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**BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FOUR
PRISONERS OF WAR OF THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTIONARY ARMY
UNDER EPLF AND TPLF, 1974-1991**

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FEBRUARY 2023

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES DEPARTEMENT OF HISTORY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN HISTORY**

February 2023

Acknowledgements

This study could not be materialized easily without the exhaustion and passion of cherished folks. My Advisor Dr. Surafel Gelgelo, really you were my stimulant. Your critical comments, language corrections and methodological advice helped me a lot to improve the quality of my research. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Tamrat Wasyihun, the coordinator of the Department of History Graduate Programs, for his humbleness and willingnes to help students including my self. My deepest thank also goes to librarians in different libraries (Kennedy, IES, National Archive and Library Agency) and my informants I am indebted to all of you and I thank you very much. Finally, my daughter Hanna Solomon you helped me a lot and encouraged me to work hard and finish writing this paper. Thank you!

List of Acronym

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
Co's	Commissioned Officers
EPLF	Eritrean People Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERA	Ethiopian Revolutionary Army
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
NCO's	Non-Commissioned Officers
NKFD	National Committee Freies Deutschland (National Committee Free Germany)
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Front
POW	Prisoners of War
SPDO	Southern People's Democratic Front
SRA	Second Revolutionary Army
TPLF	Tigray Peoples Liberation Front
TRA	Third Revolutionary Army
USSR	Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front

Preface

This study has dealt mainly with the study of the experiences of the four Ethiopian POWs who were insurgents against the then government of socialist Ethiopia. These groups include ex-Ethiopian soldiers who had fallen in the hands of the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front) forces and the TPLF (Tigrayn People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebels in the then Ethiopian northern provinces of Eritrea and Tigray from 1974 to 1991. The study has tried to examine treatment of war captives in the civil wars in Ethiopia during the *Derg* military regime. The thesis attempts to see the treatments of the Prisoners of War based on the Geneva Conventions. Actually, the EPLF and TPLF were rebel groups who could not provide the basic needs of even to their own combatants. It is also known that the EPLF and TPLF who were by then insurgent groups who were not signatories of the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions were taken by the researcher as benchmark to investigate the handling of the Ethiopian Prisoners of War during the *Derg* period as the conventions show at least the minimum standards of treating Prisoners of War. After all, both the EPLF and the TPLF which eventually transformed itself to the EPRDF had assumed political power and became leaders of Eritrea and Ethiopia respectively. It is not correct to conclude that the Geneva Conventions cannot be applied on rebel groups who did not size formal political power and are not signatories of this international convention. In fact, the Geneva Conventions are not basically prepared to deal with issues of civilians living in peaceful times or domestic civil right cases. Criminals are criminals no matter they are formal government officials or illegal insurgent groups. While investigating international crimes in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the International Tribunals assigned there had made it clear that rebel groups cannot escape from charges of breaching of laws or customs of war. Insurgents could be held accountable for any illegal acts committed at times of war based on Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions in general and the Geneva Protocol II that was issued in 1977 in particular are applicable "with equal force to all parties to an armed conflict, government and rebels alike". The International tribunals that were assigned to investigate International Criminal Acts in Yugoslavia and Rwanda have investigated crimes committed not only by government forces but also by rebel groups.

The writer of the thesis was motivated to conduct this research partly because he himself was a member of the ex-Ethiopian army and had proximity to many Prisoners of War. To conduct the

study both primary and secondary sources were used and analyzed. Primary sources such as, oral testimony of living witness of four POWs, archival documents; magazines and newspapers have been utilized. Secondary sources such as books, different research and articles are being in exploit predominantly in dealing chapter one and two of the thesis.

This research undertaking shouldnot be the monopoly of a single institution views of different stakeholders coming from varied fields of Social Science are intertained.

Abstract

The main objective of this research undertaking is to investigate the lived experiences of four ex-members of the Ethiopia Armed forces while they were under captivity o the EPLF and TPLF. This research discusses about the Ethiopian Prisoners of War who were members of the Ethiopian Revolutionary Army who were detained by the EPLF and TPLF which eventually became EPRDF forces in the period between 1974 and 1991. The thesis took some ex- Ethiopian POWs and studied their family background, recruitments and experience during their imprisonment and repatriation process. In conducting this study both, primary and secondary sources were utilized. Primary eye witness account of the POWs and documents that are found in the hands of the inmates and some archival materials are used. The secondary sources, books and articles of different scholars are the other sources used to produce this research work. Qualitative research method is employed to conduct this research. The study found out that the Ethiopian Prisoners of War were maltreated by the northeren insurgents who captured them. The need of doing this study is to contribute to the historical the historiographical research method of reconstructing past events using lived experience of prisoners of war.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Historical Background

The history of POWs is as old as the history of warfare with each side in any conflict expects to win and exercise excessive control over the other.¹The change of circumstances of warfare makes it inescapable that some portion of the armed forces involved in the conflict should fall hostage or prisoner to their enemies.² Besides, imprisonment in wars has existed for centuries and has deeply affected the lives of millions of people.³

Jonathan F. Vance simply defined POWs as “members of a recognized military body captured during wartime.”⁴ In this regard, Pieter Lagrou described POWs in a situation of total wars as, “[POWs] are most often mobilized citizens, drafted by military conscription. Their experiences are thus not solely those of the professional soldier but affect the societies to which they belong.”⁵

Article 4 of Geneva Convention on the POWs dictate that a person who has fallen in the hands of the enemy is regarded as a prisoner of war “if, (1) he or she is a member of a national armed force or, (2) if he or she is part of a group that fulfills four conditions; (a) that of being commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates;(b) that of having a fixed distinctive sign recognizable at a distance; (c) that of carrying arms openly;(d) that of conducting their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.”⁶

¹ Arnold Krammer, *Prisoners of War: A Reference Handbook* (London: Praeger Security International, 2008),1;Geoffrey P. R. Wallace, *Life and Death in Captivity The Abuse of Prisoners During War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,2015),8

² William Best Hesselstine, *Civil War Prisons: A Study in War Psychology* (Ohio:Ohio State University Press,1998),1

³ Jonathan F. Vance et,al, *Encyclopedia of prisoners of war and internment*,2nd edition (Millerton: Grey House Publishing, 2006),xiii

⁴Vance, *Encyclopedia of prisoners of war and internment*,xiii

⁵ Pieter Lagrou, “Overview,” In*Prisoners of war, Prisoners of Peace : Captivity, Homecoming, and Memory in World War II*, edited by Bob Moore and Barbara Hatley-Broad (Oxford: Berg, 2005)

⁶ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Switzerland: 2012),39

Several writers lamented that the history of POWs even in the two World Wars is neglected by historians, let alone the history of those captured and detained during internal conflicts. Heather Jones noted that although large scale military captivity was one of the most important paradigms of the First World War, it remains striking that historians have paid little attention to it.⁷ Thus reluctance of scholars in investigating the history of POWs is not unique to Ethiopia.

Ethiopia was involved in several wars in the late twentieth century. These include the interstate wars against Somalia at the beginning of the 1960s under Haile Selassie and later at the end of the 1970 under the *Derg*. The civil war between the Ethiopian military forces and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) which commenced in 1961 was evidently the longest intra state war in Africa. Moreover, the Ethiopian Revolutionary Army waged subsequent intrastate wars with the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) and with other major rebel groups namely, Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Movement (EPDM)⁸ presumably representing the Amhara ethnic group, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) apparently corresponding to Oromo peoples, and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).⁹ With the exception of OLF, the TPLF was capable of making the EPDM, the OPDO, and its ostensible partners form Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in May, 1988.

Ethiopian and expatriate scholars like Gebru Tareke and Fantahun Ayele, Broich Tobias, Dan Connell John Young, Remco Van Hauwermeiren, as well as organizations like the CIA, ICRC and Human Rights Watch have published their works on the interstate and intra-state wars. Almost the above works revolve around the causes and effects of the civil wars or the wars that took place in around the borderlands of Ethiopia strictly focusing on the reasons for the defeat of the ERA in the civil wars. Besides, they focused on the socioeconomic, ideological, religious and nationalist or secessionist interests of contending parties. Moreover, these works included the

⁷ Heather Jones, "A Missing Paradigm? Military Captivity and the Prisoner of War, 1914-18," In *Immigrants and Minorities* 26 no. 1-2 (2008), 19, Cited in Kate Alexandra Ariotti, "Coping With Captivity: Australian POWs of the Turks and the Impact of Imprisonment During the First World War", (PhD Dissertation, School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics, The University of Queensland, 2014), 9

⁸ The ANDM was formerly operating under the name Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM). According to Aregawi Berhe was compelled to change its nomenclature to comply with or adhere to the ethnic politics of the TPLF.

⁹ Aregawi Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilisation in Ethiopia* (Amsterdam: 2008), 3

external factors such as alliance with superpowers on the basis of economic, geopolitical and ideological interests of the warring groups as factors that add fuel to the blood shade.

Gebru and Fantahun provided quantitative descriptions of casualties of the wars (the number of wounded and dead), captured and missing combatants and the monetary values of properties damaged because of the protracted civil war. However, only international humanitarian organizations such as ICRC and Human Rights Watch tried to record the situations of Ethiopian POWs. Nevertheless, these organizations lack historical perspectives. Despite the contribution of studies to our knowledge on military strategies, foreign diplomacy and even skills of leadership, they paid little attention to the accounts of POWs captured by the EPLF and EPRDF.

Considerable numbers of Ethiopian soldiers were captured and became POWs in both the interstate war with Somalia and the intrastate war with EPLF and EPRDF. For example, the Associated Press indicated that “a total of 3,543 Ethiopian POWs and civilian prisoners including one Cuban officer were brought back to Ethiopia in exchange for the return of 245 Somalian POWs in a nine-day operation”.¹⁰ The 1988 annual report of ICRC validated the figure presented by the Associated Press, albeit the slight difference in the number of years of detention of the captives.¹¹

1.2. The Ethiopian POWs captured by EPLF and EPRDF

Although the exact number of prisoners of war captured by the EPLF and EPRDF is difficult to ascertain, reports from humanitarian organizations indicate that the EPLF alone had reportedly captured more than hundred thousand Ethiopian soldiers over the course of the war. Members of ERA who were captured by EPLF and eventually released by the same group in the years from 1985 to 1992 were 145,400.¹² Meanwhile; Health Action Group (1988) indicated that in late 1988 there were 5,200 wounded prisoners that received treatment in the TPLF’s field hospital. In late 1988, the EPRDF claimed to have 37,000 POWs.¹³

¹⁰ Associated Press, “Prisoner Exchange 10 Years After Ethiopia-Somalia War” September 2, 1988, <https://apnews.com/article/d789e09aeac4737a74835f678a9a197>

¹¹ ICRC Annual Report, 1988, “Ethiopia/Somalia, Prisoners of War of the Ogaden Conflict”, *In How does law protect in war?* 25-26 Online casebook (<https://casebook.icrc.org>), 25

¹² Killion, *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea*, 358

¹³ Alex Waal, *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (London: Africa Watch, September 1991), 98

Three decades have passed since the war was concluded. Nevertheless, historians still did not pay due attention to study and document the experiences of the members ERA who were held as POWs by the EPLF and the TPLF/ EPRDF forces. In addition, ample evidence that proves the existence of large numbers of Ethiopian POWs under the control of the EPLF and the EPRDF during 1974-1991 is available. However, historical works on the EPLF's and EPRDF's treatment of ex-combatants is very limited. In other words, the effect imprisonment on the ideological, psychological and physiological makeups of the POWs, their family situations, as well as the hardships faced by prisoners of war were not carried out by both Ethiopian expatriate scholars. The available literature mentioned the issue as a passing remark. Moreover, the experiences of Ethiopian prisoners of war were not analyzed considering the 1949s or the 1977 Geneva Conventions that specifically deal with POWs.¹⁴

Therefore, this research project deals with the biological narratives and experiences of four members of the ERA who have been POWs under the EPLF and TPLF later EPRDF during the protracted civil war in Ethiopia of 1974 to 1991. More specifically, the research provides the historical account on the treatment that Ethiopian POWs received from their captors namely the EPLF and the EPRDF through examining the hardships and reliefs that Ethiopian POWs experienced starting from the moments of captivity to repatriation including the adequacy of post war rehabilitation services offered to the POWs. In the same vein it identifies analyzes the problems faced by the families of Ethiopian POWs. The research also presents a comparative analysis of the ways in which EPLF treated Ethiopian POWs with that of EPRDF.

As an empirical study, the research heavily relied on the experiences of four members of ERA who were prisoners of war under the EPLF in Eritrea and the TPLF /EPRDF in Tigray and another additional four POWs, two from the Navy and two from Ground force interviewed for supplementary study. Purposive sampling was used to identify key informants. Four former members of ERA who were captured for a minimum of six months and above by either EPLF or EPRDF were purposively selected as key informants. Oral data were collected through qualitative methods of data collection such as in-depth one to one interview. Utmost care was

¹⁴ The rules protecting prisoners of war (POWs) are specific and were first detailed in the 1929 Geneva Convention. They were refined in the third 1949 Geneva Convention, following the lessons of World War II, as well as in Additional Protocol I of 1977 (ICRC, 29-10-2010). " accessed December 1,2020

taken to prevent bias. This was done on the basis of the coherence and consistency of the informants' responses to the semi structured interview questions prepared for the pilot study.

1.3 Scope of the Study

Four former Ethiopian POWs who were members of the Ethiopian ground force and the Ethiopian navy participated in providing the data necessary for this research. Informants were asked to provide detailed descriptions of their prison experiences. The analysis of the data obtained from informants was coded and identifying of common topics on the center of meaning of the description of incidence of their imprisonment. The topics were corresponded with the help of the data gained from the secondary sources conferred with the research.

Despite great effort to gain access to the Ethiopian POWs, it was difficult to access a representative sample due to lack of exact list of the Ethiopian POWs, the scattering of the veterans throughout the country and the total refusal of some POWs because of their lack of interest to remember their traumatic experiences.¹⁵ Some ex-POWs who are living in Addis Ababa were contacted in this research. Hence, research is confined to explain the experiences of Ethiopian prisoners of war who were captured by EPLF and EPRDF between the years 1974 and 1981 and repatriated after the end of the war.

The research does not include those prisoners of war who joined the insurgents and those who fled to other countries after their captivity. Nevertheless, this thesis can be regarded as an original contribution to the historical writing of Ethiopian prisoners of war during the military regime. The outcomes of this research will contribute to the historiographical research methods of reconstructing past events using lived experiences of actors. In addition, the results of this research serve as inputs to policy makers who work to bring about effective improvement in the treatments of prisoners of war, their rehabilitation after return and the treatment of families of POWs. Moreover, it provides a ground for further research.

¹⁵Researcher's personal experience while conducting pilot study and actual data collection from December 30 – May1,2021

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one introduces the research. Chapter two reviews the available literatures on the Ethiopian Revolutionary Army, on treatment and repatriation of POWs, International Conventions especially the Geneva Convention on POWs and other related materials. Chapter three outlines the background of key informants and presents general socio-economic, demographic and professional profiles of the ex-members of the Ethiopian Revolutionary Army who were prisoners of war under EPLF and EPRDF and participated in this study. It describes their pre-military background; military lives and ranks at time of capture; the actual years they served in captivity; the processes of repatriation and survival strategies in their transition to civilian life. Chapter four is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the oral data on the actual lived experiences of the informants while they were in captivity. Chapter five provides the summary of the major findings and conclusion of the research.

Generally, the thesis investigates comparative analyses the lived experience of the Ethiopian POWs who were under the EPLF and the TPLF which eventually transformed itself into EPRDF.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Experience of Prisoners of War and Their Families

This chapter reviews scholarly works on the experiences of prisoners of war focusing on the treatment of prisoners of war and their families. Moreover, it evaluates literature on POWs held by the EPLF and the TPLF during the years from 1974 to 1991. Furthermore, data on the numbers of Ethiopian Revolutionary Army captured by EPLF and TPLF during the protracted Ethiopian civil war (1974 - 1991) is summarized. The review is of much importance to analyze the experiences of members of the ERA who were captured and detained by EPLF and EPRDF.

2.1 Prisoners of War and their Treatment

Warring parties incarcerate their captives for various reasons. The major reason is to detach them from their comrades to decapitate the manpower of their respective enemies. Victors after detained the prisoners they undertook fair trials on war crimes or release them after the end of the war. Moreover, victors kept their prisoners of war for indication of military success, and get ready to use their captives labor, collected military and combat intelligence information. In modern times, they exploited it as instruments of propaganda for the opposite party after solid indoctrination.¹⁶ Captured combatants who had surrendered and taken as prisoners of war were either slayed or enslaved depending on the culture, ideology or socio-economic stance of their captors.¹⁷ Prisoners were also murdered in order to avoid future problems such as escape and exposure of secrets of their captors, and financial constraints to cover expenses for their food as well as the assignment of extra manpower to guard them. However, not all prisoners of war were executed by their captors.

A study on former American POWs of the Second World War elucidates factors that brought about stark differences in the treatment of POWs in the course of history. The study outlined a number of issues which can be summarized in three major categories. These are psychological or intellectual positions of captors; their resource extracting and administrating capacities to sustain themselves along with their

¹⁶ John Hickman, "What is a Prisoner of War For," *Scientia Militaria* 36, no 2 (2002), 1

¹⁷ Jason Wickham, "The Enslavement of War Captives by the Romans up to 146 BC," (PhD Diss, University of Liverpool, 2014), 16; Jok Madut Jok, *War and Slavery in Sudan* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 10

prisoners, captor's compliance to international human right laws. Moreover, the same source noted spatial and temporal dimensions as well as climatic conditions of battle fields affecting treatment of POWs.¹⁸

According to USVA, human being's varying conception of the significance of other people's life; captors understanding of retaliation enemy soldiers as an appropriate and justifiable activity or otherwise; coupled with their individual momentary impulse and mental states seriously affect the fates of POWs.¹⁹ In some cultures, POWs are institutionally condemned.²⁰ During the war in Yemen (1962–1967), for example, prisoners of war were often slaughtered because of the presence of a code, particularly among the noble tribes of Yemen that relegated all prisoners of war as cowards who deserved death.²¹ Nevertheless, viciousness is not the only destiny in awaiting soldiers in captivity.²²

The conditions of POWs improved through time. Walton K. Richardson indicated that there has been an increasing concern about the benevolent treatment of prisoners of war.²³ Richardson classified the trends in norms of treatment granted to POWs into four stages.²⁴ According to Richardson, in the first stage of the destiny of the POWs was death in most occasions. POWs were either murdered on the frontline, tortured and executed after the war, or used as a sacrifice to the gods of the captors. Herrlee Glesner noted that in 532 B. C. prisoners of war in China were sacrificed at the altar.²⁵ The transition to the second stage was prompted primarily by economic motives. Captors envisaged that careful handling of war prisoners yielded profit. Enslavement was the first parsimonious way of treating POWs. As a result, making slaves of those captured in war increasingly became widely accepted way practice.²⁶ The third stage, where Richardson's classification for humanitarian concern for captives is involved the payment of ransom developed in the patterns of handling of POWs. Nonetheless, the ultimate economic element remained prominent. Prisoners of war who were not held in slavery were returned to their families after a ransom was paid. The fourth stage was together with the creation of the nation-state systems and

¹⁸USVA, *Study of Former Prisoners of War* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 16.

¹⁹*Ibid*

²⁰ Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency The Savage War In Yemen 1962–67* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books 2014), 33

²¹*Ibid*

²² Geoffrey P. R. Wallace, *Life and Death in Captivity: The Abuse of Prisoners during War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), 31

²³ Walton K. Richardson, "Prisoners of War as Instruments of Foreign Policy," *Naval War College Review* 23, no. 1 (1970), 52.

²⁴*Ibid*

²⁵ Herrlee Glesner Creel, *The Birth of China* (1937), 207. quoted in William E.S. Flory, *Prisoners of War: A Study in the Development of International Law*. (Washington: American Council on Public Affairs, 1942), 11.

²⁶ Henri Coursier, *Course of Five Lessons on the Geneva Conventions* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1963), .59. quoted in Richardson, "Prisoners of War as Instruments", 326

modern international law. It is at this stage that the treatment of prisoners of war was defined and addressed in international agreements.²⁷ However, the callous treatment of POWs has continued even in the presence of conventional or international laws. Although enslavement and the ritual killing of prisoners of war mostly vanished over the centuries, captors in modern times have resumed employing violence against prisoners by other means. These included torture, hard labor, and a variety of mistreatments of captives.²⁸ For instance, in 1966 South Vietnamese militants frequently mistreated their captives by using acts of violence such as intimidations and torture to obtain intelligence information.²⁹ James Eastland indicated that the records of Soviet treatment of prisoners of war during World War II and of the Chinese-North Korean treatment of prisoners of war during the Korean War were even more hostile than the gloomy records of Vietnamese communists.³⁰ Eastland contended that communists viewed their prisoners of war as hostages who could be mobilized against their own country.³¹ In this regard, Wilfred O. Reiners uncovered how the Soviet communists exploited German POWs mainly through their political indoctrination program targeted at the latter.³² Reiners disclosed that the Seventh Division of the Red Army utilized individual German POWs for fabrication and spreading of propaganda leaflets and radio broadcasts long before the formation of the NKFD (National Komite Freies Deutschland (National Committee Free Germany)). It had also haphazardly sustained these activities even after the creation of NKFD.³³

POWs were convinced to provide such services right after their capture and prior to their being sent to permanent camps. The Soviets also sent German POWs to anti-Fascist school and assigned them to the Red Army for psychological warfare duties after graduation. This persuasion was aimed at splitting the German people and shattering their determination to fight back. The Soviets used German POWs as trainers of high-status groups, for the former were absorbed in recruiting potential opinion leaders who could be qualified as propagandists in East Germany. First, the POWs joined anti-fascist schools in USSR where they were prompted to attain program of strict Communist indoctrination or brainwashing.

²⁷ Richardson, "Prisoners of War as Instruments", 327

²⁸ Wallace, *Life and Death in Captivity*, 8

²⁹ Howard Levie, "Maltreatment of Prisoners of War in Vietnam," International Law Studies Series, Vol 70: U.S. Naval War College (1998), 104

³⁰ James Eastland, *Communist Treatment of Prisoners of War: A Historical Survey*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 98

³¹ *Ibid*, 1

³² Wilfred O. Reiners, *Soviet Indoctrination of German War Prisoners 1941 -1956* (Cambridge: Center for International Studies Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1959), 7

³³ Reiners, *Soviet Indoctrination*, 7

After completing their studies, they returned to their respective camps or made to join the Red Army and work as "activists". During the post war period they moved to East Germany and assumed vital positions in the administration, the party bureaucracy, and the different media of mass communications or link up with in secret activities.³⁴

The Soviet communists have also used POWs as political Instruments. USSR established NKFD (National Komite Freies Deutschland (National Committee Free Germany) composed of anti-Nazi Germans of various political ideas inside USSR. These anti-Nazi Germans were predisposed to carry out the interests of the USSR Authorities. The main purpose for the establishment of NKFD was to serve as nucleus of a future German government, or an easily manipulable entity through which the USSR could exert control within Germany. Besides, the Soviet planned to use NKFD to intimidate the Western Allies and to make them more docile to Soviet demands. However, USSR dropped the second purpose of NKFD, after granting the allegiance of allied forces on the Teheran Conference in December 1943³⁵

The other objectives pursued by the USSR on German POWs during WWII were fulfillment of Marxist-Leninist ideological Legacy held by USSR.³⁶ Since Soviets had a working-class background, they only had to be emancipated from the exploitation of their capitalist bosses, who were represented in the army by the officer class. Accordingly, the Soviet authorities detached officers from ordinary soldiers and men of other ranks in the POWs camps and placed only the officers under strict guards.³⁷ Similarly, EPLF fighters waged a psychological warfare on an accidentally besieged battalion of Ethiopian revolutionary army whose members refused to surrender. The EPLF cadres put loudspeakers on trees and hilltops close to the surrounded garrison and tried to persuade and brainwash the encircled troops with the intention of persuading members of Ethiopian revolutionary army to surrender to the EPLF. The EPLF cadres told them that it was foolish to bear too much suffering in their trenches just to keep few officers on power.³⁸

Although Eastla and Reiners did not portray how noncommunist governments such as U.S.A, France and Great Britain treated POWs, their work on communist treatment of prisoners of war is relevant to this study because both EPLF and EPRDF pursued communist principles. EPLF leaders namely,

³⁴Reiners, *Soviet Indoctrination*, 7-8 *Ibid*, 7-8.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 9

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 8

³⁸Fantahun Ayele, "The Untold Story of the Besieged Ethiopian Troops at Naqfa (1976-1977)," *The International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 8, no.1 and 2(2014), 106

Issayas Afewerki and Ousman Salah Sabe took their training in communist China. As David Pool observed, the education and indoctrination programs of EPLF were designed in accordance with the doctrines of the Chinese Communist Party. Pool explained the dominance of Chinese ideology on EPLF as “Songs (EPLF fighters sang) had a distinctly old-fashioned Chinese communist ring to them: ‘Rise up, workers and peasants’; as did verse like: ‘As a revolutionary party you point your gun, with an internal problem you solve it democratically. I will struggle saying: victory to the masses.’”³⁹

Concerning the treatment of POWs by noncommunist countries, Raphaëlle Branche noted the breach of the Geneva Conventions by French authorities throughout the war between France and Algerian freedom fighters during the period between 1954 and 1962. According to Branche, although France had signed the Geneva Conventions and ratified them by June 1951, French authorities were unwilling to accept that the Geneva Conventions were also applicable to the war in Algeria.⁴⁰ As a result the French used torture on Algerian freedom fighters captured in the battle field. Even though torture was formally outlawed, the French authorities created a distinct group whose members were specialized in torturing and killing Algerian POWs.⁴¹

Studies have indicated that, on rare occasions, prisoners were offered the opportunity to switch sides and live to fight again. For example, Krammer pointed out that during World War II, the German Army, who had captured large number of members of the Red Army in Russia, thoroughly searched its POW camps for Russians who were willing to fight against Stalin under German command. The Germans succeeded in getting 50,000 Russian soldiers including a Russian General Andrei Vlasov.⁴² General Vlasov was a veteran who was waiting for an opportune time to avenge Stalin, for the later sought to exterminate him.⁴³ However, after Germany's surrender on May 8, 1945, the Allies offered Vlasov and his army to Stalin. The soldiers were shot down machineguns right after their arrival in Russia and General Vlasov was executed by hanging.⁴⁴

³⁹ David Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government: The Eritrean People's Liberation Front* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 120

⁴⁰ Raphaëlle Branche, “The French in Algeria: Can There be Prisoners of War in a ‘Domestic’ Operation?” in *Prisoners in War*, ed. Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 175

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 177

⁴² Arnold Krammer, *Prisoners of War: A Reference Handbook* (London: Praeger Security International, 2008), 10

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

Various scholars (e.g., David J. Boyne, Joan Beaumont, Geoffrey P. R. Wallace, and Shmuel Krakowski) have tried to examine the differences in treatments POWs based on rank of race, ethnicity and nationality. David J. Boyne explored the experiences of British officers and other ranks of the 18th Division, who were captured by the Japanese Imperial Army in February 1942 and stayed three and a half years in captivity.⁴⁵ David found out that, while the commissioned officers were often assigned administrative tasks with relatively good pays, the noncommissioned officers were compelled to work as unskilled Asian laborers with rations that their captors believed to correspond to their works. Besides, the latter were forced to dress like local laborers and ordinary soldiers, which in turn exacerbated their humiliation. Although conditions in prisoner of war camps were deteriorated in the end of the Second World War and unanimously affected all POWs, the burdens of work and the effects of malnutrition such as disease and weight loss were heavier particularly for those at the bottom of the military ladder.⁴⁶

Joan Beaumont tried to analyze the rights of officers who are taken prisoner of war as compared to those of noncommissioned officers, and how can this distinction between ranks be substantiated. Besides, Beaumont sought to answer the questions how did these rights become legally enforced and what difference has it made in how officers have been treated in previous conflicts? Furthermore, he tried to answer the question how this differentiation between prisoners of war can be justified.⁴⁷

Beaumont admitted that there is no value-free answer to the question of whether officers should enjoy a better chance of survival during captivity simply by virtue of their rank. He also contended that, the rule favoring commissioned officers could not be adopted unless all POWs are held in permanent camps. Beaumont substantiated his argument by mentioning a case in Vietnam. According to Beaumont, the actual nature of this guerrilla conflict urged a resentment and lack of sympathy to human life on all sides which was symbolized in the instantaneous killing of a Viet Cong insurgent by the head of the South Vietnamese National Police in the streets of Cholon in February 1968. In such uncontrollable conditions, both belligerents evidently have hardly any respect to legal rights of officers who were taken prisoner of war.⁴⁸

⁴⁵David J. Boyne, "Ordinary Men in another World: British other Ranks in Captivity in Asia During the Second World War," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sussex, Brighton, 2015), 219

⁴⁶*Ibid*

⁴⁷ Jean Beaumont, "Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War" *War & society* 1983, 68

⁴⁸*Ibid*, 69

Beaumont's finding in Vietnam was like that of George G. Okiror's who studied the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) a rebel group in the Buganda region led by Andrew Kayiira. Okiror disclosed that UFM which was fighting alongside Museveni's guerrilla movement to topple Milton Obote's regime in Uganda was well known for its inhuman treatment of civilians. According to Okiror, people captured by UFM rarely returned home alive and if they did, they arrived harmed⁴⁹ However, writers who studied Latin American insurgents in Cuba, El Salvador, and North Africa have shown how Guerrilla soldiers treated their captives with love and respect.⁵⁰

Beaumont recommended amendment in the Geneva Convention that deals with the treatment of commissioned and noncommissioned officers. Beaumont contended that, the Geneva Convention of 1949 may be amended such that officers and soldiers with other ranks should be imprisoned together without visible distinctions. According to Beaumont, this would enable prisoners of war to develop collective unity and a greater talent to bear the stresses of captivity. Officers may find their jobs to be more satisfying and less stressful than organizing escapes.⁵¹

Shmuel Krakowski indicated that other grounds of differential treatment of POWs are race, ethnicity and religion. The way Germans soldiers treated Jewish POWs can be a typical example for this. If a POW's answer for the Germans frequent question: "Are you a Jew?" is "Yes," there will be no more question but a bullet in the head.⁵² On the contrary, most of the prisoners taken by the Russians remained at least 10,000 of them were militarized into the Red Army or in the Polish units established by the U.S.S.R. and continued to fight against Nazi Germany.⁵³

Wallace questioned why POWs are differentially treated by different captors, albeit the presence of international law.⁵⁴ He explores the differences in ways captives are treated during armed conflicts by taking the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 as an example. Wallace noted that both Russia and Japan

⁴⁹George G. Okiror, "Liberation Movements Turned Governments: The Ugandan Experience," in *National Liberation Movements as Government in Africa* edited by Redie Bereketeab, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 192

⁵⁰Dayan Jayatilleka, *Fidel's Ethics of Violence: The Moral Dimension of the Political Thought of Fidel Castro* (London: Pluto Press 2007), 84-92

⁵¹Beaumont, "Rank, Privilege and Prisoners of War", 89

⁵²Shmuel Krakowski, "The Fate of Jewish Prisoners of War in the September 1939 Campaign" Shoah Resource Center, *The International School for Holocaust Studies*, 4YadVashem www.yadvashem.org

⁵³Ibid, 34

⁵⁴Wallace, *Life and Death in Captivity*, 18

treated prisoners very differently. He finally concluded that the behavior of any given country is liable to vary from conflict to conflict and even within the same war.⁵⁵

Also, Wallace compared the treatment of POWs in interstate wars with that of civil wars. He contended that the prominence of civil wars in the current era, with their stark differences in the treatment of prisoners, suggests the need for a more systematic examination of the causes of prisoner abuse on interstate wars.⁵⁶

Edgar H. Schein elucidated how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) treated Chinese civilians as well as foreign and domestic prisoners of war through duress means of indoctrination. Schein commenced his discussion by defining the term “Brainwashing” as an informal term for Chinese Communists' and implicitly for Soviets' systematic efforts to coerce the bourgeoisie and capitalists including Chinese landlords into accepting Communist allegiance, commands, and doctrines by intimidating means.⁵⁷

Schein further expounded that the term "brainwashing" is derived from the Chinese phrase *Szu Hsing Kao Tsao* which is equivalent to the English phrase “ideological remolding.”⁵⁸ It is a program of political indoctrination based on the idea that people who were not educated in a Communist society had, by default, incorrect bourgeois attitudes and beliefs, and must therefore be re-educated before they can take their parts in Communism.⁵⁹ Schein has also explained the purposes brainwashing in the development of the Chinese Communist Party. According to Schein, “brainwashing is the attempt to reform its enemies and prisoners to cure the disease and save the man.”⁶⁰ The Chinese Communist Party employed the method of ‘criticism and self-criticism’ to inculcate communist ideologies in the minds POWs. This was backed by merciful and treatment of those POWs who were willing to accept the principles of CCP and punishment of those who refused to do so.⁶¹

TPLF used the method of “criticism and self-criticism” differently in a way to maintain discipline among their fighters and also to indoctrinate POWs..EPLF, ‘criticism and self- criticism’

⁵⁵Wallace,*Life and Death in Captivity*,9 Ibid, 9.

⁵⁶Geoffrey P. R. Wallace, “Welcome Guests, or Inescapable Victims? The Causes of Prisoner Abuse in War,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*56,Issue 6, (2012),956

⁵⁷ Edgar H. Schein, *Brainwashing* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012),1

⁵⁸ E. Hunter, *Brainwashing in Red China*. (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951) quoted in Schein, *Brainwashing*,2

⁵⁹ R. J.Lifton, "Thought reform" of Western civilians in Chinese Communist prisons” *Psychiatry* 19 (1956), 173-195 quoted in Schein, *Brainwashing*,2

⁶⁰Schein,*Brainwashing*,5

⁶¹Edgar H. Schein, “The Chinese Indoctrination Program for Prisoners of War.” *Psychiatry*19, no.2 (1956),153

employed as discipline was sustained through” criticism and self criticism” within their fighters and POWs. Those members against this principles were warned and punished.⁶²

Dayan Jayatilleka tried to elucidate Fidel Castro’s conception towards enemy soldiers.⁶³ According to Jayatilleka, Castro has always upheld his belief in the existence of the notion of the innocent. Castro has always rejected the use armed violence against captured enemy soldiers. Instead, Castro considered enemy soldiers as victim of enemy’s ideology and did not take them as real foes. Castro refused to allow torture, mutilation and disfigurement of his POWs.⁶⁴ Jayatilleka has also noted that Castro's forces were benevolent in their treatment of captured government soldiers during guerrilla war to overthrow Batista’s regime. However, they tortured and executed spies.⁶⁵ In addition, Castro’s soldiers protected the lives of their wounded captives through providing medical treatments. They never tortured captured soldier “even when they know he has crucial information”.⁶⁶ Jayatilleka work is relevant to this study for it portrays the ways of providing humane treatment for POWs which will be used to make comparative analysis of how EPLF and TPLF handled their captives.

2.2. Handling of POWs by the EPLF and TPLF.

Scholarly works particularly on the experience of POWs from ERA captured by Somali forces as well as the EPLF and the TPLF are highly limited. Amrit Wilson indicated that there were thousands of Ethiopian Prisoners of War under EPLF. According to Wilson, EPLF released 20,000 members of ERA in 1990. These prisoners of war were provided medical treatment, food, shelter and basic education. In addition, EPLF cadres taught the POWs the history of Eritrea as well as politics. Wilson also noted that, the food rations for Ethiopian prisoners of war were larger than those of Eritrean fighters.⁶⁷ Amazed by such “generosity,” Amrit asked EPLF cadres for the reason. They intern told her that Ethiopians required and are used to larger amounts of food. Wilson directly accepted the information she obtained

⁶²John Young, “The Tigray and Eritrean People’s Liberation Fronts: A History of Tensions and Pragmatism,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996),111, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00055221>.;Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*,124

⁶³Jayatilleka, *Fidel's Ethics of Violence*,92

⁶⁴*Ibid*,64.

⁶⁵*Ibid*,84.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*

⁶⁷Amrit Wilson, *The Challenge Road: Women and the Eritrean Revolution* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press,1991),92

from EPLF cadres without any attempt to cross check it with evidence from POWs on the same issue. Hence her account is not enough to depict the situation of Ethiopian prisoners of war under EPLF.

Michael Johnson and Trish Johnson argued that, unlike the torture and execution experienced by Eritrean prisoners captured and held by the Derg government, Ethiopian prisoners of war were treated in a brotherly manner. Johnson and Johnson had also testified that the POWs were supplied the same rations as EPLF fighters and were given political education that elucidated the aims of EPLF's struggle.⁶⁸ However, this does not prove that captivity under EPLF was comfortable.

TigistTefera's work on POWs from ERA and Civilians in Somalia during 1977/78-1988 is one of the very few works that exclusively deals with the entire experience of Ethiopian soldiers, a Cuban officer and Ethiopian civilians in Somali commencing from their capture to repatriation.⁶⁹ Though Tigist presented a basic narrative of the encounters of Ethiopian POWs in Somalia, she did not systematically analyze experiences of POW in light of respective international conventions. Nonetheless, Tigist's essay is useful for documenting aspects of POWs' experiences such as living conditions, day-to-day routine including education, theatre and sport in prison camps, as well as on the role the Red Cross played in the lives of POWs.

Another Important work on POWs from ERA is a book by John Young.⁷⁰ This book focuses on the relationship between TPLF rebels and peasants in Tigray and later the relationship of EPRDF with Ethiopia's peasants. Like the Krammar's explanation above, Young indicated in this book that the TPLF/EPRDF in Ethiopia presented its POWs an opportunity to switch sides and fight against the Derg regime.⁷¹ Young indicated that captivity under TPLF entailed eight months of training followed by three alternatives after graduation apart from officers who were segregated and made to stay long. The choices for ordinary soldiers and NCOs include "going to Sudan as refugees, returning to their home villages, or.... joining one of the components of EPRDF."⁷² However, informants have indicated that EPRDF

⁶⁸Michael Johnson and Trish Johnson, "Eritrea: The National Question and the Logic of Protracted Struggle", *African Affairs* 80, no.319 (Apr., 1981),1

⁶⁹TigistTefera "Ethiopian POWS and Civilians in Somalia during 1977/78-1988" (Senior Essay, Department of History, Addis Ababa University,2001) P 22

⁷⁰ John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997),126

⁷¹Ibid,128

⁷²Ibid

compulsively switched captured officers with technical skills to fight its cause. EPRDF often did this either at gunpoint or stubborn intimidation. This shows that Young did not pay adequate attention to the issue of POWs under EPRDF. Also, Young compares the way how TPLF and EPLF handled POWs. The elements of comparison such as using the labor of POWs, duration of release, and delivery political education to the POWs by EPLF and EPRDF proposed as springboards to develop other prominent variables for making further comparisons of differences in handling POWs among different captors.

International organizations such as ICRC, Human Rights Watch and a report from the Hague have tried to record the conditions of POWs from ERA.⁷³ For example, a report by the Hague indicated that POWs from ERA captured by Eritrean forces were summarily killed, severely beaten, made to walk long distances on barefoot; tortured during interrogation; and suffered from lack of necessities.

Tadesse Telesantano noted how EPLF fighters treated members of ERA they captured at the end of the battle of Massawa. According to Tadesse, the first task of the EPLF fighters was to disarm the captured ERA members. The EPLF fighters searched each part of the captives' bodies and took whatever they got. These included wrist watches, gold rings necklaces, Birr notes, trousers belts, shoes, field jackets eyeglasses, shoes, socks, notebooks, ID cards, driving licenses, pens, and papers.⁷⁴ They also took similar items from the dead bodies of ERA.⁷⁵

EPLF fighters did not provide any medical treatment even to gravely wounded POWs. Instead, they blew the heads of the severely wounded POWs with bullets from their guns and pistols. Around 270 POWs were murdered in this way. Then EPLF fighters ordered the unwounded POWs to throw the corpses to the Red Sea.⁷⁶ POWs stayed without food and water for three days. Most of them started eating leaves from nearby trees and grasses on the ground, but the guards forbade them to do so.⁷⁷ This shows how POWs are treated in an inappropriate manner. It indicates the traumatic conditions experienced by POWs starting from the very beginning of their captivity.

⁷³ Partial Award, Prisoners of War, Ethiopia's Claim 4, The Hague, July 1, 2003 Volume Xxvi.110

⁷⁴ Tadesse Tele Santano, Eye Mitssiwa! (Addis Ababa, Desta Metsehafena Yetsifet Messarya Medebir, 1997 E.C), 197

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 198

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 208

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 211

Many members of ERA were captured by the rebel fronts specifically, EPLF, TPLF/EPRDF, OLF, WSLF as well as by the Somali army in the 1977/8 Ethio- Somali Border conflict. During the protracted periods of war (1974-1991), the EPLF and TPLF/EPRDF held highest number of ERA prisoners as compared to those held by OLF and those captured by the Somalis. Concerning their treatments, the same report stated that while the prisoners captured by EPLF and TPLF/EPRDF were well treated, the WSLF and the Somali army recurrently assassinated ERA members after captivity. It also noted that there was no clue concerning way how OLF handled surrendered members of ERA. ⁷⁸

2.3 Prisoners of War and Conditions of their Families

Separation from family as a result of military service was undesirable but must be accepted. These extended and frequent separations have a significant influence not only on soldiers' lives, but also on their spouses and children, who were dealing with the home front in a variety of ways.⁷⁹ Pieter Lagrou explains the situation in the following terms:

The absence of hundreds of thousands and, in some cases, millions of men as POWs left the home front bereft of fathers and sons. The resulting feminization profoundly affected wartime societies, in the family, at the workplace and in politics. The subsequent remasculinization that accompanied the return of the POWs was nowhere a foregone conclusion. Many countries witnessed upsurges in divorce rates, denials of paternity, or juvenile crime attributed to an uprooted and fatherless upbringing. In the post-war years, societies lived through successive phases of acute anxiety over a crisis of the family, a crisis of male identity, plunging birth rates and physical degeneration and later, after a forced return to 'normality', a restoration of gender roles, family values and moral conservatism. The disruption of family life demographically multiplied the effects of military captivity and as such affected the whole of society.⁸⁰

This shows that the protracted separation of POWs from their families not only affected POWs and their families, it has also a nationwide implication. Lagrou's explanation is very important to this study because it helps to analyze the hardships faced by families of ERA who spent several years away from home during their internment.

Though many families successfully reintegrated, and some even claimed that the experience of surviving separation had strengthened or even saved their relationships, reintegration was much more difficult for many others.⁸¹ The difficulty begins with the announcement of the spouse's deployment to the front lines. Separation imposed by the call of duty puts an enormous strain on the bond marriage. The extent

⁷⁸ Alexander De Waal, *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*, Africa Watch Report (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991),304-305

⁷⁹JyotiPrakash, RD Bavdekar, and SB Joshi, "The Woes of Waiting Wives: Psychosocial Battle at Home front." *Medical Journal Armed Forces India*, 67 (2011) 58-63. doi:10.1016/S0377-1237(11)80016-X

⁸⁰Peter Lagrou "Overview," In *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace* .4

⁸¹Barbara Hatley-Broad "Coping in Britain and France: A Comparison of Family Issues affecting the Homecoming of Prisoners of War following World War II," In *Prisoners of War, Prisoners of Peace* ,144

and degree of the impact vary depending on the stage of the stresses being addressed, family practices involved, and the coping method of attentive expectants.⁸²

After recovering from the initial shock of their spouse's incarceration, the wives or husbands of POWs moved in a continuum of grief, advocacy, and freedom. Some people were so overwhelmed with sadness that they spent the entire day staring at photos of their spouses.⁸³ Others were involved in POW organizations advocating their spouse's release. Still others joined the civil community and commenced dating.⁸⁴

Edna Hunter contended that as the POW tried to adjust himself or herself with the conditions of captivity, his or her spouse in the home front tried to cop up with life alone and the coping mechanisms will affect the whole family life and the life after reunion as well.⁸⁵

Hamilton I. McCubbin and others indicated three variables uniquely related to family reintegration. These include "(a) the wife's assessment of the marriage before casualty, (b) the degree of wife's emotional dysfunction during separation, and (c) the length of the marriage at the time of the POW's causality."⁸⁶

The problem seriously affected children. Children were burdened with additional tasks because of the father's absence, for they are required to sacrifice their time and energy to typical household activities. Moreover, they are exposed to pressures of adopting adult like responsibilities.⁸⁷

The above explanations especially those offered by Lagrou, Hunter and McCubbin, A. and others are very important to this study because it is of much importance to analyze the hardships of faced by families of ERA who spent several years away from home during their internment.

2.4 The Numbers of Ethiopian Revolutionary Army Captured by EPLF and TPLF

The EPLF has stated that it killed 195,620 and wounded 180,287 Ethiopian troops, between 1974 and 1991. However, its addition of the figure 103,682 "dead and wounded" devoid of explanation of has

⁸² *Ibid*

⁸³ Hatley-Broad, "Coping in Britain and France", 148

⁸⁴ Edna J. Hunter, "Families in Crisis: The Families of Prisoners of War" (San Diego, : Naval Health Research Center, 1981), 8

⁸⁵ Hunter, "Families in Crisis", 9

⁸⁶ Hamilton I. McCubbin et al., "Coping Repertoires of Families Adapting to Prolonged War-Induced Separations," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 38, no. 3 (Aug., 1976): 461-471,

⁸⁷ Hunter EJ. *Families under the flag: A review of military family literature* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 83-84

engendered disorientation in the report.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Gebru approved EPLF's claim that it had 33,895 POWS from ERA.⁸⁹

Though the exact number of rebel POWs in the hands of the Ethiopian Government is uncertain, the International Committee of the Red Cross estimated that the aggregate of POWS from ERA held by the EPLF and the TPLF in 1989 stood second to the 100,000 soldiers held by Iran and Iraq as a result of the 10-year Persian Gulf conflict and not released till 1989. In 1989, 55,000 prisoners of war were detained by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigray People's Liberation Front.⁹⁰

Red Cross officials witnessed that the prisoners held by the EPLF were being kept in generally decent conditions, with food rations equivalent to those given to their own fighters. POWs under the EPLF had also room for recreation. They were allowed either to watch or play football by thousands of them were held in outdoor camps. Philip Williams has also reported that 12,000 Ethiopian prisoners of war were working in the hidden factories run by the EPLF rebels.⁹¹

Tom Killion provided a relatively reliable figure on POWS from ERA captured, detained and released by EPLF and the treatment the POWs received as well. EPLF has released 145,400 POWS from ERA in the years from 1985 to 1992 mainly because of its inability to provide them with food and shelter. POWS from ERA under EPLF were compelled to feed themselves and the wounded EPLF fighters as well as conduct their own schools apart from the political education they receive from EPLF cadres.

EPLF did not receive any support from International Organizations such as the Red Cross. The only solution available to alleviate the problem of sustaining POWS from ERA was to release them. It requested no ransom from the Ethiopian government and any form of repatriation.⁹² From this it is reasonable to conclude that it is the severe constraint on food and the implicit political objective of the rebel group rather than the benevolence of the EPLF authorities that gave way to the release of POWS from ERA after the "Brainwash." under EPLF.

⁸⁸ EPLF, "Kab 1961–1991 zitefetsemawetahadarawisirhatatinkisrattselain" ["Military Activities and the Enemy's Losses in action from 1961 to 1991"], n.d., RICE, Asmara, quoted in GebruTareke, *Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa* New Haven & London: Yale University Press.2009,132

⁸⁹ Gebru, *The Ethiopian revolution*,132

⁹⁰ Jane Perlez, "Prisoner No. 14279: Forlorn Pawn in Ethiopia's Long and Ruinous Civil War." *New York Times*, February.19, 1990:5 <https://help.nytimes.com/hc/en-us/articles/115015727108>

⁹¹ Philip Williams. "Eritrean Rebel Campaign Backed by Hidden Factories, Ethiopian POWs." *Los Angeles Times* January 1, 1989 <https://www.latimes.com/P231>

⁹² Tom Killion, *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea* (London: Scarecrow Press,1998),348

Estimates on the loss of life during the civil war among Ethiopian government forces against various opposition groups indicate that 500,000 civilian and military persons died between 1962-1990 including Eritrean conflict and more than 10,000 deaths were recorded during 1990 alone.⁹³

The above review dealt with general treatment of POWs. It also overviewed literature on the experiences of members of ERA incarcerated by EPLF, TPLF, and the Somalis together with the numbers of ERA held by each group. In addition, the experiences of families of POWs are discussed briefly. This review is not a conclusion per se. The literature discussed above together with others works and international laws and conventions pertinent to the experiences of POWs will be thoroughly consulted in the analysis part.

⁹³Karin Lindgren, et al, "Major Armed Conflicts in 1990," in SIPRI Yearbook 1991: World Armaments and Disarmament, 345-380 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 371

Chapter Three

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF LIEUTENANT'S AYALEWGETACHEW, AYALEWZEWDE, GIRMAHAILU AND SUB-LIEUTENANT SEYFEORO

This chapter presents biographical sketches of Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew, Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde, and Lieutenant Girma Hailu Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro. While Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew and Ayalew Zewde were captured by the TPLF combatants and incarcerated in Tigray, Lieutenant Girma Hailu and Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro were captured by the EPLF and incarcerated in Eritrea during the Ethiopian civil war of 1974 to 1991. The biographical sketches focus on their educational background, reason for enrollment in Ethiopian Armed Forces (EAF), the division of EAF they served before they were captured by TPLF and EPLF, the circumstance of their captivity and their living condition in captivity. In so doing, the chapter aims at providing the historical context for the eventual analysis of the prison experiences of the four ex-POWs.

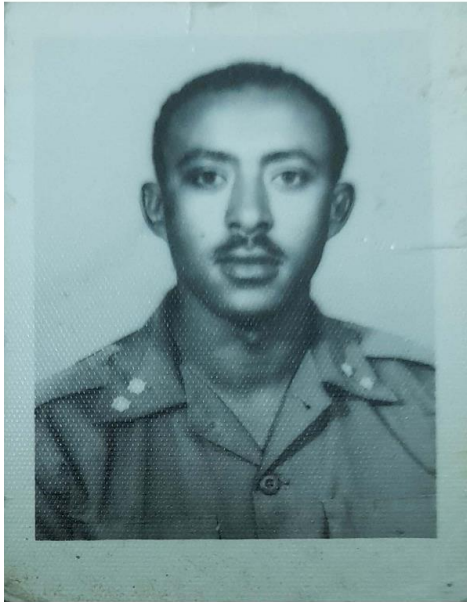
The biographical sketches and the narratives are based on the data obtained through self-administered questionnaires and a series of in-depth interviews conducted with the four ex-POWs. This will help to analyze what they have experienced during their incarceration in the EPLF and the TPLF prison camps from different perspectives. In addition, the biographical sketches help to substantiate the relevance of the oral testimonies of the ex-POWs to the study in question.

3.1 Biographical Sketches of Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew and Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

Lieutenants Ayalew Getachew and Ayalew Zewde were graduates of the Holeta Genet Military School. They were captured by the TPLF forces after the final battle in Shire (February 18-19, 1989) and incarcerated in Tigray. While Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew was freed about a year before the end of the war (February 1990), Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde was freed two years after the end of the Ethiopian civil war (1974-91).

This section presents short biographies of Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew and Ayalew Zewde.

3.1.1 Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew⁹⁴



CS CamScanner Source

Ayalew Getachew Lt.(from his album,1988)

Ayalew Getachew was born on September 29, 1964, in Shewa *Teklay Gizat* (province), Menagesha *Awraja*, Welmera *Wereda*. His father was an ex-soldier who retired after reaching the rank of Colonel and his mother was a housewife. Ayalew commenced his formal education in September 1969 at *Yekatit 25* Elementary and Junior Secondary School at *Holeta*. He completed his senior secondary studies in the same school in July 1982.

Ayalew decided to serve in the military mainly because his ESLCE result was below the requirement to join higher institutions of learning. Ayalew's father, Colonel Getachew, encouraged him to join the Army. In contrast, Ayalew's mother and his relatives were against Ayalew's decision to join the Army. They were worried that Ayalew would be sent to the war front and die there. Meanwhile, Ayalew thought he had no other future for himself other than to

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follow the footsteps of his father. In September 1983 he joined Holeta Genet Military School as a cadet at the age of 19 and graduated as a second Lieutenant in January, 1985.

Lieutenant Ayalew first served as a military training officer at *Hurso* Military Training center from March 1985 to December 1988. Then he was assigned to Tigray, in the 16th regiment of the 128th brigade command post and served as a secretary of the Brigade's political division from December 11, 1988–February 19, 1990. He had simultaneously participated in a series of defensive battles from February 3 to February 8 in Selklaka and in and around Shire from February 9 to the final debacle of the Third Revolutionary Ethiopian Army on February 19, 1989.

The troops retreated to Gondar after the tragic crumble of the Third Revolutionary Ethiopian Army in Shire. However, the retreat was not carried out in a strategic manner. As Lieutenant Ayalew recalled “Everyone was in disarray”. There were no units to give them cover during the retreat. Everyone sought his own way to escape from the advancing enemy forces. Lieutenant Ayalew and his friends tried to escape from the enemy by driving heavy vehicles but they could not move far. The anti-vehicle mines exploded and injured some of his comrades. They got out of the cars and tried to reach their destination on foot. However, TPLF gunmen opened fire on Ayalew and his friends. From the situation the fugitive recognized that moving in collectivity increased their vulnerability of attack from the TPLF fighters. They often regrouped themselves into dyads and triads and dispersed in the darkness to escape from the enemy bullets.⁹⁵

With a friend, Ayalew set off for the Tekeze River. They pursued their way hiding in the woods during the day and only traveling at night. Ayalew and his friends reached a place called Endabaguna around Shire after traveling for five nights. They took a rest in the woods as they were highly exhausted by hunger and thirst. Unfortunately, on February 15, 1989, members of the people's militia got aware of their whereabouts and surrounded them.⁹⁶ The militia ordered them

⁹⁵ Informant : Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew

⁹⁶ Nigatu Bogale claims that the TPLF had assembled more than 40,000, consisting of seven regular divisions, about 10,000 zonal fighters, more than 5,000 people's militia, and an unknown number of EPDM fighters. (Nigatu Bogale 1989a:10-A,15-17, Major, 1989a, { A cumulative report of the fighting between the 604 Corps

to lay down their weapons. Ayalew and his friends were surrendered near Tekeze River. Ayalew recalled that “At the time, I was too exhausted to think what would happen to me after the capture.”⁹⁷

As soon as Ayalew and his friend dropped their weapons, the militia searched them and took everything they had- watches, money, and gold. Next the militia gave them food and water. Ayalew recalled that “Our captors gave us *Injera* made of wheat and lentil stew . We had what they gave us voraciously,” Finally, the militia handed Ayalew and his friend over to the nearby TPLF fighters.⁹⁸

Though Ayalew and his friend were not wounded, few other captives had minor injuries. The TPLF fighters tried to help the wounded captives as much as they could. However, the help was limited to washing the wounds with salt and bandaging it. Ayalew and his friend were then marched to Shire town accompanied by armed TPLF fighters. As Ayalew described it “the journey to Shire town was difficult. The road was full of dead bodies, and it smelled bad. The appearance of the corpses and the smell of them were disturbing. They settled in the compound of Shire Commercial Bank after they reached Shire town. There were around thirty officers of various ranks arrested in the compound including Ayalew. The TPLF commanders started humiliating Ayalew and his fellow POWs. The commanders forced the POWs to carry baskets (*mesob* in Amharic) full of on the head and paraded them through the town center of Shire under strict control of heavily armed guards.”⁹⁹

After they had spent about a month in Shire, the captives were taken to the Atserga Prison Centre which is located near the Waldeba Monastery .The journey was very difficult for the POWs because they were weakened due to lack of food and the immense heat of the surrounding . Besides, they carried their cooking utensils on their backs and the injured captives with stretchers all the way from shire town to Atserga prison. Ayalew and his fellow imamatees were made to march at night because of the extremely hot climate of the area and afraid of Ethiopian

and the enemy from 8.2.89 to 19.2.89 and the reason for the evacuation of Mekele}, n.d, appendix jo-A, Tesfaye to Mengistu), cited in Gebru Tareke, “From Afabet to Shire: the defeat and Demise of Ethiopia’s Red Army 1988-9” *Journal of Modern African Studies* VOL, 42 no. 2 (2004), 266

⁹⁷ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

bombard airplanes. Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew recalls what he and his fellow inmates faced during their journey from Shire town to the POWs' internment camp located in the Waldeba Monastery. He claims that after a month of suffering they went to the Waldeba Monastery and they saw the dead bodies of their brothers on the way. He claims that they were perplexed when they saw the TPLF vehicles deliberately running over the bodies of the POWs. The appearance of the corpses and their smell were disturbing. The remaining captives arrived at Atserga Prison after five days. They were so weak that they could not move fast. Besides, they carried their cooking utensils and the sick captives with stretchers.¹⁰⁰

The Atserga Prison Camp was one of the worst confinement centers in Tigray. The area surrounding the prison was very hot and the prison cell had no roof. As a consequence, the POWs were exposed to the scorching sun light during the day and cold at night. Besides, there was neither adequate clothing nor enough food for the prisoners. Their rations were very small in quantity and of low quality. Moreover, there was an acute shortage of potable water. Furthermore, the commanders of the prisons allowed the POWs to go to the toilet in the following terms. There was no privacy while using toilets. Many prisoners were forced to sit side by side and defecate with their buttocks intact. Most of the POWs had no such experience and they sometimes returned without even eliminating their waste.

The POWs were not provided with good food both in quantity and quality in the camps they were confined. Preparing food was an arduous task for the POWs under the TPLF centers of confinement. According to Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew, the TPLF forces were confronted with a serious shortage of fuel for three months. As a result, the grain mills had stopped working. The only ration they offered to the POWs was raw wheat for three months. The inmates were confused about how to prepare the wheat grain the TPLF forced provide them. One of the inmates finally set up a mill from flat stones. He grounded the wheat, prepared porridge and bulgur, and served the starved POWs. The war prisoners began to use the mill and started grinding wheat and preparing porridge and bulgur turning by turns.¹⁰¹

Lack of adequate and proper medical treatment was another serious problem of the Ethiopian prisoners of war who had fallen in the hands of the TPLF insurgents. Regarding the problem of medical treatment Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew claims that when he was in Adet prison camp, he caught malaria and

¹⁰⁰ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

simultaneously suffered from diarrhea. He went to the clinic in the camp but he could not see any medical equipment. There was no organized health facility for the POWs, except for a group of TPLF fighters, identified as 'health professionals.' One of the health professionals told Lieutenant Ayalew to wait for the arrival of medicines for malaria and diarrhea. Above all, wounded POWs did not get enough food and adequate treatment. About fifty captives died because they did not get enough food and medical treatment¹⁰²

Prisoners in the Atserga POWs camp were always overwhelmed with panic because of the haphazard disciplinary rules of the camp. The POWs were severely punished if they refused to comply with the whims of rebel officers in charge of indoctrinating the POWs. Besides the security of the prison was so tight that the POWs were accompanied at gun point by the guards wherever they moved. It was difficult to communicate with the guards because the guards spoke Tigrinya only. TPLF cadres often asked the professional officers among the POWs to work with them. They sent the unwilling POWs to a special prison where they were tortured and forced to hard labor. The prison guards were the major actors in charge of executing the punishment. Ayalew endured all these ordeals while he was incarcerated for about a year and ten months in Atserga prison.¹⁰³

In the last three months before the release of Ayalew, the TPLF authorities gave the POWs partial freedom endorsed under TPLF's "free movement" program. The program, unlike the previous situation, allowed the POWs to move half a kilometer radius around the prison because they felt after the victory of Shire they felt there will be no chance to run away. The leaders of the TPLF rebels partially lifted the strict restrictions of movement they had placed on the prisoners and allowed them to move in and around the prison courtyards without the guards who used to survey the POWs at gun points. On July 19, 1990, the TPLF authorities gathered the POWs and declared them free for the latter had finished their prison terms. They also gave the POWs four choices. The first choice was to rejoin the *Derg*. The second was to join the TPLF in the fight against the *Derg*. The third choice was to live freely on the lands liberated by the TPLF. The fourth and last choice was to go abroad. But the TPLF barely implemented the fourth option. Except for a few captives, Ayalew and most POWs incarcerated in the Atserga prison opted for

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

rejoining to the *Derg*. Ayalew recalled that “upset with our determination to return to the *Derg*, the TPLF cadres vowed that they would soon recapture and put us in hell. Nevertheless, none of us changed our decision.”¹⁰⁴

Finally, Ayalew and several other POWs were released in July 1990, a platoon of TPLF fighters escorted them from Atse Gaperison to a place called Gedebye in North Gondar, which was under the control of the Ethiopian Army. All the POWs were interrogated by the local police in, the released POWs continued their way. They traveled four days on foot and joined the ERA at Azezo Camp.

According to Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew, the TPLF cadres used to invite tea and cigarettes to some of the POWs and assigned them to reinforce the task of dividing the POWs along ethnic lines. These in turn created tensions among the POWs. There were separate quarters for the Amharas, Tigrians, Oromos, and others. Moreover, the cadres used some POWs to convince others to join the TPLF.¹⁰⁵

Some inmates had made unsuccessful attempts to escape from the TPLF prison camps. Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew claims that some inmates had attempted to escape but they were captured and penalized. They were captured and taken to a high-security detention center where they were tortured during interrogation. Then TPLF commanders were highly concerned with disciplinary issues and used to charge the POWs with attempted escape. The punishment was backbreaking hard labor. There was one particular occasion where a group of POWs attempted to escape to Eritrea. These POWs were assigned to work from dawn to dusk on one of the farms owned by the TPLF rebels. They used to wake up before 4:00 AM every day, prepare food, eat breakfast, pack their lunches and start marching to the farm at 5:30 AM. They were always accompanied and watched over by an armed guard. One day they strangled the guard and took away his rifle and hand grenades. Then the POWs moved swiftly in the direction of Eritrea. However, they couldn't get away for they encountered three POWs from the normal prison camp. The latter immediately comprehended what was going on right after they saw the rifle on the shoulder of one of the escapees. Seeking special reward from the prison commanders, two of the latter POWs started crying loudly to alert the villagers while the third ran to the special detention center to inform the commanders of the special prison. After a few minutes, armed villagers, the local militia, and the prison guards surrounded the escapees and opened fire on them. Four of the escapees were captured alive, three

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

of them died in the fire exchange and the remaining three POWs escaped successfully. All the captured escapees were brought back to the camp and sentenced to death. They were prosecuted in front of all POWs in Adet prison camp. Surprisingly, the three POWs who partially aborted the attempted escape did not get any reward from TPLF authorities.¹⁰⁶ After the unsuccessful *coup* attempt to topple the *Derg* regime on May 16, 1989, the POWs were forced to march in support of the Second Revolutionary Army. Most of the inmates apparently refused to do so, saying, "We will not march because we are captives and have no information." The next day, they first made us roll on the sand naked. Then they ordered us to stand in the scorching sun of the Tekeze desert throughout the day.¹⁰⁷

The POWs were imprisoned in very hot and inhospitable areas. Most of the prisons had no roof where the inmates were exposed to the sun during the day and cold at night. The security of the prison was very tight. The POWs were allowed to go to the toilet only in the morning and at night. The prisoners were exposed to a severe clothing and footwear problems during their captivity. The captive soldiers had no shelter in the winter or summer.¹⁰⁸

According to Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew the POWs were confronted with a serious problem of clothing and footwear. He claims that: Most of the POWs had no clothes to cover their genitals. When they tried to cover their genitals by pulling and sewing the internal garments of our jackets, they were often naked above their waist. They usually traveled naked above their waist. Fortunately, the area of their captivity was relatively warmer and night clothes were not mandatory. The POWs had no shelter in the winter or summer. They apparently lived something like wild animals.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew

3.1.2 Lieutenant AyalewZewde



Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde (1984)
collection

Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde (2022) from his personal

Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde was born on 24 February 1963 in Addis Ababa, Yeka *Kifele Ketema* (sub-city). His father was a civil servant and his mother was a housewife. He started his primary education in September 1970 at the Menelik II Memorial Primary School and completed his senior secondary education at Menelik II Memorial Secondary School in June 1982. During his stay in high school, Ayalew actively participated in the school's discipline committee and got recognition from senior school officials as well as other authorities in charge of youth affairs. He did menial work while in his high school to supplement his parents and cover some of his personal expenses like clothing with the income. Although Ayalew was active and hardworking, he failed to score adequate results in the matriculation examination to join tertiary level education after completing his high school education. At last, Ayalew decided to join the army as his 12th - grade leaving certificate national exam result could not allow him to join tertiary level institution of learning in Ethiopia.¹¹⁰

By the time when Ayalew Zewde completed Secondary School, the Ethiopian Ministry of Defense was looking for young and strong candidates who were eligible to join the Holeta Genet Military

¹¹⁰ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

School. Accordingly, the ministry established a task force to realize its objective. Members of recruit committee from Holeta and Harar academy enlisted those students in senior secondary schools for cadet training and Ayalew became one of potential candidates and sent Ayalew to Holeta Genet Military Academy. After gathering additional information about Ayalew Zewde from teachers and principals of Menelik II Memorial Secondary School, members of the committee told Ayalew Zewde that Ethiopia was in dire need of help from her young generation to rescue her from the threats of internal and external foes. They also briefed Ayalew Zewde on the short and long-term benefits of joining a military academy as well as the privileges of an army officer. Finally, they urged Ayalew Zewde to apply and register at Holeta Genet Military School.¹¹¹

Eventually, Ayalew was convinced to join the Ethiopian army at the age of 19 without consulting his parents. He joined Holeta Genet Military Academy in December 1982 where he was trained in Field Artillery Operation and was commissioned as a second Lieutenant at his graduation in February 1984. Ayalew Zewde was first assigned to the 6th Mechanized Brigade stationed in Wollo. After a short stay in Wollo, he managed to get a scholarship in Cuba and took practical training in handling BM-21 rockets. He returned to the 6th Mechanized Brigade and served as a battery commander of the BM-21 rocket until May 1985. Finally, his BM-21 battery crew was transferred to the 604th Core army that was stationed in Tigray¹¹².

Ayalew and his crew members engaged in different battles fought between ERA and TPLF in Southeast Tigray. They fought in areas such as Mekele, Raya Azebo, Wadnebrai, and Adiagrai. The last battle he participated in Shire in 1989. In spite of his involvement in a number of battles, Ayalew did not suffer any injury. After the defeat and dispersal of the members of the 604th Core of ERA in Tigray, Ayalew Zewde and his crew remained behind the enemy lines to rescue the BM-21 rockets under his command from the TPLF forces. They could not escape with their BM Rockets since the TPLF soldiers had already broken the bridge that linked Tigray and Gondar. After destroying the BMs, Ayalew and a handful of his comrades marched in a direction they assumed was out of the enemy's control. They traveled through the night, hiding during the day. On the sixth day, they were suddenly confronted by a unit of TPLF patrolling the area. After

¹¹¹ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹¹² *Ibid.*

exchanging fire for a while, Ayalew's group run out of bullets. They also noticed that another group of TPLF fighters had already surrounded them from behind. Recalling the situation lieutenant Ayalew said, "We had surrender because the enemy fighters had surrounded us at close range."¹¹³

The captors arrested Ayalew and his comrades after collecting the names and ranks of each captive. Ayalew Zewde trembled with fear because the BM-21 crew under his command had inflicted heavy damage on TPLF forces. He thought that his captors would hurt him if they found out that he was the commander of the BM-21 crew in Shire. He concealed his real identity and gave the captors a pseudo name with no rank. By doing so the POWs got a sigh of relief, albeit temporary.¹¹⁴

The TPLF fighters led Ayalew Zewde and other POWs to a nearby open space and allowed them to take some rest. In the meantime, the captors offered some food and water to the POWs. Then, the fighters took all POWs to a place near mountain Aloge where TPLF assembled its captives. It was there that TPLF fighters searched each POW and took whatever they found from the pockets and other belongings such as shoes, money, gold, rings, necklaces, wristwatches, and everything that the senior TPLF officers considered valuable. After robbing the money and all the possessions of the captives, the TPLF officers separated the POWs with ranks of the second Lieutenant and above from the ordinary soldiers and the non-commissioned officers. Captured national service conscripts constituted a third category of POWs. Because some officers like Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde had concealed their titles and sat in the company of the enlisted ordinary soldiers and captives below the rank of second Lieutenant.¹¹⁵

Then Ayalew and his crews were taken to one of the TPLF's permanent detention centers at the Waldeba Monastery on foot. The captors gave the POWs with food and water during the journey. However, POWs could not consume it because it was spoiled. Consequently, the POWs suffered from hunger and thirst during the journey. Wounded POWs were the hardest hits of the trek because the long march on foot aggravated the pains from the wounds. Relatively stronger POWs carried the living soldiers. Ayalew and his friends easily reached at the Waldeba Monastery where they detained around for two and half months.

¹¹³Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

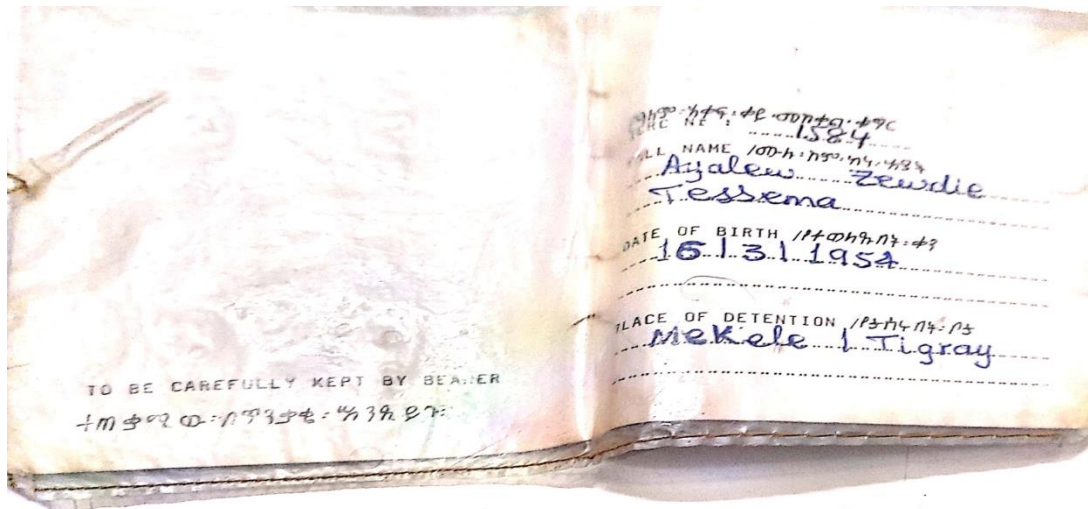
TPLF officers separated the POWs on the basis of their military profession. The POWs who were serving in music and propaganda departments before their captivity were grouped under one category regardless of their military ranks. The POWs, who were serving before their surrender to the rebels in the Ethiopian army radio communication units, military engineering and surveying divisions, artillery units, anti-aircraft divisions, and army medics among others, formed another group. Commissioned officers were grouped as a separate unit. The TPLF had a tradition of “criticism and self-criticism” or what they called “first expose yourself and then others”. Whereby, the enlisted rank and file soldiers first identified themselves and then their commanders. It was in one of those sessions that Ayalew’s true rank was revealed by an inmate within two days after his arrival at the POWs camp stationed near the Waldeba Monastery. After he made apologetic self-criticism and received a serious verbal warning, Ayalew was sent to the part of the camp where the officers were incarcerated.¹¹⁶

The TPLF cadres tried to convince Ayalew to switch side and work with them, for they were in dire need of artillery officers. They had also sent converts from previously captured members of ERA to encourage Ayalew to join TPLF’s cause but they could not win his heart. At first, commanders of the prison assigned Ayalew Zewde cumbersome tasks. However, Ayalew was not obedient to their orders. Then the prison guards clamped him together with a prisoner suffering from dysentery which made him suffer whenever the latter moved to toilet. Ayalew was tortured several times because of his persistent refusal to serve TPLF and to engage in hard labor.¹¹⁷

Ayalew was incarcerated in different POW camps in Tigray and finally settled in a prison located at Adet where he was detained for two years after the termination of the war. He was forced to serve two more years in prison because he was tried and committing war crime on the people of Tigray and the court assumed they found him guilty by senior TPLF cadres. Lieutenant Ayalew stayed in captivity from February, 1989 to November, 1993.

¹¹⁶ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*



Lieutenant Ayalew's Red Cross ID Card (1991)(from his personal collection)

Following his release Lieutenant Ayalew was reunited with his family in Addis Ababa November 1993,.Ayalew resumed his education in the night division and improved his Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination result. Then he joined the Kotebe College of Teacher Education to study Mathematics although he did not complete the training, he was hired as a courier by the Ethiopian Ministry of Pensions in 1994. Then he took a job to the position of an acting director. After working in the Ethiopian Ministry of Pensions until May 1999, he was transferred to Assosa. Two months later, he resigned from his post and moved to another office. He also earned a first degree in management from Addis Ababa University learning from 1993 to1998. He was recently retired and is currently working in another private project.

The TPLF rebels did not properly handle their captives. In this regard, Lieutenant Ayalew Zewdie recounted his case and the case of several other POWs.Following their capture, the TPLF fighters took them to a village and gave them some food. Later, they took the POWs to the edge of mountain Alog near Shire. Then they took their money and all their valuable properties. For example, they took

Ayalew's money and his wristwatch. When he asked them the reason, one of the TPLF officers said, "You bought the watch with the salary the *Derg* paid you, so we have to take over because it is the *Derg*'s property."¹¹⁸ As they traveled from the first detention center to a place called Adet in Axum district on foot, they trekked from Adet to a place called Atsbi on foot. They transported their captives from Atsbi to Mekele Prison Center by vehicle. They gave their inmates Fafa flour during their journey on foot. The POWs could not consume the Fafa flour because it was spoiled.¹¹⁹ TPLF usually provided the POWs with *Wadiaker* (a variety of sorghum) and wheat flour. There were no cooks for the POWs. They received the flour and took turns cooking. They then prepared *injera*, bread, and porridge. Both the sorghum and the wheat flour were of extremely low quality. When you bake the wheat dough, it seemed ready to eat. However, it does not. Later the POWs started preparing it in the form of porridge and ate it.¹²⁰

According to the testimony of Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde, all the POWs did not have equal access to medical treatment in one of the camps where there was a relatively moderate medical service. This was because the TPLF commanders did not allow those POWs who refused to collaborate with them. Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde was one of the POWs who resisted the persuasion of TPLF cadres. Consequently, TPLF commanders denied him access to medical treatment because he refused to serve their organization. Ayalew expressed his grievance as follows: "My legs were injured because of the long march. The wounds did not heal for a long time. I suffered a lot because of these injuries." This shows that the TPLF used to punish POWs who refused to give in.¹²¹

The TPLF fighters were reportedly treating well those POWs who were willing to join them as combatants. Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde claims that the TPLF commanders took good care of the POWs when they were in Shehafkur. In doing so, they intended to recruit the captives into their organization. Everything was complete in the Shehafkur prison camp. They hired cooks for their captives. The POWs were provided with water of good quality. It did not seem a prison. The provision of food to POWs in Adet was different because the POWs in Adet were those who refused to join the TPLF rebels. In Adet, they used to give half *injera* and a quarter of *injera* for breakfast and lunch. They gave the POWs dinner only when food was prepared in abundance, most of the time the captives did not get dinner.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

Any attempt by the POWs to defy orders coming from the TPLF rebels was followed by severe punishment. Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde recalled what he faced in the Atsbi special prison. The TPLF rebels were constructing a new prison in a valley found in Atsbi. TPLF officers ordered the newly arrived POWs to construct the walls of the prison by piling up stones of relatively uniform sizes without cement. Ayalew and seven other prisoners refused to engage in the construction work for they were afraid that the pile would collapse on them. The members of the disciplinary committee of the prison came and took them away at night. Then they put them in a room and whipped their inner legs with a solid rubber rod. Their legs had swollen. As a result, they could not walk by their own. They kept them separate from other prisoners until their feet could step on the ground.¹²³

In another incident, Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde remembers how he was tortured because he refused to serve the TPLF fighters professionally and carry out tasks in the prison camp as well: Ayalew claims that the commanders of the TPLF prison camp made him suffer a lot because he refused to join and serve the TPLF and he was not willing to accept their ideas during their indoctrination sessions. They cuffed his hands and shackled his ankles with cuffs made of iron. The cuffs were made of curved sheets of iron and were locked with bolts. The cuffs blistered his hands and legs. Then they untied one of Ayalew's legs. They tied his other hand together with a patient's hand. He was often shackled with someone who had a stomach ache or who was unable to walk due to sickness. As a result, he had to carry the person shackled with him wherever he went. He even carried him to the toilet. Commanders of the prison considered that he was doing work whenever he pulled a sick prisoner everywhere he moved. Both the hands of the injured prisoner and Ayalew's legs were severely wounded. They refused to treat Ayalew. A medic who was one of ex-Ethiopian soldiers slowly treated Ayalew with medicine and healed his wounds. Finally the TPLF forces sentenced Ayalew to five years of imprisonment. But many other POWs in TPLF prison camps were sentenced to death and they were executed there.¹²⁴

Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde described the situation in the prison camp in Atsbi where he was incarcerated for a long time. He remembers that the TPLF cadres used to organize a "rehabilitation" meeting every day. There was also an evaluation of the daily performances of the POWs every night. In the meeting, they always insisted their captives to condemn the *Derg* and to accept 'the progressive, democratic, and righteous' positions of the TPLF. But some of POWs refused to do so. One day, the

¹²³ Informant : Ayalew Zewde

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

TPLF cadres insulted the *Derg* government saying “fascist, butcher” and so on. Finally, the issue of “The food for Work” program was raised. One of the cellmates of Ayalew said, “the *Derg* whom you condemn as “Fascist” used to give 100kgs of wheat to the people who have done work, but you gave only 15 kgs to the people who did the same type of work to you. You incarcerate 18-year-old farmers in the name of bandits.” Another POW also said, “when people fought and killed each other, the *Derg* asked elders to make reconciliations. The elders used to make the offender pay compensation to the parents of the victim. But you (TPLF) killed the offender and confiscated the family's livestock. In another meeting, the POWs challenged the TPLF cadres during the session when the issue of young men who rebelled against the TPLF was brought to discussion. There were young men in Wolkait and Debarq areas that rebelled against TPLF. TPLF leaders told the youths, “If you surrender, you will be pardoned.” The young men surrendered, thinking that the TPLF leaders would keep their promise. The TPLF leaders decided to arrest the youth together with the POWs. It was suggested in the meeting that TPLF's approach is incorrect. The prisoners unanimously supported the idea with uproar. The TPLF cadres who chaired the panel got extremely upset. The cadres considered the action as an uprising against the TPLF's strategy. That day, Tesfaye Deferesu (Wedi Mekele), the head of the prison, pulled out his gun and threatened the POWs with loud words. From that day on, they assigned the POWs to carry out difficult tasks.¹²⁵

The Atsbi POW's camp was built in a valley surrounded by mountains and hills. The TPLF purposefully chose this place to conceal the camp from the views of bombarding planes of the Ethiopian Air Force. The walls and the roofs of the prison cells were made of stone, wood, and earth. The rooms were like the houses that local people called Hidmo in Tigrigna. There were neither beds nor mattresses in the rooms. Each POW was given a shoulder size space on the floor and a thin plastic sheet to cover his respective sleeping space. The POWs used to sleep in a blanket sewn from a piece of old cloth. There were also underground rooms built in hollowed-out pits. It was in these rooms where the POWs, who refused to collaborate with the TPLF insurgents and those who were accused of breaching the rules of the camp were punished and tortured. POWs were allowed to go to the toilet only twice a day. The prison was guarded by heavily armed guards who stand on posts found all over the roof.¹²⁶

¹²⁵Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

3.2 Biographical Sketches of Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and LieutenantGirma Hailu

3.2.1 Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro



Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro (1991)

Source: His Personal Collection.

Seyfe Oro was born in 1964 in Addis Ababa around Menelik II Memorial Hospital. He commenced his formal education at Menelik II Primary School in September 1969 and completed his senior secondary studies at Teferi Mekonnen Secondary School in 1981. In 1982, after successfully completing his senior secondary school studies, Seyfe joined Addis Ababa University. However, he dropped out of the university and entered the Ethiopian Naval College in September 1983, where he was trained as a logistic officer and studied naval science. He graduated with a BSc degree in Naval Science and was commissioned as Sub-Lieutenant in 1986. Starting from the final year of their studies in Ethiopian Naval College, students were assigned to battleships for field practice in and on the Red Sea coast in general and at Massawa in particular. In due course, they would engage in occasional skirmishes with EPLF forces. Seyfe was involved in such armed conflicts twice.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Informant: Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro



Naval warship in reconese 1988(Messawa)

From Grduation photo personal collection



NavalGradu.ceremony(1970)Messawa)Empror on

Grduation day(personal photo collection)

Seyfe had fought in the battle of Massawa from February 5, 1990 to February 8, 1990. He was slightly wounded on February 8, 1990 at the battle of Dogali and captured by the EPLF fighters. At first, the EPLF fighters confiscated the boats and guns together with all valuable items from Seyfe and several other POWs. At that time, Seyfe was stripped of his shoes, wrist watch and necklace. The POWs were then marched to Dogali on barefoot. The EPLF fighters shot the severely wounded ones on the way. Seyfe and other prisoners were transported to the liberated land of EPLF for two nights. EPLF officers chose the night journey apparently in fear of the bombs from the Ethiopian Air Force. The last place they were settled was a valley in Afabet.¹²⁸

Seyfe claims that he suffered a lot in prison where he was detained for one year and ten months. The prison in which Seyfe and several other POWs were incarcerated had no roof there by exposing prisoners from rain and the sun. The guards were armed with PKM machine guns. Senior officers, such as Brigadier Generals and Senior Colonels were held in solitary confinement. Sometimes these senior officers were allowed to listen to the Ethiopian Radio. Coffee was brewed for them, but not for Seyfe and his friends. The latter was compelled to listen to *Shabia* (EPLF) radio station one day in a week. They never wore shoes.

POWs who refused to obey orders given to them from the EPLF cadres were taken to special confinement called Zereba Gidef (literally keep quite in Amharic). Prisoners who were incarcerated in Zereba Gidef had no right to move even their legs without the permission of the guards. They were locked up and interrogated in a ditch. Sadly, many of the prisoners released from the Zereba Gidef camps suffered from mental problems. Seyfe and a number of other POWs were once sent to Zereba Gidef for they refused to build a road from their prison camp to Nakfa.¹²⁹

Seyfe spent one year and ten months in captivity. He was released on October 19, 1991, and arrived in Addis Ababa in November of the same year. After he came to Addis Ababa he worked as a teacher at the Jerusalem Elementary School which is located around Menelik Hospital. Then he went to Djibouti and worked on a cargo ship for four months. Finally, he got a job at the US Embassy in Addis Ababa where he has been working for twenty years. Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe got

¹²⁸ Informant: Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

married right after he was employed and he is living with his wife raising their two children (16 and 14 years old).¹³⁰

Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro explained the tragedy he witnessed while the EPLF fighters marched him and several other POWs from Massawa to EPLF's freeholds: Seyfe claims that they were about 300 to 400 POWs in number. All of them were captured by the EPLF fighters at the battle of Massawa. Their journey from Massawa to EPLF's freeholds was full of tragedies. The EPLF shot and killed those severely wounded POWs. Then they rushed their captives to a place called *Shaib* where they parked their Mercedes trucks. Finally, they forced the POWs to pack on the truck like trash. The voyage took place at night because the EPLF forces were afraid of the Ethiopian Air Force blitz. The POWs passed the daytime resting under acacia trees. After three days' journey, they reached a gorge found in the EPLF's free hold.¹³¹

Sub-lieutenant Seyfe Oreo recounted what had happened to one of his inmates in the EPLF Prison camp: In 1978, the Ethiopian government formed a joint security force composed of members of the Army, the Navy, the Police, and the Air Force. This force operated in and around Asmara. The EPLF strongly believed that members of this force had invariably committed crimes against the Eritrean people. One of the inmates, Chief Sinke (Sergeant Major), was suspected of being a member of that Joint Force. The EPLF Commanders took Chief Sinke to Zereba Gidef prison. He never returned. Former members of the Ethiopian military and civil intelligence were also taken away on suspicion of killing civil Eritreans. They did not return. Nobody see them again.¹³²

The EPLF fighters kept the POWs in camps which were crowded and lacked basic facilities. Lieutenant Seyfe Oro described the prison enclosure and the shelter in which he was incarcerated for one year and ten months. According to Seyfe the place where they were incarcerated was not exactly known because it was not a permanent camp. Since the place was in a valley, it turned into a river when it rained. The flood swept away everything it found on the way. Gunshots were heard from a distance whenever the flood started. EPLF soldiers armed with heavy weapons were on every hill and mountain vigilantly guarding the area day and night. They shoot warning shots whenever it flooded. When the soldiers guarding POWs heard the shooting, they quickly moved us the inmates to a hilly place. The valley is very long and surrounded by hills on its left and right sides, so it is difficult to see what was

¹³⁰Informant : Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro

¹³¹*ibid.*

¹³²*ibid.*

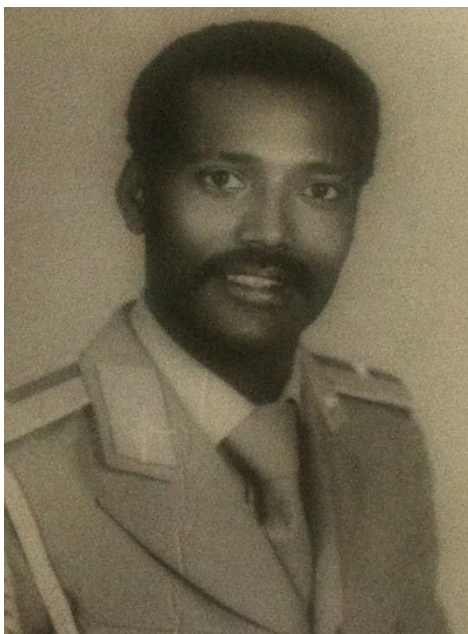
inside. During the dry season, the valley used to be a road where EPLF trucks laden with supplies and weapons would travel as they pleased. But when it rained, there was always a heavy flood. So, both people and vehicles got out of the valley to avoid the flood. The POWs stationed there were confined in an enclosure within the valley. The captives slept in large hollowed-out pits which had no roofs to protect us from the rain and the sun. PKM-Machinegun holding guards watched over us. The area was circumscribed by explosives.¹³³

As Lieutenant Seyfe Oro recalled the EPLF authorities had given privilege for senior officers and pilots in many ways. The prison commanders exempted officer POWs ranking from major and above as well as pilots from hard labor. Besides, the EPLF cadres knew that they would not be able to explain and convince senior officers and pilots of the rightness of EPLF's causes, let alone make them their allies. Thus, the cadres refrained from forceful indoctrination of senior officers and pilots. Moreover, they were not compelled to listen to the Amharic session of Voice of the Masses or *Dimssi Haffash* and attend political lessons after dinner. Instead, they listened to channels from Ethiopian radio stations. Female EPLF fighters cooked food and served them along with coffee. These POWs lived in properly built rooms furnished with sanitation facilities and an adequate supply of water and electricity. Finally, they were the first to be set free and repatriated safely.¹³⁴

¹³³ Informant: Lieutenant Seyfe Oro

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

3.2.2 Lieutenant Girma Hailu



Lieutenant Girma Hailu Photo (1984)
Source: His Personal Collection



Lieutenant Girma Hailu Photo (2021)
Source: His Personal Collection

Girma Hailu was born on August 12, 1962 in Shewa *Teklay Gizat* (province), *Selale Awraja*, in the Fiche *Wereda*, *Debre Libanos Kebele*. In September 1983, he joined the Holeta Military School in the 45th round cadet recruitment program at the age of 20. He graduated as a Second-Lieutenant in January 1984, he went to Eritrea in February of the same year, and was assigned as a maintenance officer in the 29th Zeraf Deres Mechanized Brigade. Girma was a heavy armor maintenance officer and often worked behind the frontlines. He had served in the army for six years before he was captured by the EPLF fighters on January 12, 1990. At that time Girma was hit on his abdomen and leg in the Loko area near Massawa. He was being treated in a hospital when the EPLF fighters controlled the area. He thought that he would be tortured and killed by

the captors.¹³⁵



The 45th Round Cadets Graduation Tank Maintenance Department (1984) (from graduation Bulletin)

At first, the EPLF fighters stripped of everything in the pockets of the captives. They then forced the captives to gather in a temporary camp beating those who refused to move. Ignoring wounds in the abdomen and on one of his legs, the captors (EPLF fighters) compelled Girma to march to the temporary POWs camp on foot. Although Girma said, "Kill me," he will not go." The captors forced him to go with other POWs. The captors gave POWs flour made of corn and water after they reached the temporary camp.¹³⁶

Then the POWs were shifted from Massawa to the liberated land of EPLF using old German made Mercedes trucks to transport their captives. There were also wounded EPLF fighters on the vehicles that carried the POWs. The journey took place at night. After traveling for three nights Girma and several other POWs reached a place that seemed like a permanent camp. Girma spoke Tigrigna fluently. Looking at his physical appearance, the EPLF officers in the camp considered Girma as one of their members who came from the TPLF fighters.¹³⁷ They treated him well for two months because there was a scar on his forehead (which is a sign of most people from north and several of those in Eritrea). However, after thorough interrogations they conducted on all POWs, they learned about Girma Hailu's regiment and military rank. They immediately changed their minds and regarded Girma as an impostor who came to spy on them. Then they put him in a large sack, tied him tightly, and put him in an underground prison. After five hours of interrogation, they took him to their main POWs camp called Aytewa which is located about 60kms from Port Sudan.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Informant: Lieutenant Girma Hailu

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Informant: Lieutenant Girma Hailu

The number of captives in Aytewa was estimated to be 25,000. Most of them were members of the Nadewdivision, the 29th Mechanized Brigade, and the Ethiopian Navy. There was a shortage of food in Aytewa Prison Camp. The POWs often ate *injera* made of a variety of sorghum called “*Wedi Aker*” and later the captors began to give them wheat flour with two pieces of wheat *injera* daily but it was not enough. POWs drank spring water and occasionally the captors gave POWs used clothes.¹³⁹

Girma was incarcerated in Aytewa till February 1991 where he endured too much suffering. He suffered from a deficiency disease which is commonly known as night blindness caused by scarcity of vitamin A. For about eight months, Girma depended on his friends who helped him to walk to different places like latrines at night. Finally, the EPLF nurses treated him and his vision was revitalized. At the beginning of March 1991, Girma was taken to Naqfa with thousands of inmates. He was rereleased in 1992 sometime after the end of war. Finally, they were transported to Addigrat (Tigray) and reached Addigrat after fifteen days of journey. They covered all the way from Naqfato Zalambesa on foot. Girma received a Rehabilitation Card and a Red Cross Assistance Card in Adigrat. The EPRDF cadres transported Girma and other POWs from Addigrat to Dessie in a truck. Girma took a bus from Dessie to Addis Ababa where he joined his family and found them safe. Lieutenant Girma was married and had 3 children. Girma supports his family by driving small taxi.¹⁴⁰

Lieutenant Girma Hailu who got punished twice when he was incarcerated in one of the EPLF prison camps recalled: One of the irritating realities in EPLF prison camps was the way prison commanders punished the POWs. They made Girma run in the scorching sun for many hours. They also obliged him to roll in the hot sand necked his feet explode and the inside came out. Girma’s inner feet grew another strong layer. It was so painful and irritating¹⁴¹.

Lieutenant Girma Hailu described the prison camp in which he and several other POWs were incarcerated: The prison was built on a mountain. Two fifty-caliber machine guns were mounted on the top of the mountain with their barrels pointed at us. Since the land slopes to one side, steps are built for it.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

The POWs went to and from their prison rooms on the stairs. There were four towers around the prison where machine guns were attached. Three guards were assigned to each tower. A total of twelve armed guards constantly watched over the prison and its prisoners. On the ground, guards with wooden sticks patrolled the prisoners. There were also two guards stationed on the stairs -one at the bottom and another at the top. At night, fluorescent lights hung on the walls of the rooms and around the fence illuminating the courtyard and the rooms. Every POW had his number. When a POW wanted to go to the toilet at night, he must tell his number to the guard at the top of the stairs and ask for permission to go. The POWs only start moving to the toilet when the guard told him to do so. When the POW returned, he must tell his number to the guard at the bottom of the stairs. Talking to POWs on another floor was strictly forbidden.

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Regarding the hard work the inmates were forced to do Lieutenant Girma Hailu remembers that the EPLF commanders used to assign their captives to cumbersome tasks such as extracting stones from rocky hills, carrying the stones to construction sites, and constructing roads and buildings. For instance, the POWs built a prison in Nakfa where senior officers (with ranks of Lt. Colonel and above) and pilots were simply imprisoned and exempted from such forced arduous works. The POWs, including Lieutenant Girma, built it by quarrying and carrying stones from the rocky hills in the surrounding. They often built roads. The stone they carried every day was beyond their capacity. However, the EPLF authorities did not allocate extra food to POWs who were engaged in such tough manual labor. The POWs who were providing forced unpaid labor service consumed the same amount of food allotted to non-working POWs. Nevertheless, the daily hard labor kept us busy and made us forget our situation at least temporarily.¹⁴³

Lieutenant Girma Hailu recalled his case I had the opportunity to receive a letter from one of the members of my family. Girma's elder brother was in Sweden at the time Girma was in the Ayteway POWs camp in Eritrea. The EPLF commanders in the camp saw Girma's name in the magazine entitled "New Eritrea" that was published and distributed in Stockholm and Girma's brother sent him a letter. The commanders of the prison camp read the letter and gave it to Girma. That day was the happiest day of Girma's life under EPLF captivity. From that day on, he started receiving letters every month. The letter reached Eritrea through Port Sudan with the help of ICRC. On the contrary, Girma's mother used to receive a pension, because the Ethiopian government considered that Lieutenant Girma Hailu was already dead.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²Informant: Lieutenant Girma Hailu

¹⁴³*ibid.*

¹⁴⁴*ibid.*

Chapter Three generally explored the short biographies of members of ERA who were held as POWs by the EPLF and TPLF fighters during the protracted Ethiopian civil war, especially during the years that ranged from 1974 to 1991. The places of birth, places of capture and incarceration as well as the ordeals suffered by each ex-POW were briefly presented in this chapter. With the exception of on one informant all of them were born in large cities. All the informants joined the military at an early age and they were not engaged in any other occupation before they joined the military. Moreover, all of them had completed their senior secondary studies, though most of them did not score results that guaranteed their enrollments in Ethiopian universities during the 1980s. All but one informant joined the military mainly because they had no alternative means of earning a living.

All informants were graduates of the well-known military Schools of Ethiopia. All the informants were captured on the young age when they could contribute much to their country. Above all, they were captured relatively healthy. From this it is reasonable to conclude that while the Ethiopian military lost its dynamic members, the captors, namely EPLF and TPLF have gained potential man power.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETITION

As indicated in the first chapter, this thesis aimed at investigating the experiences of eight members of ERA captured and incarcerated by EPLF and TPLF during the protracted Ethiopian civil war of 1974-1991. It used primary data obtained through in-depth interviews of the POWs and secondary data from empirical literature to explore and analyze the adversities and respites POWs experienced from capture to repatriation. In addition, the thesis assessed and compared how EPLF and TPLF treated them as POWs in light of International Conventions, International Humanitarian Laws and Principles of Armed Conflicts. Alex De Waal pointed out that the EPLF had declared its dedication to abiding by the Geneva Conventions on the rights of prisoners of war in its first congress held in January 1977. He also mentioned that the TPLF had followed suit, although he did not indicate the exact time. The major concern of the Geneva Conventions apply to international armed conflicts However, it states the humanitarian principles that apply to internal armed conflicts.¹⁴⁵ Thus, it is plausible to analyze how the EPLF and the TPLF treated prisoners of war captured and incarcerated during the Ethiopian civil war between 1974 and 1991 in light of the Geneva Conventions.

This chapter has two sections. The first section presents analysis of the data on the experience of POWs. It does so by examining their experiences in light of international conventions and protocols, as well as by situating their prison lives in the context of the existing empirical literature on the POWs. The analysis focuses on the circumstances that led to the capture of the POWs, and their experience in the hands of TPLF and EPLF in Tigray and Eritrea respectively. Particular attention was paid to examine the POWs' access to basic needs namely, food, shelter and clothing, health care services and sanitation facilities. Besides, the adaptive mechanisms that the POWs devised to meet their needs are issues discussed in the first section. Moreover, the conditions of labor, punishments, and political indoctrination in EPLF and TPLF POW camps are the major issues analyzed in this section. Furthermore, this section presents analysis of the data on the means through which the POWs maintained contacts with their families and the challenges they faced during liberation and repatriation.

¹⁴⁵Alex De Waal, *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia, An Africa Watch Report*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 305

Capture of the POWs

This section discusses conditions that led the POWs to surrender to the EPLF and the TPLF: physical and psychological conditions of POWs during the time of their capture; experience of POWs after their capture; and the ways in which TPLF and EPLF transported the POWs to their respective internment camps. It presents analysis of the data obtained through in-depth interviews of the POWs in light of international conventions, protocols; and laws concerned with POWs. This section, discuss and analyzes the available literature that dealt with the capture, treatment and transportation of the POWs.

The circumstances that led to the capture of the POWs varied by the geographical settings of the battles, and the physical as well as the psychological conditions of ex-captives before they surrendered to their respective captors. Lieutenants Getachew Ayalew and Ayalew Zewde had fallen in the hands of the TPLF forces after the battle of Shire while Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and Lieutenant Girma Hailu, were captured by the EPLF fighters at the battle of Massawa respectively. Despite being highly exhausted by hunger and extremely fatigued from the long journeys they traveled, the former two Lieutenants had surrendered unwounded. The latter two, Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and Lieutenant Girma Hailu were wounded after their surrender.

As mentioned in chapter three, the POWs were captured by the TPLF forces after the defeat and dispersal of members of the 604th Core of Ethiopian Revolutionary Army in Tigray. The committee established to examine the reasons for the annihilation of the 604th Corps identified intelligence failure as one of the causal factors.¹⁴⁶ Uncoordinated retreat of the troops, unfamiliarity of the POWs with the area surrounding the war zone, fatigue from hunger and thirst, and the presence of the TPLF militia and pro TPLF armed civilians all over Tigray had narrowed their chances of escape from the grips of TPLF fighters.¹⁴⁷

In February 1990, the EPLF forces defeated the Ethiopian army and navy that were stationed in Eritrea and made them POWs and controlled the port of Massawa. The EPLF fighters circumscribed the POWs leaving hardly any room for the escape of the latter. Some POWs also

¹⁴⁶ MOND Archives, Administration 108–120C, Br. Gen. Techane Mesfin to Maj. Gen. Seyoum Mekonnen, 26/11/81 E.C. (August 2, 1989), Quoted in Fantahun Ayele. *The Ethiopian Army From Victory to Collapse, 1977-1991* (Evanston :Northwestern University Press.2014),95

¹⁴⁷ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

were injured in the battle. Above all, EPLF fighters who infiltrated Massawa prior to EPLF's attack on the armed forces in Massawa played a vital role for the defeat of ERA and navy as well as the subsequent capture of the POWs.¹⁴⁸

The EPLF fighters in Massawa captured Lieutenant Hailemariam Bede. He remembers that initially, the graduation ceremony of students of the Naval College as per their plan to take place in Massawa on February 7, 1990. The graduation ceremony was postponed to February 9, 1990. Meanwhile, the EPLF forces were getting prepared in advance to attack the Ethiopian armed forces in Massawa given that the army and the navy would be busy preparing for the festival. Accordingly, the EPLF forces stationed their fighters everywhere on the dry land of Massawa and waited for an opportune time to execute their plan of capturing Massawa. Overpowered by the stronger EPLF forces, the soldiers of ERA and the navy retreated desperately towards the Red Sea and eventually ended in the water. Many of the Ethiopian army commanders died bravely fighting in Massawa. A considerable number of members of the army and the navy including General Alhaji Abdullahi and General Tilahun Kifle surrendered to EPLF.¹⁴⁹

The POWs captured in Massawa pointed the failure of the military intelligence units in Eritrea to sense the EPLF's strategies subjected the army and navy to surprise attack by a well-prepared enemy. As a result, the army and the navy ended up in an overwhelming defeat. Besides, reluctance of the civil intelligence division in Massawa in spotting infiltrators paved the way to the concentration of EPLF forces in the area. This in turn, exacerbated the casualties on the SRA and navy. Captives of Massawa also noted that the troops, especially the army had no route to retreat because of the sea. They also alleged that General Tilahun Kifle and General Alhaji Abdullahi to have conspired with the EPLF instigating the army and the navy to surrender.¹⁵⁰

Gebre Tareke has the following to say on the battle of Massawa, which took place in February 1990:

The assault on Massawa was well-timed, coming on the eve of the naval academy's annual graduation ceremony, a festive day in the city when Ethiopia's war fleet was in the harbor for the occasion. So unprepared were the government and its army that its own

¹⁴⁸Tadesse Tele Salvano, *Aye Metsewa* (Berana Printing Press; Addis Ababa), pp.79-85

¹⁴⁹ Informant: Lieutenant Haile Mariam Beide

¹⁵⁰ Informant: Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro

troops battled one another. Operation Fenkel was launched on the night of February 8, 1990, when the armed forces were at a low level of readiness.¹⁵¹

Gebru also pointed out that the Ethiopian military did not anticipate that the EPLF would want to capture Massawa. The army had focused on safeguarding Keren, which was strategic town than Massawa for both belligerents. He also admired the strategies of EPLF, which were, in Gebru's words, "conducted in utmost secrecy, with utmost speed, and utmost concentration of forces aimed at destroying the Ethiopian military."¹⁵²

Most of Gebru's findings on the 1990's battle corroborate the data obtained from the POWs captured in Massawa. For instance, Gebru indicated that the Ethiopian troops had no route to escape from EPLF's assaults as they were trapped by the Red Sea on one side and by the violent EPLF forces on the other.¹⁵³ However, Gebru's argument regarding the role of General Alhaji Abdullah in the battle of Massawa contradicts with that of the testimony of the POWs'. According to Gebru, "The Third Mechanized Division, under Brigadier General Ali Haji Abdullah which was supported by the Fourth Tank Brigade, held its ground, beating back repeated attacks. Hence, the information obtained from the POWs was simply a speculation."¹⁵⁴

Regarding the battle of Shire, the data obtained from the POWs coincides with what Gebru Tareke noted about the possibility of retreat after the battle. Gebru pointed out that "Retreat was extremely hazardous, as the TPLF had alerted its rural supporters and positioned blocking forces at Endabaguna, Imbamadre and Limalimo."¹⁵⁵ Fantahun Ayele noted that the TPLF obtained extraordinary backing from the local population during the Battle of Shire.¹⁵⁶ TPLF captured POWs with the help of its peasant supporters in Tigray.¹⁵⁷

The capture of the POWs was an unavoidable result of the defeat of the Third Revolutionary Army (TRA), Second Revolutionary Army (SRA) and the navy by the TPLF and the EPLF forces respectively. Besides, battle injury, unexpected confrontation with the enemy and

¹⁵¹Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution : War in the Horn of Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 292

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 293

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 283

¹⁵⁶Fantahun Ayele, *The Ethiopian Army From Victory to Collapse, 1977-1991* (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 2014), 220

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

uncoordinated retreat were the major causes that led to the capture of the POWs. Referring to Archives of Ministry of National Defense of Ethiopia that dealt with tactical faults of ERA perceived in different battles Fantahun noted that, “The retreat which is being practiced by the army is not tactical.”¹⁵⁸

As described in chapter three, the POWs were in different mental states at the time when they were captured. Getachew Ayalew had no time to think about what would happen to him because he was highly exhausted while he was captured, others were afraid of torture and execution by the captors. Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde was overwhelmed with fear when he and his crewmembers were captured by TPLF fighters. This led the Lieutenant to conceal his real name and rank from the captors to escape prosecution.¹⁵⁹

Most of the POWs were overwhelmed with fear when they surrendered to the enemy. Among the aforementioned POWs, only Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde had a little idea about the international conventions on prisoners of war. Though the others have heard about the Geneva Conventions, they did not know the provisions in detail. Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde was not sure whether the conventions were applicable in the context of internal conflict or not.¹⁶⁰

Insurgents, especially the TPLF used to release POWs after providing political indoctrination without inflicting any harm on them. The objective of sending former captives was to disseminate the organization’s propaganda and convince active members of ERA that surrendering to TPLF was not frightening.¹⁶¹ However, the propaganda did not take effect on the interviewed POWs. Although all the POWs captured in Shire were overwhelmed with panic after the debacle of the 604th Corps, they tried hard to evade capture. Tesfamariam’s finding corroborates the above explanation. Despite the swift movement of TPLF fighter to Endabaguna to confine the retreating troops of TRA, around 6,000 soldiers could escape while 2,505 troops failed in TPLF hands.¹⁶²

POWs captured by the TPLF during and after the battle of Shire (December 28, 1988 - February 19, 1989) and those who surrendered to the EPLF after three days battle of Massawa (February 8, 1990 - February 11, 1990) were invariably stripped of their possessions by their respective

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 227

¹⁵⁹ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁶¹ Fantahun, *The Ethiopian Army From Victory to Collapse*, 99

¹⁶² Tesfamariam Tesfahunegn. “The Battle of Shire 19 February 1989.” (Senior Essay, Addis Ababa University, 1998) quoted in Fantahun, *The Ethiopian Army From Victory to Collapse*, 168

captors. Although the seizure of weapons and other vital military equipment from captured enemy soldiers is unavoidable, personal belongings of captives such as wristwatches, gold and silver rings, necklaces, money, and everything considered valuable were also taken away by captors. In an extreme case, EPLF fighters took the golden insignia of sub-lieutenant Seyfe, captured in Massawa, for they thought that it was made from real gold.¹⁶³

Tadesse Tele's testimony corroborates the above story explanation. Tadesse mentioned that the EPLF fighters scouted and captured the scattered soldiers in the city of Massawa. Their first task was to disarm them. Next, they began to search the captives. During the search, the EPLF fighters took away the watch, finger ring, necklace, etc. of the captives. The fighters voraciously rushed to take the properties of the captives made of gold. They searched the pockets of the captives and took away money, notebooks, driving licenses, and ID cards. Moreover, the fighters stripped of shoes, socks, field jackets, and eye glasses. Furthermore, they pulled out field jackets and shoes from the corpses of deceased members of the Ethiopian armed forces.¹⁶⁴

The TPLF custody fighters had dispossessed the belongings of their war captives, claiming that they did so because the properties belonged to the *Derg* government. Confiscation of properties of the POWs is one of the strictly prohibited actions stated in all of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. For instance, Article 4, paragraph (2) (g) of Additional Protocol II forbids pillage of individual and state properties by belligerents.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, Article 18, Paragraph 3 of the 1949 Geneva Convention, which states "Badges of rank and nationality, decorations and articles having above all a personal or sentimental value may not be taken from prisoners of war."¹⁶⁶ It was in contravention to the above conventions that both the TPLF and the EPLF dispossessed all the properties of their captives.

The TPLF officers offered differential treatment to captives who surrendered while they were serving their national military service duties.¹⁶⁷ Abraham Wube, a service member who

¹⁶³Informant: Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe Oro

¹⁶⁴Tadesse Tele Salvano, *Aye Mitswa*, (Berana Printing Press, Addis Ababa, 2018) pp.159-160

¹⁶⁵ICRC, *Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 85

¹⁶⁶ICRC, *The Third Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 9

¹⁶⁷Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1990 - Ethiopia*, 1 January 1991, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca2712.html> [accessed 21 October 2022] indicated that During the Dreg regime, Proclamation no. 236 instituted compulsory military service on young Ethiopians 1983. All men and

surrendered to the TPLF fighters around the Tekeze River, claims that the TPLF commanders provided fair treatment to the POWs from national military service conscripts. However, they treated Commissioned officers, Noncommissioned officers, and enlisted regular soldiers differently or less favorably than the captured national military service conscripts. TPLF treated the POWs unequally against Common Article 3(1) states: Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. Some officers, who were captured by the TPLF fighters after the battle of Shire, were humiliated in public by their captors. First, TPLF commanders ordered each POW to carry *Mesob* filled with *injera*. Next, the commanders assigned low-rank TPLF gunmen to look after the POWs. Then the POWs were paraded on the major avenues that pass through the center of Shire town facing the crowd on the sidewalks. In this case, TPLF treated the POWs against Article 13, paragraph 2, which states that: "... prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence or intimidation and against insults and public curiosity."¹⁶⁸

Article 20, paragraph 2 of the third Geneva Conventions of 1949 states that: "... The Detaining Power shall supply prisoners of war who are being evacuated with sufficient food and potable water, and with the necessary clothing and medical attention."¹⁶⁹ Customary International Humanitarian Law stipulates that "...if the detaining power is unable to provide for the basic needs of detainees, it must allow humanitarian agencies to provide assistance in their stead and detainees have a right to receive individual or collective relief in such a context."¹⁷⁰ However, the TPLF moved the POWs from place to place without supplying them with sufficient and healthy food and potable water.

TPLF did not collect and disposed the dead bodies of members TRA. In addition, TPLF soldiers forced POWs to drink water contaminated with blood from the dead bodies of TRA. This shows how the TPLF forces were operating against Article 8 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva

women aged 18 to 30 were liable for a six months' military training and a two years' active military service, with the duty to remain in the reserves until the age of 50.

¹⁶⁸ ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 97

¹⁶⁹ ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*, 99-100

¹⁷⁰ ICRC, *Customary International Humanitarian Law - Volume I Rules* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 431

Conventions of 1977 which dictates that at the end of a battle belligerents must search for the dead, prevent their being despoiled, and decently dispose of them.¹⁷¹

The EPLF had treated its captives against Article 7 of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions; 1977. Article 7 stipulates that, “all wounded, sick and shipwrecked people must be esteemed and safeguarded. They must be treated humanely and they must be given immediate medicinal treatment pertaining to their situation indiscriminately, save for medical reasons.”¹⁷²

Instead of providing medical treatment to severely wounded POWs, EPLF soldiers murdered them. In addition, EPLF soldiers clubbed the POWs on the way. Moreover, they crammed the already exhausted captives, which created a great deal of inconvenience for the POWs. Though the travel at night seemed to protect the POWs from the attack of the Ethiopian Air Force, the primary objective of the EPLF authorities was to protect their fighters and their trucks, as well as to conceal their territories from the sights of the POWs¹⁷³.

The POWs devised adaptive mechanisms when the grain mill machine blocked due to thermo-electric power stopped from flat stone and kept on workin on it .. However, the mechanisms did not do well like that of Grain mill engine and. Lieutenant AyalewGetachew bitterly recalled those days and said, “We lost about dozen severely sick POWs within those three months.”¹⁷⁴

The TPLF forces gave special attention to the POWs, especially to those who were willing to join their forces. In this regard, the TPLF troops provided special privileges to captives who once belonged to the Third Revolutionary Army. Captain TameneHailu, who was one of the captives from the Third Revolutionary Army, narrated the way the TPLF insurgents provided food to him and his fellow inmates that the commanders of the prison camp hired and brought civilian cooks from the nearby town. The cooks prepared and served food to captives from the Third Revolutionary Army, prison guards, and TPLF cadres, as well as senior TPLF officials who occasionally visited the POWs. They slaughtered several goats and some sheep. The kitchen staff prepared the meat in different forms and served the captives three times a day. The cooks also prepared eggs and fed the POWs. They also gave us eight cigarettes a day. The TPLF fighters escorted the POWs to the nearby river when they

¹⁷¹ICRC, *Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*(Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross,2010),87

¹⁷²ICRC, *Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*(Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross,2010),88

¹⁷³*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

wanted to bathe. Puzzled by such an unanticipated benevolence of TPLF officials, some members of their mates complained that, "The TPLF is well known for their hospitality to those they are going to kill." This shocked the POWs. In contrast, the TPLF commanders provided captives with rations below the second lieutenant with raw rations and the latter took turns to prepare their food.¹⁷⁵

The TPLF commanders enlivened the POWs to join the organization's causes and punished those who refused to switch sides to their organization. The POWs disclosed that one of the mechanisms through which the TPLF commanders punished the POWs was by reducing their food rations. Sometimes the POWs were denied access to food when they were accused of breaching the rules of the prison camp. This exacerbated the vulnerability of the already malnourished POWs to diseases. Many inmates who were sent to the TPLF's special confinements died from the deprivation of food and medical treatment.¹⁷⁶

Regarding handling of war prisoners, Edgar H. Schein elucidated how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) induced the collaboration of UN POWs. According to Schein, the Chinese employed mechanisms of rewards and punishments on the American POWs to stimulate collaborative behavior among the latter. A POW's predisposition to be compliant with the Chinese was recompensed with better food rations or extra items such as fruit or cigarettes. On the contrary, a POW who refused to comply was punished with a reduction in food, and medicine, which was extended to seclusion in special compounds for "reactionaries" in which hard labor was mandatory.¹⁷⁷ TPLF's provision of food to POWs is quite similar to that of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). TPLF used food to draw POWs to the organization and to punish them as well.

¹⁷⁵ Informant: Captain Tamene Hailu

¹⁷⁶ Informant: Lieutenant Ayalew Getachew

¹⁷⁷ Edgar H. Schein, *Brainwashing* (Massachusetts: Center for International Studies Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012), 29

4-2 Food Provided to POWs by EPLF Prison Camps

The food provided to POWs in EPLF prison camps was *injer* made of Wadiaker or wheat and lentil boiled with water. This food also provided for their fighters too. It was of low amount and poor nutritional value. The POWs in EPLF prison camps also suffered from serious diseases caused by a lack of essential vitamins.¹⁷⁸

Sub-lieutenant Seyfe Oro recounted that the food EPLF given to them was not rich in essential components like protein, vitamins, carbohydrates, and fats used by our body to keep up growth and restore our energy.” Lieutenant Grima Hailu too claims that in the EPLF prison camp the inmates with him only ate Canadian lentils high in salt. The food had no oil, no pepper, and no vegetables. The EPLF forces gave one boiled egg to the POWs whose sickness was proved by the prison medic.”¹⁷⁹ According to Lieutenant Hailemariam Bedea, who was incarcerated in one of the EPLF prison camps “A well-built officer before capture turned into a stunted teenager after the officer was incarcerated in EPLF prison camp for a week or two because of the hunger and thirst”¹⁸⁰

The ICRC guide to health care in detention camps stipulates that the minimum energy content of prisoners’ daily ration should be 2,400 Kilocalories.¹⁸¹ The guide cautioned that energy content should be adapted in accordance with detainees’ profiles and their physical activities. It also recommended prisoners should be provided with at least two meals each day because their entire nutritional necessities cannot be met by a single meal.¹⁸² The figures in the table below provide approximate amounts food groups that yield 2,400 Kilocalories of energy to an individual when consumed on daily basis.

¹⁷⁸ Informants : Sub-lieutenant Seyfe Oro and Lieutenant Grima Hailu

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Informant: Lieutenant Hailemariam Bede.

¹⁸¹ ICRC, *Health Care in Detention : A Practical Guide* (Geneva, International Committee of the Red Cross, 2021), 43

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 43

Food groups	Recommended dietary amount, per person per day*	Example of foods
Carbohydrates Staple	400g	Grains and cereal products (including wheat, rice, bread, oats, barley, pasta, and noodles) Also, tubers and roots (cassava/manioc, yams, potatoes) Note that the nutritional value of tubers and roots is lower than that of cereals. If tubers or roots replace cereals, quantity should be doubled.
Proteins Meat, fish, dairy, beans, nuts	130g	Beans, peas and lentils Meat, poultry, fish Dairy products (milk, yogurt, curds and cheeses, dried milk powder), eggs, and nuts
Energy Fat	65g	Butter, ghee, margarine Palm or vegetable oil (fortified with vitamin A)
Micronutrients Vegetables and fruits	200g	Vegetables and fruits (especially green leafy and red/orange varieties)
Flavor /Socio-cultural complement	6g salt	Iodized salt, sugar, tomato paste, tea, herbs and spices
	30g sugar	
*Weights are for uncooked food and based on a diet providing approximately 2,400 kcal (≥10% energy from protein and ≥25% from fat).		

Source: ICRC Health Care Definition

The ICRC guide to health care in detention has also stated the approximate daily energy of individual energy requirements for detainees by gender and levels of activity. Accordingly, female prisoners who perform Light (very little or no activity) require 1,950 Kilocalories and male who practice the same activity need 2,400 Kilocalories of energy per day. Female who carry out moderate activities (walking, occasional exercise) need 2,100 and male require 2,900 Kilocalories of energy on daily basis. The daily necessities of energy for female and male

who are engaged in heavy tasks (farming and construction works) are 2350 and 3,400 Kilocalories respectively.¹⁸³

Although the interviewed POWs contended their food ration lacked protein, vitamins, carbohydrates, and fats, they used to get some of the aforementioned nutrients in the foodstuffs provided to them. For instance, they obtained carbohydrates from the wheat flour and protein from the lentils that EPLF provided them every day. Nevertheless, they did not get balanced diet from their daily rations because the POWs suffered a lot from deficiency diseases due to malnutrition. Moreover, all the POWs used to carry out heavy tasks like construction of roads, which require 3,400 Kilocalories of energy per day.¹⁸⁴

The first paragraph of article 26 of the Third Geneva Convention dictates, “The basic daily food rations shall be sufficient in quantity, quality and variety to keep prisoners of war in good health and to prevent loss of weight or the development of nutritional deficiencies. Account shall also be taken of the habitual diet of the prisoners.”¹⁸⁵

The above article enshrined two fundamentally interrelated elements of food rations that ensure the survival, physical fitness, and health of POWs, apart from the cultural element of the food provisions. One can infer from the above narratives that neither the TPLF nor the EPLF provided POWs with rations considering the functions of quality and quantity. As mentioned above, TPLF served officer POWs with good quantity and quality of food for a few weeks. This was done with the intention of recruiting captives rather than in adherence to the provision of the Geneva Convention, it was rather to recruit. According to Seaman Gezahegn Bekele, EPLF used to offer splendid parties to POWs once or twice a month slaughtering oxen, sheep, and goats. Generally, both the TPLF and the EPLF could provide adequate rations to their respective captives.¹⁸⁶

4.3 Health Care Services in TPLF Prison Camps

POWs revealed that they were exposed to several types of diseases when they were incarcerated in TPLF prison camps. The most common diseases which were prevalent in TPLF prison camps

¹⁸³ ICRC, *Health Care in Detention*, 44

¹⁸⁴ Informants: Lieutenant Girma Hailu, Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde

¹⁸⁵ Jean S. Pictet, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949. Commentary. Volume III Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (Geneva, International Committee of the Red Cross, 1987), 320

¹⁸⁶ Informant: Seaman Gezahegn Bekele

were infectious and deficiency diseases. POWs had experienced outbreaks of infectious diseases in TPLF prison camps. Malaria, dysentery, and diarrhea are the most frequent epidemics that broke out in the camps.

4-5 Health Care Services in the EPLF Prison Camps

The POWs who were incarcerated in the EPLF prison camps were also adversely affected by both infectious and deficiency diseases. A closer look into the data obtained from the interviewed the POWs indicate that the incidence of deficiency diseases in EPLF prison camps was higher than that of the infectious diseases. Moreover, an additional infectious liver disease called jaundice, which was not the case with TPLF prison camps, existed in EPLF prison camps. Deficiency diseases that affect human bones and joints were rampant in EPLF prison camps. Generally, prisoners in EPLF camp suffered from night blindness, as well as bone, joint, and limb diseases.¹⁸⁷

The POWs in EPLF prison camps were subjected to various deficiency diseases due to lack of adequate diet. Lieutenant Hailemariam Bedea recounted that the prisoners in EPLF prison camps suffered from joint and limbs diseases. Many prisoners suffered from osteoporosis and bone swelling. There were prisoners among us who had bone swelling. Some prisoners started suffering from bone fractures and swollen limbs right after they were arrested in Zereba Gidef prison but they did not get adequate medical treatment from EPLF. Hailemariam remembers two POWs whose legs were amputated due to bone disease.¹⁸⁸

Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and lieutenant Girma Hailu noted that EPLF officials concerned with the health conditions of POWs used to order one boiled egg and a couple of ladle bean sprouts to malnourished POWs. They also gave pills to sick POWs. However, they did not allow any patient to administer the medicine by his own. This was done to prevent POWs from committing suicide due to deliberate overdose. Accordingly, the patient would take water when he went to the medic. Then the latter put the medicine in the mouth of the patient and made him swallow it with water. This indicates that EPLF officials overtly recognized that life in their POW camps was so miserable that it could push POWs to take their own lives.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Informants: Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and lieutenant Girma Hailu

¹⁸⁸ Informant: Lieutenant Hailemariam Bedea

¹⁸⁹ Informants: Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and Lieutenant Girma Hailu

Article 30, Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the third Geneva Convention of 1949 stipulate that:

Every camp shall have an adequate infirmary where prisoners of war may have the attention they require, as well as Canteens Hygiene Medical attention appropriate diet. Isolation wards shall, if necessary, is set aside for cases of contagious or mental disease. Prisoners of war suffering from serious disease, or whose condition necessitates special treatment, a surgical operation or hospital care, must be admitted to any military or civilian medical unit where such treatment can be given, even if their repatriation is contemplated in the near future. Special facilities shall be afforded for the care to be given to the disabled, in particular to the blind, and for their rehabilitation, pending repatriation.¹⁹⁰

Although referral of patients to civilian hospitals is not expected from rebel medics because of security reasons, the medical attention accorded to protect POWs from disease is very limited in both EPLF and TPLF camps. In addition, and curative medical treatment offered to POWs was minimal. As the POWs explained above, many inmates suffered a lot from deficiency and infectious diseases.

4-6 Torture and Killings of POWs in TPLF and EPLF Prison Camps

POWs incarcerated in TPLF prison camps disclosed that the TPLF tortured and killed its captives. They have also revealed that many POWs who were taken away by commanders of TPLF prison camp never returned or were not seen again. POWs who refused to collaborate with TPLF and those who were accused of breaching the disciplinary rules of TPLF prison camps were subjected to torture and even summary killing. In addition, POWs who used to be intelligence officers, military security officers, combat reconnaissance officers, and those who were political cadres in the army were singled out, taken to special prison cells, and tortured. Most of the time, they were killed in the special prison. These POWs had to side with TPLF to save their lives. Some of these POWs served as advocates of TPLF's plan to divide inmates along ethnic lines.¹⁹¹

TPLF had established a committee authorized to adjudicate the case of POWs accused of committing war crimes during the war. Besides, the committee was mandated to deliberate and decide on the cases of POWs accused of breaching the disciplinary rules of TPLF prison camps.

¹⁹⁰ICRC, The Geneva Conventions of 12 August, 104

¹⁹¹Informants: Lieutenant Seyfe Oro and Lieutenant Girma Hailu

Though it was not explicitly stated, refusal to collaborate with the organization was one of the main offenses against TPLF. TPLF officials authorized adjudicate the cases of POWs pass verdicts without allowing the accused POWs to defend themselves. Nevertheless, Article 6 paragraph 2 (a) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 dictates that “the procedure shall provide for an accused to be informed without delay of the particulars of the offence alleged against him and shall afford the accused before and during his trial all necessary rights and means of defense.”¹⁹²

The experiences of Lieutenant Ayalew Zewde show us how TPLF officials punished and tortured the POWs. The TPLF commanders treated the POWs against Article 4 paragraph 2 (a) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 which prohibits “violence to the life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder as well as cruel treatment such as torture, mutilation or any form of corporal punishment.”¹⁹³

This shows how POWs were tired of the burdens imposed on the in special prisons of TPLF. It also depicts how TPLF cadres have broken the unity of POWs in their prison camps. Prisoners of war who were recaptured before making good their escape are liable only to a disciplinary punishment in respect of this act.

According to Article 93 of the Geneva Convention, prisoners of war who perpetrate offenses with the exclusive goal of expediting their escape are accountable to disciplinary penalty only, if such offenses do not involve any hostility against life or limb. Similarly, prisoners of war who help or encourage an escape are liable to disciplinary punishment only provided that the offenses committed in the giving of such assistance do not entail any violence against life or body.¹⁹⁴ As stated in the above narrative the POWs who attempted escape have engaged in violence and therefore they deserved punishment. However, they were sentenced to death summarily. EPLF authorities should have given them a chance to defend themselves and get clemency.

Commanders of the TPLF prison camps also used another method to punish POWs. They kept POWs out in the scorching sun and rolled POWs naked on hot sands. This was also against Article 4 paragraph 2 (a) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 mentioned

¹⁹²ICRC, *Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 54

¹⁹³ICRC, *Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions*, 85

¹⁹⁴ICRC, *The Third Geneva Conventions of 12 August*, 129

above. Generally, the narratives of the POWs depict that commanders of the TPLF treated POWs against the Geneva Conventions, which apply to internal conflicts. Common Article 3(1) of the Geneva Conventions and Article 4(2) (a),(b),(e) and (f) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 strictly prohibit killing, torture, mutilation, and collective punishment, cruel or degrading treatment, threats to kill as well as punish POWs. However, the TPLF authorities killed, tortured, threatened, and collectively punished POWs in various ways mentioned above.¹⁹⁵

The EPLF officers were sending POWs who were suspected of committing crimes against Eritreans to a special prison known by the name Zereba Gidef. POWs who worked in the Army Intelligence Units of ERA, political cadres, members of the Civil Intelligence Office, members of the Joint Forces, and reconnaissance officers were directly sent to Zereba Gidef for further investigation but most of them never returned.

The POWs who breached the rules of EPLF prison camps were also sent to the Zereba Gidef prison. Those POWs who refused to work, quarreled with other POWs, and entered the cells of other POWs among others were also detained in Zereba Gidef. Many POWs who were taken to Zereba Gidef were tortured and killed there.

The EPLF officials treated POWs against Common Article 3(1a) and 3(1d) of the Geneva Conventions states that prohibit

- a) Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; ... d) The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.¹⁹⁶

Article 6 (2a) of Additional Protocol II states that, “no one shall be convicted of an offence except on the basis of individual penal responsibility.”¹⁹⁷ However, the EPLF commanders picked and punished POWs who used to work as security officials without proving whether the POW has individually committed crime against the Eritrean people.

¹⁹⁵ Article 4 paragraph 2 (a) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977

¹⁹⁶ ICRC, The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 91-92

¹⁹⁷ ICRC, *Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions* 58

The EPLF intelligence officers also had another method that they used to identify those who might have committed crimes against the people of Eritrea. Seaman Gezahegn recounted that when they misbehaved, they punished them in the heat. They pinned themselves in the shadows while they punish them in the sun.¹⁹⁸

EPLF breached the Geneva Conventions on internal conflicts. This include, Common Article 3(1) of the Geneva Conventions that deal with humane treatment of POWs ,Article 4(2) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977, and Article 6 of the same protocol that applies to the prosecution and punishment of criminal offences related to the armed conflict.¹⁹⁹

4-7 Shelter to POWs incarcerated by the TPLF

The POWs revealed that there were two types of POWs' camps apart from the one in Waldeba Monastery, where the TPLF fighters used to separate POWs based on military ranks and specialization. Accordingly, TPLF provided two types of shelter to POWs. While the first one was a simple enclosure located in Adet, the second was a purposefully built POW camp found in Atsbi. What the two camps had in common was that both were located in very hot areas.

4-7-1 Shelter to POWs Incarcerated by the EPLF

The EPLF prison camps were often located in the valleys of the Nakfa desert. These camps were open enclosures surrounded by mountains and hills. Since most of EPLF prison camps were situated in valleys, they were vulnerable to floods that run through them whenever it rained.

Neither The TPLF nor the EPLF provided adequate shelter to their respective POWs in accordance with the provisions of Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 25 of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, Volume III, Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War which state

Prisoners of war shall be quartered under conditions as favorable as those for the forces shall of the Detaining Power who are billeted in the same area. The said conditions shall make allowance for the habits and customs of the prisoners and shall in no case be prejudicial to their health. The foregoing provisions shall apply in particular to the

¹⁹⁸ Informant: Seaman Gezahegn

¹⁹⁹ ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 91-92; ICRC, *Protocols additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010), 85; *ibid.*, 87

dormitories of prisoners of war as regards total surface and minimum cubic space, and the general installations, bedding, and blankets.²⁰⁰

However, EPLF attempted to construct a few POW camps near Naqfa Atserga prison. According Article 23 paragraph 2 the Third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 which states that: “Prisoners of war shall have shelters against air bombardment and other hazards of war, to the same extent as the local civilian population.”²⁰¹

The POWs under the EPLF prison camp had severe clothing and footwear problems. The conditions of clothing of POWs under EPLF were relatively better than that of POWs under TPLF. This was because EPLF officers made occasional and random delivery of used clothes to POWs.

4-8 Indoctrination of POWs

Both the TPLF and the EPLF conducted indoctrination programs for their respective POWs. However, the objectives of the programs held by the TPLF and the EPLF exhibit considerable variations. While EPLF cadres carried out indoctrination of POWs mainly convincing the latter of the correctness of their organization. The TPLF did so mainly to win converts and recruit fighters, especially from the officer POWs. The following section presents the indoctrination of POWs by the TPLF and the EPLF.

4-8-1 Indoctrination of POWs by the TPLF

The TPLF cadres aimed to persuade officer POWs, especially those with special skills to join them by providing lessons on the causes and ideologies of TPLF and concomitantly denouncing the *Derg* regime. The cadres worked hard to attract POWs by providing lenient treatment and generous provisions of food, clothes, and cigarettes.

TPLF’s indoctrination of POWs involved intensive criticism and self-criticism. It was also coercive. Paulos Chanie’s finding on criticism and self-criticism sessions corroborates the above narrative. Paulos noted that TPLF’s evaluation criticism and self-criticism sessions were

²⁰⁰Pictet, *The Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949*, 1929

²⁰¹ICRC, *The Geneva Conventions of 12 August*, 101

not straight and receptive. They implicated coercion and their result largely depended on the whims of the political cadres directing the sessions.²⁰²

4.8.2 Indoctrination of POWs by the EPLF

Indoctrination of POWs by the EPLF was aimed at convincing POWs of the causes of EPLF by providing lessons on the history of Eritrea and concepts of self-determination. Exposing the grim features of the Derg and those of the previous Ethiopian regimes was also part of the political lessons that EPLF cadres delivered to POWs. After the lessons, POWs were expected to denounce the *Derg*.

Concerning the indoctrination programs Seaman Gezahegn Bekele explained

The EPLF cadres gave us political lessons every after dinner. The EPLF cadres often said, “You and we are from two different countries. You (Ethiopians) are not colonized like us (Eritreans). But we were ruled by Italy for 50 years. Your government had crushed us in a federation by force.” Educated people among us argued with the cadres because the latter lacked convincing evidence. EPLF cadres used to punish us whenever they felt that we didn’t accept what they thought of us. They assigned us difficult tasks and made us work hard until we got tired. There were young men called “continental fighters” from Addis Ababa who joined EPLF. These young advised us to accept the teachings of EPLF cadres. We accepted the advice and decorated our rooms with anti-Derg slogans and pictures. On the wall, we painted the Derg by cutting off his leg and captured by EPLF fighters. There were some great artists among us. We decorated our rooms with anti-Derg pictures. EPLF cadres were pleased with it.²⁰³

The indoctrination programs conducted by EPLF were also selective. The EPLF indoctrinated Seaman Gezahegn Bekele cadres had the belief that junior officers and subordinate officers of other ranks, as well as ordinary soldiers, would understand the purpose of EPLF and change. Therefore, at 4:00 am and 11:00 am, we had to listen to the program broadcast by the Shabia radio station in Amharic.²⁰⁴

²⁰²Paulos Chanie, “What One Hand Giveth, the Other Hand Taketh Away: Ethiopia’s post-1991 Decentralization Reform under Neo-patrimonialism”(Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Development Studies of the Institute of Social Studies The Hague, 2007),282

²⁰³Informant: Seaman Gezahegn Bekele

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*

4-9 Forced labor of POWs in the TPLF and the EPLF Prison Camps

As mentioned in chapter three, life in the TPLF prison camps entailed engagement in hard labor for two major reasons. Survival in these camps was almost impossible without working hard mainly because of inadequate or poor supply of items to sustain life. The POWs detained in TPLF prison camps did not have ready access to basic facilities such as potablewater and cleaning equipment, sources of energy like fuel, grain mills, and means of transport among others. Besides, TPLF authorities used hard labor as a means of punishing POWs who deviated from the disciplinary regulations of the camps or avenging those who did not conform to TPLF's policies and ideologies. POWs under TPLF were compelled to engage in hard labor to maintain their biological needs and those of their captors as well.

Captives in the TPLF POW camps participated in different types of chores with varying levels of difficulty. They cleaned their camp, cooked food, fetched water, collected fuel wood, and carried rations such as flour and edible oil from distant places to their respective camps or enclosures. Professionals, who were army medics, provided medical services to their fellow inmates, the prison officials, and the local TPLF militia. Even the wounded and sick POWs carried out the task of burying their deceased prison mates. Most of the POWs' tasks revolved around obtaining their means of subsistence. Fetching water and collecting fuel wood were the most difficult tasks singled out by the interviewed ex-POWs. They disclosed that commanders of TPLF POW camps compelled captives to collect fuel wood and fetch water for the consumption of their captors. Lieutenant GetachewAyalew elucidated how prisoners in Atserga POW camp collected fuel wood and fetched water:²⁰⁵

TPLF authorities ordered the POWs to construct new prisons. TPLF often constructed new POW camps in gorges or adjacent to hills to avoid exposure to air strikes. Besides, the walls of the prisons were made of stones in the form of traditional homesteads of rural Tigray locally called Hidmo in Tigrigna. Officials in charge of construction and maintenance often assigned the POWs to extract stones from the rocky hills and carry the extracts to the construction site. TPLF commanders paid the POWs neither in cash nor in kind. Their food rations were no different from that of the POWs in the normal TPLF POW camps.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Informant: Lieutenant GetachewAyalew

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

TPLF assigned cumbersome tasks to POWs without providing them additional food. This is against Article 26 paragraph 2 of the third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, which states: “The Detaining Power shall supply prisoners of war who work with such additional rations as are necessary for the labor on which they are employed.”²⁰⁷

The POWs under EPLF used to carry out construction works. They extracted and carried stones to construction sites. They built new prisons and sub-highways. As Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe recalled that EPLF authorities told the POWs that, every one of them must engage in tasks assigned to them by the commanders of the prison camp. Therefore, the inmates started carrying stones and constructing roads in EPLF liberated areas.²⁰⁸

The EPLF compelled the POWs to carry out difficult and dangerous task without providing them additional food or payment in cash. Apart from breaching Article 26 paragraph 2 of the third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, the EPLF assigned dangerous tasks to POWs against Article 52 paragraph 3 of the same convention that precludes the assignment of POWs in the elimination of mines or similar devices, which are regarded as unsafe labor.²⁰⁹

4-10 Contact of POWs in the TPLF and the EPLF Prison Camps with their Families

The POWs in the TPLF prison camps did not have a chance to communicate with their families when they were in the desert POW camps of Tigray. Article 5 (2)(b) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 stipulates that “Persons whose liberty has been restricted shall be allowed to send and receive letters and cards, the number of which may be limited by competent authority if it deems necessary.”²¹⁰ However, TPLF failed to facilitate contact of POWs in accordance with the above article. On the other hand, EPLF allowed communication of POWs with their relatives through ICRC and its radio channel. POWs incarcerated by EPLF had better chance to communicate with their families than those incarcerated by TPLF.

²⁰⁷ ICRC, *The Third Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*, 102

²⁰⁸ Informant: Sub-Lieutenant Seyfe

²⁰⁹ ICRC, *The Third Geneva Conventions of 12 August*, 111

²¹⁰ Article 5 (2)(b) of Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, 1977

4-10-1 Differential Treatment of POWs under the EPLF

The POWs from the EPLF camps indicated that EPLF treated officer POWs with ranks from major to major – general (from now on referred to as senior or top officers) and pilot POWs of all ranks differently from POWs ranking captain and below. The TPLF also treated POWs differently. However, the treatment was not based on the ranks of POWs, albeit the officer POWs and those ranking below the second lieutenant were incarcerated separately. The TPLF provides special treatment to those POWs they wanted to recruit and make use of.

4-10-2 Release and Repatriation of POWs by the EPLF and the TPLF

Both the EPLF and the TPLF used to release their POWs amidst the protracted Ethiopian civil war (1974-1991) for different reasons. The EPLF released POWs due to a lack of resources to sustain them. The EPLF also released POWs through ICRC to confirm its compliance with international humanitarian laws and to gain international recognition. The TPLF released POWs to disseminate propaganda to the Ethiopian people about its benevolence and build its image defamed by the *Derg*. However, the EPLF apparently neglected and breached the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols on the release and repatriation of POWs.

After its fighters successfully controlled Eritrea, the EPLF breached many provisions of the Geneva Convention which it avowed to respect in 1977. EPLF controlled the entire Eritrea on May 24, 1991. However, EPLF had not started repatriating POWs until February 22, 1992. on May 26, 1991, EPLF cadres declared POWs free and pledged them immediate repatriation of the latter. A few days later, however, senior EPLF officials renounced their decision and brock their promise. EPLF authorities ordered POWs to take part in the reconstruction of Eritrea. The authorities compelled the POWs to carry out dangerous and cumbersome tasks despite outrageous resistance from the latter. POWs named two tasks that the EPLF assigned them. The tasks were; (1) clearing mines on the subway from Afabet and its surroundings, and 2) reconstructing the subway and feeder roads. The EPLF neither paid the POWs in cash nor subsidized their food rations.²¹¹

The EPLF detained a considerable number of POWs for more than eight months (from May 24, 1991, to February 22, 1992).After the end of the civil war at the end of May 1991, Lieutenant

²¹¹Informants: Lieutenant Haile Mariam Beade and Seaman GezahegnBekele

Hailemariam Beade recalled the situation that on May 26, 1991, the EPLF officials came to the camp and told the inmates that, "You are free from today." They told the POWs that they would bring transport vehicles and escort to home or Ethiopia. They ordered the inmates to sit quietly until transportation was provided, then they changed their minds and told the POWs to participate in the reconstruction of Eritrea. About seventy-three of the officers (twenty-three from the captives of Massawa and fifty from the captives of the Nadew command) including Hailemariam, refused to work. The officers said, "We will not work. You told us that we are free so let us go." Nevertheless, they took the prisoner officers to Zereba Gidef prison for further detention because they said they would not work. The POWs were engaged in the construction of the road from Nakfa to Afabet. Finally, the EPLF fighters released the POWs on February 22, 1992.²¹²

The EPLF violated international humanitarian law Article 118 of the Third Geneva Convention, which states, "Prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities."²¹³

²¹²Informant: Lieutenant Haile Mariam Beade.

²¹³Jean S. Pictet, *The Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949*, 540

Conclusion

This research undertaking has tried to explore the lived experiences of the members of the Ethiopian Armed Forces who were defeated and had fallen in the hands of the EPLF and TPLF rebel groups. Conflicts and miss understandings between individuals and states are common and normal in the history of humankind. Sometimes the misunderstandings between the hostile groups may result in armed struggle or open warfare. War by its very nature is destructive and it should be taken as the last alternative. In any warfare, there will be a victor and vanquished groups. The group that assumed victory should treat the surrendered group with respect and dignity. Even if the captives have committed genocide or crime against humanity, they should be taken before the law and given a fair trial. Treating the prisoners of war harshly and refusing to provide the very basic things to life is both inhuman and illegal according to the international law particularly the Geneva Conventions. Whenever the fighting is between peoples of the same country or region who share common or very similar political, economic and historical experience the handling of the surrendered people should be given a special care. Fellow country men continue to leave together after the end of military confrontations. In any warfare there may not be permanent victors and always losers. When victory shifted to the group who was previously a loser and its captives were badly treated, the new winner undoubtedly takes revenge for what has been done against its prisoners of war and could be merciless.

Defeat and surrender in battlefields are not always manifestations of weakness and inferiority. Sometimes the mighty, well-trained, properly armed and experienced group could be routed by a group, which is inferior to the defeated group in these regards. The Ethiopian armed forces during the *Derg* military regime were apparently much better than the civilian and non-professional rebels of EPLF and TPLF. We can mention different factors for the defeat of the well trained and professional Ethiopian armed forces during the military regime. Battle injury, surprise attacks by the EPLF and TPLF forces and the resulting uncoordinated retreats (untactical withdrawal) could be taken as the possible factors for the surrender of the Ethiopian troops. After the members of the Ethiopian Armed Forces were defeated and taken as war prisoners the victors did not provide them proper handlings.

The impact of civil wars waged in developing countries like Ethiopia is so high. Besides the heavy toll of life and destruction of property, losses of skilled military personnel are among the negative effects of civil war. It is wise to handle war prisoners properly as it enables to attract to

your side professional soldiers who could strength the military capacity of the captors. In the late 20th and the early 21thcenturies, it is unwise not to handle people whom you defeated and made them your prisoners. Our history reveals that our forefathers were so merciful to the Italian troops that were defeated and captured at the battle of Adwa. Empress Tayitu had treated the wounded Italians who were alien invaders with much care and dignity in the manner she treated her fellow Ethiopian wounded soldiers. Emperor Menelik II was not reluctant to set free the Italian war prisoners when the request came from the Italian side through the Roman Pope. The incumbent Ethiopian government and its future successors should learn from the exemplary experience of the former Ethiopian leaders regarding appropriate handling of war prisoners.

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List of Informants

No.	Name	Rank	Profile	Date of interview
1.	Ayalew Zewde	Lieutenant	Since 1983E.C, served as an artillery officer and was a prisoner of war from 1989 to1993.	04/07/2021 29/07/2021
2	Ayalew Getachew	Lieutenant	Since 1984, he served as infantry training officer and secretary of brigade workers people of Ethiopia(WPE).	06/03/2021 10/03/2021
3	Girma Hailu	Lieutenant	He was Tank maintenance officer since 1983-1989 and became POW from 1989 to1991.	05/08/2021 20/08/2021
4	Siefe Oro	Sub-Lieutenant	He was a naval logistic officer from 1987-1989. and he became POW from 1989 to1991	13/05/2021 22/11/2021
5	Hailemariam Bedea	. Lieutenant	He was served as an artillery officer and POW from 1984 to1989.	01/05/2021 01/12/2021
6	Tamene Hailu	Capitain	He was Batallion commander from 1980 to 1990 and became POW from 1990 to 1991.	15/07/2021 25/06/2021
7	Gezahegn Bekele	Seaman	He has served as a seaman in Masswa from 1989 to 1990 and became POW in 1991.	15/12/2020 4/06/2021
8	Abrham Wube	NationalService (Private)	He was a private soldier from 1985 to 88 and was a POW from 1988 to 1990.	05/03/2021

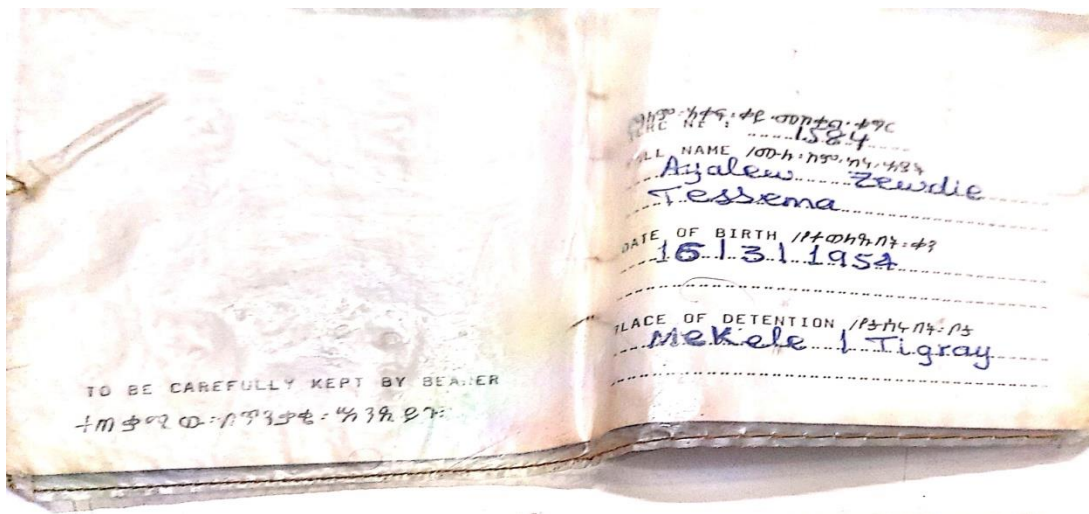
Appendix



ሥነ- ምግብና
ፋሽነት ደርግን የሥነ ደብ ሃይዘትን
ንምድምህን ዩ!
ምድንፋሪ ማህተት ውሳኔነት ምግብ 'ዩ!

From L/t Ayalew zewde personal collection (1989)

L/t Ayalew Getachew's Red cross card after the released (1993)



Holeta Genet military academy Logo 1936- 1983





L/t Hailemariam Bedea collection after he and other POWs
released from Ereterea1991(taken photo at Adirat,Mekele)

Basic Field manual.
military COURTESY and discipline

The most important of all military courtesies is the Salute. This is because it is at once the most obvious and the most used. The proper execution of the Salute distinguishes the military man. The Salute serves two purposes: as the act of recognition between members of the military profession, and as an indication of respect for authority. The Salute is not a mark of subservience, it is an indication of the possession of military courtesy and discipline by those who render it. Its omission indicates a lack of poor discipline.

From basic military field manual from L/t Hailemariam Bedea's notebook

ውድ ተሳታፊ፡

ለዚህ መጠይቅ ውድ ጊዜዎን ሰው-ትው ምላሽ በመስጠት በዚህ ጥናት ላይ ስለተሳተፉ በቅድሚያ አመሰግናለሁ ። የእርስዎ ምላሾች ለምርምር ዓላማዎች የሚውሉ ሲሆን በኢትዮጵያ ለረጅም ጊዜ በቆየው የእርስዎ በርስዎ ጦርነት በሻዕቢያ እና በወያኔ የታሰሩትን የኢትዮጵያውያን የጦር እስረኞች ተሞክሮ ለመረዳት እና ለመመዘገብ እንዲሁም ታሪኩን ለመጨመር ትውልድና ለማስተላለፍ ለአለም ህዝብ ለማቆየት ከፍተኛ አስተዋጽኦ ይኖራቸዋል። ይህ ጥናት በፈቃደኝነት ላይ የተመሰረተ እና ሚስጥራዊ ነው። የሁሉም ሰው ምላሾች በአንድ ላይ ይተነተናሉ። ይህ ማለት ምላሾችዎን ማንም ሊያውቅ አይችልም ማለት ነው። በድጋሚ አመሰግናለሁ ።

1) ስም አናቴው ዘውዴ ማእረግ ጠ/አ የትምህርት ደረጃ የመጀመሪያ ደግሞ

2) የትውልድ ጊዜ 16 የካቲት 1956
 ቀን ወር አመተ ምህረት

3) የትውልድ ቦታ ገጥ መናገሻ ያካ
 ክፍለ ሃገር አውራጃ ወረዳ ቀበሌ

4) የወላጆችዎ መተዳደርያ ምን ነበር?
ባለቤት ወርሃዊ ደመወዝ

ተ. ቁ	ደረጃ	የ ትምህርት ቤቱ ስም	ክፍለ ሃገር	አውራጃ	ከ _____ አ/ም	እስከ _____ ወር _____ አ/ም
	1ኛ ደረጃ	ህብረት 1ኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤት	አርሲ	ጭላሎ	መስከረም 1970	ሰኔ 1976
1	1ኛ ደረጃ	ዲ/ምኒሲን መተዳደር	ገጥ	መናገሻ	መጋቢት 1963	ሰኔ 1968
2	መለስተኛ 2ኛ ደረጃ	" " "	"	"	" 1969	" 1970
3	2ኛ ደረጃ	ዲ/ምኒሲን አጠቃላይ	"	"	" 1971	" 1974
4	ኮሌጅ/የኒከርሲ.ቲ	ኢንዱስትሪያል ስኬል	ጎጂኝ ሸባጣ	ጎጂኝ	1995	2001

5) መደበኛ ትምህርትዎን የተከታተሉባቸው ቦታዎች

ዲ/ምኒሲን መተዳደር 1ኛ ጊዜ መለስተኛ 2ኛ ደረጃ ገጥ

50) ለቆሰሉ ምርኮኞች ምን ዓይነት የሕክምና ተቋማት ነበሩ?

46) ለተሰብዎ እንደታሰሩ የሰሙት መቼ እና እንዴት ነው?

በታሪክ መታዘቅ የሰሙት ጽኑ ጋ ታሪክ- የነበሩ ምርኮኞች ተሰቡ-
ሰላሳ- ሰላሳ/ነሐሴ 1983 ዓ.ም ነበረ

51) እባክዎ የሚከተሉትን ባጭሩ ይግለጹ
51:1) ወጥ ቤቶቹን፤

በዚህ ገንባታ ጊዜ ሌሎች ወጥ ቤቶች የሚባሉ የገጽ ህንፃዎች የሚባሉ
ሌሎች ሲሆኑ ሌሎች ምንምምን ነበሩ

51:2) መጻፍት ቤቶችን

መጻፍት ቤቶች ለጊዜ ስላሉት ገንባታ ስላሉት ሌሎች ሲሆኑ ሌሎች ምንምምን ነበሩ

51:3) የመዝናኛ አገልግሎቶችን

የመዝናኛ አገልግሎት የገጽ ህንፃ ስላሉት ሌሎች ምንምምን ነበሩ

52) ምርኮኞች ምን ምን ዓይነት ሥራዎችን ይሰሩ ነበር? (ለምሳሌ: ካምፑን ማጠቃለያ ማብሰል፣ ውሃ መቅዳ ወዘተ)?

ምርኮኞች በየቤቱ ለሚጠጣ ፕሮግራም መሠረት የሚገባ ጽዳት ፣ የምግብ ማብሰል ፣ ውሃ ማጠቃለያ ማብሰል ስላሉት ሌሎች ምንምምን ነበሩ

54) የምርኮኞች ቁጥጥር የሚደረገው እንዴት ነበር? ያመለጡ ምርኮኞች መኖራቸው ሲታወቅ ምን እንደተፈጠረ ይግለጹ።

የምርኮኞች ቁጥጥር ማድረግ ስላሉት ሌሎች ምንምምን ነበሩ

55) ፍለጋዎች ነበሩ? ከሆነ፣ እነዚህ ምን ያህል ጊዜ ይከሰታሉ? ሂደቱን ይግለጹ.

55) ካምፓችሁ በቀይ መስቀል የተገነባችን ጊዜ ያስታውሳሉ?

መቀሌ ወህኒ ሎን ጃያገ ሰቀይ መቀሌ ተገባችን ነበር

57) ካምፓችሁ በቀይ መስቀል ከተገነባችሁ በጎብኙቱ ምንድን ነው የሆነው?

ባገብኝቱ የወህኒ ሎን ጃያገ ሰቀይ መቀሌ ተገባችን ነበር
የተገባችን ጊዜ ምንጣብን ገንግረዋል፣ ለጅም የቀይ
መቀሌ ላይ ሰጥተዋል

58) ከቀይ መስቀል ተወካዮች ጋር ለመነጋገር ምንም ዕድል ነበር?

ባገብኝቱ ላይ የገሰገሰ ገንግረዋል

59) የሰራ ካምፖች ውስጥ የመሰራት እድል ነበር?

60) ከሆነስ መጠናቸው ስንት ነበር?

61) በውስጣቸው ስንት ሰዎች ነበሩ?

62) እንዴት ተመረጡ?

63) ምን ምን ብሔረሰቦች ተካተዋል?

ባገብኝቱ ገሰገሰ ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል
የሆኑ ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል ገንግረዋል

77) በካምፕ ውስጥ ደብዳቤ እንዴት ይደራጃል? ምን ዓይነት ሳንሱር ነበር?

ምንም መሆኑም የተገኘው፤

78) በአርሰዎ ካምፕ ውስጥ ምን ዓይነት መዘናኛ ነገሮች ይካሄዱ ነበር? (ለምሳሌ: የካርድ ጨዋታዎች፣ ቁማር፣ ስፖርት፣ ተውኔቶች፣ መዘቃዎች፣ አርኬስትራዎች፣ ንግግሮች፣ ጥያቄና መልስ፣ ወዘተ) እነዚህን ይግለጹ።

የካርድ (ካይ) መጠቀም ከተጠቀሱት ውጭ የሌሎችም እና ዳግ ነበር

79) ከጠባቂዎች ጋር የነበሩት ግንኙነት ምን ይመስል ነበር?

ከጠባቂዎች ጋር የነበሩት ግንኙነት በጥንቃቄ ላይ የተመሰረተ እና መልካም ነበረ።

80) አብረዎት ከታሰሩት የጦር ምርኮኞች መካከል የተለየ ባህሪ (ለምሳሌ: ለዘቦች ወሬ የማቀበልና የስርቆት አመል) ያላቸው ነበሩ?

የረገጠውን ያገም

81) መልስዎ አዎ ከሆነ፣ የስርቆት አመል የነበረባቸውን እስረኞች የሚያስተናግዱት እንዴት ነበር?

82) ለዘቦች ወሬ የሚያቀብሉ እስረኞችን የሚያስተናግዱት እንዴት ነበር?

83) በእስረኞች መካከል ምን ያህል ህብረት፣ መደገፍና የጻዳዊነት መንፈስ ነበር?

እንደተገኘው ለእነዚህ ጥያቄዎች ላይ በጥንቃቄ ላይ የተመሰረተ እና መልካም መልካም መልካም ተጠቅሞ ነበረ።

84) አብረዎት በታሰሩት የጦር ምርኮኞች መካከል በግለሰብ ደረጃ (አንድ ለ አንድ) የከረረ ግጭት ተፈጠሮ ይውቃል?

አገረጠውን ያገም

95) በጦር ምርኮኛ አሰሪኞች ካምፕ ውስጥ በነበሩበት ወቅት የሚራኪዎችን ጦር በሙያዎ እንዲያገለግሉ ተጠይቀዋል ነበር?

ሸዎ ተጠይቀው ነበር።

96) መልስዎ አዎ ከሆነ፣ ፈቃደኛ ነበሩ? አልነበሩም

97) ፈቃደኛ፣ ካልነበሩ አሳሪዎችዎ ምን እርምጃ ወሰዱ?

በግምገማ ስራው ወደ ላሊ ጅምር ላይ ወሰድኩ

98) በጦር ምርኮኛ አሰሪኞች ካምፕ ውስጥ በነበሩበት ወቅት በተቃውሞ እንቅስቃሴዎች ውስጥ ወይም በማንኛውም ሚስጥራዊ ኮሚቴ ውስጥ ተሳትፈዋል? ላይኛውን ስርዓት ለማሳካት ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል

99) ተሳትፈው ከሆነ፣ የተሳተፉበትን ምክንያት/ቶች እና በተቃውሞ እንቅስቃሴዎች ውስጥ ወይም በሚስጥራዊ ኮሚቴዎች ውስጥ የነበሩትን ሚናዎች ይግለጹ በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል

99:1) ምክንያት/ቶች በመደባቸው የሚሰጡ ጥያቄዎችን ለማሟላት ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል
በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል

99:2) ሚናዎች የግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል
በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል

100) በተቃውሞ እንቅስቃሴዎች ወይም በሚስጥራዊ ኮሚቴዎች አማካኝነት የተገኘ/ኙ ወጤት/ቶች ካሉ ይጥቀሱ

በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል
በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል
በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል

101) በእስር ቤት ካምፕ ውስጥ በነበሩበት ጊዜ በጣም ከባድ ችግሮችዎ ምን ምን ነበሩ? እባክትን ከታች ያሉትን ችግሮች #1 የከፉ

ችግርዎ፣ #2 ቀጣዩ የከፉ፣ ወዘተ በማለት ደረጃ በመስጠት ይመልሱ።

- _____ ከሌሎች የጦር አሰሪኞች ጋር የነበረ ግጭት
- #1 የአካል ህክምናን በተመለከተ ከአሳሪዎች ጋር የነበረ ግጭት (ምግብ ፣ መጠለያ, ድብደባ)
- _____ የስነልቦና ህክምናን በተመለከተ ከአሳሪዎች ጋር የነበረ ግጭት (የካምፕ ህጎች እና ገደቦች፣ ዘቻዎች፣ ምርመራ፣ የፕሮፓጋንዳ ጥያቄዎችን ማክበር ፣ ወዘተ.)
- _____ ከቤተሰብ እና ከጓደኞች መለየት
- _____ አካልን ለማቆየት የሚደረግ ጥረት

ሌላ (አባዛዎ ይግለጹ) በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል
በግምገማ ስራው ላይ ተሳትፎ አድርገዋል

102) በሚከተለው ዝርዝር ውስጥ የጦር አሰሪዎች ከጋጣሚያቸው መጥፎ አጋጣሚዎች መካከል ጥቂቶቹ ናቸው። ከእነዚህ ውስጥ አንዱ አሰሪኛ በነበሩበት ጊዜ አርሰዎን ይመለከታል? አባቶችን የሚመለከቱዎት አጋጣሚዎች ፊትለፊት ባለው ክፍት ቦታ ላይ ምልክት ያርጉ እና በዝርዝሩ የመጨረሻ ላይ ያጋጠሙዎትን ሌሎች መጥፎ ገጠመኞች ይጨምሩ።

- _____ አሰሪኛ ሆኔ ምንም መጥፎ ነገር አላጋጠመኝም።
- _____ ለብቻዬ እንድታሰር ተደርጓል ።
- _____ ከመጠን በላይ ከባድ የጉልበት ሥራ እንድሰራ አስገድደውኛል።
- _____ ሌሎች አሰሪዎች በአሰቃቂ ሁኔታ ሲቀጡ ወይም ሲገደሉ አይቻለሁ።
- እኔ ራሴ በአሰቃቂ ሁኔታ ተቀጥቻለሁ።
- _____ ለረጅም ጊዜ ስራ ሳልሰራ አንድቀመጥ ተገድቻለሁ።
- _____ በቂ ምግብ አላገኘም ነበር።
- _____ አብረውኝ የታሰሩ ሰዎች ግፍ ፈጽመውብኛል ።

103) ያጋጠሙዎት ሌሎች መጥፎ ገጠመኞች ካሉ እባክዎን ያብራሩ

ባዙ 'ቅ' 'ደ' ሳይ ገብቀው ምንገድ ያጸላሉ ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር መሆናቸውን
በመሆናቸው የማይታዩት

104) አብረዎት ከታሰሩት የጦር ምርኮኞች ጋር ስለማምለጥ እድል ተወያይተው ያውቃሉ?

ሕገ-መንግሥት

105) መልስዎ እዎ ከሆነ ለምን ያህል ጊዜ/ያት ተወያይተዋል? ከሚከተሉት አንዱን ያክብቡ

- 1) ለ አንድ ጊዜ ብቻ
- 2) ከሁለት እስከ አምስት ጊዜያት
- 3) ከስድስት እስከ አስር ጊዜያት
- 4) በተገኘው አጋጣሚ ሁሉ

106) ከጦር ምርኮኛ አሰሪዎች ካምፕ የማምለጥ እቅድ ውስጥ ተሳትፈው ያውቃሉ?

ሕገ-መንግሥት

107) መልስዎ እዎ ከሆነ ፣ ምን ያህል አሰሪዎች በማምለጫ እቅድ ውስጥ ተሳትፈዋል?

108) እቅዱ ምን ነበር?

109) የማምለጫውን እቅድ ለማቀድ ምን ያህል ጊዜ ፈጅቷል?

110) የማምለጥ ሙከራውን ለማድረግ እንዴት አይነት ጊዜ መረጡ/መረጣችሁ?

111) ለማምለጥ በሚሞክሩ / በምትሞክሩ ጊዜ የነደፍዎቸውን/ የነደፋችሁቸውን የማስመሰያ ዘዴዎች ይግለጹ።

112) ለማምለጥ በምትሞክሩ ጊዜ የነበሩትን/የነበራችሁን መረጃዎች (ለምሳሌ፡ የተጭበረበሩ ወረቀቶች፣ ፎቶግራፎች፣ ምግብ፣ ካርታዎች ወይም ኮምፓስ ፣ የሚስጥር ኮዶች) ይግለጹ።

113) ከላይ የተጠቀሱትን ቁሳቁሶችና መሳሪያዎች እንዴት አገኙዎቸው/አገኛችሁ?

114) ሙከራ/ዎችሁ ካልተሳካ ወይም እቅዱን ከተወጡ ለምን እንደሆነ ያብራሩ።

115) ለማምለጥ ሲሞክሩ ተይዘው ከነበረ ፣ እንዴት እንደ ተያዙ ያብራሩ/ይግለጹ።

116) ለማምለጥ ሲሞክሩ ከተያዙ በሁዋላ የሆነውን ያብራሩ/ይግለጹ።
