

PART FIVE:

Lacrimosa for Ethiopia: Political Liquidation of EPRDF/TPLF

By Tecola W. Hagos [December 23, 2009]

“Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein [from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*]

“One does not set up a target for the sake of missing it; in the same way, evil does not exist in the world.”

Epictetus [from the *Enchiridion*]

I. Introduction

Epictetus’s provocatively challenging statement that the principle of evil does not exist is as shocking today as it was to his contemporaries in Imperial Rome nearly two thousand years ago. I too believe evil is simply the absence of good deeds rather than an active principle; moreover, by contrast to Epictetus, as far as I am concerned the concept of the “good” or virtue is our transcendence of mere existence and the work of our mind. Ethiopia is in big trouble and we, Ethiopians of the present time, are even more so. Few seem to understand the core source of our troubles and the seriousness and the immensity of the problems facing Ethiopia as a nation-state. For most seem to think that our problem has to do with bad governments and terrible national economy policies. I challenge both assertions as our core sources of troubles, for the sources of our troubles are to be found elsewhere. The problems with bad governments and poor economy are simply derived from far more devastating social conditions in Ethiopia. This does not mean that Ethiopia’s past and present bad governments and its chronic poor economy did not have negative impact on our development aspirations.

I am inclined usually to consider solutions rather than brood over on problems or stick out accusing fingers at those to blame. However, when it comes to Ethiopia, I am making such pessimistic assumptions about Ethiopia as a country and the people of Ethiopia as a whole with the grim possibility of a catastrophic end. This is not a pleasant state of affair for anybody to be in or deal with. I have no intention to walk naked predicting doom and gloom as Jeremiah did in Jerusalem over two thousand five hundred years ago about the destruction of Judea. Needless to say, I am no Jeremiah by a long shot, but a man simply consumed with serious concern for Ethiopia’s survival, with an overwhelming desire to see a people treated with dignity and proper respect by their own government and everybody else.

It is particularly disconcerting and debilitating to come to the realization that our “Ethiopian life” is a life that I can only describe as anecdotal, a life that lacks authenticity. The quality of social relationships is deformed and destructive in most of its aspects, such as gender relationships, family and children related interactions, teacher-student relationships, communal participation et cetera. I cannot understand how anyone with his right mind would conclude that life in Ethiopia to be civil when we see that most Ethiopians live in extremely hostile social environment. Our physical living quarters

reflect the poverty of our minds too. For most Ethiopians living in huts, with no better construction than that of a weaver bird's nests, or in hideous *Korkoro betts* with nothing of comfort or utility is the sum total of the reality of life in Ethiopia. The way things are at the present time, it is next to impossible to live a clean, genuine, and honest life in Ethiopia. Because I have lived most of my adult life in exile in a foreign country, with no particular attachment neither to its culture or its people, I am an individual who had never set root anywhere, who is fully-packed-ready-to-leave all these years of exile, at a moments notice. It is precisely this sense of uprootedness that gives me clarity of perception as to what is wrong in Ethiopia.

The common perception, both in the Ethiopian Diaspora community and at home in Ethiopia, seems to be that Ethiopia with the right political leadership and the right economic policy would turn around its dismal quality of life for its citizens into that of great prosperity and highly improved quality of life. This is a nice belief to have and a myth to follow. However, it seems to me that both the dire economy and the current terrible government are simply symptoms of a far more entrenched and devastating problem that all Ethiopians are faced with. Ethiopia's problem totally has to do with problems of social and cultural norms and the way Ethiopian families function and how they brought up their children. I have watched over the years through documentary films, pictures, and numerous videos how Ethiopians live, eat, talk, socialize, et cetera. I have unlimited access to my own life also—how I lived and how I related with family members, friends, and society in my formative years and in my coming of age—to help me understand this serious problem.

The harsh treatment of discipline of Ethiopian children carried out at very early age might have contributed to delay in cognitive development and the development of personhood. Several clinical studies including the recent studies on cognition and social development of children in Latino immigrant families confirm my conclusion. [See Bruce Fuller, Margaret Bridges, Edward Bein, Heeju Jang, Sunyoung Jung, Sophia Rabe-Hesketh, Neal Halfon, Alice Kuo, *The Health and Cognitive Growth of Latino Toddlers: At Risk or Immigrant Paradox?* Published online: 25 June 2009, [www. Springerlink.com](http://www.Springerlink.com)] In the Ethiopian situation such harsh discipline is tied to food availability, which seems to have a devastating effect in molding the behavior of children like a Pavlovian dog. Such form of reinforced behavior or inhibition or censorship of an Ethiopian child is difficult to overcome by later days enlightenment of the same individual. This seems to be also what the famous sociologist Donald Levine pointed out in his book *Wax and Gold* that as grown ups Ethiopians either become very aggressive or too submissive in cases of individual challenges. I have cited here for more extensive work a compilation of annotated bibliography which is worth the effort to read and understand the complexity of the problem of family life and the upbringing of Ethiopian Children in Ethiopia. [See Eva Poluha, *An Annotated Bibliography on Children and Childhood in Ethiopia*, Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children Norway, Addis Ababa, March 2007.]

I agree with what most of my compatriots claim that there would be some improvement in the short run with the establishment of a new Ethiopian Government replacing the Government of Meles Zenawi. And with some new economic policy in place, there may

be some temporary relief, but all such seemingly positive changes would still be a far cry from solving the monumental problems of our nasty life-style and degenerative social norms. Life in Ethiopia is the most dismal of all the World's communal lives. Our accumulated inertia of centuries may be a drag on any attempt on our part to change even the least significant aspect of our life routine that is very superficial to begin with.

The United Nations Human Development Report 2009 - HDI rankings affirm my statement, for Ethiopia is listed at 171 out of 182 countries on that list. If change is the key to improving the quality of life in Ethiopia, then such change has to be massive and revolutionary. No band aid patch fixing would make any dent in solving our entrenched highly corrosive social problems. The toxicity of some of our culture and the distortions of our present life-style due to our recent adaptation of even worse behavioral "modernity" has brought us to the brink of total social meltdown, and the leftover thereof of cultural slug would be of no value to anyone.

II. The Present State of Affair

We, Ethiopians, are being given a Morton's Fork for a choice by the current Government of Ethiopia. Meles Zenawi as Prime Minister seems to be writing the last chapter of his destructive rule of Ethiopia of the last eighteen years since the time he arrived in 1991 at Bole Airport in a rented small plane. Even at that point arriving without much fanfare, he was no ordinary warrior, and not with very little possession as we would have expected. He was already a multimillionaire, even far richer than the man he chased out of office. He controlled literally multimillion dollar accounts in different banks around the Western World on behalf of his organization the TPLF and its non-profit wing REST. For all practical purposes he owned the accounts. The assumption that the leadership of the TPLF consisted of poor peasants wearing nothing better than flimsy rubber/plastic sandals and clad in hand-me-downs, is a far cry from the reality.

Over the years, from such well funded start-up capital, Meles Zenawi has turned "TPLF, Inc" into a conglomerate with asset that could be reckoned in tens of billions of dollars. His own personal fortune could be estimated into hundreds of millions of dollars. Meles Zenawi and his wife Azeb Mesfin are very rich, and his close associates, such as Sebhat Nega, Mesfin Seyoum, et cetera have amassed each fortunes worth hundreds of millions of dollars. This is not mere allegation and can easily be verified by simply taking into account the number of Board Membership and Executive positions they are holding. It is not that difficult to verify the number of private business interests they have in Ethiopia alone as well.

Life in Ethiopia whether one has millions of dollars in deposit in foreign banks or one lives on the charities of strangers is still a miserable affair for all. There is no way one could lead a relaxed and pleasant life in Ethiopia where one is circled with extreme deprivation, poverty, corruption and moral degradation day in day out. Unless one is made of cast iron, the human suffering everywhere in Ethiopia would get to such a person sooner or later. The new fabulously rich TPLF Leaders now running the Ethiopian Government are no exception, even they would be feeling the pinch of discomfort and

would desire a breathe of fresh air somewhere else in a community where there is no comparable degraded humanity as is the case in Ethiopia.

Moreover, Meles Zenawi and his close associates are mostly in their mid-fifties and over. In case of Sebehat Nega, maybe close to or over eighty. Those individuals have now children who are attending colleges or finishing high schools or attending preparatory pre-college expensive private institutions mostly in European countries. They all have lived the last thirty years either in the bush fighting and conniving or in power as part of the EPRDF Government suppressing and harming the people of Ethiopia. The ghosts of all their misdeeds are haunting them. They all may be seeking a way of enjoying the last few years of their lives in material splendor in Western fabulous cities where they would enjoy their years of ill begotten accumulated wealth and see their children blossom into professional men and women nurtured on the blood and sacrifices of Ethiopians.

Here is where Meles Zenawi once again has come to the rescue of his close associates and created a new system of self preservation that is being implemented as we speak. We have spent too much time running after the caricature of Meles Zenawi when the real master of manipulation Meles Zenawi is facing us up front in his entire gruesome splendor. We sought a statesman in the person of Meles Zenawi, when we should have been looking for a *Berbere Cherchari*, someone like anyone of us. As a matter of fact, Meles Zenawi's illusionary extraordinariness is in his utter ordinariness. Thus, the purpose of this essay.

III. The Liquidation of TPLF's Wealth and the Marginalization of EPRDF

Meles Zenawi and his very close associates seem to be liquidating or winding down the activities of their flagship enterprise the "TPLF Inc." They seem to be also marginalizing or cutting back the organizational power structure of the EPRDF as a whole too. I have several forensic indicators that I took into consideration in reaching such conclusion, but no direct material evidence such as written document, video, or taped conversations. You may say that my analysis is highly speculative, but it is based on cool consideration of several factual matters that may seem unrelated to the untrained eyes.

A. Bailing Out

The first indicator of the liquidation of EPRDF that is very cleverly camouflaged as part of a process to bring about democratic governance in Ethiopia is the recent highly publicized signing of the Code of Conduct forging new alliance between the EPRDF/TPLF and Hailu Shawel and Lidetu Ayalew and others. The Code of Conduct itself is a harmless document, but a potent tool in diverting our attention from the real goals of Meles Zenawi and associates. It would be helpful to go back to the time of Emperor Haile Selassie and his successor Mengistu Hailemariam in order to bring out the true color of the events that is taking place at this time in Ethiopia. One thing for sure, we Ethiopians are predictable, for we repeat history more often than any other people in the World I am aware of.

Emperor Haile Selassie, despite his very many admirable qualities, was a very selfish man, and to his own demise acted precisely as the proverbial "dog in the manger" for all

of his long reign where he prevented the developmental aspirations of the people of Ethiopia. He did not help himself either. Haile Selassie never truly accumulated real wealth, and because of such flaw, his extended Royal Family members still suffer from material needs. The evidence is to be observed in the type of modest lives the Ethiopian Royal Family members live scattered all over the World. To put it bluntly, he did not get anything worth much for himself and for his family members, and he did not allow others to grow rich either. His successor Mengistu Hailemariam was a slight improvement on selfishness. Mengistu and associates had no clue what material wealth signified.

Mengistu Hailemariam and associates had no idea on the accumulation of wealth. For them marauder activities of vandalizing private property in the name of national causes, such as nationalizing cars and residences and the few industrial assets is wealth creation. Mengistu and his close associates were individuals born in poverty and could not think further than the next dirt mound. They accumulated nothing, but few may have succeeded to extort a few millions of dollars from Western Governments. The legacy of Mengistu Hailemariam and the Derg was dismal; they end up leaving their close associates and supporters holding empty bags. They were pathetic in that barely a month after the collapse of their Government, their heroic soldiers who fought gallantly in numerous battles were lining the main avenues and streets of Addis Ababa displaying their Medals of Valor begging for donations from the public.

Meles Zenawi and associates are totally a new breed of beings unknown in the long history of Ethiopia. These are people who seem to have no emotional attachment to the State of Ethiopia or its history. Meles Zenawi and his close associates functioned as a shoal of Piranha (*Serrasalmo*) since 1984, and more intensely since 1987 once they were in control of hundreds of millions of dollars from international sponsors fighting famine in Ethiopia, and from fund available from the United States and other European countries fighting the spread of the influence of the Soviet Union. The history of that period and great wealth accumulation is documented by two top insiders of the TPLF. Testimonial essays by the individuals who had intimate knowledge of the finance and administrative process at the time, such as Gebremedhin Araya (responsible for the finance of TPLF), Aregawi Berhe (former Leader and Commander of the TPLF guerilla forces) et cetera, did expose the diabolical secret of the TPLF leaders diversion of donated funds into private accounts that was never audited by the organization or by anyone else. [See Aregawi Berhe, *A political history of the Tigray People's Liberation Front [1975-91]*, Tsehai Publishers, 2009; Gebremedhin Araya, "A Disturbing Report: So that the Ethiopian People Know: The fall of the people of Tigray in the hands of the enemy and its ramification on Ethiopia," *Ethiomedias*, pdf in Amharic, 2009.]

I think from the point of view of Meles Zenawi there is nothing in Ethiopia that he would aspire for at this point in his life. He has reached the pinnacle of power and wealth. There is no incentive for him that would compel him to put up the type of single minded fight he is known for to maintain his position of power. The great accumulation of wealth outside of Ethiopia by Meles Zenawi and the TPLF Leadership becomes a disincentive to stay in power in Ethiopia, for the risk of being overthrown grows in an inverse ratio to the amount of wealth under the control of such leaders. Thus, my thesis is that Meles Zenawi and close associate are at a phase at this point that they would rather enjoy the fruit of

their incredible wealth elsewhere in the World rather than risk it all by staying too long in power under an ever deteriorating social and economic condition in Ethiopia. The fact that the wealth of the Leaders of the TPLF is controlled by a group as opposed to by a single individual as was the case in all corrupt African leadership cases, such as Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, the late Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon et cetera, makes a big difference in creating the desire to leave power and enjoy the loot.

In order to arrange for such safe harbor and peaceful end of life (surrounded by one's children and grandchildren), Meles would gradually appoint the core TPLF group involved in the control of the asset of the TPLF as Ambassadors and National Representatives to all the major cities of the World where such assets are held presumably in nominal accounts by such leaders. The rumor that Abayi Tsehai would be appointed Ambassador to the United States may be the opening move, which will be followed by Sebehat Nega being appointed as Ambassador to Great Britain, Abadi Zemu Ambassador to Switzerland, Azeb Mesfin Ambassador to France, Tewodros Hagos Ambassador to Germany et cetera. Thus, by removing his close associates to places of safety away from Ethiopia, Meles will clear the deck also at the same time for the new Government that will probably be led by Hailu Shawel as Prime Minister while Meles Zenawi or Seyoum Mesfin stays on as President in order to make sure the transition will not lead to immediate upheaval jeopardizing the enjoyment of the wealth those leaders have accumulated from Ethiopia. What Meles seems to be in error in bringing Hailu on board to do his bidding is that he is violating a cardinal principle that no one should trust a turn-coat. If Hailu Shawel is willing to betray the opposition group, a group consisting of some individuals who were long time compatriots of Hailu, what will keep him from betraying Meles at a crucial time in the future?

Now, what would happen to the leaders and their supporters in the Member organizations of the EPRDF, i.e., the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPFD)? Very few will be able to participate in the larger loot controlled by the Leaders of the TPLF; moreover, some from such affiliate parties have done their own accumulation of wealth (even though strictly domestic) in a couple of corporations. The ones who will be forced out of the future Meles Government seems to be the leaders of ANDM, such as Addisu Legesse, Tefera Walwa, et cetera. Meles seems to be set on removing them or completely supplanting them with Hailu Shawel and Ledetu Ayalew. Meles will use those two *Mahel Sefaries* to undermine and marginalize OPDO, ANDM, and SEPFD thereby having open ended free hand to deal with the assets of the TPLF in his control that would have been challenged by the veterans EPRDF Member political organizations. Unless they move before it is too late countering Meles's manipulation, they will either end up in prison or would be left striped of their power on the side-walk of history demoralized and disfranchised just like some of TPLF's ex-leaders.

At any rate, there are a number of Ethiopians who would demand documentary evidence on every allegation of corruption, especially on allegations about foreign bank deposits of TPLF funds held in nominal accounts by a handful of TPLF Leaders including Meles

Zenawi. Here is where educated suppositions or inductive reasoning is valid. It is clearly established in Ethiopia through corporate licenses issued to several mega corporations controlled by the TPLF Leaders doing business in Ethiopia, with cash flow of hundreds of millions of birr and dollars and other hard (foreign) currencies. I would also add to such foreign bank deposits held by TPLF Leaders the share of gold mined by Sheik Alamoudi and others. It does not make much sense to think that such huge amount of fund is kept stashed somewhere in Ethiopia or abroad in someone's home/*casena* in *kirchat* or *akumada*. In fact, it is downright absurd to think that there is no deposit account in foreign banks held by Meles Zenawi and close associates. Because of lack of accountability by TPLF controlled business ventures and bank deposits, people have no other choice than to extrapolate from the reality at hand about the accumulation and deposit of fabulous wealth by the leadership of TPLF. This is a valid argument. There is a simple way to dispel all these speculation and learned valid argument by rendering full disclosure and public accounting using international auditors from respected accounting firms, on the assets and income of all TPLF controlled businesses and publishing such accounting for all to see.

B. Surrogates: All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) and United Ethiopian Democratic Party-Medhin Party (UEDP-Medhin)

Meles Zenawi could not have picked better individuals to replace him and protect his interest more than Hailu Shawel and Lidetu Ayalew, individuals who would carry out the biddings of Meles Zenawi as loyal *Mahel Sefaris*, whose interest and commitment would satisfy their hunger for power for themselves first and foremost, in the new government to be constituted after 2010. My scorn of those who seek power as an end is fully justified taking into account our dismal history with leaders who welded absolute power in our past and did very little by way of improving the condition of life of their subjects. Political power in Ethiopia has never been properly used to benefit the people of Ethiopia. That is a truism, and does not require elaborate proof.

Even Emperor Menilik II, who is being rehabilitated and portrayed as a “demigod” by few individuals in *Warka* using mainly Pawoolos Gnogno (tabloid journalist) as their authority, was not free from despotism. He left scars in our psyche that we are still struggling to heal, such as the international Treaties he entered that are now the sources of all of our international border disputes and the challenge to our rights to the waters of the Blue Nile and Lake Tana by Egypt and Sudan. Nevertheless, no one leader is all evil or all pure. Thus, Ethiopian Emperors must not be seen in stark black or white terms or choices. Modesty of claim is far closer to the truth than ethnic based exuberant exaggerations of facts. Self restraint and academic discipline could only benefit us in dealing with our current reality. I too have transgressed to some extent in the past writing about past Ethiopian emperors that now I am adjusting to recent academic findings in order to reflect our reality. What we must aspire for is to write as honestly as possible from tangible evidence in our hands, and to make learned speculations and interpretations of facts thus established through rigorous research. A revisionist claim of particular event in history is no less misleading or no less harmful than the falsification of historical events outright.

Here is a tragedy in the making: For those who believe that Hailu Shawel is going to have a smooth ride to power on the coat-tail of Meles Zenawi are going to have the surprise of their lives. From my crude survey it seems almost ninety percent of Ethiopians I contacted are opposed to Hailu Shawel, but some are not necessarily opposed to AEUP. A good indicator of the mounting opposition or disapproval of Hailu Shawel's association with Meles Zenawi was the small number of attendees at the recent Bahr Dar political rally, Hailu's first political rally far from his headquarters in Addis Ababa. There were hardly three hundred people. Such occasion should draw at the very least three to four thousand people, ten times more people than those who showed up. I was informed that some of those who showed up were not from Bahr Dar, but officials doing business in the area and the locals who were intimidated into showing up at the rally.

The other "protagonist" Lidetu Ayalew seems to be slotted in the new government to be constituted after 2010 by Meles Zenawi in order to play a subordinate role in the new scheme of the establishment of a new Ethiopian Government, and also to act as a check to any ambition that Hailu Shawel might have harbored for absolute power all along. It is ironic that their targets starting at the signing of the Code of Conduct were Members of Medrek. And they continued to attack that group while the real criminals who brought caused Ethiopia such catastrophic conditions are left out of the debate and the challenge. Here we have the weakest links in the chain that is being forged between Meles Zenawi and his new surrogate groups.

By now every one of us must realize that preserving Meles Zenawi and his legacy is far more costly than the effort to change the system completely by voting him out or even by overthrowing his Government. Meles and his close associates are in desperate situation. They are despised and hated by most Ethiopians. Such being the reality, Meles Zenawi and his close associates are not engaged in improving their relationship with the Ethiopian people or with a significant number of opposition groups. One clear indicator is the harsh death sentence that was handed down this December 21, 2009 against seven alleged conspirators to assassinate Ethiopian Government Officials.

One must consider the gravity of the Ethiopian political situation in its possible impact on those political parties that are not part of the EPRDF. If power would pass to a true opposition group, it is conceivable that there would be a thorough reorganization of the Ethiopian government structure and serious investigations about the past administrative actions of eighteen years of the TPLF and its Leaders. It will open a Pandora Box of cases of corruption that the TPLF Leaders want to keep under lock. Now, the question is whether we have the stomach and the stamina to deal with the enormous filth that has been accumulated by the TPLF and its leaders. It is with such earnest concern that I suggest that things are not what they are claimed to be by Meles Zenawi and his Government. It makes much more sense to consider the signing of the Code of Conduct as part of an elaborate scheme with far deeper insidious purpose than mere moralization on the conduct of political parties.

Relationships with neighboring countries may require also drastic change in Ethiopia's foreign relation policies. Foremost is the unresolved situation with Eritrea that should be

our priority to solve. There is much to be gained in establishing or bringing peace with Eritrea, but that is possible only after changing the current Government of Meles Zenawi and the Government of Isayas Afeworki. Intellectuals like Professors Tesfatsion Medhani and Tekeste Negash are exemplary scholars who have understood in depth the essence of the right kind of relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea to be that of a single nation-state. Tesfatsion thinks that it should be done in stages of confederation then federation and later in a more intimate structure. On the other hand Tekeste has no use for intermediary phases and advocates straight out intimate unitary political structure for Ethiopia and Eritrea. Over all, such distinguished scholars see the future of the two countries as one nation-state for a number of convincing reasons. To listen to the cool and collected Tekeste and to the brilliant and likable Tesfatsion is reward in itself, for here we see how true scholars handle themselves dealing with very difficult issues.

Lasting peace leading to economic prosperity could only be realized after Eritrea is incorporated as part of Ethiopia in a unitary structure. Ethiopia can manage without Eritrea. It has done so in the past ten years. However, it would have been far better to have spent the billion dollars each year Ethiopia shells out to Djibouti mainly (and the other neighboring countries) on port fees, on Eritrea and us as one nation rather than spend that much hard currency on extortionist neighbors. After all the atrocities committed against Ethiopians and Eritreans by each other, the conflict essentially remains as a rivalry between siblings. [See Tekeste Negash and Kjetil Tronvoll , *Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, Ohio University Press, 2001]

V. Conclusion

My acknowledgement of the versatility and tenacity of Meles Zenawi in some of my previous articles has no bearing whatsoever on my evaluation of the work he has done for Ethiopia. Such work product is not judged whether the leader has high IQ, but by the impact of such leadership on society on how it elevated and improved the lives of people. One finds some of the great leaders in the World were people with limited formal education. On the other hand, it is also true that some of the worst leaders were highly educated individuals. Thus, our focus must be on what is being done by leaders and their past record rather than their formal training and intellect. I would like this to be clearly understood because I am at times falsely accused of elitism.

More importantly, all who oppose the political program and administrative state structure that is currently being implemented by the present Ethiopian Government, should not assume that there are no individuals within the rank and file of the EPRDF who have patriotic feelings about Ethiopia and opposed to several of the activities of Meles Zenawi and his close associates. Call them closet-patriots or better still “*yewoositt arbegnoch*” their potential contribution to free Ethiopia from the vise like grip of Meles Zenawi is incalculable. Such individuals must be reassured that there is a better life after Meles Zenawi and the Mafia type control of Ethiopia.

Despite the fact that Meles Zenawi was given a fresh platform with endless possibilities at the Copenhagen Climate Conference, his performance was dismal. He displayed his lack of political savvy, experience, and wisdom at that conference, which would have

propelled him as a World-class political leader. For Ethiopians it is no brainer, for they have known of his betrayal of his duty as their leader. But for most African journalists and NGOs it was a new revelation that there are still African leaders, such as Meles Zenawi who will not hesitate to compromise the interest of the people of Africa to the West. He should have kept his brutal dictatorial activities in his own backyard. As a matter of common sense, one must not lower one's guard dealing with a cobra. Ethiopian politicians in general deserve reclassification as a branch of *Reptilia*. What is displayed on the surface is never the reality subsumed underneath the heap of deception and pretentions of all political and civic association leaders, except in case of very few individuals. Meles Zenawi understands the game we Ethiopians try to play, and at every turn he has been beating us for the last eighteen years. *Chewatawoon tekhnobetal*. We must come up with a strategy that would be like the Chinese Finger Traps, once Meles has his fingers in the contraptions the more he pulls apart his fingers the more entrapped he becomes, totally rendered helpless if he persist in pulling away.

There is an Ethiopian aphorism that is always a source of fascination to me every time I think about Meles Zenawi and his close associates: When *Totit* (a young agile ape) was asked what type of contest-game she liked best, she answered, "*Ye zaf ly tige*." [trans. "Wrestling on tree branches."] What Meles does best in politics is the equivalent of wrestling on tree branches metaphorically speaking, where he is adept with arboreal acrobatics of lies and deceptions. To counter his form of contest is not to go after him to tree tops up in the air, but to pull him down to Earth with pragmatic strategy and short term tactics. Medrek is a group I believe destined to rescue Ethiopia from destruction. It is the best aggregation of politicians and intellectuals that could effectively transform Ethiopia into a unitary and multi-ethnic nation-state and on to a strong rich and humane country in the near future.

I am willing to re-examine Lidetu Ayalew and Hailu Shawel's positions if those gentlemen are honest with us and discloses all of the conditions they agreed to and all of the promises made to them by Meles leading up to the signing of the Code of Conduct. My being skeptical of the game played out in the signing of the Code of Conduct is proper. Moreover, I would counsel Medrek and its Member Parties to be cautious and to leave some escape route/room for Meles Zenawi and EPRDF Members. A very tight opposing political challenge would lead to more tragic confrontation with the current Ethiopian Leaders. Out of desperation, like a cornered creature, they might strike back with devastating consequences. The recent death sentences against Ginbot7 Leaders in absentia are warning shots across the bow of Medrek and all other opposition political groups and individuals in the opposition. Ω

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