

# The CIA agent Isayas Afeworki recruited in 1969 by Richard / Miles Copeland



MOTHER OF ALL CIA POLITICAL  
SURROGATES IN ETHIOPIA

How Richard / Miles COPELAND of  
the CIA recruited Isayas Afeworki in  
1969

As told by Tesfamichael Giorgio

Aleme Eshete

Senai magazine, Addis Ababa, February 1985 Eth.cal (1993) translated from Amharic

Before delving into the subject matter, we would like to say a few words about the CIA. Established in 1947, the CIA is the American spying agency in foreign lands with the objective of advancing the national interests of the United States. Similar to its rival the Soviet KGB, the CIA has been deeply engaged and has to a large extent met the responsibility entrusted to it. This spy agency has been engaged since its establishment in 1947, in three principal areas it has been particularly successful in secret political infiltration and psychological warfare in foreign lands through the use of force and secret plots. Given American focus on fighting socialism, the CIA has been particularly active in infiltrating and plotting to overthrow socialist regimes, and designating in its place a puppet regime which it can manipulate as desired. Where it has not succeeded to overthrow a given regime through infiltration and secret plotting, America does not hesitate to intervene militarily and designate a puppet regime. All this is carried out in the name of “democracy and human rights”

It was thus that (in 1969) the CIA had launched a secret operation known by the code name of “seed planting project” (nursery), at Kagnew military base (near Asmara). At that date the United States had completely lost faith in Haile Selassie government. This CIA project was therefore intended to prepare an alternative means to defend American interests in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. And this alternative was plotting against and sabotaging Ethiopian unity, in collaboration with Ato Isayas Afeworki.

This account may not be trusted by our readers. And yet this account is the truth as told by no other than Tesfamichael Giorgio, then a governor of a district in Eritrea, who had participated in the negotiations at Kagnew between the CIA and Isayas Afeworki. America was alerted that her position in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa was facing danger when she realized that a guerrilla organization called JEBHA - ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) supported by closely allied Arab countries was gaining fame through its military campaigns in the Eritrean low lands, while the Government of Haile Selassie battered from various angles was shaking unable to stand on its feet.

The United States Government was worried that if the situation continued in this way, Eritrea and the Red Sea will fall under the control of extremist Arab countries (allied to the Soviet Union), while Haile Selassie government will be overthrown and replaced by a socialist regime. ( Our Note: More importantly, due to PLO training and advice and also due to the provision of arms and finances by

Libya, the Sudan, South Yemen, and others ...the establishment of the PLF marked an important turning point).

Until then, for instance, Eritrea fighters had rarely used mines and explosives...By 1969 the number of Eritreans who had received training abroad (including Cuba, China) in advanced guerrilla tactics had increased considerably. With their new method and weapons the Eritreans began executing spectacular acts of sabotage and terrorism, including hijacking of planes, kidnapping of foreign diplomats, blowing up of bridges in front of cameras and ambushing and assassinating Ethiopian functionaries and collaborators Haggai Erlich, "The struggle over Eritrea", 1983 p.28).

That is the background to the CIA secret operation known by the secret code of "seed planting project." And indeed the CIA has been able to anticipate and avoid a planned attack by the Palestinian organization known as "Black September" against the American bases in Asmara and Gurae.

Once the project was launched the CIA and top officials of Kagnew were busy recruiting intellectuals and young Eritreans coming to relax at the "Top Five" and Golf Club in Asmara. Their spying infiltration activities convinced the CIA more and more that Haile Selassie government, faced with both civilian and military opposition, could not last long, while on the other hand, the Eritrean guerrilla organization – the ELF – active in the Eritrean deserts, faced equally strong (mainly Christian) opposition whom it hunted down and eliminated physically.

Among the Eritrean groups opposed to the ELF was Isayas Afeworki's "Selfi Natsinet" (Kidane Kinfu had been sent in 1965 by the ELF to recruit Addis Ababa University students for the ELF and sow the seed of student revolt against the government of Haile Selassie Government). "Eritreans at Addis Ababa University distinguished themselves by their political activism and their immersion in the radical ideological currents that were beginning to surge in Ethiopian student circles in the mid 1960's (Markakis, "National and Class Conflict in the Horn" –1985, p119). By coincidence or by design, the Ethiopian student revolt had also started in 1965: And that is where the future leaders of the EPLF, including perhaps Isayas Afeworki, were recruited.

It is difficult to imagine that Kidane Kiflu entered Ethiopia and carried out his mission of recruitment and inciting revolt without attracting the attention of the Ethiopian security. We could imagine on the other hand, that he too was a CIA agent inside the ELF. Indeed given CIA expertise in destroying unwanted opposition parties through infiltration, and through the creation of parallel organizations, it has, either directly or indirectly, through Saudi Arabia and conservative Iraq, infiltrated the ELF Muslim leadership of the western Muslim lowlands, with its well-known divide and rule objective on religious and linguistic lines (Arab versus Tigrigna).

Although strongly resented by the Christian highlanders, Arabic was the official language of the ELF. Its literature was written in that language, and Arab nomenclature was adopted within the front, such as "JEBHA", and "SHAEBIA". All that contributed to the Muslim-Christian contradictions. It is to such contradictions of divide and rule methods that the continuous massacre of Christian members within the ELF have been attributed. The creation of religious and linguistic zones similar to our "kilel" of to-day enforced by the conservative elements within the ELF and which had incited strong opposition among particularly the Christian highlanders, may also be attributed to such "divide and rule" external infiltration.

So also Ethiopia, certainly in collaboration with the CIA appears to have been engaged in secret contacts with the ELF: Indeed about September 1969, that is a few weeks before the CIA story we are recounting here, "the leaders of the western regions were in constant touch with Idris Mohamed Adem (one time ELF Chairman and conservative element) were negotiating a deal with the Ethiopians in which the ELF would stop disturbing communication with the ports of Massawa and Assab in exchange for a free hand in the west (along the Sudan border).

Mohamed Ahmed Abdu (member of the General command formed by the Adobha congress of August 1969) was accused of negotiating to this effect with the U.S consul in Asmara, Murray Jackson. The chief advisors of Eritrea's Ethiopian Governor, Ras Asrate Kassa – namely, Tesfayohannes Berhe, Hamid Faraj, and Muhammad Umar Qadi – were to be in contact with members of the General command. In fact, sometime in early 1970, (1969?) the Ethiopian Ras clandestinely travelled to a remote town near the Sudanese border to discuss the matter with Idris Adam” (Haggai Erlich , “The Struggle over Eritrea : 1962-1978 (Hoover Institution publication , 1983).

Isayas Afeworki was born in 1946 in the Christian highlands of Hamasien, and is of Tigray origin on the side of his mother who was a native of ancient and historic Yeha in the Adowa region. Dejazmatch Solomon Abrha, one time Assistant Minister of Interior, and later Governor of Wollo was his uncle. Isayas had joined the ELF in 1967 (Markakis,, op.cit p.286, says 1966) after dropping out from the Engineering College in Addis Ababa University. Indeed In 1967, the Supreme Council of the ELF had sent him to Maoist China where he received a six-month military training, a strange opportunity for a newly recruited Christian element in the largely conservative Muslim leadership drawn from the Western lowlands and conservative ELF.

Haggai Erlich's story regarding the early days of Isayas in relation with the Italian half-cast Dr. Biasolo is false in some ways. Haggai writes in the struggle over Eritrea, 1983, p.29 that Isayas was influenced as a youngster by a Marxist-oriented economist from Asmara, Dr. Biasolo, a half caste businessman”. I have known Dr. Biasolo in Rome where he lived in exile under the Derg. He was not a Marxist. On the contrary he was very close to the Ethiopian leadership of the EPDA organized and financed by the CIA. One may therefore conclude that he might have been in those days in Asmara in the 1960s and early 1970s among the CIA collaborators, all, including Isayas – posing under the cover and cloak of Marxism. With the rise to power of Isayas, Dr. Biasolo who has been promised to regain the property of his house has returned to Asmara.

In 1969 Kidane Kinfu would be assassinated in Kassala, at the height of an anti-Christian hysteria, among the Western Eritrea ELF Muslim leaders, apparently on suspicion of being a spy of the Addis Ababa Government. Several hundred Christians were thus executed accused of being spies of the imperial government. See John Markakis, op.cit p.120, 126. 127 For the Christian Eritreans then concentrated in the former “fifth” Christian zone reserved for fighters from the highlands of Seraye, Hamasien and Akeleguzay, and “particularly for the radical former (Addis Ababa university) student contingent, this was the last straw. Some abandoned the movement entirely; others fled to the Sudan. Others in the former “fifth zone” split and headed for a place called Ala on the eastern edge of the escarpment in Akeleguzay to join Abraham Tewelde, the former commander of the “fifth Christian zone”.

Among them was Isayas Afeworki the former political commissar of this zone.” (Markakis: National and Class conflict p.127). It appears that Isayas' group was initially (around this date) no more than eleven. (Tsfatsion Medhanie, op. cit p. 35) One other important point that has to be raised in relation with Isayas' membership of the ELF is that, as we now discover, justifying ELF suspicion, Isayas was indeed one of the spies in the service of the Ethiopian government paid to infiltrate the ELF and inform Addis Ababa.

In fact in an interview with the magazine “Menelik” (March 2001), General Daniel Mengistu, head of External intelligence Service at the Emperor's cabinet, as the General himself tells us their job was different from the internal security organization. Their job was to spy on anti Ethiopian and anti-Government activities on the part of our Arab neighbors inside Eritrea and Somalia, as well as to spy on Soviet Communist activities in Ethiopia, and protect the person of the Emperor while travelling abroad.

The General tells us that the Foreign Intelligence Service was working in close co-operation with “our allies”, particularly, the CIA who helped them in the fights of what was considered the “principal enemy”, i.e. the Soviet Union and Soviet Communism. “Paul Henze was our advisor for

27 months (1969-1972)" the general tells us. Paul Henze was "advising" Ethiopia while Isayas was plotting with Richard Copeland in Asmara to break Eritrea and dismember Ethiopia! It is no secret that the Ethiopian security was organized by the CIA and Mossad, and may indeed be considered, under Haile Selassie, (like the the Savak of the Shah of Iran) an international branch of the CIA.

General Daniel tells us that although the Eritrean secessionist movement led by the ELF was infinitely small and did not mobilize more than 2000 followers they kept close watch on its movements, through spies that had infiltrated the organization. "And one of these was Isayas Afeworki whom they had recruited to follow the Eritrean situation and report to them. It was precisely for that purpose that he was sent to join the ELF. Isayas was financed and equipped with all that he needed by Ras Asrate Kassa (the Emperor's Enderasie – Governor – 1964-1970.)

Our agent in the Sudan was also co-coordinating the activities of our spies in the infiltration of the ELF. Our spies were largely Christians as the Christian highlanders in Eritrea were afraid of being overwhelmed by the Muslims. ". There could be no doubt that both the CIA and the Mossad must have known this. The Israelis were since 1965 engaged in the formation of the Nebelbal commando paramilitary counter-insurgency units to tackle the ELF in close collaboration with Ras Asrate Kassa. Isayas must have known this and this might support the suspicion that Isayas was already in contact with the CIA before leaving Addis permanently and perhaps even as a student at the Engineering College about which certain ELF leaders seem to be convinced.

Once the Americans had discovered and identified the persecution suffered by "Selfi Natsinet" they were convinced that they could use it to fight back against the Muslim ELF and its ally the Palestinian "Black September" which threatened their bases at Asmara and Gurae. It was thus that Richard Copeland (we believe the true name is the famous CIA agent at this time Miles Copeland who recruited Abdel Nasser) of the CIA launched the "seed planting project" and began hunting for members of that organization. Whether Eritrea will break away from Ethiopia, and whether human rights will be respected or not, does not bother American foreign policy. As long as American interests were served they were ready to ally themselves with the devil.

In order not to attract the opposition of the Ethiopian government, Richard Copeland had suggested what he called "Peace Conference" between the Ethiopian government and apparently, the ELF leadership.(Whether the invitation letter was really sent to the ELF leadership or it was just another CIA ploy of announcing names without actually inviting the person concerned, as would seem most likely in this case, is for the survivors of ELF to tell us) . A separate letter inviting "Selfi Natsinet" to attend the conference has been written by Dejazmatch Gebre Yohannes Tesfamariam.

Upon receipt of Selfi Natsinet's favorable response signed by Abraham Tewelde (leader of the Ala" Christian group at that date) and Solomon Woldemariam addressed to the Ethiopian Government, the date and place of the conference has been fixed. Accordingly a government negotiating committee made up of three representatives, - Lieutenant Colonel Gebre Egziabher Mehari, vice commissioner of the Eritrean Police force, and the author of this account , Tesfamichael Giorgio, governor of Dekemehare, with Dejazmatch Gebrekidan Tessema – judge at the supreme court, as Chairman, was established on Hedar 28, 1962 (November 1969).

On 5 Tahsas, the negotiating committee had proceeded to the Ala desert but upon arrival the ELF leaders have not turned up because of the conflict between the two. Waiting for us were only the "Selfi Natsinet" faction of the ELF. Selfi Natsinet had therefore a good opportunity to discuss alone and freely with the Government delegation and meet the American officials at Kagnew.

Several suggestions were forwarded by both parties in the negotiations. The Selfi Natsinet group had requested for arms and material assistance to fight the Muslim ELF, but the government side having declined to meet that request saying they did not want to fuel a religious war among citizens they had suggested instead to Selfi Natsinet to give their hands to the government and stop fighting. To this Selfi Natsinet having requested to talk to its members for their reaction, requested another appointment and the meeting was adjourned at that.

Following this Richard Copeland had asked the author of this story, Tesfa Michael Giorgio, to arrange a separate meeting between him and the Selfi Natsinet leadership. It was thus that a meeting between Richard Copeland and Habteselassie Gebre Medhin at Kagnev military base. At this meeting Copeland had learnt from Habteselassie many major facts pertinent to his secret plot. He had concluded that it was important to ally himself with his new friends and attack both the Arab supported ELF and Haile Selassie's government from the back by surprise. He did not mind to see Eritrea disintegrating as long as America's interest in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa were served. Habteselassie briefed Abraham Tewelde and Isayas Afeworki on his talks with Richard Copeland. He was then sent back to Dekemehare to arrange the agenda for the next meeting with Richard Copeland.

At the fixed date, Richard Copeland and his friend Richard Siwelen had come up with an arms catalogue in order to further sharpen the desire of Selfi Natsinet leaders, and induce them to accept to serve as American war proxies. At this meeting Richard Copeland appeared most interested to know the contradiction between Selfi Natsinet and the ELF. Richard Copeland was not worried by the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia but by the influence Islamic fundamentalist with the ELF and the risk of losing the Red Sea to a rival power. Finally Richard Copeland asked Habteselassie to bring a letter from the Selfi Natsinet leadership officially requesting for military assistance.

Accordingly a letter signed by Isayas Afeworki was addressed to the head of Kagnev base Colonel Mamuzer with the following requests.

1. Given that the Christian fighters at Ala are daily massacred and slaughtered by the Muslim ELF which obtains massive political and military aid from Arab as well as, indirectly from socialist countries,
2. Given that the ELF policy reflects above all Arab policy and is targeted mainly against American and Israeli interests
3. Given that the political objective of Selfi Natsinet is fundamentally different aiming towards the establishment of a progressive democratic movement.

To that end they requested American military assistance.

Selfi Natsinet addressed such letters not only to the United States but to all Western countries stressing always the fact of the Arab and socialist assistance to the Muslim ELF. It was clear that the leaders of Selfi Natsinet saw only their rival the ELF whom they wanted to destroy. They did not however consider the danger of allying with imperialist Western powers, which, at any time could change their position if they find other more profitable ways for advancing their interests.

After receiving the letter from Isayas the Americans were happy to see that their "seed planting operation" was advancing successfully. They fixed a budget and started financing the movement. However, as they had to finalize the agreement with Isayas Afeworki, an appointment date was fixed. Since the letter to the CIA was signed by Isayas Afeworki, the CIA specifically asked to talk to Isayas Afeworki and not to the Selfi Natsinet Chairman Abraham Tewelde. In fact Abraham Tewelde would die in what has been described "mysterious circumstances" in reality poisoned by Isayas – prior to the 1st ELF Congress October-November 1971. Isayas will become the top figure –see Tesfatsion Medhanie, "Eritrea – Dynamics of a National Question," p.37)

On the appointment date, Ato Tesfamichael drove to Ala to accompany Ato Afeworki to Kagnev. The Americans having decided that, for security reasons, it would be better to hold the talks outside Kagnev, the group drove to the house of a security colleague near the Cathedral of St. Francesco at the Residence called Bowling. Richard Copeland had come in company of several

American officials for the negotiations with Isayas Afeworki. Isayas repeated the request that he had already enumerated in his letter and concluded by asking American assistance.

The Americans wanted to hear a clear commitment on the part of Isayas that they will protect all American bases and citizens in Eritrea from terrorist attacks. Isayas promised that he will do everything to protect American interests, but that he did not yet have the force to defend the American bases in Asmara and Gurae. The Americans told him indirectly that as they are worried that following the fall of the weakened government of Haile Selassie, a military government might come to power, unfriendly to the United States, they were ready to ally themselves even with anti-unity secessionist forces. Indeed they stressed the point that they desired to ally themselves with an anti-socialist force committed to defend the Kagnew base as well as similar other American bases in the Red Sea, and committed to the establishment of a democratic government in Eritrea.

Isayas Afeworki, not having appreciated the American indirect reference regarding their disinterest for Ethiopian unity, stressed that they wanted full independence and that they will not accept a federal solution that may be proposed by the new government after Haile Selassie. In reply Richard Copeland had assured Isayas that as long American interests were safeguarded, they care less about Ethiopian unity. "If you satisfy our conditions, and you want independence in return you shall have your independence" Isayas was told. Richard Copeland went indeed further to advice Isayas not to accept the federal solution from a new government. Ato Isayas was further assured that if Selfi Natsinet could succeed in bringing the Red Sea coast under its control, they promised to supply unlimited quantity of arms by sea.

Ato Isayas wanted to know if the Americans were talking serious and asked what guarantee they have that the Americans will offer what they promise. Richard Copeland laughingly replied: "Politics is gambling. You want independence and we want our Red Sea position secured and strengthened. That is your guarantee and our guarantee." And with that the meeting had come to an end. They had then gone to the house of Richard Copeland to drink to the success of the new plot. And there were festivities.

From then on Isayas avoided appearing in company of Richard Copeland and the Kagnew officials in order not to arouse the suspicion of Ethiopian security officials. So in the morning Richard Copeland arrived with an embassy Cadillac flying the American flag, curtained all over, so that no one could see who was inside, and drove out of Kagnew with Richard Copeland in the seat of the driver. Following this Richard Copeland was busy putting into action his project of alliance with Selfi Natsinet. He had cheated Ras Asrate telling him that his agreement with Selfi Natsinet was only to safeguard American interests from the threats of the Palestinian "Black September".

Copeland had then started bringing in Lorries full of arms given to Selfi Natsinet which will soon be a powerful organization challenging the very existence of the ELF, and the unity of Ethiopia and Eritrea. While Richard Copeland was recruiting Isayas as a surrogate to fight Ethiopia and break away Eritrea, Paul Henze was "advising" the Emperor's external intelligence Service, as we have seen above. Further this new agreement being signed between the CIA and Afeworki to start a new secessionist movement against the ELF was arranged together with Ras Asrate Kassa who had attended the meeting.

But the fact that Isayas was now being organized also as a Christian secessionist movement to fight Ethiopia must have been opposed by Ras Asrate or it becomes an intriguing issue. Indeed the Emperor will remove Ras Asrate from his post as Governor of Eritrea, the next year, 1970, on account of what some observers attribute to an alleged suspicion that the ambitious Ras Asrate Kassa was plotting to overthrow him in collaboration with the secessionists, and perhaps also in collaboration with the CIA and Mossad.

The Ras' – political non-military- approach (as opposed to the military approach of Prime Minister Aklilu) was dictated by his interest in turning Eritrea into a power base for himself. Ras Asrate Kassa concentrated on divisive tactics and on secret efforts to work out a "political solution" with

various groups in the Eritrean movement. It seems he had the co-operation of Israeli and American military personnel in Eritrea in this endeavor” (Tsfatsion Medhanie, op. cit p.41).

What does General Daniel know about this? With this background you can imagine the lives of so many progressive intellectuals lost unable to unmask the true nature of Isayas who will decimate them one after another (notably the Menkae who were opposed to the regional divide and rule and infighting within the Christian movement –among the Seraye, Hamasien and Akeleguzay – once again a CIA ploy of divide and rule used by Isayas and Solomon Woldemariam -Tsfatsion Medhanie, op. cit. p. You can also imagine all the energy lost in ELF’s attempt to build a united secessionist front with Isayas, until he was strong enough to destroy them completely, and all the Ink lost by so many Western writers who year after year “brandished” the Marxist, “anti-imperialist” Isayas. We are not talking only of paid disinformation agents, but writers and parties who claimed to be Marxists of all colors).

Various sources indicate that Information regarding the above secret agreement between Richard Copeland and Isayas had soon reached the ELF leadership in its generalities. Tsfatsion Medhanie (Eritrea –Dynamics of a National Question ,p. 41-42) who is not aware of Tsfatsion’s story when he published his book in 1986, talks about “Isayas Afeworki’s secret talks with Ethiopia and U.S authorities in the Eritrean capital, Asmara in 1970 (sic)” Tsfatsion, in general, a very deep and critical analyst of Ethio- Eritrean affairs, attributes the CIA-Isayas secret agreement to the internal power struggle in Ethiopian politics between Ras Asrate Kassa and Prime Minister Aklilu. He attributes the secret negotiations to Asrate Kassa’s attempt to bring the Eritrean faction as well as Israeli and American support on his side, in order to wipe out the ELF. The author therefore draws the wrong conclusion.

We have seen that the CIA had in fact avoided the presence of Ras Asrate Kassa or his representatives in the Government of Eritrea in the secret negotiations with Isayas. No wonder therefore missing that last crucial stage, he considers the negotiations a failure. “The project was not implemented” he writes. And yet he himself shows in detail chapter by chapter, step by step, the ever growing power of the EPLF thanks to American military assistance, until the complete destruction of the ELF. The story regarding the ELF-CIA agreement had also been referred to in Africa Confidential, November 1970, and by the ELF, with their usual sluggishness regarding propaganda literature, in December 1979, when they were about to disappear, in The Eritrean News letter, ELF Foreign Information Center, Beirut.

The Name Selfi Natsinet of Isayas will change gradually with the development of alliances and counter-alliances. Following the massacres of Christians by the conservative Western lowland Muslim ELF leaders, and Selfi Natsinet’s escape to Ala in eastern Akeleguzay, Isayas seeks the alliance of the rich and powerful Osman Saleh Sabe, leader of the Muslim Asawurta inhabiting the coast of Semhar – including Massawa and Hergigo, his birth place. In the history of secessionist Eritrea Osman Saleh Sabe has been lauded by several writers and acquaintances as “the most adroit politician” (Markakis, 1985) “relentlessly energetic secretary general and roving ambassador of the movement.” Haggai tells us (op.cit) that Sabe’s “native language” is “Arabic” (Haggai op.cit p. 27) although the native language of the Asawurta is Tigre. He was married to a Syrian wife.

Liberal in his outlook Sabe had often identified himself with the cause of the Christian highlanders against the Western conservative Muslim lowlanders’ leadership of the ELF. As the roving ambassador of the ELF, Sabe spent most of his time abroad at the courts of Arab Sultans and emirs, as well as presidents of Syria, Iraq and Lebanon from where he collected the rich funding for the ELF. Sabe’s insistence that the Eritreans were Arabs and that their struggle against Ethiopia of Haile Selassie was part of the war on Zionism made him a welcome guest in Arab capitals and in the camps of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). According to Haggai Erlich, it was in fact in a PLO camp in Amman that he laid the foundation in November 1969 of a new organization, aided by the veteran Christian leader Tedla Bairu, Taha Mohammed Nur, (head of ELF-PLF Rome office until very recently).etc.

In June 1970, calling representatives from the three zones of the Anseba basin, the Christian highlands and the coast, to a conference south of Massawa, where a new movement – the Popular Liberation Forces (PLF) was formed, with Osman at the head of its Foreign Mission. Sabe is held to be a Saudi-CIA agent by some observers. He was a frequent visitor of New York, where he received press covering of the New York Times, as well as in Washington where he held talks with government officials and the State Department. On one occasion Sabe's entourage had explained their objective as being to liquidate one by one "those who espouse socialism and communism". (Tsefatsion Medhanie, op. cit. p. 41) Bear in mind that western Muslim ELF leaders were not allowed setting foot in the United States.

Isayas' Selfi Natsinet continued alone. Already in 1970, Selfi Natsinet had formulated in what was called "Nehnan Elamanan" (translated as "We and Our Objective"), certainly with some intellectual support, their well articulated program differentiating themselves as Christians with an ancient culture that goes back to Axum and enriched by their ancient Christian religion – Orthodox Christianity and an ancient script - the Geez. A reading of "Nehnan Elamanan" of which I have read the English translation, gives the perfect picture of the proud Ethiopian, proud of his culture and identity. What a pity they had to later write another history of Eritrea under CIA dictation dissociating them completely from Ethiopia.

Isayas and his group were now gaining notoriety as an urban guerrilla movement using sophisticated arms, supplied naturally by the CIA. Haggai tells us that on 14 April 1970, a few months after the agreement with the CIA, in a bar in down-town Asmara, Isayas and his associates had machine-gunned two ex-judges who had sentenced some ELF guerrillas to death. Again in November 1970, the Selfi Natsinet group led by Isayas, Abraham Tewelde, and Ermias Debessay, ambushed and killed the commander of the Ethiopian army in the province (Haggai Erlich, op. cit. p.29)

Naturally the Isayas group will eventually be attracted into an alliance with Saleh Sabe's Popular Liberation Forces (PLF) with whom he shared a number of common points including that of being a U.S surrogate. Indeed both had nothing political but business oriented and one can therefore not talk of political ideology but rather the absence of one. Marxism was in fashion in the 1960s and 1970s particularly following the Paris student revolt of 1968. CIA had therefore chosen to cover its surrogates with a Marxist cloak everywhere in the Third World, including Jaafar al-Numeiry of the Sudan, the TPLF, and even perhaps the EPRP.

In any case from the very beginning Isayas would wear a Marxist cloak. In the strategy of the CIA, this helped, among others, as we have seen in the Sudan to identify the leftists and decimate them. Saleh Sabe told Markakis frankly that Isayas' cloak of Marxism was a fake ploy of cover which should not be taken seriously. (Markakis, op. cit p.286, note 57). Another observer had noted that the EPLF hiding its totalitarian and repressive nature (Tsefatsion, p-68) assumed different images and colors towards different patrons: To the Arab financiers it appears with the Koran, and to the socialist camp with Marxist literature, while to the liberal West it appeared as a liberal democrat. (Tsefatsion, p.71)

Certainly Isayas appears brutally totalitarian and repressive. We have the famous case of the Menkae and other prominent EPLF leaders massacred by Isayas. Tsefatsion Medhanie writes that as of 1972 the Isayas group was officially represented abroad by Sabe's Secretariat: the Foreign Mission. "There was no basis whatsoever to draw a distinction between Osman Sabe's political line and foreign relations and those of the Isayas group." According to Haggai Erlich (struggle over Eritrea, p.31) following a meeting held from 3 to 12 February 1972, the PLF will unite with Selfi Natsinet to form the Eritrean People Liberation Forces (EPLF). In 1976 when the two groups separated, Isayas group will be named the Eritrean People's Liberation Front using the same acronym EPLF.

(I dedicate this paper to the Ethiopian Hero Tesfamichael Giorgio, who through his courageous denunciation of the traitors has made an epoch making contribution to the writing of Ethiopian



history. Tesfamichael Giorgio has been hunted and assassinated by the CIA dogs of war of the EPLF-TPLF on April 13, 1992, a year after their occupation of Addis Ababa.

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