

***FROM THE SURGICAL WARD TO THE POLITICAL FIELD:
REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE & WORKS OF PROFESSOR
ASRAT Woldeyes (1928-1998)***

By

Assefa Negash, M.D.

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I - Biography and Profile of Professor Asrat

Professor Asrat Woldeyes was born in Addis Ababa, on June 20, 1928. When he was barely three years old, his family moved to the south eastern Ethiopian town of Dire Dawa (1). He was an eight year old boy when Italian Fascist occupation forces of Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. Following the attempt on the life of the Italian fascist general Grazianni in Addis Abeba on that fateful day of 19 February 1937, his father, Ato Weldeyes Altaye, was captured and brutally murdered along with thousands of other civilians and patriotic Ethiopians by the invading Italian fascist forces and their Eritrean mercenaries. His grandfather, Kegnazmatch Tsige Werede Werk, was one of the Ethiopian patriots who was deported to Italy and stayed there for three and half years along many other Ethiopian resistance fighters. As if the unfortunate death of his father was not enough, the future surgeon was struck by bouts of another misfortune i.e. the loss of his mother W/o Beself Yewalu Tsige, who died of bereavement caused by the untimely and brutal death of her husband. In spite of having been struck by a paroxysm of traumatic events at such prime age, the future surgeon diligently struggled on to find his bearing and maintain his gait through the tumult and insecurity created by the sudden loss of his beloved parents at such youthful age when he needed their emotional support and parental guidance.

Following the defeat of the Italian fascist occupation forces in 1941, the future surgeon came to Addis Ababa to pursue his education. In 1942 he joined the then prestigious Tafari Mekonnen School. He was an outstanding student and in 1943 he was rewarded a camera for having been the best student of the school in that academic year. From Teferi Mekonen school, he was sent to Egypt to pursue his education at Victoria college. Subsequently he was sent to UK where he joined the Medical Faculty of Edinburgh University and studied medicine. He was the 42nd student from among the Ethiopian students that were sent abroad in the post-liberation period. Untempted or untitillated by the glitter and glamour of western life, he immediately returned to his native country upon completion of his medical studies in 1956. After having served his country as a general practitioner for 5 years in the former Prince Tsehai hospital of Addis Abeba, he returned to Edinburgh (Scotland) where he specialized in surgery. He was the first Ethiopian surgeon in the post-1941 period. Professor Asrat is the founding member of the Ethiopian Medical Association (EMA), Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Scotland (FRCS Edinburgh) and FRCS (England), member of the British Medical Association (BMA), the East African Surgical Association (EASA) and International College of Surgeons (USA). Since his return to his beloved country Ethiopia, Professor Asrat Woldeyes has given extraordinary medical service to his country both as a practicing physician and professor of surgery at the Addis Abeba University Medical Faculty in the establishment of which he played an important role. The medical school, in which he subsequently served as dean and professor of surgery, came into existence in 1965 as part of the Haile Selassie I university (as it was then called).

II - The Disruption of Educational Development in the 1936-1941 Period - A Negative Legacy of Fascist Italy's Occupation of Ethiopia.

Fascist Italy's occupation of Ethiopia deprived the country a generation of fledgling modern intellectuals. The few hundred Ethiopian intellectuals the country produced prior to 1935 were the primary targets of Italian fascist occupation forces and were accordingly hunted down and physically decimated for fear that they would serve as potential leaders of the resistance movement against

Italy (2) . When the Italians left Ethiopia after 5 years of unsuccessful occupation, there was no trace of Ethiopian intellectual elite to man or run the modern administrative machinery and shoulder the responsibility of reconstructing the war-ravaged country. Ethiopia had to wait 12 years after liberation before the first graduated nurses appeared on the scene and wait another 14 years (after liberation) before the first Ethiopian medical doctor (professor Asrat Woldeyes) has to appear on the scene (3). He was one of the first educated Ethiopians to appear on the scene in a country where the manpower vacuum created due to the unfortunate, if outrageous, extermination of Ethiopia's few intellectuals by Italian fascists and their 100,000 strong Eritrean (4) bandas (as these soldiers of fortune are called by Ethiopian patriots) or askaris between 1936-1941 meant that Ethiopia has to start ex nihilo trying to produce anew its educated elite. It also meant a painful, if intolerable, dependence on expatriates during the two decades following the liberation of Ethiopia. Expatriates had to devise plans and set up priorities for Ethiopia about which they knew or cared to know little. This surrender of decision making process to expatriates has had many untoward or negative effects on a developing nation's life like that of Ethiopia. It was these foreign experts, a good number of whom had no concern for the interest of Ethiopia, which decided what was good or bad for Ethiopia (5).

More often than not, it was the views of these "omniscient" expatriate experts which had an overriding role or sway in shaping the national developmental policies and setting priorities of Ethiopia. Perhaps nowhere was the ill-advised policies of these "omniscient" international experts and advisers so evident as in the area of Ethiopia's public health problems. These experts advised Emperor Haile Sellase's government on the non advisability and impracticality of establishing a medical school in Ethiopia. Of course any sane person can understand the implications of such advice. It implies not being able to produce nationals locally who can best solve their country's problem head-on. It implies a humiliating and continued dependence on expatriate medical doctors who could not even directly communicate with the Ethiopian people they are meant to serve due to the language and cultural barrier such an encounter would entail. In a field like medicine, the medical professional's knowledge and

mastery of the language, culture and social background of his/her would-be patient remains to be an important asset in understanding, diagnosing and treating this patient. The few Ethiopian professionals like professor Asrat had to fight hard to overcome these obstacles that were being put on their way by foreign expatriates who tried to block or delay the establishment of a medical school in Ethiopia.

III - Service as a Medical Practitioner and Professor of Surgery

Professor Asrat vigorously struggled along with his few Ethiopian colleagues to create the first medical school in the country. This medical school came into being in 1965. And since its opening, the school of medicine has produced hundreds of medical graduates. Thanks to the effort of medical professionals like professor Asrat and his colleagues such as professors Edemariam Tsega, Paulos Quana'a, Nebiyat Teferi, Demisse Habte, etc the school of medicine has begun to locally train various medical specialists in such fields as Surgery, Internal medicine, Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Ophthalmology and Paediatrics. This is an achievement we owe primarily to people like Professor Asrat and his few colleagues who have dedicated their time to create such fine national institutions that can serve the needs of their population. It is all the more surprising, though, that such national figure of extraordinary calibre has to be dismissed from the University along with 41 other senior lecturers and professors because of his political opinion. In present-day Ethiopia, where might becomes right; omnipotent ex-rebel leaders and misfits of society can become "omniscient academics" that can evaluate, dismiss and lay off at will independent-minded and "incorrigible" intellectuals. The present anti-intellectual campaign of the EPRDF government parallels that of fascist Italian period in its methods, in its anti-Ethiopian goals and, particularly, in its anti-Amhara overtones. In its drive and cruelty, EPRDF's current action surpasses the anti-intellectual campaign of the Chinese Cultural Revolution of Mao Tse Tung and Cambodia's Pol Pot in that the latter two were motivated by communist ideological infatuation (directed against Chinese and Cambodian intellectuals irrespective of their ethnic origin) while EPRDF's anti-intellectual campaign is motivated by an ethnic hatred directed against non-Tigrean Ethiopian intellectuals in general and

Amhara intellectuals in particular. Until his outrageous dismissal from the Addis Abeba University medical school and teaching hospital in March 1993, Professor Asrat had served his country for 38 solid years.

IV - The Dergue Period (1974-1991)

In the hey days of ideological infatuation through which my generation passed, many issues of national concern had to be decided by ideologically motivated cadres that had hardly any grasp of practical issues. Ethiopia became a country where the decision-making process came to be dictated by the all pervasive ideology in wide currency then i.e. socialism. Ideology assumed supremacy over professional competence and merit. This pervasive ideological supremacy over professional commitment was also to encroach upon the health sector. Ideologically-motivated, inept cadres who were for the most part people that knew little about the country's health problems tried to revise and rewrite the medical school curriculum and define priorities regarding Ethiopia's health manpower training. Few summoned up their courage to challenge the diktat of these ideologists. True to character, it was individuals like Professor Asrat who had the courage to challenge such sweeping and ill-advised revisions at a time when such opposition amounted to an act of defiance against socialism and the revolution - two sacred concepts in the Ethiopia of the mid and late 1970s. Since Ethiopian national interest was at stake, Professor Asrat never yielded to the blackmails or the diktat of these cadres who tried to dictate terms regarding the medical curriculum or health manpower training issue in Ethiopia. Speaking on this important issue of health manpower training in Ethiopia when he addressed the eleventh Annual National Conference of the Ethiopian Medical Association (EMA) in 1975, Professor Asrat had the following to say :

"It is, however, unfortunate that this important theme (the issue of health man-power training and medical curriculum of Ethiopia) has dwindled to an adulteration as it is being used by some self-styled intellectuals, to cover their own failures in life and promote their selfish motive and cover up their defects. In appearing to be saviours

of the common man, they (these cadres) tell them he only needs more medical health workers that are trained in a short period. Such a concept is not known and this was what the colonial powers in Africa did and preached. In the French colonies, the African could only go as high as the level of "medicine Africaine" or Assistant d'etranger (African Doctor or the Foreigner's assistant). Such cadres of workers were to function as paramedicals to help and assist the well trained European master who forever occupied the position of the unattainable. The very people who preach such doctrines for their countrymen, have no hesitation of employing doctors irrespective of their competence, as long as they come from other countries"(6) .

Such principled stand on issues of national interest has earned Professor Asrat and his few colleagues the then popular label "die-hard, conservative, bourgeoisie reactionary intellectual, etc". This was an insult courageous people like him had to bear or stomach because of their professional defiance against an inept regime and system that tried to impose its own diktat on the medical profession and system. Few Ethiopian professionals have shown such professional defiance which, in those terrible days, amounted to risking one's career, and above all, one's life at a time when ideologists and cadres dictated terms and opposition to their diktat amounted to national treason. Contrary to the allegations of the groups that are currently in power, professor Asrat was not a yes-man that appeased and is willing to appease those in power - past or present. He has always been a man who spoke out his mind regardless of the consequences which such "defiant" behaviour would entail.

If readers need more proof about professor Asrat's determination to defend the truth without any regard for its consequences, here is one more example of his confrontation with the Dergue regarding the circumstances around the death of the late emperor Haile Selassie. Here is what professor John H. Spencer wrote in testimony about the courage of professor Asrat in his monumental book entitled "Ethiopia At Bay : A Personal Account of Haile Selassie's Years".

Spencer wrote:

"The Dergue announced that Haile Selassie had been found dead in bed and that it had immediately summoned the former emperor's physician Dr. Asrat Woldeyes. With considerable courage, the doctor publicly denied any such summons. He had been at home all day and no such call had ever reached him" (7).

In 1980, at the height of the war in the north, professor Asrat was sent to the northern town of Mitseswa (which is since May 1991 part of the Eritrean state). Here he had to treat war casualties that fell on both sides of the warring factions. For the Tigrean elites who are currently in power in Eritrea and Ethiopia, professor Asrat's service in Mitseswa was an act of cooperation with the defunct former military regime. As such following EPRDF's assumption of power in Ethiopia, professor Asrat was subjected to an intense campaign of character assassination by EPRDF controlled newspapers and magazines like Efoyta, Maleda, Abiyotawi Democracy, Addis Zemen, the Ethiopian Herald, etc. Answering to these outrageous charges in 1993, Professor Asrat stated that:

"According to medical ethics and the oath any medical doctor swears, it is the duty of every medical doctor to treat all those who present themselves with medical problems. In this sense, in my capacity as a medical doctor, I have treated the late Emperor Haile Selassie and the family of Mengistu Haile Mariam in the yester-years. At the same time, through out my life, I have been treating many poor Ethiopians who could not afford to pay anything for their medical care. And I am still doing that and it is my duty to treat all those poor who helplessly lie on the streets and come to seek my professional help. I am duty bound to treat any one that comes to my attention to the best of my ability and expertise. If it is their wish I am also prepared to treat members of the present ruling groups (EPRDF/TPLF) when and if they need my help since it is my professional duty to treat and help them (irrespective of their political views, etc) should they need my help (8) "

V - Altruistic Service and Medical Ethics (1956-1993)

In spite of his extensive surgical skills and knowledge, professor Asrat has never been tempted to use his skill and knowledge to enrich

himself or nest his feather. He was not one of those medical doctors who set up private clinics to line up their pockets. Had that been the case, today he could have been one of the few Ethiopian millionaires par excellence and his place would not have been in the verminated prison cells of Kershele at such an advanced age (he is currently 69 years old). But he is not a man that runs after money or self aggrandizement. He is a very God-fearing and ethical surgeon who leads a very inconspicuous, simple and humble life. It was these altruistic qualities and his life-time professional service and commitment to the Ethiopian people that earned him a glorious name worthy of respect and panegyrisim among the people of Ethiopia of all ethnic and religious groups who have come from all corners of Ethiopia to seek his professional help. This simplicity endeared him to all his colleagues and his patients.

VI - The Leap from the Realm of Medicine into that of Politics (1991-1997)

Professor Asrat Woldeye's name was catapulted to the fore in the realm of Ethiopian politics when he participated at the so-called July 1, 1991 "national peace conference". This was a conference organized by the EPLF/EPRDF duo in an effort to give a semblance of legality to their military seizure of power. It was a conference in which all major Ethiopian political parties and organizations that upheld the rule of law and democratic unity of Ethiopia were deliberately prevented from participation with the acquiescence of USA and other western patrons hat were behind this so-called "national peace conference". Professor Asrat Woldeyes (along with another delegate) was a participant in the conference representing the Addis Abeba University - as the only delegate who was elected by a constituency i.e. the university community. He was the only person at this highly stage-managed conference that came out to defend the national interest of Ethiopia and Ethiopians by declining to give his blessing to the sinister and divisive Charter (9) that came to pass as a supra-legal document governing the transitional period.

VII - The Amharas as the Bete Noirs in EPRDF's Ethiopia

At the July 1, 1991 conference the Amharas who, according to a national census carried out in 1984 (by the Ethiopian Central Statistical Office, CSO) (10), constitute nearly a third of the Ethiopian population, were deliberately left out of the transitional government that was set up during this conference of "oppressed nations and nationalities". A feverish anti-Amhara propaganda was launched by the EPLF-EPRDF duo and their trusted junior partner - the OLF (Oromo Liberation Front) (11) all of which tried to blame the Amharas for all that befell Ethiopia. Amharas were demonized through the mass media. Their humanism was denied; their language (Amharic) castigated as a dirty language (Afan Ajawa) by groups like the OLF/OPDO; the positive contribution of Amharas and their struggle for the democratization of Ethiopian society in past and recent Ethiopian history were denied and the Amhara people equated with the Dergue - a regime which goes down in Ethiopian history as one of the most brutal regimes Ethiopia has ever seen. The Dergue was a regime, which for the most part, wiped out a whole generation of the Ethiopian elite. The irony about the demonization of the Amhara is the fact that a significant percentage of those who were physically decimated by the Dergue were the very Amharas that were later (at the July 1, 1991 Conference) equated with the Dergue by all those ethnic elites of "oppressed nations and nationalities". The anti-Amhara hysteria and demonization which sought to identify Amharas with the brutal former military regime was stretched to its absurd limits when the so-called EPDM (later christened as Amhara National Democratic Movement or ANDM) led by the now disgraced Tamirat Layne (former prime minister in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia) traveled to Eritrea to apologize on behalf of millions of Amharas. In the words of AAPO's president professor Asrat :

"To present the Amharas as colonial rulers in Eritrea and to attribute the war waged there to the Amharas, a self-appointed team was sent to Eritrea to apologize on behalf of the Amharas for what had happened there under the former military regime" (12) .

The anti-Amhara hysteria was not only limited to verbal attacks and demonization. All the non-Amhara population of Ethiopia were prodded or called upon to rise against the Amharas who were

henceforth dubbed colonialists, expansionists and neftegna chauvinists etc and were made to bear responsibility for of Ethiopia's past and present ills. Soon the anti-Amhara witch-hunt began in earnest and began to claim human lives. In areas like Bedeno (13) , Girawa, Kurfa Chele (14) , Lange, Kersa, Soka, Deder, Hirna, Kuni (15) , Messela, Galeiti, Doba (16), Habro region (17) (Boke, Bedessa, Gelemso, Mechara), Arba Gugu (18), Arsi Neghele (19), Wellega (20), Gojjam (21) , etc Amharas and Amharic speakers (Gurages, Kembatas, Hadiya, christian Oromos, etc) were hunted down like wild animals and herded into various prisons where they were subsequently exposed to tortures, and in some instances, forced labour and later mercilessly murdered and dumped in ravines by the forces of the OLF/IFLO/OPDO(EPRDF). Some of these precipices or ravines in which these victims were dumped are located in localities such as Gara Kufa and Chefe Bante both of which are located near my home town of Hirna in Western Harrarghe. Today the ravines into which the bodies of these innocent Amhara civilians (many of them peasants) were dumped are popularly referred to by the local people as Haleya Amhara (Amhara ravines (22) or precipice i.e. Haleya means ravine or precipice in Oromo language). In Dire Dawa city alone, 37 Amharas were brutally killed in one day and many others wounded when forces of the OLF/IFLO were allowed to go berserk against unarmed civilian Amharas in this city in the summer of 1991 right after the July 1, 1991 "national peace conference" - a conference that had the international backing of major western powers (23) and was publicized by western media moguls. The soldiers of the Tigrean army of TPLF who were watching this drama were laughing when Amharas were being brutally killed by the OLF/IFLO forces that were armed by the Tigrean regime - a regime which armed the rationals (OLF/IFLO, etc) and disarmed the irrationals (24) (the Amharas). Surprisingly it was the Issa Somalis of Dire Dawa (who were later publicly exhorted by Tamirat Layne to beat and punish the Amhara chauvinists and Neftegnas) who were disgusted by these deliberately instigated pogrom-like anti-Amhara campaigns in Dire Dawa city and sent a telegram asking the TPLF/EPRDF government officials in Addis Abeba to immediately intervene and stop the bloodshed. The Issa Somalis of Ethiopia threatened the government in Addis Abeba saying that should the EPRDF government fail to intervene and stop

the carnage of Amhara civilians, they (the Issa Somalis of Dire Dawa) would directly intervene to stop the blood-shed (25) . Subsequently it was these Issa Somalis who came to the rescue of the defenceless Amhara civilians of Dire Dawa and assured them their safety since the Amharas were disarmed and were not allowed to defend themselves against the OLF/IFLO thugs who were armed and encouraged to attack Amharas by the Tigrean regime. This solidarity which the Issa Somalis showed to the Amhara civilians of Dire Dawa will go down in history as a great example of human compassion in times of distress and need. No political group inside (except this Issa group in Dire Dawa) or outside Ethiopia that is worth its salt protested the wanton killings of Amharas in such places like Araba Gugu, Hararghe, Wellega, etc until the All Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO) appeared on the scene in January 1992 and began to voice the plight of the Amharas (26) . In the north western Ethiopia region of Gonder such as Humera, Dansha, Armachiho, Wolkayit, Tsegede hundreds of respectable Amhara elders were executed by EPRDF soldiers. Many of these Amhara elders were executed in places like Kabtiya and Adi Goshu (27). Many others, among them, the famous Ethiopian patriot Fitawrari Yeshe Wendem Nadew, were taken to Mekele prison after they protested against the forceful annexation of their fertile region to Tigray in 1992. While the Amharas in the countryside were being subjected to ethnic cleansing by the EPRDF/OLF/IFLO, etc thugs; the Amharas in the towns and cities of Ethiopia experienced ethnic cleansing of a different sort. Here in the towns and cities, highly experienced, educated and qualified Amharas were being dismissed and sacked from their jobs. These vacant places have since been filled mainly by drop-outs and cadres of Tigrean and Eritrean extraction. In the face of all these assaults, the Amharas were defenceless. It was this situation which precipitated the emergence of the All Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO) that was founded by professor Asrat and few dedicated Amharas. AAPO publicly announced its legal existence on January 14, 1992.

VIII - AAPO under the Leadership of Professor Asrat Woldeyes

ከ ንጹቦን ካ ጣህ ዝብ ኅኤተኛ ገፈክ ት

ወንጀል ከይሆንምወይ ወገኑ ነኝ ማለት(28)።

(ገሃዱወብ ማሌ ዮሐንስ ስምዖን ማህተም-ወቅርብ-ዋቅር-ግላላ ላክ ቅኝ ስህተት ኃይሉ ገብረ ዮሃንስ ዮተገመገሙ=

The above couplets written by the famous Ethiopian poet Mr. Hailu Gebre Yohannes have the following meaning when roughly translated into English.

"If one cannot speak on behalf of the muzzled, is it not a crime to claim that one is part of this muzzled people?*"

As stated above AAPO was founded at a time when the incumbent government and its erstwhile coalition partners like OLF/IFLO, etc embarked upon a campaign of displacing and destabilizing the Amharas by subjecting innocent civilian Amharas in the countryside and in provincial towns to indecent assaults and mayhem. Horrendous atrocities were perpetrated on Amharas where girls were subjected to an orgy of group rape (29), women abducted and forced to live with their abductors, pregnant women disemboweled and men skinned off (30) like animals. AAPO called for the cessation of such atrocities against defenceless Amhara and Amharic speaking civilians. It called for a peaceful settlement of the country's problems. It insisted on the right of the Amharas and Amharic speakers to live in every part of Ethiopia as Ethiopians without any discrimination. AAPO does not subscribe to the ethnic federalism currently being pursued with religious zeal by the incumbent government and its Lilliputian cadres. Unlike many of the July 1, 1991 Charter signatories, AAPO believes in the supremacy of individual rights over group or ethnic rights. It upholds the principle of one man one vote and rejects the concept of Bantustanized ethnic enclosures or frontiers as is now the case. It does not subscribe to the notion of the so-called Amhara, Oromo, southern, Somali, etc ethnic homelands or Killils. It is against the criminalization of the Amhara ethnic group as being responsible for the ills of all Ethiopia's past. It upholds the right of any Ethiopian to live and work anywhere in Ethiopia without any discrimination based on one's ethnic, regional, linguistic background or religious persuasion. It upholds the composite identity of all Ethiopians. It adheres to peace and peaceful settlement of the country's outstanding

political problems. It realizes the damage wrought to Ethiopian society by incessant wars and is accordingly committed to the peaceful settlement of Ethiopia's problems. However, in spite of all these peaceful efforts, AAPO and the Amhara people, whose interest it seeks to defend and promote, have been subjected to increasing wave of repression. The displacement and destabilization of the Amhara people continues unabated. Amharas lead an insecure life, (this is also true of all Amharic speakers from other ethnic groups who live outside their designated ethnic enclosures of Killis) particularly in regions where they are considered outsiders or aliens. Amharas are harassed by the soldiers and cadres of the present government in the country side and towns. Amhara peasants who are not loyal to the political line of the incumbent government have been deprived of their plot of land and evicted from their land in areas like northern Shoa, Gondar, Wello and Gojjam (31). In the southern and central parts of Ethiopia, Amharas are subjected to constant bullying by the incumbent government and its satellite ethnic organisations such as the OPDO, Harari (Adare) League, etc. The untold and undocumented suffering of Amharas in areas like the city of Harrar is still continuing.

Although the AAPO has a legally recognized status and is registered as a legal political organisation, its members and sympathizers are harassed, killed and subjected to untold suffering. It was against all these reprisals that AAPO was peacefully protesting. It organized rallies, wrote appeal letters, campaigned on behalf of Amharas and Amharaic speakers who have become victims of the ethnic cleansing in post-May 1991 Ethiopia. AAPO set up branch offices in various parts of the country. In northern Shoa alone, more than 40 offices and more than 130 AAPO basic committees were set up within a short span of time. Similar efforts were made in areas like eastern Hararghe (Dire Dawa), Arba Gugu (Arsi), Bahir Dar (Gojjam), southern Wello, Northern and Southern Gonder (Debre Tabor, etc), Arsi Neghele and Nazareth (located in southern and eastern Shoa respectively), etc. Thanks to AAPO's emergence as a leading voice of Amharas, Amharas who at the end of the 1991 and beginning of 1992 (a period during which the anti-Amhara hysteria reached its zenith or peak) were otherwise afraid to speak their language in public places, taxis,

buses, etc gradually began to assert their rights as human beings and Ethiopians. This was clearly witnessed in the many public rallies which were successfully organized by the AAPO. When the president of the AAPO, professor Asrat Woldeyes, addressed a public rally in the northern Shoan town of Debre Berhan on December 20, 1993, thousands of Amhara peasants (from the surrounding area and far flung areas such as Yifat, Merhabete, Menz, etc) turned up to attend the meeting. This was in stark contrast to the low turn up and attendance (just some 120 people) enjoyed by the rival government-supported ANDM or EPDM at a meeting it held some times prior to the AAPO meeting at which professor Asrat spoke. This sent a shock-wave to the EEPRDF authorities. They panicked and they have to take measures to silence AAPO and its Amhara and Amharic supporters from other ethnic groups. To illustrate the regime's apprehension and worry about the growing influence and preponderance of AAPO, it suffices to just quote the regime's strong military figure and former defence minister Mr. Seye Abraha who uttered the following words regarding the danger posed to the TPLF regime by Professor Asrat Woldeyes:

“Asked whether there exist armed opposition forces in the country answerable to colonel Goshu Wolde and former president Mengistu Haile Mariam, Ato Seye dismissed such rumours as the work of those who attempt to incite violence and instability”.

“Forget about Goshu or Mengistu and think instead of Professor Asrat Woldeyes chairman of the All amhara People’s Organisation (AAPO), who has been unsuccessfully declaring war against the government for the last three years. If the EPRDF had the opportunity of agitating people as does Professor Asrat now, it would not have taken it 17 years to topple the Dergue regime” (32) .

Why should Seye Abraha who said that "TPLF/EPRDF not only wins wars but also makes wars" should be so much alarmed by an elderly man committed to peaceful struggle? The answer to this is any body’s guess. This was a clear statement by Seye Abraha and shows how AAPO and its charismatic leader were deeply resented and feared by

the Tigrean regime. AAPO and its leadership proved to be serious challengers to the regime. This was why the regime had to throw professor Asrat and the AAPO leadership into prison by contriving trumped-up charges of "incitement to war" and falsely accusing AAPO leaders of encouraging "armed resistance" against the EPRDF regime. Professor Asrat was accused of being a war-monger because of the public speech he delivered at Debre Birhan. Far from inciting people into war, in reality his speech was replete with references to the destructive role of wars in our long history. Here is what professor Asrat stated about AAPO's peaceful struggle at this same public rally held in Debre Birhan town on December 20, 1993. Ironically this is part of the speech of which he was accused as a war-monger and sentenced to 5 and half years of imprisonment.

"We believe in the supremacy and decisiveness of the people. Hence, we take great care to prevent these mighty people from once again being forced or pitted into an all-out war. Because the Amharas know more than anybody else the harmful nature of war and realize the fact that any military victory will only lead to vengeance. We shall not hurry for war nor shall we make any special preparation for it. It is true that AAPO has no armed soldiers or a liberated land. Its liberated land is none other than the free heart of the Ethiopian people. We also want to remind them that our army is the Ethiopian people. An organisation that believes in the supremacy and decision of the people and is part of the people, as AAPO is, does not try to gain power by running to the caves and engaging in banditry. The basis of a popular struggle is not the bush or the cave or the peak of a mountain but the people themselves. In some places military operations were openly conducted against Amharas and the people were subjected to brutal treatment because of their support to AAPO. The people should know that many AAPO supporters were imprisoned, plundered and dislocated in consequence of this campaign. You know that here in Debre Birhan itself, a boy's belly was torn with knife and disemboweled in an attempt to make him tell where his father had hidden his gun. As we have proved with sufficient evidence and is being witnessed by the world, despite the attempts to portray them as war-mongers and chauvinists and despite the murder and plunder they have been subjected to in their

own villages, the Amharas have remained patient and law-abiding. We demand that this patience and loyalty to the law be given due respect and value by the authorities of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (33) "

IX - The Crack Down On AAPO and its Leadership (1992-1997)

Since the end of 1992 AAPO and its leadership were subjected to intense harassment (34). Abductions, killings and imprisonment were carried out against AAPO activists and leaders as a matter of routine. One of the first victims was Mr. Melaku Yirdaw, head of the AAPO regional office in Dire Dawa city (south eastern Ethiopia). He was abducted by EPRDF soldiers on September 11, 1993 and was not heard of ever since. He is presumed dead. Between September and July 1993, 41 AAPO central committee members and regional representatives of Gonder, Gojjam, Wello, Hararghe, Arsi, northern Shoa, were abducted or imprisoned (35). During much of 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995 hundreds of innocent Amharas were abducted and killed by EPRDF forces in areas like eastern Gojjam, northern Shoa, northern and southern Gonder and southern Wello for no other reason than just being sympathizers or supporters of AAPO (36) .

Scores of AAPO activists were gunned down in broad day light in areas like northern Shoat, Dire Adwa (37), Gondar, Gojjam, etc. In addition to these, currently 7 of AAPO's central committee members are in the Kershele prison. No legal charges have been brought against many of them some of whom are already in prison for more than 4 years. Others like professor Asrat have been sentenced to 5 and half years of imprisonment on false charges of "inciting people to war". And more new charges against him are pending at the court for allegedly inciting peasants of Gojjam and Gondar against the EPRDF government. Amnesty International has stated that the imprisonment of professor Asrat and his four AAPO colleagues was made "on the basis of slender and dubious evidence and without direct proof of the alleged conspiracy" and added that "it believes all five men to be prisoners of conscience who should therefore be immediately and unconditionally released" (38) . Since his imprisonment professor Asrat has appeared in court on more than 120 occasions. Each time

his case is adjourned - deliberately and as a means of punishing him psychologically. He was sentenced to two years of imprisonment on June 27, 1994 and later sentenced to another three years prison term on December 18, 1995 (39). In his prison cell repeated efforts were made by the cadres of the incumbent government to subject him to intense psychological pressure and stress. Professor Asrat suffers from a chronic heart problem and is supported by a pace maker. Prison officials and cadres of the ruling Tigrean regime organize lumpensih elements from among the common criminals held in prison and exhort them to denounce him and accuse him of false charges. To deny him social contact with other inmates and force him into a state of loneliness, they punish or threaten inmates who are on good terms with him and talk to him in prison. Those inmates who maintain contact with him are warned to stay away from him and told not to approach him. The relatives and friends of professor Asrat and his AAPO colleagues are subjected to the most gruelling body searches before they are allowed to see him and his colleagues. Especially female relatives and friends are subjected to very dehumanizing and humiliating body searches by the insensitively vulgar cadres and guards of the Kershele prison. Unlike many other political prisoners, professor Asrat can receive visitors (relatives and friends) only twice a week and that is just for half an hour each time. He is currently held in custody with juvenile delinquents (40). More often than not, he is not allowed in books and newspapers. Another AAPO leader, Mr. Wendayehu Kassa, suffers from Asthma and is since his imprisonment held in a dark, rather cold and humid underground prison cell. This is the worst place to be in as far as the Kershele prison is concerned. According to my informant, Mr. Teferra Asmare, who was himself a prisoner in the Kershele prison for three years, these prisoners in this underground section of the prison, have nearly bleached for lack of sunlight. According to Ato Teferra Asmare, in addition to the AAPO leaders (such as Ato Wendayehu Kassa, Ali Indris, Mr. girma Enquo Selassie, Major Getachew Mengiste and Colonel Getahun Ejigu), OLF members are also similarly suffering in these underground cells together with the AAPO leaders. What is more these AAPO leaders such as professor Asrat have all been denied their pension rights to which they are rightly entitled by virtue of their long professional service to the Ethiopian society.

X - Combining Intellectual Integrity-Cum-Courage

Professor Asrat is a man who put his career and, even more importantly, his life at stake for the cause of justice. He is not a man who is after hedonistic pursuits of material wealth or some one who is interested in personal advancement. Unlike many intellectuals in our society, he did not pander to his personal pleasure nor needs of his family alone. He chose to put maximum premium upon the collective interest of Ethiopian society. He is a man with a powerful personality for whom the incumbent state or those at the helm of power in Ethiopia are not too big or too imposing as not to be opposed or criticised whenever they go astray. This is what he actually did and that is what brought him on a collision course with the incumbent ethnocratic government. Unlike some of those timid and uncommitted intellectuals of our society who barricade themselves behind academic walls and institutions and acquiesce to gross human rights violations in their midst, professor Asrat demonstrated to his society and the world that rare quality of the intellectual i.e. the ability to go beyond his narrow interest and articulate and represent the suffering, passion and hope of his people even when that meant sailing against the conventional political current and time-honoured political dogma such as the concept of ethnic enclosure or Killil which is the political stock-phrase and flagship of the ethnocratic EPRDF regime.

*Unlike many of the non-committed Amhara elites, he did not want to sit idly by and witness the continued genocidal campaign directed at Amharas in the 1991/1992 period when the whole Amhara ethnic group was subjected to a barrage of criminalizing propaganda by groups like OLF and OPDO (EPRDF) leaders like Mr. Hassan Ali (president of the Oromia region) were speaking of "**de-Nazification of the Amharas**". Asrat Woldeyes was a man of deeds and not a pedant. He had no time for those ivory-tower intellectuals who were too timid to even protest the wanton killings of innocent children and mothers in areas like Arsi and Hararghe, etc. Being a man who has been trying to save the lives of sick people all his life, he could not tolerate the physical decimation of healthy people because of their ethnic group to which they belonged by chance and not by choice. Enough was enough and he has to put aside his surgical knives and*

get to grips with the defence of the rights of a marked and targeted group of people whose existence was in danger. This he did by throwing his moral and professional weight behind AAPO. For this professor Asrat Woldeyes would continue to be remembered by the present and future generation of Ethiopians.

One enduring quality of professor Asrat is also his deep sense of awareness of Ethiopian history and self-reliance. Unlike my generation who looks beyond the frontiers of Ethiopia for many of Ethiopia's ills, professor Asrat insists that we should not look for Ethiopia's redemption at the corridors of power in the White House (Washington), Atlanta Carter Centre (Atlanta), Whitehall (London) or Partis. While addressing an AAPO founding conference in the Yeka zone of Addis Abeba city in 1992, a middle aged woman raised her hand and asked why he and his organisation AAPO do not appeal to western governments so that these western governments would stop the mayhem and genocide against the Amharas by bringing immediate pressure to bear upon the incumbent government. Professor Asrat having listened to the woman carefully cleared his throat and answered to her queries as follows:

"During the now defunct Dergue military regime, Western governments and institutions used to locate and see a small needle at night (even when it was dark) in Ethiopia. Today they cannot see or observe an elephant even in broad day light. So should we beg westerners to see the elephant in broad day light (41)?

Having said that he smiled and looked at the woman. Hopefully both the woman and the audience gathered there have understood the message and taken to heart the futility of wasting time trying to appeal to the western powers that are aware of what is going on in Ethiopia. For those who doubted the veracity of what professor Asrat had to say about the west's lack of sensitivity to what is happening in Ethiopia, what transpired

two years later when 17 western embassies (42) signed a joint communiqué supporting the new "democratic constitution" of Ethiopia should serve us all as a good lesson. The moral of this story is that to solve our problems, we have to primarily rely on ourselves and not

run to Washington or London in search of solutions to Ethiopia's problems. Self-reliance is a strong quality of professor Asrat - something which the western embassies and so-called peace institutions like the Carter Centre resent since such self-reliant leaders do not pander to the narcissistic ego of self-styled "peace makers" like Jimmy Carter (42). After six years of street demonstrations, appeal letters, etc today we have learned the bitter truth of counting on our own resources - something which professor Asrat was hammering home 5 years ago.

Professor Asrat's defense of the collective interest of Ethiopia as a single dissenting voice at the "historic" July 1, 1991 "Peace Conference" that initiated the fragmentation of Ethiopia and his subsequent emergence to defend the very existence of millions of Amharas and Amharic speakers who have been demonized and branded as the devil incarnates or bete noirs of Ethiopia, is a clear testimony to his intellectual defiance against what he believes is unjust and wrong in the present day scheme of things in Ethiopia. Such rare intellectual courage and defiance involves risks, and not infrequently, it is fraught with dangers and makes one susceptible to the assault and unpredictable whims of dictatorial and ruthless regimes like the current Tigrean regime - a regime whose very essence is premised on hate, intolerance and violence. As an intellectual and political leader, professor Asrat was very able at reconstructing, concatenating and articulating the historical experience of the Ethiopian people and particularly the Amharas both under fascist Italy's occupation and under the present ethnocratic regime. For many Ethiopians like myself many of the practices of the present government are mirror images of fascist Italy's experiment with Ethiopia albeit with one difference (i.e. this time though the perpetrators happen to be local people who are Ethiopians and speak an Ethiopian language unlike the white foot soldiers of Mussolini who spoke Italian and came from Europe). Such historical reconstruction and concatenation of the historical experience of the past with the present as was deftly articulated and presented by professor Asrat in his famous speech at Debre Birhan on December 20, 1993 touched the raw nerve of the minority Tigrean regime of EPRDF. Hence EPRDF's decision to lock him up and

silence him. As of June 1994, professor Asrat finds himself in prison on trumped-up charges of "incitement to war".

All those who have read the book of the Italian historian Alberto Sbacchi (43) cannot fail to see the historical continuity of fascist Italy's policy of pax Italiana with the pax Tigrigna policy of the incumbent EPRDF regime of today. Both the pax Italiana of fascist Italy and the pax Tigrigna of EPRDF are based or premised on the divide et impera policy of the apartheid system of ethnic homelands or ethnic enclosures and frontiers popularly known as Killils in the Ethiopia of today. Both represent the ethnic fragmentation of Ethiopia. Let me pen up my reflections on the life and works of this great Ethiopian by saying that my generation has a lot to learn from the selfless dedication, intellectual energy, patriotic courage and altruistic service of professor Asrat. In front of my computer hang one A4-sized photograph of professor Asrat and another A3-sized colour photograph (courtesy of EHRACO) of Mr. Abushu Deme Hamda (an Ethiopian peasant of 32 years of age from the Shasemene area of southern Ethiopia). The left lower arm and hand of Mr. Abushu Deme have to be amputated and his right arm and hand have been paralyzed and atrophied after he, along with 4 of his peasant colleagues, was subjected to a terrible physical torture for hours on end. This happened after his hands and feet were tightly tied by a plastic rope for more than 30 hours. This was perpetrated against this pitiful Ethiopian compatriot and his 4 colleagues by the EPRDF soldiers in the summer of 1991. This young peasant is married and a father of many children. The piercing, if inquiring, eyes of these two victims of human rights (professor Asrat and Mr. Abushu Deme Hamda) whose photographs hang on the wall of my computer room looking at me every time I sit in front of my computer remind me the fact that the task ahead of us all in making Ethiopia a better and hospitable place for the present and future generation is indeed gigantic!!!. In fact what we are currently doing to bring change in our society pales in significance when compared to the commitment of the incumbent government and its local and international supporters in blocking any effort that leads to the emergence of a better future for ETHIOPIANS suffering under their rule. Hence the need to redouble and coordinate

our efforts for the liberation of our country from the clutches of the ethnocratic regime of EPRDF !!!!.

-----SHINE-----

Foot Note

1-Ethiopian Register Magazine, August 1996 Issue

2-Educated Ethiopians like Benjamin Workneh-son of the late Hakim Workneh (the first Ethiopian medical doctor) and the two sons of the Ethiopian foreign minister Hirouy Wolde-Selassie who were studying in England were among the scores of Ethiopian intellectuals that were hunted down and brutally murdered by Italian Fascist forces.

3-Asrat WoldeYes, Manpower Training in the Field of Health in Ethiopia, Ethiopian Medical Journal, Vol. XII, pp.104, 1975

4-100,000 Eritreans fought against Ethiopian patriots by siding along the Fascist forces of Italy during the 1936-41 occupation of Ethiopia. Only 445 Eritreans fought alongside Ethiopian patriots. For details see United Nations "Documents de L'Ethiopie, 1948).

5-We should note that among Expatriates, there were also men and women who selflessly served Ethiopia. For example expatriates like the Dutch paediatrician the late Dr. Dekker had served Ethiopia with exemplary dedication for more than two decades.

6-Manpower Training in the Field of Health in Ethiopia, Asrat Woldeyes, Dean and Professor of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopian Medical Journal, Vol. XIII, 1975.

7-John H. Spencer, Ethiopian at bay: Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years, 1987.

8-Quoted from a speech made by Professor Asrat at an AAPO founding conference in Bahir Dar on June 20, 1992. (translation to English mine). As Professor Asrat was not able to be physically present at this meeting, he had to travel to USA and Europe during this time.

9-The July 1, 1991 Charter was an instrument meant to impose Pax Tigrigna by Bantustization of Ethiopia into ethnic homelands or enclosures, thereby allowing the ruling EPRDF to pull all political strings and guarantees the supremacy of a minority Tigrean ethnic group over the rest of Ethiopia.

10-See the 1984 Population and Housing Census of 1984, Transitional Government of Ethiopia, 1991.

11- The OLF is an organization which considers Ethiopia as a "colonial state" and the Oromos as "colonial subjects" of Ethiopia. OLF struggles for the "decolonization" and secession of the so-called "Oromia" nation from what it calls the "Ethiopian Empire". In the 1991/92 period, it formed part of the TGE and was the second largest political group in the TGE. It left the TGE in June 1992 and since then finds itself in opposition to the EPRDF government. In an interview with the Dutch daily newspaper called the NRC Handelsblad in 1992, Lencho Letta, OLF's secretary had the following to say about Ethiopia and the 'colonized Oromo land':

"Ethiopia is a unique country in Africa. Not a European but rather an African power (Ethiopia) colonized Oromo land. The decolonization process that began 30 years ago in the whole continent of Africa has yet to take place here in Ethiopia now", translation of the text is mine'. For colonial thesis of OLF, see the publications of Oromo ethno nationalists like Mohammed Hassen, Sissay Ibssa (see for example his book entitled: "The Invention of Ethiopia", 1990 and OLF Publications like the Journal of Oromo Studies, Oromo Commentary, etc...

12-See Professor Asrat's public speech on December 20, 1993 in Debre Birhan.

13-154 people, the majority of them Amharas were killed by OLF soldiers and dumped in a precipice known as Inquftu in a region called Bedeno in Hararge. See Amnesty International's Annual Report, 1993. See also Africa watch Report 1993.

14-See Mr. Betre Mussie's article: "Ye-Harargew Inkoklish", Addis Zemen, May 1992.

15-In 1992 in a locality known as Kuni which lies some 7 Kms outside Asebe Teferi in Western Hararge, Amhara peasants who came there on a market day were beaten naked after their clothes were taken off by OLF soldiers. An Amhara girl by the name of Beletetch Negussie, who refused to marry an OLF soldier as a spy of the ruling EPRDF and beaten naked in the market place by OLF soldiers. Far from spying for the EPRDF, it was this same EPRDF which allowed OLF a free hand to perpetrate any kind of crime against the Amharas-the mortal enemies of the EPRDF. For details, see the May 30 issue of Addis Zemen newspaper (Miaza 23, 1984).

16-See an article entitled "netsa mewtat weys dem meqabat" that appeared in the Addis Zemen newspaper, May 5, 1992 written by Mr. Mohammed Beshir. This man, who is himself an Oromo, was writing about the mayhem that OLF was perpetrating against Amharas in Hirna, Doba, Weberra etc.

17-According to the EHRCO first report, 46 Christians were killed in this region. December 12, 1991.

18-According to the vice-chairman of the AAPO, Kegnazmach Neka Tibeb Bekele, in Arba-gugu alone some 32,000 Amharas and Amharic speakers were displaced in the 1991/92 period, see the now defunct Mahilet Amharic magazine, 1993 edition. For details about the genocidal campaigns of the OLF/OPDO groups against Amharas and Amharic speakers, see the following issues of SHINE:

- The Hidden Massacre of Amharas and Christians in Arsi, December 10, 1992.

- The Inter-Ethnic Conflict Instigated by EPRDF-led Government Continues to Claim Human Lives and Precipitates Destruction of Property, SHINE July, 1992.

-Professor Asrat's Appeal Letter Regarding the Continuing Massacre of Amharas and Amharic Speakers (translation to English by SHINE), October 1992.

19-According to EHRCO's third report (dated July 16, 1992), 60 people have been killed and 60 others wounded and properties belonging to non-Oromos destroyed when Arsi Oromos attacked non-Oromos living in the area. This was disclosed to EHRCO by representatives of the victims of these attacks who happen to be people from the Kembata and Amhara ethnic group living in the Arsi Neghele region.

20-In the Mugi town of Wollega, more than 200 Amharas were murdered by the OLF forces in 1992. This was communicated by a surviving victim to a field worker who travelled to this area at the beginning of 1993. On a related note, in the Wollega region in a locality known as Genji, scores of people were imprisoned by the OLF in February 1992. On one fateful night, some 7 Amharas and Amharic Speakers were taken from this prison and lined up on the edge of a precipice or ravine and shot dead. (For details of the Genji killings, see Mr. Moti Fridisa's article (from Ghimbi, Wollega) in the May 2, 1992 issue of Addis Zemen Newspaper.

21-According to EHRCO's third report dated July 16, 1992, 60,000 Amhara Muslims were displaced, many men burnt alive and many castrated and about 270 shot dead and killed. 185 schools and mosques and 6833 houses burnt following an attack by the Beni Shangul ethnic army.

22-Personal communication by surviving relatives of victims in the area.

23-It should be remembered that dozens of Western envoys were present at the July 1, 1991 conference thereby adding colour and decor to the EPRDF stage-managed conference. The irony of all this drama was the fact that the majority of Ethiopians who really were not allowed any representatives.

24-See Meles Zenawi's interview with Times of November 1991.

25-Personal communication by a relative of mine who used to live in Dire Dawa.

26-Of the non-political human right groups inside and outside the country, EHRCO was the only human rights organization that brought to light the carnage perpetrated against Amharas in Western Hararge and Arba Gugu region in Arsi. For details, see the 1- First report of EHRCO, December 12, 1991.

27-See the appeal letter written by Gondar Development and Cooperation Organization (GDCO) to Amnesty International, June 15, 1992.

28-A couplet coined by one of the greatest living patriotic Ethiopian writer and poet who has indefatigably struggled for the empowerment of Ethiopians for well over three decades. Mr. Hailu (alias Gemorraw) currently lives in exile in Stockholm, Sweden).

29-According to AAPO, 474 Amharas were killed of which 87 were literally slaughtered like animals and 300 others were wounded and left in the bush without access to food, shelter or medical care. 56 girls were raped and subsequently forced to live with their abductors. 76 women were subjected to an orgy of group rape and forced to live with their abductors after their husbands were killed. These became pregnant after repeated sexual assaults. For details see, Professor Asrat's Appeal letter to the EPRDF government, Ethiopian Review, April 1992. All this was perpetrated by the OLF army which was operating in the area and formed part of the TGE.

30-An Amhara elder by the name of Mr. Getu Tegegn who used to live in the Lapis peasant association of the Arsi Neghele district was killed by machete and spear and his body skinned off just like a wild animal and his abdomen disembowelled on April 10, 1993. This gruesome act was perpetrated by some extremist individuals from the Oromo ethnic group who were encouraged by the local EPRDF authorities to do whatever they like against the Amharas living in the region. For details, see the appeal letter of the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) to the incumbent government, dated May 19, 1993.

31-Currently similar harassment are also carried out against other Ethiopians such as the Oromos, Southern Ethiopians, Ethiopians in the Ogaden, etc for being supporters of OLF, SEPDC, ONLF etc..

32 – For details, refer to the Ethiopian Herald newspaper, Thursday May 26, 1994 edition.

33-See Professor Asrat's speech made at a public rally in Debre Birhan on December 20, 1993.

34-For a list of abductions of AAPO members by EPRDF soldiers, refer to the press release of SHINE entitled "A New Stage in EPRDF's Anti-Amhara Hysteria", dated January 24, 1993.

35-See the AAPO's Fact Sheet of July 8, 1993 that was presented to the American delegation led by Congressman Harry Johnston, chairman of the House Foreign sub-committee on Africa the latter's visit to Ethiopia in July 1993.

36-For similar killings which took place in the 1994/95 period, see the various publications of AAPO's official organ known as Andinet newspaper (1994, 1995 issues) which has compiled such reports under the heading "Sekokawe Amara" literally meaning the "Cry of the Amhara".

37-For example, Ato Mindaye H/Selassie, AAPO's representative in Dire Dawa region was shot dead by EPRDF soldiers in front of his house in 1994. Ato Mindaye was head of a family of 7. Similarly Captain Aschenakie, head of the financial department of AAPO at its Dire Dawa branch office was killed in broad day-light in November 1995. He was a father of 6 children.

38-See Amnesty International Press Release, July 1, 1994.

39-For details, see the Tobiya weekly newspaper, Vol II, No 4, December 27, 1994.

40-Personal communication by Mr. Teferra Asmare, former prisoner of Kershele prison.

41-Public address of Professor Asrat in Addis Ababa, 1992.

42-For details, see the joint communiqué (dated December 18, 1994) of the 17 western embassies based in Ethiopia who congratulated the EPRDF government for its newly adopted "democratic constitution".

43-For an account of the destructive role of Jimmy Carter against Ethiopian national interest, I refer the interested reader to a well-documented paper prepared by a Lund (Sweden)-based Ethiopian group called "Ethiopian Unity Organization", spring 1994. Regarding his involvement with Ethiopia and his so-called "peace initiative" this is what Jimmy Carter said during a PBS interview in November 1996:

"The Carter Centre negotiated for years trying to resolve a problem between Ethiopia and Eritreans. Then along came a Tigrean-his name is Meles Zenawi-who overthrew Mengistu, who is a communist dictator in Ethiopia. Now there is a wonderful little nation of Eritrea and a growing democracy in Ethiopia, still struggling along making good progress on their own without any outside interference."
