

Abune Petros in our heart. By Yilma Bekele

On July 29th. 1936 Abune Petros was executed by the Italian fascist that were trying to colonize our country for his refusal to submit. On May 2nd. 2013 the monument that was built to commemorate our Holy Father was removed by the order of the TPLF party that is currently ruling our country. Our Holy Father died for the first time. The murder by a firing squad was an honor and showed his deep love for his people and country. The fascist killed his body but he made his home in every Ethiopian soul for ever and ever. We all carry Abune Petros in our heart. 'Abune Petros Adebabaye', 'Abune Petros Hawelt' is not just a location but the symbol of our pride and the true meaning of sacrifice for a higher cause.

The order to Kill Abune Petros was given by the fascist Viceroy Graziani but the trigger was pulled by solders from the North that were faithfully serving the fascist invader. The order to remove our monument to our beloved father was given by the TPLF party but the backhoe and flatbed truck was driven by modern day Banda's.

They claim the removal is temporary. That is not the issue. Was it necessary is our question. Could it have been avoided is our point. Aren't there some things considered priceless is our contention. The same people that moved heaven and earth to bring back our stolen Obelisk and erect it in its rightful place felt no qualms about dispatching daily laborers to bring our hero down and place him in a warehouse. We rejoiced when our obelisk was returned because it is the symbol of our glorious past. Although their leader dismissed our joy and happiness and tried to claim it as his peoples private history we bit our tongue and dismissed his rudeness for immaturity.

I agree it is difficult to personally relate to a stone like an obelisk. Nevertheless it is the product of our ancestors and a symbol of their ingenuity for that period in our past. But Abune Petros is a living symbol every one of us would have no problem claiming, admiring and silently thinking 'would I have courage to act like him?'

Abune Petros is what I always thought we Ethiopians were like. I was raised at a time when being an Ethiopian was something special. There was not enough adjective to describe our country and people. Yes I am aware that we had lots of problems to resolve after all forging a nation is not a cake walk. There were many that were left behind and quite a few that did not get a fair share of what was on the table. We are still trying to come to terms with that.

That still should not dampen our glorious past. Abune Petros was one of those bigger than life Ethiopians that added a positive value to our experience. He defined patriotism, resolve, love, spiritual guidance and commitment to the truth. He accompanied our Emperor and the civilian army to Maichew and confronted the fascist army. He witnessed the gallantry of his people and the savageness of the European invaders. They came with modern weapons and poison gas to scare

us to submission. We lost the battle but it only made us realize defeat was not an option. Surrender was not the language of the Ethiopian at that time. Yes times do change. A visitor would have a hard time believing the current generation descended from those that even washed the shoes of the foreigners lest they take our soil with them.

Abune Petros continued to fight the way he knew. His religion and his love for his country were his weapons. From the monastery of Debre Libanos to far away churches he continued to rally his people to stand up straight and took the cry 'By any means necessary!' to drive the invader out of our cherished land. During his interrogation this is what he told the fascist authority when asked to accept Italy's sovereignty over Ethiopia or face death.

"The cry of my countrymen who died due to your nerve-gas and terror machinery will never allow my conscious to accept your ultimatum. How can I see my God if I give a blind eye to such a crime?"

His last words before the bullets tore our bishop and Holy Father were:

"My fellow Ethiopians, do not believe the Fascists if they tell you that the patriots are bandits, the patriots are people who yearn for freedom from the terrors of fascism. Bandits are the soldiers who are standing in front of me and you, who came from far away to violently occupy a weak and peaceful country. May God give the people of Ethiopia the strength to resist and never bow to the Fascist army and its violence. May the Ethiopian earth never accept the invading army's rule."

His defiance and heroism became the battle cry of our patriotic army thru out the land and it echoed in our valleys and mountains from north to south east to west and the invader never saw a day of peace until they were driven out.

This was the man and his memory our new Bandas were trying to extinguish that day a week ago. They thought removing a statue would erase history. They tried to cover their mis-deeds with talk of progress. We are not against progress. We in the Diaspora contribute more than our share to help our country and people. As a matter of fact there would be no tall buildings, no dinner on the table and no profitable Ethiopian Airlines and no TPLF millionaire without remittance from the Diaspora. We just know that there are some things more important than others and our heritage, our history and our patriots cannot be kicked around wantonly. We are also well aware of TPLF's habit of using wedge issues to divide us and hiding behind nation building while using a wrecking ball to destroy our history.

It is a sad sign of the times that our dear father's memorial statue was removed without much protest. Those that preach about waging a 'peaceful struggle' against the new Bandas were nowhere to be seen holding a vigil. They were given an opportunity to unite and galvanize their people and use this Woyane insult against our history as a 'teachable' moment. Yes a little sacrifice is what is required to fight injustice. Yes there is imprisonment, injury even death in the struggle for freedom and dignity. People like Eskinder, Reyot, Andualem, Bekele Gerba , Abubeker and Woubeshet are behind bars because they choose not to submit to injustice and heed Abune Petros's call to stand their ground. I am sure what gives them such determination is

his everlasting pray “May God give the people of Ethiopia the strength to resist and never bow to the Fascist army and its violence.” We shall overcome.

For further Info please go to:

<http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/gallery/todaysphoto/abunepetros/index.htm>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCraAfrm0n0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBXRrVYgCgY>

<http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/28504>