

Graziani and the TPLF, an Ethiopian saga. By Yilma Bekele

'The Duce will have Ethiopia, with or without the Ethiopians'. Rodolfo Graziani

I am writing this as a proud Ethiopian because Graziani's promise to the Fascist dictator was thwarted by my gallant ancestors. If it was not for the bravery and sacrifice of our grandparents, to day our country will be referred to as ex Italian Colony, we will be conversing in Italian, our national dish would be spaghetti and my name will probably be Mario. Please don't knock it because my country being referred to as the only independent country in Africa, having my own national language, dining on Injera and answering to an original name is what defines me as unique member of the human race.

The Ethiopian and Italian entanglement goes very far back in history. The period known as 'the scramble for Africa' from 1870 to 1914 is a good place to start. It was a time the European powers were invading, colonizing, occupying and abusing Africans all over the continent. After the scrooge of slavery this was another century where being black was not a desirable existence, not that it is any different now. To avoid warring each other the Europeans decided to sit around a table and carve out the continent into outright ownership of people and country and spheres of influence. Italy already had Libya and decided to include Ethiopia in its portfolio.

Unfortunate for the Italians the Ethiopians found the idea absurd to say the least. The battle of Adwa settled the matter and dealt the Europeans their one and only defeat in Africa. The victory at Adwa will forever define what it means to be an Ethiopian. Generations will use this colossal event to shape and mold their children to grow up with pride and determination to guard what is their own and not to covet what belongs to others.

The Italians never forgave us for the humiliation at Adwa. After waiting for forty years they came back in 1935 to avenge their defeat. They came back better prepared. They used superior weapons including poison gas trying to overwhelm our barefoot army on horseback. They occupied most of our sacred land. They won a few battles but were unable to win the war. Our grandparents never gave the invading army a single day of respite. The concept of guerilla warfare that has become the mainstay of all oppressed peoples response to overwhelming force was brilliantly utilized by our ancestors. You can say they wrote the book on mobile war using a few to harass and demoralize the enemy while recovering national strength.

This brings us to the infamous General Rodolfo Graziani Governor of Italian East Africa. His ghost is what is waking us up from where we having been lying down comfortably numb for over forty years. Graziani tried to do what Meles Zenawi was able to accomplish. I know harsh words but deservingly so. Let me tell you what Graziani did to us in 1936. The day was Friday February nineteenth. Viceroy Graziani decided to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Naples in Addis Abeba at the 'Genete Leul

palace.' Abreha Deboch and Moges Asgedom two of the most beautiful Ethiopians our country has ever produced threw ten grenades at the fascist pig and his accomplices during the celebration.

What happened next will forever live in our heart and mind as the price paid when sovereignty is lost. The Federal Secretary Guido Cortese gave the following order to his soldiers:

“Comrades, today is the day when we should show our devotion to our Viceroy by reacting and destroying the Ethiopians for three days. For three days I give you carte blanche to destroy and kill and do what you want to the Ethiopians.”

Ethiopians were hunted down like prey animals and killed. Over thirty thousand (30,000) of our people died in revenge. No one was spared. They burnt the town down and murdered everything that moved. Graziani earned the name “butcher of Ethiopia.” I doubt there is anyone amongst us that has not lost a distant relative in this bloodbath. Darkness fell on our country and we were given a taste of what it means to be under the mercy of an occupying force.

On the other hand Graziani’s animalistic and criminal behavior aroused the righteous anger of any and all red blooded Ethiopians. The fascist pigs never knew peace in the land of the habeshas until they were driven out the second time hopefully never to return again. This little note is by no means an adequate exposition of our fearless and gallant ancestors but it would be unforgivable not to mention Lij Haile Mariam Mamo-the first *árbegna*’, Dejazmacj Abarra Kasa from the north-west, Dejazmach balcha Aba Nebso from the south-west, Ras Abebe Argay leader of the band, Shaleka Mesfin Seleshi, Ras Desta Damtew from the south, Ato Belay Zeleke and host of other notables that stood a head above others and gave the enemy a taste of Ethiopian indignation.

As I said before the ghost of this evil specimen of a human being is with us again. In 2012 his town of Affile built a mausoleum in memory the fascist pig. Yes the same Graziani that ordered the killing of over thirty thousand people in a three days period, the same criminal that used mustard gas throughout our homeland killing in the hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians was honored as a patriot and a hero by his people. They felt they could do that because they knew there would be no one to stop them. What they saw was a country divided into nine Bantustans, a country in the process of degrading its past, a country willing to sacrifice its youth pushing, encouraging them to go where harm awaits them. Yes the citizens of Affile felt no shame because they knew no one will call them out.

We might be down but we are not dead yet. As there were ‘wust arebenoch’ during the occupation, there are still plenty of patriots that keep the flame of freedom alive. The shameful act of the people of Affile was too much to take. Patriotic Ethiopians decided to protest this fascist spit on our honor and insult to the memory of our people by marching and showing their righteous indignation in our homeland. You would think any government that is the recipient of this unjust provocation will lead the charge on behalf of its citizens. That it will use its moral power to unite its citizens and humanity at

large and put the unrepentant Italians on notice that this kind of act is not acceptable, is counterproductive and unnecessarily brings buried memories to the forefront.

This is not unique to us. The Germans were made to accept responsibility for the crimes of Hitler, the Japanese were held liable for their atrocities in China and South East Asia, and the US showed its profound sorrow for slavery and so on. In the scheme of human history some shameful acts were committed and since no one can turn time back the responsibility of the current generation is to look back at the horror and shame and take responsibility and do what is necessary to teach its citizens so there would be no chance today or in the future for history to repeat itself.

No need to travel to Germany or Japan when we can just walk over to our neighbor in the south. The Kenyans have sued the British government for imprisonment and torture during the Mau Mau uprising for independence and their case is being heard in London. As far as I know the Kenyan government has not jailed any of its citizens for requesting accountability. Needless to say we do not have a legitimate government that reflects the aspirations of the citizen. Thus our patriotic protesters that dared express their views on the matter were beaten by Woyane police and hauled to prison. Their protest was seen as a criminal act. The odd situation here is that a few Italians that felt this miscarriage of justice did protest in Italy but no one beat them up and none were imprisoned for peacefully making their objections known.

We are one unique people aren't we? No one will believe this unfolding story taking place in our ancient land. No one with a fertile imagination will come up with this kind of scenario even for as fiction. When we think we have seen enough our Woyane masters idiocy they seem to have this bottomless pit where they pull out a new and more bizarre behavior to confound our senses.

At the beginning I compared Graziani to the recently departed Meles Zenawi the Woyane warlord. Some of you probably thought I have gone too far. Some of you judged me unfair and filled with hate. I understand. I felt the same way when I wrote it down. I almost took it out. Then I slept on it. Further reflection made me realize I am not really off the mark. I will state my point, you my brethren be the judge.

Graziani was avenging his people's humiliation at Adwa. He came back with a purpose. What exactly did he do to make sure Ethiopia will never rise again? Wanton killing was one. Selective murder was another. The use of mustard gas, burning of villages and the Addis massacre are examples of wanton killing. The May 19th murder of 297 monks and 23 laymen of Debre Libanos Monastery is a calculated act of terror to discredit our ancient religion. Furthermore the liquidation of the young Ethiopian intellectuals and their organization 'The Black Lions' was another assault on what is dear to us. Other than those that left the country with the Emperor and the lucky ones that found their way to Sudan and Kenya all were executed. This I will file under selective murder.

The Italians also redrew the map of our country to create separate Bantustans. They divided our country into six units as follows: 1) Eritrea to include Tigrai – capital Asmara 2) Amhara to include Begemeder, Gojjam, Wello and northern Shoa - capital Gonder 3) Galla and Sidamo –capital Jimma 4) Addis Abeba 5) Harar 6) Somalia-capital Mogadishu

Well, well, well, where do you think the great mind of Meles came up with his kilil solution? Now you know what he has been reading while holed down in his cave in the mountains of Tigrai. History will also show that his first target was none other than Haile Selassie University in search of intellectuals to liquidate, imprison or exile. Meles and Graziani- two peas in a pod. I rest my case.

The period from 1935 to 1941 is referred to as the time of Italian ‘occupation.’ It is not known as Italian ‘colonization.’ That is so because our resistance did not give the Italians the legitimacy they so desired. Our patriots never allowed the Italian flag to fly unchallenged. Our Emperor was gallantly going to every capital in Europe and the League of Nations keeping the flame of freedom alive while our patriots at home were waging a successful guerrilla war keeping the fascist army in a state of fear and uncertainty.

We their children have failed our forefathers. We are unable to resist a home grown fascist dominating us using an old user’s manual. There are groups fighting the regime but unfortunately no one has managed to break out and claim the vanguard role. We are working on that. Where there is oppression there is resistance and we are not different. It is obvious we’re fighting an uphill battle. Our people are not educated, our communication system is rudimentary and our enemy is very cunning with plenty of resource. The young and able that are open to new ideas are being systematically marginalized using cheap drug to numb the mind and encouraged to leave the homeland. No matter, the planes and advanced weapons did not deter our ancestors and surely illiterate and not more than a thousand Woyane diehards are not going to make us flinch from our destiny of making sure our country take its deserved place as the leader of all Black people.

Finally here is a beautiful and timely poem from a play written by Ato Yoftahe Negus while in exile in the Sudan as quoted by Ato Berhanu Zewde. You will find information on Ato Berhanu’s book at the end of this article.

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He who continues to lead a life of mirth and fun
While a deadly plague is raging
He who is not vigilant in the face of death
May his soul perish with his body!
For this is not a light matter

Bahru Zewde-The Ethiopian Intelligence and the Italian Ethiopian War, 1935-1941 (The International Journal of African Historical Studies, vol. 26, No. 2(1993.)

Richard Pankhurst –The Ethiopians- A History. (Blackwell Publishers USA 1998, pp238-239)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yekatit_12#cite_ref-7

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodolfo_Graziani