











Remembering unique Eritreans in contemporary history

*Biography
Of
Martyr Kidane Kiflu*



*By
Emnetu Tesfay*

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Preface

No author would have imagined to write a biography of **Kidan Kiflu** without having the essential information about him deposited at the **Hoover Institution Archives** by **Jack Kramer**. The common problem nowadays encountered by writers on Eritrea and Eritreans is lack of sufficient information from primary sources. And for the data gathered from secondary sources, verification by itself becomes a difficult task. When there is no easy access to required data it creates fatigue and ambiguity to the point of abandoning the work. In the absence of free press, we are witness to the fact that oral history has taken over as the main source of news, stories and biographies in the Eritrean society. Anything that is written about our past heroes in the official media is limited to a few lines or a few paragraphs on selected individuals.

For quite a long time I have considered writing a biographical sketch of Kidane Kiflu but the available information was so scarce that I refrained from going ahead with it. It is when I came across the Jack Kramer dossier that I was encouraged to contemplate on writing this biography. The part of the biography that eminently required detailed knowledge and verification of data was the period after he left Addis Ababa until his death. Jack Kramer's documents utterly and diligently accommodate much of the needed data of Kidane Kiflu's activities in the Sudan and the situation of the Eritrean Liberation Front in the late 60's and early 70's.

Therefore, my whole-hearted gratitude and appreciation goes to **Mr. Jack Kramer** for making his documents available to readers and writers of Eritrean history. By establishing intimate contact with Kidane Kiflu in Kassala, and continuing the contact later when he returned back to the USA, Jack Kramer is most likely the sole source of the vital information about the activities of Kidane Kiflu and the circumstances surrounding his brutal death on the 5th of March 1970. Without Jack Kramer's documents much of the needed information about Kidane Kiflu would be left to oral stories and rumors. I therefore decided the story of this fascinating and gallant hero to be recorded for readers of the present generation and generations to come. The story of our heroes is in fact Eritrea's greatest treasure.

My sincere appreciation also goes to **Issayas Tesfamariam**, the blogger who developed interest in Kidane Kiflu and provided supplementary information to Jack Kramer's documents. After independence, he contacted many would be knowledgeable individuals in many countries and collected data from primary sources.

Finally, I would like to thank the Hoover Institution for preserving such important materials as the Jack Kramer Papers. I hope that the Hoover Institution would make the aforementioned collection to be available online, soon.

Note: Some lines of the Jack Kramer documents are quoted under relevant sections of the biography, likewise the entire Jack Kramer document is annexed to the biography.

Early life and personal data

Synopsis

Kidane Kiflu Gebretatios was born in Mendefera (Adi Ugri) wereda Mai Tekela, Seraye province, from his father **Ato Kiflu Gebretatios** and his mother **Woizero Tirfnesh Reda**.



Map of Eritrea



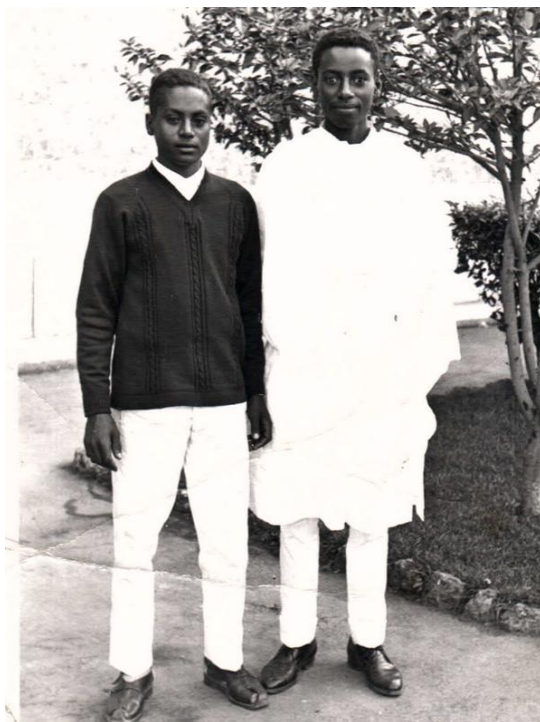
Maedo is the 3rd biggest village in Tekela located approximately 10 km south east of Mendefera

The origin of martyr Kidane Kiflu is from a farm village called Maedo, which is located about 10 kilometers southeast of Mendefera. Kidane had only one sibling, a brother by the name of Yohannes, who passed away in 2014.

To collect personal data of martyr Kidane Kiflu, I was able to contact his cousins who reside in Asmara with the help of Tegadalay Tesfai Ghebresellassie, the current Minister of Land, Water and Environment. Kidane is the second son to his parents with no other siblings. There was no one who could tell the exact year of Kidane's birth, but according to his cousins' guess, it is in 1941. They could however confirm that he was born in the town of Mendefera. He grew up as a child in Mendefera until he moved to Asmara for his secondary school education. He started his elementary education at the school commonly known as Tipo on the north eastern part of Mendefera.



From left to right Araya Sbhatu Gebretatios, Hagos Gezehey Gebretatios, Abraha Gebreslassie Gebretatios, Ogbamariam Gezehey Gebretatios and Kidane Kiflu Gebretatios



Araya Sbhatu Gebretatios and Kidane Kiflu Gebretatios

I believe he is my senior by about 4 years, but the little I remember about Kidane Kiflu's childhood time is at the school end festivities where a variety of athletics and theatrical activities and shows are performed. Devotion and commitment are the characteristics he

had acquired way back from childhood. I am informed that unlike many other students he was not doing his school homeworks as an obligation to fulfil but he enjoyed reading and acquiring knowledge. According to his old classmates that habit continued all the way at the Haile Sellasie secondary school in Asmara and later at the Haile Sellasie 1st University in Addis Ababa.

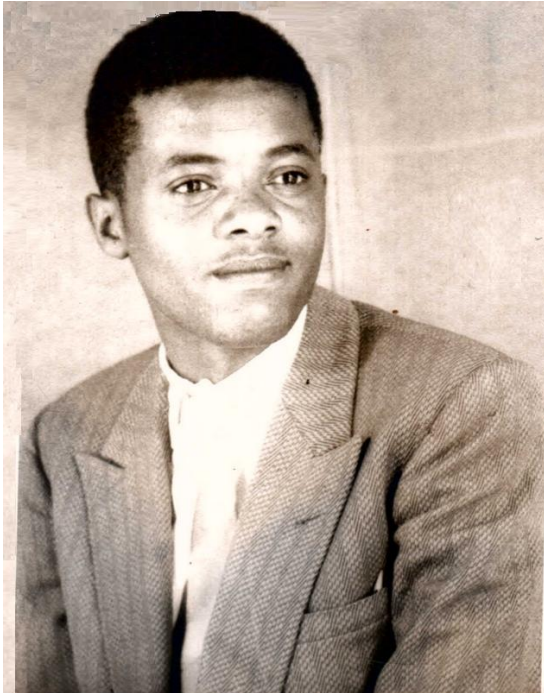


Mendefera: the birth place of Kidane Kiflu

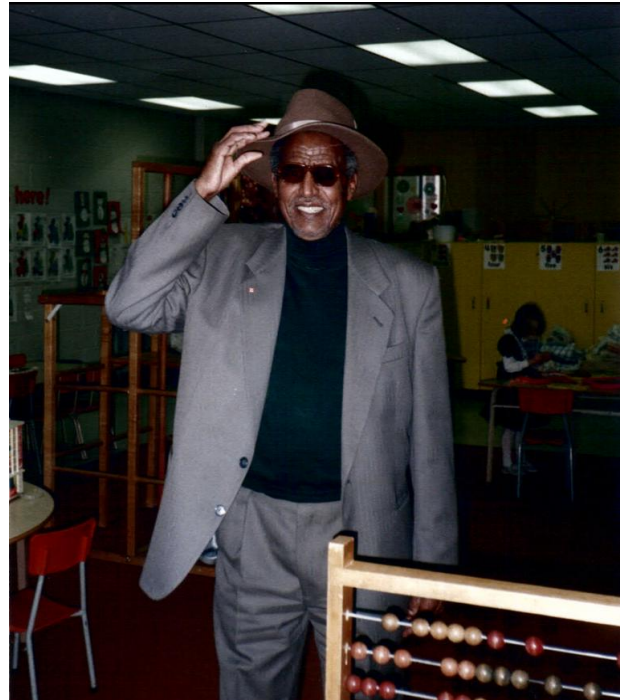


These two gentlemen are the remaining cousins of Kidane Kiflu who could supply me the personal data. They are Ato Ogbamariam Gezehey Gebretatios to the left and Ato Getachew Gebreslassie Gebretatios.

Kidane came from a humble family. His cousins tell that Ato Kiflu died at the place he was working far away from home and died before seeing his child. That means Kidane was brought up by a single parent as a child, but later when he moved to Asmara, he could get support from his older brother and uncles who lived there.



Yohannes Kiflu Gebretatios, the elder and only brother of Kidane Kiflu



Kidane Kiflu's cousin, Hagos Gezehey Gebretatios

The second part of his elementary education, i.e. 5th to 8th grade, Kidane studied at the San Giorgio or ቅዱስ ግዮርጊስ ቤት ትምህርት located on the southern outskirts of the town. High school education was not opened in Mendefera at that point in time.

After completing his elementary school education in Mendefera, Kidane moved to Asmara where he enrolled at the Haile Selassie 1st secondary school. The school is located near the American military base, Kagnew Station. Of the students from this school who were active in politics in the 60's, include, among others, Kidane Kiflu, Tikue Yihdego, Ahmed Nasser, Andemichael Kahsay and Capt. Mebrahtu Teweldemedhin.

A good amount of information about Kidane's youth life in Asmara was obtained from Professor Berhe Habte Ghiorgis who was his classmate. The following pages are taken from Jack Kramer's documents, in part 4 of Issayas Tesfamariam's blog.



The Haile Sellasie 1 secondary school in Asmara at that time

Note: Herebelow are information about Kidane Kiflu's childhood, education and a strong sense of nationalism from early age in an interview with Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis (Chairman of Rowan University's Marketing Department, New Jersey, USA) and the late Minister Naizghi Kiflu (no relation) by Issayas Tesfamariam.

Issayas: Did you know Kidane Kiflu when he was a kid in Adi Ugri?

Minister Naizghi. I knew him very well. He was older and also in a higher class than me. His given name was Kebede. His nickname was Kebedom and his baptismal name was Kidane.

Issayas: Did you notice any qualities in him when he was a kid?

Minister Naizghi. Kidane was brilliant and wise. He was smart in his studies. He used to be always first in his class. He used to help and tutor kids like us who were in the lower class during exam. He used to be hard working and considerate and was always helping his mother. He has an older brother called Yohannes Kiflu. I don't know too much about his father, but I think his father died when they were young.

Issayas: Did you know Kidane Kiflu?

Professor Berhe: Yes, Kidane Kiflu was my classmate in the formerly Haile Selassie I Secondary School in Asmara. Perhaps the most memorable image I have of him is his ever-present smile and very calm demeanor. He was quiet to the point of shyness, always low keyed, and never got into a heated argument, as many of us at that age would.



A class (tenth grade) photo taken on 10/25/1958, tenth grade at Haile Selassie I Secondary School, Asmara. Picture courtesy of Professor Berhe Habtegiorgis

*Kidane (Kebede at that time) Kiflu is on the third row, extreme left column, in front of the person with dark glasses. Professor **Berhe Habte-giorgis** (The person with dark glasses). Professor Tekie Fessehazion (Back row, extreme right next to the column). Second row, second from the right is Capt. Mebrahtu Teweldemedhin who joined the EPLF in 1975 and was killed with Ibrahim Affa. Mebrahtu was also a classmate of Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis in the Military Academy at Harar. He joined the EPLF from the airborne regiment in Debre Zeit.*

Issayas: What were the qualities of Kidane Kiflu as a student?

Professor Berhe: As a student Kidane was very intelligent, hard working, with a penchant for social studies, especially geography. He did not participate in sports and physical activities. In terms of social relations at school, he had the quality of being friendly with everybody without getting particularly close. His politeness and respect of others earned

him plenty of respect and love by his classmates. He was always neat and meticulous in everything he did and displayed a high level of discipline and seriousness of purpose. After high school, he joined the then Haile Selassie I University in Addis Ababa in 1961. From there he went to the field and the last thing we heard about him years later was that he was murdered in Kassala, Sudan by the same movement that he joined to liberate his country.

Issayas: Did Kidane show nationalistic feeling when he was in Adi Ugri or after he went to Haile Selassie I University?

Minister Naizghi: He was a very observant and patient person. For anything we used to do, he used to approach us in a calm and collective manner and advise us. If one did not accept his ideas he would continue to make us understand, tirelessly. Whether in Adi Ugri or at Haile Selassie I University, he had a lot of nationalism. Not the see me, hear me type. Especially at the University, he was a very active participant. He did not finish his studies there because he had so much love for his mother; he wanted to help her financially. Putting into consideration his active political participation, he decided to get a job. He then got a job at Agip Co.

End of interview

Undercover activities at the University campus and beyond

After completing his secondary school education in Asmara, Kidane moved to Addis Ababa and enrolled at the then Haile Selassie 1st University. At the University he started in the Arts faculty majoring in Political Science. Two years later he joined the Law School. Humble and charismatic, Kidane Kiflu is known for his quick mind, courage and political cunning, traits that became tools for his political activities. Kidane was active in the struggle for Eritrean independence starting from his young age. Kidane gained the love of his country from an early age and he dedicated his life to Eritrea until the day he is murdered in cold blood the 5th of March 1970 in Kassala, the eastern city of the Sudan.

Students at the Haile Selassie 1 University had the rights and protections within the campus, which included freedom of expression, press and assembly. Many of the radical students used these rights to agitate and voice unpopular views and dissent. The students expressed their views on issues of national policy and on matters of general interest to the student body.



Picture courtesy of Professor Araya Debessay. This is a picture when Kebede Kiflu was in his freshman year (1961-62) at the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA).

Kidane is on the top left corner. Next to him to his right on the top is Daniel Yohannes, and next is Sennay Kifleyesus, next unidentified, Zerabruk Aberra, next unidentified

On the Middle line from left to right are: Woldegabriel Tsehaie, Petros Gebre, Goitom Yoseph, Bairu Tafla, next unidentified, next unidentified.

Front line: left to right: Al-amin Humed Derir, Araya Debessay, Teweleda Beyene, next unidentified, Amdetsion Kidane, and Tsehaie Menelik.

Asked about his memory of Kidane, Professor Araya recalls “Even though I did not know Kebede in High School since I went to Haile Selassie I Secondary School - Kotebe in Addis, but I agree with Prof. Berhe Habtegiorgis' characterization of Kebede. He was a brilliant student, gentle but socially kind of reserved person.”

Petros Tesfagiorgis from London has also the following recollection of this gallant hero. “Kidane used to encourage high school students in Eritrea to advance their education. I remember during the Summer holidays he and colleagues used to organize debates at YMCA- in Edaga Hamus - Asmara. Trophies were given to those who did the best. At the same time he used to inform them about the struggle its objectives and the role they should play to promote it etc. He was a committed revolutionary and selfless and a teacher who was able to raise the level of consciousness of his compatriots and juniors”.

For Kidane Kiflu the campus was another springboard to super active politics to fight the unilateral annexation of Eritrea by its bigger neighbor Ethiopia. Kidane soon became involved in the partly clandestine and partly open work of organizing Eritreans in the campus and other compatriots outside the University campus. Many Eritreans who migrated to Ethiopia for job opportunity or education have not forgotten the worsening situation of their beloved Eritrea following the abrogation of the federation. Underground activities were proliferating everywhere in Ethiopia.

Kidane Kiflu was not an ordinary person in the eyes of the Eritrean university students. There were many who considered him to be the voice of the Eritrean people struggling to achieve independence of Eritrea from Ethiopian occupation. Kidane was above all a man of action.



The Haile Sellasie 1 University's main gate at Sidist Kilo

Kidane Kiflu was the Eritrean university students organizer and inculcator, whose skillful work raised the spirit of struggle against Emperor Haile-Selassie, who dismantled the federation and gradually annexed Eritrea in the 1960s. Kidane was a unique student who made sure that Eritrean students at the University were not assimilated in the Ethiopian society and culture. Kidane Kiflu chafed at Ethiopian colonialism from an early age — the cruelties of colonialism were well understood and deeply felt when the federal act was abrogated by Emperor Haile Selassie. He understood expeditiously the beginning of cultural colonialism notably at the schools and from the media.

One event that shocked the entire Eritrean community at the University was when one early morning students read a two page statement which was nailed to the notice board of the Faculty of Arts building. Reading in the content of the notice one would conclude that it is the act of some ultra nationalist Amharas at the University. Strong words like destitute were used to degrade the Eritreans. The University administration sent a statement condemning the content of the notice. The text was so brutal and degrading that no one would have thought the author could be someone else than some Amhara students who hated the Eritreans for being so independent among others, for openly and loudly speaking Tigrinja at the university building corridors, canteens, coffee rooms, classrooms, etc. The hatred of the Amharas by the Eritreans heightened after the notice was read by students and the news spread quickly to all campuses. High nationalistic feelings returned to those who looked to have taken the road of assimilation. Amazingly, Professor Mesfin Woldemariam, who was the Head of the Geography department at the time, expressed that such statements could not be written by others than the Eritreans themselves. Some months later it was rumored that Kidane Kiflu was the possible author of the text.

At that time it was somewhat visible that some Eritrean students, notably those who returned from the USA after one year stay under the American Field Service program looked to have embraced assimilation with the Ethiopian and American cultures. After that day of recrimination, all changed in the University campuses. The situation that looked like assimilation was on the rise was reversed. If assimilation was to continue unabated, the spirit of Eritreans to fight for independence would have been weakened.

Kidane was an outstanding student leader who paid the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of the ideals of an independent Eritrea. The student movement he led in the 60s should be documented so it becomes an inspiration for the new generation of Eritrean students who need to secure the ideals of Kidane to continue to battle in the future of any national danger from outside or inside.

What makes Kidane Kiflu different from the other politically active University students was that he was not exposed to making speeches, organizing strikes and the like. He became known as the most quiet fighter with low profile. It can be said that the H.S.1 University administration and the Ethiopian security police were not aware of who he was and what he can do. He was only known among the active Eritreans in the university campuses and beyond.

It looks like Kidane was taking different courses and changing faculties at the university for the sole purpose of staying in the university for a longer period of time to make sure he influences the students and make good use of the rights and protections within the campus. The tip from Prof. Araya Debessay of the **University of Delaware**, that Kidane started his university education at the Science Faculty strengthens the presumption that he wished to stay longer in the university to accomplish his bigger dream of fighting for the independence of Eritrea.



Kidane Kiflu as a University student in Addis Abeba

Looking back at all of his activities and the development of strong national feeling by Eritreans in Ethiopia, Kidane as paramount strategist, could be accredited with much of the achievements of the time. He was instrumental in achieving this transformation when the meeting of all university students on all campuses was held in the Science faculty building at Arat Kilo. The Engineering and Building colleges as well as the Agricultural collage in Alemaya were represented. The strategic line Kidane chose to inculcate and organize all Eritrean students to fight for their country, envisaged the transformation of the movement from mere protest and public meetings to a new level that would draw students in large numbers to taking concrete actions in supporting the armed struggle in Eritrea.

An avid reader and a good writer, Kidane was highly respected by the Eritrean communities in Ethiopia. He managed to mobilize the Eritrean society to fight for freedom. To this effect, Kidane was strongly committed to expanding his contacts. He penetrated the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa especially the Africans and the Arabs. The versatility (skillfulness) of Kidane was seen in his roles as organizer, planner, creative writer, freedom-fighter, administrator and champion of the Eritrean cause.

Assisted by some radical foreign academicians and diplomats, notably from the Somalian embassy in Addis Abeba, he managed to penetrate the diplomatic circle in Ethiopia and used that opportunity to brief them on the Eritrean case. The suppression of the 1960 following the abrogation of the federal act became a springboard for the start of the armed struggle.

During his years in Addis Abeba Kidane played a major role in the growth and development of the underground movement. The University campus was a springboard for his intensive political activities and it was while he was there that Kidane threw himself, body and soul, into the liberation struggle. Kidane Kiflu who acquired the love for his country from an early age dedicated his life to Eritrea until the moment he was killed on the 5th of March 1970. He was one of the devoted university students who struggled to emancipate Eritrea from Ethiopian occupation.

“Despite the vital role that student activism played in stimulating the Eritrean liberation struggle there has not been proportional publicity of the topic in mainstream Eritrean Media. While less is written about student activism in the brief years after Federation (1952-56), student movements intensified in major cities of Eritrea in the early 1960s in

an opposition to the imperial regime of Ethiopia. For example, in September 1960, about 400 students staged an open demonstration in Asmara opposing the removal of the Eritrean flag and institutionalization of Amharic as an official language⁵. In retribution, most of the students ended up in jail and others moved to Ethiopia to serve their prison terms. In May 1962, another big and well organized demonstration is staged by hundreds of high school students in Asmara denouncing Ethiopia's open defiance of the Federation⁶. Meanwhile, the student activists formed an interim organization called "*Association of Eritrean Intellectuals*" and submitted a leaflet to the UN committee, which was holding a meeting in Addis Ababa the same week⁷. In the leaflet, the student-association condemned Ethiopia's breach of the terms of the Federation, and demanded UN's intervention in the Eritrean matter. Although such activities yielded no concrete results, they reflected the deep desire of most Eritreans to have a sovereign country. The other version of student activism during this time was the clandestine mass mobilization and artistic expressions aimed at fostering unity among Eritreans. One notable development in the late 1950s was the formation of the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) in 1958 in Sudan by young exiled Eritreans⁸. Ruth Iyob (1995:103) describes the role of the ELM in the following words, "The ELM's ideal of a secular Pan-Eritrean nationalism, activated through its politics of protest and reconciliation, set the foundation for a rich, nationalist culture." Soon, ELM's network spread throughout major cities of Eritrea through artists and student groups operating in distinct cells called *Mahber Showate (group of seven)*. Ethiopia finally annexed Eritrea in November 1962 and the situation became extremely hostile to any kind of open youth activism in Eritrea."

Source: Iyob, R. (1995). *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism 1941-1993*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

A diehard and fearless nationalist

Reminiscence: Kidane Kiflu joined the then Haile-Selassie University in 1961-62. No one was to know that he was to leave an imprint in the annals of the Eritrean struggle for independence. I had the opportunity of knowing Kidane (then Kebede) at the Haile Sellassie 1st University. He was a sophomore at the Arts faculty majoring in Political Science. I had, on some occasions, been involved in his underground activities against the illegal occupation of Eritrea by Emperor Haile Sellassie. He seized on every given opportunity to enlighten diplomats and other foreigners residing in Addis Abeba on the prevailing realities in Eritrean politics. He established contact with some foreign diplomats in Addis Ababa and befriended with many foreign academicians as well as foreign students at the University, with the sole aim of conveying the Eritrean cause. Kidane's activities were not confined to organizing and inculcating Eritreans but also used every opportunity to make foreigners he met to be

interested in the Eritrean cause and appealed to them to convey the message further to journalists in their respective countries.

To my novice understanding, Kidane then had a profound understanding of technics and strategies in a political fight. One recurrent theme that preoccupied his mind was the formation of a free Eritrea, and this was at a time when most university students were not even acquainted with independence movements in Africa. What made him essentially different from most of the other active student leaders was his insistence on the active participation of all Eritreans in all the University campuses.

Kidane Kiflu's strong Eritrean independence views and his unquestionable devotion to the cause of all Eritreans were little known to the majority of the people for whom he sacrificed his life.

Kidane is remembered by the majority of the University students and underground activists in Addis Abeba who were acquainted with his name as an outstanding student leader. What actually cost him his life was the cause of the Eritrean people for which lofty ideal he unflinchingly and unswervingly stood to the very end. He will always occupy a permanent place in the pantheon of Eritrean heroes. His love of his country and his unique dedication to that goal will always act as an inspiration for the new generation to defend their country when threatened from outside or inside.

I knew that Kidane was massively engaged in numerous underground activities, but I never asked to know and he never mentioned them to me. He was so secretive and a person with low profile. I listened intently, enjoying the man whose ideas and actions quickly commandeered my admiration. With courage and determination he fought hard to keep the Eritrean question on the surface. I have a vivid memory recollection of some events I was involved in or I was witness to. Below are some anecdotes from our time together in Addis Ababa.

Embassy of the republic of Somalia

One day Kidane asked me to accompany him. When I came to his house, he told me that we would transport two packages to the embassy of the Republic of Somalia. He told me the packages contained documents on the ongoing armed struggle in Eritrea. He further told me that the documents in one package will be distributed in the diplomatic circles in Addis Ababa while the second package will be dispatched to Mogadishu to be distributed

there. We took a bus that dropped us about 150 meters from the embassy. From the busstop, we walked directly to the embassy each of us carrying a heavy carton full of documents. At the gate the guard asked who we are and Kidane gave him the name of the diplomat whose guests we are. At the embassy premises Kidane had a short chat with the diplomat while I waited in the adjacent room. About a quarter of an hour later we left the compound and returned home by bus. Although I was happy to be involved in the noble cause, half of my mind was preoccupied with the possibilities of getting caught redhanded by the security. I could see some individuals in civilian cloth were chatting with the guard and staring at us. I did not believe Kidane had at any time entertained the idea that we can be arrested by the police. He acted as if there were no police and security surveillance in Addis Ababa.

A venture at the Africa Hall or the ECA

Another day Kidane prepared a document describing the illegal annexation of Eritrea by Ethiopia and that the Eritrean people were offer to the brutal suppression by the Haile Selassie government and that the Eritrean people have started armed struggle to make their country free. Many copies were stapled and made ready for distribution. At that time African foreign ministers were meeting at the Africa hall (ECA) and Kidane's plan was to distribute the documents there. Mr. Grady, a radical American academician who also was a teacher of Kidane at the university drove us to the conference hall and we carried the documents from the car and placed them at the entrance of the hall where the diplomats were to meet. All those who saw thought we were employees of the ECA engaged in preparation of the conference. After placing the documents on the tables of the conference hall we returned to the car and drove out of the building. We are neither stopped by the guards nor by the employees: mission accomplished.

Mata'a in Addis Abeba

In 1968 the famous band, MATAA (Mahber Theater Asmara) came to Addis Ababa to perform musical shows. Some University students took over the responsibility to organize their lodging and programs for the duration of their stay in Addis Ababa. The band had a show at the Haile Selassie 1st theatre for the public and another one at the University campus in Sidst Kilo for the University students. Passing by the road to Piassa, Kidane and I met three University students with the announcement to be hanged (posted) on two poles across the street. One of the students reminded the others that they should first

acquire permission from the municipality before they hang the announcement. Kidane pulled the ladder and climbed to tie it. He did it on the other pole across the street too. We were all waiting anxiously to hear what he will say. "In such matters you don't have to waste your time going through the bureaucracy of the municipality. How would passers by or even the workers in the municipality know that we have not acquired permission", he asked: and he was right.



Kidane Kiflu (source: <http://kemey.blogspot.no>)

By the death of Kidane Kiflu, Eritrea has lost one of her great revolutionary fighters. Free Eritrea and all the true revolutionaries of the struggle salute this indomitable fighter. We shall respect the cause to which Kidane Kiflu devoted all his energies and ultimately gave his life.

Kidane Kiflu: A Member of the Remarkable Generation that Was

Kidane Kiflu was a member of a remarkable generation of Eritreans who were engulfed by that irresistible zeal and devotion for independence that lasted their life time. He reached adulthood at a time when the peoples of the Third World were being set on fire with a passion called Revolution for National Liberation.

Kidane, as testified by Professor Berhe *Habte-giorgis*, who was his classmate in the then Hailesellasiye secondary school in Asmara, was already an active participant in the clandestine group of 7 which acquired the name Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM – *Mahber Showate*) in Asmara but with little or no publicity at all. He was one of the bright lights of a generation of Eritreans who were inspired by Ibrahim Sultan and Woldeab Woldemariam committed to winning freedom, and who threw themselves wholeheartedly into the freedom struggle.

Kidane met like-minds and continued working in the world of underground in spreading the need to fight for freedom. The first clandestine cells of *Mahber Shew'ate* (Association of Seven) were established by Yasin el-Gade (a tailor from Asmara). To mention a few among members of the remarkable generation that was, are the following: Saleh Eyay, Mohammed Saed Nawd, the ELM co-founder-leader, Yassin Uqda, Adem Melekin, Mohammed Burhan Hassen, Ali Berhatu, Tikue Yihdego, Kahsai Bahlbi, Mohammed Omar Akito, Abdulkerim Saed Qasim, Sheikh Saddadin Mohammed, Khiyar Hassen Beyan (a rich and courageous compatriot who hosted the conference in his house) and other well known names.



Saeid Moh. Saleh



Wolday Ghidey



Abdul Salam



Teklay Haraka



Nur Abdul Hai



Ahmed Bin Abdulqader



Weldenkiel Abrha



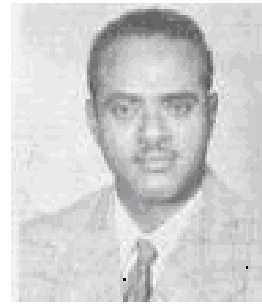
Mehari Debesai



Yasin el-Gade



Tukue Yehdego



Mohamed Said Nawud



Mahmud I. Al-Haj



Mussa Araho



Saleh Ahmed Eyay



Kahsai Bahlbi



Mohamed Burhan
Negash

To avoid the sectarian divisions that had marked Eritrean political activities in the 1940s, the ELM activists set out to recruit within the urban Christian community, stressing, in the words of the preamble to the ELM status, that “Muslims and Christians are brothers, Mohamed Said Nawud, the principal leader, had contacts with the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), which at that time was one of the best organized of such groups in black Africa. (Iyob, 1995:99). The goal of the movement was ‘to wrest the administration of the Eritrean people from Ethiopia by various means (Markakis 1987: 107). Markakis adds that as a model for the organization they chose the cell structure used by the Sudanese Communist Party. He adds that cells of seven members were formed, and each member was instructed to recruit six others to form a new cell. Thus the movement spread amoeba-like in the towns of Eritrea.

Alsayed (2009) states that for the first and perhaps last time in Eritrea’s delicate history, the ELM managed to appeal to Eritrea’s diverse society, united Eritrean Muslims and Christians, Highlanders and Lowlanders, infiltrated institutions, including Eritrea’s police force, spread its organization and mobilization cells of 7 (famously known and still remembered by the highlanders as “Mahber shewatte” and in the lowlands as “Haraka or Haraket”). By April 1959 clandestine cells had been established in almost all Eritrean towns and the first conference of the ELM were held in Asmara in 1960. According to Woldeyesus Ammar (2004) there were 40 participants including:

Mohammed Saed Nawd, the ELM co-founder-leader, Saleh Eyay, Yassin Uqda, Adem Melekin, Mohammed Burhan Hassen, Ali Berhatu, Tiku’e Yihdego, Kahsai Bahlbi, Mohammed Omar Akito, Abdulkeri. Before the conference Salih Eyay was stationed in Keren representing Senihit, Sahel, Baraka and Gash with Saed Qasim, Sheikh Saddadin Mohammed, Khiyar Hassen Beyan. Whereas Yasin was stationed in Asmara represented Kebesa. After the conference Asmara became the center and Yasin, Tuku'e and Mohammed Birhane led the movement (Bereketeab, 2000:220)

In the process of the Eritrean struggle for independence, the *Mahber Shew'ate* or Haarakat had contributed a great deal to narrowing the rift between Christian and Moslem, which had been developed by the Unionists in the 1940s; through employing the slogan “Muslims and Christian are brothers, and their unity makes Eritrea one” The founder of the ELM, all Moslems, were conscious of the harmful effects of the religious divisions which had pitted Christian against Moslem in the 1940s. (Iyob, 1995:100).

According to Killion (1998:142) the ELM started recruiting Eritreans under the policy that Moslems and Christians are brothers in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. According to (Arkokabay Team, the ELM was a unique movement of its time. It had overcome the religious division between Eritreans; the polarization that was instilled by the Ethiopian monarch of the time: Haile-Sellassie I and some Church leaders in Eritrea, such as the infamous “Qeshi Dimitros”, who intimidated and lured Eritrean Christians towards preferring union with “Christian Ethiopia” to “Independent Eritrea composed of Christians and Muslims”. The ELM challenged and defeated this fear and mistrust and managed to unite Eritrean Muslims and Christians to fight for their self-determination and independence 2010). The ELM gained a lot of support from the students and almost all professional unions and clubs. The Eritrean middle class was a dedicated supporter of the ELM. Teachers, writers, artisans, traders and merchants were all represented in the ELM whose program was so clear that a takeover from within in a swift popular uprising seemed achievable.

The ELM members included Eritrean police officers, civil servants, intellectuals and merchants among many other professional categories. The ELM’s priority was to first raise the Eritrean people’s national political awareness that can then be used to launch a popular revolution to oust Ethiopian occupation (Arkokabay Team, 2010).

Iyob (1995: 102) also states that in addition to the participation of students and workers, artists and musicians joined the underground conglomerate of radical nationalism. The Mahber Teatre Asmara (MTA), a cultural association, was established in 1961 by singers, composers, poets, and university students returning from the Haile Selassie I university in Addis Ababa. Plays, singers, and stand-up comics satirized the federal scheme and warned against the evils of "alien" cultures. Shigey Habuni, a popular song of the mid-1960s, is an example of the creative nationalism resonating within the population.

 <p>Tewolde Redda</p>	 <p>Shigai habuni by Tewolde Redda Youtube</p>	<p>Shigey Habuni</p> <p>Ay'tetal'luni</p> <p>Intay Gher'e Eye?</p> <p>Shigey Zei'tbuni?</p>	<p>Give me my torch</p> <p>How long can you deceive me</p> <p>What have I done?</p> <p>That you deny me my torch?</p>
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In 1959, the sectarian politics of most of the Muslim exile community in Cairo left Woldeab isolated. With the rise of the secular Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) whose labor-oriented political ELM sent Tahir Ibrahim to contact them, but he was met with suspicion verging on hostility, except Woldeab Woldemariam, who later agreed to become the movement's representative in Egypt (Markakis 1987:107). In connection with this, Killion (1998:433) wrote The programme coincided with Woldeab as own political vision, he returned to political activity serving as the ELM's Cairo representative.



Woldeab Woldemariam

Following is an *excerpt from The Eritrean struggle for independence by Iyob, Ruth (1995: 103).*

The ELM redoubled its efforts to publicize its existence and obtain outside recognition and support after it failed to obtain the backing of the exiled Eritrean politicians in Sudan, Egypt, Somalia, and Saudi Arabia. But before the ELM's coup could be mounted the establishment of a new organization in 1960 -the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) - by former political leaders in exile further complicated the simple strategy of liberation by coup espoused by the ELM. Thus, while the first ELM Congress was held in Asmara on September 1960 to discuss the "necessity of armed struggle" in the event of a failed coup the erosion of the fragile unity nurtured by the ELM was already well underway, spearheaded by the ELF under Idris M. Adem. All this occurred during the 1959-1961 period; in the meantime, the ELM had the political field within Eritrea much to itself. It spread all over Eritrea within a short time. In January 1961, *Mahber Showate/ELM* held its first and last conference in Asmara.

All the above mentioned freedom fighters, product of the Eritrean freedom struggle and heroes of the revolutionary stream of the struggle with virtues of the highest order of courage, conviction, commitment and sacrifice for the cause of Eritrea's freedom from the Ethiopian colonialism seem to have been forgotten. The younger generation is not aware of the visionary aspect of their personality. The fact that they are today forgotten by the political system is shameful and scandalous. It is beyond apprehension that there is not one single monument to commemorate the remarkable generation that was. And the very many battles that collectively brought independence to Eritrea. Children are not taught in history classes about the history of the gallant Eritrean forefathers who fell defending their land from Egyptian, Turkish, Italian colonialism and Ethiopian occupation. What a pity to see the pride of a nation virtually buried.

Another category of the remarkable generation whose names and contributions almost vanished are those who lost their lives behind enemy lines. Eritrea has many exemplary heroes who fought the enemy in his own backyard. By taking the risk they spilled their blood for the ultimate goal of achieving the independence of their beloved country. They included civil servants, intellectuals, students, merchants among many other professional categories. I inquired with some compatriots who survived the Ethiopian prisons and were lucky enough to see the independence of Eritrea in 1991. Our fallen heroes and heroines behind enemy lines were countless but to mention a few of them, I was given names like Temesgen Haile, Amanuel Johannes, Hailesellasiye Ghebrezghi, Melake Belay, Tesfay Meresie and Abrehe Bemnet. It is disheartening though to witness that their sacrifices are not made known to the young generation in the form of biography books. To collect the names of all our martyrs who fell behind enemy lines and publish a book for this category of martyrs was the easiest task the revolution could have done after the Eritrean flag was hoisted in 1991.

The following pages are quotation from Issayas Tesfamariam's blog. During his trip to Eritrea in 2011, he received strong impressions of the remarkable generation that was.

"My trip to Eritrea could not have been complete without looking into some information on Kidane Kiflu. People sometimes ask me why I continue to research about Kidane Kiflu. My answer to that is two fold. 1. I read the letters that Kidane Kiflu wrote to Jack Kramer, which are housed in the Hoover Institution archives. Through his writing, I have begun to understand and appreciate his prophetic vision (while he was in his early 20's) for a future Eritrea. 2nd. And the most importantly – I want to understand – through Kidane Kiflu (his life and writings), his generation. That is, the generation that brought independence to Eritrea, fighting through thick and thin to achieve this goal. In other words, was the vision that is described in his letters only his or was he representing his generations sentiment and vision for the way forward for Eritrea at that time and beyond? I came to the

conclusion that he was representing his generation. I believe that he along with Wolday Ghidey became important in the struggle because their death signified. "The straw that broke the camel's back" in the EPLF's split from the ELF.

As evidenced by other students and student leaders who joined in the Eritrean struggle such as Tukue Yihdego, Wolderufael Sebhatu, Mehari Debessay and others, they were as dedicated, well versed, well articulating in their analysis and vision as Kidane Kiflu was in his letters. Therefore, Kidane was one of the many young people of his generation who had the vision, commitment, determination and discipline to see an independent and truly free Eritrea. His letters, and letters by other student leaders of the time, testify to the aforementioned. By the way, I believe that a particular period in history can also be understood not only through archival materials, interviews, but also through letters / from individuals, organizations, friends, family members and etc. A couple of years ago, for example, at the research and documentation center (RDC) in Asmara, I looked through letters written in the early 1970's by the Eritrean students in various countries across the world to their respective organizations in various countries. It was a fascinating read. Of course, I did not have enough time to look through all and research deeply, but suffice it to say that one day it should warrant for research on the various Eritrean students (Eritrean Students Association in North America, Germany, Russia "the former Soviet Union" and etc.). While we are at it, we also need to do research and publish all the posters and tapes that the liberation struggle published. It is because the various respective cultural and political productions (posters, designs on the cassettes, songs, etc.) of the time represented a particular threat, motivation, mobilization, education and etc. This does not mean it has not been done yet, but we need to do more. For example, RDC has digitized the entire Dimtsi Hafash (Voice of the masses) broadcast since its first broadcast in 1979. Also RDC has identified and reproduced digitally, books that were printed in Eritrea since the first book came out in 1867 through 1941. There were more than 750 titles identified and some 60 000 pages digitized. For more on this keep an eye for my interview with Dr. Massimo Zaccaria.

One thing that I noticed every time the name Kidane comes up in conversations in Eritrea is that he is remembered fondly and respectfully. I have talked to people who knew him personally and every time end up hearing some new information about him that I have not heard before. For example, in my 2008 visit to Eritrea, I heard from a person who told me that he had received a letter from Kidane a week or so before his murder. In that letter, I heard Kidane had sensed that he was going to be killed and he had mentioned that in the letter. I have urged the person to look for the letter.

On one occasion during this visit, a group of us went to have drinks after a book signing / book review of Michael Adonay's latest book entitled "Tsihifto Haneta: Ekub Tewaseotat Hagerawi Bealat" (Haneta's writings: collected national holidays theatrical place". For a report on this event, see my upcoming sketches of a trip: Eritrea 2011. While discussing and admiring the just concluded event, the conversation ended up discussing Kidane Kiflu. A person who was there was shocked when he heard that I had written about him. He said that he knew Kidane and his family very well. As a matter of fact, he mentioned that he still remembers when Kidane left to join the Eritrean struggle from Addis Abeba; People who knew Kidane in Addis Abeba understood (including his family) that he was leaving for Checkoslovakia for his studies. This was something that I never heard before. Further down in the same discussion, several names popped up who knew Kidane in Addis Abeba and I jotted down the names to interview them.

Some of the people on this list were people who I already knew and had interviewed for other topics, but did not realize they knew or even went to school with Kidane. One person told me that Kidane was very serious at Haile Sellasie 1 University in Addis Abeba. He told me that Kidane, behind the scenes, was one of the organizers of Eritrean students at the university. I also understood that he was a good friend of Professor Donald J. Grady, a Canadian political scientist from MacMaster University, who was teaching at that time at Haile Sellasie 1 University. I was informed that Kidane Kiflu threw a party for Prof. Grady, when the latter was returning to Canada. In that event Kidane was the MC of the party and had on his traditional cloth. In that event, the renowned historian and playwright, Alemseged Tesfai sung a song. Who said our heroes didn't or don't have fun!

During a discussion with some people in Asmara, I heard about the book written by Take Beyene entitled "Kab Rik Hifinti" (a loose translation would be "A snippet from an enormous part". I bought the book and asked Tekie to autograph it. The book is an autobiographical account of his involvement in the struggle. It is the first of its kind. Tukue Yihdego's name is mentioned many times as one of the student organizers in Asmara. As I mentioned at the beginning of his sketch, Tukue Yihdego's (Mehari Debessay and others) writing and vision was similar to Kidanes. In the book Tekie mentioned that sometime later, after Yihdego joined the liberation struggle he was sent to Beirut, Lebanon. By this time, Kidane Kiflu was already killed in 1969 in Kassala, Sudan. In Beirut, Mehari Debessay and others arranged for Tukue to get married to Hadas. When their son was born, the couple named him Kidane my memory of Kldane Kiflu. Later, Tukue died in Eritrea while he was on assignment. And guess what, the God father of Kidane Tukue is none other than the President of Eritrea, Issayas Afwerki. All of the above and more are detailed in the aforementioned book by Tekie Beyene. I recommend the book highly. I encourage other people who participated in the struggle for Eritrea's independence to follow Tekie's example and write their personal experiences in the struggle."

End of quotation

The journey from Addis Ababa to Kassala

The plan to leave Addis Ababa was twofold. It was primarily aimed to break the chain of arrests the Ethiopian security police were making. After succeeding to uncover names of some members of the underground organization known as Mahber Shewate, the Ethiopian security force succeeded to uncover the different clandestine groups one after the other. By leaving Ethiopia, Kidane and Tesfay could break the chain of arrests and put the security police in a situation where they will have no more names to penetrate into the cells, while at the same time saving themselves from arrest.

According to Tesfay both he and Kidane had to hurriedly leave Addis Ababa before the police uncover their names and arrest them. At that point in time Kidane knew something was radically going wrong with the revolution. He also found himself in a precarious situation to see that on the one hand Eritreans were consolidating their appetite to fight Ethiopian occupation and on the other hand the revolution in the field and the Sudan was not embracing them. So, I believe he was eager to know for himself what was going on there and find out what can be done to rectify the direction of the revolution. Departing from Addis Ababa one early morning both of them took a secret way destined to Aden. From Aden Kidane travelled to Kassala while Tesfay left for Poland to pursue his studies.

Having saved members of the Mahber Showate in Ethiopia from arrest Kidane travelled to the Sudan to see for himself the problems of the revolution which by that time has surfaced in the Eritrean communities. News of the killings in the field disseminated by those who are forced to surrender to the enemy to save their own lives. Once he was in the Sudan I was told by a veteran freedom fighter that Romodan Mohammed Nur warned Kidane that Kassala was a dangerous place for him to stay. He told him that Kassala is a small city and his activities can easily be monitored which could make him an easy target of Quida Al Ama. He advised him to move to Khartoum, a big city, providing him the possibility to live unnoticed. But Kidane replied, "I will stay in Kassala and if martyrdom comes it will contribute to the correction or change of direction of the revolution."

Because of his instigating patriotic feelings, Kidane was ready for fighting all the way, including using pressure to the ELF leadership to make changes for the better. He had already established a network in Ethiopia, Europe, America and the Middle East. It was under this circumstance that Kidane Kiflu was killed. Information about his death was sent by Adragon Haile Meleket from Germany to the cells in Addis Ababa.

“ድሕሪ መፋርቅ 60ታት ወደብ ተ.ሓ.ኤ. ምስ ተዳኸመ ከአ ሃይለ ድሩዕን ገለ ብጾቱን ኢደም ናብ ኢትዮጵያ ሂሮም ተመሊሶም። ሃገራውነቶም ስለ ዘዳኸሙ ግን ፣ እቲ ማሕበር ተኣኪቡ “ሕጂ”ከ እንታይ ይገበር” ኢሉ ከዝቲ ከሎ ኣብ ኣኼባ ናይቲ ማሕበር ይሳተፉ ነይሮም። ሓደ መዓልቲ ካብ ከሰላ ሱዳን ፣ ኪዳነ ክፍሉ ነቲ ማሕበር ዝጸሓፉ ደብዳቤ ክዝተየላ ምስ ተኣከቡ ፣ ናይቲ ኣኼባ ኣለይቲ ርእሶም ተኸለማርያም (ናይ 70ታት ታርዛን) ወልደየሱስ ዓማር ፣ ሚካኤል ጋብር ወዘተ ነይሮም። ናይ ኪዳነ ክፍሉ ትሕዝቶ ብሓጺሩ “ተ.ሓ.ኤ. ስለ ዘይጸረየ ክትሰለፍ ኢልኩም ከይትሓሰቡ ፣ ዘዋጽኣኩም ግበሩ” እያ ትብል ነይራ። ኣብቲ ኣኼባ ምስምማዕ ስለ ዝተሳእነ ከአ ጸጥታ ኢትዮጵያ ብማእሰርቲ ከይቀደምዎም ከለዉ ባዕላቶም ተጋጊና ኔርና ኢሎም ንመንግስቲ ይቕረታ ክሓቱ ወሰኑ። ዝርዝር ኣስማት ጽሑፎም ከአ ነቲ ሸዕኡ ኣብ ስልጣን ዝነበረ ዶክተር ሰዩም ሓረጎት ሂሮም ባዕሉ ነቲ ጉዳይ ክዓጽወሎም ሓተትዎ። ዶክተር ሰዩም ሓረጎት ከአ ብዘይ ማእሰርቲ ይቕረታ ከም ዝግበረሎም ገይሩ ነቲ ጉዳይ ዓጽይዎ።”

Source [kab rige -hefeneti](#) **Tekie Beyne (2009: p.123)**



Tesfay Ghebreselassie was the companion of Kidane Kiflu at the time he left Addis Abeba heading towards the Sudan

“ኣብቲ ንዛረበሉ ዘሎና እዋን ካብ ዝነበሩ ኣገደስቲ ሰባት ግድን ኣስማት ይጠቐስ እንተተባሂሉ ፣ ኣብ መድረኽ 1965-69 ኣብ ዘሎ ግዜ ኪዳነ ክፍሉ ክጥቀስ ይኸእል እዩ። ኣብቲ ኣብ ኣስመራ ኣብ ካልኣይ ደረጃ ኣብያተ ትምህርቲ ዝካየድ ዝነበረ ምንቅስቃሳት ፣ ኪዳነ ሓደ ካብ ወደብቲ እዩ ነይሩ። ዓው-ዓውን ርኣዩን - ርኣዩን ዘይብል ህዳኒን በሊሕን ሰብ ስለ ዝነበረ ፣ ብዙሕ ተመሃራይ ይፈልጦ ነይሩ ክበሃል ኣይከኣልን። እቲ ኣወዳድባዊን ብምስጢራውያን ዋሕዮታት ኮይኑ ፣ ሓያል ዲሲፕሊን ስለ ዝነበሮ ፣ ሓደ ብዛዕባቲ ካልእ ክፈልጥ ዝህሉ ተኸእሎ ጽብብ ዝበለ እዩ ነይሩ። ዝኾነ ሰብ ኣብ ዘዩድልዮ ስራሕ ኣይኣቱን እዩ ፣ ግን ኣብቲ ዘጋንፍ ዝነበረ ዉሱን ኣጋጣሚታት ይር ኣ ከም ዝነበረ ፣ ኪዳነ ሓደ ካብቶም ቀንዲ ወደብቲ እዩ ነይሩ።

ናብቶም ኣብ ሃገራት ወጻኢ ዝነበሩ ናይ ሰራሕተኛታትን ናይ ተመሃሮን ምንቅስቃሳት ብ እዋኑ ዝጽሕፎም ዝነበረ መልእኽትታትን ዝገብሮም ዝነበረ ርክባትን ዘደንጽዉ እዮም። እቲ ኣወዳድባ ዶብ ሰጊሩ ኣብ ደገ ንክካየድ ፣ ብኣብነት ዝሰርሐ ተቃላሳይ እዩ። ምክትታል ምስ በዝሐ ንሱዳን ከይዱ ፣ ንዉሱን ግዜ ኣብ ካርቱም ድሕሪ ምጽናሕ ፣ ካብ ናብቲ ክሳብ ዕለተ መስዋእቱ ዝጸንሓሉ ከተማ ከሰላ መጽዩ።”



Kidane Kiflu

Woldai Ghidey

Pictures are courtesy of Brig. General Ghirmay Mehari.

“ንኪዳነ ተኸቲሉ ፣ ወልዳይ ጊደይ'ውን ክጥቀስ ይኸእል እዩ። ክልቲኦም ኣብቲ ናይ ተ.ሓ.ኤ ጽንኩር ምሕቓን እዋን ፣ ኣዝዩ ዳይናሚክ ዝኾነ ተራ ዝተጻወቱ እዮም። ናይ'ዞም ሰባት እዚኦም ተራ - ክሳብቲ ናብ ቅትለቶም ዘበጸሐ ኩነታት - ብዝርዝር ክጽሓፍ እንተ ዝከኣል ጽብቕ ነይሩ። እቶም ዝቐተልዎምን ዘቐተልዎምን ሰባት ውን ኮ ክጥቀስ ምተኸእለ ፣ ግን ምስቲ ዘሎና ሃገራዊ ዕማማት ንግዝይኡ ምውንዛፍ ይምረጽ። “ ጠቕላሊት

መሪነት” ወይ “ቅያዳ ዓማ” ዝተሰምዩት ንዋዕላ ኣድብሓ ጨውያ ናብ ስልጣን ዝመጸት ሓዳስ መሪነት ፣ ኣብ ውሽጢ ሓደ ዓመት ዘይመልእ ግዜ ፣ ንኹሉ ነቲ ንሰውራ ንቕድሚት ክደፍእ ዝኸእል ዝነበረ ውሳኔታት ናይቲ ዋዕላ ግሂሳ ፣ ካብቲ ናይ ቅድም ብዝኸፍኦ ኣፈላልያን መጽቀጥትን ክትገዝእ ምስ ጀመረት ፣ ብዙሓት ተጋደልቲ ተቃውሞ ኣርእዮም እዮም። ካብ’ቶም ሰውራ ንምዕራይ ዝቃለሱ ዝነበሩ ንጹሃት ተጋደልቲ ከኣ ፣ ን400 ኣቢሎም ዝኸኑ ብረቶም ኣውራዳ ንሱዳን ጠሪዞም”።

Source: መዘከርን መስርሕን - ታሪኽ ምንቅስቓስ ሰራሕተኛታት ኤርትራ - ኣብ መድረኽ 1961-1979 ገጽ 46-47

Activities in the Sudan: The pen as a vital instrument

At the great risk to his life, Kidane together with Wolday worked tirelessly to rectify the wrong policies of Qaeda Al Ama from Kassala where the Revolutionary Command (RC) leadership was based. Kidane had a burning patriotism that never swayed back from the goal of bringing freedom to Eritrea. Even when information started flowing about the ELF leadership’s political and military strategy in the field, Kidane’s motivation to fight against the Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea hasn’t changed; although his thoughts and energy were split by the need to make changes in ELF’s political direction.

Kidane through his writings, established communication with all actors in the liberation struggle, far and near, By his skill to communicate it can be said that information flow between units, individuals and the media was effectively undertaken by Kidane. He was the sole communicator of good and bad news. He was the one who addressed the problems and applauded positive developments. Kidane had unwavering trust in every Eritrean that he involved many individuals in the activities he was undertaking outside the work of the clandestine groups. There was no oath taking to involve anyone. For him the work of every Eritrean to secure the freedom of Eritrea at any cost was for granted.

Kidane had a big network that included politicians, freedom fighters, diplomats, journalist, academicians, revolutionaries, students, traders, etc. He kept addresses and telephone numbers of his contacts neatly even under adverse situations. I was so happily amazed to have received a letter from him in the University post pigeonhole about 6 months after his departure from Addis Abeba. He was quick to get to know also non-Eritreans and supply them with information about Eritrea and its struggle. This has helped massively in the Eritrean cause to be known outside Eritrea and Ethiopia. Kidane was not good only in writing, but he was also super in data collection and archiving. Clarity of writing usually follows clarity of thought. He wrote in such a way that the message is conveyed simply and readily understandable.

Resoum Kidane in his researched compilation writes the following. The death of Kidane caused much disillusionment among the ELF fighters. For example Tukue Yehdego who was one of the founders of *Mahber Shew'ate* in Asmara in 1959 became disillusioned. Tukue hated the Kiada al Ama leadership from the beginning and decided to work with the Sabbe group rather than to join Selfi Nesanet which was led by Issayas who was member of Keiada al Ama until he defected to the Ala group on 27 April 1970. After Tukue left the ELF, he sent a letter to the Eritrean students and other former members of Haraka in the Diaspora to inform them about the unstable political situation in the ELF and the Kiada Al Ama conspiracy to kill Kidane Kiflue and other fighters.

Find more information from [Mr Berhan Belata interview with Eritrean Tv. Demtsi Hezbi 9 February 2013](#)

Naizghi Kiflu [ex-Internal Security chief who died in London on the 6th of February, 2012)] confirms:

“The split from the ELF had already started before the martyrdom of Kidane. Basically, Kidane was in Kassala with the understanding reached between him and Isaias Afwerki and Abraha Tewolde. Isaias and Abraha had already split with their respective comrades. Kidane Kiflu was in Kassala to coordinate the activities outside of the field. From Kassala he used to correspond with me [Naizghi], Aboi Woldeab Woldemariam, Hiruy Tedla and others about the conditions and situations of the field.” When I first heard about the brutal murder of Kidane Kiflu and Wolday Ghidey by Quiada Al Ama I was speechless and torn apart.



Kidane Kiflu (second from the left back row), Aberra Mekonnen (Second from the right front row). Jack Kramer (second from the left sitting). Picture courtesy of Mr. Jack Kramer. (Kassala, Sudan. 1968)

Wolday Ghidey: the death companion

I have designated this section of Kidane Kiflu's biography to Wolday Ghidey's synopsis. With the passage of time, information concerning Wolday Ghidey is getting sketchy and fragmented. I even had to correct my information about his origin and place of birth a couple of times. His name pops up only in connection with the fatal day in Kassala where he was brutally murdered together with Kidane Kiflu. Many veteran fighters of the revolution were contacted to provide information on the personal data of Wolday but it has been difficult to locate such individuals. Lately I was able to contact a veteran tegadalay who worked with Wolday Ghidey at the SATAE SANNA bus company who knew him well and was willing to share his information with me.



The only picture available of the gallant martyr Wolday Ghidey

Kidane Kiflu was widely known among Eritreans because he lived in many places, including Mendefera, Asmara and Addis Ababa where he established contact with many

like-minded compatriots. But Wolday Ghidey is mentioned only in connection with the tragic day when his life ended with that of Kidane Kiflu. In the process of writing this biography I also researched for the personal data and background of Wolday. The information in this section consists of his personal data and his political activities before he joined the Eritrean Liberation Front.

The birth place of Wolday is not yet known. What is known so far is that his origin is in the village of Adi Sneai in Seharti district. This village is located about 12 kilometers southwest of Asmara. It is confirmed that prior to his departure to join the ELF, Wolday worked for the bus company commonly known as Satae Sanna. As head of the ticket office, he was responsible for controlling all the company's activities related to ticket sales and distribution.



Another Google map of Adi Tsneai.
ዓዲ ጽንዓይ ምስ ምሉእ ካርታ ኤርትራ ከትርእ ኩኦ



Adi Sneai location map from Google earth

While working for Satae Sanna, he was an active member of the clandestine group of 7 (Mahber Showate). It was possible to know that his close friends and members of the group were the pioneer political activists Abraham Tewelde and Suleman Bini. All of them were actively engaged in the Eritrean resistance and the rapid growth of the sense of nationalism in the country. They were preparing manifestos to be distributed secretly in all the big towns of Eritrea.

Obviously working in Satae Sanna gave him the advantage as he had access to the bus company's traffic schedules and personnel working for the company particularly the drivers and ticket men. I am told that they distributed manifestos to even far away places like Mekele and Addis Ababa.



The famous Satae Sanna bus share company was easily recognizable by its light blue colored buses

The year Wolday joined the ELF was not possible to track, but surely he is one of the pioneer freedom fighters who was ready to spill his precious blood for the cause of his country, Eritrea. It looks he climbed quickly to the leadership rank. He was one of the members of the Kassala based leadership of the ELF Revolutionary Command and the only one from the highlands and Christian background. Here below the reader will find the list of names who were in the RC leadership. At the high time of ELF's inability to show genuine leadership of the armed struggle Wolday was himself eliminated in a brutal way together with Kidane Kiflu.

The main task of the Revolutionary Command (RC) based in Kassala, Sudan was to coordinate the five military zones in Eritrea. The RC was the go-between or the link between the High Council, which was based in Syria and the Divisions in the field. The Revolutionary Command is believed to have 12 members.

Following were the members of the RC:

1. Muhammed Saed Adem
2. Muhammed Ismail Abdu
3. Azzein Yassin
4. Omar Haj Idris
5. Abdu Osman
6. Jaffar Muhammed
7. Ahmed Muhammed Ali
8. Mohamud Muhammed Saleh
9. Ahmed Ismail
10. Saleh Hedug
11. Wolday Ghidey
12. Abdulkadir Osman

Excerpt on the development of the political and military activities up to the murder of Kidane Kiflu and Wolday Ghidey in 1970.

In Eritrea the provisions of the federal accord were either gradually and systematically disregarded or, simply repealed. With that disappeared all democratic rights for peaceful and democratic political expression were closed. More effective avenues had to be found for expressing political and national aspirations. This compelled Eritrean nationalists to search for alternative ways to challenge the Ethiopian encroachment. And because all the mechanisms through which political grievances could be channeled were banned all political activities had to be clandestine.

In November 1958, a group of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan took the initiative of organizing political activity under the name Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM). Delegates were immediately dispatched to Eritrea to establish clandestine cells, which were formed in groups of seven persons in order to avoid detection by the Ethiopian security forces. As a result of this organizational method, the movement in Eritrea took the name of Mahber Sheet (association of a group of seven). In the lowlands it was known as Harakat Et Tahrir El Eritrya, and best known in its short form, Haraka.

The activities of the ELM were predominantly urban-based, founded by young Moslem nationalists residing in the Sudan. Its aim was to terminate Ethiopian rule through peaceful means, although later it attempted to launch an armed guerrilla insurrection.

They were very much influenced by the nationalist movement in the Sudan, and particularly by the Sudan Communist Party. The strategy of the urban Clandestine movement, according to Nawid (1997), was learned from the experience of the Sudanese Communist Party.

As soon as they could dispatch their representatives to Eritrea, the work of mobilization was carried out among the urban population. The mobilization and recruitment work received an immediate positive response from both the Moslem and Christian communities, and in quite a short time, by April of 1959, clandestine cells had been established in almost all Eritrean towns. The ELM convened its first congress in Asmara in 1960.

With the entrance of the ELM into the field, the liberation movement encountered its first substantial internal conflict. The discord pivoted around the question of whether there should be two organizations. According to Nawid (1997), the ELM made a proposal to the leadership of the ELF to merge the two organizations. However, the proposal failed because of the ELF's rejection. This led to the first armed confrontation within the liberation movement.

The antagonism between the two organizations reached its peak and was eventually resolved through coercive means, ending in the complete demise of the ELM. According to Markakis, the discordance between the two fronts can be explained in structural terms. First, the ELF viewed the ELM as a communist influenced organization. Second, sectionalism played a significant role. While the leaders of the ELM were from the Keren and Sahel regions, the leaders of the ELF were from the Barka region and this difference of origin contributed to the cleavage. Third, the ELM's attempt to broaden its organization through recruiting Christians also played not an insignificant role. The leaders of the ELF, and Idris Mohammed Adem in particular, disliked this strategy because in their view, it was the Christians that delivered Eritrea to Ethiopia in the first place (Markakis 1987: 108). According to Mohammed Said Nawid, however, the ELF and ELM disagreed over the ELF leadership's belief that they had the sole mandate of representing the Eritrean people.

The leaders of the ELF believed that the mandate had been bestowed upon them during the time of political struggle in the 1940s and 1950s. They therefore believed that newly emerging political forces had no legitimacy. Moreover, their view that the Eritrean arena could not accommodate more than one organizational so constituted an irreconcilable point of difference. Ahmed Mohammed Nasir, acquiescing to the latter point admits that

the chief reason for the ELF attacking the ELM was its belief that the Field could support only one organization.

At last, the ELF Supreme Council decided to take military action against the Movement. The obliteration of the ELM unit by the ELF at Ela Tza'ada in 1965 effectively terminated not only the military, but also the political existence of the ELM. Many believe that the legacy of this military action set the precedent for the later civil wars between the Eritrean organizations.

Source: Eritrea: the making of a nation 1890-1991 By Redie Bereketeab 183-185 p.

The ELF leadership divided Eritrea into regions and divided the Liberation Army-command as well as rank and file-along tribal and provincial lines, thus fomenting provincial; tribal and religious sentiments instead of building a single army and through it foster national unity. This also affected the prosecution of the liberation war. Instead of leading a nationwide effort, the ELF could only carry out isolated, small-scale operations. The Revolutionary Command, the group established to realize the decentralized commands in the field with the Supreme Council, suffered from incompetence and backward composition and outlook and resided outside the field, in Kessela. It was incapable of coordinating the work of the commands inside Eritrea and providing leadership. It served more as a center for concocting conspiracies to perpetuate divisions.

The Supreme Council, the highest body, was not responsible to any authority. It was not only based far from the field, but also disunited. Each Supreme Council member attempted to build his own power base exacerbating the divisions within the growing Eritrean Liberation Army (ELA). The art of manipulating the feelings of clans, tribes, religious and regional groupings and of sowing discord among them developed.

A meeting was convened in Aredaib, in Barka province, in June 1968. The call for greater unity in the ELF met with much approval. Issues that had not previously been aired were raised, such as the often harsh treatment of civilians by the fighters. This meeting marked the beginning of complex and far-reaching changes in the ELF.

Following a disastrous attack by the Second zone on Halhal, northwest of Keren, zones two, three and four united in the Tripartite Unity Force. All zones then attended another meeting in 1969. Not only did this ultimately brought about the downfall of the Supreme Command, but the quarrelling led to embarrassing, not to say many horrifying incidents. Wolday Ghidey and Kidane Kiflu, two prominent Christian ELF members, were also killed in cold blood in Kassala by comrades.

Illustrative drawings on the life of Kidane Kiflu

In the process of accumulating data for the biographical sketch of Kidane Kiflu, an idea came to me to find out how the young generation of today understands dreadful events of the early period of the Eritrean revolution.

To that end, I contacted 9 diaspora youngsters aged between 27-32 years. I told each of them a summary of Kidane Kiflu's life story orally. I then asked all to tell the life story of Kidane Kiflu in a single drawing. Four responded and I have placed their drawings in the following pages. These young drawers have Eritrean parents, but they are all born in the diaspora long after the death of Kidane. Some expressed their wish to be anonymous, so I decided that all of them become anonymous. That means their names are not noted down, but their ages and current country of residence are noted. They are from Stavanger (Norway), Sandnes (Norway), London (England) and Frankfurt (Germany) and the drawings are numbered in the same order.

All the youngster's drawings are well expressive on the part of the story they have chosen to draw (reflect on). Uniquely drawer no. 1 had a complete visual narration that reflects the sequence of events in Kidane's entire life. All the other three drawers chose the tragic last day of his life as representing all the other memorable events in his political life. I am so much fascinated to see that two of the drawers who found philosophical quotations or expressions in history to link them with the fate of Kidane Kiflu.

Telling a story by drawing requires a strong sense of imagination and the art of expression. Having a glance at the drawings, it gives us, adults who experienced or heard the stories as they unfolded, the opportunity to know, if there exist a difference in our expression or reaction to traumatic events with the young generation. In other words, do traumatic events lose their intensity with the passage of time? It was a casual idea that emerged, but it has revealed interesting impressions to me of how the younger generation reacted. My gratitude goes to all 4 who took time to draw the story of Kidane Kiflu.

Drawing No. 1 is from a 29 year old resident of Stavanger, Norway

Mendefera



Nationalism

Asmara

More nationalism

Addis Abeba

Devotion and agitation

Aden

Rectification and reconciliation

Kasalla

More rectification and reconciliation



Drawing No. 2 is from a 27 year old resident of Sandnes, Norway



“Revolutions devour their own children “

Revolutions

eat

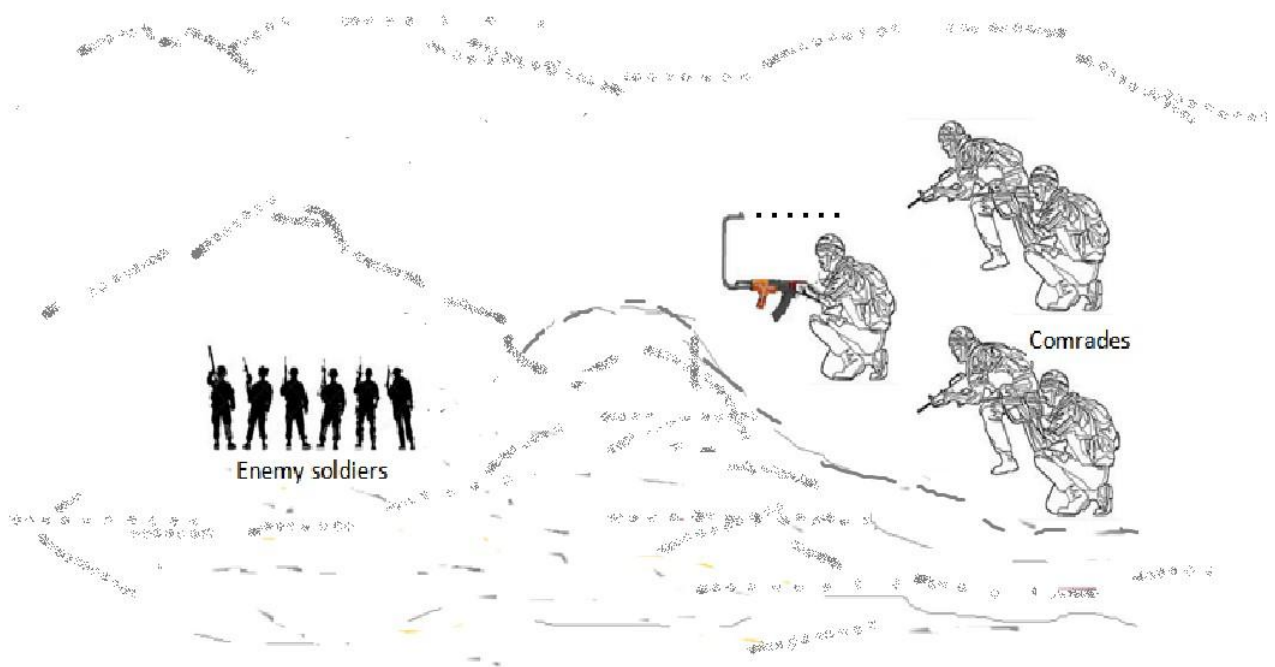
their

children

and

Eritrea is definitely no exception.

Drawing No. 3 is from a 32 year old resident of London, England



“Oh Lord, protect me from my friends. I can take care of my enemies”.

Voltaire

Drawing No. 4 is from a 31 year old resident of Frankfurt, Germany

Transporting the deceased to a cemetery by taxi. **What?**

Unheard of, unprecedented, outlandish, inconceivable, barbarous, graceless, mischievous, atrocious, heinous, insidious, treacherous, fratricide, fungicide, prolicide, amicide, giganticide, homicide,

It is more than words can describe.



End of life: Loss of two gallant fighters

In march 1970 the unthinkable became a reality. When a freedom fighter is eliminated by his own organization and by persons fighting for the same cause, it is a tragedy of the highest order.

Here is an excerpt from the transcript of Gunther's interview with Abdalla Hassan Ali. This part is copied from Jack Kramer documents, part 8, Addendum. L. BAIRU on the events of 1969/1970 in Kassala.

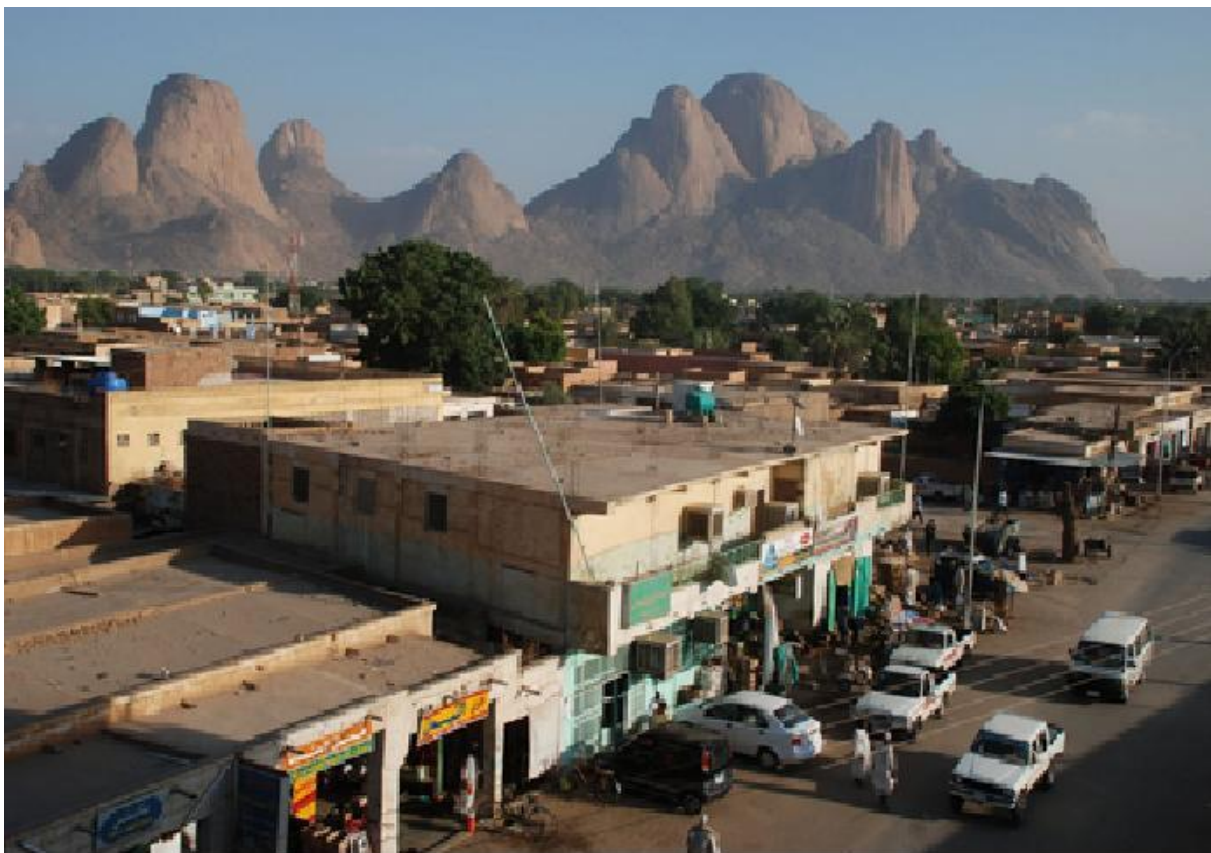
"Kassala. March 21, 1989 translated from tigrinja into English by Gebray Weldeselase.

I'm more than 35 years in Kassala. Many people in Kassala were killed at that time. These two were killed out of the six of the RC in Kassala. Mesfin Hagos was supposed to be killed with them. He was here in Kassala when they called him, he told them he has a job right now. After this Time, Mehari was in Khartoum. After they were killed, he came and took their belongings to send them to their families. They were the ones to make contact with the Sudanese government. If any fighter was wounded or in need of some help these people were trying to solve the problem of the fighters in Kassala. Any Eritrean, who had an interest in the revolution, they were helping if any problems or difficulties were happening to him. If people were kidnapped by the organization these people appealed to the Sudanese police.

Ali Berhatu came from an Arab nation. He was responsible for refugees passing through the ELF. When he arrived, Wolday and Kidane took him to the hotel. They suspected "if he sleeps without any guard the opponents may kidnap him and take him to the field." They went to the police station and they requested to give one police to guard him in the hotel. They gave them the police. Then the opposers knew he was sleeping in the hotel and they came the next day by taxi to the hotel and told the police this guy is wanted by the Sheikh of Hilla. They took him to this place. When they dropped him there he was taken by other opponents waiting there by force to the field.

Kidane and Wolday came to the hotel to find him. They asked the police and the police told them, a member of your organization came and took him by taxi to the Sheikh of Hilla. They were angry with the police, but they immediately went to the police station and appealed that this man has disappeared from the town. Then the administration of

Kassala sends a letter to Khartoum that this man had disappeared from Kassala by kidnapping. Then the administration of Khartoum sends a letter to this office to ask the ELF office and force them to bring the man from the field. The police arrested some of the ELF to force them to bring him back. They asked for two months and assured that he is alive. And after 2 months they brought him. His life was saved because of these two individuals Wolday and Kidane. When he came back, they were already killed. Tesfay and Ibrahim were living with these two. They were in the field, they came to Kassala. Ibrahim was in China for training and educated. Tesfay was an ordinary fighter.



Kassala: the city where the life of our gallant freedom fighters, Kidane Kiflu and Wolday Ghidey ended

They were newcomers and started simply discussing, talking with other members of the ELF, because they did not know what things were happening in Kassala. Wolday and Kidane advised them not to go with the other members and not to separate from them and after some time the opponents understood that the idea of Tesfay and Ibrahim is the same as those of Wolday and Kidane.

They kidnapped them immediately and took them to Sowake, a garden near Kassala. They killed Ibrahim there, but took Tesfay back to the field. When the two, Wolday and Kidane, appealed to the police station that Ibrahim and Tesfay had disappeared, then the police arrested some members of ELF and investigated. Then among the members of ELF it was believed that Ibrahim had been killed, but they did not find the body. The people who had done it, told actually the police that they had killed him in the garden then. They promised to the police to bring Tesfay back to Kassala. Before they brought Tesfay back Wolday and Kidane were assassinated.

ELF got behind Welday Feqaq, one of their members, to bring his wife from Ali Giddir and then to make a feast and to invite Wolday and Kidane as otherwise they would not have a chance to touch them. They gave Welday Feqaq money to get these people into his house. He hid 8 persons from the opponents in his house and when these two came to his home, immediately these 8 persons caught them. Wolday started to fight and trying to escape. Immediately they killed him by knife in his side. Kidane was gagged and trussed up and tied, then they attend a taxi and they took them away. Kidane was covered by sacks from head to toe. 4 sacks. When they went around Haffera, Wolday's dead body dropped from the taxi and the taxi is soiled with blood. A villager who sells milk passed the car and saw this. The taxi driver and the other people tried to escape from that place and they succeeded.



Illustrative picture of a taxi in Kassala

The villager went to the police station and told there are some dead bodies there. Then the taxi driver started washing his car. When the police investigated, they found him washing his car. When they asked him, he said, people were fighting and I took them to their house. Then the villager, police and the taxi-driver went to the area there and found

the dead bodies. They were taken to the police station for investigation. The police asked the taxi driver how it happened, they beat him to tell the truth. When the police asked the taxi driver, he explained that when someone gave me money to take people that way, I do it, and all police, you know this, that many taxi drivers do that. The police declared then that he is mad. Then the taxi-driver informed the police that many taxi drivers are working like that and many were arrested.

When the other taxi-drivers were questioned, they were released again as there was no evidence against them. Wolday Feqaq, the traitor, and two others were arrested at that time by the police. The taxi-driver said, he was called by a fighter called Shinkahay to carry a sick person to the hospital and I came. Shinkahay and one other were arrested. The other six escaped. The taxi-driver claimed to have been forced by Shinkahay by knife to carry the dead bodies. He received 25 Sudanese Pounds and was promised another 25 Pounds. At last, Wolday Fekak, his wife, Shinkahay and his friend and the taxi-driver were imprisoned.

Shinkahay was sentenced to death, but the ELF office appealed and he was released after some years. The second man was sentenced to 14 years, after 7-8 years in Port Sudan they were released. Wolday Fekak and the taxi driver stayed only one year in prison. The wife was imprisoned for one year only. Kidane was killed when Wolday's body fell out of the car. Originally it was planned to take them alive inside for interrogation. From the Harakat many people were killed in Kassala and in the field by the ELF. There were no clubs here for the Christian Eritreans especially because the Sudanese Government would pick them up and return them to Tesseney. Tukue, Mehari, Mesfin, Wolday and Kidane were secretly working in the house of Leterfiel. Tukue Yehdego, later killed by ELF, had a child in Sahel. He was killed about 3-4 years after the death of Kidane and Wolday."

Words of Brig. General Ghirmay: "Kidane Kiflu was killed along with Wolday Ghidey. They were killed after the end of the Adobha Conference. The main aim of the conference was to unite the various divisions. Kidane and Wolday were working hard and believed that the struggle or the revolution should be united. Both of them were invited for lunch at Wolday Fekhak's home. Once there, they were butchered by the "fedeyeen" who were hiding under a bed."

Contrary to the spirit of the Eritrean revolution, in a heartbreaking action by Qiada Ama, an Eritrean hero who dedicated his life to the struggle for the independence of Eritrea was given death instead.

Eulogy/መልቀስ - 45 years later

Dear friend Kidane Kiflu

I know that this is hardly a መልቀስ
Not even a poem or song
Just a letter of gratitude
Eritrea is so grateful to you
Despite everything that has happened
And everything that is happening
Eritrea will always cherish you.

I'm ready to tell the world your life story
Your love of Eritrea gives me the strength
Your dedication gives me the will to write
You were so strong and brave
Fearless and you bring out the best for your country
You were so special. You were so talented
I remember all your wishes for Eritrea.

And you have a voice that needs to be heard
I'll always be there to provide you a microphone
And when you need it a megaphone
I'll always think of you
I'll always think that you are still around
Because you have always been there for Eritrea
You fought hard when your country was annexed
You fought hard when things went wrong in the revolution.

Your memory encourages me to tell the world
Of your courage and bravery
I can't say it enough
Eritrea is so grateful and thankful to you
You had to fight on two fronts
The enemy and the brother
You were fearless to both.

You're the best fighter I have ever seen
I will tell your bravery to the world
Also to your countrymen for whom you shed your blood
You were not afraid to speak your mind
I respect and admire that about you.
You did so much for your country
Things that people will never know.

I do not see your story in the libraries
Nor do I see your story in schools
The point of this letter is to let you know
That your love of Eritrea will be told
You will not be the unsung hero
I want you to know how much your people love you
For all that you did for us all
Eritrea will cherish you forever
You're my hero.

Sincerely,

Your Friend
Emnetu Tesfay

ንዝኸሪ ተጋዳላይ ኪዳነ ክፍሉ!

እስከ ክንዝክር ካብቶም ዝሓለፉ
ኣብ ድላዮም ክይበጽሑ ዝተኾልፉ
ታሪኽም ብግቡእ ክይተነግረ ዝተረፉ
ዛንታ ጀጋኑ ኣሎ ገና ዘይተጻሕፉ
ብብሓድ ክንደዮም ዘይዓረፉ።

ታሪኽ ሃገርና ክመርር ክዝከር
ቆፋፉ ታሪኽ እንተ ዝቐጸር
ኣየ!!! ክሓስም ዛንታኡ እንተዝብርበር
ጅግንነት ኣመስኪሮምዮም ዘይጥርጠር
ሂወቶም ወፍዮም!! ታሪኽም ይመስክር።

ኪዳነ ክፍሉ ወዲ ማይተኸላ
ሰራዮ!! ኣድከመ ምልጋእ ብኸላ
ማእዶ ዝዓድኻ ምስ ቅነ ሓየላ
ሩባ “ማይ ጊፍ” ሕጊ ዝትከላ
ወለድኻ!! ሓገግዎ ሕጊ! ጎዶሎ ዘይብላ።

ከበደ ክፍሉ ብዓል ማእዶ
ጻዕዳ ጣፍ መሸላ ዝኸየዶ
ኩሉ ዝበቐሎ ጋሻ ዝእንገዶ
ማይ ጊፍ ሕልፍ ኢልካ ዓዲ ቐዶ
ሕጊ ኣድከመ ምልጋእ ዝቐነቶ።

ተመሃራይ ቲቦ ናይ መባእታ
ብዓል መን ነበሩ ካብ መስታ
ናይዝጊ ክፍሉ ኣብ ቐላሕታ
ወልደ ዳዊት ብዓል ዛንታ
ስዩም ዑቅጥንኪኤል ኣሎ መወሰኸታ
ቃልሲ ኤርትራ መንም ተሪፋታ።

ከበደ ክፍሉ ብዓል መንደፊራ
ብንእስነቱ ንፍርሒ ዝሰገራ
ቃልሲ ጀመረ ብዘይ ጥርጠራ
ኣዋልድ ዓድና ገና ክዕንድራ
ዝነበረ ማሕለኻታ ኮነ መፈንጥራ
ጅግንነት፡ ትብዓት ብኢዱ ዝግተራ።

ዲሕሪ ቲቦ ከደ ንሳንጀርጀ
ሰርሔ መስረተ ናይ ቃልስ ጎጆ
ዝመጸ እንተመጸ ነይ ዓጅቦ
ንምግዳል ዝበልዖ ከም ኣጅቦ።

ትምህርቲ ንእስመራ ምስ ወሰዶ
ተማሃራይ ኤርትራ ኣሕበሮ ከም ማእዶ
ሸቃልይ ኮነ ሰራሕተኛ በለ ሓዞ ሰዶ
መኳንንቲ ኣስመራን! ሸዋን! በሉ ኣየ ጋዶ
ነዊሕ ጉዕዞ ተነጻፊ! ከበደ ዝኣጎዶ።

እዋን ኮለጅ ኮይኑ ሙህሮኡ ኣብ ሸዋ
መናእሰይ ኤርትራ ከም ብተይ ክዘልዎ
ትዓዘበ ኣሕዋቱ ኣድለዮም ሓለዎ
ኣማሕጸን ነሕዋቱ ሓጹር ክይሰግርዎ
ተረዲኡ ዕንቅፋት ብወዘራዝር ዘለዎ።

ከበደ ብሉጽ ነበረ ብትምህርቱ
ኣንጊሁ ዘጽንዕ ዝእምት ብጊሓቱ
ሕጊ ዝተማህረ፡ ንህዝቡ ክጸንዕ መንግስቱ
ሰራሒ ክይፈጸመ ንዝዛ ዘይኣቱ
ሸግር ኤርትራ ዝነግር ምስ ብልሓቱ
ምስ ዲፕሎማት ዝዘቲ ኣብ ንእስነቱ
ንሓድነት ኣፍሪቃ ነገሮም ገና ብሸዊቱ
ኣብ ዕሸል ዕድሜኡ ብሃገሩ መገሓቱ።

ከበደ ሽሙ ተገልጸ አብ ሰስተኛ
ሓዞ ሓዞ ተባህለ!! ኮነ ሽፍታ ዓመጸኛ
ክእሰር ተደልዩ!! እዚ ሓርበኛ
ብዓይኔ ጃንሆይ! ጠላም ከዳዕተኛ
ንዓና እንተኾነ ናይ ውሽጢ ሓርበኛ
ኪዳነ እናተባህለ ወጸ ብመጽዓኛ
በረኻ ዓዱ ተጸምበረ እዚ ጅግና።

ኪዳነ ሓወይ በሊሕ!! ብንእሱ
አንጊሁ ወረደ ንበረኻ ገሰጊሱ
ጣሻ ዓርኩብኮባይ ጠሓሒሱ
ጎላጉል ባርካ ሰቲት ተኸስኪሱ
ሽው እውን ነበሩ ነገር ዘጓሰሱ።

ኪዳነ ተመደበ አብ ሱዳን ከሰላ
ምስ አትማን ሓደረ፡ በዓል ቆሊባ ሸላ
አስማቶም ተጋደልቲ ታሪኽም ሓተላ
ገበኛም ከቢድ ኢዩ መደምሰሲ ዘይብላ።

ትእዛዝ ካብ ኻርቱምዩ ነቐሉ
መጅልስ ላዕላ ሰደዶ ጠቐሊሉ
ንወልዳይ እዉን ምሳኻ አማእኪሉ
አብ ቤት ጽሕፈት ከሰላ ክትቐተሉ
ቀተልትኹምዉን ! ሓሊፎም አበይ ከርክብሉ
ዛንታአምን! ታሪኽምን! ይነብር ተበሊሉ።

ደምኩም አእወዩ!! አብ ከበሳ ኮነ ቐላ
ህዝባዊ ሓይልታት (ግንባር) ብደም እያ በቐላ!!
ብደምኩም ባንደራ አስመራ ተሰቐላ
እንተዘመጽእ ኪዳነ! ሕጂ እንታይ ኮን ምበላ
ጅግና ይስዋእምበር አበይ ከርክበላ
ታሪኽ ይገድፍ ሃገር ዝበርሃላ።

ዝኸሪ ይኹን ንወልዳይን፡ ንኪዳነ ክፍሉን
አዋልድ አወዳት ታሪኽኩም ተመሃሩ
ቃልሲ ኤርትራ ከመይሉ ጎበሊሉ
ብዓል መን ነበሩ እናበልኩም ኩለሉ
መጋረጃ ይቀንጠጥ እናበልኩም ዝለሉ
ፍትሕን ስርዓት አብ ሃገር ክተኸሉ።

ዘልኣለማዊ ዝኸሪ ንስዋአትና
ዉድቀት ንትምክሕተኛታትን ፣ ንፈላለይትን ፣ ዓመጽትን
፣ ረገጽቲ ፍትሕን

ሃይለ ገብረትንሳኤ
ኢንዱያናፖሊስ ኢንዱያና
13 ግንቦት 2015

Some of us Eritreans have heard something about Kidane Kiflu if not his whole story. He is one of the dearest and favorite heroes of Eritrea. Unfortunately, the new generation does not know him. I introduce this hero to the new generation of Eritreans as well as the old to remind them in case he is forgotten. Such heroes will help revive patriotism in the new generation that will be a great asset in the struggle to bring democracy and unity in Eritrea today.

By his unique and formidable resistance against the Ethiopian actions to make Eritrea a province of Ethiopia, replace the culture, and language, make Eritreans disperse into different corners of Ethiopia, Kidane contributed significantly to change the course of history for his nation. Each compelling story led to yet another and in writing his biography I realize I am in the presence of living history.

Kidane's love of Eritrea and his unique dedication and sacrifice to its struggle for independence will not be forgotten. I write this biography of him so he does not remain the unsung hero, but instead he will be remembered by the present and succeeding generations.

I want my heroes and heroines to be reborn and all Eritreans witness and say "These Eritreans have died for us".

History will always remember Kidane's brutal exit and the contribution he made to the ultimate success for Eritrea to be reinstated in the world map. We lost him physically but he will live among us with his soul and legacy. Eritrea cherishes this shy gallant nationalist who is tragically eliminated by his own organization.

*The Eritrean people
You
loved so much,
the old as well as the new
generation, will
always remember your
heroism and
will not let it erode in
the annals of history.*

Rest in Peace



Kidane Kiflu

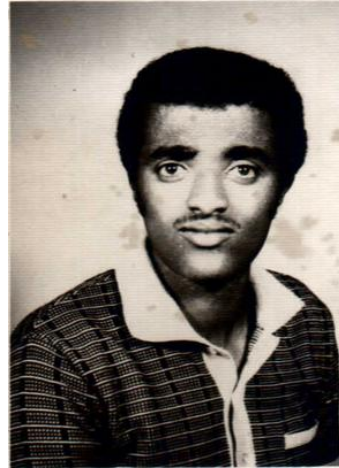


Wolday Ghidey

Here below are Kidane Kiflu's cousins who followed in his footsteps and shed their blood for the country they loved so much.



Martyr Saare Hagos



Martyr Girmay Ogbamariam



Martyr Habtom Hagos



Martyr Tesfay Bisrat



Martyr Mussie Ogbamariam



Martyr Assefaw Hagos

Annexes: Mr. Jack Kramers documents

Mr. Jack Kramer's documents

This chapter is comprised of all documents of Jack Kramer (parts 1-8) with addendums and data collected by blogger Issayas Tesfamariam from many interviews he has undertaken. This includes interviews with Jack Kramer himself and other primary sources, notably pioneer fighters and old classmates and childhood friends of Kidane Kiflu.

Kidane Kiflu and the Jack Kramer Papers

Historical documents on the Eritrean Liberation Front

By Issayas Tesfamariam

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

When I got home on September 5, 2003 from work, my wife noticed that I was unusually excited. It was not our wedding anniversary, she figured. But she wondered what the excitement was all about. I was not going to tell her until I was sure myself. What almost got me do the jitterbug was the thought of the finality of a search. I picked up the phone and dialled a number. I did not know who was going to be on the receiving end, but I was hoping that it was the person or the number of the person I had been looking for since 1991.

Back in 1991, I read the contents of a collection called "Jack Kramer Papers 1968-1969" at the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. A young American journalist named Jack Kramer donated the collection. The collection includes various ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) pamphlets, letters, pictures and audio reels. Beside the pictures and the audio reels (interview), what got my antennae raised were the letters.

The letters include the following:

- 3 letters from Kidane Kiflu to Jack Kramer (1pg, 8pgs, 4pgs dated Oct.29, 1968, Nov. 27, 1968 and April 3, 1969, respectively).
- 1 letter from Mohamud Dinai to Jack Kramer (2pgs, dated 12/9/'68).
- 1 letter from Kramer to Kidane (1pg, dated Feb.6th 1969).
- 2 letters from Osman Saleh Sabbe to Kramer (1pg each, dated 5/11/'68 and 27th Dec.'68, respectively).
- 1 letter from Fathay Mohammed Ahmed Saleh to Kramer (1pg, dated 1/4/'69).
- 1 letter from Kramer to Osman Saleh Sabbe (2pgs, dated Feb.7, 1969).
- 1 letter from Kramer to Woldeab Woldemariam (1pg, dated Feb.24, 1969).

What is most interesting, at least to me, is the contents and the uniqueness of the letters of Kidane Kiflu to Kramer. Who was Kidane Kiflu? What are the contents of the letters? Etc. are questions that this article/interview will attempt to answer.

The format will be difficult to categorize, since I am experimenting with it myself. Suffice it to say that it is an article/interview format. First, I will give a short background of the historical period (late 1960's) to which the collection belongs because of the importance of the historical period in the Eritrean struggle. Second, I will interject interviews with six people (Mr. Jack Kramer, Dr. Tom Killion, Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis, Brig. General Ghirmay Mehari, Minister Naizghi Kiflu, and Minister Woldenkiel Gebremariam) at various junctures that will be pertinent to the topic discussed. I conducted the interviews via phone and e-mail from California to the East Coast of the United States and Asmara, Eritrea at different times.

Before I start with this article/interview, I would like to take you back to September 2003. Around the beginning of September 2003, I was thinking as to what important Eritrea related historical events would be up coming. Of course, September 1, 2003 was the 42nd anniversary of Bahti Meskerem. The first shot that announced the birth of the Eritrean armed struggle for independence from Ethiopia. I also remembered that September 8-10, 1968 was the period where the "Battle of Halhal" took place. Well, that was 35 years ago! I knew from the "Jack Kramer Papers", that Mr. Kramer was near

Halhal at the time of the “Battle”. What I wanted to do was introduce the “Jack Kramer Papers” on the 35th anniversary of the “Battle of Halhal”. But I had one problem since I first read the “Kramer Papers”. The problem was that I had too many questions, at least in regards to the collection, but I could not locate the person who was in the position to answer them. Furthermore, I could not find any articles written by Jack Kramer about Eritrea from 1969/70 on. Before that, Jack Kramer was one of the few Western journalists who wrote about Eritrea and visited Eritrea (1968) with the ELF.

To get answers for the questions that I had, I started searching for Mr. Kramer. All the available leads led me to nowhere. Since the collection was obtained through Dr. Peter Duignan (a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution), I asked Dr. Duignan as to the whereabouts of Mr. Kramer, sometime before 2000. In April 2003, I asked Dr. Duginan again. To my surprise, he mentioned that Mr. Kramer had contacted him through an e-mail back in 2001. Armed with this new information, I went back to the Hoover Institution Archives and with the help of Ms. Linda Bernard, Deputy Archivist, we followed a paper trail. Sure enough, we found the e-mail message that Dr. Duignan mentioned. In it there was a phone number and of course, the e-mail address. The question then was, "were both the emails and the phone number current?" After I called the number and introduced myself, I was waiting for Mr. Kramer to come to the phone. The voice on the other end sounded the same as the one on the tapes that I heard 12 years earlier. That was when I did the jitterbug. Not quite, but close. It was a long time coming! This article/ interview will be in parts. With the permission that I received from Mr. Kramer and the Hoover Institution Archives, I will present some pictures, two/three letters, a sketched map to go with this article. I will also present pictures I received from Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis and Brigadier General Ghirmay Mehari.

Before I finish this introduction, I would like to thank the following people for all their help. Mr. Jack Kramer, Dr. Peter Duignan, Linda Bernard, Heather Wagner (Audio/Visual Archival Specialist), Karen Fung (Africa Curator, Green Library, Stanford University) and from the Hoover Institution Archives Carol Leadenham (Reference Assistant Archivist). Last but not least, my thanks to the interviewees for their time and the interview.

Kidane Kiflu and the Jack Kramer Papers

BACKGROUND

By Issayas Tesfamariam

Part 2

In order to understand the significance of the “Jack Kramer Papers”, it is important, at least briefly, to get a short historical background of 1960’s Eritrea.

By 1965, the ELF had divided Eritrea into five military zones/divisions to fight against Ethiopian forces (Actually, they first formed four zones and later added a fifth zone). The divisions were modeled after the Algerian FLN (Front Liberation Nationale).

The commanders of the five divisions were as follows:

- Mohamud Dinai, 1st zone
- Omar Ezaz, 2nd zone
- Abdulkarim Ahmed, 3rd zone
- Mohammed Ali Omaro, 4th zone
- Woldai Kahsai, 5th zone.

It is also important to understand the organizational structure of the ELF at that time. At the top was the Supreme Council (SC) based in Cairo.

Some members of the SC were:

1. Osman Saleh Sabbe
2. Idris Osman Galawdios
3. Idris Mohammed Adem
4. Taha Mohammed Nur, etc.

The next tier was the Revolutionary Command (RC) based in Kassala, Sudan. The main task of the RC was to coordinate the five military zones in Eritrea.

Some members of the RC were:

1. Muhammed Saed Adem
2. Muhammed Ismail Abdu
3. Azzein Yassin
4. Omar Haj Idris
5. Abdu Osman
6. Jaffar Muhammed
7. Ahmed Muhammed Ali
8. Mohamud Muhammed Saleh
9. Ahmed Ismail
10. Saleh Hedug
11. Woldai Ghidey
12. Abdulkadir Osman

There were also five political commissioners or commissars who were attached to each zone.

They were:

- Ahmed Adem, 1st zone,
- Mohammed Shikini, 2nd zone,
- Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim, 3rd zone,
- Romodan Mohammed Nur, 4th zone, and
- Isaias Afwerki, 5th zone. (For more on this, read SEWRA ERITREA: The Ups and Downs of the Eritrean Revolution, by Alamin Mohammed Said)

The zonal structure in the field had its complement in the Supreme Council, whose leading figures vied for control of one or another of the zones, completely bypassing the intermediary structure of the Revolutionary Command. In 1967 Ethiopia conducted a major "counterinsurgency campaign". The military campaign was conducted with the assistance of the United States and the Israelis and its main aim were:

1. The creation of strategic hamlets (create villages around Ethiopian military garrisons) in an effort to "dry the sea to get the fish" or to "cut the lifeline of the mass support" for the fighters. Barka, Senhit, Semhar and Sahel became the primary targets of this scorched earth policy. Many villages were burnt down and there was a mass exodus to the Sudan

of some 30 – 40.000 Eritreans.

2. To attack the divisions one at a time, fully understanding the absence of coordination among the zones.

The zonal structure of the front proved incapable of responding effectively to the Ethiopian offensive, and soon after led to a political crisis in the ELF.

A reform movement (the Eslah) emerged with the intention of creating a unified army and command structure. In June 1968 military commanders and political commissars of the 3rd, 4th and the 5th zones met in Aradeib. The following month, the aforementioned people along with the representatives of the fighters, again met in Aradeib. They agreed to get rid of the zonal divisions, to unify the army under a single command, to organize the masses in associations, etc. During the meeting, the first and the second divisions were absent.

This was the overall situation in the second half of 1968 in Eritrea when Jack Kramer, a young American journalist arrived.

Kidane Kiflu and the Jack Kramer Papers

Interview with Jack Kramer

Part 3

Issayas: Would you tell readers about yourself?

Mr. Kramer: I've worked as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal (two years), as Business Week Magazine's Cairo-based Middle East Bureau Chief (three years) and as a Staff Editor at Time Magazine (three years.) I've also worked as a freelance producer for the Public Broadcasting Service, During the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-sixties; I was

Birmingham Alabama bureau chief for the Southern Courier, a movement newspaper associated with the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In addition to the above outfits, I've written for the Nation, the New Republic, the New York Review of Books and New Society, and a British periodical.

As a reporter I've covered banking and oil, most particularly the oil crisis, which took me from Texas to Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Geneva, London, Vienna, and Rome. I was accredited three times as a reporter in Vietnam (1967, 1968, and 1969), and covered major battles at Cam Lo, Con Thien, Gio Linh and Khe Sanh. I covered the Six Days War in Israel, the war in Eritrea, the war in the Western Sahara, the revolution in Iran (from Teheran, Ahwaz and Abadan), the civil war in Lebanon (I was there when the French and US barracks were bombed and helped restart Beirut's English-language Daily Star, and in 1994 I covered both the French Foreign Legion and the US Marine Corps during the Somali troubles. In addition to the high spots, I've traveled extensively through East Africa, including, of course, Rwanda, about which I'm now co-writing a book, King Solomon's Crimes. I've also written a book about the 'sixties, Travels with the Celestial Dog, which was published by a London subsidiary of Random House, Wildwood House, and which contains extensive material on Vietnam and Eritrea. I'm a veteran of the Marine Corps, and a graduate of Stanford and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

Issayas: You were one of the first Western journalists who reported on Eritrea. How did you get interested in Eritrea at that time (1968)?

Mr. Kramer: I wish I could say it was my perspicacity that got me interested in Eritrea. In fact I was quite young and like most Americans, I barely knew Eritrea existed. My only reporting jobs had been for the civil rights paper, the Southern Courier, and for a provincial newspaper in Britain. The previous summer I'd made a friendly bet with a student reading law at Cambridge, Malcolm Ashton, that come the summer of '68 I'd make it to Addis overland before he did. I got my Egyptian and Sudanese visas; in London, the Ethiopians told me that I didn't need one. I traveled by third class railway coach to Port Sudan, where I tried to book passage on a Greek freighter and the Greeks told me all about Eritrea, and how you really couldn't go there because of the war. So I got back on the train to Kassala, where I slept on the floor of the police post, and was told all about a fellow who shared the same room with us (only about half of us were inmates).

He had a huge head, and they said he was in jail “for throwing bombs at the Eritreans” i.e., Eritrean activists living in Kassala. Of course I was interested, but still more interested in getting to Addis overland, and was having no luck with the Ethiopian consul in Kassala, who kept putting me off. Eventually I ran into the Indian fellow who ran a radio shop. Eventually he put me in touch with a Sudanese fellow called Hassan mi Jack who had a small shop from which he rented and repaired everything from bicycles to refrigerators. I remember he had a couple small posters on the wall, one of Mao as a young scholar in Kiang Si, and another of a female Chinese guerrilla about to pitch a grenade. For a small businessman, he was quite a character. I remember he said, “My name is Hassan mi Jack. They call me Jack Palance. The Man without a Gun. Only I have a gun.” And with that he pulled out a 38 revolver. We talked for some time, and he suggested that come sundown, I get a table at Kassala’s Central Gardens, order tea and wait. I did.

Issayas: Can you tell me more about the guy who was in jail “for throwing bombs at Eritrean activists”? Who was he? Who was he working for, etc..?

Mr. Kramer: No. I had the impression he was mentally disturbed, and in any case, just hireling. Regardless, at that moment I was not working as a reporter.

Issayas: You met Kidane Kiflu in Kassala and then he convinced you to go to Eritrea. Would you describe Kidane Kiflu?

Mr. Kramer: I didn’t have to wait long for Kidane to show up with some friends. We talked a while. He asked if I had any of my articles with me. I showed them to him. It was hard not to be impressed by his earnest and straightforward manner. He was altogether unaffected, wearing a white shirt that was clean and pressed, and black trousers. I don’t think that at that point he offered to take me into Eritrea. I was impressed, and you can tell from my C.V. that I’ve covered some trouble spots, but I don’t go looking randomly for trouble and jump at the chance to cover it whenever it comes up. At that point, I would have been happier getting a visa and a bus to Addis. We met again, and eventually he asked me if I’d like to go over the border into occupied Eritrea with ELF guerrillas, meet some locals and come back to Kassala. I said thanks, but no thanks. But then the Ethiopians gave me a firm and final No, and so I asked him if the ELF could take me all the way across Eritrea to Asmara. He didn’t say yes right away. It took a while; I went to see him where he worked as a tailor, and met some other activists. Eventually I got the go-ahead and six of us left Kassala in an old Peugeot taxi that almost immediately left the road and took off straight out over the desert. The five were myself, two cadres (Abdullah Hassan and Aberra Mekonnen) and three guerrilla scouts, Ismail, Ibrahim and Ali. As I remember, it took almost three days just to reach the border. It was hard just to get a camel.

Issayas: How long were you in Eritrea? And would you describe your stay with the fighters?

Mr. Kramer: My account at Hoover should say how long I was in Eritrea. As I remember it was just over a month, more than three weeks of which were spent with the ELF.

Issayas: In the "Kramer Collection" at the Hoover Institution Archives there is a transcript of the audio tapes you made in Eritrea in 1968. In it you mentioned that you met the guerrillas (fighters) through an Indian contact in Kassala. What does contact mean? Who was this Indian and what was his connection with the ELF, if any?

Mr. Kramer: I can't remember any more than what I've written above. As I remember, I just ran into the fellow. It wasn't unusual. Reporters are curious. And in a backwater like Kassala in 1968, everybody is interested in an outsider. It was easy to talk to people; sometimes too easy.

Issayas: I am going to start backwards and ask you, where and when did you learn about the murder of Kidane Kiflu? And what was your reaction?

Mr. Kramer: I learned of Kidane's death years later reading propaganda that the EPLF sent me. I'm usually pretty cynical reading any sort of propaganda, but reading about Kidane's death and how he died ambushed me. It was partly because of how he impressed me, and that he'd trusted me, but I wasn't in Kassala that long and he didn't come with us. So I think one reason it hit me so hard was that he represented what I saw in Eritrea. There are six ghosts who follow me wherever I go. My father, Kidane, my old drill instructor at Parris Island (his name was Jettie Rivers and he won a posthumous Silver Star while I was in Vietnam) and three old geezers who kept me writing (an American, Malcolm Cowley, and two Brits, James Cameron and Oliver Caldecott

Issayas: You mentioned that one of the ghosts that follow you around wherever you go is Kidane's. My long search to locate you partly was that my suspicion had always been that you were turned off (after the brutal murder of Kidane) from reporting about Eritrea. Was my suspicion well founded?

Mr. Kramer: I didn't make myself clear. I was briefly turned off by reading about in-fighting. I thought to myself, that's all these guys need, with all their troubles. Fighting among themselves. Of course I read the propaganda, but it didn't convince me. Soon enough, though, I began to understand, and was once again interested in Eritrea. If anything turned me off writing about Eritrea, it was the great wall of indifference I met when I tried to convince quality publications that Eritrea was worth writing about. I told them basically that we were fighting a guerrilla war in Vietnam, that Vietnam was heavily covered, and meantime, we had hardly any coverage from independent (i.e., non-ideological) reporters

of what it was like on the other side of a guerrilla war, the Liberation Front side. They were more interested in my Vietnam reporting. In fact, it was easier to convince them to hire me to write and report for them on staff than it was to get them to accept one freelance article about an African country. Aidan Hartley, who has just published a book called *The Zanzibar Chest* about Rwanda, sums up what it's like. He recalls hearing from his Reuters boss in the middle of the Rwanda genocide, which was still barely reported (the horror wasn't widely known until after the war). "Sorry, mate," his boss said. "We're not going to be able to use any more Rwanda material from you." Hartley asked why not. The answer: "It's not making any money for us." In other words, papers that subscribed to Reuters weren't buying anything. Another example, which has shades of the current scandal dogging the NY Times: After I left the guerrillas and got to Asmara, I ran into Times reporter Eric Pace, who took my photos of the guerrillas, took my story, said it should be in the Times, and promised to send it in. He sure did. When Eritrea's Liberation Front let a Marine Corps veteran, credentialed as a reporter in Vietnam, accompany them, they were in effect handing a fat goat to whatever news outfit got the material. What the reading public got was tripe you'd never call fit-fit. What appeared in the paper (under the byline of their reporter) was a thoroughly gutted version of what I provided, without a hint that an ideologically independent US reporter had been with the guerrillas. (Years later, this same Times reporter published a political novel about Iran that appeared either just before or after the revolution; in it, the word "ayatollah" never once appears.) This is a lot worse for Eritrea and for Africa than it is for the small clutch of reporters like me. We take chances, including professional ones; we expect to take our lumps. For Africa, it means grotesque reporting. Aidan Hartley notes how much news (Liberia, for example) comes out of Africa during August. Why? August, he points out, is "the silly season", when "real people" are on vacation and editors are hard up for what they consider news, so they run stuff from Africa that they've been ignoring all year. I'd add another reason: When an outfit sends a reporter to Africa, it likes to show off. That's why you'll see big stories running about Africa long after the news to which the story is pegged. That's because the news really isn't pegged to the news, which was ignored when it happened. It's pegged to their reporter's tour. Reporters for big American outfits like to laugh at the way African news programs always start out with the president's schedule, even if he's just meeting with the Ministry of Female Sport, while elsewhere in the world, the Berlin Wall is falling.

The way rich, sophisticated US news operations report Africa, with "news" neatly corresponding with the month of August or their reporters' tours, is just as absurd. Hartley praises local African reporters in Rwanda (and I can confirm that many, all Bahutu, did great work exposing the genocédaire persecuting Batutsi), then laments how their work was often either ignored or stolen by outfits who were paying big bucks to have their own reporters on station. He calls it "the big foot from the big hacks." Halhal is an example. Years after I left Eritrea, western reporters began to travel somewhat regularly with the guerrillas, thanks to EPLF work, the availability of vehicles to carry reporters, and greater security. During this period, I ran into Times reporter John Darnton in Nairobi who had my wife and I over for supper. John, who is a good reporter, had recently spent almost as much time with the guerrillas as I had. Though it was now a much more common story, and the Eritreans were much less "the other side" (the Stalinist Mengistu having taken

over Addis), the Times ran his story in three parts, with each part starting on the front page. Needless to say, there was no Halhal to which to peg all this. Which makes the Nation, and several British periodicals that published my reports out of Eritrea, look pretty good. It was also a British outfit (started by two successful editors at Penguin, Ollie Caldecott and Dieter Pevsner) who published my book on the sixties, *Travels with the Celestial Dog*, which includes a long chapter on Eritrea. Likewise, Hoover showed prescience. Given their conservative reputation, I was cautious, but a) I wasn't disclosing anything the Eritreans had not disclosed openly to me, b) Peter Duignan assured me my account would be unedited and open to anyone and c) I was guided above all by Kidane's obvious concern just to get the story out, available not just to reporters but to researchers and writers. Hoover lived up to its commitment not to edit me, and to make the collection available in the open stacks. In general, it showed more foresight than news outfits in recognizing the substance of the Eritrean movement, Marxist or not. (Though I must say I was somewhat baffled by their lack of interest in Rwanda, which seems to me of equal interest.) By the way, I've been getting complaints from one of the ghosts who hike around the world with me. When I mentioned them to you, I neglected to mention Ollie Caldecott. He was, is (even in death), inspirational.

Issayas: You also mentioned that you learned about Kidane's death from reading EPLF's material that they sent you. How did they contact you especially since there was no EPLF at that time?

Mr. Kramer: After the ELF/EPLF split, virtually all the correspondence I got was EPLF; in short, they continued the correspondence that Kidane began.

Issayas: The ideas that Kidane expressed in his letters to you, did he ever express to you verbally the same ideas before in Kassala?

Mr. Kramer: It is too easy for me to read those ideas into what Kidane talked about in Kassala. Maybe they were there, but he was more guarded.



Picture courtesy of Mr. Jack Kramer. (Kassala, Sudan.1968)

Kidane Kiflu (second from the left back row), Aberra Mekonnen (second from the right front row). Jack Kramer (second from the left sitting).

Issayas: Were you suspicious from reading his letters to you that he was a threat to the status-quo of the ELF or was he in danger at that time?

Mr. Kramer: I was not suspicious that he was a threat when I read his letters to me, but I was nonetheless naïve. I was still young. I admired the movement. I was not critical enough. So when I got his letters, I thought to myself, “Don’t you guys have it hard enough without fighting with each other.” My basic reaction was disappointment. Which I must admit is a silly reaction for a reporter, but that’s how it was.

THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Part 4

Kidane’s childhood, education and nationalism

Interview with Minister Naizghi Kiflu (no relation) and Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis.

Note: To get a perspective on Kidane's youth and nationalism, Minister Naizghi Kiflu and Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis (Chairman of Rowan University's Marketing Department, New Jersey, USA) were interviewed.

Issayas: Did you know Kidane Kiflu when he was a kid in Adi Ugri?

Minister Naizghi. I knew him very well. He was older and also in a higher class than me. His given name was Kebede. His nickname was Kebedom and his baptismal name was Kidane.

Issayas: Did you notice any qualities in him when he was a kid?

Minister Naizghi. Kidane was brilliant and wise. He was smart in his studies. He used to be always first in his class. He used to help and tutor kids like us who were in the lower class during exam. He used to be hard working and considerate and was always helping his mother. He has an older brother called Yohannes Kiflu. I don't know too much about his father but I think his father died when they were young.

Issayas: Did you know Kidane Kiflu?

Professor Berhe: Yes, Kidane Kiflu was my classmate at the formerly Haile Selassie I Secondary School in Asmara. Perhaps the most memorable image I have of him is his ever-present smile and very calm demeanor. He was quiet to the point of shyness, always low keyed, and never got into a heated argument, as many of us at that age would.



A class (tenth grade) photo taken on 10/25/1958, tenth grade at Haile Selassie I Secondary School, Asmara. Picture courtesy of Professor Berhe Habtegiorgis.

*Kidane (Kebede at that time) Kiflu is on the third row, extreme left column, in front of the person with dark glasses. Professor **Berhe Habte-giorgis** (The person with dark glasses). Professor **Tekie Fessehazion** (Back row, extreme right next to the column). Second row, second from the right is Capt. **Mebrahtu Teweldemedhin** who joined the EPLF in 1975 and was killed with Ibrahim Affa. Mebrahtu was also a classmate of Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis in the Military Academy at Harar. He joined the EPLF from the airborne regiment in Debre Zeit.*

Issayas: What were the qualities of Kidane Kiflu as a student?

Professor Berhe: As a student Kidane was very intelligent, hard working, with a penchant for social studies, especially geography. He did not participate in sports and physical activities. In terms of social relations at school, he had the quality of being friendly with everybody without getting particularly close. His politeness and respect of others earned him plenty of respect and love by his classmates. He was always neat and meticulous in everything he did and displayed a high level of discipline and seriousness of purpose. After high school he joined the then Haile Selassie I University in Addis Ababa in 1961. From there he went to the field and the last thing we heard about him years later was that he was murdered in Kassala, Sudan by the same movement that he joined to liberate his country.

Issayas: Did Kidane show nationalistic feeling when he was in Adi Ugri or after he went to Haile Selassie I University?

Minister Naizghi: He was a very observant and patient person. For anything we used to do, he used to approach us in a calm and collective manner and advise us. If one did not accept his ideas he would continue to make us understand, tirelessly. Whether in Adi Ugri or at Haile Selassie I University, he had a lot of nationalism. Not the see me hear me type. Especially at the University, he was a very active participant. He did not finish his studies there because he had so much love for his mother; he wanted to help her financially. Putting in consideration his active political participation, he decided to get a job. He then got a job at Agip Co.

THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The interview continues with Mr. Kramer

Part 5

Issayas: When you entered Eritrea from the Sudanese/Eritrean border with the ELF, do you remember with which zone or division you traveled?

Mr. Kramer: Memory is bad reporter. We should rely on what we know for sure. Two of the fellows in the group picture I sent you(see part three), Ibrahim on the far left, first row, and the fellow in the middle of the first row (I believe his name is Ismail) were the two of the three armed and uniformed scouts who took us over the border, near Tessenai. I believe they belonged to whatever zone or division we entered because when we left that region, they stayed behind and new guerrillas took over from them.

Issayas: Your guides with the ELF were Aberra Mekonnen and Abdullah Hassan. Would you describe them?

Mr. Kramer: Abdullah was like me, young. We were similarly naïve. He was short and slight. Aberra was not heavy, but thick set, somewhat older. He seemed to carry a real sense of tragedy about him. His only weapon was a hand grenade, and I had the distinct sense it was meant for himself, should events call for it.

Issayas: In a couple of places in your collection you mentioned that Aberra Mekonnen kept diary. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Have you had contact with either Aberra or Abdullah since your last visit?

Mr. Kramer: No I haven't had any contact. Aberra's diary was more like a tiny appointment book. We had to travel light. Again, as I described him he carried a sense of tragedy about him.

Issayas: You entered Eritrea from Sudan and after you separated from the fighters you went to Asmara and then left Asmara to go to Yemen. How was that possible, especially since you did not have an entry visa?

Mr. Kramer: Because of Halhal, and the insecurity in the countryside, Abdullah and Aberra left me with a new cadre just west of Keren. He took forever, something like three days, to loop around Keren to the east. Once there I was handed off to civilians, who got me to the Keren-Asmara road, where I hitch hiked into Asmara. (Once I actually got picked up by an Ethiopian Army truck!) How I got out, lacking an entry visa is a comedy. They had me wait for a couple of hours. I was worried. Basically they did not notice that I did not have an entry visa because they were so concerned about my lack of a TB shot, or some such.

Issayas: You and Kidane both in your correspondences mentioned a journalist called James Cameron. Who was James Cameron?

Mr. Kramer: James Cameron was a wonderful journalist who wrote mostly for the British public. He covered the Korean War, the Vietnam War from North Vietnam, and the escape of the Dalai Lama from China etc. I forget how I ran into him; as I've indicated he is among the few.

Issayas: Has Mr. Cameron ever written on Eritrea?

Mr. Kramer: I don't know. When I met him, I did not even know about the struggle in Eritrea. He was certainly interested in it after I went there, but he was an old man, and ill.

All Pictures are courtesy of the Hoover Institution Archives. (The Jack Kramer Collection 1968-1969)



Lower right (Abu Sheneb) September 1968.

Issayas: A person named Fathy Mohammed Ahmed Saleh wrote you a letter. Do you remember who he is/was? All the correspondences in your collection were very famous people in the Eritrean revolution except Fathy Ahmed Saleh.

Mr. Kramer: No

Issayas: Kidane was using an address in Kassala. Hassan Hasankai. Do you know who he was?

Mr. Kramer: No. Maybe he's Hassan mi Jack. Maybe he's the older fellow at the center of that group photo. Maybe it is not a good idea to speculate too much.



Aberra Mekonnen (Sept. 1968)



Ibrahim in the mountains of Tessenai/Kassala frontier



Kramer after a Front sponsored civil meeting had just broken up under the trees.



Ibrahim is scanning the eastern horizon. (Sept, 1968)



Kramer (on the camel) "with the largest unit (11) men



In a wadi with a battalion commanded by Muhammed Ali Idris (Not in the picture). The person on the far left of the group wearing a blue scarf is a seventeen year old female fighter. One of the few at that time. Figure in light khaki, on the right of photo, facing battalion, is their commander, Abu Sheneb

THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Letters of Kidane Kiflu and Mohamud Dinai. The interview continues

Part 6

As I have mentioned in my introductory remarks, what impressed me the most were the contents of the letters of Kidane Kiflu to Jack Kramer. There are three letters written by Kidane Kiflu from Kassala, Sudan to Jack Kramer in Palo Alto, California, USA. In part six, I will present only the first four pages of the 8 pages letter of Kidane Kiflu dated; November 27th, 1968. The second four pages of the same letter are a literal translation of an Arabic article that appeared on a Lebanese newsletter "Kulush" entitled; "25 Days With Eritrean Strugglers". I will also present a two-page letter written and signed (12/9/68) by Mohamud Dinai who was the commander of the First Division. Included you will also find typed transcribed letters of the aforementioned letters.

Summary of Kidane's first letter to Kramer.

In Kidane's first one page letter dated 29th, October 1968 (a month later after the visit of Kramer to the field), Kidane conveys his heart-felt greetings and wishes Kramer a good academic year. Kidane also mentions to Kramer that Abdella and Aberra have returned to Kassala safely from the field. In the rest of the letter, Kidane tells Kramer that he had sent him his packages (documents, recorder and negative films) that Kramer left with him. Kidane finally asks Kramer to let him know once he gets the packages.

Second and third letters.

I don't need to go through the second letter (which I am presenting here) because the contents are self-evident. For the third letter dated April 3rd, 1969 I will use excerpts to convey the thinking of Kidane four months before his brutal murder.

On the first page he wrote;

"We are struggling to have a clear cut party line, policy and principles we have to follow an ideological pattern, which will be implemented in the course of struggle without having any sort of inclination be it to the Western or Eastern Blocks. As Eritreans, we have the common principles, common values and sentiments which we share together and we stand for together. We are struggling to defend our constitutional and birth rights with the motto that Eritrea is for Eritreans and Eritreans have the right to self-determination on the basis of democratic principles without being subject to any nation or groups or individual leaders, who want to exercise political power by implementing a totalitarian state in our fatherland." In the second page he continues;

"Some leaders in the Front have Arabism as a sentiment instigating them and this sentiment is wholly undesired by the people of Eritrea. We are first Eritreans then Africans. We have no enmity or love be it for Israel or for the Arabs. We do not base our analysis on the basis of dislikes and likes we base our objectives on the understanding of matters through principles carefully and critically analyzed on the basis on neutrality. But for most leaders in the Front the latter course is bitter to accept. With respect to the problems of all Eritrea for that matter which I have enumerated in my letters to you are real facts. Because of fear, truth and facts should not be hidden as treasure. Everything should be exposed and made known, so that a solution could be found and will serve as a pressure if exposed by world public opinion. I left my country because I stood for the "truth" and for Eritrean national principles and goals. In the Front also I stand for principle, and I do not fear from anybody."

Is it this kind of stand and “Eritrean national principles” that got Kidane Kiflu killed? Interestingly, there is also in the “Jack Kramer Papers 1968-1969” an 11 pages (no date) paper entitled; *The Progressives Demand Radical Changes In The Eritrean Liberation Front*. Even though the paper did not have a date in it, it mentions that “seven years have elapsed since the armed struggle was organized, which makes the paper written in 1968.

Some of the points that Kidane wrote to Kramer were also in the “*The Progressives Demand...*” Some of the points in the “Demand” are:

“Understanding that the present division of the Eritrean Liberation Army on the basis of tribal, religious, regional and functional elements is a retarding force in fostering national unity and is hazardous in maintaining Eritrean national beliefs, values and sentiments which the people of Eritrea have in common and believing that unless the latter course is implemented Eritrean nationalism will not have firm ground in our armed struggle and without a united front and unity of action we can hardly wipe out Ethiopian Colonialism”.

“*The Progressives Demand*” continues by raising their concern that “seven years had elapsed since the armed struggle was organized. When we review the political developments in the last seven years we can see that in name we are the Eritrean Liberation Front, but in practice a militia (an auxiliary force). The “Demand” continues its call and on page five has the following paragraph. As we see it, a revolution cannot be guided through telegrams and telephones, and it has never been attempted elsewhere. It is impractical and fruitless to alleviate the leadership group from the masses. A leader is expected to lead life with them, he should understand their problems through their help. In any revolutionary movement no revolution that detaches itself from the people existed and if it existed it was doomed to failure.”

Regarding the leadership of the Front, this is what Kidane Kiflu (letter dated November 27th, 1968) had to say;

“Many of the leaders in the Supreme Council of the Front are pseudo revolutionaries they do not have a clearly defined ideology nor have they the ability and the qualification to lead our revolution. They live detached from the realities of the people’s struggle and reside abroad and lead the revolution through letters and telegrams. This is a unique case of a leadership body living outside. (unreadable) country unlike the revolution in Cuba the role-played by Castro, and Mao Tse Tung in China. In the near future, we hope to change the tide of the status quo in a sure refined way, which will satisfy the demands of our people”

October 7
Kuala Lumpur
November 11, 1951

Dear Sir:

It was a pleasure to receive your kind letter of the 27th of
September and my apologies for the delay in answering.

I have received your letter dated from Singapore, with respect to the
letter I have not yet received it.

I was pleased to note from your letter that you had deeply
understood the issue and that you had raised the national aspect of the
problem.

From the moment you left Kuala Lumpur I received your kind letter of
the 27th of September and I felt that you placed in the hands of the
Singaporean people, the issue of the national contribution
investigated in Kuala Lumpur in 1950. The responsibility of the
Government is held enough to allow for all to be security provided. This is
concerning the Singapore people but the people and the State are
concerned with the people and the people and the people and the people
the same before (I believe we are talking of the people of the
Singapore as well as the State and the people of the Singapore
when the case is considered as an internal affair. If you had by chance
inquired of the Singapore people, or the people of the State, or the
the and people of the State, the people of the State would have been
responsible to the State, you had deeply understood your way out from the
national Singaporean and the people of the State for some years.

Your expression of the problem of the State, as I said it will
be a useful purpose in analyzing and making comparative study of
national movements in Singapore and elsewhere and particularly in
the study of the problem of the national contribution for and getting an
report from the world public opinion - the more interest, the more
often have to remain a dead case in the eyes of world public opinion.



is accountable to the policy of the leaders of the front, who in most cases identify themselves as workers and not as bourgeois and join their hands in the Russian League. Besides, they imagine through misapprehension that they are workers and join the front regardless of the voice of the people of Latvia.

Many of the leaders in the Supreme Council of the front were former revolutionaries. They would have a clearly defined ideology, not only the ability and the qualifications to lead our revolution. They had detached from the revolution of the people's struggle and were abroad and had the revolution through letters and telegrams. This is a unique case of a leadership that, being outside their country, initiates the revolution, in Latvia, the rule of law by lawlessness, and thus, the way in Latvia. In the near future, we hope to change the face of the leadership in a more radical way, which will cut off the demands of our people.

We feel that the leaders of the front identify the front as a Russian and Latvian movement, in their foreign policy, besides, being a bourgeoisie and turning the revolution into a religious movement, half of the population of Latvia being Christians up to now, have not been able to support the front wholeheartedly, mainly because of the religious, and hence, nationality of the leaders of the front. Very important revolutionary at this point is against the play of the reactionary leaders in the Supreme Council and our people in the revolutionary movement as well as in the actions of the workers. Through persistent work and perseverance, we hope to change the face of the reactionary leadership in the front and appeal to our people on a basis of national goals and principles.

The political movement and the concept of political party, ^{organised} ~~organised~~ in Latvia in the year 1918. The parties at that time were ^{the} ~~the~~ Latvian Workers' Movement, and



All
 Syed Abul Kalam and Mr. Abdur Rahman, the founders of the
 Eastern Party they stand for the principles for the people, the people of Eastern
 for the country, Eastern and for the political progress, for the independence of the
 people of Eastern from the British Administration in Eastern (1941-54), Eastern were
 not yet politically mature enough to possess and understand fully the concept of the
 political party. They opposed all being pure national or religious, regional and
 other factional elements. Since 1942 Eastern has not yet produced a national
 leader except Mr. Abdur Rahman, who has been struggling for the modern
 Eastern or for Eastern - for the last 24 years. I have written in his book
 "Inside Africa" wherein Mr. Abdur Rahman is an African nationalist, who has spent
 for an almost in his life for Eastern from 1947 to 1952. He worked during
 the British Administration in Eastern and an editor of the fundamental newspaper Eastern
 Weekly News and the Eastern (the Voice of Eastern Progress), and President of the
 Eastern Nationalist Union. In 1948 he was elected as a representative in the
 Eastern Assembly. The Egyptian Government through its puppets in Eastern
 were trying to assassinate him. In 1953, he sailed himself to the United Arab
 Republic. Since 1953, he is residing in Alexandria, U.A.R., as a political refugee.
 He appeared before the United Nations General Assembly on several occasions, but
 the UN failed to stop him. In 1956 from Alexandria he was broadcasting on
 Cyprus, his messages about the political activities in Eastern raised the
 unity and national sentiment of the Eastern people. Up to now Mr. Abdur Rahman is
 appearing nationalist stand for the principles acceptable to the people of
 Eastern on the basis of nationalistic stand, we regard him as a national and
 head leader. The leaders of the East who are around this part century,
 have often advocated for the partition of Eastern into two, the Western
 Province to be independent or to join the pro Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and the
 East to join Ethiopia. Some are Eastern historians at heart and appear as

... from the outside by ... and revolutionary process
for the ... movement ... into ... of the ... and ...
... and ... participation

... the ... people ... called ... and ...
... as a ... leader ... of the ...
... of the ... of the ... has been ...
... the ... from the ... of ...
... of the ... of the ... people, the ...
... of the ... of the ... from the ...
... of ... in ... with ... when all the ...
... and ... are ... and ... leaders ...
... to ... the ... with ... you ...
... at ... the ... of ...
... and ... the ... of ...
... and ... of the ...

Mr. Lady Selony
House 124 Street No 11
Cairo
U.A.R.

P.S. I am attending here to give
you a biased opinion but I wonder
you to have a fair picture of the
... can do but you can do
... the ...
... and ...

... and ... of the ...
... and ... and ...
... in ...

... in ...
... and ...
... particularly in ...
... from you ...

Yours,
Kedat Kiflat

P.S. I am enclosing a short
translation of the ...
article.

Here is the transcribed letter of Kidane Kiflu.

P.O.Box 9

Kassala

November 27th, 1968

Dear Jack:

Allow me to convey to you my heart felt "revolutionary greetings on behalf of myself and my colleagues here in Kassala. I have received your letter mailed from Singapore; with respect to the other letter I have not received it. I was pleased to note from your last letter, that you had safely arrived in the United States and that you have received the material we mailed from here.

From the moment you left Kassala until I received your first letter, I was pessimistic and I felt that you were in the hands of the autocratic Ethiopian Empire. As is stated in Article 4 of the Ethiopian constitution promulgated on November 2nd in 1955, "the personality of the Emperor is sacred who so ever is bold enough to attack him will be severely punished". This is a warning to the Ethiopian people that the Emperor and the state has one corporate personality and any body who stands against the Emperor and his Empire awaits him severe torture (a barbaric one like that of the days of the Roman Empire), and flogging as well as death sentence. For the gloomy Ethiopian autocrat, the Eritrean case considered as an internal affair. If you had by chance been caught by the Ethiopian police, an electric shock might had rang into their ears and protest after protest to the American Ambassador would have been the result. On the whole, you had safely managed your way out from the area of a (unreadable) Ethiopian autocracy , which had been forgotten by the world for 3000 years.

Your experience with the freedom fighters of Eritrea, as I see it will owe a useful purpose in analysing and making comparative study of revolutionary movements in Africa and elsewhere; and particularly in understanding the problems of the Eritrean revolution for not getting an active support from the world public opinion. To some extent, the cause for the Eritrean case to remain a dead case in the eyes of the world public opinion is accountable. 1. The policy of the leaders of the Front, who in most cases identify themselves as Moslems and not as Eritreans and join their hands in the Moslem League . Besides, they imagine through wishful thinking that they are Arabs and join the Arab world regardless of the voice of the people of Eritrea.

Many of the leaders in the Supreme Council of the Front are pseudo revolutionaries they do not have a clearly defined ideology nor have they the ability and the qualification to lead our revolution. They are detached form the realities of the people's struggle and reside abroad and lead the revolution through letters and telegrams. This is a unique case of a leadership body living outside their country unlike the revolution in Cuba the role

played by Castro and Mao Tse Tung in China. In the near future, we hope to change the tide of the status quo in a more refined way, which will satisfy the demands of our people. The fact that the leaders of the Front identify the Front as a Moslem and Arab movement, in their foreign policy, besides, being a hindrance and turning the revolution into a religious movement; half of the population of Eritrea being Christians up to now have not been able to support the Front wholeheartedly, mainly because of the religious, and Arabism sentimentality of the leaders of the Front. Every progressive revolutionary at this moment is against the policy of the reactionary leaders in the Supreme Council and their puppets in the Revolutionary Command as well as in some of the leaders of the divisions. Through persistent work and perseverance we hope to change the tide of the reactionary sentiments in the Front and appeal to our people on the basis of national goals and principles.

The political movement and the concept of political party organization started in Eritrea in the modern sense in 1942. The patriots at that time were the late Ras Tessema Asberom, and the late Degiat Abraha Tesema and Mr. Woldeab Woldemariam. As founders of one Eritrean party they stood for the principles for one people, the people of Eritrea for one country Eritrea and for one political program, for the independence of the people of Eritrea. During the British Administration in Eritrea (1941-52), Eritreans were not yet politically mature enough to perceive and understand fully the concept of the political party. Many opposed it basing their sentiment on religious, regional and other factional elements. Since 1942 Eritrea has not yet produced a national leader except one Mr. Woldeab Woldemariam, noted by progressive Eritreans as an Eritrean charismatic Ghandi, who has been struggling for the motto Eritrea is for Eritreans for the last 26 years. John Gunther in his book "Inside Africa" mentions Mr. Woldeab as an African nationalist, who escaped from an attempt on his life for 7 times from 1943 up to 1952. Mr. Woldeab during the British Administration in Eritrea was an editor of the Government newspaper Eritrean Weekly news and of an independent newspaper One Eritrea (the Voice of Eritrean newspaper) and President of the Eritrean Labourers Union. In 1952 he was elected as a representative in the Eritrean Assembly. The Ethiopian Government through its puppets in Eritrea were trying to assassinate him. In 1953, he exiled himself to the United Arab Republic. Since 1953, he is residing in Cairo, as a political refugee. He appealed to the United Nations General Assembly on several occasions, but the U.N turned a deaf ear. In 1956 from Radio Cairo he was broadcasting in Tigrinya, his teachings about the political activities in Eritrea raised the morality and national sentiment of the Eritrean people. Up to now Mr. Woldeab as a progressive nationalist stood for the principles acceptable to the people of Eritrea on the basis of Eritrean nationalism. We regard him as our true and honest leader. The leaders of the Front when we examine their past history, some of them were standing for the partition of Eritrea into two, the western provinces to be independent or to join the then Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and the rest to join Ethiopia. Some are Moslem brothers at heart and appear as progressive from the outside by memorizing some revolutionary phrases from books; and others concern themselves in the basis of the Moslem movement in Ethiopia and others were pro Ethiopians.

In the eyes of the Eritrean people only Mr. Woldeab is the most respected and looked upon as a charismatic leader. Since the personality of Mr. Woldeab outweighs that of the leaders of the Front; the leaders of the Front have been trying in vain through their propaganda to exclude Mr. Woldeab from the political scene of Eritrea. Although he is a great teacher, a true leader of the Eritrean people, the futile attempt of the leaders of the Front to exclude Mr. Woldeab from the political scene of Eritrea is failing and will fail more when all the corruption and re(d)tape in the Front are exposed particularly that of the present leaders. In order to understand the Eritrean case much better I advise you to correspond with our true leader Mr. Woldeab Woldemariam. He is not participating in the Front, because he disagrees with the policy of Arabism, Moslem sentiment, tribal and regional motives of the leaders of the Front and their puppets.

His address is:

Mr. Zaky Fahmy

Mariette Pahsa Street No.11

Cairo

U.A.R.

N.B. I am not intending here to give you a biased opinion but I wanted you to have a fair picture of the Eritrean case so that you can dig into the matter to analyze the condition. Please do not expose some of these facts in the newspaper to which the Ethiopians may benefit in their propaganda. Abdella, Aberra and Woldai Gedai a member of the revolutionary command Myself and all our colleagues are conveying greetings and good wishes and success in the academic year.

Hassan Karar is still in the field.

P.S In case you introduce yourself with Eritrean students in the U.S.A. please do not forget to give them my address and let them contact me. We wish to see you back in Kassala and particularly in Eritrean soil.

Hoping to hear from you soon,

Yours,

(Signed)

Kidane Kiflu

P.S I am enclosing a literal translation of the Lebanese article.

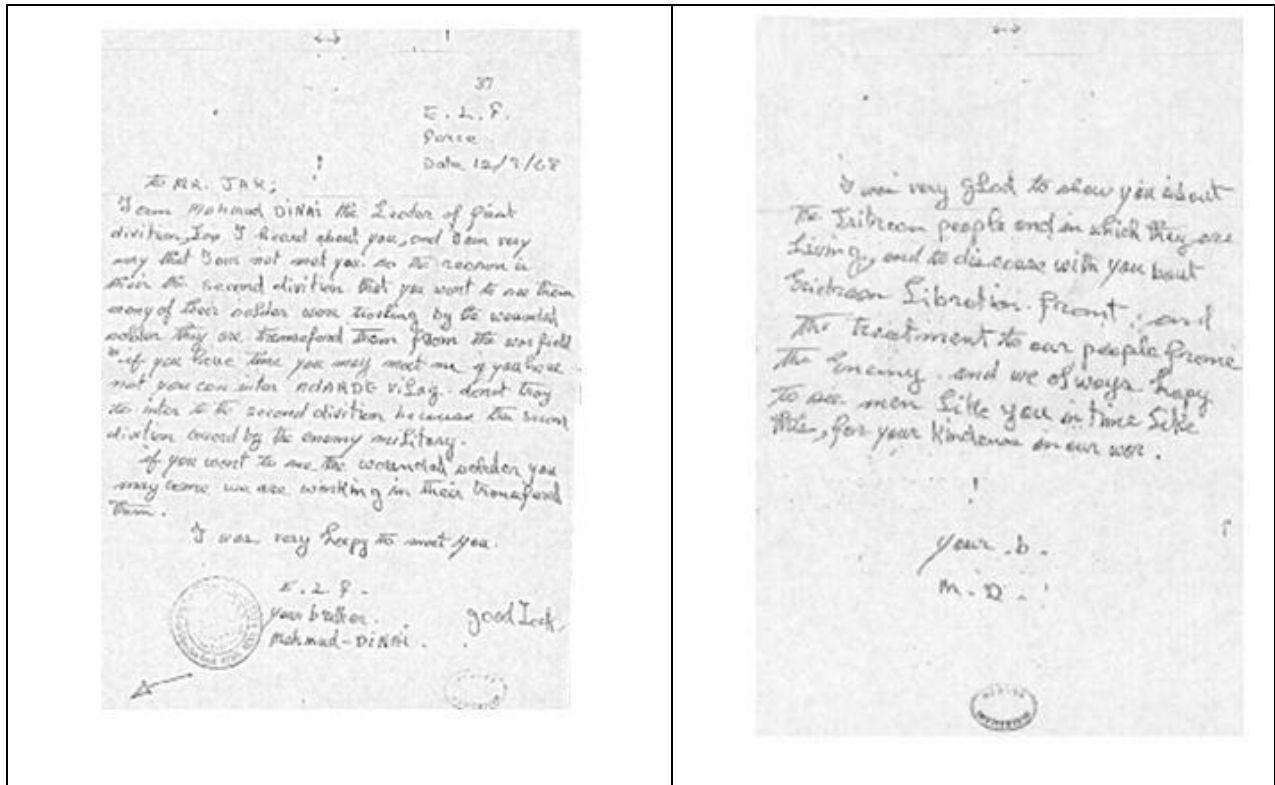
Now, I want to take you back to the interview with Mr. Jack Kramer.

Issues: In the 21 page report in your collection at Hoover, you mentioned that you saw Osman Saleh Sabbeh in Aden, Yemen after you went to Yemen from Asmara. You also mentioned that Osman did not have information on the "Battle of Halhal" (I will deal with it in the last part) except only what he read through the Ethiopian papers. Is it fair to say, what Kidane wrote in his letters to you, was he right on the money about the weakness of the leadership when he said and I quote, "Many of the leaders in the Supreme Council of the Front are pseudo-revolutionaries. They do not have a clearly defined ideology, nor have they the ability and the qualification to lead our revolution. They live detached from the realities of the people in struggle and reside abroad and lead the revolution through letters and telegrams."?

Mr. Kramer: In retrospect, it is fair to say. As for my judgment of Osman Saleh Sabbe at the time, remember I was young. I was not certainly not impressed by him the way I was impressed by the lads in the field, but any leader living in relative comfort is at a disadvantage. He is bound to be less impressive, except to reporters who appreciate nice clothes. He was nice to me, and I appreciated it. As for fighting the war through letters and telegrams, it's hard to say for sure, but coming from Kidane, this may have had some real impact on me. In my writing, I find myself becoming more and more skeptical of writers who analyze from afar, parsing opaque tracts and alliances instead of talking to real people who have gotten their hands dirty in the real conflict.

Issayas: Mohamud Dinai wrote you a letter dated September 12, 1968 (two days after the "Battle of Halhal" and two days after the Anseba Conference) warning you not to go to the second division. Did you know why? How and where did you get the letter?

Mr. Kramer: Yet more confirmation that memory is a bad reporter. At first I told you that maybe I got that letter in the US. Checking my notes and trying harder to remember, there's no way I got it in the US. It came in to camp by runner. There may have been political implications to his warning. From what we know now, the entire Halhal region was dangerous at that moment; where we were at may have been even more dangerous. But reading political implications into his warning is pure speculation. I am inclined to take it at face value. A warning of physical danger.



Transcribed letter of Mohammud Dinai.

E.L.F.
 Force
 Date 12/9/68

To Mr. Jak;

I am Mahmud Dinai the leader of first division, I heard about you, and I am very sorry that I am not met you. So the reason is their the second division that you want to see them many of their soldier were traveling by the wounded soldier they are transferred them from the war field if you have time you may meet me if you have not you can inter ADARDE vilag. do not try to inter to the second division because the second division covered by the enemy military. If you want to see me the wounded soldiers you may come we are working in their transferred them.

I was very happy to meet you
 (ELF Stamp)
 E.L.F good luck
 your brother, Mahmud – Dinai

I was glad to show you about The Eritrean people and in which they are living, And to discuss with you about Eritrean Liberation Front and the treatment to our people From the enemy. And we of ways happy to see men like you in time like this, for your Kindness in our work.

Your . b. M. D.

262 Kingsley
Palo Alto, California
February 7, 1969

Osman Saleh Sabbe
Foreign Secretary
The Eritrean Liberation Front
P.O. Box 2914
Damascus
Syria

Dear Osman,

Since my last letter, a couple of things have come up.

1) Could you send me another set of the Front's publications? I have lent the others out, can't get them back, and need the information. Copies in French, and even Arabic, would be helpful.

2) I am finally encountering some interest in the Eritrean situation, but need some hard information about how things are there right now. People here are very skeptical about things which sound one sided...although this is occasionally a foolish reflex. So, if, without jeopardizing the Front's security, you could be as candid as possible in very briefly outlining the current strengths and weaknesses, this would help me greatly in presenting the Front's case in this country.

Also, western news media want very specific facts. For example, as with the recent hangings in Agordat, they want to know the exact day, and even the time of day, the names of as many people involved as they can get, both executioners and victims, and generally the significance of the event - not morally but practically. In other words, was it an isolated occurrence, or was it part of a current campaign of planned intimidation, and if so how long has this specific campaign been going on and how much of Eritrea does it cover; was it a reaction to increased activity by the Front, and if so how much and where has Front activity increased, or was it simply a move to strengthen the Emperor's hand - and if this is so how well has it worked. Have recruits slacked off? Did cooperation with town people slack off? What sort of successes has the Front had in re-demonstrating their strength to the town people? A good example of this sort of specific information would be the story you told me about the sheiks near Assab who told the tax collectors from Addis that they had already paid their taxes - to the "new government."

This sort of story, with as many names, and dates as you can safely give, is what I need to tell the story of the Front's struggle.



This is especially true with such incidents as the public hanging in Agordat. Think of all the publicity the public hangings ~~in~~ were given in Baghdad! And Israel made representations to the Emperor of Ethiopia to prevail on the Iraqi government to stop them.

Think of the hypocrisy of he should do this! But it is hard for me to write about this without more solid information, names, dates, etc, about what happened in Agordat.

Also, if you have any other recent news, specific battles, etc., I am anxious to hear of them, and of course, I am anxious to get from you that brief outline of the Front's current problems and prospects, inasmuch as you can safely do this.

Best wishes to you, and to the Front in its struggle,

Jack Kramer

Letter of Osman Saleh Sabbe to Jack Kramer

Eritrean Liberation Front

DAMASCUS OFFICE

P. O. Box. 2914

Telephone No. 27367

Cable Address (Shamose)



جبهة التحرير الأترتية

مكتب دمشق

ص.ب ٢٩١٤

هاتف ٢٧٣٦٧

برقيا شاموس

Ref. 13/602/68

Date. 5-III/68

..... الرقم

..... التاريخ

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter dated 30/10/68 in which you expressed your sympathetic sincere feelings towards our struggle. I am very sorry that you have not received yet your notes and the other documents which are certainly very vital for you to write facts about what you saw in Eritrea. I cabled today urgently to the Sudan asking for the immediate posting of the documents to you. They are safe for no one has been captured by the enemy during the last few weeks.

I have not read what the New York Times wrote but I heard about them. I appreciate your feeling towards the unscientific item of the paper, certainly you have all the right to disgust with any writings which do not correspond with facts, but do not worry too much, for, such papers do not write to serve the bare truth, in contrary, they write to serve certain political ends, even if they flagrantly contradict with visible facts.

The latest news I have from the revolutionists they held a military conference in which they decided many important resolutions concerning policies and strategies. As to battles there have been about ten small battles with few losses in lives.

Thank you for introducing me to the British journalist James Cameron. I have written him a letter in which I mentioned your name also .

Please accept my fraternal and heartiest greetings and I hope we shall in constant contact with you/

Yours sincerely,

Osman Saleh Sabbe



Letter of Jack Kramer to Woldeab Woldemariam

262 Kingsley
Palo Alto, California
February 24, 1969

Woldeab Woldemariam, Esq.

c/o Zaky Fahmy, Esq.
No. 11, Mariett Pasha Street
Cairo
United Arab Republic

Dear Mr Woldeab,

I am a young American journalist. Last year, at Kassala, I met some activists of the Eritrean Liberation Front, and they arranged for me to enter Eritrea with the movement. With two young cadres and three guerrilla escorts, we crossed the Sudan/Eritrea border on August 30, between the Girgir and Tamarat bases.

We travelled considerably in Barka, and met Abu Shanab and his regiment. Later, we entered the Keren area (2nd division) just before the attack on Halhal camp, then crossed back into Barka after it, and met Muhammad Ali Idris and many members of his regiment. They had just executed an ambush (Sept 8) on a convoy proceeding from Agordat to reinforce Halhal.

The two cadres I had been with left me shortly after that, and I proceeded to circle Keren with a small group of guerrillas. I left them in the hills due east of Keren on September, 23, and continued on with various groups of sympathetic civilians. I left the last of them early Sunday morning, September 25 on the road Keren-~~Agordat~~ Asmara, and ~~later~~ auto-stopped on into Asmara. A few days later, I managed to fly to Aden, where I met the Front's foreign secretary, Osman Saleh Sabbe.

Since then, I have been trying to present the Front's story in America. This is very difficult as there is virtually no public here that has any familiarity with the background of the struggle.

While I was in Eritrea, and in correspondence since then, I have heard many Eritreans speak of you as an admired leader, even though you hold no formal position. More recently some of them have written me, including your address, and suggesting that I write to you for advice in presenting the story, and for your views on the internal and external problems of liberation movements generally, and of the Eritrean Liberation Front in particular. If you could do this, it would be most helpful.

With best wishes to you, and to your Eritrean people in their struggle,



Jack Kramer

PS I include a couple of photos we took during September

THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The interview continues on the murder of Kidane Kiflu and the documents of Kassala with Minister Naizghi Kiflu, Brigadier General Ghirmay Mehari, Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis and Minister Woldenkiel Gebremariam.

Part 7

Issayas: What was the importance of Kidane Kiflu in the Eritrean struggle. In other words, what did Kidane Kiflu symbolize?

Professor Berhe: Kidane landed in the midst of the turbulence that characterized the first decade of the Eritrean armed struggle. In the second half of the 1960s the armed struggle for Eritrean independence was undergoing severe growth pangs. Kidane's writings (correspondences) show his concern about the problems faced by the movement and the need for positive reform and development. The leadership of the Front at that time did not welcome such views. Eventually he was murdered in cold blood. Alamin Mohamed Said in his book "The Ups and Downs of the Eritrean Revolution" (1994), specifically states, "The Eritrean Liberation Front ... executed 250 individuals based on religion and regional affiliation. Kidane Kiflu and Weldai Ghidey were two of them." (p.26).

Issayas: What was your feeling when you heard that Kidane Kiflu was killed?

Minister Naizghi: I had just finished my studies in Russia and was getting ready to go to the United States for a Ph.D. From Russia I went to Rome and it was in Rome that I heard that Kidane Kiflu was martyred from Tsegai Kahsai. I was saddened. On the other hand, I decided to quit my studies and join to fight.

Issayas: What is the significance of the death of Kidane Kiflu?

Professor Berhe: Recent interview by Brig. General Ghirmay Mehari, serialized in Haddas Eritrea, confirms the previous word of mouth account of how the two (Kidane Kiflu and Woldai Ghidey) were murdered in cold blood in Kassala. They were lured to a certain Woldai Fikhakh's house for lunch. There they were literally butchered by "fedayeen", hiding under a bed. Later, the killers put the corpses in sacks, put them in a taxi and were on their way to Mt. Mikram to dump them away when one of the bodies fell off the car. (Haddas Eritrea, October 1, 2003). Kidane Kiflu was a learned man, a man of ideas and idealism. I have no doubt that his ideas contributed in shaping the future direction of Eritrean revolution. Kidane died an untimely death, in his twenties. His death should torture the conscience of his assassins, and the pusillanimous leaders who ordered his murder, that is those who are still alive, and assuming they have the conscience of a penitent murderer in his deathbed. But that is expecting too much.

Issayas: While I was working on this article/interview, coincidentally you were interviewed on Haddas Eritrea. Even though you have mentioned in detail your experience as a fighter in the newspaper, if you don't mind, I would like to ask you a few questions.

Brig. General Ghirmay: There is no problem. I will be glad to.



Brigadier General Ghirmay Mehari

Issayas: Did you know Kidane Kiflu?

Brig. General Ghirmay: No, I did not know him very well. But I have met him a couple of times.

Issayas: When was he killed?

Brig. General Ghirmay: He was killed along with Wolday Ghidey. I have pictures of both of them. If you need the pictures for your article I will let you use them. They were killed after the end of the Adobha Conference. The main aim of the conference was to unite the various divisions. Kidane and Woldai were working hard and believed that the struggle or the revolution should be united. Both of them were invited for lunch at Woldai Fekhak's home. Once there, they were butchered by the "fedeyeen" who were hiding under a bed.

Issayas: A lot of people say that the killing of Kidane Kiflu and Woldai Ghidey was the breaking point for the later EPLF to split from the ELF. What do you think of the statement?

Minister Naizghi: The split from the ELF had already started before the martyrdom of Kidane. Basically, Kidane was in Kassala with the understanding reached between him and Isaias Afwerki and Abraham Tewolde. Isaias and Abraham had already split with their respective comrades. Kidane Kiflu was in Kassala to coordinate the activities outside of the field. From Kassala he used to correspond with me, Aboi Woldeab Woldemariam, Hiruy Tedla and others about the conditions and situations of the field.

Issayas: Thank you for the pictures. In the Haddas Eritrea interview you mentioned that you and Wolderufael Sebhatu were sent to retrieve the documents of Kidane and Woldai Ghidey after they were killed. What was the importance of those documents and where are they now?

Brig. General Ghirmay: They were very important documents. Wolderufael Sebhatu (who was martyred in Nakfa) and I were sent to get the documents from the house that was used as their office. Wolderufael knew the whereabouts and the importance of the documents because he used to work with them. You know, Wolderufael was supposed to have been killed with them but he was away at the time. Once we got to Kassala we got some of the documents but not all.

Issayas: In the interview with Haddas Eritrea, Brig. General Ghirmay Mehari stated that he and Wolderufael Sebhatu were sent to Kassala to collect the documents of Kidane Kiflu. What was the importance of these documents? Where are they now?

Minister Woldenkiel Gebremariam: The documents were very important. Kidane Kiflu was in Kassala and Kassala was the coordinating point with the field. He used to follow up the situations in the field and record them. They were very important historical documents.

Some of the documents (letters) were sent to the field. With the situation that we went through in the field, it is hard to say where they are. Some documents were taken by Tekue Yhidego and etc. to Aden from Kassala. We used to have them with our Hafash Wudubat (Mass Organizations). After we went to the field we did not know the situation of the documents.

Minister Naizghi: The documents were very important. They used to describe the situations in the field. Who did what? Who got killed by whom ...etc. are the sort of things that were in the documents. We left some of the documents with our Hafash Wudubat (Mass Organizations) in Aden, Yemen. Later, we heard that the documents were stolen.

THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

“The Battle of Halhal” (1968) with Mr. Jack Kramer, Professor Berhe Habte-giorgis and Dr. Tom Killion. Also, a sketched map from the “Kramer Papers 1968-1969.”

Part 8 Final

In this last segment, I would like to bring you a full circle to the beginning of the first part. The catalyst for this article was the 35th year of the “Battle of Halhal” in September 2003. You will find that I have put a reference to the “engagement” (using Mr. Kramer’s terminology) in Halhal of 1968 in parenthesis. The reason is some people argue that the attack on Halhal in 1968 by the second division (zone) was not even a battle. Whether one sees it as a battle or an attack or engagement, I chose to put it in a parenthesis. Also in this final part, I am presenting a sketched map drawn by Mr. Kramer that is in the Hoover Archives. There is also another sketched map by the commander of the unit, that Mr. Kramer was with at that time, who attacked the reinforcement convoy sent to Halhal. But that particular map is not presented here because some parts of it are very faded. Battle or attack, what is important is to investigate: (a) what was the significance of that attack? (b) What was the aftermath? (c) What was the political and military significance of that attack or battle? ... etc.

Issayas: You were not too far away from Halhal in 1968 where the “Battle of Halhal” took place. Can you tell me about it?

Mr. Kramer: Yes I was close to Halhal. But being close is not being there, especially, when you are reporting the guerrilla side of a guerrilla war. In Eritrea it took me days to cover ground that I could cover in ten minutes of hitchhiking by chopper in Vietnam. Of course I got reports, and those are in the collection. But I don’t want to make it sound as if

I could see the units attack. I can't even say if any of what we heard over that period of days was the Halhal engagement itself. The guerrilla attack on Halhal fortifications was the centerpiece of the engagement, but there were related actions all over. When an attack like this takes place, the entire region gets hot, helicopters are out hunting, and if you are with the side they are hunting for, you get an intense idea of what it's like to be on the guerrilla side, especially in open country. I got much more detailed stuff on the attack by Mohammed Ali Idris on an Ethiopian column sent to reinforce Halhal, maps, descriptions of the participants, etc. The picture (see part five) of us in the wadi with the blue Eritrean flag was with the unit that carried out that attack. The figure near the left of the group with a blue scarf is a girl--- one of the few female guerrillas at that time, though I understand that they were later to make a great contribution. Many of the guerrillas in that wadi bore deep scars, and they were so young.

Issayas: In our phone conversations, you mentioned that you did not find out about the failure of the "Battle of Halhal" until you came back to the United States. Was there any new information that you did not know when you were there?

Mr. Kramer: I did not understand how severe the engagement was until years later. Without over dramatizing, the guerrillas were honest with me about an engagement during which they took serious losses. But when I got to Asmara I was fed Ethiopian propaganda that was so obviously false (for example, that the Eritrean guerrillas had been cleared from the regions in which I knew first hand they were still operating) that it backfired, and convinced me that the Eritreans had not suffered nearly as bad at Halhal as they had. I really didn't understand just how bad things were when I was there until I read the Eritreans' own accounts of what happened, and I didn't read them until much later.

Issayas: You were a military man. What was the significance of the "Battle of Halhal" of 1968?

Professor Berhe: The Battle of Halhal was a daring assault by a fledgling guerrilla force on the entrenched government outpost. The attack was repulsed. With around sixty freedom fighters and the zone commander (Omar Ezaz: commander of the second zone) killed the outcome was disastrous. Alamin Mohamed Said explains the incident in a footnote in his book as an attempt to disrupt the reform oriented meeting of the field commanders of the ELF that was scheduled to take place at Anseba to work on the reform of the ELF's organization and leadership. To understand the situation, it is important to view the context within which events were evolving at the time. Alamin Mohamed Said describes the many challenges the Front was facing and how, instead of meeting the challenge by solving the problems, the leadership took measures that aggravated the situation and plunged the movement into deeper and wider religious and regional divisions. The five military zones that reflected the religious and ethnic homogeneity of the area were created. In addition, there was rivalry between former members of the Sudanese military and former members of the Eritrean police force

(Alamin Mohamed Said, p.14). The commander of the second zone, Umar Ezaz, was a sergeant in the Sudanese forces. The progressive counter movement that was developing inside the Front was trying to call a meeting at Anseba to create a unified command and structure. The first and second zone commanders did not attend the meeting. Some writers and people who were in the Front at that time explain the “Battle of Halhal” as an attempt to gain an upper hand in the power feud in the field. Alamin further portrays the leadership of the early years of the revolution as consisting of individuals who “misappropriated money and services such as scholarships and medical aid donated for the Front” by supporters of the Eritrean struggle. The field commanders, in a way, became warlords with complete authority over life and property in their region. Keeping the fighters divided was their strategy of maintaining their power and promoting their interest. Ahmed Teifar, editor of the Sudanese paper “October” in his book “The Truth about the Eritrean Revolution” provides detailed account of the abuse of power by the leaders and their views on religion and the role of non-Moslems in the movement and future Eritrea (quoted in “The Eritrean Riddle” by Alemseged, B. Adal, 1993). Change was imminent, because there were too many committed young people in the movement. Some eventually split and formed new organizations while others worked for change from within. The resolution of the contradiction in the organization catapulted the struggle for independence to a new plane, which eventually led to the total liberation of the country from enemy rule.

Issayas: Tom, you know about the “Kramer Papers”. Kramer was near Halhal in 1968. What was the significance of the “Battle of Halhal”?

Dr. Killion: Battle of Hal-Hal 1968 was the worst ELF defeat of the liberation struggle to that point they lost about 75 fighters and gave the Ethiopians a propaganda victory. Apparently, Omer Ezaz had planned the action in an attempt to strengthen his independent bargaining position at the upcoming Anseba Conference. At the time, he was both critical of the ELF leadership but unwilling to join Eslah reformers, and he seems to have hoped form a "third force". His death and the Hal Hal defeat ended any possibility of a "Bilen" third force emerging in the ELF; it also increased the divisive and recriminating bickering in the ELF, thus paving the way for the rise of the reform movement and eventually Shaebia.



Dr. Tom Killion

Issayas: You interviewed Azen Yassin in Asmara in 1994 for a couple of days. Did you ask him about the "Battle of Halhal"? If yes, what was his response?

Dr. Killion: I have looked through the notes I took in Asmara in 1994, but I can't find any comments by Yassin on Hal Hal. I will look more carefully when I have more time...

Unfortunately; my notebook organization needs to be revisited. The tape of the interview is in the former RICE (today's Research and Documentation Center) archives in Asmara, but it is unfortunately of poor quality. I got much of my information from an interview I did in Hal Hal in 1994 with some Muslim villagers who had just returned from 25 years or so of exile in the Sudan -- they remembered the 1968 debacle well and were still bitter about it. They respected Ezaz for his bravery, but certainly did not paint him as a great hero.

Issayas: The attack on Hal Hal was ill fated. Some people even say it was a blunder on the part of Omar Ezaz. What is your take of it?

Dr. Killion: Of course the attack was a blunder. To begin with, Ezaz had planned it for the wrong reasons (ELF politics, not a larger guerrilla strategy). Second, his military security was weak and one of his men (some say Omer himself) leaked word of the operation to a relative in the town who let it be known to some others, one of whom was a prostitute who told her Ethiopian boyfriend -- so the Ethiopians were waiting in ambush for Ezaz instead of the visa-versa. Though Ezaz had about 200 fighters and outnumbered the "Ethiopian" (mostly Eritrean Christians, by the way) police, he lacked the element of surprise. Ezaz should have then retreated to fight another day as a good guerrilla strategist would do -- but it was his home and apparently pride got in the way, leading to a senseless continuation of the attack and the slaughter of much of the Bilen contingent of the early ELF. Ezaz was brave, but he was not a good strategist. The defeat dealt a serious blow to ELF prestige for many months and increased the divisions in the ELF -- so it was in every sense a big defeat at that period in the liberation struggle. The defeat also brought horrible reprisals on the civilian population of Hal Hal, with some 30 killed and much of their property and livestock looted.

Issayas: What was the after effect of the "Battle of Halhal"?

Professor Berhe: Militarily, the Battle of Hal Hal may be viewed from many angles. One angle demonstrates the danger a guerrilla force faces when it moves too quickly out of hit and run tactics to attacking entrenched enemy positions without appropriate weapons and adequate training plan. The danger is multiplied when the enemy force is well trained and disciplined. Hal Hal post defenders were Eritrean Police commandos trained by the Israeli military in advanced infantry and counter insurgency tactics. Above all, they were Eritreans, albeit on the wrong side. Eritrean fighters are known throughout history for their tenacity and fighting spirit. Eventually, most of the young Eritrean Police Commandos joined the fronts and proved their mettle. The loss in human life was staggering. Over fifty freedom fighters, including the commander were killed. The total combatant force of the

zone was believed to have been less than 200. Perhaps the indirect effect of the Battle of Halhal may have had more enduring effect in the long run than in the immediate future. Temporary success at Hal Hal may have given the Ethiopian government and military false hope that they can succeed militarily. The Ethiopian military had failed to suppress

the Eritrean armed struggle at the initial stages. Experts in counterinsurgency stress that if a movement cannot be stopped during the first few months or years, it will be difficult to control. The Eritrean armed struggle had crossed that stage. Ethiopian counterinsurgency doctrine, which relies on brutal suppression, loses its effectiveness once the people in uprising and their organization pass that critical stage. The consternation of arrogant Ethiopian leaders was why Eritrea should be an exception, because earlier peasant uprisings in Ethiopia, example Oromo, Tigray, Sidama, were “nipped in the bud” in the first two or three years. An exception to this scenario is the Ogaden movement, which survived for many decades and may eventually bring the unraveling of the empire that Menelik built.

Issayas: Before I finish this article/interview I would like to ask you two more questions, if you don't mind. When I went and re-read your 21- page article that is in the Hoover Archives, the following questions came to my mind. You wrote;

“Eritrean strategy parallels the Vietnamese strategy, but at this moment, it doesn't so much parallel the Giap strategy, particularly of battle from a fixed emplacements. Given the Eritrean terrain, fixed emplacements may never be feasible or necessary anyway. Their current strategy would seem parallel much more the earlier Vietnamese strategy of “Trung Chinh”, which essentially means prolongation.

Can you explain? EPLF won the war in 1991 from their base in the Mountains of Sahel, which was basically a fixed position. What is your comment?

Mr. Kramer: You must remember that whether I was the first western reporter, or one of the first western reporters, or the first non-Party reporter in Eritrea, I was still just one reporter at a particular place at a particular time, and my reporting reflects that narrow perspective. I had a little background: the Marine Corps; several months as a reporter in Vietnam; an interest in liberation movements. But I also had my biases, among them a sympathy for minorities, which may have been no more than the traditional American sympathy for the underdog, and whatever else you may think of that, it is a bias. It limits objectivity. In short, I was simply reporting what I was able to comprehend of what was going on at that early stage in the war. Not only were there few fixed positions (from Tessennei to Keren, I saw none), the ELF was deploying virtually no vehicles. We rode mules, we rode camels, we walked, once in a while we ran; we never once rode in a vehicle. In fact the only vehicles we saw were bombed out Ethiopian armored cars near Agordat. Once or twice we saw Ethiopian choppers overhead. (It was not until years later, traveling with the Polissario in the Western Sahara, that I realized guerrillas could actually get away with driving oil tankers across open desert behind enemy lines; I was quite amazed and equally frightened.) From what I'd seen in Vietnam, it seemed that Trung Chin's emphasis on protracted war more closely reflected what the ELF was doing and

could do in such open country, with little cover. Not only did I see no evidence of Giap's fixed-position tactics, but also I could hardly imagine it. Not only was there none of the cover guerrillas had in Vietnam, but where the Vietnamese could take advantage of a

large population to build emplacements, Eritrea had a comparatively light population. From what I saw at that moment, mobility appeared clearly to be the tactic and protracted war the strategy, wearing the Ethiopians down until they understood that Eritrea was too costly to hang on to. The great achievements came later -- the underground munitions factories, underground hospitals and operating rooms, underground machine shops, oil tankers and tanks roaming at large despite the lack of air cover and subject to air attack. As I wrote, I had no inkling that this was coming. When it did come, it amazed me. Whether it represented a change of strategy by the EPLF or was always the strategy of the leadership is a question you should address to the leadership.

Issayas: You also wrote; *"In Aden I heard the common stories—Eritrean and other African revolutionaries being trained by the Chinese in Zanzibar, or on some island near, Zanzibar the Cubans who were supposed to be or were supposed to have been in Eritrea. There were stories I had occasionally heard in Eritrea as well, but with an altogether different emphasis."* Would you elaborate on the quote?

Mr. Kramer: All I meant by that comment about Chinese/Cuban involvement was that this business seemed of much greater moment over hookahs in coffee shops in the Crater (not to speak of espresso bars in Milan) than it did on the ground in Eritrea, where it actually mattered. Aside from my few days in Asmara, and auto-stopping the road to Asmara, the only people I saw in Eritrea were Eritreans.

Issayas: Have you visited Eritrea since you last visited with the ELF fighters in 1968?

Mr. Kramer: No. How I wish I could. I go where I am sent, and there still isn't much interest. There should be. Eritrea is at the hub of a critical region, and Lord knows we need good news out of Africa. But there isn't much interest, and so I watch Eritrean news on public access cable and whenever we can, my son Zeke and I get ful for breakfast at the Keren Café on Florida Avenue in Washington, D.C.

Issayas: Thank you very much for all your help, time and specially for granting me to publish your pictures, audio clips and letters from the Hoover Archives. Also, thanks for being patient with my constant endless questions. Finally, I am looking forward for your upcoming co-authored book on Rwanda.

Note: *Mr. Kramer's book is already out and is entitled: **Rwanda Means the Universe: A Native's Memoir of Blood and Bloodlines.***

Concluding remark: By no means, this is not an exhaustive research. Of course, more is needed. As more documents surface and more people share their experiences in the Eritrean struggle, we hope to get a better and full picture of the early part of our struggle for independence. I hope the above interviews have succeeded in putting few pieces in

this bigger and much needed picture. What the experience of writing this article has shown me was that sometimes things happen for a reason. As I have mentioned in the introduction, I have been looking for Mr. Kramer for a long time. Once I found him in September 2003, not only the questions that I was dying for to ask Mr. Kramer were answered but also five more other people were interviewed to show the significance of the collection. Now I know why that entire wait was for a reason, Zeigiest. There were many people whose names are not mentioned in this article but were involved in a lot of different ways. They know who they are. Many people including the interviewees had to tolerate my continuous nagging, sometimes disrupting them from their activities, yet they accommodated me with patience. I am grateful for that. Again, I would like to thank all the people who helped in the completion of this article, especially the interviewees for their time and mind. Finally, as you have read in part three of this article/interview, Mr. Kramer mentioned that seven ghosts follow him wherever he goes. One of them is Kidane's. I would hope that Mr. Kramer (through the invitation by the GOE, etc.) visits Kidane's Eritrea to rest assured the ghost of Kidane that he did not die in vain. All the hopes, aspirations, struggle, stand, truth that Kidane stood for, for an independent Eritrea has been achieved and is being achieved by his countrymen and women and his comrades.

Addendum

KIDANE KIFLU AND THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: ADDENDUM

KIDANE KIFLU AND THE JACK KRAMER PAPERS: ADDENDUM

In my previous series of postings entitled " Kidane Kiflu and the Jack Kramer Papers", I mentioned that the research was on-going. The continuing research for the aforementioned led me to two interviews that were conducted by Gunther Schroeder. From the 1980's to early 1990's, Gunther Schroeder interviewed, what would be considered a WHO'S WHO list of people from ELF and Harakat (ELM). (Note: He also interviewed very few people from EPLF. During that period he interviewed over 50 people).

Going through the transcripts of the above mentioned interviews, two interviews grabbed my attention. The first was Gunther's interview with Abdella Hassan Ali. If you recall, Abdella Hassan Ali was one of the fighters (the other being Aberra Mekonnen) who accompanied Jack Kramer from Kassala to the field in 1968. I'll present part of the transcript that relates to Kidane Kiflu and Jack Kramer. I'll present the second interview in its entirety.

The reason why I started writing "Kidane Kiflu and the Jack Kramer Papers" was because of Kidane's letters to Jack Kramer. The letters are located at the Hoover Institution Archives in Palo Alto, California, USA. The letters reveal the political maturity of Kidane. In the letters, Kidane was reflecting his and his comrade-in-arms sentiment of the time and their vision for the future of Eritrea's struggle for independence. For the purpose of this article, his comrade-in-arms included people like Tekue Yehdego, Wolderufael Sebhatu, Mehari Debesai and others. The same people were mentioned by General Ghirmay Mehari and Naizghi Kiflu in part VII of "Kidane Kiflu and the Jack Kramer Papers".

I found some letters that Tekue Yehdego, Wolderufael Sebhatu and Mehari Debesai wrote (separately) to the Eritreans in the diaspora. The letters were written in the early 1970's. I'll post samples of their letters in another time. Suffice it to say, despite their young age, what makes all their respective letters (including Kidane's) valuable is the similarity of their sharp analysis, the clarity of their message, organizational ability, boldness, humbleness, politeness, determination, resolve and focus.

Here is an excerpt from the transcript of Gunther's interview with Abdalla Hassan Ali.

ABDALLA HASSAN ALI

On The Student Movement In Asmara And History Of ELF

Kassala/13-02-1991/Arabic/English (Translator: Tesfay Weldemikiel)

Transcript read and corrected by Abdalla Hassan Ali summer 1991

Gunther: When you came to Kassala it was the time when the Harakat Eslah and the movement of the fighters were agitating there. What were the issues and how did you participate in those activities?

Abdalla Hassan Ali: At that time in Kassala the general atmosphere was intensifying in calling for the unity of the zones, also there was slogan about there should be one leadership and its center must be the field, that the congress should be held and also there were slogans calling for the programmatic declaration of ELF. In Kassala there were many houses which belonged to the different zones, these centers accepted the fighters who came either for rest or for treatment but all the fighters used to gather and to exchange ideas. And also there were people entering Kassala from different zones and the organized people in Sudan also had the same sentiments and views of this general atmosphere. So being in Kassala at this time I participated in the activities calling for the unity of ELA and the establishment of one leadership whose center would be in the field.

There was no difference between the general sentiment of those fighters and people here in Kassala and the Harakat Eslah. And finally the task was done jointly. From Harakat Eslah there were Abdelqader Ramadan, Abdalla Suleiman, Kidane Kiflu and others. So even this expresses the general sentiment of the situation. There was no difference, we can not see them as different groups. We were doing meetings together. Although we can't say that this gives a form of two bodies, from those who were known as army committee were such persons as Abubaker Mehamed Jime, one martyr called Abdalla Talodi, Abdalla Mehamed, Taha Ibrahim, Mehamed Nur and also Idris "Sharif".

Gunther:How did it come about that Aberra Mekonnen and you were given the assignment to accompany Jack Kramer to the field eventhough you were active in the movement of the fighters? Was Aberra also of this movement?

Abdalla Hassan Ali:Aberra Mekonnen was with us also in these activities. When he came to the field he directly came to Kassala before even taking a military training and he participated directly in this situation. At that time, even though the Harakat Eslah and the movement of the fighters were present, this does not mean that the relations between the fighters participating in them and the Revolutionary Command did not exist. For example, Said Saber has been working in the information Department, Welday was a member of the Revolutionary Command and Kidane Kiflu and myself were under the Kiada Sewriya. When this American journalist came it was seen that the Americans still do not have a clear assessment of the situation. So it was organized that if this American goes to the field and writes of what he sees it would be for the benefit of the revolution. So I and Aberra Mekonnen were ordered to go with Jack Kramer to the field. We were not long with him, we accompanied him from Kassala to Barka, we visited some place in Barka and then, because he had to meet some units in the 2nd zone and then enter to Keren, he was given some fighters who accompanied him and they directed him to zone no. 2 and with Aberra Mekonnen I returned to Kassala with his documents and films.

Gunther: When you came to Kassala in 1968 what was then the relationship between the ELF and the Sudanese government? Was there a tendency of the government to impose restrictions on the activities of the ELF in Sudan?

Abdalla Hassan Ali:At that time, of course, I was new in Sudan and how the government of Sudan functioned and what its relation to the revolution was, I did not know. But what I had come in contact with was that the Sudanese authorities were arresting some fighters who were released after paying some fees. The members of the Kiada Sewriya were mainly operating underground and the activities of the Ethiopians also intensified. They have been throwing some bombs in the Western Gash area of Kassala against the Sudanese petrol distribution area to threaten them, This was the general information I had, but I really did not know what was going on.

Gunther:What did you do after you returned to Kassala with the materials of Kramer?

Abdalla Hassan Ali: After the formation of the Tripartite Unity I went to that area and with me were many other fighters who were sent to the field in many directions and with the same ideas we had we joined the units in the different zones. I went to Akele Guzay and joined the unit called seriya 8. Seriya 8 at that time had about 150 fighters. In the Tripartite Unity there were at least eight seriya but also independent gantas for guerilla activities. I did not participate in the Adobha Congress. I continued in this seriya in Akele Guzay. Its commander was Umer Suba. I stayed with this unit till the Tekhlit of Tahra.

After that some units were sent to the vicinity of Asmara. After the merger of the army new units were formed and it was also decided to send guerilla units around every town. Saleh ad-Din Abdalla and myself were given the duty to organize inside Asmara, Mahmud Hazeb was sent to Aqerdat, a certain Mehamed Yazin to Mas-sawa, Suleiman Musa Haj to Keren, Mehamed Taher to Mendefera. The guerilla units were given the tasks of organization around Asmara and inside the town. When I returned responsible for organizing the city I found everything had come to a new situation, that the Ethiopians intensified their campaign to arrest the ELF members. So we began to organize the city according to the acquaintances we had. We also tried to recruit new elements. At that time to operate in Asmara was very difficult. Besides this task of organizing the guerilla units had other tasks which can be identified as military operations and political agitation around Asmara. Our main camps we were depending on, were in the area of Mensa up to Ad Shumer (Filfil, Agenat). When we tried to go up to the Highlands we couldn't even stay for half an hour, just after some time the Ethiopians used to arrive. So, the center being these lowland areas gradually we were managing to expand our activities, to create cells in the villages, to get information and to return back. We had cells inside the villages, we got information from them and sometimes we came into contact with some persons who came from Asmara and organized them. But we were always returning hastily. For example, we first met in She'eb, Selemona, some teachers and we mandated them to carry our mission. Concerning the acceptance of the people, of course, because there is an intensive enemy pressure in that area, there were difficulties, but those who came into contact with us from Asmara were mainly composed of Christians and we fighters, our units, were both composed of Christians and Muslims. So, especially in our task, when we come to work, the general national sentiment was dominating. And when we were inside Asmara, Muslims and Christians were working together. I did this work up to October 1970. Then I was captured on October 13, 1970 inside Asmara, but Saleh ad-Din Abdalla carried on with our work after I was arrested. I was about 6 months in prison, then in April 1971 Mehamed Amir "Kabli", who was captured at Massawa, and myself, we escaped from the prison by digging our way out. After I fled from the prison, I was mainly on treatment in Kassala and Khartoum and then I participated in the 1st National Congress.

Below is the transcript of Gunther's interview

L. BAIRU

On the events of 1969/1970 in Kassala.

Kassala. March 21, 1989/translated Tigrigna to English by Gebray Weldeselase.

I'm more than 35 years in Kassala. Many people in Kassala were killed at that time. These two were killed out of the six of the pC in Kassala. Mesfin Hagos was supposed to be killed with them. He was here in Kassala when they called him, he told them he has a job right now. After this Time, Mehari was in Khartoum. After they were killed he came and took their belongings to send them to their families. They were the ones to make contact with the Sudanese government. If any fighter was wounded or in need of any help these people were trying to solve the problem of the fighters in Kassala. Any Eritrean, who had an interest in the revolution, they were helping if any problems or difficulties were happening to him. If people were kidnapped by the organization these people appealed to the Sudanese police.

Ali Berhatu came from Arab nation. He was responsible for refugees through the ELF. When he arrived, Welday and Kidane took him to the hotel. They suspected "if he sleeps without any guard the opponents may kidnap him and take him to the field." They went to the police station and they requested to give one police to guard him in the hotel. They gave them the police. Then the opposers knew he is sleeping in the hotel and they came the next day by taxi to the hotel and told the police this guy is wanted by the Sheikh of Hilla. They took him to this place. When they dropped him there he was taken by other opponents waiting there by force to the field. Kidane and Welday came to the hotel to find him. They asked the police and the police told them, a member of your organization came and took him by taxi to the Sheikh of Hilla. They were angry with the police, but they immediately went to the police station and appealed that this man has disappeared from the town. Then the administration of Kassala send a letter to Khartoum that this man had disappeared from Kassala by kidnapping. Then the administration of Khartoum sends a letter to this office to ask the ELF office and force them to bring the man from the field. The police arrested some of the ELF to force them to bring him back. They asked for two months and assured that he is alive. And after 2 months they brought him. He was saved his life because of these two persons Welday and Kidane. When he came back, they were already killed. Tesfay and Ibrahim were leading with these two. They were in the field, they came to Kassala. Ibrahim was in China for training and educated. Tesfay was an ordinary fighter.

They were newcomers and started simply discussing, talking with other members of the ELF, because they did not know what things were happening in Kassala. Wolday and Kidane advised them not to go with the others members and not to separate from them and after some time the opponents understood that the idea of Tesfay and Ibrahim is the same as those of Wolday and Kidane. They kidnapped them immediately and took them to Sowake, a garden near Kassala. They killed Ibrahim there, but took Tesfay back to the field. When the two, Wolday and Kidane, appealed to the police station that Ibrahim and Tesfay had disappeared, then the police arrested some members of ELF and investigated. Then among the members of ELF it was believed that Ibrahim had been killed but they did not find the body. The people who had done it, told actually the police that they had killed him in the garden then. They promised to the police to bring Tesfay back to Kassala. Before they brought Tesfay back Wolday and Kidane were assassinated.

ELF got behind Wolday Feqaq , one of their members, to bring his wife from Ali Giddir and then to make a feast and to invite Wolday and Kidane as otherwise they would not have a chance to touch them. They gave Wolday Feqaq money to get these people into his house. He hid 8 persons from the opponents in his house and when these two came to his home, immediately these 8 persons caught them. Wolday started to fight and trying to escape. Immediately they killed him by knife in his side. Kidane was gagged and trussed up and tied, then they attend a taxi and they took them away. Kidane was covered by sacks from head to toe. 4 sacks. When they went around Haffera, Wolday's dead body dropped from the taxi and the taxi is soiled by blood. A villager who sells milk passed the car and saw this. The taxista and the other people tried to escape from that place and they succeeded.

The villager went to the police station and told there are some dead bodies there. Then the taxista started washing his car. When the police investigated they found him washing his car. When they asked him, he said, people were fighting and I took them to their house. Then the villager, police and the taxi-driver went to the area there and found the dead bodies. They were taken to the police station for investigation. The police asked the taxista how it happened, they beat him to tell the truth. When the police asked the taxista he explained that when someone gave me money to take people that way, I do it, and all police, you know this, that many taxistas do that. The police declared then that he is mad. Then the taxi-driver informed the police that many taxistas are working like that and many were arrested.

When the other taxi-drivers were questioned, they were released again as there was no evidence against them. Wolday Feqaq, the traitor, and two others were arrested at that time by the police. The taxi-driver said, he was called by a fighter called Shinkakay to carry a sick person to the hospital and I came. Shinkakay and one other were arrested. The other six escaped. The taxi-driver claimed to have been forced by Shinkakay by knife to carry the dead bodies. He received 25 Sudanese Pounds and was promised another 25 Pounds. At last, Wolday Fekak, his wife, Shinkakay and his friend and the taxi-driver were imprisoned. Shinkakay was sentenced to death, but the ELF office appealed and he was released after some years. The second man was sentenced to 14 years, after 7-8 years in Port Sudan they were released. Wolday Fekak and the taxista stayed only one year in prison. The wife was imprisoned for one year only. Kidane was killed when Wolday's body fell out of the car. Originally it was planned to take them alive inside for interrogation. From the Harakat many people were killed in Kassala and in the field by the ELF. There were no clubs here for the Christian Eritreans especially because the Sudanese Government would pick them up and return them to Tesseney. Teku, Mehari, Mesfin, Wolday and Kidane were secretly working in the house of Letefiel. Teku Yehdego, later killed by ELF, has a child now in Sahel. Was killed about 3-4 years after death of Wolday.

Posted by [Issayas](#) at 6:00 PM

Right Place, Wrong Reasons: Discovering a Rare Sound Recording from Eritrea

By [Issayas Tesfamariam](#)

Tuesday, November 18, 2014



Jack Kramer

Eritrean Liberation Front members, 1968 (Jack Kramer Papers, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives)



Image credit:

Jack Kramer

Eritrean Liberation Front members, 1968 (Jack Kramer Papers, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives)

At times, the stories behind archival collections can be as important as the collections themselves. You've heard of being in the right place at the right time? This is a story of being in the right place at the right time, for the wrong reasons.

In the late 1960s, Jack Kramer, now a retired journalist, donated his papers to the Hoover Institution Archives. The papers include letters between Jack Kramer and Osman Saleh Sabbe, Mohamud Dinai, Kidane Kiflu, and Woldeab Woldemariam, well-known personalities in the political landscape of Eritrea's independence movement, as well as a rare sound recording, which is the focus of this post.

The story begins in London, England, over a £5 bet. The time was the 1960s, a decade Kramer called "a storm that seemed to rage forever."¹ Kramer bet £5 that he would arrive before his friend in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, overland.

The purpose was to fulfill two friends' respective childhood daydreams. For Kramer's friend it was to reach the "Land of Prester John." For Kramer it was to be shipped out to Dar (el Salaam) past Mogadishu and Zanzibar.

The state of Kramer and his friend at the time of the bet? "Gin-drunk."²

Here are some details of Kramer's journey that I picked out of his book:

- The European-staffed Ethiopian Embassy told Kramer that he did not need a visa for Ethiopia and that he could get it at the border.
- Kramer made his way to Port Sudan and then to Kassala, Sudan. On arrival, he asked the Ethiopian Consulate in Kassala for a visa and was told that they would have to contact Addis Ababa for a reply. He was asked to wait.
- For the first time, he heard about Eritrea and its fight against Ethiopia in Kassala. Kidane Kiflu introduced himself to Kramer.³
- The following evening, Kidane Kiflu asked Kramer if he was interested in meeting “freedom fighters” in the mountains of Eritrea. Kramer recalled the occasion “as if he [Kidane] were inviting me to dinner.”⁴
- Kramer got a firm no from the Ethiopian Consulate.
- Kramer took up Kidane’s offer and decided to go to Eritrea without an exit visa from Sudan or an entrée visa from Ethiopia.
- Kramer crossed the border and traveled inside Eritrea with the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) fighters for almost a month.
- Kramer and his escort arrived near Halhal, Eritrea, a few days after the Battle of Halhal. At the time of the battle they were fifteen kilometers (about ten miles) southwest of Halhal.⁵

Before continuing with the consequences of Kramer’s travel, I want to give a brief historical background of Eritrea:

- Eritrea was Italy’s first colony. Italy ruled Eritrea from 1890 until 1941.
- Eritrea was the first to be freed by the Allied forces in 1941. As a result, Great Britain ruled Eritrea from 1941 to 1952.
- From 1952 until 1962 Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia.
- In 1962 Ethiopia abolished the federation and ruled Eritrea until 1991.
- In 1961 the ELF began the armed struggle against Ethiopia.
- By 1965, the ELF had divided Eritrea into five military zones/divisions (modeled after Algeria’s Front Liberation Nationale [FLN]) to fight against Ethiopian forces in Eritrea.⁶
- The Supreme Council (SC), based in Cairo, Egypt, was at the head of the organizational structure of the ELF, followed by the Revolutionary Command (RC), which was based in Kassala, Sudan. The main task of the RC was to coordinate the five zones inside Eritrea. The leading figures in the SC vied for control of one or another of the zones, bypassing the RC.

- In 1967 Ethiopia conducted a major counterinsurgency campaign by attacking the zones one at a time, knowing there was no coordination among them. The zonal structure of the front proved incapable of responding to the Ethiopian offensive and soon after led to a political crisis within the ELF.
- A reform movement called Enslah emerged with the intention of creating a unified army and command structure. In June and July 1968 military commanders and political commissars of the third, fourth, and fifth zones met and agreed to get rid of the zonal divisions, unify the army under a single command, and so forth. During the meeting commanders of the first and the second zones were absent.⁷

It was during the clandestine activities of the Enslah and the strategic political positioning within the ELF that Jack Kramer arrived in Eritrea in September 1968. Hence, the historical value of the letters and the sound recording of the Jack Kramer papers, especially when analyzed within this historical context.

The Battle of Halhal was significant because first, it was a daring assault by commander Omar Ezaz of the second zone/division on an entrenched Ethiopian government outpost with a disastrous outcome, and second, it was a planned action, even though the Ethiopian forces were aware of the attack, in an attempt to strengthen his bargaining position in the upcoming conference of the reformers at Anseba.⁸

As described earlier, Kramer and his escort were within close proximity of Halal. During that time Kramer met and recorded the commander of an ELF unit that had attacked the Ethiopian enforcement units who were sent to Halhal. The drawing by an injured member of the attack group on the outcome of their attack is also in the Jack Kramer Papers. During his three-week stay, which involved six hundred circuitous kilometers on foot, camel, and mule inside Eritrea, Kramer also recorded a well-known battalion commander, Osman Ali Idris or Abu Shenab, "The Whiskered One".

Now back to the series of consequences:

- The two political cadres (Aberra Mekonnen and Abdella Hassan) who had accompanied Kramer from the time he crossed the border with Sudan were recalled to Kassala. They asked Kramer to give them the films and the documents that he had collected for his own safety in case he was apprehended by Ethiopian security. The Cadres promised Kramer that they would ship his belongings to his address in the United States. Except for one 35-mm film, which Kramer hid from them, he gave them the rest of his materials.
- Kramer was escorted to the main road between Asmara and Keren.
- Kramer hitchhiked to Asmara, the capital city of Eritrea, at one point sharing the ride with Ethiopian soldiers.
- Kramer stayed in Asmara for two weeks.

- On his departure from Asmara, the immigration officer at the airport asked Kramer why he had not gotten his yellow fever vaccination. (He overlooked Kramer's nonexistent visa.)
- A high-ranking immigration officer was called; he too overlooked Kramer's visa and waved him good-bye and good luck. The unprocessed 35-mm film in Kramer's pocket was full of pictures taken by Kramer with the ELF and made it back to the United States.

As promised by the two cadres, Kramer received his materials a month after his arrival in the United States; they had not been tampered with.

The rest is history. We would not have had this rare sound recording, now available online for the first time, were it not for the series of unintended consequences from a £5 bet.

1. From Jack Kramer's autobiographical book, *Travels with the Celestial Dog* (London: Wildwood House, 1976).

2. Ibid. p. 109

3. At the time of the meeting Kidane Kiflu was a member of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Later, he advocated reforms within the ELF. Kidane stated his vision for the movement and the future for an independent Eritrea in his letters to Kramer, which are located in the Hoover Archives. Kidane Kiflu was killed in 1969 in Kassala, Sudan.

4. Ibid. p. 127

5. Unpublished report by Kramer in the Jack Kramer Papers at the Hoover Institution Archives (p. 9).

6. Originally the ELF created four divisions and added a fifth zone, later. Each division had one political commissioner.

7. Mohamud Dinai was commander of the first zone (division). His letter to Jack Kramer is in the Jack Kramer Papers at the Hoover Institution Archives.

8. For a complete interview with Dr. Tom Killion and Dr. Berhe Habtegiorgis about the battle, see http://kemey.blogspot.com/2007_10_01_archive.html

Kidane's voice in the audio appears for a brief moment. The voice of Kidane Kiflu starts at 8:35 and ends at 9:07 mark of part two.

Below is the link:

<http://www.hoover.org/research/right-place-wrong-reasons-discovering-rare-sound-recording-eritrea>

A wake up call

Many countries in the world honor their heroes and commemorate them eternally by erecting statues, naming streets, parks, schools, universities and all sorts of institutions in their names. Eritrea has failed to remember its heroes in all spheres of life and fields, including statesmanship, military, scholarships, arts, literature, religion, music and sports. It would be too long to list all the great Eritrean personalities from antiquity to the present. Even the heroes of the last 50 years who have not been recognized and honored are very many.

I believe many will agree with me that Eritrea has many amazing individuals in history who have done something unique to their country in the field of politics, culture, education, sport etc, which we need to remember them for what they have done. It is disheartening though not to see biography books of Eritreans in the library shelves. Lately I have decided to open a section in my website that will be dedicated to the biography of individual Eritreans from all walks of life in history (www.emnetu.com).

To start with I have randomly established a list of possible candidates. I therefore ask you all to put additional names to the list and return it to me. The list has to accommodate only individuals who have passed away. In other words, we will concentrate only on post mortem biographies. I will update the list when I hear from you. The list will remain open all the time for additional names.

If you are positive about this idea and you have the time I would challenge you all to write a biographical sketch or find individuals who can be interested to write a biography on any in the list. If you come across anyone who has access to information, but not ready to write, you can ask him/her to supply the information to me in any format (paper, diskette, gramophone dish, cassette, videos, photographs etc) so that I can send it to the one who is interested to write.

The size of the file is not important at all. What is important is remembering them and trying to document their history before it disappears all together. The size will be determined only by the amount of information available on these individuals. Of course the individuals in the list must have done something positive for the cause of our country or to the well being of our people and our culture.

Emnetu Tesfay