

## **PART TWO: The Ugly American THE HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE: MELES ZENAWI AND MOHAMMAD AL-AMOUDI**

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*"The world is too dangerous to live in—not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen." Albert Einstein*

*"When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist." Dom Helder Camara*

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### **I. Introduction**

The time of reckoning is long past, and the time of action is over us. Our Ethiopia has suffered a steep decline in the quality of its leaders ranging from the opportunistic to the traitor; from the bar room brawler to the school dropout et cetera in the last one hundred years. Especially the last two governments of Ethiopia, since the time of the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1974, namely the Government of Mengistu Hailemariam and the current Government of Meles Zenawi are the worst. Mengistu reintroduced the old practice of the occasional "Royal" terrorism, magnifying it a hundred fold and as a result hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians were butchered during his rule. In the long history of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi may be considered as the only leader who ascended the seat of power for the sole purpose of dismantling and destroying Ethiopia. He has caused not only the destruction of harmonious existence of the people of Ethiopia but also betrayed the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ethiopia. I have written repeatedly about the seriousness of our situation as long as Meles Zenawi remains in power.

Meles has succeeded in driving a wedge between the people of Tigray and the rest of the Ethiopian population due to his crony system of doing business in Ethiopia, where few members of his close associates within the TPLF seem to own every business in Addis Ababa. In a recent article posted in this Website ["The Tigre Question"], Professor Teodros Kiros has pointed out succinctly the incongruity between perception and reality of the economic situation in Tigray where most Tigrians live in abject poverty and also migrate driven by hunger and oppression to elsewhere, and thus make up most of the "beggars in Addis Ababa." The corrupt few, due to the corrupt business network created by Meles Zenawi and close associates, are giving Tigray the wrong image. It is due to such divisive wedge by Meles that some of the leaders from the opposition, albeit unwisely, started attacking individuals from Tigray as a form of political mobilization without making any distinction between Meles Zenawi (including his very few cronies) and the people of Tigray, as the real enemy of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian opposition groups are seemingly in some form of disarray—a temporary setback. That process of reorganizational development is a typical corrective process that may occur in all political parties around the world and not unique to Ethiopia. The problems leading to such tragic state of affairs are several and complex. The obvious ones are cultural drags leading to political immaturity and a prohibitive atmosphere created by a vicious oppressive Ethiopian Government. If we take one of the more significant political groups, Kinijit for example, it is reorganizing itself having broken down into three distinct and viable groups. Unlike many political commentators, I see this breakup of Kinijit and its reformation as a maturing process.

The Revelation of St. John the Divine of Patmos in Chapter Six describes the Four Horsemen that ride all over the world spreading havoc. Thus, I envision Meles Zenawi riding the Pale Horse spreading "death" and destruction; Al-Amoudi riding the Black Horse spreading "pestilence, corruption, plague, and economic breakdown." Between the two of them Ethiopia is doomed. The analogy I used here, even if a religious one, is the best graphic image I could think of to illustrate and share my concern with fellow Ethiopians about the type of enormous danger we are faced with under the "patronage" of the two Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Meles Zenawi and Mohammad Al-Amoudi.

The secret for our future political success is to be found in our capacity to create bridges of relationships connecting the newly formulated political organizations with all other opposition groups, such as those of Beyene Petros, Merara Gudina, Lidetu Ayalew et cetera. One must find important common interest such as questions of civil rights, territorial integrity and sovereignty, law and order et cetera to champion. Most importantly, the opposition group must identify and focus on one or two personalities in the present Ethiopian government and from those that are collaborators rather than direct its opposition in a generalized form to the entire group. One must be able to create division and dissension within the Government of Meles Zenawi. Meles Zenawi and Mohammad Al-Amoudi must be identified as the two most dangerous individuals who are threats to the very existence of Ethiopia and as enemies of the people of Ethiopia.

### **II. Meles Zenawi: the Pale Horse Rider**

The State Department of the United States has issued its yearly "Country Report" for the year 2007: "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2007" released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor on March 11, 2008. The report on Ethiopia on human rights, governmental abuse of civil and human rights, illegal detentions and disappearances, the social situation dealing with prostitution, child abuse, trafficking with people, and a host of others is quite bleak and even worse than that reported for 2006. One wonders how any sane person dare defend Meles Zenawi and his Government taking into account this particular Report from the State Department especially reading it in conjunction with other reports and eyewitness accounts of such violations of civil liberties and atrocities.

The other day I watched a series of videos about the great struggle against the brutal military regime of Mengistu Hailemariam mounted by the members of the TPLF. What I saw in videos, with great amazement, was the real-life record of battlefield scenes of great bravery and sacrifices of very young Ethiopian men and women barley in their twenties. What I saw in the videos were patriotic Ethiopians fighting for the liberation of our ancient Ethiopian people. I was transformed by their energetic and fierce dedication to the people of Ethiopia. It is probable that such heroic young men and women may have formulated their reasons for fighting in nationalistic even ethnic terms. However, as all great warriors have done throughout human history, I think they fought primarily for each other, which is no less patriotic.

I am very attentive about the current situation in Ethiopia, which left me shuddering with disgust when I consider how far the sacrifice of such brave Ethiopians was corrupted in the hands of Meles Zenawi and his supporters. I realized also most of the great commanders of the TPLF were removed from office, some are in prison under horrible conditions, and some are eking a living having been thrown out from their Organization by Meles Zenawi during and after his manipulative power consolidation of the last ten years. Even their founder leader Sebbat Nega, the father of TPLF, is marginalized by Meles Zenawi and his Mahel Sefari associates. I find the current collaborative exploitation of Ethiopia by Meles Zenawi and his supporters, which prominently include the Mahel Sefaris and their arada children at the cost of the hundreds of thousands of patriotic Ethiopians, who actually suffered in battle fields, in Mengistu's detention camps et cetera, absolutely disgusting and unacceptable.

I have read comments posted by Meles supporters that assert that my criticism of Meles might be personal for being spurned by his Government. What ever criticism I have leveled against Meles Zenawi and his Government has never been due to any personal animosity. I have criticized Meles for his misdeeds, for hurting Ethiopia and for brutalizing Ethiopians. I have criticized him for his balkanization of Ethiopia. I have criticized him for ceding Ethiopian territories of Kunama, Irob, Afar coastal territories, Ethiopian villages and vast border disputed territories with Sudan et cetera. I have criticized him for compromising the Sovereignty of Ethiopia. I have criticized him for interfering with the justice system and for being lawless. I have criticized him for his crony based selective economic development policy. I have criticized him on many more items of national concerns. Thus, I wish people will stop trivializing my legitimate and serious effort of standing up for the best interest of Ethiopia as some act of personal animosity toward Meles Zenawi or anybody else.

Meles Zenawi has committed inexcusable crimes against the State of Ethiopia and all Ethiopians. Starting from destruction of the education system to destroying civility, Meles Zenawi is responsible for the insurmountable social, political, and economic problems engulfing Ethiopia for the last seventeen years. He alone is the main force for the land locking of Ethiopia. The detention and murder of many Ethiopians since the day EPRDF took power is also another responsibility he will be required to account for. Meles is the ideologue, the crusader, and the enforcer of the current divisive ethnic federal structure of Ethiopia based on narrow ethnic identity. This was done in pursuit and fulfillment of the agenda to divide and weaken Ethiopia, which was the main goal of the Eritrean secessionist political organization, the EPLF.

Meles's state crimes are not limited to the State of Ethiopia. He has also destroyed the TPLF and corrupted the EPRDF. The TPLF that is now claimed to be in existence is not the TPLF that heroically fought Mengistu's brutal Government. Meles has transformed that political organization into a Mafia-like private organization now. The present Meles Zenawi's TPLF is fully involved in criminal activities murdering people, torturing people, looting the wealth of a nation et cetera. The recent uncovering of gold bar heist, replacing authentic gold bars with fake gold bars at the Ethiopian Central Bank to the tune of several hundred million dollars loss to Ethiopia, is alleged by some to be the work of TPLF's highly placed officials to benefit their organization and themselves. This is the tragic end of an organization, which had as its members some of the finest patriotic Ethiopians I had the privilege to know, to be associated now with international fraud.

It is the responsibility of both current members and former members of the TPLF to acknowledge the fact that the TPLF has now a tarnished image. It is also important to recognize the fact that the old militant idea of the "liberation" of Tigray is passé. Thus, it is time to do away with such forms of movements in favor of nationwide non-ethnic political organizations. Seeye Abraha in his momentous address of Ethiopians on January 7, 2008 had spoken of "assets" of the EPRDF. And my take is that we need be thinking in terms of "salvage" rather than succession to an organizational asset. This is an opportune time to face our reality face to face. The TPLF of old is dead, and what is in its place now is a Mafia-like criminal organization that ought to be dissolved, and whatever good is found to be salvaged to be part of a new political organization. Seeye in his

January 7, 2008 speech even suggested for the sake of unity that Tigray could be incorporated within the Amhara State in order to avoid the perception of favoritism. These are statements of individuals who are not stuck in the mud of conformity, and they are willing to take risks for greater communal good.

The present political structuring of Ethiopia across ethnic division is the most destructive seed planted by Meles Zenawi in our Ethiopia. I have read and heard a number of Ethiopians buying the argument of Meles and his associates that all opposition to Meles's propaganda of ethnic equality and freedom is an opposition to the rights of ethnic Ethiopians who have been marginalized by previous Ethiopian Governments. The fact is that Ethiopians divided in Oromo, Somali, Amhara, Tigray et cetera States are suffering worse political and human rights violations in the hands of the Government of Meles Zenawi than they have ever suffered even in the hands of the brutal Mengistu. Tigray State is under virtual martial law, the degree of brutal suppression of individual freedoms in Tigray is far worse than anywhere else in Ethiopia.

Meles Zenawi is truly a devious man when it comes to matters of economic development and governance in Ethiopia. It is clear from his float "African Development: Dead Ends and new Beginnings" that Meles suffers from split personalities. I used the word "float" deliberately in order to identify that essay as full of hot gas and no substance. In that essay Meles advocates for a government that is essentially an improbable monstrosity—a sort of Chimera that would have parts of a benevolent dictatorial power as body parts on one hand, but also dedicated to serve the public good in directing and shaping the economy and government of a country such as Ethiopia. He could not delaminate his form of government of brutal violence and suppression of all essential political and human rights from the gilded form of government he is advocating for in his long essay. Meles does not seem to have grasped the true meaning of "a civil society" and the form of political structure that checks and inhibits all tendencies toward absolute power. He still believes in advancing personalities as opposed to putting in place systems. He failed to see that he is the first problem, a serious obstacle, in the efforts of the people of Ethiopia to advance their self interest and share in the responsibility to determine their political and economic future without anybody's patronage or midwifery.

The economic policy that Meles Zenawi and his Government have adopted of selling out state property in the guise of privatization to favored individuals, to organizations created by political parties, to international investors et cetera has seriously damaged the economy of the country. The privatization program implemented by the Ethiopian Government is a distortion of what the experts at the World Bank suggested soon after EPRDF took power in 1991. Another area of economic corruption that has seriously hurt the lives of Ethiopians is the misguided emphasis on export-trade. Rather than concentrating on the production of stable crops and animal husbandry in order to increase the amount of food available at affordable price to Ethiopians, the emphasis was put on export trade of farm produces. Ethiopia has suffered repeatedly devastating famines. As we speak, there is already an early warning system issuing the impending serious shortage of food affecting millions of Ethiopians.

On March 11, 2008 Reuters has reported that "[n]early 9 million people in Ethiopia's pastoral regions will need food aid this year despite a projected bumper harvest for 2007/08, a U.S.-funded research group said on Tuesday. 'About eight million chronically food insecure people and an additional 952,503 acutely food insecure people in Ethiopia will require food or cash assistance in 2008,' said the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS Net) in a report." This report is just one out of many warnings of famine in Ethiopia. It is legitimate to ask what has the Government of Meles Zenawi put in place to counter this recurring famine. If it were not food subsidy from the United States and several European countries, millions of Ethiopians would have suffered starvation. I will show next the ridicules response of the Ethiopian Government of Meles Zenawi to such suffering.

The Ethiopian Government is promoting the farming of flowers, coffee, livestock breeding et cetera targeting such items as huge foreign exchange earners, when the Government should have been focusing on maximizing the farming of staple-food items that ought to include coffee and livestock breeding for local consuming. As investment incentive, the Ethiopian government is providing awards, soft loans et cetera for flower growers. The rate of increase in crop production in 2006-07 is about 10%; this may sound huge, but when your starting base is very low even a tiny increase in production would register huge percentage increase. By now what would be a decent increase in crop production should be over 100%. Here you have a government that has lost its priorities. In the middle of a starving population it is focusing on promoting flower farming, fattening cattle for export, bio-fuel production for the few drivers for most Ethiopians simply walk covering enormous distances, and on and on. People in Ethiopia do not eat flowers, do not drive cars burdened with fuel costs, or over indulge eating meat year round. The way Meles Zenawi is handling the economic situation in Ethiopia is quixotic, for a lack of a better word. Who would think the removal of nutritional food items, such as meat from the plates of starving people in order to export for some hard currency, a responsible governmental policy?

I read recently a boastful report about the export of millions of livestock from Ethiopia to neighboring countries. "Ethiopia's leading private livestock exporter known as 'Shag Company' says it would ship nearly a quarter of a million heads of cattle estimated at 20 million USD to abroad this fiscal year. The company, the number one government award winner this year for

its excellent export performance, will export 245,000 heads of cattle, Company Owner Shiferaw Assefa Gebre-silassie pointed out in an interview with ENA on Wednesday. Some 200,000 sheep, 30,000 oxen and 15,000 camels will be exported to Egypt.” [The Ethiopian News Agency, February 28, 2008.]

Even in cases of new investments, the Ethiopian Government has focused on export commodities as could be evidenced in a report by Fortune magazine. The magazine reported a joint investment, which it identified as Horizon Plantations Plc, by Al-Amoudi and a Southeast Asia investment company to develop a massive agro-industry in Western Ethiopia to produce bio-fuel and other export produces. “This company is expected to grow jatropha, palm oil, rubber trees and tea in the coming five years with a projected investment of 250 million dollars. The total investment land required for the project, which is 250,000hct, five times the size of Addis Ababa, is expected to benefit 350,000 people.” Such is the greed of mercenaries who will not hesitate from all kinds of merciless exploitation, who will come up with all kinds of schemes to suck the very marrow of Ethiopia by whatever means leaving nothing for the citizens of Ethiopia.

Now, I want us to consider some sobering facts about the starvation of millions of Ethiopians while sitting on some of the most conducive arable land for agricultural development in Africa, blessed with fresh water in thirteen major river basins. The average calories intake of Ethiopians is about 1700, which is starvation level intake and among the lowest in the World. The United Nations recommended amount is about 2370. Egypt’s intake is about 3330. [<http://wilderdom.com/games/descriptions/WorldMeal.html> as retrieved on March 4, 2008.] Here in Ethiopia, it seems we are engaged in self induced starvation by taking out of circulation millions of pound of meat as I stated above. Furthermore, productive farmland is being utilized for export produces, and thereby competing against the farming of stable-food for a population under famine type situation year in and year out. Scarce government fund is not being used to promote and maximize stable food production, but diverted into promoting and subsidizing agro-industrial productions. Thus, Ethiopians are left to scratch out a living suffering from the high cost of food, utilities et cetera.

Under the chronic famine situation in Ethiopia, it is rational of us to expect a responsible and patriotic Ethiopian government would focus foremost all of its energy and talent on the production of food and the supply of clean water to all Ethiopians under such threat of recurring famine. Such would be the conclusion of any reasonable person. However, Meles Zenawi is not a patriot but more of a mercenary, and the welfare of the people of Ethiopia is not his priority. His effort seems to be focused on how fast and how deep he could maximize “the loot.” The export oriented agro-industry not only is removing scares resources from the local market places, but also crowding out fertile arable land from being utilized for the purpose of producing adequate food for the people of Ethiopia. The export oriented agro-industry in Ethiopia, unless carefully and wisely handled could create even worse economic disaster in Ethiopia than the world witnessed in 1984 where millions of Ethiopians died due to massive failure of the Ethiopian Government of the time attend to the needs of the people of Ethiopia.

### **III. Mohammad Al-Amoudi: the Black Horse Rider**

Sheik Mohammad Al-Amoudi is a very wealthy man. No one can deny that he is very much attached to his birth homeland, Ethiopia, for it helped him launch what maybe the greatest private investment venture in the history of modern Ethiopia. He claims to have invested heavily in Ethiopia over a billion dollars worth according the 2008 Forbes listing of wealthy individuals. As an individual, Al-Amoudi is ostentatiously generous to his friends and acquaintances. [In the past, I have written repeatedly with appreciation how Al-Amoudi had helped me in 1993 with my expenses during my Fellowship years at Harvard. Such fact will not deter me from criticizing his activities that threaten the very life of Ethiopia.] He has tremendous energy and an ambition to match. Only three decades ago he was peddling music cassettes of famous Ethiopian artists, and now he is listed in Forbes as the ninety-seventh richest man in the World with a net worth of nine billion dollars. Such increase of net worth by nine billion dollars, having been listed for the first time in 2002, from a net worth of one and a half billion dollars is very unusual and suspicious as would be in the case of shady dealings. The accumulation of great wealth is a tremendous achievement in the eyes of very many people. If such is the case, why am I then very critical of Al-Amoudi’s investment activities in Ethiopia and see him as a threat to the continued existence of Ethiopia?

First of all, Al-Amoudi’s investment in Ethiopia is heavily leveraged, and insured against all kinds of risks, a financial structure that makes investment-capital very expensive, with tremendous pressure to have front-end recovery of capital as a primary goal, a condition especially unattractive in an economic system that is highly unstable and with major inflationary swings, in an economy more like in a permanent recession. Ethiopians should not be gullible and believe everything said or written by sleek businessmen. In our highly complex world, things are not what they claim to be. When we look closely and examine Al-Amoudi’s investment in Ethiopia, one thing stands out clearly that the economic sector he is investing as original investment in Ethiopia initially deals mostly with the service industry, such as hotels, health services, rental property et cetera.

Al-Amoudi’s secondary investment in preexisting manufacturing companies, such as the Pepsi Cola Company (four bottling plants) and the paint and other companies is done pursuant to extremely questionable privatization policy that favored individuals who could invest with hard currency. Because of his bargaining power, Al-Amoudi bought all these great

businesses that have near monopoly market at great discount i.e., almost at throw-away-prices. For example, the four bottling plants of Pepsi Cola were bought for less than one tenth of their worth for a mere 16.6 million dollars. Well, there is also the gold mine investment that I find most egregious of all investments of Al-Amoudi, for as a matter of principle I hold the view that no gold mining concession be given to private individuals because of the nature of the industry, for no risk of loss is possible especially in a mining concession where there is already mining activity, and the Ethiopian government should do the mining by itself.

In 1998 Al-Amoudi bought a twenty year concession of the Lege Dembi Gold Mine for a measly 172 million dollars. At the beginning of this year, Al-Amoudi's gold company, MIDROC Ethiopia, announced its discovery from two mining sites a total of 28,000 Kg gold reserve. [See Addis Fortune, <[http://www.addisfortune.com/MIDROC Strikes Gold Big in Two Reserves.htm](http://www.addisfortune.com/MIDROC%20Strikes%20Gold%20Big%20in%20Two%20Reserves.htm)> as retrieved on Feb 28, 2008] This could easily top a return of over a billion dollars on an investment of 172 million dollars, which does not include existing mining operations that have been producing gold for Al-Amoudi since 1998. This is over 500% return on investment, which is extremely lucrative by any standard of measurement of risky businesses.

[Here we can have a glimpse of some of some forty corporations and partnerships owned by Al-Amoudi through his holding corporation MIDROC-Ethiopia: Sheraton Addis, Midroc Construction, Ethiopia Moha Soft Drinks S.C., National Mining Corp., National Motor Companies, Ethio Leather Industries (ELICO) P.L.C., Dashen Bank, Elfora Agro-Industries P.L.C., Bauer-Midroc, Sara Lamps, Ethio Coffee & Tea Plantation & Marketing P.L.C. and Kombolcha Steel Products Industry (KOSPI). (Source: Tired Magazine)]

As an aside, I must mention here the inequities patriotic Ethiopians suffered in the hands of bandas, and the Pepsi Cola Company case is a good example to illustrate my point. After the EPRDF took power in 1991, the Pepsi Cola Company could easily have been returned back to its lawful owners, to the family of the founders, to the people who organized the corporation before it was nationalized by Mengistu's regime. It was the policy of the Military Regime in 1974 to nationalize productive assets in order to emasculate former owners of factories and other investments from mounting opposition to Mengistu, a policy that was continued in more dubious form by EPRDF leaders after Mengistu fled the country. The irony of the situation was that those former owners of the Pepsi Cola bottling company, some of whom members of families who actually fought the Italians during the 1935 to 1941 patriotic struggle, were driven off their property by Mengistu, and after Mengistu fled the country and was replaced by the EPRDF, their property was sold out to carpetbaggers by the new leaders in power.

In order to make way to Al-Amoudi's insatiable appetite for acquisition of real estate, several hundred Ethiopians were forcefully driven off their homes where now seats the ostentatious Sheraton Hotel, a hotel seen by many as hyped-up brothel for the rich. Ethiopians are marginalized and demoted to second class citizenship, and have to suffer the ultimate indignity of being forced out of their homes in order to accommodate the needs of this one person. Most of the people who were forced out from their homes from the area were descendants of the household of Emperor Menilik II who had accompanied the Emperor to Adowa and many other battles as well. At least I know of one family that was forcefully relocated that was headed by a distinguished retainer of Emperor Haile Selassie, who had shed his blood for the independence of Ethiopia during the Italian War!

Al-Amoudi seems to place his investments where his investments directly straddle both access to deposits and direct receipts in hard currency. This is a troubling position. The Ethiopian government seems bent on accumulating hard currency there by increasing its reserve of hard currency. If such is the case, what is the benefit to having a partner that cuts into that hard currency source and reserve? There are several reasons government officials allow such proximity to hard currency to private investors, and the main one being corruption to siphon off such currency to their private accounts with minimal governmental entanglement. If there are formal records of receipt in foreign currency by banks and other agents of the Ministry of Finance, the facts are recorded multiple times going through the scrutiny of very many Ethiopians. However if the initial recipient of such hard currency is a private business venture controlled by a single individual owner, the account books could be cooked very easily and millions of dollars or other hard currency could be siphoned off for distribution to the corrupt Government leaders and officials without being detected.

When one adds the liberal Ethiopia's Investment Proclamation into the equation of minimal control of foreign exchanges at private contact points of companies having access to deposits and receipt in hard currencies, the Proclamation allows additional loopholes that one could drive through with trucks full of hard currency. Money laundering by Al-Amoudi and Meles Zenawi controlled companies is a reality. The Investment Proclamation "allows all foreign investors, whether or not they receive incentives, to freely remit profits and dividends, principal and interest on foreign loans, and fees related to technology transfer. Foreign investors may also remit proceeds from the sale or liquidation of assets, from the transfer of shares or of partial ownership of an enterprise, and funds required for debt service or other international payments." Such is the summary rendition of the Proclamation by the State Department.

Other highly questionable investment activities in Ethiopia are Al-Amoudi's licenses for trading in gold and gold mining concession. The recent exposition of the defrauding of hundreds of millions of dollars in fake gold bought and deposited by the Central Bank of Ethiopia has resulted in the arrest of a number of individuals of both private and governmental bodies. It is indicative of the corruption in the gold mining and trade business in Ethiopia. The investigation of the alleged fraud seems to be leading to the very seat of political and economic power. This may well be the greatest theft ever committed against the pecuniary interest of the nation.

Although there has been no link to Al-Amoudi of any wrong doing so far, it is claimed by several individuals that Al Amoudi uses routinely his private planes to haul gold bullions from Ethiopia to unknown destinations. I personally know of no such facts. However, it is legitimate to identify the people who are involved in gold mining, storing of gold, and transporting of gold in order to get to the probable criminals. A good investigator of such crimes would start by asking the one important question: Of all the millions of people in Ethiopia who would be the one individual or individuals with access, opportunity, the necessary knowledge, and the monetary backup and international connection who would commit such daring heist?

Al-Amoudi, Meles Zenawi, and Sebhat Nega are the three most involved individuals in international business, foreign exchange, or the gold business at the highest governmental and corporate level in Ethiopia. A reasonable place to start an investigation of the recent gold heist should be directed at those three individuals. They all had the means, motive, and opportunity (not to mention the arrogance) to commit such crime(s). I doubt very much that any other Ethiopian other than the three would have the gut and the ingenuity to carry out such a complex heist. First of all, such sophisticated crime requires great capital outlay to disguise steel bars as gold bars. It is an expensive process that requires probably a few million dollars and Euros to camouflage steel bars to look like gold bars. It also requires an organization of previous experience in such criminal activities in order to move such fake gold around. The individuals under custody are unlikely candidates for such sophisticated crime(s); they neither seem to have such fund nor the right connections to such international high yield criminal organization(s) involved in fraudulent activities trading in fake gold. Mark my words, the investigation will not go anywhere, it will be hashed, and Ethiopia will suffer the loss of untold hundreds of millions of dollars worth of gold.

Money laundering, illegal foreign exchanges, goursha of corruption, medical treatment to government officials et cetera are some of the serious allegations leveled against Al-Amoudi by very many Ethiopians. Because of his attention seeking behavior of throwing huge parties, Al-Amoudi has created this unsavory image of a corrupt rich man with immoral persona that has no bounds for debauchery and indulgence. Whether or not Al-Amoudi is corrupt in reality is not the important question, the perception of his activities is sufficient reason to put him under vigorous scrutiny.

I also question the sincerity of Al-Amoudi's claim that his primary goal in investing and his philanthropy in Ethiopia (more so in Addis Ababa) is due to his attachment to his motherland. If it were so, strictly speaking, Al-Amoudi's investments and philanthropic activities should have started in Woldia (where he was born) and Dessie (where he grew up) if he were truly interested in improving the lives of people he grew up with. [To Al-Amoudi's great credit, he chose to stay with Ethiopia proper than attaching himself with the birth place of his Mother that is in "Eritrea," the newly independent State and former province of Ethiopia. I witnessed how he was glowing with pride and great joy showing me his Ethiopian Passport soon after he acquired it in 1993. Ethiopia in its domestic and/or immigration laws does not have a designation for holding dual citizenship status even though its citizenship is based less on principles of jus soli and more on jus sanguinis.]

In 1992, I was requested as a favor by Al-Amoudi to prepare a proposal for schools building project for Dessie and for Wollo in general that Al-Amoudi was to finance. I prepared a preliminary study and project outline as requested, but I had to leave Ethiopia soon after and did not do any follow-up. Since I left Ethiopia in 1993, over the years, I watched with bewilderment why Al Amoudi did not do anything worth mentioning in either Dessie or Woldia. I hear ad nauseam all about Al-Amoudi's philanthropy, about building a twenty million dollar hospital or Concert Hall in Addis Ababa, millions of dollars commitment to the Addis Ababa University et cetera, but nothing in his hometowns either in Dessie or Woldia. For example, the great W/o Seheen Comprehensive High School in Dessie is falling apart from poor maintenance right under his eyes, and he did absolutely nothing to maintain such a great and historic school! It has been reported by very many individuals that Al-Amoudi is behind the renovation or building of a number of Mosques, but I take that to be part of the subversive activity of the Saudi Government using the opportunity against an Ethiopia having fallen on hard times in the hands of a treasonous leadership, to undermine further the stability of Ethiopia by planting the seeds of religious conflicts within Ethiopia.

I could recount an incident that may bring to us some degree of catharsis, especially to all those aggrieved Ethiopians due to the looting of our nation by Al-Amoudi and Meles Zenawi. At least one very clever Ethiopian, Noah Samara of World Space, did beat Al-Amoudi at his own games. Noah Samara rebuffed Al-Amoudi's overture to snatch away World Space from his control, and eventually Noah Samara booted out Al-Amoudi from World Space in 2000, after a couple of years of intense matching of wits. It is to be recalled that it was the genius of Noah Samara, with no capital to mention of, but with a great vision, that resulted in the creation of a corporation (World Space) that is a pioneer corporation in many ways. World Space is also the only corporation serving the World with digital satellite radio systems. Sadly, I am not aware of Noah Samara being

involved in any philanthropic or business programs to benefit Ethiopians in his homeland Ethiopia. On the other hand, Noah Samara did not loot his homeland either.

The story coming out of Ethiopia these days is not encouraging at all. Impending famine, economic stagnation, inflationary and predatory pricing resulting in ever rising cost of living, loose moral and prostitution, poor and corrupt administration, a slow and grinding justice system, vicious political oppression, intrusion of foreigners et cetera have made life in Ethiopia for most Ethiopians a living Hell on Earth. There is an ionized fear in the atmosphere that has opened up a new fissure in the Ethiopian psyche of frenzied search for hard currency. The talk of the town in Addis Ababa is that the officials of the Government of Meles Zenawi and political party bosses from the TPLF and the other Members of the EPRDF are converting their savings from Birr to dollars and Euros and stashing such currencies in foreign banks and in their own safes. I do not know if what is alleged to be true or not, but the fact of the existence of such talks illustrates to me how far the Ethiopian public is suspicious of its leaders and party bosses. Some observers of the corrosive political atmosphere in Ethiopia have indicated to me that the situation resembles the 1990 frenzy before the fall of Mengistu Hailemariam. I have tried to establish the veracity of such allegations. It might take a while before we know the truth one hundred percent.

It is tragic that Ethiopia, the land of great heroes, could become the play ground of the likes of Meles Zenawi and Al-Amoudi. What would our ancestors think of us turning our country into a sandbox for traitors and rich kids to use it as a playground? Is it not shameful to turn a nation that has been forged out of the very blood, flesh, and bones of countless brave Ethiopians into a brothel? Is it not shameful to turn our many sisters into prostitutes earning us the scorn of the world? I have spent countless nights brooding over the humiliation I feel when I consider my fellow Ethiopians being shoved aside and suffering in silence as second-class citizens, while foreigners, children of bandas, and sleek arada individuals who do not give a hoot about Ethiopia, are now the leaders and the beneficiaries of all the sacrifices of our ancestors, in the current Ethiopia.

I am not per se against foreign investment in Ethiopia if it is the right kind. Within reason the flow of capital into Ethiopia is not bad at all. What I am objecting to is the suppression of local entrepreneurs from participation in the economic development of Ethiopia, in order to benefit foreign investors by giving them a monopolistic stranglehold on diverse sectors of the national economy. This is what is happening in Ethiopia at this moment. Except for the few individuals closely linked to the leadership, no other Ethiopian citizen has emerged as a nationally identifiable economic powerhouse. Corporations controlled by TPLF functionaries in the guise of self-help associations such as EFORT may share the limelight with Al-Amoudi in exploiting and looting of our national wealth. Such condition of economic stratification by a couple of interest groups does not reflect growth or development, but impending doom for Ethiopia.

Even though I am against the acquisition of excessive wealth as a matter of ethical and political principles, I would have been willing to look the other way if such excessive wealth was owned or controlled by individuals who are Ethiopians and live in Ethiopia, rather than by individuals whose connection is purely mercantile camouflaged as some benign concern for Ethiopia. There can be lasting economic growth and development if the wealth of the nations is being looted by foreigners and mercenaries disguising their diabolical activities as some kind of charitable work. Look what Al-Amoudi is after sucking up every hard currency he can find as some kind of vacuum cleaner. His current skim to build a number of Hotels in Tigray is to suck up what ever little foreign currency comes its way through tourism. Why he is not involved in putting up substantive investment building factories is a puzzle.

What the current political leaders in Ethiopia have succeeded in doing is to create an illusion of an ongoing vigorous economic activity in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian economic structure, which generates and registers some statistical data for the benefit of Western governments and their banks (e.g., World Bank, IMF) that are willing to hang on to straws in order to justify their involvement in Ethiopia shelling out hundreds of millions of dollars or Euros, is simply a house of cards that will collapse if there transpires a minor change in the lives of few politicians or foreign investors due to the lack of solid economic base of productive labor (farmers, factory workers) and capital (small scale industries) and its dependency on personalities such as Meles Zenawi and Al-Amoudi.

## Conclusion

There are very many lines of actions that Ethiopians can take in the best interest of Ethiopia. It is not necessary that individual Ethiopians as individuals or as members of a group need be in power in order to bring some solution to our serious national problems. The first line of defense against abusive political and business practices is to develop the right frame of mind for protest, which would require objective evaluation of the characteristics and motives of people who affect our lives. What emboldens our political leaders to be ruthless and abusive is the fact that there seems to be no retaliatory action by Ethiopians as individuals or as groups against such leaders or their families. There ought to be consequences against leaders who abuse their public trust of brutal governance that will check such brutal leaders from hurting our country or citizens.

Our Ethiopia is at crossroads and held hostage by a government whose supreme leader has questionable loyalty to the State of Ethiopia and to the people of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the Opposition that generated great hopes of salvation at one point failed in its most important mission of forging a coherent movement, for it was led by people with conflicting agendas and national visions of their own and not necessarily visions that are inclusive and in the best interest of the nation as a whole. Of course, as I stated earlier there is a corrective reorganization taking place as we speak. And I recognize that my statements seem grandiose and in large brushstrokes. I did not intend to denigrate any one opposition leader by my evaluation of the opposition movement; I am simply stating my understanding why the opposition to Meles Zenawi's totalitarian rule failed to galvanize Ethiopians after the 2005 election fiasco.

One solution is suggested by Seeye Abraha to build bridges across differences that had divided political organizations and individuals for so long in Ethiopia. Even though the idea is not new, it has a particular significance because of the background of Seeye and the fact of his recent release from prison where he was imprisoned for six years on some concocted charges. His cause for release was championed even by his former adversaries and strong critics. In his presentations (Crystal City, Virginia) Seeye and in his recent interview with Addis Neger newspaper appealed to all of us for meaningful reconciliation and unity. His message stressed the value of having constructive interactions in order to bring about solutions to our political and economic problems. The willingness of Seeye Abraha in offering his thoughts on unity and reconciliation, especially under the circumstances, is remarkable in itself.

Amare Mitiku's criticism posted in this Website a couple of days ago is a good example of constructive challenge that bears on events and activities with seemingly contradictory foundations such as supporting selectively certain individuals but condemning others even though both groups are with past involvements in diverse political organizations. For example, his take on my support of Seeye Abraha should be considered seriously in the larger context on how society ought to deal with former leaders of political organizations or governments. However, Amare Mitiku erred in suggesting some kind of ethnic base for my support of Seeye Abraha. The simple fact of thousands of Ethiopians across political and ethnic lines were in attendance at Seeye's presentations is evidence of the non-ethnic nature of the event and the characteristics of my support.

In regard to my support of Seeye Abraha, I can say with confidence that the fact of Seeye's ability (willingness) to challenge Meles Zenawi and Meles's anti-Ethiopia bureaucratic structure and the fact of Seeye's demonstrated undivided loyalty to Ethiopia and his patriotism, as evidenced in his lone dissenting voice in the Ethiopian Parliament expressed in his abstention on the disastrous 2000 Algiers Agreement, is the reason for my support. My presumption of the potential of Seeye as a challenger is commonsensical and does not require extraordinary logic to grasp its viability. By contrast, I see no one else from the opposition on the strength of one's personality who could be able to keep the military forces of Ethiopia from flying apart in every direction when the inevitable happens—the departure of Meles Zenawi.

Hannibal, the great African General, who was determined to conquer Rome by going over the Alps, being informed by his field commanders that there was no passage for his army to cross such enormous barrier, was reported to have said, "We will either find a way, or make one!" We Ethiopians are faced with enormous political and economic barriers that we need to overcome. In the same manner the great Hannibal faced up adversity, we Ethiopians have no other choice except to find some proven method to solve our problems, or create new methods to solve such problems. •

Tecola W. Hagos  
Washington DC  
March 23, 2008

To be continued

### **PART THREE**

#### **The Ugly American: Hope and Redemption**

##### **I. Senator Barak Obama v. Senator Hillary Clinton**

##### **II. "Snake Oil Salesman" Economic System**