

ADDIS DIGEST

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Editorial

«IF WE LOSE ELECTIONS EVEN ONCE ...»

In an earlier issue of Addis Digest (N° 4 July 1995) we tried to show how the kind of regime now unfolding in Ethiopia was more dangerous and vicious than an «ordinary one-party state». The extracts from an EPRDF secret document distributed to key members in Sene 1985 EC (June 1993) which we are producing in our document section not only confirms this analysis but also shows in no uncertain terms another facet of the ethnocentric clique. If they were to be defeated in a democratic electoral process, TPLF's leaders will not accept the role of an «ordinary» opposition in line with the principles of multi-party democracy which the regime and its Western apologists claim now prevails in Ethiopia.

«If we lose the elections even once» says the document «we will encounter great danger». There is nothing wrong about a government not wanting to lose elections. What is alarming and dangerous is the way the ethnocentrics are trying to ward off this «great danger». The old-fashioned Stalinist rhetoric and references to «the ruling classes», «imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie», «punishing the enemies of the masses», etc. are not reminders of TPLF's hard line past. They testify to the persistence of a narrow and dogmatic outlook which still governs their action and determines the course of event to come. TPLF leaders' strategy to avert the «great danger» of losing elections is of course, first and

foremost, not to conduct democratic elections in the first place. It is based not on a serious commitment to democracy and respect of the people's fundamental rights but rather on the steady consolidation of an ethnocentric totalitarian regime.

For a better understanding of this totalitarian strategy we refer our readers to what Meles and Co. say about the economy «which should be controlled by Revolutionary Democratic individuals, associations and organizations», the army which should be «free and neutral in appearance like bourgeois armies in the West» but «Revolutionary Democratic in content», ideological hegemony which should be maintained and guaranteed through use of «public and private revolutionary democratic media» and that of other «key propaganda tools» such as schools, religious institutions, etc.

But what if all this fails and the «enemy and the vacillators bring about their hegemony» or in more simple terms the ethnocentrics lose elections? «This is not possible», claims the document. If this ever happens, then «the country will be hurled into an endless crisis and Ethiopia will not survive as a nation». In other words, the ethnocentrics would rather start their «Revolutionary War» all over again than accept electoral defeat at the hands of the «enemies of the masses».

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RAGPEHA

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Ethiopia's democrats do not need such a reminder to understand TPLF's tactics and strategies as what is happening in the country is consistent with what is outlined in the document. Our intention in publishing it is to help our foreign readers better understand the problems and prospects of the struggle for democracy in this country. It is also hoped that this chilling

reading will come as a clear warning to those Western governments and NGOs who by their irresponsible attitude of blind support to the ethnic dictatorship are -deliberately or unwittingly- helping in the making of a great tragedy in a country which has already had more than its share of blood and tears in the last decades.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

THE 10TH REPORT OF EHRCO (SEPTEMBER 1996)

Between September 1995 and August 1996, EHRCO says it received complaints relating to extrajudicial killings, torture, and inflicting bodily injury, arbitrary arrests and disappearances, illegal dismissals, confiscation of property and other human rights violations» of 2927 individuals. According to the report, citizens involuntarily retired or dismissed without any medical reason or without reaching pension age included factory workers, teachers, judges, public prosecutors and other civil servants.

EHRCO adds that «The administration of justice which was weakened by summary dismissal of qualified judges in 1992 has been totally paralyzed by the second round of mass dismissals in 1996». It noted that the mass dismissal of these judges was delaying proceedings of several thousand detainees accused of committing human rights abuses under the former government. There are «a considerable number of detainees who have not yet been formally charged even six years after the fall of the Dergue». EHRCO listed over 20 names of victims of extrajudicial killings, names of people tortured or abducted by security forces and not heard of again.

The report also mentions instances of confiscation of property and cruel treatment of war prisoners.

On concluding its report EHRCO remarked «The government has not been observed by protecting human rights by taking legal action against the perpetrators of such violations .. If no attempt is made to implement the existing laws, it is futile to talk about the kind of laws the government has promulgated, the international human rights conventions it has ratified, or the provisions included in the Constitution ... the fundamental issue is not the existence of these laws on paper but their strict application.»

EHRCO ended its report with a request to the government that those kept in detention without charges be brought to justice without delay or that they be set free if there are no adequate grounds for filing charges against them, the necessary legal action be taken against the perpetrators of the human rights violations which have been exposed in the present and past reports of EHRCO, to improve the administration of justice additional benches be opened and judges appointed; the illegally confiscated property be returned to the rightful owners; those unfairly dismissed from their jobs be reinstated, efforts be made to implement the human rights provisions enshrined in international and national laws.