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**Battle of Adewa A Curse!**

No one needs to be told the devastating consequences of war fought in one's own turf. I will spare you the details and leave that to your imagination.

That said all wars fought against foreign imperial powers wanting to colonize Ethiopia, with the exception of Metema and even Metema was fought under Tigray Emperor, were fought in Tigray and Eritrea. Most of the battles and wars conducted in Tigray and Eritrea were a must do or die, and the people decided to do and die. But one would be curious to know why the two wars fought against the Italians in 1896 under Menelik and 1936 under Haile Selassie were fought in Tigray. They need not have had to be fought in Tigray had it not been for sinister motives of the Showan Emperors.

From a strategic and tactical military point of view, the two battle fields were wrong moves. One, at Adowa we were lucky we half won but at Maychew we were decisively defeated. Had the Italians been allowed to move deep into the country before challenged, this would have avoided logistic expenses, and human losses for Menelik and Haile Selassie's seven months of foot roundtrips to meet the Italians both at Adewa and Maychew respectively.

Battle of Adewa was partially successful but not complete. Victory, yes achieved and everyone ought to be grateful for the sacrifices paid. But it could easily have been lost. Tactically and strategically engaging the Italians at Adewa was ill-thought through if there was no intention to drive the Italians out not only from Ethiopia but also from Eritrea. And there was no intention to do so, Menelik had secret deals with the Italians which were not known to the public.

Some may say, it was not only Emperor Menelik or Haile Selassie that marched from their seats to challenge foreign aggressors. Emperor Yohannes did the same. He marched against the Mahdists to meet them at Metema, when by the same logic he could have stayed at his crown seat, Mekelle. But Yohannes' war against the Mahdists was offensive and not defensive. In an offensive war the force that makes the move chooses a strategic battle place. The force that plans an offensive attack would not lay in wait for the enemy force to dictate where battle could take place. The aggressor would have to decide.

But how do we know that the Mahdists were in the defense or offense? Well, after they killed Emperor Yohannes and his army was in disarray, the Mahdists stayed put rather than marching into Ethiopia, until they finally retreated to their homeland. Apart from destroying churches and killing some people the Mahdists did not seem to have any better plan. It felt they were agent provocateurs. It can therefore be argued that had Yohannes stayed put in Mekelle and waited for the Mahdists to come inland, it would have had not happened. If they could not advance inland once he was killed, one would not dream they would have done so while Yohannes was still alive and active. Thus dealing with the Mahdists at the place Yohannes did, Metema, was a foregone

conclusion. It appears, the Mahedist were only interested to burn some church and kill few priests for whatever motive they had in mind. It was not acceptable for Yohannes being a pious religious leader he would not take it in. Had he done so he would have saved his life and many other who followed him. Likewise, he ought not have had waited to the last minute his life depart to prepare and name his successor. Before confronting the Mahedist, it looked as though he thought he had some more years to live on to see his grandchild, Gugesa Areaya Selassie grow to adulthood to take over his seat. But fate had it he got this calculation wrong and his life was cut short. The decision and naming Ras Mengesha his successor before his last breath expired, was in a spur of a moment and an act of desperation.

Compare the Italians with the Mahedist, the Italians were set to move not only to the capital but all over Ethiopia to claim the country as their colony. Unlike what Yohannes did with the Mahedist, Menelik and Haileselassie ought to have allowed the enemy advanced far deep into the country and cut its link with its base if they did not have the dubious plan of dealing with the enemy and Tigray at the same time. ስድስት ብርባት

Strategically, the Italians would have been far removed, and isolated from their bases at the Red Sea and/or Rome, and would have been cut off and decisively dealt with.

But the reasons why Tigray was chosen as a battle ground is to weaken and decimate its fragile economy. War over, six to seven months of ravaging its material resources to feed hungry 100,000 foot soldiers Tigray was place in a far more existential struggle to survive, and it never recovered.

When Ras Seyum Mengesha informed Emperor Haileselassie that the Italians had made a move to Tigray to occupy Ethiopia, Haileselassie instruct Ras Seyum to retreat one day's foot trip, but only as far as Maychew and block the Italian moment there and then. Why Maychew, one would ask? Ras Seyum could have moved with his army farther inland to Wello and beyond where the Emperor's forces could meet half way that of Ras Seyum's. Surly, there was nothing legal, cultural or other constitutional restrictions at a time of war, that could have prevented Ras Seyum's force to move in and around the country, as did Ras Mekonnen Haile Micheal father of Emperor Haileselassie and others moved their armies as far as Adewa to fight the war without their movement questioned or restricted to the regions they governed.

Not only natural disaster, misrule, outright and deliberate neglect and oppression were allowed to play their roles to destroy Tigray but wars if they had to be fought out, it would have had to be in Tigray to make sure Tigray had no chance to revive.

No wonder Tigray was left in a sorry state after all the battle fought it had to bear.