

Remarks at the Victory of Adwa Dinner

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**By His Imperial Highness Le'ul Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie
President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia**

My Dear Bishop, Honorable Lijs and members of the Balabatawinet (the Ethiopian nobility), distinguished award recipients, your excellencies, and beloved friends of Ethiopia ...

Firstly, let me congratulate the great individuals honoured here tonight. Each year, we present a very small number of medals to commemorate the Victory of Adwa. Each of you have performed outstanding work for Ethiopia; for your communities in the diaspora and at home. As you remember Adwa, we remember you. We thank you.

Ours is a sacred mission tonight: to remember, to honour, to cherish, and to learn from the great sacrifice of the patriots of Ethiopia who united 126 years ago to repel a great invading Army. Emperor Menelik II and his Empress, Taitu, rallied all of Ethiopia to act as one, showing that great unity could be achieved without the loss of the many individual cultures, traditions, and languages of our many nations.

Ethiopia showed that it was capable of acting as a great nation on the world stage.

We are fortunate that you will soon here some brief remarks about the Victory of Adwa from our distinguished friend, colleague, and historian, Professor Tibebe Eshete, who was honoured with the award of a Victory of Adwa Medal this year for his scholarship.

Our Agafari, Pamela, Marchioness of Tana, will introduce him shortly, and after Dr Tibebe gives his keynote talk, Pamela will introduce the Crown's Strategic Advisor, Gregory Copley, the Marquess of Tana, to speak briefly about our important current work.

My mission here tonight, and that of my wife, Le'ult Saba, is to thank you again for your support for Ethiopia and the role of the Crown in Ethiopia's recovery. We have been engaged for so long in a struggle for the survival of our nation and our

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identity that it is difficult to comprehend that we have been under siege for almost a half-century since the murder of my Grandfather and so many other Ethiopian patriots.

And it was my Grandfather, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, and my Grandmother, Empress Menen, who, like Menelik and Taitu, resisted and ultimately repelled an invading Italian army less than a half-century after the Victory of Adwa. As at the Victory of Adwa, my grandparents worked with patriots — arbegnoch — from all parts of Ethiopia, who united to prove that they were part of a noble mission to preserve the great example of Ethiopia as a pinnacle of African dreams. As with Adwa, the second Italian-Ethiopian war saw victory culminated at the Battle of Gondar after six years of struggle.

History has determined that the millennia of Ethiopia's unique history and culture should be a pillar which sustains Africa, so when Ethiopia is humiliated and broken, then so, too, is Africa. And for Ethiopia to retain and rebuild its prestige, its traditions and mission must be revered. We are, then, all servants to this task which God has set us.

And yet even after two great trials set for Ethiopia at Adwa and Gondar — and, of course, there were many more great challenges through our history, we were, again within a half-century, beset by the coup which overthrew our Empire, and began almost a half-century more of oppression.

We are now emerging from that dark period, but still face many threats and obstacles, not just from the internal divisions which were created, but by foreign powers funding and inciting internal threats. We see the light, but we have not yet reached it.

How do we retain optimism, identity, dignity, and resilience when we have grown old in these shadows of brutality, oppression, and pervasive lies? How do we know when hope may transform into victory?

Yes, we see rays of light. The first sales of electricity from our Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam have begun to demonstrate that Ethiopia can be a great hydropower for the region, as Emperor Haile Selassie envisaged, but that it can take command of its destiny. The Prime Minister paid tribute to those whose vision

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created the Dam, and rightly saw that this was initiative which began with the Emperor.

And this year, as Ethiopians took up the celebration of Adwa — something your Crown Council has always maintained in exile — we saw that the battle lines have still not been overcome. Those in government who gained their position through the revolutionary period of the Dergue and TPLF attempted to say that the Victory of Adwa was nothing to do with Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu, and moved the Adwa celebrations away from Menelik Square in Addis Ababa. You may have seen the unofficial celebration of Adwa, which was not organised by the Government. It not only saw Menelik Square filled with peaceful and enthusiastic people waving the tricolor of Ethiopia and spilling out into neighboring areas of the city, it saw a predominance of young people.

The great revival of Ethiopia is not based on old people looking back. It is based on young people looking forward, confident that the past has affirmed their identity of nobility and their unique mission.

We have much still to do. Great scholars, such as Dr Tibebe and our newly-appointed *Blaten Geta*, Dr Gizachew Tiruneh, both here tonight, are helping rebuild the process of educating Ethiopians and the world of the historic truths which made Ethiopia a durable civilization these past three millennia and more. We thank God for them and their sacred work. Another great Ethiopian scholar, Dr Edward Vestal, a Knight Grand Cross of the Star of Honour, is here with us in spirit tonight, and helped sponsor this event, as he did with the Victory of Gondar Dinner in London last November. So, too, is Nicholas Melillo, who helped sponsor the important Victory of Gondar dinner last November. He was recently promoted, with much gratitude, to the rank of Knight Commander of the Order of the Star of Honour for his ongoing energy in supporting the cause of Ethiopian unity and the restoration of its honour. With us in spirit tonight, too, are two other sponsors of this great event: their excellencies Owen and Carole Lee Whitman. We thank them, too, for their generosity in helping to sponsor this gathering.

And all of you will have noticed the beautiful works of art created here to celebrate Ethiopia's Crown. They are the work of the great artist, Kelly Fawaz, who was honoured here tonight, as well, with the Victory of Adwa Medal.

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We have founded the Royal Ethiopian Geographical Society, which is charged with bringing together all the learning about Ethiopia's geographic, geophysical, its other resources, and water data, and to understand the full sociological dynamic of our vast realm. The great Ethiopian Scholar, Gerazmach Dr Wolde Tadesse, has been elected the first President of the Royal Ethiopian Geographical Society, and we look to you all to help make this great endeavour a reality.

We have much more to discuss, but tonight is not the time to do more than reflect on the great lessons of the victories at Adwa and Gondar, and the great victory we need to win by restoring Ethiopia to unity, prosperity, and dignity.

Your Crown has been exceptionally busy, every day of every week, attempting to achieve the revival of our nation. We will not cease. And I thank you for being part of the journey we make together. I asked how we retain optimism, identity, dignity, and resilience through the darkness. The answer is you.

God Bless You. God Bless Emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie. God Bless the Ethiopian People and our beautiful land. Our mission is noble. Thank you.