

For the 7 May election itself, the DEU missions were supplemented by observation missions sent by embassies, focusing particularly on those constituencies where a contest between political parties had been identified.

Despite the initial difficulties which we faced, the DEU has been able to work effectively. We have been fortunate in having highly qualified staff. The advisers and many of the outside observers had extensive electoral experience, both in their own countries and in Africa and elsewhere. We much regret, however, that, due to TGE's refusal to accredit some of those nominated by the Governments of Canada and the Netherlands, these countries were obliged to withdraw their outside observers.

#### The Report

The enclosed report, which we do not intend to make public, reflects the experience of the DEU and Embassy missions run during March, April and first week of May, including Election Day. We believe that the TGE will be interested in its findings. In many respects the conduct of the elections built further on the achievements of the June 1994 elections and despite the complexity of holding the federal and regional elections together, evoked a positive response from the electorate in an atmosphere of peace and stability. Special mention should be made of the behaviour of the police during the elections, who performed their duties effectively but unobtrusively, as well as of many of the NEB officials in the field whose confidence and commitment to impartiality is growing. There are, however, areas of concern where action will be required if democratic institutions are to take deeper root in Ethiopia. These are in particular:

- the need for extensive civic education of the electorate and, in particular, of political and administrative officials and cadres at the local level, where some behaviour was not consistent with the democratic nature of the elections and the climate of tolerance and pluralism that it implies;
- the need to guarantee access to the rural areas for all political parties;
- the need to improve and speed up the means of checking and, where necessary, redressing complaints about the electoral process;
- the need for adequate time to prepare for elections and for some modifications of electoral procedure to minimise irregularities.

Throughout the two month pre-election period we had weekly meetings with the National Electoral Board attended by the DEU Senior Adviser at which, as the report makes clear, most of the concerns reflected in this report were aired. We would like to put on record our appreciation of the close cooperation we have received from the NEB and the seriousness with which our observations were treated. If there are areas identified in the DEU report, or in the external reports on the June 1994 elections, where we can be of assistance to the NEB we would be happy to pursue them.

We recognise the efforts that have been made by the government to improve both the climate of tolerance of opposition and the electoral process. We appreciated the assurance of His Excellency the President at our last meeting with him that the law would be imposed impartially, and that, to demonstrate this, the EPRDF would be the first to put its own house in order. Despite the concern identified in this report, we firmly believe that those opposition parties who chose not to participate in the elections missed a valuable opportunity to further the democratic process.

A serious interest in human rights and democracy will continue to be an important aspect of our governments' relations with Ethiopia and we look forward to working closely with the new constitutional government in furthering the democratic process.

Signed:

HE Robin Christopher	HE David Stockwell
British Ambassador	Canadian Ambassador
HE Irvin Hicks	HE Maurizio Melani
US Ambassador	Italian Ambassador
HE Jone Bos	HE Horst Winkelmann
Netherlands Ambassador	German Ambassador
HE Ann Wilkens	
Swedish Ambassador	

## II. FINAL ANALYTICAL SUMMARY OF DONOR ELECTION UNIT REPORTS (A summary)

### *-Participation of candidates and political organisations:*

When the DEU was first created, the Donor Group was supporting talks aimed at encouraging political organisations to participate in the May elections ... Given the unsuccessful outcome of these talks, the May 1995 election was marked by the absence of major organised opposition parties. Although the popular support of these parties is untested in a national election, each had the potential to offer a significant alternative choice to the ruling EPRDF in the major regions of the country.

An element of electoral competition to the EPRDF came from a few sources. One small national party, the Ethiopian National Democratic Party (ENDP), ran 85 candidates particularly in Addis Abeba, parts of region 4, parts of the Southern region and Dese in Region 3. Financial and organisational difficulties apparently limited the ENDP's ability to field or support more candidates; The ENDP's programme differed explicitly from EPRDF with regard to the controversial issues of self-determination and land ownership; Despite those policy differences, the DEU mission met a number of Ethiopians who perceived the ENDP to be part of the EPRDF.

The other parties which participated had regional or ethnic bases appealing to much smaller and often very localised communities ... These competitions generally were for control of regional administrations with less interest in the races to send representatives to Addis Abeba.

As in the June 1994 Constituent Assembly elections, a multitude of independent candidates were on the ballot, despite the requirement that each collect 1,000 signatures, twice that required of party candidates. 960 individual candidates participated in the national and regional contests; The presence of these non-party candidates partially filled the vacuum left by the non-participating political organisations and, where their programmes differed from EPRDF's allowed voters a degree of choice.

The diversity and large numbers of independent candidates makes generalisations difficult. In certain areas, most notably in Region 1 (Tibgray) and parts of Region 3 independent candidates told DEU missions that they had been encouraged and assisted by EPRDF in order to make the election «more democratic». Elsewhere, particularly in rural areas, the independent candidates often supported the EPRDF programme and some were party members ... According to many voters interviewed by the DEU, these independent candidates did not offer them a meaningful alternative.

Some private candidates, particularly those in the towns, did offer voters a degree of choice. Many others had difficulties articulating a political agenda beyond a vague desire to promote «development» and «democracy».

### *- General political climate*

It is notable that the Ethiopian election was conducted in a atmosphere that was generally free of violence or armed conflict. In contrast for example with the June 1992 regional elections, instability did not prevent most Ethiopians from participating in the election. The placement of military forces was observed to be non-threatening and the civilian police was observed to maintain the peace unobtrusively in most population centers.

A number of legally registered but non-participating parties faced political intimidation, arrest, and the closure of their offices in the pre-election period. The Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition had some members in jail on dubious charges in Jinka (South Omo) and was refused permission to open an office and hold a rally in Hosaina. The All Amhara Peoples Movement (AAPO) had much of its leadership in jail and most of its offices closed.

DEU missions received numerous reports of intimidation of the legally registered but non-participating Ethiopian Democratic Union Party (EDUP). EDUP had many of its offices closed in Regions 1 and 3 (Tigray and Amhara Regions) and prevented from organizing in rural areas; Several DEU missions received, investigated and judged credible reports that EDUP leaders have been imprisoned for political reasons in Baher Dar, Gondar and Tigray.

In addition to playing a role in these parties' decision not to participate, the treatment of these parties contributed to a political climate in which significant numbers of potential candidates and their supporters told DEU missions that they feared repression.

Several political organisations that did participate charge that their members faced harassment or arrest. In the prison

of Butajira (Southern region) a DEU mission interviewed eight officials of the Sisle People's Democratic Unity Party who reported that 55 party members were in jail without charge and for political reasons. The Benisangul and Western Ethiopian People's Democratic party alleged that a number of its supporters were harassed and prevented from campaigning, Ato Wolle Abegaz (ENDP candidate) and other ENDP candidates had been jailed in Awassa (Southern Ethiopia) in the past but participated in the May election. Sheik Junedi Kebir Kadir, an independent candidate in Robe (Bale Zone Region) was assassinated by unknown gunmen after collecting 3000 signatures. Ato Dejene Balu, an independent candidate in the 1994 Constituent Assembly election, popularly known as the «Ambo tractor man» is in jail, charged with stealing a typewriter ...

National and local election boards usually refrained from intervening in cases of political harassment. Recourse to the court system proved to be slow and inadequate, leaving candidates with grievances and few places to appeal for redress.

### *- Rural versus urban situation*

DEU missions consistently and across all regions found that political and electoral conditions differed markedly between the urban and the rural areas. In a real sense, two very distinct elections took place. These differences were seen in all aspects of the election, from basic civic education, the ability of non-EPRDF candidates to be registered, their ability to campaign, the levels of voter registration, the administration of polling places and, to a degree, the results.

Urban areas had far greater freedom for both non-EPRDF candidates and voters ... DEU observers noted on election day that most urban voters seemed unintimidated and free to vote for the candidate of their choice.

In contrast, in the rural areas where 85% of Ethiopians live, the Farmers' Associations are under the firm control of the EPRDF. Nearly all non-EPRDF candidates complained that they had trouble collecting qualifying signatures and were restricted in campaigning in rural areas. Voter registration was very high in many rural farmers' associations, indicating the EPRDF's effectiveness in mobilizing the population.

### *- Issues relating to the campaign*

EPRDF candidates campaigned on the basis of a common five year plan that emphasized rural development. During the campaign, DEU missions observed a number of meetings where EPRDF candidates introduced themselves and their programme to voters.

DEU missions heard consistently from independent candidates that their ability to campaign was limited due to lack of financial resources. DEU missions met numerous candidates who said they were waiting for promised funding before printing their posters or beginning campaigns.

In most regions we visited, the EPRDF affiliated party had large offices provided by the government and had access to government vehicles and other material support. The

boundaries between party business and regional or local government business often were vague or not recognized. Non-EPRDF parties occasionally had similar offices. In general, however, they were assigned very small offices or had to rent them privately. Most towns did not have any non-EPRDF party offices.

#### **-Voter registration**

It is estimated that 24 million people were eligible to vote in 1995 compared to 23 million estimated for the 1994 election. The provisional figure for registration in 1995 of 17 million therefore represents 71 per cent of estimated eligible population. Local EPRDF officials actively encouraged people to register, using loud speakers in the community to remind voters. Some registered voters told DEU missions that they felt there would be repercussions if they did not register, but most of these concerns were vague and by their nature difficult, if not impossible to verify. There was no evidence of systematic coercion to force people to register. The low rates in many urban areas argues against any organised coercion while the relatively high rates in the rural areas may indicate the EPRDF's ability to mobilize the countryside.

#### **- Voting and counting procedures**

Despite the high rates of participation by registered voters in most areas, DEU missions observed little voter enthusiasm. Most Ethiopians interviewed told DEU observers that they regarded the outcome of the election as a foregone conclusion. Some said they voted out of a sense of civic duty, others because they thought it prudent because local officials had encouraged them to vote. The degree of voter education and information provided on voting procedures varied. In some polling stations, election officials provided clear, succinct and neutral information that seemed to be understood by most voters. In others, officials seemed to be encouraging voters to support EPRDF candidates or not informing them about alternative candidates. Some observers noted the instructions to voters were given by Kebele officials rather than election board officials raising concern over the non-partisan nature of the information.

In many polling stations the DEU observed, the secrecy of the ballot was not fully ensured particularly in the rural areas. The place for marking the ballots was not always out of sight of other voters, election officials, or even Kebele officials. In a number of rural areas voters marked their ballots on the same table as the registration book or even were told directly by an official where to place the mark.

#### **- Final observations**

Any transition to democracy is a long-term, complex process. An analysis of a single election can never be more than a snap shot that includes both positive and negative lessons; This report has highlighted some of the more salient characteristics of the period from 1 March to 7 May in the hope that such findings can encourage policies to strengthen democracy in Ethiopia.

The May 1995 Ethiopian elections were conducted in an atmosphere of general peace and stability, a notable accomplishment for a country so recently devastated by war. Military forces kept a low profile during the election period and the police who guarded the polls disposed themselves in a reassuring rather than intimidating manner. An atmosphere of non-violence characterised election day.

In addition, the NEB deserves credit for administering the election effectively. Despite the tremendous logistical obstacles, DEU missions reported few cases where voting materials did not reach the appropriate places on time. The border regions of 6 and 12 (Benishangul and Gambela) were unfortunate exceptions. Many DEU observers noted the competence and commitment of a great number of local election officials whose dedication was impressive and encouraging.

In urban areas, significant numbers of voters felt free to select non-EPRDF candidates. In these constituencies at least, voters had a degree of choice.

There are, however, a number of considerations that arise from the observations of DEU missions and the analysis above:

- The EPRDF was the only major political organization that participated in the May 1995 election. Regardless of the reasons and the responsibility for the non-participation of other parties, their absence reduced the significance of the choices available to many voters.

- Some smaller parties participated in a limited number of constituencies but these parties were generally weakly organised and lacked financial resources. In addition, these parties sometimes faced intimidation and restrictions on their ability to campaign, particularly in rural areas. As a result, their impact and ability to offer an effective alternative to the EPRDF was weakened.

- The treatment of legally registered but non-participating parties, including arrests of some officials, closure of offices, and restrictions on travel, hindered political participation.

- Many, but by no means all, independent candidates either shared the EPRDF's views on policy issues or offered only vague alternative programmes. Some independents also were harassed and thereby limited in their ability to reach voters.

- The ability of candidates to register and campaign and voters to vote secretly and without official interference was much higher in the urban areas than the rural areas. Given the overwhelmingly rural character of Ethiopia, these limitations inevitably narrowed the choice available to a large number of voters.

- A confusing system of voting, particularly regarding the regional election, and insufficient voter education contributed to a high number of spoiled ballots and prevented some voters from making their choice effectively known.

- Voter registration exceeded the levels of the 1994 constituent assembly election. This seemed to be the result of effective political organisation by the EPRDF, especially in rural areas.

- Overall voter interest was low, especially in urban areas and uncontested constituencies;

### **POLITICS**

#### **US APPLAUDS ELECTIONS**

Following is the text of the news release by US embassy 23 June 1995

The American Embassy in Addis Abeba congratulates the people of Ethiopia and the TGE as they complete the series of elections that has led to establishment of a new constitution and a new government. The recent elections are only one among many discrete events in the long-term evolution of the democratic process that must continue in Ethiopia.

The American Embassy joined with representatives of other countries and non-governmental groups on May 7 and June 18 in observing the most recent elections. As has been the case in other newly democratizing countries, some problems were encountered. Charges of harassment and other irregularities have been brought to the attention of the National Election Board. However we concur with the finding of one participating opposition party that these irregularities «were not of a pattern and of a magnitude to have affected the outcome of the elections». In our judgment, the elections were conducted in a manner that was, on the whole, free and fair.

The Embassy regrets that some Ethiopian political organizations rejected numerous efforts, including those of the U.S. Congressional Task Force on Ethiopia, to encourage their participation. The unilateral decision by some parties to boycott does not invalidate the election exercise. The elections represent an important milestone along Ethiopia's road to greater democracy. U.S. policy is, and will remain to encourage all Ethiopians to engage in constructive and peaceful dialogue, and we will condemn the efforts of those groups who continue to seek political advantage through the use of violence.

#### **WHY IS «ANTI-TIGRAY PASSION» ON THE RISE?**

Although they are not yet sure whether it would work or not, many Westerners seem to agree that by introducing the «secession clause» in the new constitution which divides the country into 9 ethnically distinct regions, Meles had «launched a radical experiment in democracy» which it is said could serve as model for other ethnically torn nations in Africa. Opposition to Melese's radical experiment in «democracy» is simply dismissed as «chauvinist opposition»

The May 1995 Ethiopian election had large numbers of candidates, large numbers of voters, a generally effective administration, and was conducted in a peaceful manner. Elections, however, are about choice. For the reasons stated in the report, the ability of the Ethiopian people to use the ballot effectively to choose their leaders is still limited. Until alternative political organisations participate, however, such choices will remain limited.

by Amharas who have «lost their privileged position in society and are angry about it».

This is simplistic because it does not explain why the Oromos are waging armed struggle against what they call the Tigrean government, neither does it enlighten us on the reasons why the southern Ethiopian People's Administrative region holds the country's record in terms of the number of people detained without charge for political reasons.

As Westerners are «waiting to see if it works» and Africans concerned over what some diplomats in Ethiopia call the «ethnic time bomb» now poised to draw Ethiopia slowly and steadily into undescrivable chaos and bloodshed, Ethiopians of all ethnic backgrounds are living with the uncomfortable feeling of someone sitting on top of a volcano.

Although the 31st summit of the OAU held in Addis Abeba from 26 to 28 June was overshadowed by the attempt on the life of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, the independent press in the country tried to use this opportunity to draw the attention of Africa's heads of state to the dangers of ethnicity not only to Ethiopia but also to the entire continent.

In an article entitled «African leaders, Save us!» the weekly **Genanaw** said «Your host country which had once played a significant role in the fight for the freedom and dignity of the African people ... is now up against itself. We have become so deeply inward-looking that ethnic and regional tensions and passions have clouded our reasons. We are yearning for peaceful life free from ethnic animosity and conflict. We plead with African leaders who have emancipated themselves from ethnic bigotry to save this country».

Another weekly, **Addis Tribune**, wrote that the Pan Africanist's passionate cry «Africa must unite!» had now become «hopelessly out of tune» with the continent fast retreating «into tribalism of the virulently ethnocentric strain». Criticizing the non-inclusion of this burning issue in the agenda of the Summit, **Addis Tribune** called on African leaders to consider passing a resolution to counter these dangerous ethnocentric tendencies observed in several countries including Ethiopia.

Why this «cri d'alarm» of Ethiopia's free press? This is not because Meles' «bold experiment in Democracy» is brining