

Appendix 18: The ESM, QNN and the EPLF

As "knowing one's height is not the same as being height-centered" so too "knowing one's gossa is not the same as being gossa-centered." "Gossa" refers to a group composed of individuals that speak the same mother tongue. "Above all else, it should be recognized that ethnic-centered politics is imported to Ethiopia for we Ethiopians express our allegiance to our religion and our country," but not to our "gossa". And who is the angel that brought ethnic-centered politics? "It is clear that ethnic-centered politics was brought to Ethiopia by the angelic Sha'abiya." (Getatchew Haile, 1986 E.C.)

The quotations are translated from the Amharic text and strung as a sequence, though they were made in different parts of the book review by Professor Getatchew Haile.

The Ethiopian student movement is one with a checkered history. It used to have some definition in the late 1960' to early 1980's, where the majority espoused leftist politics. The leftist politics was hijacked and devolved into language-centered politics (Gossa-centered politics). Curiously, the Pan-Ethiopian leftist student movement spawned individuals some of whom stayed loyal to the name of the original parties while the party evolved with the changed conditions. Other individuals not only pulled out from their parties but reportedly also endangered the lives of their former party combatants by joining the inimical TPLF Party at the exact time the parties were raising arms against each other.

A Pan-Ethiopian movement gained traction in the Diaspora, and it gained a great boost in Ethiopia when the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP) appeared. Curiously some individuals who left their former leftist comrades at the time of their mortal combat with the TPLF, and who worked on language-centered politics for the TPLF ruling party, had subsequently quit their work for the TPLF and became members of the CUDP. In contrast, individuals who stayed loyal to the parties formed in the late 1960' and early 70's had joined forces with others in a coalition called the United Ethiopian Democratic Front (UEDF)

This appendix provides an overview of the checkered history of the student movement.

1. From Mid 1960s onwards

In the mid 1960's when the Ethiopian Student movement (ESM) gained momentum, there were two organized political entities in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian government and the EPLF. The ESM was a pan-Ethiopian movement that worked for the interests of all peasants and laborers of Ethiopia. Its most celebrated struggle for land to the tiller is one testimony of its Pan-Ethiopian achievement. After the land to the tiller demonstrations by students, the ESM began to be steered by students of leftist political tendencies. Students of moderate and rightist political tendencies either shied away or did not express their views vociferously. Pamphleteers, elected student leaders, and initially clandestine leaders (a discussion group of university students) were whipping leftist agenda. Yet, while the ESM worked for the interests of Ethiopia, it was not warned about the dangers of manipulation by the EPLF.

Much trouble, death, and destruction would have been averted had the ESM pamphleteers and leaders provided warnings about potential manipulation by the EPLF. Had the pamphleteers and leaders of the ESM attempted to focus on the EPLF they would have been able to comprehend its nature and to anticipate its destructive role in the ESM.

2. The AG (Algeria Group) was formed.

The EPLF arranged and facilitated the highjack of an airplane with Ethiopia students in it to the Sudan. Then those students took refuge in Algeria and as such are known as the Algeria Group (AG). Those students were even more alienated by the Algerian environment so much that the AG members focused their efforts to the cause of Ethiopia and the student movement that was afoot. Though they were interacting with the EPLF, their vision was different from the vision of the Tigre-language-based EPLF. Members of the AG had their own minds and were Pan-Ethiopian in their outlook and struggle. They were saluted by Ethiopian students in the Diaspora, which gave them opportunities to influence both those in the Diaspora and the ESM in Ethiopia. Yet, even the AG did not warn the ESM about the dangers that might result from manipulation by the EPLF. The ESM was unaware of the true language-centered politics of the EPLF and its very destructive role in the ESM. Rather, without providing any warning of the dangers of the EPLF, the AG pushed full steam ahead to influence the ESM, and to regard the EPLF an "ally." The AG had serious influence on college students and even on high school kids that were incorporated in the movement. Before too long, the University Students Union of Addis Ababa (USUAA)

became militant. Its leader, Tilahun Gizaw proclaimed the desire to overthrow the regime. He was murdered on Dec 29, 1969. Ethiopian security forces imposed more disciplinary action on the ESM. Some students, many of them followers of the AG -based politics, emigrated to the West. Some observers argue that the ex-USUAA émigrés served as instruments in the splitting of the Ethiopian Students Union in North America (EUSNA) into two distinct bodies.

EUSUNA, AG, USUAA, ex-USAA émigré, etcetera, etcetera- none of the leaders or pamphleteers of the ESM in both Ethiopia and in the Diaspora had warned their followers of the dangers of being manipulated by the language-centered-politics of the EPLF. Instead, many of them became instruments for the advancement of EPLF politics. The Ethiopian Students Union in Europe (ESUE) accepted language-based politics, as did the (World Wide Federation of Ethiopian Students (WWFES). Instead of looking at "the question of Eritrea" as being one of rescuing it from the language-centered-politics of the EPLF, the issue was turned on its head and Eritrea was delivered on a silver platter for destruction by the EPLF, and the destruction of the rest of Ethiopia followed suit. The concern at that time, in the estimation of the leadership of the ESM and others, was to help the EPLF consolidate power over the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front), which was considered worse. Yet, the EPLF had nothing to recommend it. Its origin was thoroughly based on language-centered politics and dictatorial in its governance and seemed benevolent to the presumed cause of all Eritrawi Ethiopians.

To be sure, as reported by Fentahun Tiruneh (1990, p.24) there were criticisms levied against Brehane Meskel Reda, (the AG leader and who later was, along with the leadership of a splinter group of EUSUNA, a founding member of the EPRP- Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party since 1972) and Haile Fida (of ESUE, and founding member of ME'ISONE -All Ethiopian Socialist Union since 1968). A 1977 paper by Hagos G. Yesus entitled, "The Bankruptcy of the Ethiopian 'Left': MEISONE-EPRP, a Two-headed Hydra - A Commentary on the Ideology and Politics of National Nihilism", and presented in the Ethiopian Studies meeting, and his earlier 1971 unpublished piece on "the New Infantilism: Problems and Prospects of the Ethiopian Student movement" are among the rare documents that show concerns of serious leaders of the ESM. Yet, even Hagos, while denouncing the EPRP and MEISONE did not warn the ESM about the language-centered politics of the EPLF, which is the wellspring of the problems of Ethiopia (including Eritrea). The two-headed hydra that Hagos described danced with death when MEISON allied itself with the Derg and EPRP started its city warfare against the Derg. Many educated Ethiopians and potential leaders were killed right, left and center in the late 1970's and the 1980's

3. The EPLF had its message accepted.

Though initially the AG was not exactly implementing the EPLF programs, and perhaps because of it, other students, who were proclaiming the desirability of dismembering Ethiopia into language-based enclaves, were slated to hijack another plane. The same EPLF member who facilitated the hijack by the Algeria Group was assigned for the second effort too. Ethiopian security forces

shot dead the would-be hijackers and the EPLF agent. Regardless, EPLF supporters pressed on for the acceptance of EPLF causes by the ESM.

As abridged from Fentahun Tiruneh (1990) the following had occurred. The 1967 Berlin Congress of the WWFES "characterized the Ethiopian society as a semi-feudal, semi-colonial, empire-state" (p. 23). "Both ESUE and ESUNA were attacked for taking 'opportunist' and 'chauvinist' stands on the national question and on the Eritrean independence movement between 1967 and 1969.... The editors of Struggle (New York chapter) negated the 1969 ESUNA resolution on the grounds that it attempted to 'alienate the revolutionary Ethiopian Student Movement from its allies'. 'The national question is a class question'... The correct dialectical approach to the issue according to the Struggle editors, was to 'recognize the influence of consciousness on being and the superstructure on the economic base'" (Fenathun Tiruneh, 1990, pp. 85- 86). With such gibberish as their principle, the pamphleteers of Struggle were working to popularize EPLF causes.

However, the way pmphleteers misled the ESM did not stop there. The 1971 "Tatek" journal issued the determination of the 11th Congress of ESUE, which indicated that the so-called "national question" should be resolved by the ESM, and it denounced those members of ESUNA who did not support EPLF's programs. Furthermore, the editorial of the Tatek asserted, "Representatives of the feudal-bourgeois system claim' land is torn', 'there is no outlet to the sea. Therefore they advocated the massacre of people in the name of unity.

They focus on money and land not on people" (Fentahun Tiruneh, 1990, p.87).

Clearly, these propagandists and pamphleteers were arguing that a Tigre-language-centered party, the EPLF, which fights to lord over not only on the Tigre inhabitants of Hamesen, Seray and Akale Guzay, but also on the Afar, the Kunama, etc., is considered to have a legitimate stand in the name of unity of "Eritreans", whereas Ethiopians who wished to defend the interests and rights of Ethiopia and Ethiopians were despised.

Astonishingly, pursuant to the criticisms by the ESUE pamphleteers, "On August 27, 1971,... ESUNA adopted another resolution....the resolution stated that ESUNA supported 'the right of the peoples of Eritrea to self-determination up to and including secession'. That moment signaled the ESUNA's split into two major factions" (Fentahun Tiruneh, 1990, p.87). The inability of the leaders of ESM to identify the EPLF as a language-centered party that has incorporated other Eritrawi Ethiopian to do its bidding, and the failure of leaders and pamphleteers to warn the ESM of the dangers presented by the manipulation by EPLF delivered Eritrawi Ethiopians to the whims of the EPLF, and the rest of Ethiopia to serve as toys in the hands of it surrogate the TPLF.

4) They invented the oppressor Amhara Nation.

Not only did the leftist student leaders agree to accommodate the secessionist agenda of the EPLF they also invented an oppressor nation for the problems of all Ethiopians. They designated the Amhara to belong to an

oppressor nation. They pursued formation of language-based parties as allies to their brand of leftist politics that was aimed at debilitating the oppressor Amhara nation. They had made no research on propagation of languages and how the languages of Ethiopia do not necessarily identify ethnicity (Appendices 1 and 2).

Though the so-called Ethiopian Marxists assumed that the question of nations and nationalities (QNN) was a result of communist ideas by Lenin, the truth is that the idea was part of the 14 Points Principles of President Woodrow Wilson of America, who used the idea of the QNN to fragment the Hungarian-Austrian Empire after the First World War. This was done before the Germans transported Lenin by train to Russia. As part of an application of the QNN, Italy received a minor piece of territory from Austria. Yet, the QNN was not applied to cause Italy give up her colony, Eritrea. That failure to apply the QNN to the case of Italian colonization was a condemnable attitude of the morally bankrupt Western powers. However, the application of the QNN relied on the fact that previously existent states were forcibly joined to form the Hungarian-Austrian Empire. The QNN is used to free pre-existent independent states.

In the case of Ethiopia, there never was an independent Eritrean state, Oromia state, Amara state, Tigrey state before the TPLF "kitab" (so-called constitution) was scribed. Hence, the QNN, which is enshrined in the pertinent UN Charter, cannot justifiably apply to fragment Ethiopia. The basis of fragmentation, despite the

presence of articles within the TPLF "kitab", is not a correct application of the QNN, since the linguistic groups in Ethiopia did not have independent states. However, all democrats will correctly argue that any group of Ethiopians should have the right to develop and foster their language, culture and/or religion.

Two important observations are made from the experiences of the past forty years.

Firstly, it is highly recommended that Pan-Ethiopian political parties should not incorporate language-based political parties in their central committees, and that such parties that may be placed in central committees of Pan-Ethiopian efforts must be persuaded to unambiguously state that they are non ethnic-based political groups are not based on spoken language or on gossa (groups of people who have the same mother tongue). Failure to do this is tantamount to repeating what the ESM leaders did so wrongly and so dangerously only a few decades ago. People must learn not only from their mistakes but also from the mistakes of others. It is not enough to tell the Ethiopian peasant and laborer every year, as Pogo Possum would put it: "We have met the enemy and they are us". The Pan-Ethiopian movement ought to clearly and unambiguously separate itself from language-based politics and politicians.

Secondly, those students who were supported by the EPLF had connections and seemed more efficient in their work compared to others. It follows that so-called leaders who may gain support from organized enemies of Ethiopia could be efficient in what they may do. Though such

leaders might provide noises similar to their followers, analogous to cuckoo birds, their real mission is not to further the cause of the followers. Thus efficiency and ability of networking are not necessarily a measure of the sincerity of leaders. Certainly inefficiency is not an attribute sought from any leaders either. The solution of the dilemma is to prepare guidelines or bylaws that provide the parameters and responsibilities of the leaders, specifying how they should act and the duration of their services, and hold the leaders accountable to the followers.

Post May 15, 2005 election

Many Ethiopians had been angry at EPRP for its early activities including engaging in city warfare, participating in the invention of an “oppressor Amhara nation” and the demonizing of the same, and supporting the so-called rights of nations and nationalities up to and including secession. The party has since expressed its sorrow for many of the past mistakes.

Since 2005 the EPRP belongs to a coalition of parties called the United Ethiopia Democratic Forces (UEDF). The parties that now belong to CUDP could easily have been fitted within the UEDF, were it not for some political and personal friction among individuals. Be that as it may, CUDP had won overwhelmingly in the May 15, 2005 elections. And both CUDP and UEDF worked together before and during the elections.

After the May 15, elections, since some UEDF party members, whose leaders are in Ethiopia, refused to abide by the will of the coalition, particularly the will of parties largely from the Diaspora, UEDF's clout had diminished.

The CUDP, through its KNA leadership had formed the AFD (Alliance for Peace and Democracy) with language-centered parties such as the OLF, ONLF. The alliance is strange for it does not reflect the ideals of CUDP party. Remarkably, though the UEDF was working with CUDP immediately before and after the May 15, 2005, elections, the UEDF is not a member of the AFD. The fact that CUDP is for AFD while UEDF is not has serious implications. The implications are amplified when CUDP supporters are divided against each other.

An interesting condition appeared when the Kinijit Party (CUDP) leaders were voted to office in a May 15, 2005 election and the TPLF placed the leaders in jail for 21 months. Within six months of the incarceration of the Kinijit leaders, a group of six individuals anointed themselves as the Kinijit International Leadership (KIL). The manner in which they received this assignment was dubious and this author had condemned all six members, bar none. However, the leader of the Kinijit North America (KNA) support unit was also named as the chairman of KIL.

After observing the objectives and activities of the KIL two individuals, Ato Andargatchew Tsige and Brehanu Mewa were officially removed Kinijit activities by the chairman of he KIL. Yet, these individuals supported by others worked hard to splinter the Kinijit support group in the

Diaspora. Both Ato Andargatchew and Brehene Mewa were reportedly former members of the EPRP. Another former EPRP member, Dr. Berhanu Nega, we learned by October 2007 is the prime instigator for dividing and weakening the CUDP.

Ato Andargatchew Tsege, who defected from the EPRP, had joined the TPLF camp and become one of their office holders. He had written a short book, in the furtherance of the cause of dividing Ethiopia based on language spoken by people, and demonized the Amhara nation. To suit his propaganda piece he gave facts, falsehoods and lies side by side, and laced them with unwarranted predictions, or as Professor Getatchew Haile (1986) put it, Andargatchew produced "iyetmulecheleche yestchegeregn" (slippery and difficult to read) book. Andargatchew has subsequently expressed his sorrow for his much criticized book. He joined the CUDP, through the help of his friend Dr. Berhanu Nega, and both worked to weaken the CUDP

Ato Andargatchew together with three KNA officers (Shaleqa Yoseph Yazew, Ato Solomon Bekele, and Dr. Seyoum Solomon) were a party to the ceremony associated with the signing of the AFD agreement. Reportedly, except for the three the majority of KNA executives were kept in the dark about the agreement to form the AFD. Most Diaspora Kinijit supporters are not happy with the content in the documents signed by the AFD.

The AFD documents (the Statute and Memorandum of Understanding) are pro EPLF and against the real interests

of Ethiopia, as pointed out by this author and several other observers in the Diaspora.

Lest any one would misunderstand, let this underscore that the Kinijit support units are hereby warned of the dangers of the EPLF. Instruments written by it or for its interests, such as the statute and memorandum of understanding of the AFD, are inimical to Ethiopia and Ethiopia's interests.

References

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