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HAMDESA TUSO

ETHIOPIA: NEW POLITICAL ORDER.
ETHNIC CONFLICT
IN THE POST COLD WAR ERA



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by Hamdesa Tuso(*)

Introduction: "The many worlds of Ethiopia" - past and present

The Ethiopian empire has gone through earth-shaking political changes three times in a span of about three decades. During these decades, three radically different regimes have occupied the pinnacles of power, each one of them dominated by a particular ethnic group, each proclaiming radically variant ideologies — all three promising unity, social justice and economic development and progress for all — campaigning relentlessly for legitimacy amongst the populace inside Ethiopia, as well a posturing and soliciting for recognition and support from the outside world. Emperor Haile Selassie I, the monarch who occupied the position of power for the longest stretch in Abyssinian history — over 40 years — claimed that he had commitment to change, modernization and social justice for all "Ethiopians" (1). He clung to power only to be dethroned by a renegade military junta, who on September 15, 1974, marched into the glittering imperial palace, escorted him out of his majestic environs, and unceremoniously led him into a Volkswagen — an act designed to publicly humiliate him, thus stripping away the aura that had served him so well for so long, and certainly, saved his life and his regime during the 1960 coup d'état — and drove him away to his eventual eclipse from the stage of political

(*) *Atlantic Union College, Massachusetts.*

(1) The image of Haile Selassie as the modernizing emperor is reflected in his recorded speeches. See *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I [1918-1967]* Addis Ababa, The Imperial Ministry of Information, 1967; *Important Utterances of Emperor Haile Selassie I [1963-1972]* Addis Ababa, The Imperial Ministry of Information, 1972.

life of the Ethiopian Empire which he had dominated for over four decades⁽²⁾. Neither the populace in the empire where he had reigned with absolute authority, nor the international community which adored him for his shrewdness, elegance, and mystique ever saw him or heard from him until his eventual death, which apparently was caused by strangling by order of the Dergue (a military committee) for the sheer fear that his mere existence would galvanize the nobility against the Dergue and pose a threat to the revolution⁽³⁾. The Emperor's, regime and the nobility were decimated by a social revolution which erupted like a volcano avalanche rolling down a steep hill and spreading in all directions with increasing speed and might, destroying any object which stood in its way.

The Dergue, which took over power in 1974, declaring "Ethiopia Tikidam" (Ethiopia First) as its motto, later introduced itself as a "socialist" government committed to effect social change and to promote development, equity, and social justice⁽⁴⁾. In 1991, the world witnessed the dramatic crumbling of that regime like a powder house, essentially as the result of the loss of military and financial support from the weakening Soviet Union, which was to subsequently disintegrate itself as the consequence of severe internal contradictions within its own social order. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF), (both created and managed by a student revolutionary group from Tigray) supported by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) (which replaced the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime) in at the pre-dawn hours of May 28, 1991, marched into Addis Ababa, proclaiming democracy, human rights, self-determination, peace, and stability⁽⁵⁾.

During the reign each of the three regimes, there have been social contradictions which have threatened the vital interests of the various groups within Ethiopia. The Ethiopian political scene also has been a major puzzlement to outside observers. Commenting briefly, en passant, on the conflicting images as perceived by various groups who have been

(2) David and Marina OTTAWA, *Ethiopia: Empire in Revolution*, New York, Africana Publishing Co., 1978, pp. 54-56.

(3) See John RYLE, *An African Nuremberg*, «The New Yorker» Oct., 1995, pp. 50-61.

(4) David and Marina OTTAWA, *Ethiopia*, op. cit., pp. 44-62; See also Edmund KELLER, *Ethiopia: From Empire to Republic*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991, Chapters 7 and 8.

(5) See Clifford KRAUSS, *Top Ethiopia Rebel Talks of Democracy*, «The New York Times», June 2, 1991, p. 3; ..., *New Policies, Old slogans in Ethiopia*, «The New York Times», June 29, 1991, p. 5; Gus CONSTANTINE, *Ethnic Respect Crucial to Peace*, «The Washington Times», May 31, 1991, p. A7.

affected by the policies of these regimes (as well as those who have been observing the scene of social change in the political landscape in Ethiopia from outside) will provide us with a deeper understanding with respect to the unresolved social crisis pertaining to the relationships among the various communal national groups and the Ethiopian Empire state.

In this study, we propose to revisit the structural root of conflict in the Ethiopian Empire which has manifested itself in the form of sustained hostile relations between the state and various ethnic groups. This examination will be presented in a four-part serial article. Part one will explore two major issues. The first issue concerns the conflicting images of Ethiopia during the last three radically divergent regimes in Addis Ababa. We are interested in examining this issue for several reasons. First, we believe that exploring the conflicting images of Ethiopia during the reign of these regimes will provide an opportunity to gain more insight into the natures of the conflicting parties. The analysis will show that the continuity of these conflicting images indicate that the conflict is deep-rooted and still unresolved. In particular, we will focus more on the conflicting images which have emerged since 1991, the period under the Tigrean-dominated EPRDF/TPLF regime. In our analysis, it is critical that the conflict in contemporary Ethiopia should be viewed in the context of the changing global order. To this end, we will present a brief discussion on this aspect of the dynamics relative to the unresolved social crisis in Ethiopia.

The third subject which we will cover in this first part of the article will address the myriad of myth which have shrouded the image of Ethiopia over several decades. We believe addressing these two topics in the first part of the series is a critical prelude to understanding the social conflict in contemporary Ethiopia.

This analysis is based on fresh data which we have collected for a book on this subject.

The conflicting images of Haile Selassie's Ethiopia.

It was the late Professor Abraham Demoz, an Eritrean who, upon completion of an eighth-grade education in Asmara, migrated to Addis Ababa, the modern Habesha (the main civilization originating from the North in Ethiopia) "melting pot", and became assimilated into the modern Habesha mainstream system, and rose to the deanship of the Faculty of Arts at the then Haile Selassie University I University (HSIU),

who wrote in 1969 *The Many Worlds of Ethiopia* in reference to varied imageries and the various groups associated with those imageries pertaining to the social order in the Ethiopian Empire. He began his article by declaring that "Ethiopia is the despair of the compulsive classifier. There is hardly any category into which it falls neatly" (6). After providing a condensed history of Ethiopia, which was primarily an Abyssinian version of his of Ethiopia in nature, albeit with some critical observation — his critique of the social order was rather soft in general.

Professor Demoz identified four main segments in the imperial society to which Ethiopia meant different things. He characterized each category in the following manner: (a) the members of the traditional nobility which was experiencing the gradual erosion of power; (b) "the man on the street" who, according to Professor Demoz, was generally lackadaisical and readily succumbed to the Haile Selassie regime's propaganda, and who in reality thought in terms of "tribal", religious, or regional terms only; (c) the abroad (East and West) educated youth who, though a minority in number, had become articulate and vocal in expressing dissatisfaction with the inefficiency, incompetence, and corruption of the Haile Selassie regime; and (d) the disgruntled religious, ethnic, and linguistic-based communal groups in the South, who were anguished by the glaring disparity with respect to implicit, deep-seated relations between North and South, which carried profound political implications (particularly the religious disparity), which could explode if it were exploited by foreign intervention (7).

By the prevailing standard, Professor Demoz's assessment of the social order in the Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, though mild, and in some major respects off-base, was a ray of light in the valley of darkness, for during that period no one would dare to venture to utter a word in a public forum or write a critical analysis in the sphere of ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, nor about the glaring disparity between the dominant group and the rest of the social groupings, nor about the class stratification which permeated the social order under the imperial regime in the 1960s. However, Professor Demoz's analysis missed the mark by a significant margin in its treatment of the nationality question and the latent power of ethno-nationalism. On the nationality factor in Ethiopia, he wrote the following:

(6) Abraham DEMOZ, *The Many Worlds of Ethiopia*, «African Affairs», vol. 68, no. 270 (Jan., 1969), pp. 49-54.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 53.

On the other hand we must be careful not to overrate the divisive factors in Ethiopia. It is important to bear in mind for instance that the various groupings often overlap and weaken each other's decisive pulls. For instance, a Muslim Gurage peasant would have localities to his religion, ethnic group and social class. These may often conflict and neutralize each other. There is one additional factor of unity that has come to the modern scene — the emergence of a small but important educated elite. Although the members of this nouveau riche elite may sometimes be the target of the jealousies of the deprived masse, the deprived masses, they primarily serve the cause of unity because their parochial localities are generally suppressed by their loyalty to a progressive and united Ethiopia⁽⁸⁾.

In hindsight, Professor Demoz would have agreed that this analysis was, at best, a wishful thinking on his part, for as we will discuss later, the events of the last 4-1/2 years have demonstrated otherwise⁽⁹⁾.

Contradictory images of Ethiopia during the Dergue

To insiders and to the external world, the early part of the Dergue's regime was characterized as a "creeping coup" because of the bloodless, meticulously deliberate, and procedurally cautious and disciplined moves it employed in dethroning the aging Emperor and subsequently ceasing government power⁽¹⁰⁾. As the social upheavals began unravelling at a much faster pace, and the issues confronting the young military junta became more wrenching, all of that was altered, and in due course, the Dergue emerged as one of the most brutal regimes in the world⁽¹¹⁾. As we will discuss later in this study, internally, the civilian left eventually rejected the Dergue's rule and saw fit to confront it with its own counter-revolution, even employing violence, with the ultimate goal of replacing the Dergue⁽¹²⁾. The nationalists rejected the military junta in more

(8) *Ibid.*, p. 54.

(9) Incidentally, Professor Abraham Demoz was not the only scholar who misjudged the power of nationalism against an imperial social order. Ironically Gail Lapidus, in her essay, «The Soviet Nationality Question» [in Gorbachev's Era], wrote, only four years earlier to the disintegration of the Soviet Empire, «the nationality question problem creates complex challenge for the Soviet system and the new leadership, but unlikely to disrupt the stability of the Soviet system». As quoted in Michal RYWKIN, *Moscow's Lost Empire*, New York M. E. Sharpe, 1994, p. 7.

(10) See David and Marina OTTAWA, *Ethiopia*, op. cit., pp. 54-58.

(11) See, Human Rights Watch/Africa, *The Evil Days: 30 Years Wars and Famine in Ethiopia*, New York, Human Rights Watch, 1991.

(12) René LEFORT, *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution?*, London, Zed Press, 1981, pp. 157-180.

fundamental ways and begun mounting armed struggles from multi-directions⁽¹³⁾.

Scholars, particularly from the West, whose primary concerns were in the domain of social theory came to diametrically divergent interpretations with respect to the nature of the 1974 Revolution and the tenure of the Dergue in Ethiopia. Those who held a sympathetic view with respect to the notion of socialism as an appropriate social philosophy and economic system, but and who were disappointed by the means with which the Dergue implemented its policies, were provoked to describe it with such critical references as "heretical revolution", "revolution from above", "revolution betrayed", and "garrison socialism"⁽¹⁴⁾. Those who tended to categorize Third-World regimes in terms of either the Eastern or Western ideological camps — (it is to be recalled that the Dergue came to power at the height of the Cold War, and benefitted from it immensely) — simply referred to the Dergue as a "Marxist regime", a "Communist regime", or an "Afrocommunist regime". Others saw it as "Africa's potential first real revolution", "Africa's first major social revolution", etc.⁽¹⁵⁾.

Today, almost three decades later since Professor Demoz wrote on the subject of the "many worlds of Ethiopia", the social order in Ethiopia is still imminently complex and utterly confusing both for inside national communal groups and for external actors as well as for dispassionate observers. The social conflict in Ethiopia is so deep-rooted and protracted that the drama is still unfolding, manifesting different shades of social ills and making unpredictable twists. To be sure, as indicated previously, the social order has undergone dramatic changes in some critical respects during the last three decades. For example, the feudal system under whose tyrannical rule scholars such as Professor Abraham Demoz had to labor had collapsed only to be replaced by another competing autocratic regime which brutalized the society and succeeded in silencing the progressive intellectual voices such as those of Professor Demoz essentially through co-optation, intimidation, liquidation, or

(13) See Bereket Habte SELASSIE, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa*, New York, Monthly Press, 1980, pp. 48-125.

(14) See John MARKAKIS, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, London, Zed Books, 1990, pp. 237-271. ..., *Garrison Socialism: The Case of Ethiopia*, «MERIP Reports», No. 79, July 1979, pp. 3-17.

(15) See Negussy AYELE, *The Ethiopian Revolution: Political Aspects of the Transition From PMAC to PDRE*, in Marina OTTAWA (ed.), *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*, New York, Praeger, 1990, pp. 11-29.

exiling⁽¹⁶⁾. That power, the Dergue, after two and a half decades in control, too has crumbled like a powder house, and with it, the century-old Amhara power, only to be replaced by the another Habesha power, this time the Tigrean power⁽¹⁷⁾. Eritrea has gained independence, leaving behind the southern nationalities, the real historic colonial subjects in the Ethiopian empire, in a subordinate position in the new political order, and furthermore aiding militarily and managerially (via the EPLF) the Meles Zenawi regime to keep in check the southern nationalities so that Meles Zenawi and his parties EPRDF/TPLF can enjoy dominance over all significant aspects of the economic and political life of the reduced Empire⁽¹⁸⁾. Finally, after a decade and a half of hostile relations, Ethiopia is back in the fold of an old deus ex machina, the United States, where the relations of the two states were when Professor Abraham Demoiz addressed this subject⁽¹⁹⁾.

However, certain critical features in Ethiopia have remained the same. As did so many other scholars on Ethiopia, Professor Demoiz misjudged both the intensity of the grievances the oppressed nationalities felt about their marginal place in the social order of imperial Ethiopia, and the psychological strength of nationalistic feelings relative to their shared grievances, group identity, and sense of peoplehood. And it must be said that, in the final analysis, it was nationalism which proved to be the triumphant force in shaping the evolution of the new political order in post Cold War Ethiopia, as has been the case in the revolutionary phase of every collapsing empire in modern history⁽²⁰⁾. Critical factors such as national identity, territorial demarcation along ethnic lines, and linguistic

(16) See Babile TOLA, *To Kill a Generation: The Red Terror in Ethiopia*, Washington, D.C., Free Ethiopia Press, 1989; Fentahun TIRUNEH, *Ethiopian Students: Their Struggle to Articulate the Ethiopian Revolution*, Chicago, 1990.

(17) See *Ethiopia: African Balkans*, «The Economist», June 17, 1992, p. 47.

(18) See Lenco Letta's statement on the occasion of unauthorized trip to Addis Ababa, and his paper entitled *The Making and Unmaking of the New charter*, presented at the 37th African Studies Association Annual Conference, Toronto, Canada, Nov. 3-6, 1994.

(19) See Terrence LYONS, *U.S. Policy Toward Conflict Resolution in Ethiopia*, in John T. HINNANT, ed., *Preproceeding of the Sixth Michigan State University (MSU) Conference on Northeast Africa*, East Lansing, Michigan, African Studies Center, MSU, 1992, pp. 195-219.

(20) Nationalism played a critical role in the disintegration of the following three regional empires during this century: the Ottoman Empire; Austro-Hungarian Empire; and the Soviet Empire. For the treatment relative to the role of the national movements in the demise of these empires please see the following sources: On the Soviet empire see Hélène D'ENCAUSE, (Translated by Franklin Philip), *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of Nations*, New York, Basic Books, 1991; on the role of nationalism in the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, see Mete TUNCAY and Erik J. ZURCHER (Eds.), *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire (1876-1923)*, London, British Academic Press, 1994.

rights, topics which were taboo even for the purpose of academic research and open discussion during the Haile Selassie regime, are now common themes in contemporary Ethiopia, though seriously manipulated by the current regime. More will be said about this later⁽²¹⁾. Ironically, it seems, that the EPRDF/TPLF policy of structuring a new social order along ethnic lines is, albeit marred with serious flaws, currently endorsed by the Western powers who during the three decades of armed struggles by various nationalities, sided rather decisively with the successive Addis Ababa regimes in the name of "stability" and "territorial integrity" of Ethiopia⁽²²⁾.

The conflicting images of Ethiopia under the new political order (1991-Present)

Ironically, but perfectly explainably, the new political order in post-Cold War Ethiopia means different things to different actors presently interlocked in the protracted social conflict (those from within Ethiopia and those outside of Ethiopia but who have become parties to the conflict). Furthermore, the current regime which had promised democracy, human rights, and self-determination to various ethnic groups, has been employing totally opposite approaches and tactics in implementing its policies in fundamental areas such as democratic procedures and processes with respect to the rights of the political opposition entities, in the area of human rights and nationality question. These issues have become the focal areas of concern and confusion for the international community⁽²³⁾.

There are at least five significant parties which project the political development in the post-Dergue Ethiopia in radically divergent ways, depending on their relative positions with respect to power in the new political order. The five entities engaged in this round of the conflict are: (a) the EPRDF/TPLF, representing Tigrean power and its satellite

(21) See Stephen BUCKLEY, *Ethiopia Takes New Ethnic Tack: Deliberately Divisive*, «The Washington Post», June 18, 1995, p. A21; *Ethiopia: The Caravan Passes On*, «The Economist», May 6, 1995, p. 42.

(22) See Makau wa MUTU, *Ethiopia: The Anointed Leadership*, «Africa Report», vol. 39, No. 6 (Nov-Dec, 1994), pp. 31-34; Anthony Lake's Press Conference, see «Ethiopian Herald» (English), December 18, 1994, p. 1.

(23) See Donald T. FOX, *Ethiopia: The Scheduled Election May*, American Association of Jurists (ICJ); Amnesty International, *Ethiopia: Accountability Past and Present: Human Rights in Transition*, 1995; Abdullahi AN-NA'IM, *Human Rights in Ethiopia*, Testimony Before U.S. Congress (House) Subcommittee on Africa, July 27, 1994. (He gave the testimony on behalf of Human Rights/Africa Watch).

organizations⁽²⁴⁾; (b) various Amhara leaders and organizations, representing Amhara concerns⁽²⁵⁾; (c) the EPLF, representing Eritrean interests and Eritrea's new hegemonic aspirations in the region⁽²⁶⁾; (d) the U.S. State Department, representing the interests of the United States and its allies in the West as well as those in the region⁽²⁷⁾; and (e) organizations and personalities representing the experiences of the Southern nationalities⁽²⁸⁾.

(24) The Tigrean ethnic group constitutes less than 7% of the population of contemporary Ethiopia (of the estimated 52 million). The Tigray People's Liberation (TPLF) created in 1975 with the assistance of the Eritrean people's Liberation Front (EPLF), consolidated its grip on the Tigrean populace, and organized satellite political organizations under the Ethiopia Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) seized power on May 28, 1991.

(25) The Amharas constitute about 20% of the total population in Ethiopia. They can be categorized into three major groups. The first group is comprised of the Amhara populace who reside in the traditional territories in the North: Gondor and Gojjam. Through several centuries of conquest and migration they also settled in some areas of Wollo and Shoa. By and large, the Amharas who reside in these territories are traditional members of the Orthodox Church, and peasants. The second category is comprised of those who live in the newly conquered and incorporated territories. These are referred to as *naftagnas* (colonial settlers). In the past the preponderance of the educated elite who ruled the Ethiopian Empire originated from this sector. For example, Emperor Haile Selassie was born and raised in Ejerssa Goro, Harar. The third category is comprised of the children of mixed marriages between Amharas and non-Amharas in the South. This happened, in part as a conscious policy of Amharanization. The offspring of such union usually consider themselves either Amharas or Ethiopians. The fourth category is comprised of sociological Amharas. Sociological Amharas are those who neither originate from Amhara homes nor have Amhara blood. They are socialized to be Amharas and as such they share the same cultural and ideological values. They tend to call themselves «Ethiopians». They usually originate from urban centers. See Alex DE WAAL, *Rethinking Ethiopia*, in Charles GURDON ed., *The Horn of Africa*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1994 pp. 34-36.

(26) There are nine nationalities in Eritrea. It is estimated that the population is roughly divided about 50% each Christian and Muslim. The Eritrean armed struggles by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) commenced in 1961. However, a group from within the ELF broke away and established the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), and eventually wiped out the ELF militarily in 1977. The EPLF, dominated by the highland Christian Tigreans (that part of Eritrea used to be an extension of the province of Tigray), developed one of the most sophisticated guerrilla fighter groups in modern liberation fronts.

(27) The U.S. policy toward the Meles regime is heavily influenced by the State Department. The chief architect of the policy is Mr. Herman Cohen, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under the Bush Administration. The Congress has shown strong reservations from time to time about this doctrine which predicated in investing so heavily in supporting the «winners» of the 1991 at the expense of democratic principles and despite gross human rights violations. However, Mr. George Moose, Mr. Cohen's successor was obliged to follow the policies constructed by his predecessor. See «Africa Confidential», *The Horn of Africa: Recasting the Nation State*, vol. 34, No. 1, January 8, 1993, pp. 4-6.

(28) It is estimated that there about 70-80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia. The majority are in the south (the periphery). The ethnic groups with significant population, in the order of population size, are the Oromos, the Walaytias, the Afars, the Guraghes and Sidamas. Only the Oromos, the Sidamas, the Afars and Somalis were politically active by 1991. However,

In contrast to the political environment under which the divergent entities could not voice their grievances, which forced the projection of Ethiopia to the international community as a monolithic social and political entity, post-Dergue Ethiopia has been forced to accept the existence of multiple parties with legitimate interests. To this end, commencing with the London Peace Conference in 1991, the new voices have taken central stage in the international arena as legitimate actors in the conflict. Thus, our presentation of the divergent interpretations relative to the new political order in post-Dergue Ethiopia as reflected in the positions expressed by the above indicated actors in the current conflict in Ethiopia, takes on a new and significant meanings. In this discussion, we will briefly highlight these various projections according to each party which espouses them.

a) *The Tigrean proclamations.* The EPRDF/TPLF leadership vehemently argues that they have ousted the evil regime of the Dergue, and have expanded unparalleled opportunities for all the nationalities within the "country" to participate in creating the new democratic Ethiopia to which EPRDF/TPLF is committed. Thus, according to the EPRDF/TPLF, they are the new "democrats" and as such, they should be supported by all the democratic and peaceloving forces within Ethiopia as well as within the international community. These sentiments were reflected in the speech delivered by Meles Zenawi at the opening of the July 1991 Conference in Addis Ababa. Meles Zenawi declared:

In this struggle for freedom and democracy, the EPRDF linking itself inseparably with the broad masses has played; its own share dealing a decisive blow to the Dergue army and, thereby in victory, establishing a Provisional Government in the country. Following its defeat of the Dergue army and the assertion of its control of the country, the EPRDF did not follow the earlier custom in this and other countries of monopolizing power and implementing its own ideas. Since at the very outset it had chosen the option of working for the establishment of a transitional government comprising of various forces in order to bring lasting peace and democracy to Ethiopia, the EPRDF has on this basis endeavored to organize this conference to bring into being a transitional government reflecting the differing opinions as well as the interests and the aspirations of all the peoples of our country⁽²⁹⁾.

every ethnic group was required to organize itself at the July Addis Ababa Conference. See Makuria BULTCHA, *The Transitional Charter of Ethiopia: The challenges of Democratizing a Colonial Empire*, «The Oromo Commentary», Nos. 2 & 3, 1991, pp. 1-9.

(29) Speech given by Mr. Meles Zenawi, the President of the Interim Ethiopian Government, at the Opening of the National Conference for the Establishment of a Transitional Government, Addis Ababa, July 1, 1991, p. 2.

Approximately one month after the Addis Ababa Conference, the EPRDF News Bulletin, in its editorial commentary, and in keeping with the same theme, declared that the democratic process was gaining momentum. The Commentary further expanded on the achievements of the EPRDF in this way:

Having destroyed the oppressive Dergue system, the Ethiopian people are now beginning to exercise the democratic rights denied to them for so many years.

Without fear of persecution or intimidation, they are now freely expressing their opinions, engaging in open political debate holding public meetings throughout the country. Newspapers, magazines, television and radio are being used for serious debate and discussion by all, and in the capital and elsewhere democratic committees are being organized to safeguard these newly gained freedoms. Everywhere, despair is being replaced by optimism about the future⁽³⁰⁾.

b) *The Amhara protest.* The Amhara protest against the Meles Zenawi regime falls along seven broadly categorized major themes.

First, they argue that the EPRDF/TPLF is an undemocratic organization, for it prohibited the participation of democratic organizations such as CODEF (Coalition for Democratic Ethiopian forces) at the July 1991 Addis Ababa conference and jailed some of the members of the opposition groups when they arrived in Addis Ababa to attend the conference organized by the major opposition group which was agreed upon at the 1993 Paris Conference⁽³¹⁾.

Second, they complain that EPRDF/TPLF regime deliberately fosters ethnic hatred and division for its own political gains, particularly at the expense of the Amhara ethnic group⁽³²⁾.

Third, they suggest that independence of Eritrea is an unmitigated disaster which will minimally lead to Ethiopia becoming a land-locked state and economically unviable, and maximally, could cause the ultimate disintegration of Ethiopia in the same manner as in the cases of former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union⁽³³⁾.

(30) «EPRDF New Bulletin», vol. 1, No. 11, August 7, 1991, p. 1.

(31) See CODEF's report, entitled *CODEF's Peace Effort in Brief*, June 1994, pp. 3-9; Alemante G. SELASSIE, *Recent Development in Ethiopia: Prospects for Democratic Pluralism*, «Imbylta: An Ethiopian Quarterly of Political Opinion», vol. No. 1, Fall 1991, pp. 2-10.

(32) See «Ethiopian Review», interview with Professor Asrat WALDEYES, *Trailblazing Surgeon Defends the Rights of Amharas*, June 1992, pp. 12-14; Getatchew HAILE, *Amharic Speakers and the Question of Nationalities*, «Ethiopian Review», May 1992, pp. 20-23.

(33) See Efreem YEMANE-BERHAN, *Ethiopia is Threatened With Being Land-locked Again*, «Ethiopian Review», September, 1991, p. 28; Aleme ESHETE, *Carving of Eritrea Out of Ethiopia*:

Fourth, they protest that the Meles regime, by demarking regional administration along ethnic lines, and allowing the various ethnic groups to use their own vernacular languages for education and governmental business, which will eventually lead to further division and conflicts, has placed the very existence of Ethiopia in danger⁽³⁴⁾.

Fifth, the Amahra's greatest grievance against the new political order arguably is the role of the external powers, specifically, the United States, Israel, and the United Nations, in the post-Dergue Ethiopia. They hold that these powers have conspired against Ethiopia by supporting EPRDF/TPLF policies which pertain to the separation of Eritrea from "the motherland", Ethiopia⁽³⁵⁾.

Sixth, they dispute the notion that Woyane (Tigrean political leadership) led EPRDF/TPLF is interested in introducing genuine democracy and justice to Ethiopia. In their view, the Meles Zenawi regime is more interested in using naked power, which it has applied ruthlessly in dealing with its political opponents through the utilization of the state apparatus⁽³⁶⁾.

Finally, they point out that though the Woyane leaders are atheists themselves, "they cynically use religion, particularly the influential Orthodox church, as their instrument through handpicked, puppet 'patriarch', causing that traditionally respected office to suffer deep credibility problems among the rank and file clergy as well as the general public" ⁽³⁷⁾.

c) *The Eritrean ecstasy*. The third camp in this endeavor of redefinition of Ethiopia is represented by the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF). More will be said on the historic relationship between TPLF and EPLF. The Eritrean position relative to the new political order in Ethiopia can be summarized under four major themes: (1) the EPLF played a crucial role in dismantling the brutal regime of Mengistu

An Historical Account, «Ethiopian Review», April 1995, pp. 18-26; Gedeon SHAREW, *Eritrea: Triumph By Default*, «Ethiopian Review», November 1992, pp. 29-32.

(34) See Alemayehu Geber MARIAM, *Great Decision or Cruel Hoax?*, «Ethiopian Review», April 1995, p. 40; Alemu WAKDJIRA, *The Impunity of Stupidity: The Futility in Constitutional Ethnicity*, «Ethiopian Register», April 1995, pp. 33-41.

(35) Just recently, the Ethiopian Register in its editorial compared the UN approval of independence to the rejection of the League of Nations when it rejected Emperor Haile Selassie's appeal for support against Fascist Italy. See *50 Years of United Nations*, «Ethiopian Register», October, 1995, p. 3.

(36) See Getachew MEKASHA, *Democracy and U.S. Policy and Human Rights in Ethiopia*, «Moa Ambasa», March 8, 1993, pp. 3-6.

(37) *Ibidem*.

Haile Mariam; (2) the EPLF, although liberating Eritrea by military victory, and as such was entitled to declare independence immediately, chose to give a chance to the democratic process, and independence was achieved after the wishes of the Eritrean people had been expressed via the internationally supervised referendum. In this way, they argue, the EPLF cooperated with the international community and exhibited the value and respect it (EPLF) attaches to international law and democratic norms; (3) the EPLF has successfully achieved the long standing aspirations of the Eritrean people which was the right for self-determination; (4) the EPLF is not interested in the disintegration of Ethiopia. Thus, the EPLF claims that the current regime in Addis Ababa is the first government in the modern history of Ethiopia which has included so many ethnic groups to participate in the governance of the "country", and it has set Ethiopia on a new and genuine path to democracy; thus the EPLF has cooperated with and assisted the new regime in Ethiopia and as such, EPLF has been a positive political force for peace and stability in the region. These notions are reflected in one of the writings of an Eritrean intellectual, and an EPLF veteran who became the Governor of Eritrean National Bank after the liberation of Eritrea. Dr. Araia Tseggai wrote,

After thirty years of devastating war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, 1991 witnessed historical and fundamental changes in both countries and peoples. Not only was the dictatorial military regime of Colonel Mengistu replaced by a multinational revolutionary regime in Ethiopia, but Eritrea also simultaneously achieved its long-sought freedom and independence from colonial bondage and rule for the first time in recent history. Furthermore, the resolution of this core conflict is currently contributing immensely towards of all pacification of the Horn of Africa. Now that relative peace has been achieved in Eritrea and Ethiopia, war-time preoccupations are giving way to plans and deliberations of recovery, rehabilitation and economic development⁽³⁸⁾.

d) *The U.S. government explication.* The United States government became a deus ex machina to the Ethiopian empire for the second time

(38) For views which represent the EPLF positions with respect to The EPRDF/TPLF, please see the following sources: Araia TSEGGAJ, *A New Perspective of Ethio-Eritrean Partnership*, in Amare TAKELE, ed., *Eritrea and Ethiopia: From Conflict to Cooperation*, Lawrenceville, NJ, The Red Sea Press, 1994, pp. 55-84. See also Amare TEKLE, *The Basis of Eritrean-Ethiopian Cooperation*, in Amare TAKELE, ed., *Eritrea*, op. cit., pp. 1-19. For independent analysis relative to Eritrean views with respect to the new political order in the post-Dergue Ethiopia, see Doris Burgess and Lionel CLIFFE, *The Horn: Agenda for Peace?*, «Review of African Political Economy», No. 51, July 1991, pp. 93-95.

during the last half of this century. The first time was just after World War II, when the European global empires disintegrated under the pressure of two forces: the power struggle on the European continent for influence and competition for material resources both at continental as well as at global levels which contributed to the WWI (1914-1918) and WWII (1939-1941)⁽³⁹⁾. Ethiopia remained a U.S. client state for almost three decades during the Cold War, and then traded sides with Somalia during the 1977-78 Ethio-Somalia conflict, and remained under the influence of the Soviet Union during the remaining period of the Cold War until the demise of the Dergue in May 1991⁽⁴⁰⁾. Thus, the United States, the surviving superpower, became the newly found *deus ex machina*, perhaps purposefully, to save the decaying Empire from total disintegration. Its support for the current regime in Addi Ababa has been very peculiar, and very decisive in shaping the group power relationships in the post-Cold War Ethiopia⁽⁴¹⁾. Inevitably, in the process it, U.S. government has become a party with very decisive power and influence, and of course, naturally so, to the conflict. More will be said on this topic later.

However, the U.S. government public position pertaining to the new political order in Ethiopia, and its own involvement in the affair pertaining to the new regime in Addis Ababa, roughly fall along the following central themes: (1) the U.S. initially was involved in the process of the political change in Ethiopia for the purpose of facilitating the extrication of the Ethiopian Jews who were in danger of being caught in the cross-fire in the looming major political conflict; (2) geo-politics was not a consideration since the Cold War was already over (they emphasize that both the U.S. and the USSR had agreed on the goal of settling the conflict in Ethiopia through negotiation); (3) the U.S. was

(39) See Paul HENZE, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: The Defeat of the Dergue and the Establishment of New Governments*, in David R. SMOKE, Ed., *Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1993, pp. 53-58; Harold MARCUS, *Ethiopia, Great Britain, and United States, 1941-1974: The Politics of Empires*, Berkeley, University of California, 1983, pp. 22-41; 79-114.

(40) See David KORN, *Ethiopia, the United States, the Soviet Union*, Carbondale, Illinois, Southern Illinois University Press, 1986, Chapters 1-3; 5, 9; Robert PATMAN, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: the Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*, Cambridge, Cambridge University press, 1990, Chapters 4-6; Anatoly DOBRYNIN, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents*, New York, Time Books, 1995, pp. 403-412.

(41) See Gayle SMITH, *Birth Pains of a New Ethiopia*, «The Nation», July 1, 1991, pp. 17-20; Terrence LYONS, *U.S. Policy Toward Conflict Resolution in Ethiopia*, in John T. HINNANT (ed.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Michigan State University in Northeast Africa*, April 23-25, 1992, East Lansing, Michigan, Africa Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1992, pp. 195-227.

invited by both the Mengistu government and the liberation fronts to intervene in the conflict in order to assist in peace-making; (4) the American intervention made a difference in several respects: (a) the Marxist-Leninist brutal regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam is gone; (b) the three main "rebels" had agreed to form a transitional government with broad-based participation (this particular line was advanced during the early months of the Meles' regime; (c) this process has aided in avoiding a bloodbath in Addis Ababa after the fall of Mengistu; (d) Meles and EPRDF are working to put Ethiopia on a democratic path; (e) food aid for famine victims was able to reach the population for which it was intended; (f) there has been relative peace and stability in Ethiopia under the EPRDF; and finally, Meles Zenawi and Issaias Afewerki (President of the independent Eritrea) have been supportive, and have become critical allies to the U.S. government by responding to African conflicts in general and in the Horn of Africa in particular. They argue that Somali crisis and the Rwandan and Angolan conflicts are such examples of where the Meles Zenawi administration has been useful to the U.S. endeavor in maintaining peace and stability in this conflict-ridden part of the African continent⁽⁴²⁾.

(42) The most important sources with respect to the U.S. policy regarding Ethiopia since May 1991 include the following: Herman Cohen, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, U.S. State Department, *The Political Crisis in Ethiopia and The Role of the United States*, A Testimony at the Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 102nd Congress, 1st Session, June 18 1991, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992, pp. 3-6; ..., *Looking Back and Reaching Forward*, A Testimony before the Subcommittee on Africa, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 102nd Congress, 2nd Session, Sept., 17, 1992, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993, pp. 2-11; ..., *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution in Africa*, Testimony Before Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee of the Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 1st Session, March 31, 1993, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994, pp. 41-55; George E. Moose, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, on *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 1st Session, April 22, 1993, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994, pp. 47-54; ..., *Ethiopia: The Challenges*, A Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Relations, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 2nd Session, July 27, 1994, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995, pp. 3-18; 43-51; John B. Hicks, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Africa, USAID, *Ethiopia: The Challenges Ahead*, A Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Relations, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 2nd Session, July 27, 1994, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995, pp. 52-62. The strategic value the U.S. administration attaches to the Meles Zenawi regime is demonstrated by the following high-profile gestures. First, the National Security Advisor, Mr. Anthony Lake, travelled all the way to Addis Ababa and endorsed the new «Federal Constitution» in a highly staged press conference in Hilton Hotel (Addis Ababa) on December 18, 1994. See «The Ethiopian Herald», *US Official Call on Opposition here to Participate in Forthcoming Election*, December 18, 1994, p. 1; *America*

e) *The Southern nationalities — Ambivalence and anxiety.* The Southern nationalities who were conquered and incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire during the late 19th and early 20th centuries constitute about 70 percent of the estimated 52 million population of contemporary Ethiopia⁽⁴³⁾. The Oromos are the largest nationality (about 25-30 million) among these historic colonial subjects in the Empire⁽⁴⁴⁾. The Southern experience was represented via the Oromo Liberation Front at the London Peace Conference (more will be said about Oromo nationalism later). This was the first time the Southern voice was heard at the international arena, notwithstanding the Ogaden question, in the history of the conflicts in the Ethiopia Empire and the Horn of Africa. Other nationalities from the south participated at the Addis Ababa Conference of July 1991⁽⁴⁵⁾.

It is accurate to state that the political leaders of the Southern nationalities do not agree in all respects with respect to the interpretation of the political crisis in Ethiopia and neither do they converge in every point in regard to their goals to fulfill the political aspirations for the respective nations. However, there are certain discernable perceptions of the South pertaining to the new political order in Ethiopia. We will briefly discuss four major themes.

First, the South viewed the fact that they participated in the July 1-5 Addis Ababa Conference, and were represented in the new Council of Representatives as well as in the Cabinet of the Transitional Government was neither a privilege nor reassuring, for democracy which is granted by a dominant group can be taken away in the same manner at any time. Second, to them, the past evils which were visited upon them as the result of the Amhara/Tigrean ethnic domination are being replicated by the Tigrean ruling of EPRDF/TPLF. Third, the political future of Ethiopia should be decided democratically without imposition or intimidation.

Support Ethiopian Constitution: Official, «The Ethiopian Herald», December 18, 1994, p. 1. Of course, when the opposition groups declined to participate in the May 7, 1995 «Federal Elections» resulting in the TPLF monopoly of the processes with predictable results, they (the U.S. supporters of EPRDF/TPLF) were embarrassed. See «Africa Confidential», *Ethiopia: No Contest*, vol. 36, No. 11, May 26, 1995, pp. 4-6. Second, the U.S. has been conducting a series of joint military exercises, from time to time, with the EPRDF/TPLF military.

(43) See Lambert BARTELS, *Oromo Religion*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983, p. 13-28.

(44) See a fuller review relative to the subordinated status of the Oromos in the Ethiopian Empire. See Gaddaa MELBBAA, *Oromia: A Brief History*, Khartum, Sudan, 1987; Paul BAXTER, *The Problem of the Oromo or the Problem for the Oromo?*, in I.M. LEWIS, ed., *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*, London, Ithaca Press, 1983, pp. 129-140.

(45) See Makurtia BULTCHA, *The Transitional Charter of Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democratizing a Colonial Empire*, «The Oromo Commentary», op. cit., pp. 1-9.

Fourth, the current support for EPRDF/TPLF on the part of the Western powers in the face of overwhelming evidence of human rights violations and undemocratic practices of government is misplaced, and will only lead to further tensions and conflicts during the years and decades to come⁽⁴⁶⁾.

For example, we wish to make reference to the reactions of two categories of ethnic groups in the South — the Oromos and a coalition of 14 smaller southern ethnic groups — which illustrates the deeply rooted Southern suspicion about any power originating from the North, be it from the Amharas or Tigreans, who promise democracy and justice for all the peoples in Ethiopia. As the Oromo masses have demonstrated during the brief duration of open political discourse (June 1991-June 1992), the true nature of Oromo sentiments relative to the claims EPRDF/TPLF with respect to the democratization of Ethiopia was clearly, deeply suspicious of political power originating in the North, and the aspirations of the populace became progressively tilting toward for self-determination for the Oromos. Such sentiment was accurately stated, perhaps prophetically, on the OLF Radio commentary on the subject:

However democratic it is, no alien will give independence to the Oromo people. It is foolishness to hope for that. The existing current reality is that alien forces, which will not fulfill the desires of the Oromo nation, are fighting one another in Oromia. They are the forces of the Dergue Government, ruled by the Amhara, and the Tigray Woyane, opposed to the existing regime. The present government which rule Ethiopia and the movement which strives to replace it are fighting among themselves. It will not be full liberation for the Oromo nation to be free from the rule of one alien only to be ruled by another. Therefore, the struggle to achieve Oromo independence will continue⁽⁴⁷⁾.

The OLF, on the occasion of its withdrawal from the Transitional Government one year after the London Peace Conference, stated the following about the new political order in post-Dergue Ethiopia:

It is with the clear understanding of the past intrigues and shameless treacheries that the OLF decided to lead an armed struggle against the Fascist Dergue. With the overthrow of the Dergue the OLF once again resolved to take part in the process of democratizing Ethiopia through peaceful means. While genuinely participating in the political affairs of the country, it has not lost sight of the trend of the events with a skepticism

(46) See the Statement of the Secretary General of the OLF, *On the State of the Oromo People's Struggle*, March 1, 1993, pp. 9-10.

(47) Voice of Oromo Liberation in Oromiffa, April 13, 1991, as in MRC/1049, B/7.

born out of experience. As the political events of the past one year of the Transitional period bear witness the skepticism of the OLF was not unfounded. The EPRDF, which has established itself as a legitimate successor to the imperial throne of past authoritarian regimes of Ethiopia, has betrayed its true nature and intentions. If the current situation continues [...] the OLF believes that the whole effort of democratization would be in jeopardy⁽⁴⁸⁾.

A statement by Dr. Beyene Petros, the Chairman of the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), provides another perspective of the Southern grievances against the EPRDF/TPLF regime. He stated:

SEPDC is an organization that was formed by the free initiative of concerned nationality organizations from Southern Ethiopia. The organizations that formed the SEPDC required no catalyst or a "big brother" to tutor them as they formed the coalition and through their political activities thereafter. Thus, SEPDC is a free democratic organization. On the other hand, the so called "Southern People's Democratic Front" is a creation concocted several months after the formation of the SEPDC to play antagonistic role to the SEPDC. It is not freely conceived but rather a systematically contrived organization to frustrate the activities of the independently operating SEPDC⁽⁴⁹⁾.

The SEPDC too was eventually eliminated from the Transitional Government by an act of expulsion by the regime, and it stated the following on that occasion:

The Transitional Government led by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) expelled on April 1, 1993 five member organization of the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC) for participating in the Paris Conference. EPRDF expelled only five out of the nine organizations of SSEPDC who signed the Paris Peace Conference Declaration intentionally to wedge differences among the coalitions members. Until recently, because of SEPDC stands, its leadership have been denied free movements in the region they represent by the cronies appointed by TPLF. Now, finally, TPLF could not even stomach SEPDC's bitter pills, and it had to expel it from the Transitional Council in a very flagrant, undemocratic, TPLF style⁽⁵⁰⁾.

(48) Central Committee of the Oromo Liberation Front, Memorandum, *On Why the OLF is Forced to Withdraw From Election*, June 17, 1992, pp. 2-3.

(49) Interview with Dr. Beyene Petros, published in «Ethiopian Review», November, 1993, pp. 14-18.

(50) SEPDC, [North America Office] *A Statement by the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition on its Expulsion From the Transitional Council*, April 16, 1993.

A briefly presented above, today, almost three decades later, after Professor Abraham Demoz made the initial observations relative to the internal contradictions pertaining to the social order in Ethiopia, one finds the social order in the new political order still eminently complex and even more challenging and utterly confusing both for the inside actors and as well as for the outside watchers. Alex de Waal, a prominent human rightist, and the chief author of *The Evil Years: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*, a seminal work which provided a detailed account of human rights violations during the Dergue era⁽⁵¹⁾, captured the depth of this complexity and confusion pertaining to the Post-Dergue Ethiopia when he wrote:

Contemporary Ethiopia is thoroughly confusing. It is difficult enough to catalogue the events of the past few years, let alone make sense of them and hazard prediction as to what will happen next. This is partially because the changes of May 1991 represented an earthquake in the political landscape that destroyed the old certitudes which were perhaps highly misleading anyway. Just as the new rulers of Ethiopia are professing the political reinvention of the country, it is necessary for observers to rediscover the nature of political forces they are dealing with⁽⁵²⁾.

To some, the turn of events in the post-Dergue Ethiopia has been more clear, and even more chilling. Therefore, for such observers, the analysis has been less ambiguous and stunningly more insightful. For example, *The Economist* wrote the following relative to the 1992 regional elections whose results were rejected by the International Observers' Team as neither fair nor free:

When the Ethiopians, in May 1991, threw off their latest dictator, they thought they might avoid conflict by explicitly recognizing ethnic division and by carving up their nation into new administrative regions. On June 21st they held the first competitive elections in their history, to choose the powerful assemblies that will run those regions. The voting was flawed, and aroused fresh passions. Once again, the country looks close to civil war⁽⁵³⁾.

On the status of nationalities in the periphery in the new political order, it stated the following observations:

(51) Human Rights Watch/Africa, *The Evil Years: 30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*, New York, Human Rights Watch/Africa, 1991.

(52) Alex DE WAAL, *Rethinking Ethiopia*, in Charles GURDON ed., *The Horn of Africa*, London, University College press, 1994, p. 25.

(53) *Ethiopia: Africa's Balkans*, «The Economist», June 27, 1992, p. 50.

For more than a century they were [Oromos] and despised by autocrats from further north; first by feudal emperors, then for 17 years by military stalinists. Both autocracies ruled through, if not openly, in the name of, Amharas, highlanders with an ancient Christian tradition.

History weighs heavily. For now, Ethiopia is run by an army of Tigrean farm boys, while the Oromo dwell on humiliations, past and present⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Africa Confidential was equally blunt and eloquent in its assessment relative to the results and the meaning of the May 7, 1995 "federal" elections, when it wrote:

The new constitution has produced a government that looks more federal than it is. The Tigray People's Liberation Front [TPLF] won the war, ran the country during its transition to democracy and then won the elections. Now it has put men from many of Ethiopia's other peoples into top posts in the brand new Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, yet the reality of power's still in TPLF hand⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Professor Theodore M. Vestal, a political scientist of Oklahoma State University, was assigned by the United States government, to advise the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) on drafting a new constitution for the general elections. He relinquished that role and departed for the United States after he reached the conclusion that Meles Zenawi and EPRDF/TPLF were not serious about introducing genuine democracy in Ethiopia. His assessment with respect to the nature of the EPRDF/TPLF governance is captured in the following statement:

The main features of the TGE's Kitab (Kitab is an Amharic term for book of doctrine) have been well rehearsed. From wartime insurgent group, the EPRDF was transformed into transitional government by the magic wand of the U.S. State Department. Anointed with donor nations dollars on the collateral of promised good behavior in democratic ways, the EPRDF got to choose the players and make up the rules for a TGE. While most of the world breathed sighs of relief that Mengistu and the Dergue were gone, few attended to the mischief the TPLF dominated EPRDF was about. Indeed, many friends of Ethiopia cheered the democratic shibboleths and the winds of freedom that seemed to blow across the country⁽⁵⁶⁾.

On the nature and the quality of the new constitution in terms of its capacity to introduce democratic tradition and curb the undue abuse power by the government, he declared:

(54) *Ibidem*.

(55) *Looking Federal*, «Africa Confidential», vol. 36, No. 19, Sept. 22, 1995, p. 5.

(56) Theodore M. VESTAL, *Analysis of the New Constitution of Ethiopia and the Process of Its Adoption*, a paper presented at the 37th Annual Conference of the African Studies Association, Toronto, Canada, Nov. 3-6, 1994, p. 2.

In summary, the draft constitution embodies essentially what the ERDF/TGE wishes the world outside and its own people to believe about the political order. It does not express political reality but instead is a facade behind which the true actuality of the Marxist-Leninist political order is hidden. The constitution does not restrain government because it is not an expression of a firm belief in the importance of doing so. Exercise of power in such a system is not subject to review by someone other than the holder of the power — the antithesis of constitutionalism⁽⁵⁷⁾.

And, finally, we quote from *The Economist* which revisited the subject of the new political order in Ethiopia on the eve of the 7 May 1995 "federal elections":

It is these shells [the term "shell" is used in here is reference to the ethnic satellite organizations created by the TPLF] that, as parties, are now, in appearance, competing for votes. But at the centre sit Mr. Mele and his Tigrean compadres. "Decentralizing" has meant dispersing opposition and holding on to the essentials of power-guaranteed ultimately by the Tigrayan core of the army. Many other parties that presented a real challenge to the EPRDF have been excluded. Those that did go along with Mr. Meles did so on his terms⁽⁵⁸⁾.

To summarize this section, our cursory examination with respect to the new political order in the post-Dergue Ethiopia, the following realities have emerged. First, the crisis which has manifested itself during the last three decades, transcending three ethnically and ideologically different regimes, represent properties of social conflict, with various of degrees consequence, which is deeply rooted and protracted. Second, the various views presented thus far, in some broad sense, represent parties to the conflict. Third, the parties to the conflict as discussed have been engaged in this protracted conflict with radically different sources of legitimacy and drastically disparate views with respect to power. Fourth, the intermediary agent is the Ethiopian empire state. The Northerners (Tigreans and Amharas) struggle to define and redefine the Ethiopian state in their own ethnic terms and control it with exclusive monopoly, while the Southerners basically want to challenge the very legitimacy of the Ethiopian state. Thus, the conflict is structurally based. Fifth, ethnicity is a factor, the source of mobilization on both sides; imperialists use their own ethnic base to mobilize and control, utilizing the state apparatus, while the oppressed nationalities employ their ethnic properties to counter the imperial force. Sixth, the intervention by

(57) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

(58) *Ethiopia: The Caravan Passes On*, «The Economist», May 6, 1995, p. 46.

external powers; i.e., the U.S. with its allies and the newly independent Eritrea under the leadership of the EPLF, an organization, in a measurable part responsible for the creation and successes of the TPLF, presently side with those who control the state, thus widening the power gap in the relationship among the conflicting parties. Seventh, the conflict within the Northern trio of Habesha communities (i.e. Tigreans vs. Amharas; or the Northern Amharas of Gondor and Gojjam vs. the Shoa Amharas) presents a very interests and challenging theoretical issue in that it demonstrates the existence of dysfunctional relationship within the traditional imperial core society, (which in due course came to the forefront during the 1960s culminating in the fall of the Amhara power and the rise of the Tigrean power at the end of the Cold War). And finally, the parties described above subscribe to incompatible goals in their attempt to define and redefine the nature of the new political order.

It seems that each of the three radically divergent regimes which declared to the world their particular sets of solution in response the basic social conflict in Ethiopia, have failed dismally. The conflict has been escalating during each passing decade leading to what may well be the initial phase of the disintegration of the last empire on the African continent. In our view, this social order in contemporary Ethiopia and the dynamics endemic in the structure of the state system which has created so much alienation among various nationalities deserves fresh critical reexamination.

HAMDESA TUSO

RIASSUNTO

Nell'arco di trent'anni l'impero etiopico ha subito clamorosi capovolgimenti politici: tre regimi totalmente diversi fra loro, ognuno dominato da un particolare gruppo etnico, si sono succeduti al potere promettendo sempre unità, giustizia sociale e sviluppo economico e cercando incessantemente sia una legittimazione tra le popolazioni dell'interno che un riconoscimento internazionale.

Il presente articolo vuole rivisitare la causa strutturale del conflitto nell'impero etiopico e discutere l'effettivo impatto che su tale conflitto hanno avuto l'imperialismo e il nazionalismo.

RESUMÉ

Au cours de trente ans l'empire éthiopien a subi des renversements politiques éclatants: trois régimes complètement différents, chacun dominé par un particulier groupe ethnique, se sont succédé au pouvoir en promettant toujours unité, justice sociale et développement économique et cherchant constamment soit une légitimation parmi les populations de l'intérieur soit une reconnaissance internationale.

Cette étude entend relire la cause structurale du conflit à l'intérieur de l'empire éthiopien et discuter l'impact réel que sur ce conflit ont eu l'impérialisme et le nationalisme.