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ARTICLE

A note on Abebe Reta’s role in the Ethio-Swedish contacts
Abraha Weldu
Review

A note on Abebe Reta’s role in the Ethio-Swedish contacts

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Received 7 February, 2016; Accepted 17 March, 2017

Persons who are in one way or another had been involved in the Ethio-Swedish contacts, have not been well studied. The research behind the present study has purposes. First and foremost, it intends to trace personal files and memories with information significant to understand the Ethio-Swedish contacts, which could not be gotten from official archives. Secondly, to gain authentic sources which could not be obtain from other written literatures, and which could be used as an alternative for the interpretation of the changes of foreign relations that otherwise could not be understood by a scholar of a later generation. The situation, therefore, led the researcher to trace information from letters, correspondence, diaries, government reports, and archives of Abebe Reta, Haile Silassie’s personal representative in his relations with Sweden in 1940s. Abebe Reta, who took his education from Swedish Evangelical Mission, played an important role in re-establishing relations with Sweden in the post-1941. In 1944, Abebe made efforts to find out qualified Swedish experts in the field of health, military and education to work in Ethiopia. The attempt to re-establish the contact with Sweden was, however, made secret in order not to challenge the Ethio-British relations. In sum, the enquiry to find Swedish co-operation was a commission accredited to Abebe by the Emperor. Thus, this research project brings to light how Abebe appeared to manage Ethiopia’s foreign affairs in the critical hours.

Key words: Ethio-Swedish contacts, Abebe Reta, Haile Selassie, Sweden.

INTRODUCTION

Born into a humble family, Abebe Reta was one of the most trusted and widely respected figures of the imperial government of Haile Selassie. He was a scholar in history and religion, particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; and served in various capacities for about four decades and half. He rose to become one of the most powerful politicians in the twentieth-century Ethiopia, and one of closest advisors of Haile Silassie’s post-1941 government.

The present study intends to explore his contribution in reactivating Ethiopia’s relations with the Swedish from 1945 to 1950. The important issue of why Ethiopian Government decided to recruit Swedes to take part in rebuilding Ethiopia will be discussed. In analyzing Abebe’s endeavours, two basic distinctions have to be made, namely the interest of the state and the individual’s.

After being trained English by Swedish Evangelical Mission in Addis Ababa, Abebe went to Scotland for further education in 1935. His close acquaintance with Emperor Haile Silassie had begun in the first period of the Italian occupation, in this particular city.
After Haile Silassie witness the fascist atrocities, he became extremely shocked by the Ethiopia's political and military situation. Emperor Haile Silassie decided to appeal personally to the Ethiopia's case in the League of Nation. The emperor, his family and some officials left Addis Ababa for Djibouti by train and then took a ship to Jerusalem and finally to London (Bahiru, 2002; Makonnen, 1997). In 1936, Abebe Reta who was in London ahead of the imperial entourage assisted the staff in important tasks. The city of Bath deemed to be recommended by Abebe Reta for its safety and proximity to London, the political centre.

In London, Abebe rented out a single room apartment near Gloucester Road. However, in most cases, Abebe spent much of his time in the emperor's apartment to tutor the imperial family. It was at this time, also, that he came into contact with Princess Tenagne-Work, the daughter of Emperor Haile Silassie, and married her for a brief period of time (Norberg, 1977).

Princess Tenagne-Work gave birth to Emebet Tsige Mariam (Mary) during their brief union. Oral accounts claim that Emperor Haile Silassie was not interested in the union on the condition that Abebe Reta was not considered to have sufficient social standing to marry her. Covertly, the nobility's also displayed fierce opposition to discourage the practice. In such case, the union did not last long for indistinct reasons.

In the apartment, Abebe carried out important diplomatic activities of the exile Ethiopian Government. Importantly, correspondence was performed by a shift system based on language. The English correspondence was carried out by Abebe with his staff Emmanuel Abraham in the morning. The French correspondence was carried out by Lorenzo Taezaz and Petrides in the afternoon. Abebe, according to Makonnen, basically carried out the correspondence free of charges (Makonnen, 1997). He was firmly preoccupied in organizing and undertaking invaluable correspondence for the government-in-exile.

In fact, each of these factors contributed in differing degrees to Abebe Reta's eventual appointment as Ethiopian ambassador to London, a post which he held for years. Side by side, he was accredited to re-establish the economic and political relations with Sweden. In this regard, he made efforts to recruit qualified experts in the fields of education, health, mining and police. He had been encouraged by the Swedish missionary societies to establish schools and clinics throughout Ethiopia.

Five days after imperial restoration, a ministerial appointment was carried out and named Abebe in several posts. He was first appointed as Chairman of the Board of Ethiopian Air Lines. After a year on the Board, Abebe was given another appointment which was the Ethiopian Ambassador to Great Britain, where he remained for some eight years.

Abebe's educational background and previous experience, particularly his performance he manifested in London qualified him for such position. In addition, his appointment was due to the result of Haile Silassie's policy of modernizing the imperial government. Towards this end, most of the pre-war young intellectuals were reinstated, with promotions (Makonnen, 1997).

In the process, the researcher argued that Abebe's language fluency, employment in London and acquaintance with Haile Silassie in the time of hardship, helped him to develop close intimacy, and to obtain trustworthy and endorsement by the emperor.

In this study, effort has been made to use both archives and published sources to substantiate oral sources. Using private archives, the researcher had tried to reconstruct the Ethio-Swedish contacts that passed along unofficial channels. The private archives of Abebe Reta together with other literatures, offers a firm basis for an analysis of the Ethio-Swedish contacts.

Abebe Reta in the Ethio-Swedish contacts

In 1920s, many young Ethiopians including Abebe Reta had been trained in English at the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Addis Ababa. Halldin Norberg has studied the role of Swedish missionaries in educating influential Ethiopians including Abebe Reta. He sheds light on the number of students who are attached to the Swedish Mission Schools.

Information about the number of students and their respective societies can be obtained from his study as well. The Swedish Evangelical Mission in Addis Ababa, where Abebe taught, Neqemte and Najo schools published annual student data. This helps us to obtain detail information on the number and background of the students. This is uncommon in the other mission school of the period.

The Swedish missionaries, nonetheless, played an important role in providing modern education for many Ethiopians. Blatengeta Hiruy, Haile Silassie's intimate confident and his minister of foreign affairs during the 1920s and 1930s could be mentioned as an example of a leading Ethiopian, who obtained part of his education from a Swedish Mission school.

Hiruy studied English in the Cederqvist, the English school around 1906.

[1] The overall description is based on interviews that took place on Monday, May 31, 2016, Mekelle.
[2] Interview with Hailu Habtu and Dinar Amare
[3] Interview with Dinar Amare and Tesfahun
[6] The analysis of the Ethio-Swedish is first carried out by Norberg (1977) and followed by Sida (2004). Without their skilful analysis, it is doubtful whether the intricacies of Abebe's contribution would have become apparent to me. Certainly the task would have been a much more difficult.
He accompanied Ras Taffari to Europe and most importantly helped him when he turned to Sweden for advisors in the late 1920s (Norberg, 1977). Swedish mission schools were able to produce important personalities who played a key role in the Ethio-Swedish contacts. As noted earlier, Blatengeta Hiruy and Abebe Reta, who worked in reactivating the Ethio-Swedish co-operation in 1920s and 1940s respectively, were both trained by the Swedish. Abebe Reta’s activities as Emperor Haile Sillasie’s personal representative in his contact with Sweden began in 1943 and continued throughout 1960s. As a result of the first Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement, Abebe had limited possibilities to push forward the contacts with the Sweden (Norberg, 1977). The study intends to examine how Abebe’s private activities and channels helped to reactivate the pre-war relations with Sweden.

To begin with, Abebe Reta made a private journey to Sweden in 1942. The visit initiated a period of reactivating Ethio-Swedish contacts. The pre-war staff in Ethiopia, Frank Hammar, similarly meets with Abebe Reta in London in 1943 to deal on the possibility of re-establishing Ethio-Swedish co-operations.

Abebe Reta accredited a special commission to Hammar to embark on preparatory surveys in Sweden to recruit a physician to work in the imperial family. The commission was made based on a strict confidential basis; and it took place without the knowledge of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In February 1944, however, Hammar needed the help of Swedish foreign office to transfer letters to Abebe. Hammar sent the Swedish Ministry a memorandum on his contact with Abebe which the office approved, and actions to be taken.

Hammar told Abebe about the overall progress. In the meantime, Hammar was not able to recruit a qualified staff for the position of private physician to Emperor Haile Sillasie. He had informed Abebe, however, that many Swedish companies would be happy to engage in the post-war economic rebuilding of Ethiopia. At this time, Abebe tried to explain why Ethiopia preferred to get support from Sweden than from the United States or Great Britain. In one of the discussions with the Swedish authorities, Abebe stated that the medical staffs were highly needed in Ethiopia. And the Haile Sillasie government was ready to obtain such staff from Sweden. To speed up the process, however, Abebe meet Björn Prytz, the Swedish Minister in London. It was an effort to realize from Prytz whether the Swedish Government was in a way to suggest candidates to work in Ethiopia. Ethiopia requested Swede advisors for seven posts in Military, seven in Health and Eight in Education. Prytz directly asked Abebe whether any objection would come from any other foreign powers particularly Great Britain. Subsequently, Abebe tried to insure the Swedes that it was actually clear that no objection would be elevated from any Great Powers. He further promised that the advisors wanted by the Ethiopian Government would be kept secret (Sida and Global Reporting, 2004).

Abebe Reta was profoundly inspired to re-establish the pre-war co-operation with Sweden. The former Swedish missionaries and officers retained a good name in Ethiopia. They could offer important service in several posts in the post-war imperial government. After re-establishing official contacts, Swedish might also provide certain opportunities for both import and exports. Taking into account the interest of Crown Prices of Sweden, Gustaf Adolf, in Ethiopia, Prytz had sent a copy of the letter to Abebe. Therefore, the situation speedup Swedish response to Ethiopian enquiries.

In September 1944, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs resumed its contact with Frank Hammar. Hammar was a civil Engineer and recruited staff in Ethiopia in the pre-war period. The Swedish response regarding the Ethiopian enquiries were forwarded to Hammar in an extremely confidential matter. Abebe assumed that the desire of the Missionary Societies to recommence their work in Ethiopia was almost welcome by the Emperor. Some posts for the teachers and physicians stated in the Prytz’s letter could be performed by missionaries. The crown prince and Hammar drafted a letter to express their appreciation of Ethiopia’s approach and their interest to find qualified candidates. The document was sent to Prytz, who handed it over to Abebe Reta to be forward to Emperor Haile Sillasie (Norberg, 1977).

Gradually, a good number of Swedish showed their interest to work in Ethiopia. In 1943, for instance, the Swedish Evangelical Mission and Swedish Mission BV had expressed readiness to send missionaries to Ethiopia if only visas and transport could be provided for them. There were, however, two basic problems relating to the employment of foreigners in Ethiopia. First and foremost, the 1942 Anglo-Ethiopian agreement restricted the employment of experts in Ethiopia other than British citizens. Second, Ethiopia did not prepared any clear policy on the condition of their work. These situations may have affected the employment of the missionaries (Norberg, 1977; Paivi, 2006).

During his tour to Sweden in 23 March 1945, Abebe participated in a committee meeting at Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) where he presented an invitation to the mission societies to open schools and clinics in the major provinces. Abebe remarked that Ethiopia had turned to Sweden because of the great admiration of the tasks carried out in the pre-war period. Further, he stated that he personally was prepared to

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7 Karl Cederqvist founded a school for boys, which was called the English school, because he taught English.

8 Hammar was one of the key contacts both during the first unofficial Ethiopian enquiries via London in 1943 and later regarding the further development of the Ethio-Swedish relations and the establishment of the Abyssinian committee in 1944/45.

support SEM's work. The Board was also secretly informed about the Abyssinian Committee and the Ethiopian enquiries about professionals from Sweden.

The imperial government intended to employ staff for the key posts, while the mission was invited to work in the main provincial cities. Stjärne was accredited to prepare a progressive plan for the prolongation and extension of work in Ethiopia. The board was determined to cooperate with Swedish Mission Bibeltroget Vänner (SMBV) concerning the mission. They would attempt to work with the Abyssinian Committee so as to recruit experts with a Christian tendency for service in the Haile Silassie's government. Direct contact was also established between Abebe Reta and members of SEM and SMBV, where an organization of SMBV's and SEM's resources in Ethiopia was communicated (Norberg, 1977).

Both Axel B. Svensson and other Swedes anticipated difficulties in this field. For example, Nils Dahlberg, the administrator of Mission at SEM, concerned about the possible effects of the Decree for missionary societies work. Dahlberg had, however, been personally insured by Abebe Reta that 'in view of the excellent results of former work' SEM would be allowed to establish schools throughout Ethiopia, if they could only bring expert for such a broad program. Abebe deemed that such work should be invaluable in the reconstruction of the post-war Ethiopian government (Norberg, 1977).

In February 1945, an informal discussion with former members of the SEM and the SMBV, organized by Crown Prince Gustaf, held at Stockholm. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a committee whose responsibility would be to follow up incoming applications from individuals willing to work in Ethiopia. The discussion resulted in the establishment of a committee including of Tamm, Hylander and Grafstorn. The efforts to recruit Swedish advisors therefore lead to the establishment of a committee. It was basically responsible to examine both applications and the situations of employment. It was informed to recruit only qualified individuals for each post in Ethiopian. In due course, many Swedish experts showed their interest to work in Ethiopia. This settled the question of whether Swedes were to be sent to Ethiopia or not. But a controversy on the condition of works in Ethiopian was still continued (Norberg, 1977).

In March 1945, Abebe Reta travelled to Stockholm from London as Ethiopia's special emissary. He delivered an answer to Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf's document and negotiated the recruitment of Swedes for service in Ethiopia. In the document, the Ethiopian government remained the work offered by both the Christian missions and Swedish officers, and pledged to resume all the pre-war service as soon as possible. To speed up diplomatic contacts, the emperor granted both land and residence in Addis Ababa a Swedish visa. Abebe also brought a document from the Ethiopian Government to the Swedish Evangelical Mission, inviting to resume their work with a broaden program. He made important private progress to re-establish the early supports by the Sweden Evangelical Mission (Norberg, 1977).

In 15 March 1945, Abebe Reta participated in an assembly with the Abyssinian committee. The committee discussed the Aide Memoire which brought was brought from London by him. The Aide Memoire constituted an 'initial and minimum lists of Swedes' that the Ethiopian Government wanted to employ. In addition, it contained a draft standard contract for the foreign experts. The document listed experts for important posts in justice, defense, police, health and education in Ethiopia. The list further mentioned their duties and responsibilities in Ethiopia. In fact, the request of Ethiopia Government was intended to counterbalance the British domination. The existence of British advisors in every position threatened the political exercise of the imperial government. Therefore, Ethiopian Government requested Swedes advisors for the following positions: two advisers to the Ministry of Justice and one adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, instructor and chief of police school and twelve policemen for all provinces, teachers for primary schools and secondary schools, two physicians and four nurses that will work in the hospital in Addis Ababa, instructors to teach Ethiopian physicians and nurses, and twenty four physicians and twenty four nurses for Addis Ababa and the twelve provinces, 2 engineers and 1 boss to supervise mining.  

The discussion resulted in a standard agreement, which was to be applied for Swedish workers in Ethiopia. Abebe discussed on the overall progress with the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Director of Mission for SEM, and the crown prince. After he carried out his first mission, Abebe returned to London in 17 March 1945. The Ethiopian Government appreciated Abebe for his endeavour to convince the Swedes.

Emperor Haile Silassie had in mind the opportunity of reorganizing the Ethiopian army with help from Sweden. The Emperor, however, planned to delay any actions to that effect until the WWII was over. A Swedish Military Mission like the one in 1934 was later incorporated in the 'initial and minimum list of Swedes' brought to Sweden by Abebe in March 1945. The Swedish Government agreed to send a Mission to Ethiopia, underling, however, that the issue should be kept as strictly confidential, nothing being stated about it in the press or in official correspondence.  

In early May 1945, Abebe was told by the Swedish authorities that Colonel Viking Tam attended by a captain, was ready to go to Ethiopia. It was intended to make without delay as head of a forthcoming military mission. Tamm was ready to work at Haile Silassie's

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11 Ibid. pp.176-177.
12 Ibid. p.212.
disposal to arrange Swedish advisors support as a whole. He would accompany Dr Erik Norup, a surgeon, and 4 nurses. In addition, Axel Blomer would become chief of the police department and go to Ethiopia in October with Sergeant Bengt Rehnström.13 Educational and legal experts could possibly be sent to Ethiopia in the course of 1945. Therefore, the Swedish had approved all positions in Abebe Reta’s memorandum.14

As early as 20 March 1945, Tamm had informed Captain Tage Olhln concerning a probable Swedish military delegation to the Ethiopian Government. At the end of April 1945, Tamm told Olhln that he was determined to accept a post in Ethiopia if a Swedish Military Mission is materialized. In many cases, Tamm aimed to recommend Olhln for a post if he applied for one. From 1945 to 1952, more than twenty Swedish army officers participated in various positions.15

Viking Tamm remained uncertain why Emperor Haile Silassie sought to transfer the responsibility for the training of Ethiopian army from Britain to the Swedes as soon as possible. When Abebe Reta visited Stockholm, he discussed with Tamm on the responsibility of military training in Ethiopia. Abebe mentioned that the Swedish Military delegation might provide greater training than training the Imperial Guard. In Addis Ababa, he had also informed Jarring that the Ethiopian Government intend to change the British Military Mission with Swedish Military Mission as soon as possible. In early 1946, Colonel Tamm must thus have had grounds to deem that within a near future he would take over the responsibilities of the British Military Mission.16

In May 1 1945, Per Stjärne arrived in Ethiopia. He first discussed with the Emperor’s representatives about the possibility of enlarged Ethio-Swedish collaboration. In the Emperor’s request, Abebe went to Addis Ababa from London to chair the meeting. When Abebe left the city in the middle of May he took with him important document from Crown Prince Gustaf to the Emperor. Directly after his arrival in Addis Ababa, Emperor Haile Silassie discussed his country’s needs for Swedish expert with Abebe and Per Stjärne. The Emperor was anxious to keep the talks about the planed Ethio-Swedish co-operation strictly confidential. This was basically aimed in order not to challenge the Ethio-British contacts.17

In January 1946, Gunnar Jarring came to Ethiopia as Swedish Charge D’Affaires. Jarring carried out inquiries of Abebe Reta, as well as questioning the various legations, according to the response of the great powers to the arrival of Swedes in Ethiopia. Abebe criticized the British because they were not very co-operative towards the American initiative in Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Silassie was said to continue this contest with keen interest, using it to obtain the greatest possible number of Swedish experts. The British, Russian and American diplomats all discussed Gunner Jarring about the numbers of Swedes who had already arrived in Ethiopia, and those expected to arrive. The British and Russian diplomats were mainly interested in the officers’ works.

The American diplomat was said to have been rather reserved and uninterested to become involved in any detailed talks about Swedish plans in Ethiopia. The British diplomat had been rather open, and expressed worry about the great number of American experts, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration representatives and businessmen.

The British diplomat said that his country preferred Swedes than Americans. But he questioned what Jarring knew about the Russian programs. The French were mainly concerned in the border line between Somaliland and Ethiopia, and the railway between Addis Ababa and Djibouti. The French Minister only questioned the two Swedish subjects in the Ethiopian boundary commission.18

In spite of the Ethiopian authorities’ effort to keep secret, the Ethio-Swedish relations on the probable employment of Swedish advisors, information about the issue leaked out. Rumours circulated in Addis Ababa about a Swedish Military delegation would take over the responsibilities of the British Military Mission to Ethiopia. The rumour was, however, firmly rejected as groundless by the Ethiopian authorities, including Abebe Reta. The coming of a Swedish advisory unity, mainly the Swedish Military Mission, denied by the Ethiopian Government even after applications for transit visas for Eritrea and Sudan route to Ethiopia had been sent from Sweden to the British Foreign Office.

When the Ethiopian authorities refused to communicate any information about the Swedes’ duties in Ethiopia, the British Foreign Office retaliated by refusing to offer the transit visas. The entry visas to Ethiopia were postponed, because the entire issue was kept secret that nobody except Abebe Reta at the Legation in London knew about the Swedes’ future plans in Ethiopia. After Abebe’s departure in May, confusion elevated. In the meantime, the departure of the first group of Swedish advisors was appeared to delay. The Swedes informed the British that their military mission was concerned with the Imperial Guard and by no means would challenge the British Military Mission’s activities. The British diplomat explained that the Swedes visas were delayed because of the unwillingness of the Ethiopian authorities to inform them about the plan of the Swedes’ expedition to Ethiopia.19

The American diplomats were also kept informed about

17 Ibid, p.213.
19 Ibid, pp.176-177.
the Ethiopian aims to recruit Swedish experts. The British attempt to control Ethiopia’s foreign contacts was clearly indicated by the action of the British Foreign Office in delaying the visas of the Swedish experts. In fact, this action entirely contradicted the 1944 of Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement. The deal was made concerning the Ethiopian Government free to recruit foreign experts from any country without consulting the British Foreign office.20

Importantly, Emperor Haile Silassie discussed Abebe Reta on the possibility of acquiring government credit from Swedish Government. After reaching an agreement with Abebe, the Emperor sent a request for loan. The Emperor finally decided to credit 5 million Sw. Crowns to efficiently run the government plans. Directly, a detail request was sent to the Swedish Government in July 1945. The Swedish, however, decided to make investigations regarding the preconditions for a credit before replaying a clear-cut answer. The specified credit was demanded to finance the Swedish experts (Norberg, 1977).

The agreements were that the credit should be made usable in Swedish Crowns. In addition, it should be used for Swedish advisors as well as for materials necessary for their work in Ethiopia. In October 1945, the credit was officially approved by the Swedish Government.21 The interest was to be 3.5% yearly to be paid in semi-annual instalments. By 31 December 1950, the latest loan should be completely repaid (Norberg, 1977).

At the end of August 1945, Abebe Reta returned to Stockholm to discuss the recruitment of Swedish expert for Ethiopia, and stayed for about ten weeks. Before leaving Stockholm, he appointed Dr Friðy Hylander as Ethiopian Honorary Consul in Sweden until an Ethiopian diplomat could be named. Hylander’s main job would be to enquire Swedes for work in Ethiopia. As Ethiopian representative, he was allowed to settle issues regarding payments from the credit with promissory notes, sent to him from Ethiopia. Abebe Reta was assigned to sign the promissory notes on behalf of the Ethiopian Government against the Swedish credit. Since the discussion about a Swedish Government credit was entirely accredited to Abebe by Emperor Haile Silassie, the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance was by no means involved until later.

The credit of 5 million Swedish Crowns intends to cover travelling expenses and salaries for a large number of experts from Sweden as well as materials necessary for their work in Ethiopia.22 The Swedish Ministry of Finance outlined a scale of salaries for the advisors in Ethiopia. It was prepared depending on the salaries for the different vocational institutions in Sweden. Part of the advisors’ payment was paid in Swedish currency in Sweden. The Ethiopian representative in Sweden was responsible for these transactions. The credit, however, diminished quickly due to expensive orders for equipment from the different expert units during the first months of 1946 (Sida and Global Reporting, 2004). By March 1946, Hylander found it compulsory to convince the Swedish Government to extend the credit.

Since the enquiry regarding a Swedish credit was a commission given directly to Abebe Reta by Emperor Haile Silassie, the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance was not involved until later. As a result, it was unable to coordinate the expenditures of the other Ethiopian ministries for material suggested. The authorities in Sweden and Ethiopia had also different outlooks on how the credit should be used. The Ethiopians intended to use as much as possible the credit for purchases in Sweden, while the Swedes were most worried to see that the salaries of the experts were paid in due order (Norberg, 1977).

To sum it up, the credit from the Swedish Government solved the financial shortage for the experts from the Ethiopian Government for a while. The weak participation of the Ethiopian Ministry Finance in the process and other related factors altered the effective utilization of the foreign credit. Further, the divergent views on how the credit should be used and expensive orders by the Swede experts forced Ethiopian to request additional credit from Swedish. As usual, the Emperor was sent new emissaries to Sweden to negotiate additional credit.

**CONCLUSION**

This preliminary study sheds light on the role of Abebe Reta in re-establishing the pre-war Ethio-Swedish relations following Ethiopia’s liberation from Italian occupation. Abebe was a least known diplomat and public figure who served the imperial government well in the 1940s and 1950s. He had obtained part of his education from a Swedish Missionary in Addis Ababa. His early contact with the Swedish had left a positive impact on the young Abebe who attempted to reactivate the amicable relations between Ethiopia and Sweden during the post Liberation period.

Emperor Haile Silassie placed Abebe Reta as his personal representative to Sweden in 1942. Abebe enabled the imperial government to obtain experts and financial credit from the Sweden Government. In fact, the process to reactivating the Ethio-Swedish relations and to recruit experts was not an easy task for Abebe. The Great powers reacted to this diplomatic contacts, especially the recruitment of experts in 1945 to 1946, was very serious. Abebe was, therefore, careful not to disturb Ethiopia’s relation with these powers. He had requested that recruitments as well as the departure of the advisors should obtain as secretly as possible. Abebe tried to accomplish the task as soon as possible. In 1945, for example, when Abebe visited Sweden he wanted to sign as many contracts as possible.

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In conclusion we can say that the employment of Swedish experts in Ethiopia in the mid-1940s was basically carried out by individuals. The Swedish experts were supplied through Abebe Reta’s communication with the Swedes authorities. Emperor Haile Silassie’s guidance was also important in the process. The experts were essentially helped in the reconstruction of Ethiopia in the post-liberation period.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Hailu Habtu (PhD, Mekelle University), Dinar Amare (PhD, Candidate MU), and Tesfahu (PhD).

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