

The Establishment an Eritrean Government



As previously mentioned the Eritrean people were against the idea of federation. Ideally, in a state of federation, the people's choice should have been considered but in the case of Eritrea, the people's choice was not put into consideration. Due to the constant pressure from the British administrators, and the chaos and instability in the country the people of Eritrea were forced to accept the federation. As a result, in December 1, 1950 all the political parties in the country promised to abide by the decision made by the UN Assembly. Meanwhile, *Independent Block* changed its name to

Eritrea's Democratic Front

and declared its movement to be for the independence of the country. The Unionist Party also made similar promise but it was obvious to every one that the party's main agenda was to unite Eritrea with Ethiopia.

Amidst such a scenario the United Nations sent an envoy to draft and ratify the Eritrean constitution, elect an Eritrean assembly and basically establish an Eritrean government. A Bolivian citizen, the UN envoy, Mr. Enzo Matenzo arrived in the country on February 9, 1950.

The Formation of Eritrean Assembly and Ratification of the Constitution

Enzo Matenzo drafted the constitution of the government of Eritrea which protected the rights of the people to elect their own leaders and make their voices heard incase their rights were violated.

On the contrary, the Ethiopian constitution was imperial and not a democratic one. The officials of the country were elected by the emperor or kings in power and the people had no right to voice their opposition.

After the drafting of the constitution by Enzo Matenzo it was passed to the country's assembly formed in 1952. The assembly with its 68 members was elected by the people but the election was done under a lot of pressure from the British Administrators in the country. Both the British Administration and the government of Ethiopia together maneuvered a scheme and made majority of the assembly members from the Unionist Party and Islamic League of the Western Highlands.

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Written by Winta Woldeyesus
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The Assembly gathered and debated on the constitution drafted by Enzo Matenzo and members of the Unionist Party in the Assembly tried to establish laws that undermined the independence of country. They also sought to make Amharic the official language of the country and remove the country's flag. This was strongly opposed by members of the Democratic Front and they made sure that the country has its flag and Tigrinya and Arabic continue to be the official languages of the country. The Unionist Party demanded for the presence of a representative of the emperor in Eritrea and also to have an overall power in the established government of Eritrea.

Nationals like Shiekh Ibrahim Sultan and other members of the Democratic Front opposed the existence of a representative of the emperor in the country but Enzo Matenzo supported the demand of the Unionist party which results for a representative, *Enderasie*, of the emperor's presence in the country. And this was one of the major crimes committed on the people of Eritrea.

After the debate among the members of the Eritrean Assembly, they officially declared the constitution drafted by Enzo Matenzo as the constitution of the country. Then the assembly gathered for the second time and elected a governor for the government of Eritrea and a chairman for the assembly. The election was dominated by members of the Unionist and the Islamic League Party and as a result Tedla Bariu from the Unionist Party was elected as governor of the government of Eritrea, Ali Mohammed Musa Radai from the Islamic League of the Western Lowlands was elected to be the chairman of the assembly and Blata Demsas Weldemicheal from the Unionist Party as vice-chairman of the assembly.

Transfer of Power to the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia



In order for the newly established governments of Eritrea and Federation start functioning, the British Administration had to relinquish its authority. But still there were a lot of crimes and unfair judgments committed. To mention some:-

- The railway and port administration, the roads system, the cable, postal and telephone services, and the salt trade were given to be governed under the Ethiopian government. All the above mentioned hardware was the main sources of income to the country and the government of Eritrea was deprived of its main source of income.
- The important posts in government institutions were given to Ethiopian citizens.
- Government owned residential houses and offices were also given to Ethiopian officials of higher rank.
- Worst of all is the law that allowed Ethiopian soldiers to remain in Eritrea for 'security purposes'. Ethiopian soldiers made their bases in Asmara, Massawa, Asseb, and Mai-Habar.

While this was going on in the country, the members of the assembly were opposing all the activities and after a short while those supporting the unity with Ethiopia also realized the dominance of Ethiopia and started opposing it. Majority of those that were supporting unity at the beginning regretted their decision and realized that they have invited another colonizer to

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their country.