

# **Re-reading the Short and Long-Rigged History of Eritrea 1941–1952: Back to the Future?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the impact of the publication of a venomous anonymous newspaper editorial published in Tigrinya under the British Military Administration of 1941-52. The identity of the author, previously believed to be “an Eritrean”, was publicly confirmed to be Brigadier Stephen H. Longrigg in the first Eritrean history book of the period. Published in Tigrinya, *Aynfalale* 1941-50 (“Let Us Not Be Put Asunder 1941-1950”) discusses the Longrigg essay planted as an editorial piece in the official British weekly newspaper, Eritrean Weekly News (*nay Értra semunawi gazetta*). This analysis supports the view that historical events, personalities, and official narratives need to be examined and understood in the specific political, economic, social and cultural context of the period in which they came to be. The history of Eritrea will make sense to Eritreans and others only when illuminated by vernacular renditions. Striking parallels between Eritrea in the 1940s and Eritrea in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are considered from the vantage point of indigenous knowledge coupled with the benefits of hindsight. Historical narratives that are economical with the truth, if not sheer lies, are now more readily identifiable. Eritrea spells resilience - a concept well beyond the geographical boundaries and national identity of a small portion of humanity.

*Keywords: Eritrea, Self-determination, Sovereignty, Tigrinya, World War II*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Eritrea derives its name from the Greek word for red, *eruthros*: thus *pontôi t' eruthrôi* referred to the Red Sea/s in classical Greek, also known as Erythrean Sea, *Bahri Értra* in Biblical Tigrinya and Ge'ez (Ethiopic). The geographical boundaries of modern day Eritrea were defined by a series of treaties agreed during the early 1900s between three European colonial powers - Great Britain, Italy, and France - and Ethiopia<sup>2</sup>, after Italy's claim to Eritrea was formalized by the Berlin Act of 1885.

Eritrea is often curiously “introduced” by Western writers as “unknown” until they had “discovered” it themselves. The notion that Eritrea may be unknown and/or its languages obscure originates from the old colonial British plan to kill, dismember and erase Eritrea from the map as soon as it fell into British military hands upon Allied victory over the Axis in the Horn of Africa during World War II. Some insight into what European “knowledge” of Africa entailed is considered, and the particular circumstances under which Eritrea came to be occupied by a British-led military force in April/May 1941 presented. The focus is on the British Military Administration (BMA) in general, and on the deceitful actions of one of the chief administrators in particular, as they impeded Eritrea's prospects for self determination. Unlike Libya and Italian Somaliland, the two other former Italian colonies “set free” at the end of World War II, the case of Eritrea was heavily rigged from the outset. Evidence of official British betrayal of trust amidst the fluid and complex interplay of Italian, American and Ethiopian economic and national security interests is examined with two questions in mind: *How did Eritrea manage to navigate the perilous waters of global power struggle involving Great Britain, France, Italy, and Ethiopia in the aftermath of World War II, and remain united?* and *What can contemporary Eritrean and other African women and men usefully learn from reading and re-reading the history of Eritrea?* Extensive Eritrean and British narratives of the period are presented in parallel, comparing and contrasting the language and meaning of the two narratives. It is argued that it is salutary to bring vernacular Eritrean renditions of history to the attention of a wider international readership in international relations, humanitarian policy, and global leadership, as Eritrea is as much a country in Africa as it is a concept that those who have struggled for self determination immediately recognize. This paper aims to contribute to the literature on the study of self determination, sovereignty, and nation building within the interdisciplinary field of African Studies.

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<sup>2</sup> An African Empire which matched the European powers in the region, at least in terms of its military defense capabilities.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Reflecting on the state of Africa at the end of World War I, British historian Sir Charles P. Lucas observed that prior to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Africa had not even been “known as a continent” to Europeans. However, the 19<sup>th</sup> century “Partition of Africa” saw the rapid spread of “the disease of lust of conquest” among European powers, and that changed everything (Lucas, 1922: 198). Until that time, Africa was seen only as a series of coast-lines. The north of Africa was to Europeans the south shore of the Mediterranean; the west of Africa was the eastern shore of the Atlantic (after the ‘discovery’ of America). Eastern Africa was the western shore of the Indian Ocean; and the southern tip was merely a stopping-point for those traveling to and from the East and/or South (after the ‘discovery’ of Australia). In a series of lectures given at the Royal Colonial Institute in 1921, Lucas explained that

“For the white man’s purpose the rim of Africa alone existed, and the rim looked outwards, not inwards... All this was changed after the age of Livingstone, when the great lakes were discovered and the courses of the rivers determined... Africa then was the Dark Continent, because it was unknown as a continent... Africa did not exist as one whole until quite recent times, and yet one corner of Africa, Egypt, had been known through all the centuries as a cradle of civilization.” (1922: 9–10).

There had been much traffic going up and down the Nile as well as the Erythrean Sea where Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans and Turks engaged in the trade of material and human resources, often involving successive violent territorial conquests.<sup>3</sup>

Western European perceptions of Africa as the ‘Dark Continent’ engendered both ignorance and arrogance. Colonial powers had little or no interest in being educated about indigenous African history and culture, and certainly not by “native Africans”. They saw themselves as the bearers of light to the Dark Continent - especially with respect to Christian missionary activities. The colonial venture was thus often presented to the British public/tax payer as a humanitarian enterprise, which made it more palatable. The reality of British colonial control of Africa was, however, economically-driven, often unscrupulously and brutally so. The general rule of thumb, that ‘the colonies should not be a burden to the taxpayer’ was a constant reminder for colonial administrators to strive to get maximum output with minimum input - i.e., to excel in economic management. British colonial conquest did not always

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<sup>3</sup> Lucas cited the story told by Herodotus, of Phoenicians sent down the Red Sea by a king of Egypt six centuries B.C., farming the land and producing crops for two years, discovering that they had the sun on their right hand (in the North, suggesting that they had crossed the Equator) and eventually returning to Egypt via the Straights of Gibraltar in their third year. Stories of Carthaginians planting colonies on the Atlantic coast of Morocco and going further South to Sierra Leone and possibly trading with the Gold Coast (Ghana) were also mentioned.

translate into acquisition of territory and/or expatriate settlement: it could just mean expanding the British Empire's 'Sphere of Influence' around the world, a powerful concept with massive economic benefits. Representatives of the British Empire mastered the art of wheeling-dealing with local chiefs and landlords in order to secure control of resources in Africa and elsewhere; resorting to costly military operations only after exhausting all other (often cheaper) options. The seemingly incurable "disease of lust for conquest" manifested itself by the evidently insatiable appetite of colonial powers who continued to "eat" Africa, piece by piece. Eventually, the British Empire found itself biting more than it could chew; and suffering indigestion as the colonized exercised their rights for self determination (most notably in India), British public opinion shifted against the "Imperial mission", and British military presence in Africa dwindled down to a bare minimum due to World War II, when British defense had to focus on the home front.

In the case of Eritrea, Turkish and Egyptian sultanates had controlled its coastal regions for the best part of the 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the highland plateaus further inland remained largely in the domain of the Orthodox Christian Church<sup>4</sup> often in close alliance with the Kings (and Queens) who ruled the region, also known as *Bahri Negassi*; adjacent to the lowlands stretching west and south towards the Nile and its tributaries - home to adherents of Islam and local traditional religions. In 1869, an Italian shipping company named Rubatinno bought Assab Bay from the local Sultan, and it later served as the launching pad for the Italian Crown to establish its first African colony in 1883. By this time Roman Catholic missionaries had also landed at the port of Massawa farther north, and like their Swedish Lutheran counterparts, advanced into the highlands west and southwards across the Mereb river past Tigray into central Ethiopia (Arén, 1978). Similarly, the French had bought Obock on Tajoura Bay (present day Djibouti) in 1862, directly facing the British who controlled Aden Bay at the strategic meeting point of the Erythrean Sea with the Indian Ocean.

As the European "Scramble for Africa" accelerated during 1880–1884, France had acquired Tunis on the Mediterranean coast and established itself in Obock, while Great Britain extended its Egyptian "Protectorates" to the Sudan upon the collapse of Egypt. Great Britain wanted Italy to extend its territorial conquest farther inland and carve out present day Eritrea in order to stop rival France from establishing itself in the Horn of Africa. Italy's claim to Eritrea was formalized on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1885, upon the ratification of the Berlin Act by the participants of the Berlin Conference of 1884–5 where the USA was also represented. According to Lucas (1922), The Berlin Act was meant to instill the

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance Tamrat (1972) for a study of the "Sabeanization" of the highland and lowland regions of Eritrea which were home to the descendants of Bilén-Saba, Béja, Däqi-Minab, Agäw, Mänsa, Adkämä-Mälga, Kunama-Barya, and others - based largely on European sources with a few indigenous royal chronicles which included Amdä-Sion (1314–44) and Zär'a-Ya'iqob (1434–68).

“principle of trusteeship” among all European colonial powers, implying that the Europeans were expected to demonstrate at least a minimum level of civility towards each other, and towards their colonized populations. However, all colonial powers invariably practiced insidious “divide and rule” tactics favoring some while alienating others, and thereby breeding conflict between Europeans and Africans as well as among Africans. It should be noted here that Africans also colonized their fellow Africans, and behaved just as bad if not worse.

For example in Ethiopia, successive feudal rulers enslaved certain sections of their subjects, and used their peasant populations as disposable resource in order to secure profitable deals with neighboring British, French and Italian colonial powers who threatened to swallow them at different times. They developed in the process a remarkable mastery of international diplomacy at low cost. According to the royal chronicles, *Kibrä Nägäst*, Ethiopia remained for the most part protected from European colonization by virtue of the invincible power of its kings and emperors, aided by the highly impenetrable nature of its landscape - highland plateau fortresses surrounded by inhospitable desert expanses. In actual fact, however, it was the lack of agreement between the three European colonial powers (Great Britain, Italy and France) that left Ethiopia land-locked but “uncolonized” - as long as it kept up with its military defense capabilities and remained successful at playing off the three powers against each other by switching its diplomatic allegiances from one to the other at strategic times and places.<sup>5</sup> The last Emperor was particularly exceptionally skillful at creating the myth of unparalleled powers which mystified as much as it repelled his “European neighbors.” He successfully earned the status of “Black Messiah” among his Ras Tafari worshippers in far flung places<sup>6</sup> while the British

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<sup>5</sup> Except for the five years of Italian occupation 1935–41 when Mussolini violated existing treaties and invaded Ethiopia, heartened by the League of Nation’s tacit approval of his actions. Particularly, British preoccupation with the balance of power in Europe at the expense of the security of Africa, resulting in appeasement - first of Mussolini and then Hitler - See Hardie (1974) for a detailed study of the so-called “Abyssinian Crisis... a Clapham Junction of crises: an astonishingly large number of lines crossed in it”. Hardie defined an act of appeasement as “meaning not mere failure to resist an act of aggression but connivance at it, buying off the bully at someone else’s expense, as opposed to just giving way to him oneself.” It is noteworthy that Mussolini, a “Proletariat”, argued that by invading Ethiopia, a country with an appalling record of human rights as it enslaved its citizens, he was aiming to further Italy’s civilizing mission in Africa by modernizing the place and emancipating the slaves. The Italian concept of colonizing Africa in order to develop and modernize it was diametrically different from the British idea of colonial control by expanding “Spheres of Influence”.

<sup>6</sup> The story of Ras Tafari Makonnen, renamed Haile Sellasie I, King of Kings, Lion of Judah, upon his accession to the Ethiopian throne might have merited a mention in Francis Wheen’s collection of international mythology (2005). Interested readers may consult Gerry Salole’s scholarly enquiry into the true identity of the Oromo Ras (Duke) Tafari Makonnen (1978; 1979) and Karl-Eric Knutsson’s study of “Ethiopianization” through “Amharicization” (1969) whereby Ormo individuals from the periphery of the Ethiopian Empire came to get to the center by changing their Oromo names to Amharic names through baptism by the clergy of the Orthodox Church and by adopting the Amharic language for everyday use.

labeled him the “Little Emperor.” The Emperor who preceded him, Menelik II, is also credited with the modernization and improved national security of Ethiopia, and is particularly remembered for defeating the Italians at the Battle of Adwa in 1896.<sup>7</sup>

By encouraging Italy to occupy Eritrea (and later on Libya), Great Britain prevented France from getting close to the Nile and extending its sphere of influence in the Horn of Africa. The frontiers between Italian Eritrea and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan were settled by a series of agreements, as was the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia. In the late 1880s, Italy had asserted that Ethiopia was its “Protectorate”<sup>8</sup> because Ethiopia had placed its foreign relations in Italy’s hands, relinquishing its direct access to the Red Sea. However, the question of Ethiopia’s independence was later clarified by the Wichale Treaty of 1896, halting, at least temporarily, Italian ambitions to link up Eritrea with Italian Somaliland. Another series of treaties followed, defining the Italian, French, and British frontiers of Ethiopia, so that by 1906 Ethiopia’s independence was jointly “guaranteed” by the three neighboring European powers. However, this did not translate into emancipation for the Ethiopian masses. Centuries of deeply entrenched feudal rule subjected the vast majority of the population to harsh servitude, with power alternating between central (Shoa) and northern (Tigray) highland Monarchs who often appropriated land, as did the Orthodox Church. These two institutions, Church and State, invariably oppressed the peasantry through hard labor and heavy taxation with little or no returns.

Italian interest in Eritrea was two fold: firstly, the colony was to serve as an extension of the Motherland to which Italian citizens might move, settle down, and engage in economic development for increased food and other material goods production for export to Europe and East Africa. Secondly, Italy wanted

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<sup>7</sup> Harold Marcus (1995) suggested that after the Ethiopian victory over the Italians at the battle of Adwa in 1896 and the survival of national independence, the Europeans were forced to “reconsider their prejudices about at least one group of Blacks. The contrived and arbitrary European definitions of racism had to be modified, although, in the process, the Ethiopians were not granted their ethnicity... to continue to designate the Ethiopians as such would be to concede that inferior men could get the better of Europeans. Because such an admission was impossible, the Westerners painted the Ethiopians white, attributing to them many European qualities and characteristics”.

<sup>8</sup> The term ‘Protectorate’ was never clearly defined, according to Lucas (1922: Appendix II) “In a speech of July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1917, the Prime Minister [Mr David Lloyd George] said, ‘Belgium must be a free people, and not a Protectorate’, implying, what is actually the truth, that a Protectorate is a country whose freedom is restricted. Similarly, the Milner Commission [which recommended an end to British Protectorate of Egypt] reported that the word Protectorate had become a symbol of servitude in the minds of the Egyptians’... the difference between a Crown Colony and a Protectorate is that the soil of a Crown Colony is British soil... a Protectorate is not British soil, and its inhabitants are not British subjects. ” Italy had at various times played the gatekeeper of the Eritrean (Red Sea) coast as well as the Ogaden-Somalia (Indian Ocean) coast. Clearly, Ethiopia had abnegated its access to the Red Sea by recognizing Italian ownership of Eritrea.

to strengthen its political stronghold by subjugating the Orthodox Christian Church of the Eritrean highlands to papal rule. The latter was less successful, but the Italians seriously invested in preparing Eritrea for long-term European settlement, most notably under the first civilian governor, retired Florentine parliamentarian Ferdinando Martini (1897–1916) who moved the capital from Massawa to Asmara and completed significant development projects including extensive road and railway construction using disposable Eritrean labor. At the same time, several highland Eritrean and Ethiopian “leaders of large caravans” of traders in ivory, gold and coffee, “big business men” such as Adgo Haile-Mariam, his nephew Birru and others were traveling to and from Asmara, Massawa, Aden, Harer and Jimma during the period 1872–1898 (see Arén, 1978) so not all of “the natives” were subject to European colonial servitude.

The Italianization of Eritrea took a particularly nasty turn when the Fascist party was voted in to power in Italy in 1922, with Benito Mussolini as the Prime Minister (*Il Duce*). While pre-fascist Italian rule did not exactly espouse racial equality either, it was Mussolini’s regime that advanced white supremacist legislation and established a system of strict racial segregation in Asmara and other places with sizeable Italian settlement. Italian colonial occupation of Eritrea was brutal in a single-minded and predictable way - the Italians wanted to modernize the place, and they mostly believed that whites were superior to blacks (despite their own evidence to the contrary), so they kept Eritreans in the dark by restricting their access to education. There is little debate among historians and others on the accuracy of historical records relating to Eritrea under Italian colonial rule - with the exception of recent quarrels about the colonial maps of the early 1900s showing the Eritrea-Ethiopia frontier. The period immediately following the defeat of the Fascist Italian army in April/May 1941 whereupon the BMA took custody of Eritrea as an “Occupied enemy territory” heralded a totally new colonial ball game of “British intrigue”<sup>9</sup> with seriously detrimental and lasting effects on Eritrea and its people.

### 3. BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION: 1941–1952

Eritrean lawyer, veteran freedom fighter, historian and playwright Alemseged Tesfai’s first volume of modern Eritrean history entitled, “*Aynfalale* 1941–1950” was published in Tigrinya in 2001 (reprinted in 2002).<sup>10</sup> *Aynfalale*, Tigrinya for “Let us not be put asunder” was the slogan of the Eritrean

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<sup>9</sup> This is a term used by Trevaskis (1960) whose book is re-read in the next section of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> Note that although *Aynfalale* covers the period 1941–1950 in about 600 pages, this paper extends its attention to 1952 - the end of British occupation, the last year of which also saw a United Nations Commissioner, Bolivian national, *Signor* Edoardo Anze Matienzo in Eritrea. These last two years of the British occupation are to be covered in Alemseged Tesfai’s second volume (in preparation) which focuses on the following decade - the 1950s.

newspaper *Hanti Értra* (One Eritrea), the official publication of the political movement for Eritrean independence (Eritrean Popular Front), a coalition of all Eritrean political parties who wanted Eritrea to remain united and gain its independence in 1949. This coalition emerged as a popular response to one of the most powerful, vicious, underhanded and relentlessly brutal campaigns of the British Military Administration (BMA) to dismember “the territory” it saw as essentially an Italian property whose component parts were “to be disposed of” in a way that served best the interests of the moribund British Empire. The portraits of four Eritrean political leaders: *Ato* Woldeab Woldemariam, the longest-serving leader of the Eritrean liberation struggle; *Sheikh* Ibrahim Sultan Ali, leader of *El Rabita - El Islamia - El Eritrea* political party which represented the interests of Moslem Eritreans who also wanted Eritrean unity and independence; *Raesi* Tessema Asberom, a highly respected southern/Christian leader, founding member of the *Értra n Étrawian*, Tigrinya, “Eritrea for Eritreans”, also known as the Liberal Progressive Party; and *Sheikh* Abdelqadir Kabire, a patriot whose unflinching sense of justice and early martyrdom inspired determination and sacrifice among many Eritreans, are featured on the cover of *Aynfalale* (see Gebrezgheir, 2001).

The book presents a detailed and coherent account of the highly turbulent times endured by Eritreans under the BMA starting with the first 2 years which saw a speedy compilation of a “Short History of Eritrea” for publication (Longrigg, 1945). *Aynfalale* is the first record of Eritrean history as lived and remembered by Eritreans during the British occupation. It gives a decidedly different perspective on the same events as those recorded by British and other writers. As Alemseged Tesfai points out, the 1940s saw two separate lines of history being etched on the Eritrean soil, running in parallel: one was the British-directed highly complicated international political drama to determine “the disposal of Eritrea”; and the other, the Eritrean people’s struggle for political organization and self determination, against all odds. The first line is well documented and preserved in British and other historical records (published and unpublished), and thus easy to trace; while the second line proved to be a mammoth task for dedicated historians who had to protect every piece of paper and constantly move their documents from one shelter to another during the three decades of war in Eritrea.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to first consider briefly the official British account of “the Occupation” of Eritrea from April 1941 to September 1952 as chronicled by G.

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<sup>11</sup> A graduate of the University of Illinois (USA) and Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) veteran who documented both minor and major battles such as the Battle of Af’abet (see Tesfai, 2002 for the author’s own translation of the Chronicle from Tigrinya into English), Alemseged Tesfai meticulously gathered a wealth of evidence from published and unpublished materials including British colonial records housed in the Public Records Office (London). He conducted individual interviews with senior Eritrean Statesmen, letters and photographs from private family collections in order to bring to life the extraordinary tenacity and clarity of vision with which these four and many other Eritrean political leaders resisted the colonial British plan to break up Eritrea.



K. N. Trevaskis. By his own account, Trevaskis was brought to Eritrea by the Italians as a prisoner of war from British Somaliland in late 1940; freed in 1941, and seconded to the BMA to serve as the political secretary until the summer of 1950. Writing from Aden (Yemen) in March 1960, Trevaskis prefaced his book by declaring his sources:

“...During my time in Eritrea, I had the good fortune to serve in most of its districts and, also, to be closely connected with two international commissions which came to conduct inquiries affecting its disposal. Accordingly, I was favourably placed to observe the history of the Occupation unfold itself. My record of it mainly derived from my own observations, personal correspondence, and official documents and reports which came my way...”

He also paid tribute to Brigadier S. H. Longrigg “who was head of the British Administration in Eritrea during a critical period at the beginning of the Occupation” and Mr. F. E. Stafford for “much of the information covering the last two years of the Occupation after I had left the territory.”<sup>12</sup>

In *Aynfalale*, the names Longrigg and Stafford come to life in ways they had never done before. Brigadier Stephen S. Longrigg was a civilian with an honorary military title and was associated with the Middle East Command (Cairo), while Mr. Stafford, also a civilian with an honorary military title of Brigadier General represented the British Military Mission to Ethiopia (BMME)<sup>13</sup> which reported to the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) office in Nairobi (Kenya). To Eritreans, these names represented official British colonial deceit, betrayal of trust, and contempt for humanity. However, these individual men were different one from another, and did not necessarily represent the British people as they were neither elected nor appointed by the British public. They interpreted their roles and responsibilities in different ways. It is important to revisit the historical and political context in which these and other men representing the British Empire played their part in thwarting Eritrea’s prospects for self determination at the end of World War II.

The difference between the official account of the BMA as documented by Trevaskis, and Alemseged Tesfai’s rendition of history in the vernacular is striking on many counts. The most fundamental is the fact that Trevaskis neglected the human and material cost of “the Occupation” to the Eritrean

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<sup>12</sup> Trevaskis’ book was published under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House, a Registered Charity) which held copyright but dissociated itself from the political views and opinions expressed in it - attributing them solely to the author.

<sup>13</sup> Commenting on the British practice of assigning military titles to civilian personnel during the 1940s in Ethiopia, Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) Burwood-Taylor explained that it was considered better if all civilians working for the British administration were given (honorary) military titles so as to confuse the local population on who was doing what (Almedom informal interview notes, 2003). It may also be that the BMA and BMME wanted to give the impression that they were stronger (better staffed) with more than one Brigadier General on board.

people;<sup>14</sup> while Alemseged Tesfai dwelled on it, carefully tracing the complex web of Eritrean social, cultural, economic and cultural inter-relationships which had cushioned Eritrea while the powerful political and economic machinery of British wartime rules and improvised policies battered it. According to Trevaskis, the Eritreans were “politically immature” (in addition to the many other negative qualifiers he assigned to the urban leader, rural elder, farmer and herder alike); while Alemseged Tesfai unveils a very complex humane picture of a sharp and highly adaptable urban and rural citizenry grappling with the fast and fluid transition from Italian fascist yoke to British rule, followed by Ethiopian oppression, all of which threatened to destroy the very identity of the long-suffering Eritrean people. Importantly, *Aynfalale* is prefaced by the author’s strong emphasis on the need for his reader/s to see the whole picture and resist the temptation of judging individual persons and/or political groups out of context.

When the Allied forces (British troops with Indian<sup>15</sup> and Sudanese contingents) ‘freed’ Eritrea from Axis stronghold in April/May 1941, the Eritrean people were of little or no concern to the British officers who were preoccupied with the situation of “the enemy” (the Italians) whom they had been watching with interest, particularly since the invasion of Ethiopia five years earlier.<sup>16</sup> As Trevaskis put it,

“Unfortunately, the British were ill prepared for their Eritrean responsibilities. It had been supposed that General Platt would be halted indefinitely before the heights of Keren; and consequently arrangements had only been made for the administration of the Barka and Gash-Setit Lowlands, which comprised what was then the Agordat administrative division. This, it was envisaged, would be administered by officers of the Sudan Administration as an appendage of the adjacent Sudan province of Kassala. And so, at the time of his entry to Asmara, General Platt had no more than Brigadier Brian Kennedy-Cooke (the former Governor of the Kassala province), eight British officers and nine Sudanese policemen with whom to take over the civil administration of Eritrea...

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<sup>14</sup> Described as “a large man in both height and breadth” by his school friend and admirer Julian Amery who wrote an obituary in the British newspaper, the *Independent* (March 17, 1990), Ken Trevaskis was a Cornishman of dark complexion, “In speech he was very deliberate, accompanying his words with equally slow gestures... He had joined the Colonial Service as a young man genuinely inspired by a faith in Britain’s Imperial mission [and enlisted in the British army in Northern Rhodesia]. He clung to that faith but watched British Governments abandon it...”

<sup>15</sup> Unmentioned by Trevaskis, the Fifth Indian Division had also contributed to the Allied campaign against the Fascist Italian army - first in Eritrea and later Ethiopia - before it moved on to Iraq and then Cyprus (Brett-James, 1951).

<sup>16</sup> Frank Hardie (1974) elucidated the reasons why the “Abyssinian Crisis” as it was called when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935, was in fact a European crisis marking the “death of the League of Nations.” Ignoring British public opinion, the British government had failed to uphold the League’s Charter and respond to Ethiopia’s legitimate appeal, effectively heralding “the disintegration of international law and order in Europe.” See also Waley, 1975.

“Fortunately, the officials of the Italian Administration remained anxious and expectant at their posts. The only practicable course was to invite them to continue under such British control as could be improvised... The only department where urgent steps were taken to bring Italian control to an end was the police. The two Italian organizations - the Royalist *carabinieri* and strongly Fascist *Polizia Africana Italiana* - could scarcely be expected to enjoy British confidence as instruments of security... Italian uneasiness was calmed by the sight of a familiar bureaucracy attending to the routine of public business. Similarly a dangerous Eritrean effervescence very soon subsided...

“For this the British were largely indebted to the accommodating behaviour of the Italian officials. Had they chosen to leave their posts, not all the troops then moving northwards to help in the defence of Egypt could have been spared. Nevertheless, if this Italian collaboration helped the British to establish their authority peacefully, it also rendered them uncomfortably dependent on Italian behaviour and temper. Many Italians had access to secret caches of arms and ammunition, Italian officials held most of the principal executive appointments in the public services, and a number of hot-headed young Fascists were still at large.

“In this situation, the British had a choice between two alternatives. The need for quick results argued in favour of a policy of ruthless repression to induce swift Italian submission... most Italians had been educated through Fascism to respect force. Alternatively, ...more lasting and effective results would be achieved at less cost if the Italian population were weaned from Fascism by firm but sympathetic treatment... Brigadier Kennedy-Cooke, head of the new British Administration, approached the problem realistically and dispassionately... he sought to win the acquiescence of the Italian civil population in British authority by friendly and generous treatment and by the tactful presentation of British point of view as a counter Fascist propaganda...

“Most Italians were living under pitiful and seemingly hopeless conditions. With the influx of refugees and fugitive soldiery, the Italian population had increased from 40,000 to 70,000 men, women and children. Most were living in Asmara, where sanitary conditions were deplorable and the supply of water was inadequate. Many were destitute... several thousands of women and children, because their husbands and fathers had been killed or captured; food was scarce; prices were rising. Each problem was tackled urgently and energetically. Several thousands of refugees were evacuated to the smaller towns... The Royal Engineers increased the Asmara water supply; the Royal Army Medical Corps introduced town cleaning services and enforced sanitary regulations... At the same time, the unemployed were registered and paid relief from British funds... These measures... could not secure the

Italians from all distress and discomfort: they did, however, spare them famine and disease...

“Brigadier Kennedy-Cooke sought to combat Fascist influence by lending the British the appearance of caretakers rather than of conquerors. ‘Fraternization’, as it was termed, was officially encouraged. Boxing and football matches were organized between British and Italian teams; British officers and Italians met in the congenial surroundings of an officially sponsored tennis club. The Italians, though volatile, were incapable of long-sustained hatred and the British, if phlegmatic and perhaps at times arrogant, were not insusceptible to the attractions of civilian society.<sup>17</sup> In time Italian sullenness and British frigidity began to thaw out... There remained, however, an incorrigible hard core Fascist hot-heads... The eventual arrest and internment of 3,000 undesirables in November 1941 threw out small ripples of interest but otherwise left Italian society unmoved... By the close of 1941, the danger that Eritrea might prove an expensive military commitment had passed. It was fortunate that an officer with such intuition as Brigadier Kennedy-Cooke had charge of the Administration... he was able to call on the services of a small but invaluable body of officers seconded from the Sudan Government. Their flexibility, gift for swift assessment, and invariable sang-froid did as much as anything to secure British authority at so small a cost.” (Trevaskis, 1960: 19–24).<sup>18</sup>

As far as the economic status of the western Eritrean lowlands was concerned, according to the inhabitants of Abu Hashela (Barka) interviewed by Alemseged Tesfai in 1987 (cited in *Aynfalale*), the British had inherited a thriving local economy which included Eritrean-labor-dependent Italian farm produce and other products manufactured for export. However, the lack of British manpower to police the area quickly precipitated a serious problem of insecurity, as documented in the British Ministry of Information report entitled *The First to be Freed: The Record of British Military Administration in Eritrea and Somalia, 1941–1943* (1944). The widespread proliferation of fire arms resulted in violence. As detailed in *Aynfalale*, the BMA’s failure to settle land ownership disputes in the lowlands, and Eritreans’ demand to reclaim sequestered land that had accommodated Italian farm concessions (*Concissione*) in the highlands

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<sup>17</sup> Eritrean observers had also noted that the BMA officers enjoyed locally produced Italian food and wine, as well as the company of widowed or abandoned Italian women to whom the policy of “fraternization” facilitated easy access - Professor Asmarom Legesse, personal communication (2004).

<sup>18</sup> Note that Trevaskis’ description of Asmara’s water supply, sanitation, health and social conditions was confined to the Italian quarters. The situation of the Eritrean quarters of the city was much worse - four out of the seventeen photographs taken in 1951 by Haile Mezenghe to illustrate Sylvia Pankhurst’s book (1952) are depictions of children and women living in abject poverty in the Eritrean quarters of Asmara. There is absolutely no sign of urban amenities to suggest that this Asmara was not rural.

quickly resulted in mass unemployment introducing serious food shortage. Asmara and Massawa were worst-affected by the lack of security, despite the imposition of curfew. Military camps had to be located outside the city due to constant clashes between Sudanese and other African soldiers (part of the British army) with local residents.

In the case of Massawa, August 1941 saw the worst conflict between Sudanese and Eritrean soldiers in the immediate aftermath of “liberation.” In what came to be identified by Eritreans as an act of sabotage plotted by the British, an Italian ammunition depot was set on fire on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1941: Eight thousand bombs and twelve hundred land mines exploded and four thousand Eritrean residents of Massawa instantly lost their homes to the fire. Hundreds of previously laid-off Italian (Fascist) personnel were reinstated, including (contrary to Trevaskis’ account) members of the police force, spelling unmitigated disaster for Eritrean residents of both Massawa and Asmara.

In Asmara, the families of Eritrean police officers who had not been paid for several months following “liberation” (even after the BMA had finished taking a census of the entire police force with false promises it made in order to elicit cooperation). Those families signed a petition asking for their situation to be considered by the new administration. Twenty delegates were sent to deliver the petition to the BMA. They were met by a very hostile Italian officer, a member of the ‘old guard’, who inspected the signed petition, ridiculed the delegates for trying to voice Eritrean grievances, and ordered one of his subordinates to shoot them. Many were killed on the spot and those who fled were pursued all the way to the Eritrean quarters of *Idaga Hamus* where some armed Eritreans fired back to stop the chase. The incident was then reported by the Eritreans to the highest BMA office. The BMA promised to investigate and bring the criminals to justice, but no action was taken. The BMA’s inaction left deep-seated animosities between Italian fascist police and Eritrean citizens to simmer.

Again, in 1944, a united Eritrean Police Force strike (supported jointly by the Police Training Unit and Asmara Police) mobilized a peaceful demonstration involving two thousand eight hundred members who marched to the City Center (*Corso d’Italia*) demanding that: (i) Eritreans no longer be ruled by British-endorsed Fascist Italian Law; (ii) Eritrean police not be required to give up their boots and wear sandals; and not go back to their old Italian police uniforms with Turkish hats; (iii) Eritrean police no longer work under Italian officers; the BMA to honor the promise it made when it first took a census of the police force and allow them to work directly under British officers. The demonstrators threatened to remain on strike until the above demands were met.

The BMA’s reaction was to first conduct a thorough investigation to find out whether or not these demands were politically motivated. Having established that the demands were economically driven, the BMA decided to limit its response only to the question of salary and uniforms, and warned the demonstrators not to engage in political activity against it. The BMA then proceeded to hunt down five civilian men it suspected for organizing the demonstration: *Grazmatch Zere Bekhit*, *Blata Fassil Okbazghi*, *Grazmatch*

Tesfamichael Werke, *Blata Asfaha Abraha*, and *Ato Araya Sebhatu*. These were all influential leaders in the community but not members of the police force. As petitions for their release flooded the BMA offices, it was decided that they should be released upon the production of two guarantors and payment of 200 pound sterling for each prisoner. The Eritrean civilian community in Asmara collected 1000 pound sterling to pay the fine and produced ten guarantors (one of whom was Abdel-Qadir Kabire whose portrait appears on the cover of *Aynfalale*) whereupon the five men were released from prison (Tesfai, 2001: 110–111). English Suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst's eye-witness account of the demonstration was published in her book, *British Policy in Eritrea* (Walthamstow Press, undated) as part of her campaign on behalf of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Sellassie and is also cited in *Aynfalale*.<sup>19</sup>

In the eyes of Eritreans, the BMA was worse than the Italians who were not as deceitful and underhanded. The BMA seldom honored its promises, and it was more exploitative - Eritreans were always severely punished with heavy fines for apparently exercising their rights to articulate their concerns through peaceful demonstrations which turned into riots every time the British or Italian police used force to hunt the so called "ringleaders". However, in the eyes of the BMA (as recorded by Trevaskis), the policy of fraternization constituted a "comparatively inexpensive success" whereby a "costly failure" was avoided. British colonial rulers were notorious for dishonoring international treaties and agreements made in Africa; and fully aware that the British public would disapprove if the details of colonial misdemeanors committed overseas were exposed.<sup>20</sup> The resulting violence and political insurgency which claimed the

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<sup>19</sup> Trevaskis suggested that the strike was "suddenly staged by Abyssinian members of the Asmara police... in protest at a change in their footwear from boots to sandals, which were the standard issue for police elsewhere... Four police inspectors who were discovered to have been ringleaders were interned. The strikers were then ordered to return to duty on pain of instant dismissal. The strike was broken at once". He then ridiculed the subversive activities of Sylvia Pankhurst whose London-based weekly newspaper, the *New Times* and *Ethiopia News* was being surreptitiously disseminated among "the most unlikely readers in Eritrea, who included illiterate tribal leaders and Italian officials without any knowledge of English. Among the latter a surprised Italian mayor of Asmara received a copy of the paper mysteriously concealed inside a large book entitled *The Peeresses of the Stage*, which had been hollowed out for the purpose by the excision of most of its pages. Whatever impression this presumably costly publication made in the United Kingdom, its value to the Ethiopian cause in Eritrea was negligible" (1960: 65–66).

<sup>20</sup> This type of behavior has been documented and brought to light by historians and others including British advocates of Ethiopia. For example, on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of *Ras Alula's* victory over the Italians at Ted'ali (Dogali) near Massawa, Richard Pankhurst (Sylvia Pankhurst's son who traveled to Asmara and Massawa for the celebrations - accompanied by his son Alula Pankhurst who recited war poetry in Amharic, sporting a red head band in 1987) cited the comments of a certain A.B. Wylde (British Vice-Consul to the Red Sea) thus: "Look at our behaviour to King Johannes from any point of view and it will not show me one ray of honesty, and to my mind it is one of our worst bits of business out of the many we have been guilty of in Africa... England made use of King Johannes as long as he was of any service, and then threw him over to the tender mercies of

lives of countless Eritreans did not count as loss or failure, and it could be argued that it was in fact profitable to the BMA, that is, until higher officials eventually ordered the BMA to put an end to “fraternization with the enemy” in Eritrea upon the deaths of both Mussolini and Hitler in 1945, marking the end of World War II. Trevaskis lamented,

“Fascism was openly and vigorously attacked; and symbols or reminders of Fascism such as street names, inscriptions, and emblems were changed or destroyed. The mood of the Italians in Eritrea was very different from that of their compatriots in Italy. In Italy suffering and fear had bred revulsion against Fascism and relief at its collapse. In Eritrea, the Italians had been spectators of the drama, not actors in it. Military defeat brought with it a sense of bitter humiliation, not relief. It brought also a mood of defiant patriotism which, temporarily, encouraged a resurgence of Fascist feeling. And so, when they needed the most delicate handling, the Italians in Eritrea found themselves treated with unexpected roughness.” (1960: 77–78)<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, in order to monitor enemy (Fascist Italian) activities and protect Allied conquests, the BMA had recruited expatriate personnel with local language skills. On the strength of his academic qualification in Semitic languages including Ge’ez (Ethiopic) and Tigrinya, Edward Ullendorff, a new graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in his early twenties, was hired to work in the information censorship office in Asmara. However, once in post, young Ullendorff found that there were no letters or other documents in Tigrinya being sent out of Eritrea at that time, so there were no letters to censor. Letters out of Asmara were mostly in the Italian language which was outside Ullendorff’s expertise. In the event, the BMA decided to introduce “free press” instead, and started its own newspaper in the vernacular, *nay Értra semunawi gazetta*, Eritrean Weekly News (EWN) in 1942 for Ullendorff to run. *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam*, an accomplished and highly respected teacher<sup>22</sup> in his

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Italy, who went to Massowah under our auspices with the intention of taking territory that belonged to our ally, and allowed them to destroy and break all the promises England had solemnly made to King Johannes after he had faithfully carried out his part of the agreement. The fact is not known to the British public and I wish it was not true for our credit’s sake; but unfortunately it is, and it reads like one of the vilest bits of treachery that has been perpetrated in Africa or in India in the eighteenth century” (1987: 124).

<sup>21</sup> Trevaskis’ book is full of concern for the Italians and contempt for the Eritreans. According to Julian Amery’s obituary (see footnote 13 above), “Eritrea was his real training ground.” Trevaskis returned to Northern Rhodesia after leaving Eritrea in 1950 and became the District Commissioner at Ndola before he was transferred to Aden. Thirty years later, Trevaskis wrote a letter to the Times newspaper (from Camberwell, South London) advocating the use of “unconventional means of counter revolution” as an alternative to a “rapid deployment force” in the Gulf of Aden in response to Soviet aggression by “aiding those in rebellion against its puppet regimes in South Yemen, Ethiopia and Afghanistan” (7 March, 1981).

<sup>22</sup> *Memhir* Woldeab Woldemariam was educated in the schools of the Swedish Lutheran-influenced Evangelical Church of Eritrea. This schooling marked a progressive/modernist

early thirties was hired to work as the Tigrinya editor of this newspaper, while Mahmud Iraba'e became editor of its Arabic edition (see Gebrezgheir 2001 for Ato Woldeab Woldemariam's portrait - far left). At the same time, Brigadier General Stephen H. Longrigg took over from Brigadier Kennedy-Cooke in 1942 and crafted the "Standing Operating Procedures" (SOP) without adhering to the War Office (WO) directives issued by London, as discussed in *Aynfalale*.<sup>23</sup>

During his two and a half years in Eritrea as Chief Administrator, Brigadier Longrigg - one of the officers described by Trevaskis as flexible, quick and "sang-froid" (cold-blooded) - collected all the information he could lay his hands on about the ethnic diversity and pre-colonial history of "the territory". His own officers provided most of the material: Major S.F. Nadel (who had written about the traditional land tenure systems of the Eritrean highlands), Major Trevaskis (who quickly sketched the ethnographic landscape of the lowlands), Major Lee, Major Morley, and Captain Duncanson, "a score of others

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Christian democratic section of Eritrean society where the Tigrinya language and literature flourished. The Swedish mission actively supported the translation of the Bible into Tigrinya, Tigre, and other Eritrean languages. Orthodox Christian who had previously had to depend on their priests' readings and interpretations of the Scriptures in Ge'ez (Ethiopic), an ancient language used only by the clergy, received the Tigrinya Bible with open arms and open hearts, seeing it as a liberating force. Arén (1978) mentions *Woizero Aster Woldemariam* (*Memhir Woldeab Woldemariam's* sister) in connection with the great famine and rinderpest of 1889 and the family's subsequent flight to Imkullu where they were confirmed in the Evangelical Church. This church later became the hubbub of Eritrean liberation ideology/movement and leadership - *Memhir Woldeab Woldemariam* and many other political leaders including some of the members of the present Eritrean leadership including President Isaias Afwerki and General Sebhat Efreem were raised in this Eritrean school of thought where the spiritual and secular made a complete whole (many Moslem families also sent their children to the schools run by the Evangelical Church because it was openly non-sectarian and politically oriented towards equity and social justice). Trevaskis mentions that the schools affiliated to the Swedish Evangelical Mission were closed by the Italian regime in 1932, but doesn't mention the British Bible Society (which was active in and around Massawa in the 1880s) or the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), also a British missionary organization which had some influence on Eritrean civil society in the lowlands of Gash-Setit/Barka and Agordat administrative districts.

<sup>23</sup> The official explanation suggested that the BMA was constrained by the Hague Convention of 1907 which denied the occupying party the right to change existing institutions and laws of the enemy territory, "except for reasons of military necessity, humanity, and conscience... While Eritrea was still technically an area of military operations, he [the Chief Administrator] was no more than an officer on the staff of the General Officer Commanding in Eritrea, who was directly responsible to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East [Cairo Headquarters] for the civil government of the territory... It was not until 1949, when responsibility for the occupied Italian colonies was transferred to the Foreign Office and the appointment of Chief Civil Affairs Officer was abolished, that the Chief Administrator had direct contact with a department of the British Government... the Chief Administrator and the commander of the military garrison... both held the same rank of Brigadier; fortuitously the military commander was invariably the senior of the two; and to make matters worse, he had disciplinary authority over all officers in the territory including the Chief Administrator and his staff. No arrangement could have been calculated to cause more unnecessary and damaging mischief" (Trevaskis, 1960: 24-5).



who cannot be named”, and his wife who typed the manuscript for him are all acknowledged in the book. Brigadier Longrigg avowed to the hurried and incomplete nature of his work, but that did not inhibit him from pushing forth his extremely low expectations of Eritrea and its people as summed up in the Preface to his book:

“Rich or great, Eritrea will never become; it may, indeed, disappear as a political unit completely from the map. But few who have lived and worked there will view it otherwise than with sympathy, or fail to wish its people well” (Longrigg, 1945).

Brigadier Longrigg’s administration generated controversy<sup>24</sup> and chaos, ultimately causing his superiors in Cairo to reprimand and remove him from office, as exposed in *Aynfalale*.<sup>25</sup> He was replaced by the real (military) Brigadier General C. D. McCarthy for a few months in 1944–5 before Major-General Benoy took over. This high turnover of British Chief Administrators - a total of six men holding the post between 1941 and 1952 - was highly detrimental to Eritrea and its people.

#### 4. THE LONGRIGG SAGA

As finally unveiled in *Aynfalale* (Chapter 5)<sup>26</sup>, Brigadier Stephen Longrigg wrote a highly speculative and inflammatory editorial opinion piece for EWN and published it in Tigrinya under the assumed authorship of “*Hade Értrawi*”, one (male) Eritrean. The title of his article was “Some thoughts on the future of Eritrea”, EWN, issue 3/101, 3 August, 1944.<sup>27</sup> The piece, written in the style of

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<sup>24</sup> Eritrean political scientist and historian Ruth Eyob also cited Brigadier Longrigg’s “*Half Yearly Report by the Military Administrator on the Occupied Enemy Territory of Eritrea: From the Period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1942* (Asmara: Eritrea, July 29, 1942), 6–7, in which he admitted, “We had unfortunately made promises or half-promises before the occupation which we have been unable (or not always willing) to implement, thereby giving the natives some grounds for complaints.” (Eyob, 1995: 62).

<sup>25</sup> For an indirect corroboration, see Ullendorff, who dedicated the best part of a page of his 235 pages long “Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia” to him also indicated that Longrigg was, “A scholar, an Arabist, oil diplomatist, and proconsul... he was always dissatisfied with what he had achieved, and he was unlucky at crucial junctures in his career. He had done remarkably well in his Governorship of Eritrea, but just as he was about to depart from Asmara a corruption scandal in one or two departments of the administration was revealed... he had nothing whatever to do with it, but he was the head of the government in which those peccadilloes had occurred and as such he had to take the blame... these were some of the men who put their stamp on the new military administration of Eritrea” (1988: 137).

<sup>26</sup> *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* interview by Alemseged Tesfai, Orola, 1987 - cited in *Aynfalale*, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Ullendorff (Professor Emeritus of Ethiopian Studies) vehemently denied this on three separate occasions when asked informally (Almedom notes, 2003; 2005; 2006). Note

an Oxford student essay, began by stating that the final decision on Eritrea's future was expected to be made at a forthcoming international peace conference. However, in the absence of a formal and organized political party system in the country, the author wished to share his thoughts in this informal manner: the options facing Eritrea included (i) return to Italian rule; (ii) unite with Ethiopia; (iii) be taken over by the U.S.A; or (iv) get absorbed by the British Empire. The advantages and disadvantages of each option were discussed in what appeared to be a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner, before the author put forward his own preference along the following lines:<sup>28</sup>

Eritrea is complex in its ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Put simply, the country is divided into two parts: the lowlands and the highlands. The people of the lowlands are Moslem, and mostly speak Tigre or Arabic; while the highlanders are Christian and speak Tigrinya. The Moslem lowlanders will definitely want to be united with the people of Sudan who resemble them in education, trade and religion. There are already many things they have in common.

Longrigg then made the false claim that he was an Eritrean highlander himself, and that he was most interested in the concerns of his fellow Tigrinya speaking Christian highlanders, before he went on to say,

...it is well known that these Eritreans are one with the people of northern Ethiopia in culture, religion, tradition, history and education. It would be improper to divide into two the very people who gave civilization, power, and cultural greatness to the whole of Ethiopia...

Longrigg asserted that Axum was the spiritual home, the reservoir of the political and religious aspirations of the entire Tigrinya speaking populace, before concluding that:

...the middle and highland part of Eritrea, with its Tigrinya-speaking inhabitants should be united with Ethiopia and receive British aid and support... the people of the lowlands would probably be happy and grateful to be joined with the people of Sudan.

The article ignited a fire which threatened to destroy the intricately woven inter-faith and inter-ethnic harmony of urban Eritrean society there and then. Hapless readers of the British-run newspaper to whom the idea of political agenda setting using newspaper editorial columns was unfamiliar, believed that it was indeed an Eritrean Christian highlander who wrote the article. Some suspected *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* of writing the piece himself, because he was the newspaper's Tigrinya editor. The debate was staged to rage on and on almost

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that this would be the normal reaction from someone who had signed the British government Official Secrets Act.

<sup>27</sup> Translated by A. M. Almedom from the Tigrinya quotations from EWN printed in *Aynfalale*.

indefinitely, as the subject of Eritrea's future remained alive on the pages of the EWN for a long time, submissions for which were routinely censored by Edward Ullendorff under Brigadier Longrigg's supervision. This incited violence which came to be officially branded by the BMA as "banditry" - see Mburu (2000) for a detailed analysis of official BMA documentary evidence of British-instigated violence in Eritrea. Had Brigadier Longrigg actually signed his own name as the author of the newspaper editorial, the Eritrean debate would have taken a different course, and the Horn of Africa may have looked completely different today. As it was, the essay ignited a fire which threatened Eritrea with complete destruction while Longrigg's hurriedly produced short history book got published and served to inform British government policy on Eritrea and Ethiopia for decades to come.

As the newspaper debate continued, the participation of several Eritrean political leaders and notables was put on the record. These included *Fitawrari* Gebremeskel Woldu, President of *Mahber Fikri Hager* (Association of Love of Country - Eritrea) who appeared to agree with what was proposed in the (Longrigg) editorial, with some reservations: he wanted the clearly more advanced knowledge and technical skills of Eritreans to be properly recognized, and their civil rights respected by Ethiopia. *Degiat* Abraha Tessema appeared to make measured and moderating contributions to the discussion, mindful of the short-lived "Woyane Revolt" in Tigray that was brutally crushed by the Ethiopian Emperor with British military assistance.<sup>29</sup> In the absence of access to information and media reports of what the *Woyane* stood for and why, the political debate on the columns of EWN continued to be one-sided and increasingly acrimonious. *Ato* Woldeab Woldemariam was placed in the impossible position of knowing more than anybody else did (including the British authorship of the inflammatory EWN editorial), but unable to do anything about it short of leaving his job and fleeing Eritrea. The BMA's official line was that Eritreans were being encouraged to express their opinions freely in the newspaper and to engage actively in this limited type of "public" discussion to determine the future of Eritrea. *Ato* Woldeab Woldemariam was seriously misunderstood by some Eritreans and opposed by others who ridiculed his view that Eritrea should have a clear and binding contract with Ethiopia if the two

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<sup>29</sup> As documented in *Aynfalale*, in May 1943, two years after the BMA took custody of Eritrea, Tigrayan frustrations with Amhara imperial oppression boiled over, erupting into a *woyane* revolt. *woyane* literally means "woe is me" stemming from two Tigrinya words: *iway ane!* Rebel leaders aspiring to break away from Ethiopia and unite with Eritrea controlled most of Tigray for 4 months (May-November) until the weakened British and Ethiopian troops on the ground were eventually assisted by the British Royal Air Force (RAF): three Blenheim bombers flew over from Aden and bombed the center of Makele, the Tigrayan capital, killing 70 and wounding 200 civilians. *Woyane* leaders disbanded immediately - some fleeing into exile while others were captured and imprisoned. The Emperor then subjected the peasant *woyane* supporters to very harsh reprisals. *Woyane* resentment of the Amhara stemming from this painful episode of history is believed to be manifest in the present day TPLF-dominated Ethiopian government's official and unofficial harassment of the Amhara (see Vestal, 2002).

were to unite. His direct opponents were the Unionists who suggested that demanding a contractual agreement with Ethiopia was tantamount to arguing that a child needs to sign a contract with his/her mother: Eritrea was the child (who had no choice) and Ethiopia the mother (presumed to do what is right for her child whatever the circumstance). *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam's* subsequent writings indicated that he had sympathy for the *Woyane* (who had after all wanted to unite with Eritrea but were crushed by the Amhara, with British military assistance), while at the same time maintaining an unwavering commitment to Eritrean unity and independence.<sup>30</sup> He soon became the target of repeated assassination attempts, six of them inside Eritrea. *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* survived a total of seven attempts on his life, including one in exile, and he lived to see the liberation of Asmara in 1991 and was first in line to cast his vote at the 1993 Referendum which formalized Eritrea's status as a sovereign country, *inter alia* entitling it to United Nations membership in its own right. Many Eritreans called *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* the "Nelson Mandela of Eritrea".

As clearly documented in *Aynfalale*, the BMA had the interests of the British Empire at heart, and it was up to individual administrators to decide how best to protect those interests. Inter office correspondence and memoranda archived at the Public Records Office in London showed that the idea of expanding the Sudan territory by taking over the western Eritrean lowlands (the bread basket of Eritrea), and making up "Greater Somalia" by exchanging the Ogaden for the Eritrean highlands with Emperor Haile Sellasie was entertained as an economically viable plan, if it could be done without costly British military confrontation with Ethiopia and/or huge investment in British security personnel. The Ogaden desert had been part of Italian Somaliland which had barred the pastoralists of British Somaliland from using it until the defeat of Italy. Once taken over by the British as part of the Occupied Enemy Territory, the Ogaden could be used for barter.

The BMA's relentlessly destructive social engineering continued to test Eritrean endurance - the capacity of citizens to withstand low level social conflict designed to divide them into small competing political groups. In November 1943 Brigadier Longrigg visited Adi Qeyih's popular exhibition of agricultural produce which was attended by a large number of local religious as well as secular Eritrean leaders and notables. He used the opportunity to announce that Eritreans were hitherto permitted to hold formal meetings to discuss the future of their country and to organize themselves in political parties. However, when the leaders of Akale Guzai district later proposed to organize a meeting for all political parties to come together and deliberate on the future of Eritrea, Brigadier Longrigg refused to let them, stating that he was only

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<sup>30</sup> Trevaskis (1960:65) described *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* as "an outspoken champion of Separatism" and added that it was rumoured that the proposal for a union of Eritrea and Tigray to form an autonomous state under some form of British administration had the BMA's hand in it, because the Tigrinya editor of EWN had entertained it.

authorized to give permission for single political parties to meet separately, and not to hold a large multi-party convention as such a meeting would require special permission to be issued from London. Traditional Eritreans systems of political participation and accountable governance, many of which had survived Italian colonial rule were deliberately being eroded by the BMA whose attacks took different shapes and forms.

The Eritrean Weekly News continued to publish debates on linguistics. This served young Ullendorff's personal interest to learn about the development of the Tigrinya language and its relative status *vis a vis* Ge'ez/Ethiopic and Amharic, professionally assisted by *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam*.<sup>31</sup> It also served to promote a unionist political agenda which the BMA was ultimately prepared to settle for, on the condition that Ethiopia let the British keep the Ogaden in exchange for the Eritrean highlands, all of which were going to become a British Protectorate of one form or another anyway. As revealed in *Aynfalale*, Ullendorff contributed to the debate generated by Longrigg's essay on the future of Eritrea under a pseudonym<sup>32</sup> saying,

...rather than proposing plans that are driven by greed and individual self-interest, we should join countries that can offer us development...

in support of the official British plan for Eritrea (and indirectly also Ethiopia). British officials (such as Longrigg and Ullendorff) who wrote in Tigrinya under pseudonyms took great care to disguise themselves as Eritreans. Trevaskis also mentions "unsigned letters" with controversial content which often appeared on the pages of the EWN. Had these officials wanted to engage the Eritrean people in public deliberations on the future of the country, they would have signed all the articles planted in the newspaper and facilitated the debate in good faith.

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<sup>31</sup> Although *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* was Edward Ullendorff's senior (over ten years older and naturally more qualified, at least with respect to the Tigrinya language and literature), Ullendorff saw him as a subordinate. In his most recent commentary on "The father of Tigrinya", Ullendorff painted a very poor picture of the man Eritreans have called "*Abbo Étra*" (Father of Eritrea), using a personal letter purporting to have been sent from Cairo in 1954. Ullendorff's translation of the letter into English is accompanied by an editorial note justifying its publication in order to promote Tigrinya, a language that would have remained "obscure" had it not been for Ullendorff's scholarly dedication (see Ullendorff, 2005, A Tigrinya letter from an Eritrean notable, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 68(2): 295–296).

When asked politely why he chose to publish a personal letter from the late *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* without his consent; why this particular letter; and why now; Professor Ullendorff replied, "it seemed like a good idea" and insisted that the Tigrinya handwriting on the letter is not his own (Almedom notes, 2006). For an alternative reflection on this senior Eritrean Statesman, see Eritrean journalist Elias Gebrezgheir Amare's tribute to "Wel-Wel", *Ato Woldeab Woldemariam* (2001).

<sup>32</sup> In a letter to A. M. Almedom dated July 2004, Professor Ullendorff made a few disparaging statements about *Aynfalale*, having found a few minor errors in the first edition (2001) that had been corrected in the 2002 reprint. He pointed out that Alemseged Tesfai had failed to cite Ullendorff's own work, except when he "quoted accurately" what Ullendorff had written in the EWN under the pseudonym of *hayan shoofee*.

Most disturbingly, Major-General Benoy who succeeded Brigadier Longrigg presided over the tragedy of the Asmara Massacre and subsequent BMA obfuscations and evasions of justice. As detailed in *Aynfalale* (Chapter 6), on Wednesday 28 August 1946, the day of *Eid* (Feast at the end of the Islamic fasting month of *Ramadan*) a fight broke out in *Abba Shaul*, the poorest part of the Eritrean quarters of Asmara, in which one Sudanese man died and a few others were injured. As soon as the news of the death reached their barracks, about 70 Sudanese soldiers “careered murderously through Asmara’s native quarter armed with weapons ransacked from the armoury” (Trevaskis, 1960: 68). Predominantly Christian residential areas were targeted and those who did not wear a turban or an amulet or had the Coptic cross tattooed on their foreheads (as was common among Orthodox Christian women) were dragged out of their homes, lined up, and executed on the streets of Asmara. Ullendorff (1988) noted that this happened between 5 and 6 pm, and that he and his wife had heard the sound of “heavy machine-gun fire, loud and prolonged. As soon as we realized that something pretty serious was happening we went to the Senior Officer’s Mess, less than five minutes’ walk from the Hamasien Hotel...” (p.183). Alemseged Tesfai recorded that the Massacre which lasted about two hours claimed the lives of 46, leaving about 70 wounded; of which 3 of the dead and 13 of the wounded were Sudanese [possibly victims of ‘friendly fire’, as there were no records of Eritreans firing back]. Three days later, a “Special Issue” of the EWN was published in which an “Official period of mourning” and a “Fund for the families of victims” were announced, inviting donations from the public. A full list of the deceased was published on that Special Issue of EWN. Trevaskis’ account of the Asmara Massacre also mentioned 9 wounded Italians, and added some background political context:

“The similarity between this incident and an occasion when the Fascist Graziani had once let Italian troops loose in Addis Ababa to avenge the murder of a fellow-countryman, seemed sufficiently close to suggest that the massacre was a British reprisal for the July riots. Bitterness spread rapidly from towns to the Plateau villages. Though the church and Nationalists had exploited the peasantry’s grievances, it was the wave of indignation following the Asmara incident that swept most of them irrevocably into the Nationalist camp. As in the towns, so now in the villages, most Christian Abyssinians viewed alien European rule with bitter disillusionment and saw no other solution to their problems than Eritrea’s union with Ethiopia”(p. 68).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The BMA found itself engaged in urban warfare with the Eritrean resistance. According to Trevaskis, the Ethiopian government had suddenly expelled 130 Arabs into Eritrea after first confiscating their property in Ethiopia in June. “In July, a further 145 Arabs and 92 Italians were dumped over the frontier with little more than the clothes on their backs. This action, which was taken without the consent of the Administration, scarcely accorded with the normal rules of international behaviour but, to the Eritrean Abyssinian, it was effective proof of Ethiopia’s determination and ability to deal with undesirable aliens... This campaign of calculated xenophobia was supported by a number of Nationalist demonstrations and

The BMA was clearly at the center of a vicious cycle of violence it could no longer control. According to Ullendorff who attended the mass funeral of the Christian victims of the Asmara Massacre which was held on the next day - August 29<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon, three BMA representatives, Major-General Benoy, Colonel Senior, and Ullendorff (who served as the interpreter from Tigrinya into English) had driven to the funeral in a big black Vice-regal Lancia, flying the British flag, only to be received by a large angry crowd of mourners. The Bishop, *Abuna* Markos directly blamed the BMA in his address to the crowd of mourners. According to Ullendorff,

“These Eritrean masses who usually bowed to the Governor and treated him with the utmost deference were sullen on that day and very hostile. When finally we reached the centre, *Abuna* Markos, standing among the serried rows of white-sheeted corpses, began his funeral oration... We Abyssinians<sup>34</sup> had longed for the British to come and liberate us from Fascist yoke. We had trusted you to lead us to freedom. But what have you done? You have given us the freedom to die, the only freedom you have given us so far. Neither the Italians nor the British, in whom we had believed, will help us. So we must return to our Mother Ethiopia who will receive her Eritrean children with open arms. The only demand we make of you now is: kill sixty Sudanese troops as they have killed our innocent brethren. Will you promise that?... you must promise us that at least sixty will be executed, the same number as our people who died at the hands of these murderers.<sup>35</sup> The Bishop’s fierce demeanour was somehow perceived by the vast crowd of mourners, who seemed to become ever more menacing. At this stage I did not think we would ever leave this place alive or unscathed. I tried to convey to the *Abuna* that nobody knew at this moment how many soldiers had done the actual

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processions in the principal towns. Though by law permission was needed for such assemblies, the Nationalists staged them without even seeking authority. At first the administration did not intervene; but by the time the final procession took place in Asmara on 28 July, it was felt that the Nationalists had gone too far. The procession was broken up and four ringleaders were arrested. Within an hour fierce rioting broke out. The car of the president of the Arab community was set on fire; Arab shops and other property were looted and damaged; and at the same time a mob invaded the police station, where the ringleaders had been incarcerated, and set them free. A further and even more serious riot followed their rearrest and conviction by the Asmara court, and had it not been for the timely intervention of the Sudan Defence force, the small police guard at their prison would undoubtedly have been overwhelmed. As it was, a few rounds were fired, four of the mob were killed, and immediately, order was restored” (p. 67–8).

<sup>34</sup> Note that ‘Abyssinians’ is the English (derogatory) term for Ethiopians (stemming from the Arabic *Habbash*, racially mixed. *Abuna* Markos would have said ‘we Eritreans’ and Ullendorff interpreted it as Abyssinians because that was what the BMA officers called the Christian highlanders of Eritrea - the lowlanders were summarily known as “Muslim”.

<sup>35</sup> It would appear that some of those who were wounded on 28 August died later, increasing the number of fatalities to 60 Christian Eritreans overnight, however the exact number of losses of lives to the Asmara Massacre is unclear.

shooting and killing. If, say, only ten had engaged in the physical act of firing those weapons, we could not execute another fifty who had not pulled the trigger. I do not think the Bishop was impressed by this argument. But while I was talking to the Primate of Eritrea, the General stepped forward and stood to attention to salute the victims lying nearest to us. He was followed by Colonel Senior and myself and then repeated the gesture by every single body. This exceptional mark of respect by a red-tabbed general and Governor to a humble Abyssinian, indeed to all the anonymous victims, made a deep impression on the Abuna and the large concourse of people. By a hardly perceptible gesture he signaled to those nearest to us to let us go... Our attendance at the funeral had somewhat defused a very dangerous situation. The Sudanese troops were confined to barracks, and some small British reinforcements were brought to Eritrea. The court martial was convened within two months of that dreadful afternoon of 28 August. I only looked in on one or two of the early sessions of the court, as we were about to depart for Jerusalem. I was not happy about the attitude of the army authorities in charge of the culprits; they seemed to have little compassion for the victims and their relations” (1988: 185–6).

The BMA’s system of justice was said to require “proof beyond reasonable doubt” that “soldier X killed Eritrean Y”, and so no death penalties were issued; rendering vacuous Major-General Benoy’s promise to *Abuna* Markos and the angry crowd of mourners who had confronted him at the mass funeral of August 29<sup>th</sup> 1946 that justice would be done. Ullendorff was clearly shaken by what he witnessed. He later cited the aftermath of the Asmara massacre as his reason for disillusionment with the BMA in Eritrea and his subsequent decision to leave Asmara in late 1946.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> As a Zionist, young Ullendorff may also have been scared by the way increasing numbers of Jewish freedom fighters were being deported from British occupied Palestine to detention camps in Sudan and Eritrea. About 250 Palestinian Jewish “terrorists” were said to have been held in the high security prison camp of Sambal in the outskirts of Asmara in the early 1940s. Among them was future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir who escaped from Sambal with four of his comrades. Shamir and his friends succeeded in digging a tunnel under the prison fences and across a football field; finding shelter with an Italian family in Asmara where they hid for several weeks before boarding a bus for Addis Ababa; and then took the train to Djibouti. British security agents caught up with them and were ready to re-arrest them on arrival in Djibouti. However, the French authorities refused to hand over the fugitives. Shamir and his friends were granted political asylum and shipped to France. Shamir recalled that the French had noticed that the British security men had brought with them a priest, signaling to the French that they were going to execute the prisoners once recaptured, so the French refused to hand over the fugitives on the grounds of humanity. With respect to Eritrea, Shamir noted that it was “a beautiful country with a good climate - but, dear God, not for me...” and that the British were enraged by “the thought that Jewish freedom fighters were now on the loose throughout the dark and not especially pro-British continent” - See Shamir, 1994.



The BMA's vigorous political campaign to break up Eritrea had backfired, making it lose face both on moral and political grounds. However, the influence of Longrigg's short book of Eritrea's history lingered long after Brigadier Longrigg himself had moved on to write the histories of Iraq, Syria and Lebanon during 1950s, ultimately earning the Lawrence of Arabia Medal (in 1962) for his work in the Middle East.

While Eritrea emerged intact from 50 long and bitter years of struggle for self determination, and while the Eritreans themselves are to be credited for being "the architects of modern Eritrea," some British contempt for Eritrea still comes up in the media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, a recent "discovery" of Eritrea by a female British journalist writing another hurried colonial history of Eritrea struck the same notes as Trevaskis' (in tone) and Longrigg's (in substance), but lists only Longrigg's book among its sources, suggesting that Trevaskis' tone of disdain may be an inherent feature of some glib British individuals with career interests in Africa.<sup>37</sup>

The BMA did not succeed in realizing Longrigg's grand plan to dismember Eritrea and offer it as a prize to those it favored (Tesfai, 1999), but it carried it through as far as the Bevin-Sforza compromise (agreement between British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin and Italian Foreign Minister, Count Sforza struck in London to guarantee the protection of Italian citizens should Ethiopia succeed in being awarded Eritrea) which is well documented in *Aynfalale*. A key factor in thwarting the British plan was the political astuteness of Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Sellasie whose diplomatic envoys made a series of good moves (assisted by the young American lawyer, John Spencer and others) behind the backs of the BMA and BMME, practically beating them in their own game.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The author in question, London's *Financial Times* correspondent Michela Wrong, related that she stumbled upon Eritrea only in 1996, and made a few trips with brief periods of stay before she published her book with a telling title (2005). To her dismay, both British and Eritrean scholars in the UK and USA were quick to call her bluff - see for instance Christopher Clapham's review in the Times Literary Supplement (4 March 2005) which deemed the book "deeply flawed", even though Clapham is not particularly sympathetic to Eritrea, being a staunch Ethiopianist; and Abay (2005) who questioned the author's track record with respect to Africa; while those in Eritrea hosted a characteristically Eritrean public hearing/oral book review/"right to reply" in Asmara. Wrong was faced with a long list of factual errors her readers (including those mentioned in the book) had spotted in her book (leaving out her errors of judgement). This author had conducted a well organized promotional tour on both sides of the Atlantic before she returned to Eritrea during the Independence Carnival weekend, accompanied by a British film maker. Her visit coincided with the publication of excerpts of her book in the weekend travel section of the Financial Times with the title: "A great place, if you like tragedy" including a large photo of Cinema Roma in Asmara captioned: Little Italy..." (May 21/22, 2005). Sadly, instead of learning from her experience of Asmara style public hearing/oral book review and moving on, this author turned bitter and acrimonious as she continued to publish characteristically condescending pieces on the African countries said to have frustrated her travel plans - See for example <http://www.newstatesman.com/200601090005>.

<sup>38</sup> Finally defeated by the fascist Italian army in 1935, Haile Sellasie had fled to Europe (via the Sudan) in 1936 and remained exiled in England without any official British support or

*Radio Marina*, the former Italian intelligence headquarters in the outskirts of Asmara was occupied by the US Army Signal Corps who moved in quietly in 1942. Initially, it had three 40 KW transmitters which served to relay messages to and from naval vessels on/in the Red Sea, and beamed intelligence directly to the Pentagon; it was quickly upgraded and expanded to accommodate a sizeable staff comprising American servicemen (GIs) who lived a self-contained secluded communal life confined to the large compound with barracks, canteens, playing fields and social services including a school for their children, a church, shops and other amenities that turned the compound into “Little America”. As

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sympathy for his plight. The British watched with interest while the Italians worked very hard to make the central highlands of Ethiopia fit for European settlement, while Ethiopian freedom fighters (including Eritreans who defected from the Italian army) harassed them. Only when Italy declared war on the Allies by attacking Kassala did the British decide to acknowledge Haile Sellasie’s plight and assist his return to the Sudan to participate in the “Liberation Campaign” (see also footnotes 3 and 12 above). At that point, the British expected that liberating Ethiopia would help them replace the Axis control of the Suez Canal and Red Sea by Allied powers. According to Brett-James (1951) General di Corpo D’Armante Luigi Frusci, Governor of Eritrea and Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Northern Army had a quarter of a million troops at his disposal equipped with superior weaponry, while Major-General Platt had only three British battalions of infantry when the Italians attacked Kassala in July 1940. Five weeks later, the British responded by employing highly organized and effective intimidation tactics - scaring “the supine Italians” into believing that British military capacity was superior - using wisely all available resources including the reinforcement by the Fifth Indian Division, and succeeding in driving the Italians back to Akordat, then Keren, until they finally reached Asmara the following year. In the meantime, Haile Sellasie was kept waiting in the Sudan until the British set up the BMME in Addis Ababa. Haile Sellasie was then escorted back to Addis Ababa via Gojam by a few British officers led by Major Orde Wingate (later Major General). According to Captain Basil Burwood-Taylor (later Leut. Colonel) who was in Wingate’s unit, “The Gideon Force”, they finally reinstalled Haile Sellasie on his throne, arriving in Addis Ababa on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1941 (Almedom informal interview notes, 2003). Seeing that he was effectively put under British tutelage, Haile Sellasie moved quickly to name 7 ministers; reopen provincial and local government offices, rewarding local insurgent leaders and warriors with land and money; and declared independence, ignoring British directives that came from Sir Philip Mitchell (OETA) in Nairobi. He then signed the Addis Ababa agreement of 31 January 1942 in which Great Britain recognized Ethiopia as a sovereign country and invited other countries to help him rebuild the country - the USA and Sweden readily stepped in with social, economic and military assistance. Recalling this period, Mr Burwood-Taylor observed, “Haile Sellasie went behind every body’s backs...” (Almedom informal interview notes, 2006). Having left the British army and Ethiopia to return to civilian life in 1948, Mr Burwood-Taylor had returned to the region in the early 1960s, arriving in Asmara as a business man in 1962. He served as the General Manager of Gellatey-Hankey & Co. in Asmara until 1975 when he was kidnapped by the Eritrean Liberation Movement and released unharmed six months later. Mr Burwood-Taylor had forged lasting friendships with his Eritrean colleagues in Asmara, and said that he was well looked-after during his captivity, but relieved to return home to London on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1976. He revisited Eritrea in 1998 when he had a reunion with everyone who had worked with him including the staff of the British Consulate in Asmara. In response to a question about his former captors, he chuckled saying, “Yes, I met them; we greeted each other and then said, ‘Shall we have a drink’? And we did! No hard feelings, none at all” (Almedom informal interview notes, 2003).

clearly documented in *Aynfalale*, *Radio Marina* (later Kagnev Station) served as a valuable bargaining tool for Haile Sellassie to secure a profitable deal with the USA in 1943, and to keep at bay British and/or Italian threats to his authority and Ethiopia's national security. Asmara's convenient situation (located on the same longitude as Moscow, at high altitude with rarified air and a comfortably moderate climate with little diurnal variation in temperature and humidity) proved it to be an ideal setting for the Pentagon to monitor Eastern Block countries (which were under USSR's sphere of influence), the Middle East and beyond. This marked the beginning of the secret use of Eritrea by the USA in its global power struggle in which the Eritrean people had no say, while the USA benefited and Ethiopia profited.<sup>39</sup> Haile Sellassie succeeded in securing his Empire while the British Empire continued to lose its sphere of influence in the region, particularly after 1948 which marked India's independence (leaving a British imperial aftertaste of partition of India and Pakistan) and the birth of the State of Israel.

As detailed in *Aynfalale*, the BMA officers were busy trying to stop the Eritrean (Separatist) delegation to the United Nations led by *Sheikh* Ibrahim Sultan Ali (who had already been granted US entry visas by the time the BMA telegrams arrived in Cairo recommending that they be stopped in their tracks when they get to Cairo - where "they may be allowed to do some sight-seeing before they are sent back to Asmara") from reaching New York, which they did, but only to find that the General Assembly's vote was already heavily rigged against Eritrea in favor of the then US-backed Ethiopia.

In a fit of defeatism coupled with cynicism, the BMME unpicked Italian installations from Ethiopia and transferred them to the Sudan; while the BMA in Eritrea master-minded the systematic dismantling of Italian-installed factories, selling for scrap valuable buildings and machinery prior to handing over Eritrea to the Ethiopian Empire. Sylvia Pankhurst's eye witness account illustrated by the work of Eritrean photographer Haile Mezenghe (whom she duly acknowledged in her book which was published in 1952), documented some of

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<sup>39</sup> According to Marcus, "Radio Marina was important to American security, and it was located in a region Washington wanted to keep free of Soviet influence. Since Italy had the West's largest Communist party, and it was possible that Marxists might rule Rome, the United States refused to entertain any notion of returning Eritrea to Italy... Since Addis Abeba had a strong preference for the West, American policymakers decided to support Ethiopia's claim to Eritrea, a move that was backed ultimately by Great Britain and other major powers. Washington reasoned, however, that the ex-colony's recent history was different enough from other Ethiopian provinces to warrant an autonomous government. Sponsoring a federal arrangement was the perfect American way of showing gratitude for Ethiopia's contribution of troops to the United Nation's effort in Korea... In October 1952, negotiations to formalize the status of Radio Marina, then called Kagnev Station (after the Ethiopian battalion that had returned from Korea in May 1952), provided the vehicle leading to the signature, on 22 May 1953, of a base and facilities agreement and a standard military assistance treaty regulating the delivery of weapons and other equipment and providing for a Military Assistance Advisory Group. By then the United States was also deeply involved in Ethiopia's economic development" (2002: 158-9).

the destruction and removal of Eritrean assets, the value of most of which could not be accurately estimated in monetary terms. While Pankhurst focused on Massawa, the destruction of which drove her to declare the demolitions “A disgrace to British Civilization!” (p. 13), other places such as the small industrial town of Deqemhare, 40 kms south of Asmara had also suffered comparable destruction prior to the BMA’s departure.<sup>40</sup> The Conservative British government’s response to all the accusations leveled at it was that it had no responsibility for actions/crimes committed by private individuals who were acting on their own initiatives as business men, contractors, or sub-contractors in Eritrea (see also footnote 22 above). Brigadier Stephen H. Longrigg did not live to witness Eritrea’s independence, but his legacy certainly continued to haunt Eritrea long after his death in 1979, and neither the Eritrean nor the British public had a chance to find out the whole truth until 2001 when *Aynfalale* was published.

## 5. ERITREA’S SELF DETERMINATION - WHOSE SELF?

*Aynfalale* presents unequivocal evidence in support of the view that the first phase of Eritrea’s struggle for self determination began in 1941 and spanned 50 years, and not just the oft-cited 30 years of armed conflict. As 1991 heralded the end of the struggle for independence and the beginning of the struggle for nation building, the question of self determination remained as relevant then as it was at the official end of World War II in 1945. Central Eritrea, particularly Asmara was in a terrible state of disrepair when finally liberated on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1991. Upon arrival, the EPLF leadership inherited a totally run-down economy with a rotten infrastructure.<sup>41</sup> A wide range of foreign bodies - including private individuals, western governmental and non-governmental agencies - understandably wanted “to do something in Eritrea”, seeing it as a newly discovered land of opportunity on which to practice post-conflict reconstruction

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<sup>40</sup> Known in its heyday as “*zona industria*” and “*secondo Milano*”, Deqemhare was faced with mass unemployment resulting in the loss of its urban skilled labor because the factories that employed them in Deqemhare had been dismantled and the scrap removed and shipped to the Sudan or sold to Indian/Pakistani and Arab merchants by the British civilians/officers who operated as private contractors. According to the elders of Deqemhare, “the English did not leave behind even pins, not even needles from our factories, they took away everything!” (Almedom *et al.*, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> It had been Haile Sellassie’s overtly declared policy that Ethiopia was “interested in the land and not the people of Eritrea”, particularly with reference to the lowland “Muslim” communities whose villages were systematically destroyed by Ethiopian troops who burned villages and massacred their inhabitants throughout the 1950s, 60s and first half of the 70s. The military Marxist-Leninist regime which succeeded Haile Sellasie continued in the same vein with even more terror. Inhabitants of Ethiopian controlled urban centers like Asmara had witnessed, navigated and in some instances also committed neglect of their social and moral responsibilities as Eritrean citizens.

- a sort of training ground, much as it was for Major Trevaskis, Mr Ullendorff, and Brigadier Longrigg and others in the 1940s. Many walked in wearing their metaphorical heavy boots labeled “human rights”, “governance” and a few other new trade marks, and went about treading on Eritrean toes barely out of their sandals. These presented real obstacles to nation building by imposing time-framed requirements for multi-party elections in exchange for foreign aid. While some were more genuinely interested than others to help Eritrea and its people to rebuild their nation - their lives and livelihoods - manifestations of the same old tricks employed by Longrigg were evident. The Eritrean leadership had to negotiate new diplomatic grounds in which new and old “friends of Eritrea” were set to manipulate foreign aid as a tool for developing individual and collective ‘spheres of influence’ in ways that Chicago sociologist Saul Alinsky (1965) had long decried with reference to American foreign aid.

Meanwhile, contrary to certain unrealistic expectations of an entitled section of Asmara citizenry that stood idle and waited for the new government to perform miracles, most Eritreans, particularly rural women were aware of the challenges and resolved to give what it takes to rebuild Eritrean lives and livelihoods. They were also painfully conscious of the time it would take to reach the goals to which they had long aspired - political, social and economic security. Their first visit to Asmara was an extraordinary experience to so many participants of the Fourth Congress of the National Union of Eritrean Women - the first one of its kind to be held in Asmara in September 1992. They were more articulate and aware of their rights and responsibilities than some of the women of Asmara who had lived under Ethiopian occupation - a period of stagnation and decay. Eritrean women from the Liberated Zone north, south, east and west of the central highlands were critical of western advocates of human rights and their local puppets who were propagating the fallacy of a level playing field between the abused and the abuser, thwarting the prospects for justice and restitution (Almedom field notes, 1992).

As was the case when Brigadier Longrigg set foot in Eritrea, fundamental differences between the Eritrean idea of deliberating on the future of the country as a collective, communal body inclusive of all political persuasions and creed (which the EPLF had embodied); and the European individualist mentality colored by the deeply ingrained ideology of “divide and rule” became clearly visible. It remained “not in the interest of powerful western countries” to nurture African processes of collective self determination, or even individual self expression for the African “common good” without allowing room for British pundit dictations.

With respect to the British government, it is important to recall at this juncture that the British Labour Party had initiated contact with the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) in the early 1980s, having lost the election to the Conservative Party led by Mrs. Margaret Thatcher in 1979. The first official representative of the Labour Party to go to the Liberated Zone was Martin Plaut, Party delegate to the Congress of Workers’ and Women’s Mass Organisations in Eritrea in December 1982. While the Labour Party remained in “Opposition” for

18 years (1979–1997) before it finally succeeded in getting elected to govern, an extraordinary thing had happened: The Labour Party under the leadership of Mr. Neil Kinnock (a Welshman), **acknowledged British government debt to Eritrea and sent an official delegation to Eritrea in April 1984.** [emphasis added] Mr. Stuart Holland, Labour Member of Parliament for Lambeth Vauxhall (South London) and James Firebrace, Programme Officer for the Sahel and Horn of Africa, War on Want (a non-governmental organization, NGO) visited the Liberated Zone of Eritrea for a fact finding mission, and published their report as a book (Firebrace and Holland, 1984). The book included excerpts of an extensive in-depth interview with the young EPLF leader Isaias Afewerki, conducted by the authors who recorded the interview, transcribed and edited it themselves. The extract below shows the level of insight into and foresight of the global power struggle between East and West and the degree of commitment to the Eritrean people that the EPLF's leadership articulated:

“SH: You will be well aware that the Labour Party has published a strong resolution in relation to the whole question of Eritrea, but this is the first time that a representative of the Parliamentary Labour Party has visited the EPLF in the field. We feel this is overdue, because we have certain debts to clear in relation to the period of British Trusteeship after the war. [emphasis added]

“But we also were persuaded that it was important to see directly what the situation is here and to learn from what you have achieved in the area of development, particularly on the ‘basic needs’ approach. I think it was Rene Dumont, the French socialist, in his book ‘Socialisms and Development’ who said ‘one working agricultural cooperative is worth Five-Year paper Plans.’

“You not only have pioneered a range of impressive cooperatives but also have prototyped new models of development which frankly are not fully recognized in your statement of objectives... Your Party's Programme... a kind of socialism by deed, by demonstration, by example, which is beginning to impress people internationally.”

“IA: The interest you have shown is very encouraging for the EPLF because only a few people have really seen our experience. We feel that the outside world is beginning to understand our situation and is becoming more interested in what we are doing here... We want to transform this society and to have a modern society... we are striving to fight for our right to self-determination and to transform this society socially, economically, culturally... we have not had the support of the Soviet Union, China and other forces in the world - who gave all kinds of support to the Vietnamese and to other revolutions. Ours is totally different. The Americans are against our cause - and their global influence influences other forces outside the region. Of course this makes

this struggle rely on the resources of the Eritrean people which is very limited... We have learned how to rely on ourselves. We now possess practically every sophisticated weapon that the Ethiopian armed forces possess.”

“SH: ...In Europe, it is evident from the millions of people who have taken to the streets that they want a nuclear-free Europe which is independent of the nuclear policy of either of the superpowers... Your achievements are remarkable - without superpower support - in terms of sophisticated health care provision, in terms not just of repair but the manufacture of large-scale machine tools we have seen today, the electrical and electronic work, and other examples. The military victories are part of the same non-aligned dynamic - they are remarkable by any standards... It must have been a surprise to find that the Soviet Union actually was going to be the superpower opposing your revolution.”

“IA: We prefer to refrain from entering into big politics, but we are convinced about one thing: the aspiration for socialism in the Third World is completely understandable... We need not expect much from the Soviet Union because it was not only after the Derg came to power that the Soviet Union fully stood on the side of the Ethiopian government. They were friends with Haile Selassie and they never openly supported the Eritrean struggle during Haile Selassie’s rule... We never took them for enemies, but nor did we have any illusions about their global strategy. In the course of six years we now have established one factor which was not established before 1977, that the Soviet Union cannot be a genuine friend to Third World people outside its global interests.”<sup>42</sup>

“JF: Finally, there’s also been talk recently of right-wing Conservative MPs in Britain such as Winston Churchill and Julian Amery speaking for the Eritrean case. What is your attitude to this?”

“IA: The support coming from the Right in Europe can be related to a situation in Europe. The assumption that the regime in Addis could ever be detached from the Soviet Union and that they could replace the Soviet Union is fading away... The assumption was that one day in the future the experience of Egypt might repeat itself in Ethiopia. Now that belief, or that expectation is fading away... Once the Right have confirmed that

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<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, these same concerns about Russia with respect to Africa resonate in Chatham House’s director of Africa Programme, Alex Vines’ critique of Mr. Blair’s “Commission for Africa” and what might happen when Russia takes over the presidency of the G-8 Group of industrialized countries and the European Union from Britain - see *Into Africa. The World Today* (March 2005).

it's no use maneuvering or flirting with the regime in Addis in order to detach it from the Soviet Union, they have to decide whether to support the Eritrean movement as an instrument for pressurizing or changing the whole situation to their interest. They might try to use someone to that end. But we would not be misled by any support that comes to the Eritrean struggle if it's aimed at manipulating the situation for interests that do not conform with the aspirations of our population" (Firebrace and Holland, 1984: 127–140).

Neither "the Right" nor "the Left" in the UK or Europe stepped in to assist Eritrea, except for modest amounts of humanitarian aid from various public donations to non-governmental agencies like War on Want and Oxfam (UK) that were channeled through the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) whose efficiency and accountability became a model of true humanitarianism unmatched by any other (see Firebrace and Holland, 1984; Sorenson, 1993; Duffield and Prendergast, 1994). However, the East began to experience massive tremors of political reform with the rise of Mr Mikhail Gorbachev to leadership of the Soviet Union in 1985. By 1989, the effect of those reforms was visibly seen in Europe - fall of the Berlin Wall - and later on in the Horn of Africa. Gorbachev stopped the USSR's military support to Ethiopia and so its military Marxist-Leninist dictator Colonel Menghistu Hailemariam fled to Zimbabwe taking with him Ethiopia's national reserve funds and his army surrendered to the EPLF in Asmara on Thursday 23 May 1991, and Assab was liberated the next day, May 24<sup>th</sup> - Eritrea's national Day of Independence.

The challenges of the first 5–7 years of independent Eritrea included negative western media attention focusing on the leadership seeking to isolate one or two 'cult' personalities. By 1996, Eritrea was already facing a constant barrage of low-level and low-intensity media attacks on its leadership style from both African and western supremacists including former "friends of Eritrea." They all aspired for new roles as political advisors/patrons of the government. When met with resistance among leaders at one end of the spectrum of self determination, freelance operators unleashed 'dirty tricks campaigns' against those who resisted the pressure, while others played the Eritrean and the Ethiopian leaders off against each other - personal wars were being fought by proxy polarizing Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi by dangling in front of them favor with the American government, and material incentives such as western humanitarian relief and development aid.<sup>43</sup> As was the case in the 1940s, British attacks against Eritrea

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<sup>43</sup> The case of an American journalist and freelance writer who was then a staunch supporter of Eritrea while his former wife worked as US government advisor and openly favored Ethiopia was often cited as an example of rigging of international peace and security through petty personal feuds at the expense of the Eritrean people. In a series of conversations and informal discussions held with rural and urban Eritrean women in *Zoba Gash-Barka*, Ma'ekel and Debub during 1998 and 1999, it transpired that western aid workers who were milling about in Eritrea were perceived as rejects: "It is the bad ones who come here, those who



and its people during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s have been economically-driven, involving deceitful writings of certain ‘professionals’ who produced both signed and unsigned documents that are either economical with the truth, or laced with sheer lies. They precipitated an all out war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998–2000 using the pretext of a border dispute. The war was widely labeled as ‘pointless’ and ‘irrational’ by the very people who fuelled it behind the scenes - see Alemseged Tesfai’s thoughtful and balanced briefing (1999) on the reasons behind the conflict.<sup>44</sup>

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would find no jobs in their own countries; that is why they come here...” (Tigrinya women) while the Eritrean government was endearingly referred to as, “*Deqina*” - our children; with spontaneous additions of “*Isaias anbessa, mequanintu nebri*”, Isaias [Afwerki] a Lion, and his officers, Tigers - to emphasize the Eritrean leadership’s evident strength to protect the country and people of Eritrea. (Almedom field notes, 1998; 1999).

<sup>44</sup> An example of a contemporary British disinformation specialist which follows the Longrigg model came from a British writer with (academic training credentials in experimental psychology) who produced an unsigned document designed to destroy Eritrea in early 1998. The essay/newspaper editorial style short essay charted Eritrea’s economic prospects, even if it “survived the war” which was about to be waged, but had not actually happened when the document was written and selectively distributed to appease Meles Zenawi and to wage psychological warfare by trying to intimidate the Eritreans. The document was highly speculative, unsubstantiated with facts and/or figures, and unscholarly. The gist of its convoluted argument was that Ethiopia was heavily indebted to the IMF and World Bank and that it could not possibly repay the debt on its own; Eritrea had to help out because it had no debt to repay these institutions. What was not mentioned was that Ethiopia incurred the debt while it was fighting the long war with Eritrea and Tigray. The new (Tigray dominated) Ethiopian government had inherited the debt. After the border war broke out, this writer continued to frequent both Asmara and Addis Ababa at will, using his Eritrean ‘family connections’ to access to political power in both countries until the Ethiopian government suddenly refused him entry to Addis Ababa in the morning of 27 March 1999, detaining him at the airport with threats of deportation to London on the first available flight. He manipulated his way out of the situation and into Addis Ababa using his Eritrean family connections who were themselves threatened with deportation from Addis Ababa. It was later discovered that they had entrusted their hard-earned savings to this same exploitative British writer who used the money as disposable income for almost a year without their knowledge or consent. He was eventually made to pay them back. Had they been deported and not survived their ordeal, nothing would have been heard about this Eritrean family and the British writer who blighted them - see Legesse, 1999; 2000 for detailed accounts of the level of human rights violations of uncountable Ethiopian citizens of Eritrean origin (women and men, girls and boys, representing all age groups) who were mass deported from Addis Ababa and other parts of Ethiopia during 1998–99 and dumped on the Eritrean border in the same way that Italians and Arabs were deported from Ethiopia in the 1940s as documented by Trevaskis - see footnote 32 above. The British writer continued to blight the Eritrean family as his writings served to appease the Ethiopian regime which had successfully established “dual government” consisting of “façades” of human rights based democratic institutions including multi-party elections; alongside “iron fist” rule involving harassment of civilian voters, vote rigging, and summary killings of opposition party members once elected (see Pausewang et al.’s reports, 2001; and Ofcansky’s review/commentary which appeared in *Africa Today* 2005, 51, 4: 111–112).

Brutal disinformation campaigns aiming to penetrate and break up the Eritrean leadership continued even after the border conflict ended. Eritrean (insider) pundits also played their part. For example, the organizer of the meeting of Eritrean “intellectuals” who drafted of the so-called “Berlin Manifesto” of 2001, a former civilian member who had deserted the EPLF in 1990 amidst allegations of fraud and misappropriation of ERA funds in Khartoum, and was granted amnesty upon his return to Eritrea soon after independence successfully “covered the wool over the eyes” of many, including those working for reputable European NGOs who funded in good faith his campaigns against Eritrean unity cloaked under a “human rights” banner.<sup>45</sup>

In spite of continued betrayals by the “international community”, Eritrea is making remarkable progress in terms of putting its own house in order - slowly but surely. Constant government anti-corruption crack down measures continue to grieve many Eritrean business men and women who voice their opinions freely, including in public debates locally, nationally and internationally. While this has been widely known and is often admired by international observers within and outside the country (see for example Makki, 1996; Calhoun and DeLargy, 1996), Eritrea may continue to be misrepresented by some entitled individual British self promoters who readily mimic S. H. Longrigg.<sup>46</sup> While ethics and accountability are still written about in structural terms with reference to humanitarian and political institutions, the concept of honor and dishonor of fellow human beings is largely obscured by the activities of unscrupulous individuals who make a living out of disinformation enterprises. As was the case under the BMA in the 1940s, Eritrea’s ethnic and religious diversity and political stability are cited as reasons for disunity in modern Eritrea. Just as the fact that British Government leadership is dominated by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, two ethnic Scotsmen, can hardly be seen by Eritreans and other Africans as a sign that Scotland is ruling over England and Wales the personalities and

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<sup>45</sup> The important activities of human rights research and advocacy that “Citizens for Peace in Eritrea”, an Eritrean NGO conducts were seriously threatened by the political manipulations of the organizer/co-author of the “Berlin Manifesto” who claimed to represent this NGO without the informed consent of those who run the organization. Citizens for Peace in Eritrea survived the threat and continued to represent citizen’s human rights and responsibilities as a recent public panel discussion conducted in Asmara demonstrates (see *Hidri*, January-February 2006 - Tigrinya issues).

<sup>46</sup> This can include the publication of book-length manuscripts pretending to originate from African sources who either remain unacknowledged, allegedly for their own personal protection or they can only be “explained” by western experts. A collection of unsigned essays with a telling title, *Who fights? Who cares?* (Africa World Press, 2000) supposedly aiming to “stimulate thought about options for the future” [of Africa] is one clear example. Had the “editor” engaged Africans in public debate in good faith, they may have surprised him by surpassing his low expectations by simply speaking for themselves and offering counter narratives. The same editor’s handling of a special issue of the London-based magazine, *Index on Censorship* (January 2004) also produced indignation among African women and men who know the apparently manipulated African voices.

ethnic origins of Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders cannot be seriously considered as the determinants of peace and political stability in the Horn of Africa.

Today, the airwaves of Asmara are crammed with multiple political broadcasts in the vernacular from multiple sources in the Middle East, Europe, and North America including “*Radio Vatican*” (Vatican City), *Deutsche Velle* (Germany) and *Voice of America* (USA) with mixed messages most of which carry negative biases towards the leadership. However, on the ground, the EPLF’s long standing policy of “Unity in Diversity” has continued to bear fruit, most notably in the health and education sectors. The Eritrean government’s focus on the rural populations scourged by malaria and other preventable diseases has resulted in marked reductions in maternal and infant mortality and morbidity as acknowledged by the World Health Organization, and facing the challenges of HIV-AIDS with exemplary social organization (Müller, 2005).

Similarly, the policy of access to primary education in the first language of every Eritrean child implemented by introducing the new Eritrean public school curriculum in September 2003 is nipping in the bud attitudes and practices associated with discrimination against “minorities”. The new curriculum introduced text books in the vernacular for every primary school child to learn to read and write in her/his first language, building on the understanding that having to be schooled in a language of “the dominant group” had relegated the majority to minority status; bringing to fruition over two decades of struggle for public participation and self determination through literacy and education, Eritrean style (see Gottesman, 1998). The conception and ratification of the Asmara Declaration (2000) in Eritrea, South Africa and other African countries has marked a new impetus for self determination, declaring the dawn of a new century where African knowledge of Africa is yet to be acknowledged by all descendants of former colonial powers, European as well as African (see Appendix - “Asmara Declaration” in Tigrinya and English).

Unlike the 1940s, when Longrigg’s book was read by only a limited circle of British readers, today’s books are more easily accessible and readers (including members of the Eritrean as well as British public) are less easily fooled. With respect to western notions of Africa, ignorance is no longer a vice that cannot be tackled, but arrogance may remain a problem for the enlightened. Academic historians may also be subject to censorship and political pressure which can affect the quality and/or integrity of their work - see for example the predicament of American historian of Ethiopia, Harold Marcus who declares:

“Given the economics of publishing, I have not been permitted to integrate their [his unnamed reviewers] valid suggestions into the updated edition... I promise to act on all the helpful advice of my reviewers in an all-new third edition, which will be written before 2010. Meanwhile, let me respond to one reviewer who was irate that I had sullied the reputation of some British Commonwealth officers and men who served in Ethiopia in 1941–42. He was correct in his charges, and I apologize for my overly purple prose. I hope he will be pleased with my better-informed treatment of his military compatriots to appear in chapter

11 of my forthcoming full-length biography... [of Haile Selassie]" (2002: xiii).

Interestingly, Marcus' worry about how to keep publishing the history of Ethiopia in a way that is palatable to British individuals who are concerned about their own reputation has no room for Ethiopian women and men's views on this whole enterprise. In contrast, Alemseged Tesfai's *Aynfalale* was published neither for international marketing purposes nor academic kudos. It is the first book of its kind that brings to light the history of Eritrea in which Eritreans are no longer overshadowed by colonial players whose accounts had rendered Eritreans invisible. *Aynfalale* succeeds in driving home the lesson that historical events and personalities need to be understood in the social, political, economic and cultural context in which they came to be, lest anger and resentment inhibits the proverbial "learning from history". *Aynfalale* engages the reader in non-judgemental learning. Eritrea's lesson is that combating ignorance and arrogance through education and public participation is the most effective way to keep the blight of external as well as internal political rigging at bay, in order to promote real self determination for peace and justice.

It is reassuring to see that 21<sup>st</sup> century students and graduates of both British and American institutions of higher education have clearer vision of the long-term benefits of cooperation and collaboration with their African counterparts - paving a more equitable path to international relations and responsible global citizenship. A great many scholars of African studies and practitioners of humanitarian aid and development across the continents are actively contributing to solving political, social and economic problems in Africa, consciously choosing to be part of the solution rather than the problem/s. The challenge is to be able to differentiate between the two amidst the rapidly moving advanced technology for the acquisition of knowledge from global exchanges of information and disinformation. The importance of documentation and preservation of African history by Africans writing in the vernacular, and westerners actively engaging in co-translating African literature on equal footing cannot be overestimated. It is not by coincidence that Eritrea provided the venue for the first conference ever to be held on African soil to bring African languages and literatures to the limelight of global education for public inquiry and international citizenship (not unlike Tufts University's "EPIIC Program" - see Barry, 2006). The "Asmara Declaration" on African languages and literatures heralded a revival of positive engagement for Africans with other Africans and for westerners with Africans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Eritreans and others who remain unperturbed by the persistently negative disinformation campaigns that are designed to thwart their growth and to diminish their personhood spell resilience, a concept well beyond the geographical boundaries and national identity of a small portion of humanity.

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