

The Need for Paradigm Change - I

By G. E. Gorfu

It has now been some seventeen years since a rag-tag TPLF army overthrew the then most powerful army in black Africa, entered Addis Ababa, and took control of the nation. Having known the brutality of the Derg Regime for seventeen years prior to that, I was very cautious on what that change of government was going to mean for Ethiopia.

In my heart of hearts, I was fearful and said to myself, 'If a military government with some structure and discipline was unable to bring any measure of peace and stability to Ethiopia, how could a guerrilla force coming from the jungles do it? The worst scenario imaginable was that of Cambodia's Pol Pot who took out millions of city dwellers into the countryside forcing them to become peasants, resulting in a catastrophic disaster.

Fortunately for Ethiopia, what replaced the Derg was a pretty benign force which has given the nation not only a measure of peace and stability, but an era of unprecedented progress and development where significant infrastructures were laid down. Major roads have spread into many rural areas, air-strips were paved and many airports built, more than a dozen universities sprouted throughout Ethiopia, several large dams, some with hydroelectricity power generation, have been built, and a brisk pace in housing and construction can be seen in Addis Ababa and in other large and small towns throughout the land. So in many ways, I have been pleasantly surprised with the outcome.

All these are great, but there still is a long way to go and it is ripe for a paradigm change in the way the people in government function. Some of the most important are:-

- a) The highly secretive nature of government and the lack of transparency.
- b) The siege mentality of those in government.

A high level of secrecy is important when one is a guerrilla force operating in the jungle, but once that force takes the reins of government, a great deal of transparency and accountability to the people it governs is paramount. The lack of transparency and secrecy readily lend themselves to corruption. Though the government goes through daily condemnations of mussena/corruption, the problem is far from solved. Corruption has now become rampant and almost a norm in many levels of government. That is sad and needs to change, but before any change takes place, a paradigm change is needed first.

Furthermore, why does the TPLF (Tigray Peoples Liberation Front) still need to carry such a name? Are the people of Tigray in a liberation struggle? And do they need a front? Why then does the organization still keep the name? At one time the name might have been appropriate but not any more. So, here too a paradigm change is needed.

Most of those who came to power seventeen years ago are still in office today and have not prepared a peaceful exit strategy to leave the stage. Seventeen years is a lifetime in politics. If those in leadership are unable, or unwilling to train capable people that would replace them it could be seen as a sign of failure. Leadership in government is not much different from leadership in an organization. An organization that wants to out-survive its founders needs to have a vigorous program of training many people for leadership. But the Ethiopian government still has the old guards in place, without much in integration or in the infusion of new blood. Here too a paradigm change is needed. *To be continued...*