

## REASONS FOR HOPE

“Meles has the power to inflict only that which we lack the strength to resist”

Haki Berhane (Norway)

Legesse Zenawi as a dictator may have a variety of motives and objectives underlying his present vow to “continue implementing development and good governance activities with more vigour in the coming five years”.

We know that power, position, wealth are his real motives “good governance?” from EPRDF “LEMAYAWKISH TATEGN!”. Legesse very well knows that his power, position and wealth through “EFFORT” and government funds will not be served if he abandons his control position. That is why in the event of the last “democratic” election Legesse as a dictator tried his best to preserve his goals. He killed our brothers and sisters to stop “insurrection” as he bluntly told the Hard Talk journalist. Legesse offered false “democratic” election promises, to secure submission from his democratic opponents, and then brazenly violated those same agreements and maintained his power, position and has started to blow his whistles on how he is going to implement development in his third term.

The Ethiopian people are warning the opposition. If the opposition agree to halt resistance in order to gain a reprieve from repression, they will be very disappointed. Our people understand that a halt to resistance rarely brings reduced repression. They know that once the restraining force of internal and international opposition has been removed, the Legesse clique may even make their oppression and violence more brutal than before. The collapse of popular resistance often removes the countervailing force which has limited the control and brutality of the dictatorship. The tyrants Legesse and Bereket can then move ahead against whomever they wish. Had it not been for the popular resistance Legesse would not hesitate to kill opposition leaders. Legesse as a tyrant has the power to inflict only that which we the Ethiopians lack the strength to resist. The traitor Legesse said, that there would never be any dialogue with opposition parties unless they honour the decision of the Electoral Board and pursue their cases in a legal and peaceful manner.

We don't mind. We know that resistance, not negotiations, is essential for change in conflicts where fundamental issues are at stake. Resistance must continue to drive Legesse and his clique out of power. Success is most often determined not by negotiating a settlement but through the wise use of the most appropriate and powerful means of resistance available. Political defiance, or non-violent struggle, is the most powerful means available to those of us struggling for freedom.

The people of Ethiopia have extremely clear thinking when they speak about peace and fully understand the dangers involved. Legesse the shifta who uses the word “peace” often wants peace without freedom and justice. Submission to cruel oppression and passive acquiescence to ruthless dictators like Legesse Zenawi who have perpetrated atrocities on thousands of people is no real peace. When Legesse

calls often for the rule of law and peace, he means submission to his will. So EPRDF's peace is no more than the peace of the prison or of the grave.

## **Reasons for hope**

Dictatorships are not permanent. "DORO CHOHEM ALCHOHEM MENGATU AYKERIM" dictators need not be allowed to remain powerful indefinitely.

As Ethiopians we have seen the vulnerability of dictatorships, and experienced when Mengistu's dictatorship crumbled in a relatively short time span after he denied the offer of "Adera Mengist" transitional government. History will repeat itself.

The old preconception that violence always works quickly and non violence always require vast time is clearly not valid. Although much time may be required for changes in the underlying situation and society, the actual fight against a dictatorship sometimes occurs relatively quickly by non-violent struggle.

Achieving freedom with peace is of course no simple task. It will require great strategic skill, organization, and planning. Above all, it will require power. CUD and UEDF cannot hope to bring down the Meles clique and establish political freedom without the ability to apply their own power effectively.

But how is this possible? What kind of power can the opposition mobilize that will be sufficient to destroy the Meles clique and its vast security and police networks?

Among the weaknesses of EPRDF are the following:

- Intellectuals and students have become restless in response to conditions, restrictions, doctrinarism, and repression that EPRDF has recently started.
- The general public has over time become apathetic, sceptical, and hostile to the regime.
- The power hierarchy of the EPRDF is always unstable to some degree, and at times extremely so. Individuals do not only remain in the same position in the ranking within the coalition, but may rise or fall to other ranks or be removed entirely and replaced by new persons. ANDM had the top rank during Tehadso. It has lost it after the election. OPDO is now number two in the ridiculous rivalry of the satellite parties.
- Sections of the police or military forces may act too, even against the will of established Legesse Bereket clique. A lot of High ranking officers sympathize UEDF and CUD:
- With so many decisions made by so few people in the dictatorship, mistakes of judgment, policy, and action are unavoidable.
- Legesse is seeking to avoid these dangers and has begun in a way centralizing controls and decision making, but his control over the central levers of power will be further eroded.

With knowledge of such inherent weaknesses, the democratic opposition must seek to aggravate these deliberately in order to alter the system drastically or to disintegrate it.

The conclusion is then clear: despite the appearances of strength, all dictatorships have weaknesses, internal inefficiencies, personal rivalries, institutional inefficiencies, and conflicts between organizations and departments. These weaknesses, over time,

tended to make the regime less effective and more vulnerable to changing conditions and deliberate resistance. Not everything the regime sets out to accomplish will get completed. At times, for example, even Hitler's direct orders were never implemented because those beneath him in the hierarchy refused to carry them out. The dictatorial regime may at times even fall apart quickly, as we have already observed.

This does not mean dictatorships can be destroyed without risks and casualties. Every possible course of action for liberation will involve risks and potential suffering, and will take time to operate. And, of course, no means of action can ensure rapid success in every situation. However, types of struggle which target the dictatorship's identifiable weaknesses have greater chance of success than those which seek to fight the dictatorship where it is clearly strongest.