

fascist masters and mouthing threats at the people spoilt the whole atmosphere.

The grapevine had it that the next target for the suppression campaign would be the Piazza area, others said, no, it was the Casainches. Others claimed "for sure" it was the Gulele area and so on, the enemy had spread confusing rumours in order to cover up its intended sweep of ALL the 291 kebbles in the city. To make matters worse, the regime started airing the interviews of "those who had reembraced the Revolution", mainly those who had broken under torture and had changed sides. Some of these turncoats were also members of a faction that had split from the organization, an opportunist breakaway faction whose members tried to do great damage to the organization.

Utilizing these turncoats who knew the working methods of the organization gave the regime an edge and an advantage. Its campaigns of suppression gained some impetus and all this was taking its toll on our organization. On my part, I was trying to get my contacts in order after the previous days happenings when, on Saturday evening, the house of two of my close associates was raided. The two were not in the house at the time but the house was ransacked and looted. When I arrived at my shelter, the family advised me and another female comrade also sheltered there to evacuate from the area for our safety. The Eritrean family were extremely worried about our situation and theirs. The young ladies in the family were also to move away into another shelter since events in our area did not bode well at all.

We learnt that all the democrat Kibelle officials and all of the young people in the adjoining Kebeles have been summoned by the Higher Association for a meeting and that anyone who was found walking about would be taken to the JFK school compound and detained. Others were black listed and being sought at their houses. So, the family pleaded for us two to leave. Mimi, my comrade, and I had no place ready to shelter us. Our contacts were more or less severed. As a last resort, we decided we may have to call upon prostitutes we both knew as sympathizers. We disposed off all the compromising materiel and agreed to

meet after taking care of our respective "important" appointments. Mimi's rendezvous was actually very crucial since she was to go to the rural armed struggle the Wednesday before and she had stayed in the city just to make it to that appointment.

Both of us returned disappointed. Our rendezvous failed to materialize. Filled with anxiety, both of us came back dejected. We noted that it was dangerous to move about tht afternoon and we both agreed that we will have to sleep in one of the separate kitchens which belonged to the absentee bachelors living in our compound. That was the last thing I remember before falling into slumber on the large bed in my tiny closet-like room.

FIVE

Sunday Morning, the first day of the 5th. Julian month, at 3 a.m., I experienced a bit of rude personal awakening to the unpalatable facts of the Terror.

All three doors to our house were being banged and broken into by gangs of insult hurling, foul mouthed red terror assault group. My immediate reaction was to open the window behind me, step out, close the window and try to hide. The hiding place seemed ideal to me, I was mistaken.

To give you an idea of the setting: the house was located a few minutes walk off a narrow asphalt road in a crowded section of the city. The alley leading towards the compound was a twisting and turning uneven

cobblestone and soil walkaway. The stonewall compound and the adjoining unfenced house are built on a rapidly declining slope leading further on to a little stream. Within our compound, there was a one storey house with basement, three separate kitchens, an outhouse and our house. The two sections of the basement were rented to two bachelor-tenants. One of the rooms in our house was also rented to an old Pentecostal preacher and the two big houses were occupied by family tenants.

Our house was a sort of double row house with three front doors and one side door. Our portion of the house had four wide rooms, -one bathroom minus the tub, a kitchen and storage area, and the small closet like room that was my den. The houses did not touch but were built back to back with another house on the incline. The back of our house was a partial dugout, the back windows were level with the ground and directly faced the foundation of that house. There was only the lengthy narrow corridor between the foundation of the upper house and the window of our house.

So, when they were trying to force the doors down, I had plenty of time to step out of the window to hide in the farthest and narrowest corner of the corridor. They succeeded in ramroading the three doors at ease and rushed in. Squatting in that corner, I tried to compose myself and think about my predicament. I felt trapped but I was not excited, I felt rather numb, a "che sera sera" (what will be will be) type of feeling flowing through me. I took out my watch from a hidden pocket and my wedding ring off my finger and placed both on the foundation ledge. I waited...

From where I was I could hear them clearly, as if I was there with them. There were two female voices rising out clear above the other voices, as if they were spearheading the search. They were going to and fro indicating and instructing where to look for various items. They were calling the names of the young ladies who had given me shelter and accusing them of being the "top anarchos" of the area. These were surely the voices of turncoats, former members going out of their way now to prove their loyalty to the fascist regime.

"An anarchist's house has a thousand and one hiding places. Check the mattress-tear it apart!"

"Check the 'cornice', pull the roof apart!"

"The Demos are dangerous, they may be armed and hiding. be careful!"

"Look for hidden panels on the wall. Check all the planks on the floor!"

"Check the outhouse thoroughly!"

"tears out those pictures, yes, break the frame, look for secret compartments!"

" There must be a duplicating machine or an 'adefris'! (a popular name for a slik screening device). "They are the first ones to get Demo publications in the area".

"Check the book shelf, the cupboard!"

"There is no one around, they must have fled!"

They were ratting left and right, grunting. Voices and footsteps of the band going and coming, tearing the place apart, a pounding in my head. I also heard the voice of someone in anguish: they were flogging and beating Adé, the mother of the two young girls. She was being interrogated on the whereabouts of her children.

All of a sudden, I saw the light from the window come on. Before I finished asking myself the question, I got the answer. I remembered that I had carefully closed the inner glass panes before hiding but I had forgotten to close the wood shutters from the outside. I heard a panicked voice announcing:

"They have escaped through this window! They must be hiding nearby. They could be armed, that is dangerous!"

"Bring a flashlight or a torch and let us flush them out."

"Alert the fencing in team outside, they should not get away, no".

Right away they opened all three back windows. One of the windows was just five yards from me. Since all the lights were on in the house, it was absolutely dark where I hid. Thanks to many years of movie going, I adopted a stance that I had seen escape convicts or cartoon characters assume when hiding from search parties: I held my breath, pressed my back to the wall, turned my face and stayed motionless.

They found our own weak flashlight and flickered the light in my direction.

"Come out! Give yourself up!" they shouted, their fear resonating in their voices. "Be careful," one warned the others. "They may be armed and waiting".

I did not respond. I kept absolutely still, I have also seen the movie where the searchers pretend to have spotted the escapee. I waited. Afraid to venture to the dark corner, they went back in. I felt safe.

Maybe too safe. Another thought came to my mind: checking the identity of the turncoats, seeing the searchers.

So, I slowly inched my way to the window nearest to me and started looking in. Since the light was on inside, I thought no one could notice me. I stayed in the dark to watch the action. But there was no action except one guy picking up some cassette tapes and my bikini underwears and pocketing them. I decided to carefully pass to the middle window. The wooden venetian blinds type window shutters helped me to a better view of the room. Unless one held them in position they stayed open only halfway. I was able to observe more action from my vantage point because the window led to the combined living room and dining room which were separated by curtains. However, we used these rooms as bedrooms.

Even from the partial view that I had there were so many things going on-- a lot of people were milling in and out of the room taking out loads of materials of all sorts. One of the first things that caught my sight was a confrontation going on between Adé and one man. Earlier, I had heard her rapidly firing her protestations in Tigrigna, her mother tongue and practically the only language she spoke. But now it seemed she was struggling to safeguard her "stalleta" or "stalena" (or could it be "stella"?)--a big necklace made of pure gold (seven to nine broachlike gold pieces intricately decorated and shaped like military brass buttons of different sizes are threaded with a shiny black thread and a matching pair of gold earrings and rings go along with the necklace or pendant). It was a lifetime's savings, precious... The fellow untied the silk thread and took off her necklace and was trying to take her earrings by holding her finely braided hair at the nape of her neck.

He was calling her all sort of names: "You goddamned bandit! Secessionist! Arab mercenary!"

I had also heard Mimi's voice as she cried when they were banging away at her. I imagined they were beating her with a rifle butt. I stretched my neck and strained far to see where she was. Instead, I first saw the two girl turncoats who had covered their faces by their gabbi (blanket-like woven cotton cloth). there were two other females-- both of them were local prostitutes who had been armed as "revolutionary guards" by the Kebelle. There were a variety of the regime's structure represented: "workers' revolutionary guards", military and security officers, cadres of all sorts... Some of the workers and peasants wore overalls with monograms, one had the Diabaco Textile Factory logo on his overalls.

From the sound of their footsteps and from what I saw, I concluded that all in all there were twenty to thirty armed men and women in the house, not counting the two unarmed female turncoats and informers. After a while, many of the leading cadres started leaving the place, some with dissatisfaction on their faces. I heard them, before they left,

ordering their juniors "to search the place thoroughly". I heard their footsteps trekking up the alley.

All of a sudden I heard a voice and at the same time saw a silhouette of a man on the backwall of the house in front of the window. It was very close to me. He was climbing the bed. I dashed to hide near or under a piece of galvanized tin roofing and some broken clay pots nearby, in fact an arms reach from the window.

"I am still suspicious about that open window", I heard a voice say. "They must still be around, hiding. Somebody give me a match".

I heard him crumple up some paper and he lighted the paper in his hand.

The two of us were locked eyeball to eyeball. We both blinked. he regained his composure fast and grabbed my hair. And there I was! Under their grip and control!

SIX

A shockwave that seemed to me to have started from my knees went up to my head. My knees wobbled and felt weak. My head swirled. I felt some nausea, sort of butterflies in my stomach. It would be an understatement if I said I felt faint and defeated.

The same, I imagine, with my adversary. He was nervous as hell, a feral smell emanated from his body, offensive.

"Be careful, she must be armed," several voices shouted as if they were synchronized to speak consecutively. "There must be others".

He pulled me roughly by the hair halfway through the window. I was on my knees. All hands, tongues, eyes, etc.. were directed towards me.

Some slapped and beat me, others spat at me, one boxed my ears, another cocked his pistol on my head. Some glared at me with tons of hate in their eyes, others insulted me rudely and obscenely. Had they been cannibals they would have chewed me raw right there and then.

"Are you Abeba? Is your name Abeba Gezahegn?" shouted one of the informers holding up my ID which I had left by my bed.

"Yes, I am," I replied with tears rolling down my cheeks as I slid into my pitiful manner and pathetic bearing. "The preacher next door had told me to be careful," I went on, "careful of anarchists wearing soldiers uniforms and raiding houses at night to kill people".

What I was saying had an element of truth in it as the preacher, a strong supporter of the State, had tried to convince me that the three brothers executed summarily in the adjacent Kebele were not killed (as they were) by the government but by the anarchists.

"Where are they, the dangerous Demos who lived here? Did they jump out of the window?"

"Tell the truth or I will bash your head in!"

In my pathetic voice I said: "She went to church wearing her new dress early in the morning. She left by the Total gas station road," And without paying attention to what they were saying I continued to bombard them with pleadings: "For Christ's sake! For the sake of Virgin Mary: by St. George! etc..." I went down on my knees, "for the sake of the 44 tabots, saints! I am but an innocent maid servant. I toil to earn a living. Please don't hurt me."

But they were not really interested in me. They slapped me, landed kicks on my groin or ass, and kept asking the same questions: where are the anarchists who lived here? I kept on giving the same naive answer: she left early in the morning wearing her new dress, etc.... I

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repeated this more than twenty times, long enough to convince them that I could be mentally retarded. Believing in my innocence, they had the idea that I might fit in their scheme of things. They started leading me through the various rooms to show them the hiding places of 'the duplicating machine, the arms and other "Demo" paraphenelia'. As they led me through the rooms, they would try the sweet and sour approach on me (show us where they hid the arms and we will reward you, otherwise we will use the Red Terror on you!)

The most prominent features on Solomon's face were his eyes. He had large Coptic eyes to go along with his dark olive skin tone and fluffy hair. It was those large eyes which were opened up to their limits that confronted me as I was dragged into the next room.

Solomon was standing naked like a statue, tightly holding the grail of his ruffled up bed. His clenched teeth peeked through his oddly parted lips. I could imagine what he felt. Not that this was Solomon's first encounter with such search parties and raiders. A year and half earlier, when he was just five years old, men with dark sunglasses on had brought his father handcuffed into their home. They had combed the house inside and out and taken his father away. One of the security agents had shoved Solomon back and slammed the door on him to prevent him from following out his dear father, and this had left a deep impression on Solomon.

The room was a mess, the pillows and mattresses of the two beds in the room were torn apart. One of the searchers was emptying the bookshelf close to where Solomon was standing. I heard the man utter to himself an absurd statement : "this must be the main library of the anarchists! No wonder there are no books in the public libraries, the anarchists have taken them all and kept them in this house so that the young people become ignorant and theoretically bankrupt".

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Another man was standing on top of bookshelf and looking into the ceiling. His hands were busy shearing the canvas with a sharp object, hoping that a gun or some documents would come dropping down.

"Tell! Show! Where?" were the most frequent words that the horde behind shouted at me. Cupping my hands like a praying mantis, I responded with a "please" and "for the sake of Christ, have mercy on me for I have never dropped out of the kitchen, never, please". We were trying to drown out each others' voices. My captors were becoming more irritable by the minute. The beatings and kickings intensified, the pushing and tugging continued...

I was pushed into the living room where the "big boys" were seated on the sofa. They looked at me and shook their heads. They had disconnected the telephone: I saw two loose yellow and orange wires sticking out. There were a hurried footstep from the veranda, the door of the living room burst open.

Enter none other than the chairman of the Revolutionary Guards of Higher 2 , Kebelle 10 and vice commander of this search party. The fire breathing dragon of a man, a former airborne noncommissioned officer. He came straight at me, grabbed roughly my throat with one hand and my hair with the other. His widely open nostrils enflamed and his teeth biting his lower lip, he literally picked me up and bounced me into another room. it was one of the sections combined living-dining room which I had been surveying from the middle window.

He was full of spite. "You goddamned bitch! You already wasted our precious time by hiding. Now, if you do not show us the hidden leaflets and armaments I am going to intensify the Red Terror on you like", he now pointed at the corner, " your friend over there."

I could not control my tears. I was shocked, saddened and in tears. Adé was sitting on the floor, her legs stretched out; chanting a mourning lament softly and holding on her laps Mimi. Mimi my comrade, in her blue flamed pyjamas, frowning at the mouth, eyes closed. The old lady now

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and then wiped the foam off, she knew that had happened to Mimi, her daughters had told her of other similar cases. Our assailants did not realize what was happening. They thought Mimi must have panicked, had a heart attack or epilepsy or something like that...

Mimi was a bright, highly dedicated and a selfless leading militant. During her University days she was a sympathizer and quiet supporter of the active student movement (ESM). In those days, not many women students identified with the militant politics of the student movement, many were more interested in their careers rather than in the plight of landless peasants. But not Mimi, she was sympathetic, conscious. When the 1974 Revolution broke out she became an activist, organizing women and workers secretly. Hers was no theoretical commitment, she and her family had suffered oppression and injustice. She was firmly opposed to the military clique which usurped power and established a dictatorship.

I remember the first time I met Mimi at a mutual friend's house. At the time she was already being hunted by the political police and had gone underground. I was then a "legal" person. Mimi's fourteen years old sister was there too. Seeing the two of them in the condition they were in tore my heart apart. Me and our mutual friend joined in the crying, it was really a tear jerker. Mimi's sister had been arrested during a protest march along with hundreds of elementary and secondary school children in September 1976 (1969 Eth. calendar). She was imprisoned in Kerchiele (the central prison) which housed many political prisoners. There, she was raped by a prison guard and when I met her she was four months pregnant. She was released because of her condition, her pregnancy.

What made things worse for the little girl was that during her stay in prison her whole family had been dispersed. Mimi had to go underground. The contact with their mother who had gone to Harar to get some spring/mineral water treatment for her ailment had been severed as a result of the border war there (Ethiopia-Somalia war). One of her brothers was also arrested. As they say, misery loves company! Her

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crisis was not a simple one. She was mentally affected by the whole affair.

She posed a perplexing question to her sister. "The child that I have conceived: I know it is part of me. At the same time isn't it something put into me by a fascist thug? How can I reconcile these two things? What am I going to do? What shall I do? Tell me my sister! Do something please."

At times, she had tantrums. The whole thing was too much even for a mature fourteen years old that she was. As for Mimi, there was nothing she could do and abortion was too late.

No wonder Mimi was bitter at the enemy. Wouldn't such an experience make anyone bitter? It was because of this and many other reasons that Mimi harbored a strong hatred for the fascist regime, struggled for its demise and hoped for better times, times in which sisters would hug each other and cry only in joy. Mimi did not want to be caught alive by the murderers. She had her cyanide pill hidden inside the traditional medicine pouch hanging from her neck. She took the pill as soon as she had a chance and thus was martyred in the best tradition of the hundreds of courageous fighters for our cause.

The fascist henchmen never realized what had happened. Just the same, a dead body for them was not valueless. The thugs forced one imprisoned young man to carry Mimi's corpse to the Eri Bekentu Bridge and once there her body was covered by the usual Red Terror posters and left for display.

So many memories were flashing through my mind's eye. I had momentarily forgotten where I was and what was happening to me. I was in a trance.... He wouldn't let me escape into my own world, my captor. In the best example of their hooligan nature he dragged me roughly outside the house.

"Defile your mother! Mother fucking cunt!" He rained the foulest of insults at me in Amharic, Arabic and Oromigna. his mouth was foul by all accounts. All the time insulting me, he dragged me through the bumpiest debri and garbage ridden cobblestone alley, stopping every so many minutes to box, slap and kick the hell out of me. He would occasionally step on my throat and threaten to choke me to death. My knees were scraped and bleeding, my teeth also bled, a piece of glass had cut my bare sole. After going a hundred metres or so, we reached an asphalt road where the Red Terror van-the yellow VW (license plate 9502)-was parked with the motor idling.

The Commander of the operation was at the wheels. He stepped out, opened the the other door and took out an aqua colored Red Terror poster and some big nails.

"Get inside. We are going to intensify the Red Terror on you," he growled.

I fell on his feet and begged. i repeated my little tirade about being an innocent maid servant and how "she went with her new dress using the Total road exit". He told his deputy to take me away and handed him the poster and the nails.

By then I was resigned to my fate. I had contemplated many things but I chose not to give him the benefit of the doubt. Why should I give him the satisfaction of knowing that I was indeed his deadly enemy. He took me across the street and led me to a shallow grassy spot.

He pushed me down on the grass. he loaded his Kalashnikov close to my ears and gave me my last chance.

"She went to church in the morning wearing her new dress and using the Total raod." These were going to be my last words. In disgust and frsustration he stomped on my stomach and told me to get up.

The stomp didn't hurt at all.

SEVEN

Soon, he had me walking in front of him on a soft-shoulder road away from the well lighted street. The road was dimly lit and I suspected his motive for taking me on this deserted road.

But I was wrong.

"Stop! Stop, who goes there? Stop!" The shouts came from various directions and several rifles were cocked at the sametime.

I was scared witless but he calmly shouted the pasword and and was told to "come forth".

"What have you there?" asked the captain of the guards." An anarcho?"

After another two minutes walk, we arrived at the gate and guardspost of a large compound. It had a huge stonewall fence with metal spikes and pieces of broken bottles and glass generously cemented on top. The place was well lighted with extra bulbs wired at intervals on the stone walls. The building was a private social club owned by the self help association of an ethnic minority group.

There were lots of armed men with all sorts of firearms. We were escorted by a bunch of curious armed men into the fluorescent lighted hall. As we entered, all heads turned. All three hundred plus eyes were focused on me. A man with a whip flogged the young people crouching on the crowded concrete floor to make way for us to pass towards the two oblong tables where the panel members of the Red Terror Coordinating Committee were seated.

There was few square metres space which was relatively less crowded. And there was a reason for that as I was to find out when they pushed me towards it. A young man named Solomon who was the Kebele elected secretary was on the "parrots perch" being tortured. The torture was halted in anticipation of a new and juicier victim--me!

I was tripped deliberately by my escort and I fell onto the torturer's footsteps. It was all too convenient for him and he stepped on my fingers with his spiked military boots. I was ordered to stand up, someone handed the chairman my ID card.

Before he could even finish calling my name I moved into my routine with the best pathetic voice I could muster: "she went to church wearing her new dress and using the Total road" and added, swooning, "oh, I am going to faint, my head is swirling". I blew my breath onto my hurt fingers. Behind, the panel of the murderers the glass door reflected my own awful appearance.

The visibly tired chairman waved his hands in dismissive disgust as though to say "what a fool we have here!" I was dunked down to the floor where I immediately assumed the foetal position and started to mutter religious utterings. And then, from where I was I caught sight of a very familiar dress. I looked up and her sad, sympathetic eyes met mine. It pained my hear to see her in this place.

Woizero Tsige was a 55 years old--young at heart--militant. She was an elected vice chairperson of the Kebele and her views on the regime--pure distaste--were no secret to many. In fact, it was because she hated the regime that most people had voted her into ther position. She was one of the targets of the Red Terror Front which were usurping all the posts in the Kebele structure from democratic elements. Woizero Tsige knew me and many things about me and those associated with me. We often held meetings in her house and used it for other organizational work. Since she worked both legally and in the clandestine structure she knew quite a lot. Yet,as I was to learn later on, she had been brutally tortured and had said nothing, revealed nothing at all.

That was why the trigger happy Mola, alias Getachew of the All Ethiopia Trade Union, changed his hat, put on a trench coat ,picked up his AK47 with the folding butt and sternly announced: " I am going to intensify the Red Terror on this here EDU and the five anarchists" (older people like Woizero Tsige were presumed to be members of the conservative opposition the Ethiopian Democratic Union).

He led them out of the hall. By then it was about 5 a.m. in the morning. The young people who had been whipped like cattle to stay awake for the 20 hours demonstration that had gone on (since they were called for a meeting at the school next door) were allowed to sleep as they were, where they were.

Monday morning at about 9 a.m. we were awakened by guards who were enjoying their real life blind man's bluff playtime by landing their whips on our bodies randomly.

"Get up you bastard anarchists!, they screamed at us.

The majority of the detained were in the 10-18 age group. There were also many children under the age of ten. As the whips landed on vital body parts, the young people jumped up in pain and trampled on each other. The noise in the room made it seem like a football stadium in which some sort of football hooliganism was going on.

Mola with the dark glasses (even though it was not a sunny day and this was indoors) burst open the door, cowboy style. The floggers stopped in their tracks, the room fell so silent that one could have heard a pin drop. The roomful of people seemed as inconsequential as a fly to Mola. Confident of his good looks and his stylish clothes, he looked down both on his friends and foes. He seemed to be in a world of his own--a violent make believe world.

He pointed hois rifle towards us and in his deranged way shouted out loud:

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"I wasted six 'Kalash' bullets on those six Demos. I could have lined them up in one row and sent one bullet through them".

Was it to exploit our ignorance on the capacity of a Kalashnikov bullet or an extension of his deranged imagination? I couldn't quite make out the significance of the statement if not to merely inform us that Woizero Tsifge and the five others have been executed.

Mola pulled the trigger and enjoyed the sight of many detainees throwing themselves flat in fright.. He laughed a sinister laugh.

The Red Terror Coordinating Committee members were on the sidelines. The center stage was taken over by the likes of Martha, Gidey, Assefa and Jojualla. They told us: "we are going to expose the bankruptcy of 'Demo' today".

Gidey took his shirts off like a striptease artist and showed us his not yet healed torture wounds. Martha pulled up her bell bottoms and exposed scarred legs. Assefa with a megaphone blared: " I was Demo, all of you know damn well that I was. I had killed ten 'revolutionaries' as a member of a Demo squad. But I have now made a self criticism and I have returned to the embracing arms of the Revolution".

Martha snatched the megaphone from Assefa: "I suffered these wounds in vain, I was duped by Demo. Demo means don't--don't read, don't know, don't discuss".

"Demo had made us swallow the 'discipline pill'. She (Demo) had used our theoretical shortcomings to bridle us like mules," said Gidey and Jojualla as if in a duet.

These and other capitulators wagged their tails to impress their masters. They presented some eclectic and totally harebrained theoretical arguments about various political issues such as Fascism, the National Question, Imperialism, etc... In unison, they shouted their primary task of the day in a theatrical way: "We are going to make you Demos spit out the

Demo discipline Quinine. Spit it out! Tell all ! Otherwise, we would intensify our Red Terror on you! Auto criticism, spilling all that you know is the way out."

The audience was prodded to ask questions. No one dared to do so and they were left to cuddle their own contradictory statements.

"This Demo silence is a silence of contempt, the Demo pill is at work again," said one of the Coordinators. At which one young fellow broke the ice and asked a question on a rather unimportant matter to which they attached great significance.

"What is the difference between Enachenfalen and Enashenfalen?" (both meant "we shall win" but the first with the "che" was used by the EPRP). Another girl followed up with the question why Demo is referred to in the feminine form. The so called rehabilitated former Demos gave conflicting and contradictory answers since they were not sure of the official response to these questions. Martha mentioned that the vestiges of Demo mentality haven't been completely demolished even from within themselves: this was her way of shining head and shoulders above the other opportunists. We need the POMOA cadres to come and cleanse us she added, evoking the image of sinister exorcists.

Their act was at times very comical. For instance, there was absolutely no need for a megaphone in that hall and yet they were so eager to use it that they snatched it from each other's mouth and hand. Some of the slogans they made us shout were also hilarious: "we who were formerly tools of Demo are now modern bandas", they shouted proudly. Bandas were the Ethiopian traitors who capitulated to the Italian fascists during the Patriotic War of 1935-41, and "zemenawi banda" (modern banda) was the label given to the opportunist intellectual elements who formed factions in support of the military regime. The modern bandas were not trusted by the government and were later liquidated by the regime they had served zealously.

During a break, one banda came and aimed his automatic rifle between my eyes.

"This looks like a dangerous Demo," he said. "Are you an attack squad or a defense squad? What if I shoot you now?" He was trying to imitate Mola. With deadpan expression I let him have my standard answer: she went to the church wearing her new dress.... "He turned away from me and continued to show off on his former piers. After the break, the forum was "graciously" opened to give the "duped demos the much awaited opportunity" to expose the "bankruptcy of Demo in their own words". There was absolutely no response from the so called demos.

An absolutely furious Mola came to the forefront. Enraged, he forced a few words from his mouth: "that self criticism better starts now or I intensify the Red Terror in this room".

During the first day of the incarceration, each detainee had to fill a questionnaire: name, address, code name, who recruited you? whom have you recruited? which organization (party, youth league, women's, workers', democratic front, etc?), status in the organizational structure (cell, sub zone, zone, defense squad, attack squad, interzone, etc...), what hidden material do you know and where? I had noticed three cadres and one modern banda shuffling and reshuffling some papers. They were very busy with rulers and wide construction paper doing something. But I was not sure what it was.

Mola asked them scornfully if it was going to take them forever to finish the task they had. They informed him that they will be through in ten minutes. Impatient as he was and showing it, he went and picked up a pile of paper from the bunch they were working on. They said or did nothing since they were obviously scared of him.

Mola assumed a dramatic posture: "I am going to call each one of you," he said, "and you have to answer all the questions. If there is as much as an inkling of untruth in your answers I am going to put you on the parrots perch and then I am going to intensify the Red Terror on you."

He started calling out the names and asking the eight questions. The fourth question was where the problem cropped up. Who recruited you? If the prisoner had written or given the name of a person who had long disappeared or has been imprisoned and killed, he is automatically stripped off his clothes (save his underwear) and put on the torture rack. He is then told before being tortured: "that is the Demo pill in you, that Demo trick was written in the Demo internal organ vol.1, no.2 'On How to Evade Police Methods'. We are going to make you spit out the Demo pill" and then the torture would begin.

If the prisoner has given the name of someone not in the hall and who has not disappeared or has not been arrested then he is expected to lead a squad or the so called lightning fast raiding teams to the house of the said person. If the prisoner has given the name of someone who is presently in the hall, the said person's questionnaire is pulled out and checked. If his answer to question no.5 (whom have you recruited?) does not correspond to what has been alleged then the two are put on the spot. "How imbued are they with the Demo pill? How far would the denials go? How much torture could they withstand? Who will break first? why don't we let one torture the other? Would they be cruel on each other? What will the audience learn from the whole session? how fast?" They shot these and other weird queries sounding like some mad scientist from the pages of a book. It struck me as a sort of weird puppet show, they enjoyed watching the Demos torture and knock each other, helpless, forced, left no quarters, reduced to this level...The professional torturer was exclusive, he took care of only the "hard Demos".

The torture took place right there in front of the mass audience with the prisoner stripped to his or her underpants. He is told to sit on the floor and pull his knees up towards his chest and extend his hands towards his ankle. His hand and feet are then tightly with a plastic rope. A crooked pestle or stick is put between the folded knees and the stretched hands. Then the two ends of the stick are picked up by two attendants and the prisoner is suspended in that position with the two ends placed on two chairs. At the torturer's will, the prisoner can be

moved like a chicken on a roasting wire is turned for seasoning or basting. He can then be subjected to the various torture instruments.

The torture paraphenalia included whips, sticks of various shapes and sizes, plastic ropes of all sizes, belts with heavy metal buckles, long pieces of torn truck and tractor tires knotted at various spots, thin knotted pieces of wires, swords, matches, cigarette lighters and plastic bags, balled up dirty socks, rags soaked in urine, etc... The most sensitive organs subjected to torture were the soles of the feet, under arms, back bones, ladies breasts-nipples, private parts, kneecaps....

The physical torture was complemented by psychological ordeals aimed to cause ambivalence, alienation, humiliation, fear and imbalance within the tortured and the mass audience watching the act. They had both simple, crude and subtle ways of waging the psychological warfare. Slogans demoting our organization are repeatedly chanted. The prisoners are watched closely to see if they are wholeheartedly shouting these slogans: "down with Demo!", etc... Hours went by in this manner-torture galore. Some of them were really gory scenes: only a handful of the questionnaire have provided this much spectacle.

In the meantime, the cadres and bandas had put up seven charts with the ideal organizational structures of the EPRP. Each large chart was to be a score card of who is who and where within the organizational structure. Every information that they coerced out of someone was recorded on it. Other previous information were also entered in the chart. Exchanges of information from other detention centers were carried out through the telephone and recorded on the charts. In fact, the detention centers corresponded to the sub region of our structure. The youth of two or three Kebeles that formed our subregion were detained in one center. When they find out their identities and positions they interned them all together at a Higher Detention Center and tortured and worked on them to break them up. Fear and torture lead to betrayals quite often. It was not for nothing that many large buildings, garages, schools and warehouses were converted into Kebele and Keftegna prisons.

The "expose!" and "counter expose!", the "spit out!" and torture sessions went on most of the day. We were given a break only for excretion and dinner. There were only 4 latrines for the whole crowd and this led to an endless queue to use the latrines at the prescribed times. They had assigned three full time attendants to control the activities at the out-house. The sanitary condition was worse than disastrous and this was true not only of the latrines but of the hall we were interned in. Food and other rubbish was piling up on top of us. The stench of unwashed feet, socks and bodies (some with unattended wounds) was unbearable.

They were allowing families to bring in food, and bring in plenty. Plenty of fruits and cigarettes too. The families brought excess food as is the custom to take in more and good food for those imprisoned for one reason or another. The Red Terror thugs, more than 60 were assigned to us, had thus no logistical problems: they ate well, smoked our cigarettes, etc... Since they searched the food that was brought to us, they chose the most appetizing and kept these for themselves.

Although there was an atmosphere of fear hanging over the assembly hall, the fact that they were liberal on food, drinks and cigarettes had given some of the young prisoners the impression that the worst was over. Some of the cadres were going around eating and tasting from various dishes showing their "good and friendly" disposition and integration. They were in fact extra friendly with the smokers. Most of them were joking and telling the smoker prisoners that they have now been "liberated, since your parents now acknowledge that you are smokers and are bringing you cigarettes," etc... Laughter from the cadres and officials.

Enter Mola, as usual suddenly. He snatches a whip from an attendant and the hall becomes silent.

"You bastard anarchists", he shouted, "the whole day you have been telling us that you made a self criticism and that you have come back to Mother Revolution. But you have bitten the breast of your mother. There are Demos in this room who are showing us nice smiles while stabbing

us in the back. We have found a hidden message in the bottoms of the thermos flasks and dishes, lists of the names of us revolutionaries being sent to the Demo headquarters. We have these messages and we know the individuals who have sent them. Five Demos are involved, we know you. If you do not expose yourselves in five minutes the Red Terror will be intensified on you."

He took off his watch from his wrist and held it out with his fingers. Five minutes!

EIGHT

After Mola's terrorizing declaration, absolutely no one came to the forefront to expose themselves precisely because everyone knew the whole thing was concocted by the Red Terror Coordinating Committee. Then Mola's countdown to zero came...

He called out five names and told them to come out "on the double".

All the five youths protested that they hadn't done any such thing. Their faces were ashen, they were visibly very terrified. He drove them out of the hall... It was late in the evening when only one of the young men was brought back to the hall. An elderly man whom I suspected to be the young man's father was also brought in, wearing his pyjamas and a morning coat. The man was sweating a lot and wiped his face nervously every so many minutes. After a while the older man was called out of the room.

The Expose! session went on past midnight. Every hour or every so many minutes new prisoners are brought in surrounded by the raiding parties. As soon as the new prisoner is registered at the oblong tables, the prisoners who know him or have exposed him are sent to the new prisoner as reception hosts. The cadres set up a place for them to sit and discuss.

Engida, the local cadre brought in a group of 4 prisoners to where I was crouching.

"Convince these two Demos what is good for them," he ordered. "You better get results or else all of you will taste the Red Terror". The two were new prisoners brought in after being denounced by the two others.

One of those prisoners who had exposed them said to them: "it is no use. the organization has been crushed. No use paying a sacrifice. They everything, everyone has talked, there is no more organizational discipline. It is foolish to hurt oneself for a non existent cause." The other one also joined in echoing everything the falsifiers of history had said to him: "the leaders of the organization do not care for us, they are in Europe; if the organization did exist why didn't it save us? It is better to save ourselves, better to talk; Look at Fantahun there, he refused to talk and the only thing he got out of it is a broken body. Don't be fools. Tell all!"

The first fellow butted in: "you may be offended because I exposed you. But you should actually be grateful, it is for your own good. You better talk or they will break you."

Conversations and confrontations like this one helped them to break or at least weaken the new arrivals. If there is any hesitation, the torture gang takes over and the torture platform was hardly ever empty for the lack of victims.

At about 1 a.m. we were allowed to sleep, the girls on one side and the boys on the other side... Tuesday, early in the morning, there was a lot of commotion outside the stonewall fencing. Apparently, more than the usual number of family visitors were pushing and shoving each other to stand on the ledge of the fencing on the opposite side of the street. All we could hear was the loud voices of the guards and the shrill voices of women.

One of the Red Terror Committee members came in and called the Higher Office/Detention camp and explained the situation. He requested extra worker revolutionary guards. He also said he was going to restrict entry to the detention zone and to strengthen the barricade on the roads. Mola, who had been catnapping on his chair embracing his AK47, with his feet on the table and his face covered by his hat, got up.

"I don't understand these 'anarcho'mothers", he complained. "They don't regulate their children's activities, they even encourage them to go bad. And when they get what is due to them, they make a big scene. Tell them to get the hell out of there fast or I am going to repeat the Red Terror demonstration on them!"

The whole morning they were busy trying to settle the situation outside. Then the much awaited "consciousness raiser and cleanser of all Demo sins"— a cadre from one of the so called clandestine organizations (allied to the regime in power)— came to give us a lecture. He talked about the necessity of theoretical clarity. Thus, it was decided that study groups should be set up to give the prisoners education and theoretical knowledge. It was the only catharsis to purge away the Demo spirit, they seemed to say. The cadre told us that the slogan of the day should be "crush the trotskite EPRP!" He repeated this slogan and tried to make us repeat it with some feeling and verve.

He then wrote on the blackboard the lyrics to a song whose rough translation goes as follows:

oh how pleasant!/ oh how pleasant;

it is really a treat/ to see that no good scoundrel and cheat;

EPRP's mercenary that trotskite

Hit by the Red Terror/ and his body thrown in the middle of the street.

His enthusiasm to make us recite and memorize this cruel song was really an act in itself. None but a few of the prisoners shared his enthusiasm because it was such a sadistic song. He resorted to force to shove it down our throats. The attendants with the whips were used to check and make sure everyone sang it loud and and from the bottom of his heart. Satisfied, he gloated about the might of the Red Terror, the demise of the trotskites.

Then someone raised his hands and asked what trotskite meant. It was one of those animal? mineral? vegetable? type of questions from one who genuinely did not know. What was funny was that the cadre could not explain. Everyone grumbled that they did not understand. He excused himself saying he had a busy schedule and left promising to be back another day with a full explanation of the animal (vegetable?mineral?) called trotskite!

NINE

The population of the prison steadily increased as more and more raids were carried out and as all young people found outside on the streets were arbitrarily picked up and brought in.

One batch of young people were led in not by the familiar raiding party we had gotten accustomed to. They were led in by the likes of Ergeté Medebew, Semunegus, Kelbessa and Alemayehu. These were the most notorious criminal and lumpen elements whose insatiable appetite for murder has wedded them with the regime. They had been doing their rounds, visiting the detention centers to check out each prisoner with painstaking scrutiny and to make sure that anyone wanted on a city wide basis did not escape due to lack of attention or vigilance on the part of the Kebelles.

Since the Kelbessas and Ergetes were more experienced in matters of violence and brigandage of the worst kind, their other mission was to pass on their experience to the juniors, to the likes of Mola. Yes, even our notorious Mola played second fiddle to these superweight mur-