

**THE NATION-STATE AND ETHNIC NATIONALISM:
A CASE STUDY OF ERITREA**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

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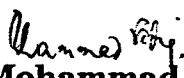
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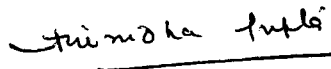
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We recommend this Dissertation be placed before the examiner for evaluation.


Mohammad Sadiq
Chairperson


Anirudha Gupta
Supervisor

*Dedicated
to
Mom and Dad*

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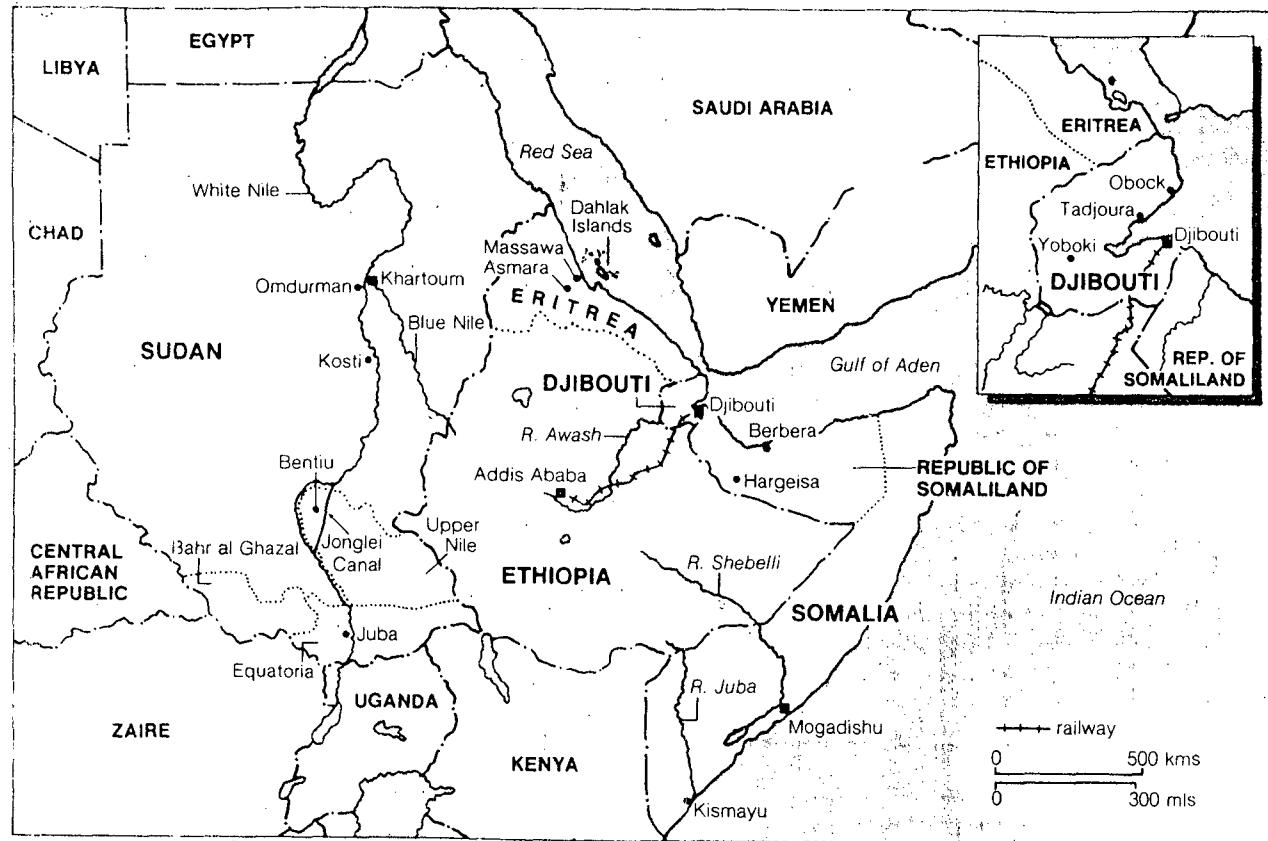
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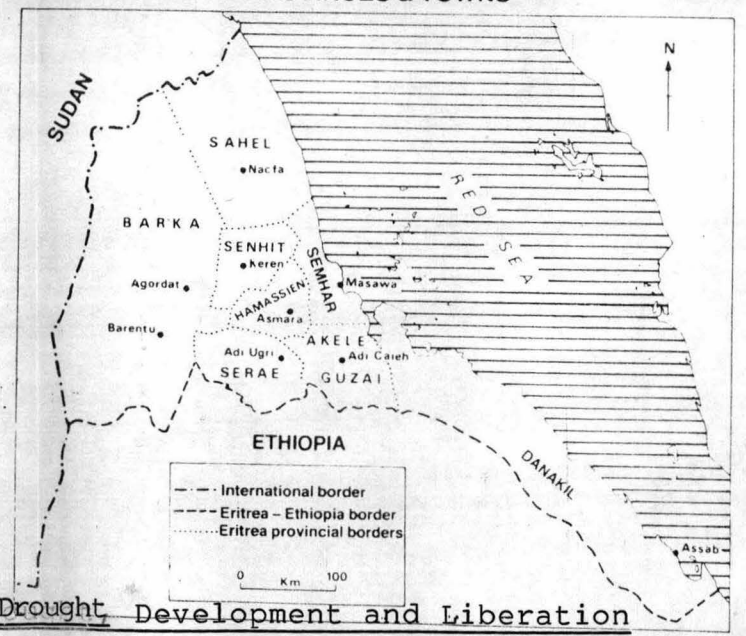
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ERITREA: IN THE HORN OF AFRICA



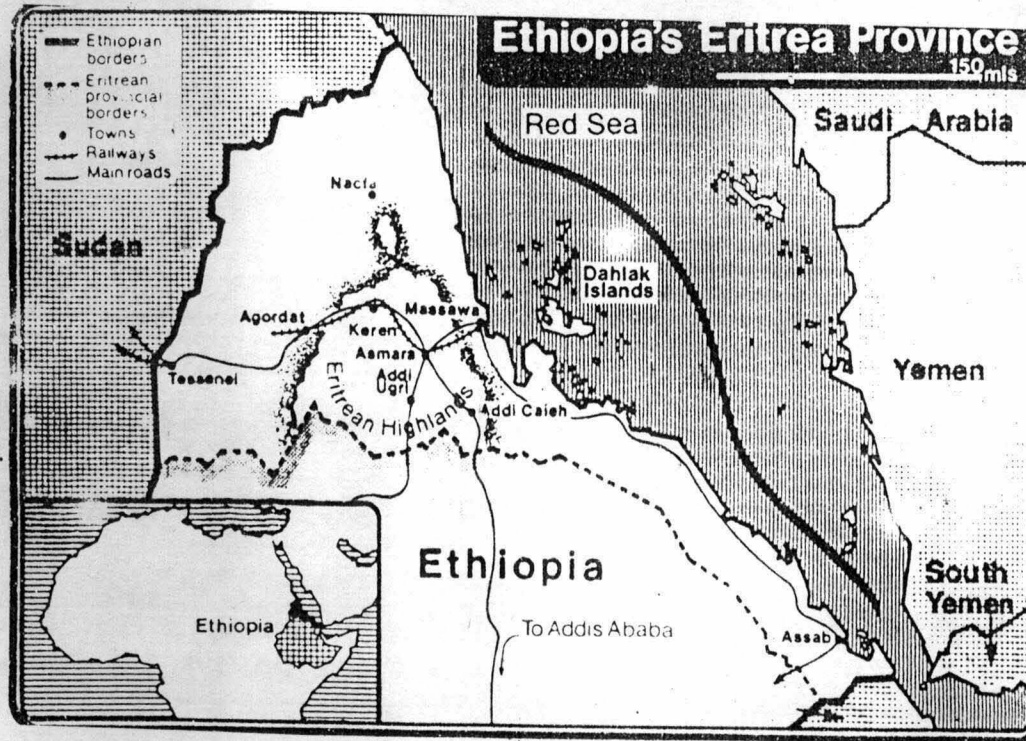
Source: Colin Legum, "The Horn of Africa: Prospects for Political Transformation". Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism (PS) Sept. 1992, p.1.

MAP 2 ERITREA: PROVINCES & TOWNS



Source: James Firebrace and Stuart Holland, Never Kneel Down: Drought, Development and Liberation
in Eritrea, Spokesman, 1984, p.13.

Eritrea: As an Ethiopian Province



Source: Gemini News Services, Ltd., as cited in Richard Sherman

Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution, New York, Praeger, 1980.

Chapter I

The Problem

In the 19th century, when the idea of nation - state was paramount, the European Powers created Africa in a 'series of Hapsburg style states'¹, in which different communities and ethnic groups have been lumped together without any thought to their cultural division. Pluralism had been brought in and the 'pluralist Hapsburg style states' which had formerly represented one style of African polity became the prevailing mode for the whole continent.²

On attaining independence, the new states emphasized the importance of central government over other units of society.³ The argument was that it was only by keeping the centre strong that the unity and integration of new states could be consolidated.

-
1. Hapsburg - a European Royal family who for 600 years played a dominant part in European politics. At various times the members attained the titles of Holy Roman Emperor, Kings of Spain and Ruler of the Austrian Empire, ruling over Hungary and various races like Czecks, Poles, Slovaks etc. See Robert A. Kann. A history of the Hapsburg Empire, 1526-1918. University of California Press Berkely/Los Angeles/London. England. 1974. for a full account.
 2. I.M. Lewis (ed.) Nationalism and self-determination in the Horn of Africa. Ithaca Press, London. 983, pp.73-74.
 3. Rothchild and Olorunsola in their article 'Managing competing state and ethnic claims', p.5. in Rothchild (Donald) Ed. State versus ethnic claims: African policy dilemmas. Westview Press. Inc. 1983. Also wrote that "in post-colonial circumstances, only a central government could be expected to prove an efficient and
Cont....

'the integrity of the nation - state, as handed over by the departing colonial powers remains the first and last doctrine in politics'.⁴

Nationalists of the third world aim to create a nation - state distinctly western but as Lucian Pye points out, they have the form but not the content.⁵ They are in a hurry to catch up with the developed world, with two objectives in mind, first, to be recognized and their identity acknowledged and second, to be as developed and to have a role in world politics.⁶

Over a period, the integration policy succeeded but new fissures began to appear, particularly in such plural societies where ethnicity and communal solidarities were marked. The peoples of the peripheral areas came to resent the policies of those in authority in the central government.

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3. effective motor agency for economic and political development. To the extent that it might assure survival and integrate society as well as mobilize and distribute resources efficiently and secure freedom from external control, a central government was considered a vital instrument for achieving societal goals at the lowest possible cost".
 4. Anirudha Gupta. 'Ethnic conflict: Roots of the Problem' -Mainstream, May 25 1991. p.10 and also, David Apter. Ghana in transition. Ed. 2. Princeton; Princeton University Press. 1972.
 5. Lucian W. Pye. Politics, Personality, and Nation Building:m Burma's research for identity. New Haven and London, Yale University Press. 1969. p.3.
 6. Ibid., pp.3-14.

In time, the ethnic groups of the peripheral areas came to share a sense of deprivation as their economic and social grievances accumulated. The distribution from government policies alienated them. Eventually, these grievances took political forms including large scale of violence.

The central authority perceived such ethnic assertions to be a challenge to the integrity of the nation - state. Hence, it adopted strong - armed methods and force and uncompromising stand. The result was further escalation of violence.

Towards a definition of Nation - State

These developments oblige us to draw a distinction between 'nation' and 'state'.

Nation

Nation is hard to define. Generally the term refers to a community of people possessing a common history and culture, confined within a defined territory and having a consciousness of belonging together. For Max Weber, a nation exists when a common factor differentiates them from others, creating a solidarity which finds expression in a political institution.⁷ Benedict Anderson writes that it is 'an

7. David Beetham, Max Weber and the theory of modern politics. Polity press. 1985. p.122.

imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'.⁸ Limited because they are confined within a territory and sovereign because nations dream of being free.

According to Rupert Emerson, 'the nation is a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they have a common destiny for the future'.⁹ Stalin made it specific by defining it as 'a historically constituted stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make up manifested in a common culture'.¹⁰

The family expands into a community which desires a common legal and economic system, and as civilization progress leads to a wider political organization who will administer for the good of the people, creating legal laws and recognizing one language. After a sufficient period, the people come to share a common history, a mode of habit and

8. Benedict Anderson. Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. Verso. London. 1983. pp.15-16.

9. Rupert Emerson. Empire to Nation. Scientific Book Agency, Calcutta. 1960. p.95.

10. Selections from V.I. Lenin and J.V. Stalin on National colonial question. Calcutta. 1975. p.69.

certain characteristics.¹¹

For many writers, nation is perennial. Nation and nationalism existed from the beginning and is inherent in the nature of men, while for others, it is a modern phenomenon. Nation is different from other political organization because a common feeling of nationhood is shared by a large group of people. Before the French Revolution, this was absent which made modern writers to put the theory that nation dates from that period.¹² The French Revolution thus heralded a new era.

In order to protect men from the disorder of nature, a nation provides an institutional representative - the modern state that controls and legalises power.¹³ Nationalism holds that they were intended for each other and incomplete without the other.

State

The state, according to Weber is 'that agency within society which possess the monopoly of legitimate violence'.

11. Nationalism, 'A report by a study group of members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. 1963. pp.1-7.

12. Hugh-Seton Watson. Nations and States: An enquiry into the origins of nations and the policies of nationalism. Methuen. London. 1975. p.6.

13. Brian Weinstein. Gabon: Nation building on the Ogooue. The M.I.T. Press England. 1966. p.4.

Well ordered societies in which humans live do not encourage private or sectional violence. Conflict cannot be solved privately. Violence can be exercised only by those to whom political authority is given. The state is the one agency within the society that has this power. Nation feels complete only when the state is there, therefore, it usually tries to create one.¹⁴

But this does not mean that they emerge together. Some nations have emerged and existed without the state and vice - versa. The state is primarily a 'politico - legal concept whereas the nation is a psycho - cultural one'.¹⁵ The state is more of an autonomous political group and not necessarily based on 'uniform culture'.¹⁶

Nation - state as a political idea in scale began from the 19th century only.¹⁷ Hakan Wiberg points out that there

14. David Beetham. *ibid.* p.122.
15. Urmila Phadnis. Ethnicity and nation - building in South Asia. Sage publications. New Delhi/Newbury Park/London. 1989. p.22.
16. I.M. Lewis. *ibid.* p.10.
17. 'Its parents being the emancipatory and democratic idea of the enlightenment and the metaphysical conception of nationhood prevailing in Romanticism'. See Hakan Wiberg. Self - determination as an international issue' in I.M. Lewis. (ed.) Nationalism and self determination in the Horn of Africa, Ithaca Press, London. 1983. p.44.

are very few nation - states in the world today. At the most, only a tenth of the world's contemporary states are nation - states in the strict sense. The most homogeneous states are in Europe and the least in Asia and Africa.¹⁸ Many of today's new nation - states were created by bringing different groups together. Paul Brass wrote that "nations maybe created by the transformation of an ethnic group in a multi - ethnic into a self - conscious political entity or by the amalgamation of diverse groups and the formation of an inter - ethnic composite or homogeneous national culture through the agency of the modern state".¹⁹

Nation - state can be created even if only a part of the population holds this belief - that it possesses 'nationalist consciousness', but to create this consciousness at the lower level of the society, they need an effective propaganda or an army to hold the image as they try to assimilate the other groups. Failing which, the nation will collapse as it cannot last on the basis of a fictitious nature.²⁰

18. Ibid. pp.43-44.

19. Paul Brass. Ethnicity and nationalism: Theory and comparison. Sage Pub. New Delhi/Newburg/London. 1991. p.20.

20. Hugh - Seton Watson. ;bid. p.5.

For the third world, keeping their image of nation - state is important. This dissertation examine the case of Ethiopia, the oldest state in Sub - Saharan Africa in this light.

From 1896, it was internationally recognized as nation - state and 'mythicized as the epitome of African independence and self - determination.²¹ Its idea of a nation - state was based on a strong centralized government intent on keeping its units intact. But the government failed in this policy as we shall see from the Eritrean case leading to serve the chasm between the central authority and the periphery.

A number of books and articles have appeared on the Ethiopia - Eritrea problem but no single work studies the trend in violence and antagonism between the centre and periphery. Such studies were discouraged because of the fear that they could serve ethnic nationalism or animosities. In recent years, the neo - Marxists have started to emphasize that ethnicity is a major force and must be given equal attention. They have started to realize that ethnicity in the case of modernization and development should be studied more carefully.

21. Edmond J. Keller. "Ethiopia: Revolution, class, and the national question". The journal of the Royal African Society. African Affairs. Vol. 80. number. 321. October. 1981. p. 522.

The study is based mainly on secondary sources - books, journals, magazines and newspapers as marked in the bibliography.

This dissertation is primarily concerned with Eritrea and its conflicts with the central government of Ethiopia. It investigates the stages of denial of their identity leading to political consciousness and conflicts with the central authority.

Chapter II

Historical Background

The Land and People

The word 'Ethiopia' comes from the Greek words to 'burn' and 'face' - the land of people with burnt faces.¹

A land where the past never seem to entangle itself from the present having a rich culture, long history and at one time a traditional Monarch.

Location

Ethiopia is situated in the Horn of Africa. The Horn lies in the north-east of Africa and extends from the upper Nile to the shores facing Arabs and a coastline that sweeps 1,000 miles to the south-west.²

The Horn was internationalized and assumed importance during the cold war and the Middle-East crisis. Soviet Union wanted to built its sea and air base there which was counteracted by the United States. The cold war has ended but the Horn continues to be important for its strategic location³ and faces today all kinds of unimaginable troubles

1. David Lamb: The Africans: Encounters from the Sudan to the Cape. Methuen. 1985. p.200.
2. Hugh-Seton Watson. Nations and States: An enquiry into the origins of nations and the policies of nationalism. Methuen. London. 1977. p.5.
3. Situated near the junction of the three continents - Africa, Asia and Europe, easy access to the Southern Red Sea, Gulf of Aden with Bab-el-Mandeb as its key point, makes it important for the super powers. See Raman Bhardwaj. The Dilemma of the Horn of Africa. Heritage. 1980.

- civil wars, ethnic unrest, contested borders, differences in religion which is accentuated by the severe poverty faced by the region with its famine and refugee problem.

Of the three countries situated in the Horn - Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti, it is Ethiopia which fascinates and draw explorers, historians and even laymen due to its past historical connection with the Kingdom of Aksum⁴, myth of Prester John⁵, the 16 hundred Christian Church and its feudal monarchy.

Surrounded by Kenya in the South, Sudan in the West and the Republic of Djibouti and Somalia in the east and north-east, it has been described as a country of 'Majestic Beauty' with its mountains which has acted as a barrier for outside forces, steep valleys and rapid waterways.

Geography

The country maybe divided geographically into the highlands of the north and the lowlands of the south. On the

4. Ancient kingdom which flourished from 1,000 B.C. See Margery Perham. The Government of Ethiopia. Faber and Faber limited. London. 1969. pp.10-30.
5. A legendary figure, said to reign during the middle ages, described as ruling over 72 kings and over the three India's. See Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux. The Ethiopian Revolution. Verso Edition and NLB. London. 1981, pp.52-53.

whole, consisting of a huge tableland or plateau, thousands of feet in height, divided by the Rift valley running north-east from central Kenya to the Red Sea.⁶

It has an area of 1,251,822 (483,1235 sq. miles) of which grassland covers about 54 percent, forest about 7 percent, 8 percent is cultivated cropland and rest are deserts, water or land which cannot be cultivated.⁷

Due to the high elevation of the country, the climate is temperate, average annual temperature of the highlands is 60 to 65 degrees fahrenheit. Ethiopians apply three terms - quolla, woina dega and dega to describe their climate. The first, meaning hot (desert and semiarid lowlands), the second, temperate (plateau country) and the third as cold (mountain area - above 8,000 feet).⁸

According to the 1989 census, the country has a population of 49,513,000. Meles Zenawi, the country's interim President, described it as "a nation of 50 million

6. Ernest W. Luther. Ethiopia Today. Stanford University Press, 1958. p.2.
7. Peter Schwab. Ethiopia. Frances Printer (Pub) London. 1985. pp.1-2.
8. Ernest W. Luther. ibid., p.5.

paupers".⁹ Muslim comprises of 45 percent of the population, Christian about 40 percent and rest consist of a small Jewish population¹⁰ and animist.¹¹

Ethnic Groups

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state having over 70 ethnic groups, speaking different languages and dialects. The important or more known groups would be the Amhara, Oromo, Somali, Tigrean, Afar, Sidama and Gurage. From among these ethnic groups, it is the Amhara who have come to dominate over the other groups.

Amhara: They comprises of about 19 percent of the population and occupy the central position on the great plateau that rises between the Somali desert to the east and the lowlands of the Sudan to the west.¹² They are concentrated in the

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9. Colin Legum. "The Horn of Africa: Prospects for Political Transformation". Research institute for the study of conflict and terrorism. Sept. 1992.
 10. Falashas (Jews) Comprising of about 0.2% of the Population were taken to Israel about 13,000 in 1984-85 by an air-lift known as operation Moses, this was followed by operation Solomon which removed 16,000 Falashas in 1989-91. Today only about 2,000 Falashas remain in the country. Africa, South of the Sahara. 22nd edition, Europa. Pub. Ltd. 1993. p.354.
 11. Africa, South of the Sahara. *ibid.* p.354.
 12. Ernest W. Luther. *ibid.* p.24.

northern areas of Shoa, Welo, Gojjam and Bagemdar. They are all Christians, having a written tradition and a mixed farming agriculture based on the ox-drawn plough.¹³ The fact that Amhara came and conquered the other groups have given them a superiority complex. They hold the idea that "the Amhara is to rule, not to be ruled". This has been legitimized by ethnic and cultural superiority. They have thus tried to Amharize the other ethnic groups via education, speaking their language - Amharic, following their religion and adopting Christian names. Their language has been specially enforced and anyone who seek job in the government offices has to be fluent in it. During the last Emperor time, it not only became the official language but also became compulsory for students in schools and universities.

Oromo: The Oromos (also known as Gallas) comprises of 40 percent of the population. It is assumed that they came from the grasslands of southern Ethiopia where they lived as pastoral stockmen, from there they probably spread to other areas.¹⁴ They can be divided into two groups politically -

13. John Markakis and Nega Ayele. Class and Revolution in Ethiopia. Spokesman 1978. p.21.

14. I.M. Lewis (ed.) Nationalism and Self-determination in the Horn of Africa. Ithaca Press. London. 1983. pp.130-131.

the first, as those who as a result of migration and warfare penetrated into the centre of the country and second, those who at a later date were conquered by the Shoan kings and incorporated into the Empire. The difference been that those from the northern side tend to assimilate themselves more easily with the Amhara while those on the southern side are less affected. Oromos compose of a number of branches, of which the best known are - the Raya, Wollo, Karaiyu, Afran, Kallo, Leqa, Mecha, Tulama, Guji, Arussi and Boran.¹⁵ They are mostly Muslims and due to their religion and big size, the Amhara have put special effort into their areas to subjugate them. Oromos in turn came to hate and fear the Amhara because they came to conquer, exploit and tried to control them politically.

Somali: The Somalis come from the semi-desert horn of eastern Africa. They comprises of about 6 percent of the population, divided into a number of clans and tribes. They are Mohammedan and hold their religion with fierce intolerance.¹⁶ Not only are they seperated from Amhara by their culture, religion and language but their opposition comes from their ties of affinity with the Somali Republic. Amhara tried to incorporate them by force, creating

15. I.M. Lewis. *ibid.* p.130.

16. Margery Perham. *ibid.* p.298.

divisions between clans and alienated them due to the alien political government and culture imposed rather than economic grievances.¹⁷

Tigrean: Tigreans comprises of about 16 percent of the population, they, along with the Amhara have dominated the political history of Ethiopia. They occupy the northern highlands of the country (the part where the ancient Ethiopian state was formed and also the capital of Aksum). Mostly comprised of Christians, they, like the Amhara adopt a slightly superior attitude over the other groups.

Sidamo: The Sidamos are non-Galla, Hamitic speaking people¹⁸ in the south-west of Ethiopia.¹⁹ They comprises of 4 percent of the population and follow Christianity.

Gurage: Gurage comprises of 2 percent of the population. They are concentrated on the fertile and mountainous district on south-western border of Shoa.²⁰ They make a living out of their herds, although some cultivate as well. They are industrious people but regarded as belonging to

17. Christopher Clapham. 'The Structure of Regional Conflict in Northern Ethiopia' in Michael Twaddle (ed.) Imperialism and the state in the third world. British Academic Press. London. N.Y. 1992. p. 262.

18. For an account of the Hamitic people. check page no. 20.

19. Margery Perham. *ibid.* p.315.

20. Margery Perham. *ibid.* p.322.

lower ranks and generally work as porters and sweepers in the capital.

Afar: The Afars (also known as Danakil) come from the north. Their territory, a torrid desert separating the Abyssinian plateau from the Red Sea. Comprising of about 1 percent of the population, they are mostly Muslims and sorcery has large influence upon them.²¹ They go about their own ways and a common language, religion and hatred of intruders bind them together. Somehow, the central government has never been able to fully control them.

These different ethnic groups having vast differences in size, religion and language have been incorporated into the Empire.

Society

Ethiopian society diverse as it was before is nowhere complicated as from the 19th century when the different groups were added to the Empire. Some of the ethnic groups had a share in the central government but it is generally agreed by writers that the Amhara (Shoan) dominates over all the other groups as mentioned earlier in the ethnic composition. Which means that the structure of the

21. Ibid. pp.339-40.

government is much influenced by the Amhara society and their views (values) of life.

Amhara are from childhood taught to be aggressive, to fight back against people who might strike them down. Their attitude is of distrust and suspicion of others which led them to a more solitary family life and they cluster together in border areas for protection. Their religion, language and district gives them an identity which they guard with a superior attitude.

Unity is rare, should the need arise, they will galvanise into action for it but revert back to their old ways once it is past.²² Their songs, dances and even wars are unorganized and preferred to be done individually.

Their society is a patriarchal one, the father is given all respect and honour, children are taught to be obedient and to readily obey their parent's commands. Rich people or those who possessed high ranks, royal blood or landlords are looked upon with due respect. An inferior when addressing or being addressed by superiors must rise up to speak,

22. Christopher Clapham. Haile Selassie's Government. Longman. 1970. pp.4-5. For a good account of Amhara Society, see also Donald N. Levine. "Ethiopia: Identity, Authority and Realism" in Pye and Verba (ed.). Political Culture and Political Development. Princeton, New Jersey. Princeton University Press. 1965. pp.245-281.

dismount, if he is riding a mule and bows when entering his home.

One particular feature of their culture is the belief in the traditional dignity and authority of the king of kings in Ethiopia. This belief have been preserved over the centuries, and Emperors have been able to use this to strengthen their position. No one can publicly criticize their Emperors, their attitude been that "whether we like him or not, we must not criticize him".²³

Their traditional ways and values have changed with the coming of modernity, but the old Amhara finds it difficult to completely wipe out the past.

Early History

Ethiopians trace their history to the Semitic people²⁴ who migrated from southern Arabia during the first millennium B.C. They came searching for trade and the region topography and weather similarity with their own homeland. They settled, developing first city-states and then a

23. Donald N. Levine. *ibid.* pp. 250-252, 271.

24. Semitic is a linguistic term. They belong to Caucasian group, the group to which majority of Europeans belong. They are found to be related to Hamitic - both stem from a common branch. Authorities differ as to whether it is from Asia or Africa. See Margery Perham. *ibid.* p.10.

kingdom based on Aksum.²⁵ They intermarried with the aboriginal Hamitic people²⁶ and their kingdom flourished. Christianity was adopted in the 4th century A.D. and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Church that was to play a dominant role in Ethiopia came into existence. The Aksum kingdom tried to spread its influence for 150 years in the southern plateau but collapsed in the 7th century A.D.²⁷ There was no stable kingdom for some period, landlords, provincial chiefs and aristocrats vied with each other for power. Unification was attempted from 1270 when the Amhara claiming to be descended from the union of king Solomon of Judae and Queen Sheba took over²⁸ basing their kingdom in

25. Robert L. Hess. Ethiopia: The modernization of autocracy. Cornell University Press. Ithaca. London. 1970. pp.8-9.

26. Hamites like Semitic is a linguistic term and also known as Cushities derived from ancient name applied to parts of north-east Africa. Sometimes referred as Eurafrian because they are from the Caucasian group. Hamites have light graceful physique with features that are clear-cut. They are supposed to have supplied pre-dynastic Egypt with its population. Their pure representatives are found among the Beja of Beni-Amer tribes of Sudan or Eritrea. See Margery Perham. ibid. pp.10-12. For a detail account see G.A. Barton. Hamitic and Semitic Origins. Philadelphia; 1934.

27. Edmond. J. Keller. "The Revolutionary Transformation of Ethiopia's Twentieth Century Bureaucratic Empire". Journal of Modern African Studies. Vol.19. No. 2. June 1981. p.310.

28. According to legend, Menelik, the first Ethiopian King was the son of Soloman and Sheba. For Ethiopians, this legend has been legalised and given them a superior feeling.

Wello province, south of Tigray and a long line of Monarchical rule began.

Political Tradition

In Ethiopia, four traditional factors play a large role. The Emperor's role has been mentioned earlier,

like the Deity whose sanction he claims, the Emperor moves in a mysterious way.²⁹

His authority is vested in his own person, his decision unchallenged and he rules with the backing of the Orthodox Church and the nobility to aid and advice him.

Church: The Church assumed importance with the adoption of the Solomonic line. It played a role of uniting the leaders and also contributed to the growing sense of nationality³⁰, and became powerful by "assuming the role of defining, articulating and interpreting the cultural myths of society and the heritage of it's rulers".³¹

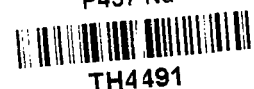
It published the Kebra Nagast (the glory of Kings) which is a mixture of Ethiopian mythodology and the Bible

29. Margery Perham. *ibid.* p. XXVIII.

30. Donald N. Levine. *ibid.* p.273. ✓

31. Edmond J. Keller. *ibid.* p.315.

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and Fethe Nagast (the law of Kings) which systemised the laws of the Empire, laying the mythical foundation of the society. Constitutionally, the Church and the state were one. Article 126 of the constitution states, "the name of the Emperor shall be mentioned in all religious services" which emphasizes the connection between the Church and the state. The Church had a good relationship with the Emperor, in some cases having the power to bring down the Emperor and also owned upto one third of the Empire's land.

Nobility: Two types of nobility existed. One who was honored through services done and the other who descended down from royal line. Traditionally, all nobility occupied places of high prestige of administration and collecting taxes. The more prestigious one's got the higher offices.³²

The Emperor rules but considerable delegation is needed to hold the Empire together, and that is where the nobility comes in, they are appointed as provincial governors and have benefitted from the Amhara respect for high officials, establishing themselves and ruling almost like a king in their own domain.³³ These led to them conflicting occasionally with the Emperor and becoming a force to be

32. Ibid. pp.316-317.

33. Christopher Clapham. Haile Selassie's Government. Ibid. pp.10-11.

reckoned with as they became almost as powerful as the Emperors.

Apart from the Monarch, Church and Nobility, land is another traditional factor that play a prominent role in Ethiopia.

Land: Land connotes wealth, power, security and well-being. They had a system of serfdom, known as 'gabar system'. The term 'gabar' applies to a peasant who has to render his services or wealth to the landlord in return for the use of his land. The gabar's position was almost like that of a slave, they had the right to appeal to the Emperors but few were willing to make the long journey to the capital and suffered in silence.

Among the Amhara, two types of system existed - rist and gult. Rist is the land which every male had a hereditary claim to a portion of the land and gult is presented by Emperors as gift for services done and is not inheritable nor transferable. Taxes can be collected from this type of land by the nobility or those in high position. Legally, all lands belong to the Emperor who has the power to distribute lands to the Church, soldiers or as gift to peasants.

Life, for most Ethiopians revolves round their land, family and the Church rather than to the development of

their society and nation. Peasants made up of 90 percent of the country. They struggle barely to survive, their condition pitiful because they don't even come upto the international standard of undernourishment which is put at 2,550 calories per day. For them it was 1,622 calories per day only.³⁴ The peasants were all agriculturist. Agriculture contributed to more than half of the gross national product. The plight of the peasants were not because of the harshness of nature but due to the collection of tribute, education and income taxes which literally snatched all their earnigs.

Against these background, the Ethiopia which emerged from the 19th century onwards was not an equal society nor politically integrated. It was a feudal society with sharp differences between the landlords and the peasants, which acquired new changes as the modern history of Ethiopia began.

Modern History of Ethiopia

The modern period began from Emperors Tewodros, (1855-68) Yohannes, (1872-89) Menelik (1889-1913) upto Haile Selassie (1930-74). Under these last four Emperors, Ethiopia emerged into a well centralized state.

34. Rene Lefort. Ethiopia: An heretical Revolution? T.R. by A.M. Berrett. London. Zed. 1983. p.8.

In 1855, when Emperor Theodore Tewodros ascended the throne, there was no unity and the society was run by a privileged few. He divided the traditional administrative division held earlier by nobility to lessen their power and tried to raise a salaried professional army to defend the country.³⁵ He had a burning desire to unite the country which in the end landed up in him earning the disfavour of the British and ultimately committed suicide.

Yohannes, more or less followed the same pattern of trying to unite the country and trying to conquer new territories. A pragmatist, he tried to teach the Ethiopians self-awareness. His rule was not very successful and witnessed a breakdown of centralization as the nobility began to reassert their independence.

Menelik's first problem on coming to power was how to defend his territory as European colonialism began to spread. In order to control the peripheral areas, he subjected them to tax collection and also changed much of the land system by distributing it among the soldiers, Church, nobility, making land to become a symbol of power and prestige in the conquered areas.³⁶

35. Richard Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935 (Addis Ababa, 1968), p.11. as quoted by Edmond J. Keller. *Ibid.* p.312.

36. Edmond J. Keller. *ibid.* p.313.

Menelik had earlier as king of Shoa under his territory - Wollo, Somali and Oromo territories, Gurage, Arussi and Harar. After becoming the Emperor of Ethiopia, he managed to expand his territories in the south and east when from 1890-1906, Ogaden, Bale, Sidama, Wolloma, Kaffer and Illubar were added to the Empire³⁷, and integrated into the political, cultural, social and economic system of the country.

The modern concept of Ethiopia was born when he defeated the Italians in the battle of Adowa in 1896³⁸, this earned the prestige and recognition from the European powers as a power to be reckoned with.

After his death, his grandson Lij Yasu reigned for a short period followed by Queen Zauditu. After her death, the way was paved for Ras Tafari Makonnen, a young nobleman and cousin of Menelik to assume power.

Haile Selassie I (as he renamed himself) was born in 1892, he became Regent in 1916 and Emperor in 1930. Under him, the territorial state of Ethiopia reached it's zenith.

37. Edmond J. Keller. "Ethiopia: Revolution, Class and the National Question". Journal of the Royal African Society. African Affairs. Vol.80. No. 321. October 1981. p.527.

38. Donald N. Levine. ibid. p.266.

An ambitious young man, he was briefly interrupted from carrying out his dreams when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935. Ethiopians inspite of their differences had a unity which prevented European powers from penetrating their territories because alone of the third world, Ethiopia was only partially colonized. Italian rule did not last long.

They seem to have united mainly in order to prevent Arabs and other Blacks coming to control them and their geographical isolation was an added advantage. They possess territorial nationalism which at first was centred around their own areas, as has been shown against the Italian invasion when resistance came individually in the form of Provincial war-lords, Priests and Mediaval Organizations.³⁹ There was no united movement against the Italians which was why Haile Selassie after the liberation⁴⁰ found it easy to bring the individuals down and create an all strong Ethiopian state.

39. Haggai Erlich. Ethiopia and the Challenge of Independence. Lynne Rienner Pub. Boulder. Colorado. 1986. p.167.

40. Following Italian invasion in 1935, Haile Selassie fled to England. In 1941, he returned with the British army and manage to drive out the Italians. This is known as the liberation. See Africa, South of the Sahara. 19th edition. Europa Pub. Ltd. England 1990. p.450.

There was stability in the form of a strong government and a well kept army to enforce order. Annexation of Eritrea (became the 14th province of Ethiopia) an Italian colony which Ethiopia claimed as part of it's territory completed the country's imperial strength.

The fact that Ethiopians looked upon their Emperors with reverence enabled Haile Selassie to use this according to his advantage. On ascending the throne, he immediately set about to introduce a number of reforms in order to emphasize his reputation both home and abroad as an enlightened reforming ruler and also to provide a framework on which the imperial power as well as the government can rest upon. This came in the form of the constitution of 1931 and 1955.

Both constitution tried to bring unity under the centralizing figure of the Emperor who was the sole benefactor of the constitution. It gave legal expression to the Imperial legitimacy proclaiming that

the Imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, whose line descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of King Solomon of Jerusalem and of the Queen of Ethiopia

further in article 5, it declares that,

by virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing which He has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity is inviolable and His power indisputable. Consequently, He is entitled to all the honours due Him in accordance with tradition and the present constitution.... the Sovereignty of the Empire is vested in the Emperor.

The constitution further states that the "territory of the Empire is to be subject to His Majesty" and article 6 of chapter II states that the "Ethiopian Empire supreme power rest in the hands of the Emperor".⁴¹

Under Haile Selassie, the authority of the government is firmly established in the structure of a sovereign nation-state, not in a clan, tribe or Church. The Church now no longer had the power. Constitution clearly increased the Emperor's power over the Church, centralizing all power in the Monarch, at the same time, in order to create a show of political modernisation, two national representative institutions were created - the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate who were to be appointed by the Emperor from among the nobility who have served for long period under His Majesty.⁴²

41. See Margery Perham. *Ibid.* Appendix-C for a full detail of the Ethiopian Constitution of 1931 and 1955.

42. *Ibid.* p.429.

The Emperor had to secure his position further and for this a professional army, a bureaucracy and a middle class had to be formed. He also had to cultivate foreign relations which will supply him with the capital for economic development.

Army

The army which was raised only when required after 1941 began to be kept on a regular basis. It composed of 45,000 men organized into 4 infantry division, each of 8,000 men, the rest being divided among an armoured division (about 200) the air force, the artillery, a parachute battalion and Commando battlion.⁴³

The army was under the direct control of the Emperor. They received special privileges like grants of land and even the lowest soldier received salary twiced that of an Addis Ababa worker. Foreign aid poured in particularly from the United States who entered a lend-lease agreement with the Emperor as a result of which Ethiopia received more than \$200 million military aid over a 22 year period⁴⁴, it also trained their personnels in U.S. Israel also aided by

43. Rene Lefort. *ibid.* p.18.

44. J.H. Spencer. Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa and U.S. Policy. Cambridge, Mass, 1977. pp.22-26.

helping to train the troops. The army was placed not only in the capital but in places where there were anti-government and dissident movements.

Haile Selassie needed educated young people to help in the running of the government, for this reason and also to keep up with the pace that other African countries were passing through, education was initiated. This had earlier been encouraged by Menelik who opened the first school in 1908 in the capital.⁴⁵ In 1950, the university college of Addis Ababa was formed, followed by Haile Selassie university in 1961.

The post war saw the first batch of graduate sent abroad to study returning to take part in the government. They have been a moving force behind most of the political changes taking place in Ethiopia after the 50's. The final decision of any plan implemented however rest upon the Emperor and most of the time, bureaucrats had no real work except to wait around the palace, awaiting the Emperor's order.

The introduction of civil services led to the rise of a middle-class group. People, other than nobility who were

45. Edmond. J. Keller. "Ethiopia: Revolution, Class and the National Question". *ibid.* p.531.

educated abroad had no difficulty in introducing themselves in the government circle. But it was the nobility which still remain the recognised political unit because they were characterised by their independent status and family circle. The middle-class depended upon the Emperor to raise them up as it entirely depends on his good-will to do so. Under Haile Selassie, the civil services grew from around 35,000 in 1960 to an estimate 100,000 in 1973.⁴⁶

Foreign Policy

Since 1941, Ethiopia followed four major foreign policies:

First, to find a major power that would supply Ethiopia with military and economic aid.

Second, to gain access to the coastal areas in order to prevent any major power from getting control. For this reason, Ethiopia claimed both Eritrea and Somaliland on historical, ethnic and geo-political grounds.

Third, to prevent Arab nationalism from penetrating into Ethiopia's domestic and foreign affairs. (as the only Christian country in the midst of Islamic countries, Ethiopia became a target for Pan-Arab movement).

46. Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux. *ibid.* pp.70-71.

Fourth, to get involve in African affairs. Ethiopia enjoyed a good relationship with the rest of Sub-Saharan countries. It received support from them in containing both Eritrean and Somalian movements as they were afraid lest a similar pattern arose in their own state.⁴⁷

In order to project a diplomatic front and also show a viable and cohesive nation-state under Haile Selassie, Ethiopia first joined the League of Nations in 1932 and later the United Nations (UN) after the II world war. International recognition can be seen in the way Addis Ababa was chosen as the headquarter of UN Economic Commission for Africa in 1958 and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963.

Economic Reforms Under Haile Selassie

Haile Selassie not only attempted to change the diplomatic and administration but also tried to reform the political economy of the country. Since agriculture was the main occupation, it was here that he first attempted to bring reforms and to commercialize in order to increase land revenues.

47. Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate. Ethiopia: Transition and Development in the Horn of Africa. Westview Press. Boulder. Colorado. England. 1988. pp.163-165.

Between 1944 to 1970, various reforms were introduced, none which were particularly effective. From 1960-74, foreign investors were encouraged to participate in the development of urban industrial sector, but as the case with commercialized agriculture (where the same thing happen) indigeneous entrepreneurs were excluded because they lacked necessary capital. Further, small industries were not given loans which meant that those who gained were from the rich and aristocrat families.⁴⁸

Haile Selassie's economic policies were aimed more at improving the extractive capabilities of the state rather than development. It gained its economic surplus from the very people it exploited and tried to suppress. Regions which were conquered and added to the Empire in the late 19th century produced all of Ethiopia's export crops with coffee accounting 60% of the country's export earnings. It is not surprising therefore that in such a state, opposition has come up, rejecting the whole concept of statehood.⁴⁹

Under Haile Selassie, the country became a land of contrasts, where tradition and feudalism existed along side

48. Marina Ottoway, "Social Classes and Corporate Interests in the Ethiopian Revolution". Journal of Modern African Studies XIV, 3 September 1976. p.472.

49. Christopher Clapham. "The Structure of Regional Conflict in Northern Ethiopia". ibid., p.262.

a modernised society. On one side, there were peasants reduced almost to poverty, toiling day in and out for their landlords, a nobility of the blood and an Emperor who wielded all power on himself. In short, a quasi-feudal order but at the same time a growing industry, beginnings of money economy and a well-centralized state. Haile Selassie used traditional ends but modern means, remaining completely attached to his own ambition - superiority over his Imperial provinces, maintaining the territorial unity and integrity of his Empire.

In one way the vast size of the country which was underdeveloped invited fragmentation, therefore, it is natural that a highly centralized state was in order. While other African countries were struggling to build up a nation, Ethiopia was always well established and looked upon as a symbol of political stability, a pride for the African countries. Unfortunately, this image has been tarnished and it's strength severly tested when first an abortive coup in 1960 followed by a revolution in 1974 brought down the ancien regime under Haile Selassie and with it the country's stability. After a brief period of confusion the Dergue - Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) under Mengistu Haile Mariam ruled for 17 years under the guise of Marxist-Leninist which again collapsed in 1991. Finally, the

country is today trying out a shared coalition of all the different parties.

These developments oblige us to question what were the factors that enabled Haile Selassie's government to survive as long as it did? Was it coincidental that the country's structure collapsed the moment the Emperor was ousted if there had really existed a nation-state?

It is generally agreed that Ethiopia survived as long as the Emperor, Church, Nobility, Bureaucracy and Military power remain intact.⁵⁰ No, doubt, the introduction of educated and western officials have improved the quality of administration and increased it's efficiency. But all agencies and officials depended on the political framework provided by the Emperor. None of them developed any authority to replace him and it is only through him that they connect with the Church, armed forces, the provinces and other elements in Ethiopian political system.

The Emperor as we have seen had already decreased the Church authority and further alienated the nobility. He failed to encourage the development of any alternative source of legitimate authority to replace or supplement that

50. Margery Perham. *ibid.* pp.398-400.

of the Emperor. Further, the government adopted policies which were not suitable for them. They tried to adopt an autocratic-bureaucratic order which led to the impoverishment of the country. Haile Selassie's last years were characterized by famine to which he remarked that,

'Rich and poor have always existed and always will. Why? Because there are those that work... and those that prefer to do nothing.... we have said that wealth has to be gained through hard work... those who don't work starve... each individual is responsible for his misfortune, his fate. It is wrong to expect help to fall from above, as a gift; wealth has to be deserved".⁵¹

Soon after, he was ousted by the revolution.

The revolution showed just how artificial the state under Haile Selassie was. Ultimate authority rest upon the Emperor who was the foundation of the nation. When he was there, he was the state, once he was no longer there, the state, the legitimate authority no longer exist. Therefore, it is not surprising that following his ouster, the country plunged into confusion and disorder for a period before order could be brought back by military power.

Regional and National Question

Like every other states of Africa, Ethiopia is besetted

51. As quoted by Raman Bhardwaj. *ibid.*, from, Haile Selassie interviewed by H.S. Oriana Fallace of Chicago. Tribune, 24th June. 1973.

with ethnic divisions. In the Amhara, there existed a core which enabled their Emperors to integrate them together and to come to power, using force to bind the other groups. They forget that their's is a multi-ethnic state where various ethnic groups have been conquered and added to the Empire. The Emperors, specially Haile Selassie ignored the problem of policies which creates the sense of identity among ethnic groups or which broadens political participation. His rule was characterised by discontentment and distrust among the deprived masses, which led to nationalist and dissident movements in various parts of the country. Following the revolution, fresh spurts of violence rose from the regions which earlier posed problems and where Haile Selassie was skillfully controlling with the use of the army.

The first resistance has come from the southern and eastern people notably the Somali, Afar and some Oromos. In the cases of Afars and Oromos, resistance arose due to the centre's economic policies. These are areas where commercial agriculture has been attempted, where the people have been reduced to tenants when their lands were taken over by the northern landlords. For the Somali's, it was more a case of wanting to join their kinsmen in Somalia rather than economic exploitation. Their opposition escalated after the Marxist regime of Mohammed Siad Barre came to power in 1969.

Resistance has also come from the Tigrayans who, along with the Amhara formed part of the Ethiopian state from the beginning. There has also been anti-government movement within the Amhara itself whose resentment stems from the Shoan-Amhara domination. They have formed groups such as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPDRF) and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) which is exclusively Amhara.

The irony of the situation is that although resistance against the central authority has come from those whom the centre has ignored, exploited or where participation in the government is very low (as in the south) the highest resistance came from those who have been associated with Ethiopians for centuries namely the Tigrayans and Eritreans, people who controlled their own means of production. In the case of Eritreans, they have demanded for outright independence after annexation in 1962.

Christopher Clapham points out that Eritreans because of their high education and qualifications and their advanced economic development have until recently been 'overrepresented' in the central government.⁵² Eritrea has

52. Christopher Clapham. "The Structure of Regional Conflict in Northern Ethiopia". *ibid.*, p. 264.

been the 'most independent and most separatist of the provinces', the only one whom the centre had to appease by appointing them to central positions.

The table given below gives an idea of the representation in the central government from 1941-1966.⁵³

Month & Years	12/42	12/48	12/83	5/57	7/59	2/62	1/64	11/66	Total
SHOA	7	10	16	23	30	27	31	43	85
%	54	66	66	70	77	64	60	63	62
GOJAM	2	1	2	2	-	-	1	3	6
BAGEMDAR	-	1	-	-	1	2	2	2	5
TEGRE	1	1	-	3	3	4	3	2	7
ERITREA	2	-	4	2	1	4	9	9	19
WALAGA	1	2	1	1	1	3	3	5	6
SIDAMO	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
ILLUBABOR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
HARARI	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	2
SOMALI	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2
UNKNOWN	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
TOTAL	13	15	24	33	39	42	52	68	138

53. Taken from Christopher Clapham. Haile Selassie's Government. *ibid.* p. 77.

Eritreans and Tigreans have a tendency for clannishness and are also found to be more co-operative than the Amhara, being more open and less secretive. But they also tend to feel their position as a minority with a fierce intensity. The Eritreans have given the biggest headache to the central government, confrontation took place due to their growing national consciousness and the central's growing distrust of them.

Chapter III

Eritrea and the Central Government

'Eritrea provides the obvious starting point, as the region where the political failures of the Ethiopian state, both imperial and revolutionary, have been most dramatically evident.

Christopher Clapham. 1992.

Location

Eritrea is located in the northern part of Ethiopia, lying 1,000 kilometers on the west coast of the Red Sea in north-east Africa. It stretches "600 miles (965 km.) from Ras Kasar (Cape Kasar) latitude 18° N. to Ras Dumeria, latitude 12° 42' N, in the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb".¹ To it's north and north-west lies the Sudan, Republic of Djibouti on the south-east and on the south by Ethiopia's Tigre Province.

Geographical Features

The country has an area of 45,405 sq. miles with a variety of deserts, bush country, highlands and volcanic wilderness. There are four different varieties of land surface - the highland plateau in the south-central core, the Red Sea coastal plain stretching thousands of kilometers, the hill country in the north and north-west and the plains in the west.²

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1. Raman G. Bhardwaj. The Dilemma of the Horn of Africa. Heritage. 1980. p.14.
 2. Richard Sherman. Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution New York, Praeger. 1980. p.1.

Its highland plateau cut deep by shallow and fertile valleys form the core of Eritrea, having an altitude of between 6,000 and 8,000 feet. These areas have provided sanctuary to bandits before and later provided shelter to guerrilla activities. The west Barka lowlands (deriving its name from Barka river) which stretch to the Sudan border are fertile due to the flowing river, its south-west is even more fertile, the soil is dark and vegetation is thick due to the Gash and Setit rivers on both sides. Setit along with Mareb form the south-western border of Ethiopia.³

The climate of the plateau is cool throughout the year while the lowlands are hot and cruel, with less rainfall while the plateau experience a good amount of rainfall. The plateau is inhabited by the more privileged and rich Semiticised people while that of the lowlands is inhabited by pastoral and nomadic people who speak Hamitic languages.

Geo-strategic Importance of the Area

Eritrea holds the key for the entrance to Sub-Saharan Africa and the oil rich West Asian countries. Situated at the junction of these two makes it an important and strategic place.

3. I.M. Lewis. ed. Nationalism and Self Determination in the Horn of Africa. Ithaca Press London. 1983. p.176.

Population

The country has a population of 3.5 (135 lakh) million of which one half is Christian, the other half Muslim and a scattering of animists.

The varied nature of the country is matched with its different nationalities or linguistic groups. These groups have different origins, having links with people outside of Eritrea.

Ethnic Groups

The major ethnic groups are Tigrinya, Beja, Tigre, Kunama, Baria, Saho, Afar and Bilen.

Tigrinya: Majority of Tigrinya speaking peoples live on the highlands (plateau), mostly Christians, they live in towns or villages and are settled agriculturists.

Beja: The nomadic Arab Beja tribe occupy the western lowlands and Red Sea plains. Majority of them live in Sudan.

Tigre: To the north-eastern coastal plains and western lowlands are people who speak Tigre. Majority of them are Muslim and are either pastoral nomads or semi-nomadic.

Kunama: They are settled village dwellers and are concentrated in the areas between the Gash and Setit rivers. They are followers of either Muslim or Christian faith.

Baria: They come from the eastern Gash in the western lowlands and are settled agriculturists, following Islam although some have converted to Christianity.

Saho: They live on the eastern edge of the plateau and the foothills of the coastal plain of 'Akalai Guzai Province'. Majority are pastoralist and are Muslims with pockets of settled peasants who follow Christianity.

Afar: The Afar (also known as Danakil) occupy the coastal plains of the south, some settled in the parts of Massawa and Assab. Majority of them are nomadic and all are Muslims.

Bilen: They are mostly concentrated in the town of Keren (an important market town), divided equally into Muslims and Christians.

These different groups have different cultures distinct from one another particularly in their songs and dances. Some Eritreans speak Arabic - those who had contact with Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula.⁴

4. Ibid. p.177.

The table given shows that Tigrinya is the most widely spoken language and Baria the least.

Tigrinya	524,000
Tigre	329,000
Saho	66,000
Bilen	38,000
Danakil (Afar)	33,000
Kunama	22,000
Baria	15,000

	1,031,000

5

Although majority of Eritreans live in the rural areas, they are also highly urbanised, about 20% of Eritreans live in the towns of Asmara, Massawa and other towns.

Traditonal Society

Eritrean traditional society is composed of agriculturists and pastoral nomads or semi-nomads. Those in the highland practised agriculture while those in the lowlands practised nomadism.

In the agricultural society, the majority of the original occupants of the villages were known as 'Restegna',

5. Statistics from Eritrea Administration for 1952, from K. Trevaskis. Eritrea, A Colony in Transition. Oxford 1960. p.132.

while those who migrated into the village later were known as 'Makalai ailet'. Their main land system was the diesa and meriet risti. Diesa means communal or village ownership, where every one in the village had the right to use the land. In the second one, only members of the family had the right to use the land. This type of land cannot be put up for sale without consent of all members. In some parts of rural Eritrea, there also existed a system known as meriet worki which is privately owned land. Among these three, the 'diesa' is the most common. In this society, the restegna hold the political control of the village affairs.

In the lowlands nomadic society, there existed a type of feudal political set-up, for e.g. - in the Beni Amer society, there were two social classes - 'ruling aristocrats and a caste of serfs'. The nobility called themselves as Nabtab and were ruled over by a chief known as Diglal.

Serfs who constituted the majority were known as Tigre and were subject to the Nabtab and were compelled to pay tributes, gifts and corvée labour. They had the right to own livestock and the land they occupied, defined by agreements and habits. They were forever trying to liberate themselves from the Nabtab before and even after colonisation.⁶

6. Francois Houtart. The Social Revolution in Eritrea in Basil Davidson (ed.) Behind the War in Eritrea. Spokesman. 1980. pp.84-85.

Historical Background

Eritrea's modern history dates from the 19th century around 1889 when its people emerged as independent chiefdoms and clans but the origins and self-identification of the people goes way back in history.

Early History: Eritreans first settlers (it is believed) were a Nilotic group⁷, probably forest dwellers who moved from south-eastern Sudan into the lowlands of Gash-Setit areas. The first recorded history comes from Egypt in 3,000 B.C. when the Pharaohs had contact with local chiefs along the Red Sea for trade and commerce.

Migration of Nilotic and Hamitic people into Eritrea was followed by a wave of Sabeans⁸ migratories who came from the Arabian peninsula. They moved on to the Dahlak islands (Massawa) to the plateau where they found the climate and countryside similar to their own. The Sabeans gradually changed the lives of the Hamitic herdsmen and began to build

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7. Nilotic refers to the Nile region and its inhabitants or languages.
 8. Sabeaens inhabited south-western Arabia, they are also known as Sheba on Saba during the old Testament time. Sabeaens were both traders and Bandits, engaged in slave trade. Their country was rich in spice, incense and gold. Collier's Encyclopedia. vol.20. Macmillan Educational company, London, New York. pp.653-654.

towns and even dams. This civilization began to spread from Eritrean highlands and as early as the 1st century A.D. Aksum became its centre. Writers have observed that the kingdom of Aksum at the height of its glory did not spread southwards further than the limits of present Tigre and this therefore, makes the Aksum kingdom more of Eritrean than Ethiopian.⁹

Aksumite power came from the Sabean's political organization and wealth they accumulated from commercial trade with Egypt, countries around the Mediterranean, Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.¹⁰

The Aksum kingdom which converted to Christianity in the 4th century A.D. declined as a result of Arab invasion of Egypt. Invasion forced the Beja tribes of eastern Egypt and northern Sudan southwards. These in turn forced their kinsmen on the northern highlands and Baraka lowlands on to the plateau. The Aksumite kingdom suddenly found itself surrounded by tribes in the east, effectively stopping its commerce upon which its wealth and power were based.

9. See Richard Sherman. *ibid.*, p.5. and Araia Tsegai, "The case for Eritrean National Independence", Black Scholar 7 (June 1976). pp.20-21.

10. G.K.N. Trevaskis, Eritrea: A Colony in Transition. London, Oxford University Press, 1960, p.5

The Bejas had the Red Sea under their control by 750 A.D. and further tried to push the Aksumite kingdom southwards which led to its disintegration.¹¹

The next four or five centuries were known as the 'Dark Ages'. There was no stable kingdom. The Beja's tried to set up kingdoms which were at constant warfare with one another and by 13th century had collapsed.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Eritreans were attacked by the people from southern Ethiopia, the Agaw from Lasta who had set-up the Zagwe dynasty in Ethiopia followed by the Tigre who along with the Agaw took over Eritrean plateau from the Beja.

Changes took place in the form of pastoral life to agricultural. While the Ethiopians effectively managed to control the highlands, they never managed to control the lowlands (although they plundered) something which they would regret later as other foreign powers tried to move in, notably, the Funj, who had established a kingdom in central Sudan were already closing in the lowlands.

Three other powers also made their presence felt by the 16th century - Turks, Portuguese and the Iman of Harar.

11. Sherman. *ibid.* pp.5-6.

Eritreans specially suffered under Islam who came in the form of Iman of Harrar, Ahmad bin Ibrahim, who, from his base in south-eastern Somali inhabited Ethiopia began to attack the plateau, plundered and killed all who refused to surrender or convert to Islam. The Christians survived only as a hunted band, taking up guerrilla activities. He was finally defeated by the Portuguese in 1541 who in turn were dominated by the Turks who, based at the coast of Massawa tried to strengthen their hold over Eritrea. They remained for three more centuries on the coast after they were driven there by the Ethiopian king, Malak-Sagad and entered into various alliances with the respective Bahr Negash (Lord of the Seas).

These changes in the 16th century led to further changes in Eritrean society, a fixed agricultural society, social structure was changed as during the Islam invasion, many from Ethiopia had come to Eritrean highlands for shelter. A new system of land tenure was introduced, division between landholders and tenants became wider.

During this period, Eritrea's difference from Ethiopia became apparent due to two reasons -

First, in 1600 when Portuguese came, they identified an area called Medri Bahri, which is said to be akin to modern Eritrea. Later when Bruce, the famous Scottish explorer came

in 1770, both Ethiopia and Eritrea existed as separate political entities and were frequently at war with each other.¹²

Second, southern Eritrea which was politically linked with Tigre in the 18th century waged resistance against the Amhara or central Ethiopians in the south. To cite an example, in 1860, Emperor Tewodros held some Britishers as hostages. Britain sent troops to rescue them and in this operation received assistance from both Eritreans and Tigreans. The Kassa of Tigre gave protection, advice and supplies to the British. The British defeated the Ethiopians and departed leaving a gap which led to Kassa of Tigre in 1872 crowning himself as Emperor Yohannes IV, the first Tigrean king to become Emperor since the Solomonid dynasty in 1270.¹³

Egypt Enters the Scene

In 1869, the opening of the Suez canal enhanced the importance of the Red Sea and the Horn. The Egyptians managed to establish themselves along the Red Sea and the Somalian coasts and to drive out the Turks at Massawa by

12. Richard Lobban. "The Eritrean War: Issues and Implications". Canadian Journal of African studies. vol.X, no.2., 1976. p.236.

13. Sherman, *ibid.* p.9.

1872 (although they had started their activities earlier from 1823) and moved towards the lowlands. Their attempt to conquer the highlands were blown by Yohannes IV who defeated them in November 1875 and again in March 1876.

The Ethiopians sent their troops towards the north and managed to defeat the Eritrean chiefs and controlled the Eritrean highlands from 1880-1889. At the same time, the Mahdist threat from Sudan was looming large and Yohannes was led to believe by the British that if he quelled the Mahdist threat, Massawa and Keren would be his and in 1884 a treaty was signed with Britain and Egypt for this. But the British did not keep their side of the bargain but instead encouraged the Italians to seize power in 1885 from the Egyptians.

Italy Enters the Scene

The British as noted above, encouraged Italians in order to counteract the French. Italians tried to bring the coastal areas under their control, in 1887, their attempt to proceed further was stopped by Ethiopian forces in Eritrea. They therefore turned to king Menelik of Shoa who already had a good number of conquered areas under him, coveted the throne of Yohannes. Yohannes faced with these combined threats and that of the Mahdists died on March 9, 1889, while battling against these forces. Menelik seized the

chance to become Emperor and was proclaimed as 'king of kings'.

In order to strengthen his position, he entered into an alliance with the Italians known as the treaty of Ucciali on 2nd May 1889, where he traded Eritrea for the safety of his throne, from then onwards, the areas known as 'Medri Bahri' would be known as Eritrea.¹⁴

Italians immediately set about to establish their capital at 'Asmara'. However, disputes soon arose over the 'treaty' between Ethiopia and Italy. While the Italians insisted that Menelik and his territories become a protectorate of Italy, the Ethiopian on the other hand argued that the Ethiopian government 'might' use the Italian government as an intermediary in its relationship with the other European states. This led to a confrontation in which the Italians were completely defeated by Menelik's troops in the battle of Adowa, 1896. One question that can be raised is why Menelik did not choose to liberate Eritrean areas but instead left the areas to the Italians and went back to his capital?

One reason could be because Menelik knew that reinforcement would soon be coming from home, another could

14. Lobban., *ibid.* p.337.

be because of the possibility of European intervention on the Italian side. Whatever reason Menelik had for abandoning Eritrea to Italy, he was more concerned with his territories in the south-western province.

In 1896, the Addis Ababa treaty was signed on October 26th in which the Italians again received the larger part of Eritrea. By doing so, Menelik was sowing the seeds of the problem between Eritrea and Ethiopia that would come up later.

The end of the 19th century as Richard Lobban noted -

"Saw the Turks replaced by the Italian in Eritrea and by the Mahdists in the Sudan. Eritrea was trapped between wider political powers. This sense of political entrapment sowed the seeds for present day nationalism. Nationalism was figuratively pushed into shape from each of three sides of the geo-political triangle which makes up the territory. Eritrea was at the periphery of three powers: Italy with the coastal base, the Mahdists from Omdurman and Menelik in central Ethiopia".¹⁵

Italian Rule in Eritrea

The Italians had three policies to follow:

First, to develop Eritrea for Italian occupation.

Second, to encourage agriculture, natural production in order to provide Italy with raw materials and also to act as a market for finished goods.

15. Ibid. p.337.

Third, to use Eritrea as a base for further African conquests.

Italian rule was both a hindrance and at the same time fruitful for them. On one side, they developed Eritrean towns with all modern services, under them the ports of Massawa and Assab were extensively developed and well equipped. Italian language was taught and its laws applied but Eritreans were treated as II class citizens and were not allowed to develop themselves politically. It is mentioned by Trevaskis that under the Italians, Eritreans were 'content, docile and obedient', but during this period, they were developing their own ideas. Italians also tried to follow a policy of divide and rule among the different groups and exploited their resources such as gold, iron ore, nickel, copper, manganese and chromium.

Conditions under the Italians

Working class: Composed of wage earners, engaged in industrial work, infrastructure and public works. They developed a common identity as a result of working together under the inhuman exploitation of the Italians, they had no union or organisation as the Fascist Italians completely forbade such organisations.

Peasantry: The peasant condition was even worse as his livelihood of subsistence production was threatened or deteriorated. There were a series of peasant rebellions which forced the Italians to revise their land settlement policies (earlier the government issued a decree that land located below 800 meter attitude, about 50% of the country, will become state land).

The Intelligentsia: Under the Italians, there was no education facility for the indigeneous population. Social service, medical care were all restricted for Italians only. However a handful of Eritreans were trained as interpreters and low level clerks and these people would later become the elite of the country.¹⁶

On May 1936, Italy conquered Ethiopia and world war II soon began. In January 1941, British troops entered Eritrea from the Sudanese side, the battle in Keren was brief and on April 1st, British troops entered Asmara. By April 8th all of Eritrea was under British control. Fifty years of Italian rule had come to an end.

British Military Administration

The British who would occupy Eritrea for eleven years from 1941-52 first utilized the place as a military base.

16. Francois Houtart. The Social Revolution in Eritrea in Basil Davidson (ed.) Behind the War in Eritrea. Spokesman. 1980. pp.85-88.

Sherman points out that during the British rule political consciousness among Eritreans developed and grew¹⁷, to get an idea of how this happened a description of their condition under British follows:

Under Britain, the administration was a military one, the Chief Administrator of Eritrea was something like that of British Commander-in-Chief. British role was more like a caretaker which disappointed the Eritreans as they viewed the British as liberators. Nothing much had changed. Britishers were on top of all administrative posts but they needed the Italians to run the government, who were at times favoured over the Eritreans by giving them agricultural incentives or land transferred to them.

However, some changes that they made benefitted the Eritreans. The colour bar was removed and a process of 'Eritreanization' began when they were selected for subordinate posts. The earlier residenti's court was displaced by Native courts, advisory councils set up and altogether the education system improved as various schools were set-up and hospitals, clinics and public health services introduced.

17. Sherman. *ibid.* p.10.

Impact of British Rule on Eritrean Society Working Class

During the early part of British rule, they began to increase in size, there was exploitation of workers but discontentment rose only after the factories were closed down. They could not return from their urbanised life back to rural and discontentment was showed against the British by forming trade unions in factories, fighting to improve their living conditions. This group played an active part in the political movement of this period.

Peasantry: Under the British rule, nothing had changed for the peasant, Britain as noted before, gave the fertile lands to the Italians and raised the taxes which put a heavy toll on the peasants. They did not remain passive but revolted. In the highlands, Italian farms were burned and destroyed and even in the lowlands, where feudal system existed, the serfs openly revolted against the landlords by refusing to pay tax and demanding complete liberation from their masters.

Urban Elites: Following the degeneration of the socio-economic situation, the urban elites also suffered. They were refused licences to start their business and faced mass unemployment. They published articles and organised

demonstrations against the British government.¹⁸

Under these deteriorating socio-economic problems, the country was ripe for political change. The British who were originally looked upon as liberators were now looked down on by the Eritreans. They searched for an alternative political order.

It is in this situation that Ethiopia for its own reasons which will be examined in the next section began to press for a political union between Eritrea and Ethiopia. They first turned to the British who refused to help them and therefore resorted to 'the Coptic Church' which as earlier noted had been the 'bearer of nationalism', it brought the Christians together under its influence.

The Christians of Eritrea soon began to believe that the only way lay in a union with Ethiopia. This, the British had earlier thought of implementing in the mid 40's-

'the best solution for Eritrea would be its partition between Ethiopia and the Sudan in such a way as to allow the Eritrean Abyssinian to join their kinsmen in Ethiopia and the Moslem tribes of western Eritrea, to be incorporated into the Sudan'.¹⁹

18. Francois Houtart. *ibid.* pp.88-90.

19. Trevaskis. *ibid.* p.62.

Muslims on the other hand favoured independence after a limited period under international trusteeship, none favoured union with Ethiopia nor partition of Eritrea. The British until this time discouraged political parties, there were only movements which converted or turned to political parties after it was decided in September 1946 that the four great powers, USA, USSR, France and Great Britain should decide the future of Eritrea. One party came from the Muslims headed by Ibrahim Sultan, separatist Christians organised themselves under the name Liberal Progressive Party, and the third, the unionists under Tedla Bairu advocating for union with Ethiopia.²⁰

Ethiopia was not only the sole claimant of Eritrea, there was Italy who assumed that:

'An independent Eritrea would look to Italy for economic assistance and also for political support against Ethiopian imperialism and would, moreover, allow the settlers to play a mediating role between the Muslims and Christian parties.'²¹

Italy had hopes of getting Eritrea back and first pressed for a trusteeship. When that failed, took a stand of independence for Eritrea.

20. Francois Houtart. pp.90-91.

21. Tom J. Farer. War Clouds on the Horn of Africa. Washington D.C. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 1976. p.24.

Disposal of Eritrea

There were various solutions to Eritrea's problem. It could become independent immediately or after a period of trusteeship, or, it could be united fully with Ethiopia. Ethiopia claimed Eritrea as an integral part of their own country, and pressed for union under the grounds that they needed Eritrea's access to the sea and that Eritrea's economy complemented that of Ethiopia.

A commission of investigation was sent to enquire upon the wishes of the people. But no concrete decision emerged as all political parties claimed the support of the majority.²² In September 1948, when the Council of Foreign Ministers met, it became apparent that no agreement could be reached. The case was therefore transferred to the United Nations.

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22. The commission interviewed 3,336 rural representatives. It is not clear as to how they were chosen but the result of this interview showed the differences of opinion among the various groups. The commission gave its report as - Highlands - Unionist 71.1, Anti-unionist 28.9 (Muslim league - 14.9, liberal progressive party - 7.8, pro-Italy party - 6.2). Lowlands - Unionist - 12.9, Anti-unionist - 87.1 (M.L. 71.6, PIP - 12.9, National party of Massawa - 2.5, LPP - 0.04). Mesfin Araya, "The Eritrean question: an alternative explanation." The journal of modern African studies. 28, (1990), p.84

Under the U.N. a commission was sent to enquire upon the wishes of the people. The Commission comprised Pakistan, Guatemala, South Africa, Norway and Burma. The team was however, not more successful than that of the team sent by the 4 powers earlier. No systematic method was used, instead there was casual observation and random questioning here and there. Under such inquiry, it is not surprising that the commission produced two separate reports and no less than three different proposals.²³

Burma, Norway and South Africa voted for close association of Eritrea with Ethiopia on the ground that Eritrea was too weak economically to stand on its own, moreover, the majority of Eritreans, they felt, wanted it to be so.

Guatemala and Pakistan voted for full independence for Eritrea on grounds that Muslims of Eritrea would never agree to the union. The three sets of proposals were -

1. Union with Ethiopia
2. Federation with Ethiopia
3. Independence after a 10 year trusteeship under the United Nation administration.

23. Sherman. *ibid.* pp.22-23.

FORMATION OF CASTE IDENTITY IN COLONIAL BIHAR

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for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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to run government offices and also appoint judges who will be free of legislative and executive control.

The constitution seems to protect Eritreans against Ethiopian government's control by permitting it to have its own flag and official languages - Tigrinya and Arabic. On September 15th, 1952, the Union Jack was lowered to make way for the federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Federation and Annexation

Headed by the unionist leader - Tedla Bairu, Eritrea with its parliament, constitution, press and a budding trade union was all set to play its role. All these qualities were in stark contrast with the ancient feudal regime of Ethiopia.

Certain flaws can be seen in the arrangement of the federation:

First, with Ethiopia being so much larger, it is difficult to see how there can be a balance between the two.

Second, the Eritrean government was democratic whereas Ethiopia was autocratic.

Third, there was no federal constitution to guide the way in which these two countries should be governed and to regulate their relationship.

The federation of Eritrea to Ethiopia was a wholesale disaster. The Ethiopian government viewed the autonomous government of Eritrea as a threat to its authority and from the start sought to absorb Eritrea as part of its administrative region. It set out to erode the arrangement by "bribery, intimidation and force".²⁵ The Ethiopian government gradually asserted upon the Eritreans what it had earlier tried to assert upon the other ethnic groups - the Amharic culture and was bent on violating the federation from 1952-62, highlighted by the following events.

1952- the Eritrean constitution was suspended.

1953 - the Eritrean trade union was banned.

1955 - the head of Eritrean government clashed with the Ethiopian government and following his resignation, was replaced by a more faithful pro-unionist - Asfaha, who along with the Ethiopian representative Andargachew (who was backed by the Emperor) began to give all key positions to the pro-unionists and tried to win over the rich class of Eritreans by entering into joint ventures with them.

The police was used to terrorise the people to agree with their policies. Leaders of the opposition were jailed or exiled.

25. Farer. *ibid.* p.28.

1956 - Eritrean National Assembly was suspended. The Ethiopian language - Amharic was imposed and Tigrinya and Arabic was cancelled. Amharic became the compulsory language for the students.

1959 - the Eritrean flag was removed to make way for Ethiopian flag.

The government was determined to completely wipe out the Eritrean identity. By 1962, Ethiopia was ready to fully integrate Eritrea within itself, the government had to only remove the Eritrean laws, constitution and impose its own feudal laws.²⁶ It failed to heed the advice of Trevaskis who noted that,

the temptation to subject Eritrea firmly under her (Ethiopia) control will always be great. Should she try to do so, she will risk Eritrean

26. Haile Selassie abolished the federation in defiance of the UN settlement. (UN did not raise any objection over it). In 1961, elections for the third Eritrean parliament was held. This parliament is supposed to have accepted the annexation of 1962 (November). There is controversy over this decision of the parliament. According to some writers, 'motions to dissolve the federation was defeated 4 times so that in the end, the declaration was read out'. According to Bereket Habte Selassie, the members were 'bribed and intimidated' to accept the annexation. Ethiopian armed force and police surrounded the house of Assembly and some were stationed inside the building. When the vote was taken, those who protested and walked out were arrested and beaten up. (Bereket Habte Selassie in Behind the war in Eritrea, (ed.) 1980. pp.43-44.

discontent and eventual revolt, which, with foreign sympathy and support, might well disrupt both Eritrea and Ethiopia herself.²⁷

This complete Amharaization process was not taken without protest by the Eritreans. Students protested against compulsory learning of Amharic language. Exiled leaders like Wolde-Ab encouraged the people to stand up and fight. The economic condition of the people was distressing as more and more were forced to leave their regions and seek jobs elsewhere since the factories/industries were closed down. In 1958, there was a total strike showing the extent of the peoples discontentment.

The Amharic governments response to all these were to tighten their hold. With its centralization policy and the army's help, obstacles were gradually removed.

For the working class, this period witnessed a complete weakening of their rights but their workers union saw a quick growth which was gradually forced down as the central policies became stronger.

During this period, only a group of elite managed to get prosperous, to be unaffected because they worked with the government, siding with them. After it's installation in

27. Trevaskis. *ibid.*, p.131.

Eritrea, the Ethiopian government gave grants of property and titles on them, Italian businesses were handed over to them and they became owners of factories, firms, insurance and transport companies. They occupied high positions in the bureaucracy, army and military forces and the introduction of international capital made them end up into a solid, defined stable elite of the country.²⁸

In 1958, the people's discontentment found an expression in a movement known as the Eritrean liberation movement, (ELM) the mass movement had two centres, one in the highlands (Asmara) and the other in the lowlands.

In response to this movement, the Eritrean liberation Front (ELF) was formed in 1961 which launched its battle against the government following annexation in 1962. From this stage, we can see that Eritreans took to armed struggle via guerrilla warfare only as a last resort. The Eritrean struggle can be divided into four phases:

1. The first phase was from 1961-63 when the ELF started its military offensives against the government. Initially, the struggle was started by the Muslims who feared being reduced to a minority should Eritrea unite with Ethiopia. The first area that they gained control

28. Francois Houtart. *ibid.* pp.92-93.

of were the Muslim areas where they collected taxes, trained the people and developed themselves militarily. In order to gain the attention of the government, they turned to violence which were at first ignored as banditry. They stopped buses and burned them, passengers were given political lectures, government soldiers who tried to stop them were killed.²⁹

2. The second phase was from 1963-70 when they started to broaden their military efforts. During this period, Christians began to join the movement having become disillusioned with Ethiopian Amharic rule and economic stagnation. In 1967, Tedla Bairu, a Christian joined the movement which encouraged other Christians to join. The Emperor alienated the Christians particularly due to the 70's army massacre when the army went on a rampage in Eritrea. The entire area of Keren was made waste as villages were bombed, livestock destroyed, people were herded together and it was reported that children in particular were the target of the army, mass graves appeared along the areas of Keren.

The army was making the greatest mistakes. Attacking villages and bombing the areas alienated the people,

29. Herrick and Anita Warren. "The U.S. Role in the Eritrean Conflict". Africa Today. 1976. pp.46-48.

everyone was treated as a sympathiser of ELF, it led to insecurity feelings among people who began to view the Emperor and his government in a new light. Muslims and even neutral Christians lost hope in the central authority. Students and intellectuals denounced the techniques of the Emperor's army. Since the schools and colleges were closed down due to political and economic disagreements and with no jobs in view, they began to join the movement bringing a Marxist radical view with them.

The ranks of ELF swelled as people from all levels began to join. During this period, the ELF suffered heavily due to its leadership crisis and lack of mobilization. The end of 1970 saw a split when one faction broke away to become the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) under the leadership of Issaias Afewerke. Issaias was born in 1945 in Asmara. In 1966 he dropped his engineering course to join the Eritrean liberation front and that same year went to China to take a military training course. On his return he took over the political leadership of ELF's fourth regional area.³⁰

The split between ELF and EPLF occurred due to disagreement over the political and military direction of the liberation movement. Lobban notes that the differences,

30. Africa Research Bulletin. May 1st-31st. 1991.

were more along the lines of religious, ethnic, Sino-Soviet alignment and ideology. The last seem to have played a more prominent role.

The debate has been over which front is more progressive or Marxist in their political line. Some writers like Gerard Chaliand views EPLF as 'Marxist Oriented'.³¹ While other writers notes that ELF over the year had developed a more radical approach and the majority of its field commanders view themselves as Marxist.³²

According to Sherman, the difference would be that the EPLF is the 'sociopolitical innovator' while the ELF follows its lead in revised version. Their differences lie in the concept of class leadership, self-reliance, mass mobilization and the socialist road to development.³³

Gerard Chaliand referred to EPLF as "the most impressive revolutionary movement produced in Africa in the last two decades". By this, he is referring to the EPLF political programme of a national democratic revolution. Because the EPLF (although it is Marxist-Leninist oriented)

31. Gerard Chaliand. "The Horn of Africa's Dilemma", Foreign Policy 30 (Spring 1978). p.127.
32. David Hamilton, 'Ethiopia's Embattled Revolutionaries', Conflict Studies. 82 (April 1977) p.17.
33. Richard Sherman. *ibid.* p.51.

has no link with Moscow, Peking on any other communist government.³⁴

The EPLF objective as stated in its 'National Democratic programme' is to establish a people's democratic state. It opposes and seek to remove Ethiopian administrative government presence and the struggle is to be operated on a self-reliant manner.

One idea that they have borrowed from the Marxist-Leninist theory is the Democratic Centralism - 'as the operative principle of the organisation at all levels, from central committee and the political bureau to the mass organization'.³⁵ The EPLF also maintains that the only road to development is towards a 'socialist path'. The ELF on the other hand advocates for a 'non-capitalist road to development'.

3. In the third phase, there was a civil war when ELF and EPLF fought among themselves. This was halted in 1974 with the downfall of the ancien regime in Ethiopia. From this stage, the EPLF emerged as the stronger party and from 1974-77 gained control over at least 42,000 sq. miles of the country. Again this period saw another

34. Chaliand, *ibid.*

35. Sherman, *ibid.* pp.52-53. See Appendix II for a full detail of the 'National Democratic Programme'.

split when one faction under Osman Saleh Sabbe broke away to become the Eritrean Liberation Front-People's Liberation Front (ELF-PLF) in 1976. Once the General Secretary of the ELF, Osman is referred by EPLF as a "petty bourgeoisie reactionary" and opportunist. He is known for having "spoken for himself while assuming the role of spokesman for the whole (Eritrean) movement".³⁶ Eritreans view him as a representative of Pan-Arab interest and the movement is helped by Saudi-Arabia, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi.³⁷

Sabbe's force is estimated to be about 5,000 men strong.³⁸ This force operates near the Sudanese border to Agordat, and the recruits are mainly Eritrean refugees and deserters from either ELF or EPLF.³⁹ The fighters are paid which is not heard of in either ELF or EPLF. Both have denounced this group. Sabbe is against the socialist orientation of the EPLF and at the same time also condemn the ELF.

36. Fulvio Grimaldi, 'The Eritrean Road to Unity'? Middle East, no.38, December 1977. p.58.

37. Africa Confidential 18, (November 18, 1977): 1.

38. Ibid. 19 (May 26, 1978): 3.

39. Ibid. 19 (March 3, 1978): 2.

4. In the 4th phase, the main battle was fought between the EPLF and the Dergue (Provisional Military Administrative Council). The revolution and the ancien regime's downfall had brought fresh hope of reconciliation. General Aman Andom, the first chairman of the PMAC, an Eritrean himself had tried to negotiate with the Eritreans by appealing directly to the local population rather than the leaders of the movements. However, before anything could come out of these talks, he was killed by Mengistu Haile Mariam, who did not favour his idea of reconciliation and instead waged a full relentless campaign against EPLF.

The Dergue had at first taken advantage of ELF and EPLF conflict and had been successful in carrying out a vast military operation known as 'Red Terror'. This operation unlike Haile Selassie's time was carried out secretly, and meant to bring fear and terror to the people. Executions and arrests are carried out by Kebeles (district committees). This had been set up from 1978 after the government managed to recapture the areas which the nationalist front had earlier captured. In Asmara, people were randomly picked from the streets for questioning and those who dared to defy the Dergue were executed.⁴⁰

40. Mary Dines, 'The Ethiopian Red Terror' in Behind the War in Eritrea. (ed.) Basil Davidson. 1980. p.60.

In May, fifty young people were arrested from Keren and never heard of again. A concentration camp was set up where prisoners were killed in inhuman ways. The Kebele ruled over as tax collectors as well and Eritreans never received their share of the food aid sent to Ethiopia as the Kebele distributed it among themselves.

It is not only the Kebele, but the Ethiopian army which sought to strike terror with its unpredictable behaviour. Moreover, they assault, rape women and steal property and animals for food.⁴¹ 'Red Terror' served to encouraged the Eritreans to join the EPLF as the only alternative. the Dergue failed to realise that this was not a 'seperatist' nor a 'rebellion' but a national liberation movement which became stronger as it was suppressed. From the 80's onward, the EPLF, apart from minor setbacks, had been able to gain victory over the Dergue.

The Dergue from this period received vast military aid from the USSR and was able to increase its military strategies. It tried to take up where Haile Selassie had failed under the slogan 'Ethiopia Tikdem'.

The Dergue survived for 16 years through sheer army force. After a hard struggle, the joint efforts of the EPLF,

41. Ibid. pp.60-62.

Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front, (EPDRF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) paid off and they managed to bring down the military control of Addis-Ababa in may 1991.

The EPDRF has been very sensible in its approach to the Eritrean's case. Even before achieving victory against the Mengistu regime, it had accepted the EPLF's demand for self-determination and its right to secede from Ethiopia. With the change of rulers, two changes in particular were made in Ethiopian history, first, instead of trying to concentrate all powers on itself, the EPDRF has chosen to share power through a 'coalition of representatives of recognised parties and of all major ethnic communities'. Second, an attempt is being made to 'craft a democratic constitution on the basis of ethnic federalism'.⁴²

EPDRF could have seized power like the two previous regimes and refused to share power, centralising all powers within itself and impose authority through force. But the very fact that it did not and was willing to concede to other parties and ethnic groups shows that this new Ethiopia has learnt it's lesson well and could well become a model for the developing nations and developed nations as well.

42. Colin Legum. "The Horn of Africa. Prospects for Political Transformation". Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism. September 1992.

The EPLF was already running the country well before the referendum took place. The referendum held on 23-25th April 1993 was a success. 99% of the Eritreans overwhelmingly voted for independence from Ethiopia.⁴³ Long-nurtured fears that the Ethiopian government might refuse to their demands prove groundless. Throwing off the central authority government is only the beginning, ahead lies the ravages of a war-torn region to be restored.

43. The Times (London) Wednesday, April 28, 1993.

Chapter IV

Claims to Political Sovereignty

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"If colonised African peoples have justly claimed and justly exercised the right to be free, and to build within colonial frontiers new nations of their own, resuming the development of their past history, then why should this right be denied to the Eritreans?....."

Basil Davidson, 1980.

For 30 years Eritreans had been denied the right to political sovereignty by both the feudal and the socialist regimes of Ethiopia. Both had claimed Eritrea as an integral part of the Ethiopian state and refused to listen or concede to the demands of the Eritreans.

For the African states, no principle is more important than preserving the sanctity of the sovereign nation - states. With the formation of Organization of African Unity in 1963, the idea was more deeply entrenched as the charter of OAU, article III, paragraph 2 states -

'(The member states affirm)... respect for the sovereignty and territory integrity of each state and for it's inalienable right to independent existence.'¹

Different groups came up challenging the territorial integrity of the nation - state with the policy of self - determination. Eritrea's case stands out as an example where the right to self - determination was not only claimed but also became a successful one.

1. For full detail of the OAU Charter, see Gino J. Naldi. The Organization of African Unity: An analysis of it's Role. Mansell. London and New York. 1989. pp.192-196.

The idea of self - determination formed in the 18th and 19th centuries in western countries became relevant for the third world colonized peoples with the 'Declaration on the granting of Independence to colonial countries and peoples'. The Declaration states,

that the peoples of the world ardently desire the end of colonisation in all its forms and manifestations,

and continued:

convinced that all peoples have an undeniable right to complete freedom, the exercise of their sovereignty and the integrity of their national territory, solemnly proclaims the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end to colonialism in all its form and manifestations - and to this end Declares that... all peoples have the right to self - determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.²

The Eritreans case for self-determination rest on the ground that their movement is a national liberation struggle against colonial occupation and view Ethiopia as a foreign oppressor. They were colonized by Italians from 1890 onwards and although at first a colonial territory, in the struggle became a nation. If other African countries can claim self - determination on this ground, why should this right be denied to the Eritreans?

2. U.N. Resolution 1514 (xv) of December 1960.

Eritreans case differ from other cases of self-determination because they are colonized by an African and not a European power.³

For years, scholars treated the Eritreans case as that of any other separatist movements. Stephen Longrigg writes that Eritrea possesses

"none of the qualities of geographical or cultural singleness which should entitle it to be a unit of territory or of government",

adding that if Eritreans had not been colonized by the Italians, Eritrea

"would be partly, as always before, the ill-governed or non governed northernmost province of Ethiopia".⁴

Ethiopian View

Ethiopia's claim on Eritrea rest on various grounds - historical, cultural, ethnic affiliation and economic. As they put it, 'the race is the same, the language except for

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3. In the eyes of the Eritreans, Ethiopian rule is compared with that of the European powers who came and colonized Africa in the 19th century.
 4. Stephen H. Longrigg. A short history of Ethiopia. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1945. p.3.

dialectical differences, is the same. The culture and habits are identical.....⁵

First, when Eritrea was joined with them, Ethiopian regarded it as two artificial separated entities coming together to be united. From the time the federation began, they viewed it as a temporary obstacle, 'an impractical interim agreement'.⁶ Their claim is based on the assertion that Eritrea has been part of Ethiopia for 3,000 years. They cite the Aksumite kingdom which spread from the province of Tigray to south of Eritrea. After the fall of Aksum kingdom, there was a break as various powers tried to capture power after which Abyssinians rose in the 15th century and took control of the present Ethiopia and the Eritrean plateau.⁷

Second, they assert that Eritreans share the same culture, social and religious pattern with them, citing the example of the plateau people who live in the Tigre province, speak Tigrinya and are mostly Coptic Christian.

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5. Memorandum presented by the Imperial Ethiopian government of the council of foreign ministers in London. September 1945.
 6. Haggai Erlich. Ethiopia and the Challenge of Independence. Lynne Rienner Pub. Colorado. 1986. p.216.
 7. Firebrace (James) and Holland (Stuart). Never Kneel down: Drought, Development and Liberation in Eritrea. Nottingham. Spokesman. 1984. p.25.

Third, economically the two need each other. Ethiopia became dependent on Eritrean port - Massawa and it's capital Asmara for storage and transport facilities. Eritrea, they claim is dependent on Ethiopia for grains and raw materials. Ethiopia's one third industrial activities is in Eritrea and its only oil refinery is located in Assab.

It is primarily because of its need for an outlet to the sea Ethiopia views Eritrea crucial for its overseas trade. Should Eritrea gain independence, Ethiopia would become a landlocked country and their right for access to the sea which had been denied to them for so long would be lost forever.

Fourth, Ethiopia fear that Eritrea will become a tool of Islam or that the Red Sea will become an Arab sea, they are particularly threatened by the aids they received from the Islamic countries. The Ethiopian government equate the Eritrean movement (specially ELF) with Pan Arabism. While Muslims population is usually put at the same number as that of the Christians, they quote Muslim figure as 40 per cent, making the Muslim as a minority⁸ and the movement as an Arab supported one.

8. G.K.N. Trevaskis. Eritrea: A colony in transition. London. Oxford University Press. 1960. pp.132-133.

Fifth, for centuries, Eritrea has been used either as a base or an outlet to attack or invade Ethiopia (in 1868 - Napier's expedition, 1878 - Egyptian invasion, Italian invasion of 1896 and 1935). Whoever controls Eritrea is crucial for Ethiopia's sovereignty.

Sixth, Eritrea's independence would imply a threat from the other dissident areas like the Ogaden, they would be encouraged to fight against the central authority.

Lastly, Ethiopians also point out that the federation and annexation took place because the people favoured it. The democratically elected parliament of Eritrea had voted to abolish the federation with Ethiopia.⁹

Eritrean Position

Eritreans claim on the other hand is a direct contradiction to that put by Ethiopians. Historically, Eritreans are adamant that they do not share the same history with Ethiopia and that at no time had they been subjected to them. They have been clearly distinguished from both Sudanese and Ethiopians for centuries. Some writers are of view that the Aksum civilization which the Ethiopian are

9. Richard Sherman. Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution. Praeger Pub. USA. 1980. p.31.

so proud of was based in Eritrean highlands. This makes the Aksum kingdom more of Eritrean than Amhara.

Ethiopia's claim that they have always maintained control over Eritrea is inaccurate. From the 6th century after the fall of Aksumite kingdom, there was no stable kingdom controlling Eritrean areas. As seen earlier from its history, some like the Beja's¹⁰ tried to establish their kingdom. At no time had there been a centralized authority ruling over the Eritreans.¹¹ Another important aspect in its historical consideration is the political implication of Menelik's Italian treaties.¹² Menelik, for reasons of his own had affirmed Italian control over Eritrea on three occasions:

In the Uccially treaty on 2nd May 1889, after the battle of Adowa, on 1st March 1896, and in the Addis Ababa treaty of 26th October 1896. They were not hasty treaties, but were made willingly and in doing so had forfeited any claim that Ethiopians might have made over Eritreans.

Further, Menelik in allowing Italians to colonize the territory 'of Medri Bahri' (as Eritrea was known before) had

10. See Chapter III. pp.49-50.

11. Richard Sherman. *ibid.*, p.32.

12. See Chapter III. pp.54-55.

shown that he considered it as a separate entity from Ethiopia.

Their cultural claim is the tricky part as Eritreans are made up of different nationality. Richard Lobban notes that Eritreans have strong claims to historical and territorial claim, it is this area that some difficulties arise as in Eritrea some ethnic groups like Beni Amer extend to Sudan and Tigre into south of Ethiopia. But a series of colonial rule have changed all these as,

"this common traditions of colonial oppression has brought a variety of Eritrean language groups into a common national culture. This is not to say that ethnic differences do not exist, but that the abuses from outsiders have synthesized and galvanized Eritrean nationalism more firmly than any Eritrean politician could hope to have achieved through rhetoric or slogans."¹³

Ethnic difference do exist, but all these become secondary to their nationalist feelings, which over the years kept on getting stronger following Ethiopian military operation against them. Lobban also questions why Eritreans should be disqualified on this issue when even Ethiopia or Sudan or even United States of America are made up of different nationalities?

13. Richard Lobban. "The Eritrean War: Issues and Implications". Canadian Journal of African Studies. Volume X, no. 2, 1976. p.339.

Economically, Eritreans have suffered under the different colonial administration. Italians as we earlier saw encouraged natural production but they also used Eritrea as a market for finished goods and to provide raw materials. Under the British, their economy stagnated and deteriorated further during union with Ethiopia forcing many Eritreans (Christian in particular) to migrate to various parts of Ethiopia for jobs.

In Eritrea, where the majority were rural peasants living a life of bare subsistence, found their conditions worsening as Ethiopian government ignored and did not initiate any agricultural or industrial measures. They claimed that after 1962, Ethiopia took no interest in developing their areas.

Eritreans also point to the United Nations (UN) decision in proposing a federation rather than total amalgamation as Ethiopia wanted.

Many Eritreans feel that the federation was imposed without consulting the feelings of the majority. There was confusion over the federation and division as Longrigg noted in 1945:

'Those of the Coptic highlanders are deeply divided... The idea of such union (with Ethiopia) is opposed by most merchants who value principally security; by a majority of the chiefs; by all who

value the progress made in Eritrea in the last half century and contrast its present condition with that of Northern Ethiopia; and by all ranks of the Muslims. It is untrue that the highlands, with a single voice or even with a clear majority, either demand or reject Ethiopian union... Demonstrations' in support of or opposition to anything at any time can, of course, be arranged with ease by anyone willing to pay for them'.¹⁴

Following federation, the Ethiopian government did not consider the Eritrean position but tried to undermine every aspects of Eritrean politics and society. Therefore, their occupation in Eritrean eyes was illegal and viewed as a colonial subjugation as that of Italian and British.¹⁵ Being subjected to these three had established Eritrea as a distinct nation - state, as Basil Davidson points out -

'On the one hand, they were robbed of their independence and made subject to a foreign rule and culture which denied their own culture and identity. On the other hand, the fact of living together within frontiers which were now defined as those of a separate entity, Eritrea, gave them a new sense of common fate and of incipient nationhood'.¹⁶

Eritreans point out the fact that they were not allowed to govern themselves democratically, their identity was suppressed by a foreign power who denied their fundamental

14. Longrigg. *ibid.* pp. 170-171.

15. Araia Tseggai, "The case for Eritrean national independence", Black-Scholar. 7. June 1976. p.25.

16. Basil Davidson (ed.), Behind the War in Eritrea. Spokesman. 1980. p.12.

rights - eliminating Eritrean institutions and imposing Amharic as the official language. Their movement which started from the 60's became stronger after the Dergue's government took over.

Eritreans and the Progressive Military Regime (1974-91)

In 1974, following the downfall of the ancient regime, the newly formed regime - the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC or Dergue) initiated its Declaration of Socialism; drawing Ethiopia into a Marxist - Leninist Framework (in theory). In truth, the 120 committee men were ignorant about socialism.

The Dergue took over with the Eritrean question (and - other nationality problem) tied like millstone round its neck. In 1976, it initiated a detailed policy on the national question,

'The right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and fully respected',

and continued:

'No nationality will dominate another one, since the history, culture, language and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism'.¹⁷

17. Basic documents of the Ethiopian Revolution, Addis Ababa. 1976, pp.13-14. See appendix - III.

The Dergue further went on that for too long the different nationalities have been subjected but now no longer - each nationality will now decide on its own internal affairs and to regional autonomy. Since both the EPLF and marxist regime of Ethiopia had supposedly the same ideology, there was a feeling of optimism that a peaceful solution could be worked out. Accordingly, in the nine point peace plan, the government offered the people of Eritrea 'full participation in the political, economic and social life of the country'. After a study of the situation, the government propose to discuss as to the best plan for the region so that both can co-exist in peace. The PMAC also proposed to initiate discussion with the progressive groups in Eritrea and to offer assistance to refugees, release of all prisoners and to lift the state of emergency.¹⁸

Eritreans refused outrightly to this plan and termed it as 'window dressing' and argued that Ethiopia remained totally devoted to the idea of 'Ethiopia Tikdem' (Ethiopia First) and was not concern with the welfare of the minorities.

The PMAC failed because in principle they refused to acknowledge any right to secession. Full respect to self-

18. Ibid., see appendix III.

determination was limited to 'regional autonomy whose powers were left imprecise.'¹⁹ It has been pointed out that while these negotiations were going on, the military regime was planning a massive armed peasant invasion of Eritrea to overwhelm the guerrillas. The plan was a disaster, it showed that the regime had no serious idea of tackling the Eritrean problem except through force and deception.

PMAC policy has been claimed as 'defensive rather than offensive'. Since their offer to peace was met with outright rejection and fighting continued afresh, the PMAC retaliated with the only alternative - to launch the 'Red Terror' to contain the movement. 'The hard line in Eritrea served to encourage the re-emergence of Amhara chauvinism at the centre.'²⁰ From their statement 'Ethiopia First', the PMAC policy had been for the indivisibility of Ethiopia and since Eritrea's movement stands for this, it is not surprising that no solution could be found as long as the Dergue was in power.

Towards a Wider Dimension of the Eritrean's Case

The Eritreans right for self-determination is today acknowledged by those who earlier dismissed it as another

19. Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux. The Ethiopian Revolution. Verso Edition. London. 1981, p.161.

20. Ibid., p.164.

civil strife within the boundaries of a sovereign state.

The Eritreans case had no stand in the organisation of African Unity (OAU) because the organisation do not encourage secessionist movements. Boundaries drawn by the colonial masters is inviolable, moreover OAU does not interfere in the 'internal affairs of member states unless they agree'. Since Ethiopia considers it as an internal affair the issue never came up for discussion. OAU is therefore 'an organisation which claims to support the self-determination of all African peoples but which in practice is committed to the existing state order'.²¹

Not only in OAU but in the United Nations, it was felt inappropriate for discussion. Reasons behind it were:

First, Haile Selassie whatever his failures was a shrewd diplomatic statesman. He managed to effectively present his case against Eritrea, legitimizing his position in such a way that Eritreans case stood no chance for discussion. This was certainly different from cases like Biafra or Katanga where the seperatist had secured the support of other African states. Eritrea had received support from two states - Sudan and Somalia. Both had provided refuge for the guerrilla movement and Eritrean refugees not because they

21. James Mayall. "Self-determination and the OAU' in I.M. Lewis (ed.) Nationalism and Self-determination in the Horn of Africa. Ithaca Press. London 1983. pp.77-78.

recognize the legal and political claims of Eritrean's self-determination but because of regional geo-strategic consideration. They had their own national interest behind the support. Similarly, Mengistu Haile Mariam who came after Selassie had no difficulty in convincing the other states that the Eritreans claim for self-determination is groundless.

Second, another reason is because the EPLF and the ELF are busy with the military aspect of the conflict that less attention has been given to the states who might have fought for their cause. No doubt, their own scholars like Bereket Habte Selassie had written about their cause but the lack of Eritrean statesmanship was evident.²²

Third, the Eritreans case has been given very little media attention. Whatever was given was made on the line of drought or famine and not on the political aspect of the region. Perhaps this explains why many western leaders fail to see the political side of the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict.

Now that Eritreans have attained their independence, the hope is that the western media will give the attention it needs for the development of the region. It is

22. Edmond. J. Keller. 'Eritrean self-determination revisited'. Africa Today. 2nd quarter. 1991. p.7.

interesting that over the years, people have started to acknowledge the legitimate right of Eritreans struggle. Keller points out that even scholars like Ali A. Mazrui and others who do not view Eritreans case as colonial but secession admits that Haile Selassie's government worked to erode Eritrean autonomy and deceit to annex the federation. A fact that has been ignored by the leaders of other states.²³

An encouraging factor has been that both the United States and Russia today speaks in favour of a peaceful settlement to the Eritreans case. The U.S. who at first considered Eritrea as an 'internal affair' of Ethiopia has reversed its opinion, 'the U.S. position today is that the aspirations of the Eritrean people are legitimate and must be addressed by the Ethiopian government'.²⁴ Herman J. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of state for African Affairs state in 1990 that,

'We support the efforts of former President Jimmy Carter to mediate between the government and the EPLF.... We have offered to be of assistance as needed.... We believe that international attention is needed... Mister Carter.... cannot be expected to shoulder by himself a responsibility that rightly belongs to all nations. Ultimately, the world community pays the price for Ethiopia's

23. Keller. *ibid.* p.9.

24. *Ibid.* p.10.

internal conflict.²⁵

He further went on that only a negotiated political solution can bring peace, peace cannot be bought by arms, 'loose federation appears to be the only stable formula'.

The U.S. was able to help the drought stricken areas and to bring a current cease-fire and perhaps, hastening the fall of Mengistu's government. What is needed today is the role of African statesman in the Eritrea-Ethiopia settlement. And for OAU to take a wider role in solving conflicts in Africa instead of concentrating on only the disputes of member states.

During the years when the Eritrean struggle went on, one of the most frequently asked question was, how would an independent Eritrea exist? Now that independence has become a reality, this area needs to be examined seriously.

When a case for independence arise, the country's geography - its size and location becomes important for it's potential economic growth. In the late 40's, this was used to argue against an independent Eritrea.

25. Speaking before the subcommittee on Africa of the Foreign Affair Committee and the International Task force of the selected committee on Hunger, United States House of Representatives, February 28, 1990. As quoted by Edmond J.Keller in 'Eritrean Self-determination Revisited. Africa Today, 2nd Quarter, 1991, pp.10-11.

'To our mind the best solution for Eritrea would be partition between Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan... (even if) it has admittedly been argued with conviction that on grounds of economic welfare and good government, it would be better for Eritrea not to be partitioned... yet looking further ahead, Eritrea is almost certainly not a viable unit of its own. If we are to think in terms of eventual independence, it's people can stand no chance unless they line themselves to bigger and more viable neighbours.²⁶

The Fabian society who gave this report than concluded that Eritrea being such a tiny state will not survive. Following their line, scholars have dismissed the Eritreans case as unviable.

Talking in terms of the smallness of a country and taking the example of Malta a tiny country about 8,000 times less than the size of Sudan and yet, doing better than Sudan, a geographically small nation has both it's advantage and disadvantage.

A small nation will have a narrow resource base and small national market, but the advantage is that they have more co-ordination and more economic adaptability. They also tend to avoid waste and conserve energy.²⁷

26. Fabian Society. The fate of Italy's colonies: A Report to the Fabian colonial bureau with contribution by an observer in Eritrea. London 1948. pp.88-89.
27. Araia Tseggai. "Eritrea the Socio-Economic Challenges of Independence. Africa Today. 2nd Quarter 1991 pp.17-18.

The location of the country is another factor that skeptics point out in Eritrea's case and which had been a dominant fear of Ethiopia. Eritrea's nearness to the Arab-sea and fear that it would be swallowed up by the Islamic countries. In Ethiopia's case, it was not only access to the sea but because the U.S. and the USSR considered the Red Sea a strategic place. Ethiopia would have been nothing if the Red Sea was no longer hers, and she depended much on the super powers for military equipment and aids. Thus she was prepared to keep on fighting for access to the sea. Being landlocked has serious implications but it never made other land-locked African countries to seize their neighbouring ports. Eritreans case have shown that a new nation may have economic viability but due to its location in a conflict area may create problems to its viability.

Potentials of an Independent Eritrea

Eritrea's main economic potential lies in its agricultural field. The war of liberation, drought and famine have reverted the country into a barren, dry country side. Their low agricultural activity also lies mainly in Ethiopian fault, instead of concentrating on Eritrea's economy after annexation they concentrated on other parts of Ethiopia.

Due to the physical diversity of Eritrea, different variety of crops are grown. In the highlands, the farms produce apples, peaches, bananas, lemons, oranges, pears, onions and tomatoes. In some areas of the Red Sea coast, papayas, mangoes and dates are grown, while in the western lowlands tropical and citrus fruits are cultivated.

Cotton is cultivated in three area - Red Sea coastal region, the Barka-Anseba valley and the Gash valley. Coffee and Tobacco were cultivated on a very limited scale. Coffee is grown on the mountainside terraces around Merara, Faghena and Sakur while tobacco is cultivated in some western lowlands and the Red Sea coast. Both coffee and tobacco can be cultivated to meet the needs of the people.²⁸

Rainfall as Trevaskis noted is 'scarce, capricious and torrential',²⁹ therefore drilling of wells and building dams is essential. The rivers of Sebene, Tsorona and Mareb will be able to supply water for irrigation system. The eastern lowlands can develop the use of water-spreading system while those of the western lowlands can extensively develop the irrigation system. It was in these areas that Italian agriculture flourished.³⁰

28. Sherman. *ibid.* p.115.

29. Trevaskis. *ibid.* p.39.

30. Sherman. *ibid.* p.117.

Another of Eritrea's natural wealth is its livestock. Sheep, goats and camels are found throughout the country. During the British time, butter and cheese were developed for European needs and they also had a surplus of cheese for exports. Camels are specially important for the desert lowland areas to provide food, clothing and transportation across the desert areas.

Eritreans industrial economy can be built up again now that the war is over. During the British time, light industrial goods like soap, beer, wine, matches, leather goods and glasswares were produced. Eritrea has also got the only oil refinery of Ethiopia located at the port of Assab, and its second largest cotton company (Baratello), Melotti Brewery, as well as Incode, Ethiopia's largest meat packing company which has tremendous potential for the future.

Minerals like gold, copper, saline deposit, mica, zinc, nickel, asbestos, kaolin, manganese, magnesium, titanium, marble, feldspar, potash are available.³¹ It also has fishing and salt industries and Eritrea's 1,000 kilometer coastline can be developed further for the fishing of its marine wealth.

The world today is so interrelated and interdependent

31. Trevaskis. *ibid.* p.41.

that no nation can afford to ignore others and hope to survive. An independent Eritrea will need to assess its role carefully in the early years of its nationhood. Eritrea, as one diplomat pointed out 'has the potential to become the Singapore of Africa, but it's starting from ground zero'.³² A strong Ethiopia is also essential for Eritrea and the role of foreign aid³³ in order to lift the country out of its drought and famine problem is essential.

So far, the EPLF with its policy of self-reliance has managed itself admirably. For them self-reliance means satisfying the EPLF's material needs. The EPLF 'envisage that an independent Eritrea will promote trade relations based on mutual advantage and seek economic assistance free of political strings'.³⁴ But they are also aware that they have to maximise the use of local resources and to stand on their own feet as far as possible.

During the war with the Ethiopian government, it was entirely self sufficient. They had developed their own food processing factories, workshops were well equipped with the latest materials. They had radio, photographic and

32. Newsweek. May 3rd 1993.

33. An estimation of \$2 billion is required to build war damages.

34. James Firebrace and Stuart Holland. *ibid.* pp.71-72.

cinematographic workshops and sandals manufacturing machines.

The health care department had established itself well, running six regional hospitals, eight health centres, fifteen health stations and over forty mobile teams. Over 1500 'barefoot doctors' have been trained and they have 140 village health workers as well as midwives and health specialist personnel.³⁵

In their educational schemes, 'education must serve the masses' is their motto. For EPLF, social change is possible only with an educated and literate population, therefore there is compulsory education for all EPLF fighters and workers.

EPLF's funds during the war came from Eritreans abroad.³⁶ They were also militarily well-equipped from the victory against the Ethiopian government. Around 1979, EPLF was reported to have in their possession 25 Soviet supplied T54 tanks and BTR60 armoured cars.³⁷ They benefitted

35. Ibid. p.102.

36. About \$10 million a year is the only aid EPLF receives. Newsweek. May 3rd 1993. p.37.

37. Dan Connell. "The changing situation in Eritrea", in Basil Davidson (ed.) Behind the war in Eritrea Spokesman 1980. p.59.

indirectly from the aids that the Ethiopian government were receiving. EPLF is reported to have an army better equipped than majority of African states. In 1991, they were reported to have around 40,000-50,000 regulars and 30,000 militia in the army.³⁸

Since the EPLF was practically running itself efficiently, it will have no difficulty in running the country with independence. Rather it can now concentrate on areas like land reforms and agricultural scheme which have been hampered during war time.

38. Africa Research Bulletin. May 1st-31st 1991.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Generally, writers attribute the cause of ethnic identity or ethnic nationalism as a response to objective exploitation of an indigeneous group by another alien group or of one social class by another and stress the need for an even distribution of resources and benefits. However, many also think that inequality cannot be the basis of nationalist movement, there is something stronger than that.

According to the relative deprivation theory, inequality alone cannot motivate nationalism but a feeling of frustration or relative deprivation defined as,

'the balance between the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled and the goods and conditions they think are capable of attaining or maintaining given the social means available to them'.¹

But how do we measure the levels of deprivation faced by different societies? Every nationalist movement has justified its movement in terms of existing oppression or anticipated oppression by a rival group.

In a multi-ethnic state, the problems are numerous - deprivation can come in the form of language, job opportunities, economic or religious discrimination.

1. Chong-do Hah and Jeffrey Martin, "Towards a synthesis of conflict and integration theories of nationalism". World Politics, Vol. XXVII. No.3. April. 1975. p.280

According to Paul Brass, it is not inequality or relative deprivation or even status discrepancies that can provoke ethnic nationalism but it is -

"the relative distribution of ethnic groups in the competition for valued resources and opportunities in the division of labour in societies undergoing social mobilization, industrialization and bureaucratization".²

He notes that ethnic nationalism can emerge in areas where one ethnic group is dominant over the other, but may not be realized until one group attempts to occupy the economic favours the other ethnic group was enjoying, or, it can also emerge in communities where one ethnic group dominates the rural society and another the urban economy or even due to uneven economic development in a multi-national region.

Eritrea presents an unusual case where alienation or a sense of deprivation takes place only after their conflict with the centre began. As noted in the second chapter, Eritreans were given the maximum job opportunities because of their education and high economic development of their area. They had been associated with the centre for years.³

2. Paul Brass. Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison Sage Pub. New Delhi/Newbury/London. 1991. p.46.

3. See Chapter II. pp.39-40.

Surveys taken in 1963-4 indicate that in educational qualifications, next to the Shoans, Eritreans came second.⁴ Educational institutions were placed only in large towns, Asmara, being the second largest city had enjoyed all educational facilities. It was only after annexation took place that Eritreans were given less job opportunities in the centre as well as in Eritrea itself.

One would have thought that the centre's policy after annexation would be on keeping the Eritreans on their side. The centre instead took a reverse policy. It had achieved what it wanted all along - Eritrea as part of it's territory and set out to weaken not only the economy but also the identity of the Eritreans. They began what was known as 'Ethiopianization'.

Deprivation in the case of Eritrea came in the form of economic and language. Economically, Eritrea was better off than the other provinces. Italian colonialism no matter what exploitation took place had at least developed Eritrea's infrastructure.⁵

4. Mesfin Araya. "The Eritrean Question: An alternative explanation". The Journal of Modern African Studies. 28.1990. p.96..

5. See Chapter III. pp. 55-56.

After Italian rule, their economy back slid during British rule and reached its lowest stage during and after the Federation. Federation with one of the least developed countries left a deep impact.

The Ethiopian government sought to make Eritrea dependent on Ethiopia and "Consolidate its hold on the Eritrean economy by balancing the economic disparity between Eritrea and Ethiopia".⁶

Whatever policy they had laid out for Eritrea, to implement its economy was quickly stopped after the Eritrean liberation front began its activities.

In 1956, Tigrinya, the language of Eritreans was replaced with Amharic language. Language is one of the criteria for belonging to a particular community. If language restriction is imposed, the person or community would find itself at a critical position in self-identification and finding a place in the society.⁷ Refusal to use their own language would aggravate the situation leading to an identity crisis.

6. Araia Tseggai. "Eritrea: The socio-economic challenge of independence". Africa Today, 2nd quarter 1991. p.29.

7. Joseph Tubiana. "The linguistic approach to self-determination" in I.M. Lewis (ed.) *ibid.*, pp.24-26.

Imposition of Amharic language was a threat to the Eritrean identity which along with the banning of their union, parties and other injustices followed by annexation triggered off the mass movement against the government.⁸ The Eritrean politicians were unable to bring their case before UN who took no further interest in their case after federation. All these led to the peoples frustration who took the only course open to them - armed struggle.⁹

The Muslims of Eritrea were from the beginning wary of joining with Ethiopia, while the majority of the Christians were for union with Ethiopia. In fact, their slogan at that period was "mother Ethiopia or death".¹⁰ At that time, they genuinely believed that a rosy future lay with Ethiopia, what happened was a complete contrast to their belief.

With formation of ELF in 1961, the government viewed them with distrust, viewing all Eritreans as sympathisers of the ELF cause while the Eritreans became increasingly dissatisfied with the government policies and began to join ELF.¹¹

8. See Chapter III. pp. 67 - 69.

9. See Chapter III. p.69.

10. Mesfin Araya. *ibid.* p.82.

11. See Chapter III. pp.70 - 71.

The government under Haile Selassie thought that the only way to eradicate the movement was to terrorise the people and arrest them into submission. As the war progressed, the centre stopped all funds and was bent on weakening their economy. Where earlier there were maximum number of jobs available to them, now they were not offered (except for the rich group who were siding with the Ethiopians) jobs even in Eritrea itself after the armed struggle began.¹²

The Dergue who came after Haile Selassie was no more successful than the previous government, with no sign of reconciliation, the movement took on a violent turn brought about by the Dergue's 'Red Terror' policy.¹³ The Dergue followed Haile Selassie's policy and was intent on using force only to subjugate the movement which on the other hand kept on getting stronger.

As their struggle went on, the Eritreans could clearly see now that they could never be on an equal footing with the Ethiopians, who would always try to dominate them. This had been feared by the Muslims from the beginning. Union

12. See Chapter II, p.40 and Chapter III. pp.68-69

13. See Chapter III, pp.75-76 For the techniques of the Dergue's 'Red Terror'.

with Ethiopia would have meant that they would be reduced into a minority group.

In their struggle for self-determination, all Muslim-Christian differences became secondary. To join forces and to be liberated from foreign oppression became the focus of the movement.

The Eritrean liberation movement goes down in African history as the longest war. Previously dismissed as an 'internal affair', Eritrea today, is international news. Their independence has paved a new road in African history and perhaps, posed a dilemma for the OAU.

The OAU principle, that nothing should shake the boundaries drawn randomly by the colonists is going to take a new twist. Jonathan Power writes that,

By the light of colonial history OAU practice and U.N. rulings, the Eritreans should probably stay put within the boundaries of Ethiopia. But this is one of those marvellous occasions in human history when we don't have to be legalistic and pedantic.¹⁴

Eritreans deserve the victory they are celebrating now, and independence is not going to draw new borders, it will only draw back the country to its earlier shape of 40 years ago.

14. The statesman, Thursday, 6 May 1993.

The OAU need not fear that other secessionist movements will be encouraged by the Eritrean movement because none will probably have as strong claims to historical and territorial rights as Eritreans.

The other African countries could learn a valuable lesson from the Eritreans case.

The movement shows that all ethnic sentiments should be met out equally. In plural societies with different ethnic groups (having their own identity and culture) the use of force cannot integrate them into the state,

Force, as we have seen from the Eritrean case alienates the people - leading to a sense of deprivation which not only creates cleavages but also a determination to free themselves from this force.

In this case, the first mistake that the centre made was to try to suppress their identity. This led to a war and the collapse of both the ancien regime and the Dergue socialist government.

Ethnicity is a major factor which the African states can no longer afford to ignore. Already enough wars have been fought and blood shed for it. The Eritrean leaders are fully aware of this problem. The EPLF main emphasis is that

all the different ethnic groups of Eritrea should be given equal attention.

It is a well known fact that different groups unite in the sight of a common enemy, once that threat is removed, they turn to fight among themselves. One can only hope that this will not happen for the Eritreans. So far their unity and mass movement is encouraging, whether they can retain this spirit or not only the policies of their leaders and time can tell.

Eritreans must now prove that they are capable of building a nation and not just winning the war.

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Appendices

APPENDIX I

THE 1950 UN RESOLUTION ON ERITREA

Resolution 390 (V), 'Eritrea: Report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea: Report of the Interim Committee of the General Assembly on the Report of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea', from the Fifth United Nations General Assembly, 316th Plenary Meeting, 2 December 1950.

Whereas by paragraph 3 of Annex XI to the Treaty of Peace with Italy, 1947, the Powers concerned have agreed to accept the recommendation of the General Assembly on the disposal of the former Italian colonies in Africa and to take appropriate measures for giving effect to it.

Whereas by paragraph 2 of the aforesaid Annex XI such disposal is to be made in the light of the wishes and welfare of the inhabitants and the interests of peace and security, taking into consideration the views of interested governments,

Now therefore

The General Assembly, in the light of the reports of the United Nations Commission for Eritrea and of the Interim Committee, and Taking into consideration:

- (a) The wishes and welfare of the inhabitants of Eritrea, including the views of the various racial, religions and political groups of the provinces of the territory and the capacity of the people for self-government.

- (b) The interests of peace and security in East Africa.
- (c) The rights and claims of Ethiopia based on geographical, historical, ethnic or economic reasons, including in particular Ethiopia's legitimate need for adequate access to the sea,

Taking into account the importance of assuring the continuing collaboration of the foreign communities in the economic development of Eritrea.

Recognizing that the disposal of Eritrea should be based on its close political and economic association with Ethiopia, and

Desiring that this association assure the inhabitants of Eritrea the fullest respect and safeguards for their institutions, traditions, religions and languages, as well as the widest possible measure of self-government, while at the same time respecting the Constitution, institutions, traditions and the international status and identity of the Empire of Ethiopia.

A. Recommends that:

1. Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown.

2. The Eritrean Government shall possess legislative, executive and judicial powers in the field of the domestic affairs.
3. The jurisdiction of the Federal Government shall extend to the following matters; defence, foreign affairs, currency and finance, foreign and interstate commerce and external and interstate communications, including ports. The Federal Government shall have the power to maintain the integrity of the Federation, and shall have the right to impose uniform taxes throughout the Federation to meet the expenses of federal functions and services, it being understood that the assessment and the collection of such taxes in Eritrea are to be delegated to the Eritrean Government, and provided that Eritrea shall bear only its just and equitable share of these expenses. The jurisdiction of the Eritrean Government shall extend to all matters not vested in the Federal Government, including the power to maintain the internal police, to levy taxes to meet the expenses of domestic functions and services, and to adopt its own budget.
4. The area of the Federation shall constitute a single area for customs purposes, and there shall be no barriers to the free movement of goods and persons

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within the area. Customs duties on goods entering or leaving the Federation which have their final destination or origin in Eritrea shall be assigned to Eritrea.

5. An Imperial Federal Council composed of equal numbers of Ethiopian and Eritrean representative shall meet at least once a year and shall advise upon the common affairs of the Federation referred to in paragraph 3 above. The citizens of Eritrea shall participate in the executive and judicial branches, and shall be represented in the legislative branch, of the Federal Government, in accordance with law and in the proportion that the population of Eritrea bears to the population of the Federation.
6. A single nationality shall prevail throughout the Federation:
 - (a) All inhabitants of Eritrea, except persons possessing foreign nationality, shall be nationals of the Federation;
 - (b) All inhabitants born in Eritrea and having at least one indigenous parent or grandparent shall also be nationals of the Federation. Such persons, if in possession of a foreign nationality, shall, within six months of the coming into force of the Eritrean

Constitution, be free to opt to renounce the nationality of the Federation and retain such foreign nationality. In the event that they do not so opt, they shall thereupon lose such foreign nationality;

- (c) The qualifications of persons acquiring the nationality of the Federation under sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) above for exercising their rights as citizens of Eritrea shall be determined by the Constitution and laws on Eritrea;
- (d) All persons possessing foreign nationality who have resided in Eritrea for ten years prior to the date of the adoption of the present resolution shall have the right, without further requirements of residence, to apply for the nationality of the Federation in accordance with federal laws. Such persons who do not thus acquire the nationality of the Federation shall be permitted to reside in and engage in peaceful and lawful pursuits in Eritrea;

The rights and interests of foreign nationals resident in Eritrea shall be guaranteed in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 7.

- 7. The Federal Government, as well as Eritrea, shall ensure to residents in Eritrea, without distinction of

nationality, race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental liberties, including the following:

- (a) The right to equality before the law. No discrimination shall be made against foreign enterprises in existence in Eritrea engaged in industrial, commercial, agricultural, artisan, educational or charitable activities, nor against banking institutions and insurance companies operating in Eritrea;
- (b) The right to life, liberty and security of persons;
- (c) The right to own and dispose of property. No one shall be deprived of property, including contractual rights, without due process of law and without payment of just and effective compensation;
- (d) The right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right of adopting and practicing any creed or religion;
- (e) The right to education;
- (f) The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;
- (g) The right to inviolability of correspondence and domicile, subject to the requirements of the law;
- (h) The right to exercise any profession subject to the requirements of the law;

- (i) No one shall be subject to arrest or detention without an order of a competent authority, except in case of flagrant and serious violation of the law in force. No one shall be deported except in accordance with the law.;
- (j) The right to a fair and equitable trial, the right for petition to the Emperor and the right of appeal to the Emperor for commutation of death sentences;
- (k) Retroactivity of penal law shall be excluded;

The respect for the rights and freedoms of others and the requirements of public order and the general welfare alone will justify any limitations to the above rights.

- 8. Paragraphs 1 to 7 inclusive of the present resolution shall constitute the Federal Act which shall be submitted to the Emperor of Ethiopia for ratification.

APPENDIX II

DOCUMENTS OF THE EPLF

1` Appendix 2a: The National Democratic Programme of the EPLF, 31 January 1977.

OBJECTIVES

1. ESTABLISH A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC STATE
 - A. Abolish the Ethiopian colonial administrative organs and all anti-national and undemocratic laws as well as nullify the military, economic and political treaties affecting Eritrea signed between colonial Ethiopia and other governments.
 - B. Safeguard the interests of the masses of workers, peasants and other democratic forces.
 - C. Set up a People's Assembly constituted of people's representatives democratically and freely elected from anti-feudal and anti-imperialist patriotic forces. The People's Assembly shall draw up the constitution, promulgate laws, elect the people's administration and ratify national economic plans and new treaties.
 - D. Protect the people's democratic rights - freedom of speech, the press, assembly, worship and peaceful demonstration; develop anti-feudal and anti-imperialist

worker, peasant, women, student and youth organisations.

- E. Assure all Eritrean citizens equality before the law without distinction as to nationality, tribe, region, sex, cultural level, occupation, position, wealth, faith, etc.
 - F. Severely punish Eritrean lackeys of Ethiopian colonialism who have committed crimes against the nation and the people.
2. BUILD AN INDEPENDENT, SELF-RELIANT AND PLANNED NATIONAL ECONOMY
- A. Agriculture
 - 1. Confiscate all land in the hands of the aggressor Ethiopian regime, the imperialists, zionists and Eritrean lackeys and put it in the service of the Eritrean masses.
 - 2. Make big nationalized farms and extensive farms requiring modern techniques state-farms and use their produce for the benefit of the masses.
 - 3. Abolish feudal land relations and carry out an equitable distribution of land. Strive to introduce cooperative farms by creating conditions of cooperation and mutual assistance so as to develop a modern and advanced system of agriculture and animal husbandry

capable of increasing the income and improving the lot of the peasantry.

4. Induce the peasants to adopt modern agricultural techniques, introduce them to advanced agricultural implements and provide them with advisors, experts, veterinary services, fertilizers, wells, dams, transportation, finance, etc., in order to alleviate their problems and improve their livelihood and working conditions.
5. Provide the nomads with veterinary services, livestock breeding experts, agricultural advisors and financial assistance in order to enable them to lead settled lives, adopt modern techniques of agriculture and animal husbandry and improve their livelihood.
6. Provide for the peaceful and amicable settlement of land disputes and inequality among individuals and villages in such a way as to harmonize the interest of the aggrieved with that of the national economic interest.
7. Advance the economic and living conditions in, and bridge the gap between, the cities and the countryside.
8. Make pastures and forests state property, preserve wild life and forestry, and fight soil erosion.

9. Maintain a proper balance between agriculture, and industry in the context of the planned economy.
10. Promote an association that will organise, politicise and arm the peasants with a clear revolutionary outlook so they can fully participate in the anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggle, defend the gains of the revolution, free themselves from oppression and economic exploitation, and manage their own affairs.

B. Industry

1. Nationalise all industries in the hands of the imperialists, zionists, Ethiopian colonialists and their Eritrean lackeys as well as resident aliens opposed to Eritrean independence.
2. Nationalise big industries, ports, mines, public transport, communications, power plants and other basic economic resources.
3. Exploit marine resources, expand the production of salt and other minerals, develop the fish industry, explore oil and other minerals.
4. Allow nationals who were not opposed to the independence of Eritrea to participate in national construction by owning small factories and workshops compatible with national development and the system of administration.

5. Strive to develop heavy industry so as to promote light industry, advance agriculture and combat industrial dependence.

C. Finance

1. Nationalise all insurance companies and banks, so as to centralise banking operations, regulate economic activities and accelerate economic development.
2. Establish a government-owned central national bank and issue an independent national currency.
3. Prohibit usury in all forms and extend credit at the lowest interest in order to eliminate the attendant exploitation of the masses.
4. Design and implement an appropriate tariffs policy to secure the domestic market for the nation's agricultural, industrial and handicraft products.
5. Formulate and implement an equitable and rational taxation policy to administer and defend the country, carry out production and social functions.

D. Trade

1. Construct essential land, air and sea transportation and communications to develop the nation's trade.
2. Handle all import and export trade.
3. Nationalise the big trading companies and regular the small ones.

4. Prohibit the export of essential commodities and limit the import of luxury goods.
5. Regulate the exchange and pricing of the various domestic products.
6. Strictly prohibit contraband trade.
7. Establish trade relations with all countries that respect Eritrean sovereignty irrespective of political systems.

E. Urban Land and Housing

1. Make urban land state property.
2. Nationalise all excess urban houses in order to abolish exploitation through rent and improve the livelihood of the masses.
3. Set, taking the standard of living conditions of the masses.
4. Compensate citizens for nationalised property in accordance with a procedure based on personal income and the condition of the national economy.
5. Build appropriate modern houses to alleviate the shortage of housing for the masses.

3. DEVELOP CULTURE, EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

A. Culture

1. Obliterate the decadent culture and disgraceful social

habits that Ethiopian colonialism, world imperialism and zionism have spread in order to subjugate and exploit the Ethiopian people and destroy their identity.

2. In the new educational curriculum, provide for the proper dissemination, respect and development of the history of Eritrea and its people, the struggle against colonialist oppression and for national independence, the experience, sacrifices and heroism as well as the national folklore, traditions and culture of the Eritrean people.
3. Destroy the bad aspects of the culture and traditions of Eritrean society and develop its good and progressive content.
4. Ensure that the Eritrean people glorify and eternally cherish the memory of heroic martyrs of the struggle for independence who, guided by revolutionary principles, gave their lives for the salvation of their people and country.

B. Education and Technology

1. Combat illiteracy to free the Eritrean people from the darkness of ignorance.
2. Provide for universal compulsory education up to the middle school.

3. Establish institutions of higher education in the various fields of science, arts, technology, agriculture, etc.
4. Grant students scholarships to pursue studies in the various field of learning.
5. Establish schools in the various regions of Eritrea in accordance with the need.
6. Separate education from religion.
7. Make the state run all the schools and provide free education at all levels.
8. Integrate education with production and put it in the service of the masses.
9. Enable nationals, especially the students and youth, to train and develop themselves in the sciences, literature, handicrafts and technology through the formation of their own organisations.
10. Provide favourable work conditions for experts and the skilled to enable them to utilise their skills and knowledge in the service of the masses.
11. Engage in educational, cultural and technological exchange with other countries on the basis of mutual benefit and equality.

C. Public Health

1. Render medical services freely to the people.

2. Eradicate contagious diseases and promote public health by building the necessary hospitals and health centres all over Eritrea.
3. Scientifically develop traditional medicine.
4. Establish sports and athletic facilities and popularise them among the masses.

4. SAFEGUARD SOCIAL RIGHTS

A. Workers' Rights

1. Politicise and organise the workers, whose participation in the struggle had been hindered by the reactionary line and leaderships, and enable them in a higher and more organised form, to play their vanguard role in the revolution.
2. Abolish the system of labour laws and sham trade unions set up by Ethiopian colonialism and its imperialist masters to exploit and oppress Eritrean workers.
3. Enforce an eight-hour working day and protect the right of workers to rest for one day a week and twenty five days a year.
4. Promulgate a special labour code that properly protects the rights of worker and enable them to form unions.
5. Assure workers comfortable housing and decent living conditions.

6. Devise a social security programme to care for and assist workers, who, because of illness, disability or age, are unable to work.
7. Prohibit unjustified dismissals and undue pay cuts.
8. Protect the right of workers to participate in the management and administration of enterprises and industries.
9. Struggle to eliminate unemployment and protect every citizen's right to work.

B. Women's Rights

1. Develop an association through which women can participate in the struggle against colonial aggression and for social transformation.
2. Outline a broad programme to free women from domestic confinement, develop their participation in social production, and raise their political, cultural and technical levels.
3. Assure women full rights of equality with men in politics, economy and social life as well as equal pay for equal work.
4. Promulgate progressive marriage and family laws.
5. Protect the right of women workers to two months' maternity leave with full pay.
6. Protect the rights of mothers and children, provide delivery nursery and kindergarten services.

7. Fight to eradicate prostitution.
 8. Respect the right of women not to engage in work harmful to their health distribution of land. Strive to
 9. Design programmes to increase the number and upgrade the quality of women leaders and public servants.
- C. Families of Martyrs, Disabled Fighters and Others Needing Social Assistance
1. Provide necessary care and assistance to all fighters and other citizens who, in the course of the struggle against Ethiopian colonialism and for national salvation, have suffered disability in jails or in armed combat.
 2. Provide assistance and relief to the victims of Ethiopian colonial aggression, orphans, the old and the disabled as well as those harmed by natural causes.
 3. Render necessary assistance and care for the families of martyrs.
5. ENSURE THE QUALITY AND CONSOLIDATE THE UNITY OF NATIONALITIES
- A. Abolish the system and laws instituted by imperialism, Ethiopian colonialism and their lackeys in order to divide, oppress and exploit the Eritrean people.
 - B. Rectify all errors committed by opportunists in the course of the struggle.

- C. Combat national chauvinism as well as narrow nationalism.
 - D. Nature and strengthen the unity and fraternity of Eritrean nationalities.
 - E. Accord, all nationalities equal rights and responsibilities in leading them toward national progress and salvation.
 - F. Train cadres from all nationalities in various fields to assure common progress.
 - G. Safeguard the right of all nationalities to preserve and develop their spoken or written language.
 - H. Safeguard the right of all nationalities to preserve and develop their progressive culture and traditions.
 - I. Forcefully oppose those who, in the pursuit of their own interests, create cliques on the basis of nationality, tribe, region, etc., and obstruct the unity of the revolution and the people.
6. BUILD A STRONG PEOPLE'S ARMY
- A. Liberate the land and the people step by step through the strategy of people's war. Build a strong land, air and naval force capable of defending the country's borders, territorial waters, air space and territorial integrity as well as the full independence, progress and dignity of its people in order to attain prosperity

and reach the highest economic stage. The people's army shall be:

- politically conscious, imbued with comradely relations, steeled through revolutionary discipline,
- full of resoluteness, imbued with a spirit of self-sacrifice, participating in production, and
- equipped with modern tactics, weapons and skills. Being the defender of the interests of the workers and peasants, it serves the entire people of Eritrea irrespective of religion, nationality or sex. The basis of this army is the revolutionary force presently fighting for national independence and liberation.

B. Establish a people's militia to safeguard the gains of the revolution and support the People's Army in the liberated and semi-liberated areas.

C. Establish a progressive and advanced military academy.

7. RESPECT FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND FAITH

A. Safeguard every citizen's freedom of religion and belief.

B. Completely separate religion from the state and politics.

C. Separate religion from education and allow no compulsory religious education.

- D. Strictly oppose all the imperialist-created new counter-revolutionary faiths, such as Jehovas' Witness, Pentecostal, Bahai etc.
 - E. Legally punish those who try to sow discord in the struggle and undermine the progress of the Eritrean people on the basis of religion whether in the course of the armed struggle or in a people's democratic Eritrea.
8. PROVIDE HUMANE TREATMENT TO PRISONERS OF WAR AND ENCOURAGE THE DESERTION OF ERITREAN SOLDIERS SERVING THE ENEMY
- A. Oppose the efforts of Ethiopian colonialism to conscript duped soldiers to serve as tools of aggression for the oppression and slaughter of the Eritrean people.
 - B. Encourage Eritrean soldiers and plainclothesmen who have been duped into serving in the Ethiopian colonial army to return to the just cause and join their people in the struggle against Ethiopian aggression and welcome them to its ranks with full right of equality.
 - C. Provide humane treatment and care for Ethiopian war prisoners.
 - D. Severely punish the die-hard, criminal and atrocious henchman and lackeys of Ethiopian colonialism.

9. PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF ERITREANS RESIDING ABROAD
 - A. Struggle to organise Eritreans residing abroad in the already formed mass organisations so they can participate in the patriotic anti-colonial struggle.
 - B. Strive to secure the rights of Eritrean refugees in the neighbouring countries, win them the assistance of international organisations, and work for the improvement of their living conditions.
 - C. Welcome nationals who want to return to their country and participate in their people's daily struggles and advances.
 - D. Encourage the return and create the means for the rehabilitation of Eritreans forced to flee their country and land by the vicious aggression and oppression of Ethiopian colonialism.

10. RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN ERITREA
 - A. Welcome the assistance of any country or organisation which recognises and supports the just struggle of the Eritrean people without interference in its internal affairs.

 - B. Establish diplomatic relations with all countries irrespective of political and economic system on the basis of the following five principles:

- Respect for each other's independence, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty;
 - Mutual non-aggression;
 - Non-interference in internal affairs;
 - Equality and mutual benefit;
 - Peaceful co-existence.
- C. Establish good friendly relations with all neighbours.
- D. Expand cultural, economic and technological ties with all countries of the world compatible with national sovereignty and independence based on equality. Do not align with any world military bloc or allow the establishment of any foreign military bases on Eritrean soil.
- E. Support all just and revolutionary movements, as our struggle is an integral part of the international revolutionary movement in general, and the struggle of the African, Asian and Latin American peoples against colonialism, imperialism, zionism, and racial discrimination in particular.

VICTORY TO THE MASSES!

Adopted by the First Congress of the EPLF on January 31st, 1977

Appendix 2b: The EPLF Unity Proposal, 22 October 1980.

POLITICAL

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front proposes:

1. Realizing that the unity of the Eritrean people is a fundamental condition for victory, prosperity, peace and progress both in the ongoing state of national democratic revolution where the Eritrean people are conducting armed struggle as well as later;

Rejecting all lines that employ unpatriotic and divisive narrow tendencies, their protagonists, and the machinations and pressures of external forces made in collusion to reinforce fermentation; A coalition be formed of all the force and patriotic elements that abide by the above-stated two principles;

2. The coalition shall form one Eritrean National Assembly composed of representatives of its constituent forces;
3. The National Assembly shall formulate a political line that would oppose all attempts and ploys aimed at dividing the Eritrean people and mobilize them against their enemies; prepare the conducive platform for different political organizations to propagate their convictions and conduct democratic struggle in the national interest; and ratify the democratic order and institutional components of independent Eritrea;

4. The National Assembly shall form - a permanent or periodically elected - body that would represent the Eritrean people in all international fora and work to solicit, on behalf of the Eritrean revolution, diplomatic, political, material and humanitarian assistance.

The EPLF expresses its readiness for bilateral meetings with the concerned forces towards the concretization of this proposal and for the elaboration of its details.

MILITARY

- Since the formation of one army and military strategy in order to defeat the colonial regime and achieve liberation a central theme of the armed struggle of the Eritrean people;
- As this has been demonstrated by the constructive efforts undertaken to reduce schisms and form one organisation and, through this, establish one army and formulate one strategy on the one hand, and the enormous losses incurred in the incessant clashes and bloodletting by the internal and external forces with a vested interest in further fragmentation on the other hand;

- Moreover, in the future too, and the existence of various armies - whether big or small - would have no positive result other than breeding internecine strife and the consequent weakening of the human and material military capabilities of the Eritrean people in the interests of their enemies;
- And permanently, since it would constitute the main obstacle to national political and economic security and stability;
- The EPLF calls upon all those armed forces outside the EPLA who adhere to the above-stated principles and accept their undeniable historical truth to join ranks in the trenches of the Eritrean People's Liberation Army. Their political question having been solved on the basis of the provisions stipulated in the political section of this proposal, the views they might harbour on the military liberation strategy would be accepted subsequent to discussions.

The EPLF invites - through this proposal - to the platform of dialogue all the forces who, aware of the complex phase the Eritrean revolution is currently undergoing, are ready to shed narrow and sectarian interests and pay the necessary sacrifices for the just national rights of the Eritrean people. It reminds all the forces who, defying these

objectives, divide the Eritrean people through various ploys, have opted to barter the Eritrean cause as a means of life and belligerently unsheath their sword against the EPLF, to reconsider their positions. The EPLF calls upon all the forces who have given their genuine support to the just cause of the Eritrean people to support this proposal and play an active and constructive role in its implementation. Political Bureau of the EPLF 25/10/1982.

Appendix 2c: The EPLF Referendum Proposal, 22 November 1980.

Although the Eritrean revolution has repeatedly reaffirmed its genuine readiness to find a peaceful political solution for the Eritrean question, the Ethiopian regime's unwillingness to seek a peaceful solution and its strivings to crush the Eritrean revolution through active military force and diplomatic conspiracy have doomed all endeavours to failure. Besides, at times when several governments, supporting the correct, democratic and just principle of the right to self-determination, attempted to bring about a genuine peaceful solution, others have created obstacles by trying to impose incorrect and unjust solutions. Thus, there has been no successful or fruitful initiative as yet. For this reason, the killing and suffering of the Eritrean people have not ceased and no

stability and peace secured. Having recognised and assessed these facts, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) would like to present the following important proposal.

First, to bring about a peaceful political solution for the Eritrean question, hold a referendum in Eritrean in accordance with the just, democratic and correct principle of the right of peoples to self-determination;

Second, to implement the first point, set up an international commission acceptable to the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean revolution. Its composition would be subject to discussion and could be formed from the UN, the OAU, the Arab League or the Non-Aligned Movement;

Third, reach agreement on a ceasefire and declare it before holding the referendum, and the commission to be set up in accordance with the second point shall monitor and oversee the ceasefire;

Fourth, from the moment the ceasefire is declared upto the time the referendum is completed, both the Ethiopian regime and the Eritrean revolution should have the freedom to carry out political agitation in all zones where there are Eritreans, will all acts of forcible imposition of views prohibited for both sides so the people may express their views with complete freedom;

Fifth, the time, places, procedure of registration and method of voting, to be determined and formulated by the commission, are to be announced;

Sixth, voting should be based on the following three points;

1. For full independence,
2. For federal association with Ethiopia
3. For regional autonomy.

Seventh, for any outcome, the Eritrean people should freely elect their representation and establish an independent state or administration through a constituent assembly. That this proposal embodies the shortest, best and most, reliable road to the peaceful political resolution of the Eritrean question is beyond doubt. Through this declaration, the EPLF calls upon the forces who wish to achieve a peaceful solution for the Eritrean question, support the right to self-determination, and fight for democracy and justice, to contribute their unswerving effort to translate this proposal into action.

Appendix 2d: Sixth Regular Session of the Central Committee of the EPLF, 8-11, September 1984 (Excerpts only).

ON THE GLOBAL LEVEL

- * Aware of the weight and influence of the US and the Soviet Union on a global scale;

- * Recalling that the US had masterminded the 'federal' association of Eritrea with the expansionist and client regime of Haile Selassie in 1952 against the wishes of the Eritrean people and later encouraged that regime to abrogate the 'federation', which had no recourse but the UN, and reduce Eritrea into a colony;
- * Noting the economic assistance and diplomatic and propaganda cover that the US, even after the downfall of the Haile Selassie regime, extends the present Ethiopian military regime under the policy of 'detaching it from the Soviet Union and winning it over';
- * Noting the injustices that the Soviet Union, oblivious of its just historic stand in 1950 supporting independence for Eritrea, is today committing against the Eritrean people and their revolution for the sake of its global strategy by providing the Derg's colonial regime with weapons of mass destruction to suppress the legitimate, just and human rights of the Eritrean people;
- * Recalling further that the intervention of the US and the Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa had created continuous instability, denied peace to the peoples of the region and made them victims of destruction, suffering and emigration;

- * Recognize the Eritrean people's legitimate, just and human rights to self-determination;
- * Halt the political, military and economic assistance as well as diplomatic and propaganda cover with which they are providing the Ethiopian colonial regime in order to suppress the right of the Eritrean people and crush their struggle.
- * Support the endeavours to resolve the Eritrean question by a just and peaceful means;
- * Stop their intervention in the Horn of Africa, with all its consequences of death, destruction and complications, and support the efforts to bring peace and stability that secures the interests of the peoples of the region.

ON THE EPLF:

As the decisive force of the Eritrean revolution and the genuine representative of the aspirations of the Eritrean people, affirms its determination to;

- * Strictly adhere to its policy of non-alignment to ensure that the Eritrean revolution shall never be an instrument of foreign interests.

ON THE UN:

- * Demands that the UN, as the primary world body legally answerable for the Eritrean question, shoulder the

responsibility that it has so far evaded and table the just case of the Eritrean people in its agenda with a view to resolving it.

ON EUROPE

- * Appreciating the political, material and humanitarian assistance that states, political parties and other organizations in Europe have extended to the Eritrean people's struggle;
- * Hailing the resolution of the European Parliament which supports the Eritrean people's just cause for self-determination, condemns the Derg's military offensives and calls for a peaceful solution to the Eritrean question; and
- * Reminding certain government which, through their support for the Derg's regime and their intervention, perpetrate injustices against the Eritrean people's just struggle and cause further instability in the Horn of Africa to reconsider their position; Calls upon the European states, political parties and other organizations to:
 - * Support the just struggle of the Eritrean people;
 - * Condemn the continuous military offensives of the Ethiopian regime;
 - * Support the efforts for a just peaceful solution for the Eritrean people's cause;

- * Extend and increase their material and humanitarian assistance to the Eritrean people;
- * Oppose the prevailing global and regional intervention that has become the cause of instability, destruction and emigration; and
- * Play a positive role in the endeavours to bring about peace and stability for the interests of the peoples of the Horn of Africa.

ON THE NATIONAL AND MULTI-NATIONAL MOVEMENTS IN ETHIOPIA:

- * Convinced that the relationship between the struggles of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples is based on solidarity for liberation and democracy;
- * Affirming that it does not view the solidarity of struggle of the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples through the narrow prism of temporary convenience of give and take;
- * Reaffirming that its conviction of this solidarity does not waver on account of any external influences and narrow temporary advantages; and
- * Reaffirming further that it supports the democratic solidarity obtaining between the national and multi-national Ethiopian movements so as to lead to the voluntary establishment and building of a democratic regime based on equality;

Urges all the national and multi-national movements to:

- * Base their mutual relations on clear long-range perspectives and a firm ground free from the tactics of mutual utilization; and
- * While affirming its determination to actively struggle to further consolidate and upgrade the solidarity, it calls on them to strengthen their solidarity with Eritrean people's struggle and its leading organization, the EPLF.

A JUST PEACEFUL SOLUTION FOR THE ERITREAN QUESTION

- * Recalling that the Eritrean people are peace and justice loving and that they rose up in arms only when perseverant political struggles were suppressed through backward and barbarous repression;
- * Recalling that peace has, side by side with the armed struggle, been their constant call and noting that they have, from time to time, paid positive attention to the question of peace;
- * Recalling the attempts of third parties even after Berlin, orchestrated under the guise of peace but intended to aggravate the internal divisions of the Eritrean revolution; and
- * Noting that it has subsequently been playing an active role by engaging in preliminary contacts to create an

atmosphere conducive to negotiations;

Reaffirms its readiness to engage in relentless endeavours and continuous contacts to create a favourable groundwork for reaching a just peaceful solution on the basis of the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination as well as its correct proposal of 21.11.80 for an internationally supervised referendum.

Calls on all concerned as well as peace and justice loving forces to play an active role in support of its struggle for a just peace.

**The Central Committee
EPLF
11.09.1984**

(SOURCE: JAMES FIREBRACE AND STUART HOLLAND.
NEVER KNEEL DOWN: DROUGHT, DEVELOPMENT
AND LIBERATION IN ERITREA, SPOKESMAN, 1984.
APPENDIX I, PP. 149-166.)

APPENDIX III

P.M.G.'s Decisions to provide a peaceful solution of the problem in the Administrative Region of Eritrea*

In accordance with the Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution and the repeated revolutionary calls in the past, the Provisional Military Government has made the following decisions to provide a peaceful solution to the problem in the Administrative Region of Eritrea:

DECISIONS

1. The anomalies which existed before will be done away with and the people of the Eritrean Administrative Region will, in a new spirit and in cooperation and collaboration with the rest of the Ethiopian people, have full participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. They will in particular play their full role in the struggle to establish the People's Democratic Republic in accordance with the Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution.
2. The Programme of the Ethiopian National Democratic Revolution has affirmed that the right of self-determination of nationalities can be guaranteed through regional autonomy which takes due account of

objective realities prevailing in Ethiopia, her surrounding and in the world at large. To translate this into deeds, the Government will study each of the regions of the country, the history and interactions of the nationalities inhabiting them, their geographic position, economic structures and their suitability for development and administration. After taking these into consideration, the Government will at an appropriate time present to the people the format of the region that can exist in the future. The entire Ethiopian people will then democratically discuss the issue at various levels and decide upon it themselves.

3. Having realised the difficulties existing in the Administrative Region of Eritrea and the urgency of overcoming them, and in order to apply in practice the right of self-determination of nationalities on a priority basis, the Provisional Military Government is prepared to discuss and exchange views with the progressive groups and organisations in Eritrea which are not in collusion with feudalists, reactionary forces in the neighbourhood and imperialists.
4. The Government will give full support to progressive in the Eritrean Administrative Region who will, in collaboration with progressives in the rest of Ethiopia and on the basis of the Programme of the Ethiopian

National Democratic Revolution, endeavour to arouse, organise and lead the working masses of the region in the struggle against the three enemies of the Ethiopian people - feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and imperialism - and thereby promote the unity of the oppressed classes of Ethiopia.

5. The Government will give all necessary assistance to those Ethiopians who, because of the long lack of peace in the Eritrean Administrative Region, have been on exile in neighbouring countries and in far-off alien lands so that they may, as of today, return to their own country.
6. The Government will make a special effort in rehabilitating those Ethiopians who might have lost their property because of the adverse conditions that had existed. All those who have been dislocated from jobs and education as a result of the existing problem will be enabled to avail themselves of the employment and educational opportunities which Ethiopia can offer in any part of the country.
7. People who have been imprisoned as a result of the existing problem will be released. The cases of those who have been sentenced to life imprisonment or death will be carefully examined to life imprisonment or death will be carefully examined and reviewed as soon

as peaceful conditions are restored and, on the basis of their offences, they will either receive reduced prison terms or be altogether released.

8. The state of emergency will be lifted as soon as the major decisions begin to be implemented and peace is guaranteed in the Eritrean Administrative Region.
9. A special commission entrusted with the task of ensuring the implementation of decision 5 to 7 above will be established by proclamation.

There are quarters that are conspiring to reverse the victories gained as a result of the struggle of the Ethiopian people and to put out country again under the yoke of feudalism and imperialism. These forces, which are working day and night, in order to realise their dreams are dangerous forces that are weaving counterrevolutionary conspiracies around the country, spending millions of dollars daily towards achieving their goals and coordinating their counterrevolutionary activities.

The Ethiopian people must be fully vigilant, organised and armed throughout the length and breadth of the country and be on guard against these forces.

The Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia believes that the problem in the Eritrean Administrative Region can be peacefully solved along the lines outlined

above. On the other hand, by allying with the broad masses the Provisional Military Government has the responsibility and duty to defend the revolutionary gains of the Ethiopian people from reactionary forces and to crush those who are inimical to the unity of the working masses and the Ethiopian Revolution.

The Provisional Military Government is making yet another revolutionary call upon the broad masses and progressive forces in the Administrative Region of Eritrea to give their fullest support and cooperation to the effort the Government is making to solve the problem in the region.

**Ethiopia Tikdem
May the Unity of the Oppressed
Masses Flourish
(May 18, 1976)**

(*) SOURCE: RICHARD SHERMAN. ERITREA: THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION, NEW YORK. PRAEGER, 1980. APPENDIX F. PP. 180-82)

APPENDIX IV

The memorandum submitted by the delegations of Burma, Norway and the Union of South Africa showing the opposition of the Eritrean Muslims lowlanders to a union with Ethiopia*

Summary finding on the wishes of the People

The hearings have shown that, in the three administrative divisions of the highlands, the bulk of the Christian Coptic population strongly favours the reunion of Eritrea with Ethiopia. In addition, a not inconsiderable number of Moslems there support the claim for union, and this is not unexpected in view of the close association of interests with their Coptic neighbours....

On the other hand, there are large groups who oppose the movement for union with Ethiopia, mainly among the Moslems in the Western Province and in the Red Sea Division, including the Danakil desert. Generally, few Copts appeared at hearings of the Independence Bloc, except one whole village group in the Akkele Guzai, whose chief is the President of the Bloc, and another group in the Serae headed by a chief of the same family. With the defection of the Moslem League of the Western Province from the Bloc, there is little doubt among the supporters of the proposal that an independent Eritrean State be created immediately today to represent a definite minority of the Eritrean population.

Both the pro-Unionist and pro-Independence groups, who together make up a large majority of the population, reject the partition of Eritrea in principle. Attention has already been drawn to the declaration of the pro-Unionist group of parties that a separate solution would be accepted for the Western Province, if the United Nations should decide on a dual solution and a majority in the Western Province want it. The Moslem League of the Western Province asked for such a dual solution but it did not appear that its adherents were in the majority.

***REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR ERITREA, General Assembly Official Records: Fifth Session, Supplement No.8 (A/1285), Lake Success, New York, 1950, p.21.**

(ABSTRACTED FROM - RAMAN BHARDWAS, THE DILEMMA OF THE HORN OF AFRICA. HERITAGE. 1980)

APPENDIX V

The Views of the British Government regarding the disposal of Eritrea, laid before the United Nations Commission for Eritrea at Asmara on 18 March 1950*

His Majesty's Government maintain the view, which has already been expressed by their representative at the General Assembly of the United Nations, that the central and eastern Provinces of Eritrea, namely, Massawa and the Red Sea Province, the Hamasien, Akele Guzai and Serae, should be incorporated in Ethiopia subject to safeguards for the Italian and other minorities, including appropriate municipal charters for the City of Asmara and the Port of Massawa. As regards the Western Province, His Majesty's Government consider that different solution is required. They do not consider that the inhabitants should be incorporated in Ethiopia contrary to their expressed wishes, nor that the Province can justifiably be placed under a separate State. His Majesty's Government have accordingly supported, and are still prepared to support, proposals for its incorporation in the adjacent Sudan, since this would seem to be the best solution on ethnic, geographic and religious grounds.

...The practical difficulties of uniting these two widely different classes of people under a "national" government to be chosen by themselves would be immense and

to attempt it would revive deep-rooted racial and religious strife and jealousies. The strife which has recently characterised relations between the Eritrean communities is, moreover, a clear indication of the civil commotion which a solution on the lines of independence would provoke.

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR ERITREA, General Assembly, Official Records: Fifth Session, Supplement No. B(A/1285), Lake Success, New York, 1950, pp.40-41.

(ABSTRACTED FROM - RAMAN BHARDWAJ, THE DILEMMA OF THE HORN OF AFRICA, HERITAGE. 1980.)

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