

Remarks at the Victory of Adwa Dinner

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By Major General Gregory Copley, the Most Honourable the Marquess of Tana, and Strategic Advisor to the Crown Council of Ethiopia

Your Imperial Highnesses, Your Eminence, Honorable Lijs and members of the *Balabatawinet*, distinguished award recipients, your excellencies, and beloved friends of Ethiopia ...

An incredible rising of the many peoples of Ethiopia joined with inspirational leadership under Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taitu to ensure that the Battle of Adwa changed history. Few battles change history, but Adwa did. Adwa restored the cohesion and dignity of the Ethiopian People, and renewed their unique claim to be one of the important and enduring civilisations in history.

The unique alignment of the stars which gave us Adwa created a shining example for Ethiopians to follow, and hope to all Africa and much of the rest of the world. Following that example was never going to be easy, and yet Ethiopians under Emperor Haile Selassie were sufficiently inspired by it to again defeat an even greater invading force less than 50 years later.

Then, within the subsequent century, Ethiopia was to face even greater challenge, by a series of people governed by an alien ideology. This may have been the most insidious challenge of all, because those who overthrew Ethiopian governance in 1974 and 1990 knew that the spirit of Adwa would once again prevail, *unless they could destroy that spirit once and for all*.

Today, however, after the fall of two successive communist tyrannies in Ethiopia, it is the spirit of Adwa which still motivates Ethiopians to resist attempts to destroy three millennia of Ethiopian Solomonic culture. You have just heard from His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias — himself of the Solomonic line — and Professor Tibebe how important the Victory of Adwa remains to Ethiopians.

Without Adwa, modern Ethiopia's legitimate right to identity, pride, prestige, and leadership would be much harder to grasp.

I am not here to reiterate the wonder of Adwa, or of Menelik or Haile Selassie. You have heard it tonight, and you know it in your hearts and from your learning. You saw it with the great outpouring of youth in Menelik Square in Addis Ababa less than two weeks ago.

The young people of Ethiopia want their history so that they can claim their future.

My goal tonight is to let you know that the Ethiopian Crown remains the beating heart of the history of Ethiopia. The Crown works every day to restore that great serenity of soul, that sense of identity, to all Ethiopians. The Crown Council of Ethiopia, which Emperor Haile Selassie had the sense to integrate into the Ethiopian Constitution in 1955, remains a living institution dedicated to Ethiopia's protection. The Ethiopian Crown has never gone away. It continues unbroken as the Crown of Ethiopians, and therefore of the embodiment of unity.

Prince Ermias, the President of the Crown Council, has developed unparalleled access to leaders around the world, in a way which politicians — especially those of Ethiopia's 1974-2018 era — could not hope to achieve. Now, daily, the Crown Council is in contact with its network of friends and contacts across the globe. You will have seen the multiple visits by Prince Ermias to countries where he has had unique access to leaders. And, in recent years, this has turned into an opportunity for the elected Ethiopian Government to the extent that Nigerian ambassadors and diplomats have been invited to join these missions. More such visits are actively being planned, and they have the potential to do great things for Ethiopia and its prestige.

All this work, and much more inside Ethiopia, is undertaken by the Crown Council without the benefit of any tax or other government funding base.

It exists on the donations of individuals, many of them foreigners; and on the goodwill and soul of Ethiopians who yearn for a return to a time of Ethiopian greatness of spirit.

All of you Ethiopians here tonight represent that incredible feeling for the sacredness of Ethiopia, but turn to see all the non-Ethiopians present.

They, too, have been motivated by the spirit of Adwa. They have become part of the great diversity of Ethiopian peoples.

Indeed, events such as this dinner not only renew the faith of us all, but contribute to the operating budget of the Crown. Each *birr* and every dollar is a blessing which helps to restore the greatness of Ethiopia, and each adds to the humility and bond between the Crown and all Ethiopians.

Soon, you will learn more about one of the great Crown projects: the creation of the Royal Ethiopian Geographical Society. This Society, which has just elected the internationally-renowned Ethiopian scholar, *Gerazmach* Dr Wolde Tadesse, as its inaugural President, aims to create a non-profit organisation which can be of invaluable service to Ethiopia.

It will begin to gather together all of the vital statistics of Ethiopia to create a center where all of Ethiopia's terrain is mapped, where all its mineral and other resources can be understood, where its waterways are known, its sociology and history comprehensively documented, and much more. It will combine geology and geophysics; it will employ space-based resources and great human knowledge so that Ethiopians and foreign investors have the tools to develop the nation to its fullest potential.

We are in the process of creating this Society as an Ethiopian legal entity, and we will find a permanent home for it in Ethiopia, using modern technology to link it to all the learning and teaching institutions of Ethiopia. In this, we have been strongly guided by the example of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, which has already developed a sister-relationship with our Ethiopian Society. The Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, His Excellency John Geiger, is with us tonight. He has been honoured by the Crown for his dedication in establishing this great endeavour for Ethiopia.

This leads us to the other question which is always close to our lips, And that is: how can we ensure that the Crown Council can function safely at home in Ethiopia? How close are we to seeing that greater formal reunion of the Crown into the legal framework of Ethiopia?

There are ways for this to be accomplished which ensure that constitutionally-based, elected government remains forever in the hands of the Ethiopian People. The Crown must be above politics, and yet part of every level of society. This is how Emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie saw Ethiopia's future.

How can the Crown be peacefully restored to the land? One thought is that we must acquire a working office for the Crown in Ethiopia, and this would also be a home for the Royal Ethiopian Geographical Society and our Water Initiative for Africa. I would be happy to talk with any of you who may be interested in helping to make this a reality.

It is vital that we demonstrate on the ground that the Crown is always there, and is always committed to supporting the Ethiopian People. The underlying truth of all of this is that the Crown is you, and you are the Crown. What you do for the Crown you do for yourself.