization. Several other Ethiopian diplomats have also followed suit the same month. They include Desta Arefo, the former ambassador to India, Dawit Kebede, the ambassador in Uganda, and Berhane Meskel Nega, senior counsellor of the embassy to the United Nations. Dawit and Berhane have now actually settled in the United States of America.<sup>65</sup>

That the Meles regime has come out weaker than it was before the purge can be shown further. The division is not only in the ruling TPLF. The EPRDF, which was simply a cluster of TPLF satellites, has also been shaken from its foundation. Unchallenged obedience to the TPLF has been replaced with bold demands from the surrogate parties. The TPLF's views are not monolithic any more. Both of SEDPC's and the OPDO's leaderships have been fragmented for good.

According to the *Reporter*, which has the most reliable inside information, even the fact that ANDM has not raised a challenge to the TPLF hegemony has been received with apparent suspicion in Meles camp. They think that the Amhara party has an ulterior motive that they cannot put their finger on.<sup>66</sup> As for the other two parties, they have for the first time castigated the TPLF, which brought them into existence as an unwholesome foster parent and an obstacle to their aspirations. Dr. Negasso Gidada and Mr. Shiferaw Jarso of the OPDO have been particularly very vocal in this regard. They raised the question of why Tigray, which is generally arid and has no known natural resource base, should be allowed to disproportionately benefit from the natural wealth that emanate in the south.

One of Mr. Meles' staunchest supporters, Almaz Mako, who was Speaker of the House of the Federation and was, by the constitution, the next in line to take over the mantle of the Presidency of Ethiopia, asked asylum in the US on August 12, 2001. She gave an interview to the Voice of America that she could not bear any more the wealth of Oromia being diverted to build Tigray.<sup>67</sup> On August 13 2001, Aaddee Almaz had a press release in which she stated:

The EPRDF government has brought about untold miseries and sufferings on the Oromo people.... [The] OPDO is ... reduced to a rubber stamp for TPLF rule over Oromia. As a result, thousands of innocent Oromos have disappeared, perished in detention centres from torture and many more forced to flee the country. Today,... [there is] direct rule from Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's office. It should be clear to every Oromo that there is neither democracy nor federalism in Ethiopia. The lip service to democracy is done only to impress western donor countries. Federalism is propagated only to hoodwink Oromos and other nations and nationalities. In reality, today Oromia has ... become an appendage of Tigray. Oromo resources are mobilized and looted to develop Tigray. ... The ruling party is categorically rejected by the entire Oromo nation and survives only on the backs of its repressive security forces. Although the regime issues statements to the contrary, the OPDO and the Oromo people have rejected Meles Zenawi's prescription of Revolutionary Democracy. ...."Narrow nationalism" is a code term used by the government to persecute any conscious Oromo who speaks on behalf of Oromos and refuses to accept dictatorship and oppression by TPLF....Because I cannot in clear conscience represent Oromia in the Federal Council and remain the speaker of the House of Federation, because my continuous existence in my post will only give the false impression that the Oromos are represented in the government, I have decided to vacate my position as a Speaker of the House of Federation and seek political asylum in the United States. I have also decided to continue my struggle for the just cause of the Oromo people by joining [the] OLF.<sup>68</sup>



It is not by coincidence that on August 11 2001, 37 Security Officers who happened to be members of the OPDO were arrested by the government. The accusation of the Meles government was that they leaked confidential information.<sup>69</sup>

There was a time when in the *Gingema* the government was forced to scramble to produce its own statistics to prove that the allegations of unfair resource distribution are exaggerated. It had to refute with a statistical data that a disproportionate number of roads, industries, clinics and schools, were built in Tigray.

In general, the priorities of Mr. Meles are misplaced. A question may be asked if “Bonapartism” and “Corruption” are really the primary contradictions or the major problems in Ethiopia today. What about democratic rights and the role of the opposition? What about ethnicity that his government has cultivated and is now using as a threat that if he and his party are not in control, Ethiopia would implode? Even the Americans who are worried about the plight of the Ethiopian opposition are also slowly recognizing that Meles’ ethnic policy is a time bomb. A recent report observes:

... Washington is said to have insisted that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi initiate negotiations with the opposition parties, including the non-legalized ones. The point was made during the May 30 visit to Addis Ababa of the acting assistant secretary for African affairs, Nancy Powell, and the Africa director of the National Security Council, Jendayi Frazer.... In their discussions with Meles Zenawi, the American delegation brought up the issues of the pros and the cons of his ethnic rationalization policy.... this Ethiopian policy is now considered a threat in the halls of Washington.<sup>70</sup>

Meles Zenawi does not accord significance to Ethiopian nationalism but the secession clause he enshrined in the constitution, a clause that no democratic country recognises in its statutes, will always remain as Damocles’ sword on its united existence. Many still consider this issue much more important than “ Rotten Bonapartism” or corruption” which are powerful weapons the Prime Minister carefully set up to crush his opponents who were on the verge of ousting him from power. But as Montaigne put it: “Corruption ...is made up by the particular contribution of every individual man; some contribute treachery, while others contribute injustice, fear...tyranny, avarice and cruelty; [and] the contribution is according to the power they wield.”<sup>71</sup>

Mr. Meles finds himself in dilemma during this trying period of intractable national crisis. No matter what, he is unable to extricate himself from his party’s political past. Everything he did since March 2001 is right out of the Book of MALELIT and the TPLF. In actual fact, the 20-year gestation of the TPLF had created a Mr. Jekil and a Mr. Clyde in Mr. Meles. To one group of his audience, he exhibits a capitalist veneer; but to the other he is an incorrigible Marxist-Leninist. He engages in the discourse of establishing democracy but rules in an authoritarian fashion. He easily extends licences to the free press but has quickly transformed Ethiopia into a massive African jailhouse for journalists. He summoned opposition political parties to challenge his EPRDF for power; yet, he has also openly announced that no other party can supplant his in Ethiopia. He abhors Ethiopian nationalism and still alleges that he is endeavouring to spawn a “New Ethiopia.” He has nurtured an ethnic federation but in the process evolved a Frankenstein that craves to gobble him up for not honouring his words of purveying genuine political autonomy to all of Ethiopia’s nationalities. He dismissed his opponents under the guise of expurgating the state of unbridled corruption but his political circle happens to wallow in precisely the same boat. He considers international financial institutions as capitalist piranhas and yet he quivers at the thought of disconcerting them lest they cut off development aid to his “Revolutionary Democracy.” His locale is the province of Tigray but he has lost the trust of the people in this ethnic enclave due to his zealous favouritism of Eritrea and Eritreans. He relocated the locus of political power from the TPLF to the EPRDF, but the minions he nurtured to counter his nemeses in the TPLF continue to jump his ship of state. He cannot turn towards his long time authoritarian comrade, Isaias Afewerki because this other half is himself reeling in the same type of political quagmire.

No matter whether Mr. Meles rides this storm or not, one thing is clear; he will be remembered for begetting a highly eccentric system of government in thousands of years of Ethiopian history. Indeed, it is

inconceivable that there has ever been a government more reckless with its past than his, so quick to tear asunder its country's unity in the name of ethnic symmetry but actually for the sake of *divide et impera*, so eager to land-lock it forever, so cavalier with the valour and genius of its past leaders from Ezana to Caleb, from Lalibala to Amda Tsion, from Fasilides to Teodros from Yohannes to Menelick and Haile Selassie, simply to assuage transitory political exigencies.

Meles maintains that Ethiopia will face Armageddon without his government, but there are still geniuses in Ethiopia, even among the illiterate sector of its population to deliver it a political break. All indications are that the time is now ripe for such a transition. And as for Mr. Meles' political persona, which has never shown a liking for the country it rules, which piled abuse on its seals and symbols, which cared more for the welfare of Eritrea and Eritreans than Ethiopia and Ethiopians, as the mainstay of a prodigal political character, it has no choice but to countenance an unenviable political demise. The predicament for the Prime Minister is, of course, that there is nowhere to turn. Neither Tigray nor the rest of Ethiopia are in a position to come to the rescue. Even the people of Eritrea – the “mother country” that he gleefully bestowed independence on consider him a pariah because together with his political ally, Isaias Afewerki, he presided over the death of some 70,000 of their kith and kin, the uprooting of close to half a million of their people, and the expulsion of over 60,000 of their citizens. Mr. Meles must have heeded Nietzsche's dictum: “Only a bird can build its house on an abyss.”

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## Notes

1.. The organizing members of *MAGEBT* were seven and included: Aregawi Berhe [*Nom de Guerre* "Berihun"] from Adwa; Fantahun; Zeratsion [NDG "Giday"] Eritrean in origin but born and brought up in Tigray; Alemseged Mengesha [NDG "Hailu"] from Tenbien; Mulu Hagos [NDG "Asfeha"] from Shire; Zerou Gessesse [NDG "Agaze"] from Enderta; Ambaye Mesfin [NDG "Seyoum"] from Agame; Amha Tsehaye [NDG "Belay"] from Axum

2.. The early declaration of the rebels did state that the Tigray nationalist Front would dissolve itself and join a Pan -Ethiopian organization that would guarantee the right of self-determination if it appeared at a future date.

3.. The secretly drafted Manifesto which many early members of the movement suspect was the work of newly appointed members of the Central Committee, Meles Zenawi and Sebhat Nega [both known to be rabidly anti-Amhara and strongly pro-Eritrean] appeared in 1976. Even though the rank and file did not share the idea, according to the document, the aim of the rebels was to establish "the democratic republic of Tigray" and "to recognize the right of Eritrea to secede from Ethiopia." The presumption was so contentious that fearing a backlash, even the EPLF was said to have opposed it. Nevertheless, Meles' cadre, Addisalem Baliema continued to fan the idea of a referendum for the independence of Tigray until 1988, less than three years before the TPLF took over power in Addis Ababa.

4.. According to the nationalist members of the TPLF, Tigrayan opposition to the Ethiopian government is not new. They claim that this feeling started in 1896 when the Shoan born Emperor of Ethiopia Menelik II, in opposition to Italy's territorial designs on Ethiopia, deployed a 100,000- man army into Tigray without adequate provisions, thereby forcing the soldiers to live off the land. Some even make the prevaricated assertion that Tigrayans who perished protecting their homes against Menelik's troops outnumbered the defeated Italians who died at the Battle of Adwa. When in 1935-36, Fascist Italy's forces invaded Ethiopia, the main battlefield was in Tigray, and once again the inhabitants suffered. Three years after Italy's defeat [1941] and Emperor Haile Selassie's return to power, Tigrayan peasants revolted against the imperial regime. This is known in TPLF parlance as the first Weyane. Ethiopian government forces, supported by British warplanes, which were flown in from Eden, suppressed the revolt and Haile Selassie is accused by the Tigray nationalists of imposing a harsh peace on their impoverished territory.

<sup>5</sup> Lenin, Vladimir, *Illich, What is to be Done*, Moscow, CW5, 1902.

6..From its inception, the seven original members led the party as its core leadership. One member - Alemseged Mersha was however dropped from the leadership within two years. He was accused of not only power-mongering but also of individualistic tendencies and for not respecting the rigid revolutionary discipline created by the party. Aregawi Berhe was its civil as well as military commander. In 1975, when more members joined the movement the leadership was re-constituted, with two new members, Asfeha Hagos and Hailu Mengesha having being replaced by Sebhat Nega and Musie Mehari. Aregawi Berhe was elected Chairman, Abay Tsehaye was given the political portfolio, Musie Nega military affairs and Seyoum Mesfin the foreign

office (which incidentally he still keeps.)

<sup>7</sup> For the historical condition before the EPRDF came to power and the developments that took place in preparing the new regime to be established, see Paul Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, Palgrave, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Theoretically Ethiopia is a Federal Republic. Its constitution ratified in December 1994; became effective on 22 August 1995. The TPLF abolished the 13 provinces of Ethiopia and replaced it with one based on Ethnicity, which has also been given the right of cessation. Since that time, Ethiopia has been subdivided into nine ethnically-based administrative regions and 2 chartered cities: ; Afar; Amhara, Benishangul/Gumuz;; Gambela; Harar; Oromia; Somali; Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region, Tigray and the cities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. It is these entities he and his colleagues created that the P.M. claims will disintegrate if the EPRDF loses power.

<sup>10</sup> Copley *Op.Cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, April, 200, No. 946.

<sup>12</sup> The pro-Meles group also known as Ate Upper Palace Group. includes Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin ; Ambassador to Washington Berhane Gebre Christos and the late security.' chief Kinfu Gebremedhin.

<sup>13</sup> As the Reporter notes, for some curious reason, three sensitive but nevertheless, very important issues were not raised by Mr. Meles. These are 1. Direction of Foreign Policy; 2. Military Issues; and 3. Questions dealing with the Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict particularly in the areas of the present status of demarcation, reconciliation, armament and demobilization

<sup>14</sup> The family connection within the Sebbat-Meles Group is quite revealing. Tsegaye Berhe who shifted course and moved from supporting the Tewolde-Siye group is married to Kidusan Nega a younger sister of Sebbat Nega. Addis Alem Balema, former Ethiopian Ambassador to China is married to the sister of Arkebe Iqubai, who took over Siye's position as EFFORT manager. Arkebe himself is married to Meles staunch supporter, the Ethiopian Ambassador to the US, Berhane Gebre Kristos. Two Meles supporters and Central Committee members – Tirfu Kidane Mariam and Abay Woldu are husband and wife. But as the Indian Ocean Newsletter points out, relations may not always work. For example, the ousted Chief of Staff, General Tsadkan Gebre Tensay, is married to Sebbat Nega's nearest cousin but this could not stop his purge because his transgression [attempting a coup against Meles] was unpardonable. Mulugeta Alem Seged and Alem Seged Gebre Amlak are also related but they are in different camps – the former on Meles' side and the latter on Tewolde-Siye group's side. Afeworki Alemseged, Mulugeta's brother had a fall out with the Meles' camp because he worked closely with the Derg. He escaped to Kenya where in 1994, he was gunned down by the TPLF's secret police at a refugee camp in Thika located near Nairobi.. See the Indian Ocean Newsletter, 01/05/01.

<sup>15</sup> Copley *Op.Cit.*

<sup>16</sup> The TPLF - has membership of about 100,000. It is based in Mekele [Tigray.] Its ideology is: Marxism-Leninist, and from 1978 to 1991, it was guided by the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray [MALELIT.] which followed Enver Hoxa's line after the latter broke away from Maoism. The structure of the TPLF follows a Leninist Model. At the top is the Secretary General [Mr. Meles Zenawi] who is mostly attached to the other government - the EPRDF and follows day-to-day activities there. He goes to the TPLF organization to get an approval when he has to have the EPRDF make major decisions. Second is the Politburo in Mekele [9 members including Mr. Meles himself] that makes key decisions collegially and without regard to the EPRDF. Third is the Central Committee with 30 members [now functioning with only 20 since the expulsion of 10 members.] Whatever the Politburo decides has to be approved by the Central Committee. In cases involving

key policy decisions that the EPRDF wants to make, the Prime Minister has to go to Mekele and get the approval of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the TPLF. If it is not approved, it cannot be implemented even if it is legislated by parliament now almost totally controlled by the EPRDF.

<sup>17</sup> Negasso's wife is German UN Integrated Regional Information Network June 26, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> This was told to the author by a delegate who was attending the conference. The informant has asked for anonymity that the research respects.

<sup>19</sup> *Walta* Information Centre, Addis Ababa, July, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> The BBC, 29 July, 2001

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Negasso's terms as President would expire in September. Any one among the following may take the titular presidency once it is vacated. 1. General Abdala Gameda, 2. Addisu Legesse 3.. Almaz Mako, 4.. Kasu Ilala, 5.. Girma Biru, and 6. Genet Zewde.

<sup>22</sup> *Walta* Information Network, Addis Ababa, July 24, 2001

<sup>23</sup> Ethiopian News Agency, Addis Ababa, July 23, 2001]

<sup>24</sup> Finote Democracy Radio, July, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Meles' "Perspectives and "Bonapartism"," and "Again on "Bonapartism"," together with other shorter documents presented at the 2001 conference, are hereafter referred to in the footnotes as Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001. The translation of these *Gingema* papers from Tigrigna to Amharic was rendered by *Reporter* Magazine. The translation from Amharic to English is the author's. This researcher pays tribute to the *Reporter* staff for the way they conducted themselves and particularly for their candid and fair reporting during the crisis. Both the *Reporter* and the Author have tried to be as faithful to the original as possible.

<sup>26</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001. Here, the Prime Minister was referring to his plan to sack Abate Kisho and his allies from the SEPDP party.

<sup>27</sup> N. Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, 1973, P. 50

<sup>28</sup> Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1869, Ch. 3]

<sup>29</sup> . Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884, Ch. 9).

<sup>30</sup> Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire*, ch. 7).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Ch. 3]

<sup>32</sup> Prime Minister Meles Zenawi presented the position paper on "Bonapartism" during the months of March to May, 2001, first to the Central Committee and then to the TPLF Cadres comprising about 10,000, the majority of whom are in Tigray and Addis Ababa. The ideas are supposed to be discussed, then passed so that they would become the policy of the EPRDF

<sup>33</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001. See also Irving, Fetscher, *Karl Marx and Marxism*, New York, 1970; Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 3 vols. New York, 1978

<sup>34</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001

<sup>35</sup> . Indian Ocean Newsletter - Daily Alert, May 30 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Indian Ocean Newsletter, 2001, No. 946; Ibid. No. 947]

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> SBG's business managers and major shareholders are Tedla Yizengaw, Minwiyelet Atnafu, Abebew Desta, Worku Merga and Asnake Jenbere most of whom are now at Kerchele prison.

<sup>39</sup> THE INDIAN OCEAN NEWSLETTER No. 951; Ibid. 952

<sup>40</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001

<sup>41</sup> *THE INDIAN OCEAN NEWSLETTER* 2001, No. 944

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> The following officials, who are not only TPLF members but also high-ranking officials of the TPLF have been or are in charge of REST, answerable directly to the TPLF. Some, have been purged during the recent feud in the organization, and have been replaced by other high-ranking officials of the same organization. Example: Abbay Tsehaye Chairman of REST; Central Committee/Politburo of TPLF; Head of the governmental Commission for Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Rehabilitation of Tigray /SAERT; [Position up to the 2001 purge;] Gebru Asrat, Central Committee/Politburo of TPLF; Regional President of Tigray [Position up to the 2001 purge;] Tadesse Haile, Head of (Federal) Investment Office; before Planning Bureau in Meqele; Dr. Solomon Inquai Member of Regional Council of Tigray; Head of Department of Social Affairs, Regional Government of Tigray, Special Advisor to the Regional President of Tigray; Dr. Mulu Ketsela, Economic Advisor to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Minister in Charge of Foreign Economic Relations in the Prime Ministers Office; Dr. Etiyopia Beyene, Member, House of People's Representatives for an Addis Abeba constituency, wife of Dr. Mesfin Minas, head of Tigray Regional Bureau of Health in Mekele and Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tigray Development Association; Tekleweyni Assefa Executive Director of REST. ]

<sup>46</sup> Again all officials who are in control of TDA, are TPLF members answerable to the organization and most are among the heavyweights though to a lesser extent than REST's. Example: Araya Zerihun, Chairman and Managing Director of TDA, TPLF-member; W/zo Aregash Adane Central Committee and Politburo member, TPLF; Secretary of Regional Council of Tigray and its Executive Committee Dr. Teklehaymanot Haileselasie: Vice Minister (Federal) of Education; Dr. Mesfin Minas: Head of Tigray Regional Bureau of Health; Gebremichael Pawlos: Retired former head of governmental enterprise; Dr. Mitiku Haile: President Mekele University College. Some individual members are from the Tigray professional and business community mainly from Mekele.]

<sup>47</sup> The managing director is Kidisan Nega Central Committee member and sister of Sebhat Nega - Meles" best friend and smart intriguer.] Tigray Youth Association [TYA,] and Tigray Farmers' Association [TFA.]

<sup>48</sup> Among them are - Sebhat Nega, founder and TPLF chairman [1979-89] politburo member from the organisation's inception until the present time still in the Meles" camp, Siye Abraha [Chairman of the Board of Directors] and TPLF Politburo member since 1979, formerly Minister of Defence of the TGE/1991-95) [TPLF] recently expelled from the organization and presently leading the dissenters' group, Abadi Zemo [TPLF] Central Committee member since 1994, Head of REST, 1970"9-91.]

<sup>49</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> The author expresses gratitude to officials with Ethiopian interest at heart [they prefer to remain anonymous,] who supplied the special study documents on which the information in this section is based.]

<sup>56</sup> One thing that is clear is that both the Tewolde-Siye Faction that has been expelled from the Central Committee and the Sebhat-Meles-Sebhat Faction that is now in control of the majority of TPLF Cadres are still avowed Marxist-Leninists. Even after their acrimonious tussle in 2001, they have not accused each other of following a Leninist path. In fact if there are accusations, it is that each denounces the other of not being genuine Marxist-Leninist with a" Revolutionary Democracy" as its guiding principle.

<sup>57</sup> Meles Zenawi, *Gingema* Papers, 2001

<sup>58</sup> Copley, Op.Cit.

<sup>59</sup> Leenco Lata, *The Ethiopian State at the Crossroads: Decolonisation, and Democratisation or Integration?* Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1999.

<sup>60</sup> Gregory R Copley, "The end of the Ethiopian facade: Meles isolated as the ruling TPLF implodes " in *Defence & Foreign Affairs Strategic* ; Alexandria; Mar 2001

<sup>61</sup> At the end of July, AAPO hired a lobby firm - Holland & Knight as its official representative in Washington. According to the Indian Ocean Newsletter, one of its objectives is to set up meetings between AAPO leaders and U.S. officials in charge of Ethiopia. Also, according to this report, AAPO has hired the lobby firm in an effort to take full advantage of the Bush administration's new, more open policy regarding Ethiopia. See *THE INDIAN OCEAN NEWSLETTER* N° 960

<sup>62</sup> The U.S. Senators who wrote the letter are: Dick Durbin (D-IL), Carl Levin (D-MI), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT.) See United States Senator Illinois, Dick Durbin, Press Release, July 3, 2001.

<sup>63</sup> BBC Monitoring Service, United Kingdom; Jul 17, 2001. Earlier, two EPRDF Cadres, who travelled to Holland to attend an UNDP-sponsored course had defected. They were former chief editor of "Weyen"

newspaper and coordinator of EPRDF organs, who was, and Mr Habtamu Alemayehu, former MP of the ANDM [Amhara National Democratic Movement, partner in the coalition] and an employee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. THE INDIAN OCEAN NEWSLETTER N° 955  
23/06/01 ETHIOPIA

<sup>64</sup> *Wegaheta*. Sunday, 17 Sene [24 June], 2001.

<sup>65</sup> THE INDIAN OCEAN NEWSLETTER No. 956

<sup>66</sup> The Reporter, Vol. iv, No. 37, Sene 1993 [June, 2001

<sup>67</sup> The Voice of America, Horn of Africa Region, August 12, 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Press Release by Aaddee Almaz Mako, Former Speaker of the Ethiopian House of Federation, August 13 20001.

<sup>69</sup> BBC World Service, August 11 2001

<sup>70</sup> THE INDIAN OCEAN NEWSLETTER No. 955  
June 23, 2001

<sup>71</sup> Montaigne, "Of Vanity," *Essays*, [1580-88.]

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