

ANOTHER FEBRUARY IS INEVITABLE

In our issue of September 1979 we wrote "a bright future is awaiting the Ethiopian people and their revolution. A new rise in the tide of the revolution is inevitable and the day of another February is not very far. That is what the objective conditions of today will be leading to. We are sure that however complex and protracted the coming struggle may be irrespective of the great sacrifices that our heroic people have yet to bear, they will certainly defeat all internal and external reactionary forces and build a democratic, free and non-aligned Ethiopia".

Six years have now elapsed since the unprecedented revolutionary mass movement that led to the three-year uninterrupted transformation of the Ethiopian society broke out in February 1974. Those eventful years will always hold an indispensable place in the history of the Ethiopian peoples' revolution.

The situation in Ethiopia today, and, in fact, since 1977 is radically different from that of 1974. At that time and until the first quarter of 1977 the Ethiopian society was undergoing an overall revolutionary convulsion. Today, Ethiopia is creeping in a state of terror, repression, national oppression and humiliation of its national independence.

It is now a well known fact that, as a consequence of the military regime's anti-democratic rule, more than 30.000 democrats, patriots and national liberation militants are languishing in the overcrowded prisons of the Derg. Hundreds have lost their lives. Hundreds of thousands (over a million

according to figures of the UNHCR) have fled the country. Others have been forced to live under ground in order to escape persecution. The different democratic mass organizations have been arbitrarily liquidated and reduced to mere bureaucratic organs. This continuous repression and anti-democratic rule of the Derg has recently been officially legalized by the proclamation issued to establish the so-called Commission to Organize the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia. According to the proclamation each and every political organization in the country is declared illegal and any individual with a different view than the President's is doomed to a penalty that varies from a ten year imprisonment to death.

The national oppression unleashed particularly against the Somalis, the Oromos, Tigres and in Eritrea is continuously intensifying. Reports of indiscriminate bombings of villages and innocent people in the Ogaden and Eritrea regions continue to reach the outside world. Hundreds of intellectuals and government officials belonging to the Oromo nationality have been recently arrested by the Derg and others are being persecuted.

Following the increasing dependence of the Derg on the Soviet bloc countries in general and the 20-year "Friendship Treaty" with the Soviet Union in particular, the non-aligned foreign policy and thereby the national independence and sovereignty of the country is capriciously and continuously humiliated. The intervention of the Soviet bloc countries has no doubt temporarily succeeded in helping the counter-revolutionary Derg perform an effective repression. It has also become so deep and total that the local and foreign policies and therefore the destiny of the country at present do not lie in the hands of its own citizens but in those of foreigners who are operating as "experts" in the different government agencies and regions of the country. These "experts" of various professions are today fully engaged in not only consolidating

the rule of the counter-revolutionary Derg (an already-converted puppet regime) but also in gearing the political, economic and social lives of the country to the interest of the Soviet bloc countries.

In view of the growing mass opposition against the Derg and its foreign allies and the vital place Ethiopia holds in the Soviet global military and economic strategy it is very possible that the Soviet bloc countries will one day resort to an open military control of the country. The disgraceful aggression against Afghanistan by the USSR, which ME'ISONE strongly condemns, should be taken as a good lesson as well as a warning. The presence of about 20.000 Cuban fighting troops and other Soviet and East German high-ranking military experts on Ethiopian soil should be viewed from this angle. The risk that Ethiopia will be another Afghanistan should not be overlooked.

The economic and social reforms that were paid in blood and souls and started giving fruit during the first years of the revolution have been redirected by the military bureaucracy not to remedy the peoples' problems but to maintain the lavish living styles of the ruling Derg and its allies. Consequently food, housing and health conditions are continuously deteriorating. Famine is striking the people all over the country; the main victims this time being the people living in the southern provinces. Faced with these colossal social and economic problems the Derg and its foreign allies are continuing to rob money from the people by different coercive measures and directing the country's wealth to build an oppressive apparatus to suppress any democratic and patriotic movement.

Reactionaries resort to repressive means because they vainly believe that they can annihilate a peoples' struggle. But what happens in actual fact is just the opposite. Reactionaries might be capable of temporarily weakening of peoples'

struggle but they can never have a lasting victory. On the contrary, the revolutionary forces go more and more under ground, become more and more inaccessible to their enemies, learn from their experience, adopt and develop new methods of struggle, improve their organizational strength, become tempered in the struggle and take offensive under favourable conditions. They never surrender. This is what we observe in contemporary Ethiopia.

The repression perpetrated by the Soviet backed Derg, notwithstanding its intensity, has not been successful in fulfilling its plan of crushing the Ethiopian peoples' democratic movement. It is undeniable that it has incurred the revolution a high cost and temporarily weakened it. But it has at no time totally silenced it.

Having survived the intensive Soviet backed repression, the revolutionary mass resistance is continuously gaining momentum under the leadership of ME'ISON. The national liberation struggle in Eritrea, Tigre, Afar, Ogaden and by the Oromo people are intensifying more than ever before. In the urban areas, the strongholds of the Derg's repression, progressive intellectuals, students, soldiers and workers are giving the Derg a hard time.

The struggle for democracy, equality of nationalities, national independence and social progress waged by the Ethiopian masses is growing constantly and gaining strength with every passing day. And the Derg as well as its foreign backers are becoming helpless and desperate. At the same time the contradiction, and thereby the crisis within the Derg, between the Derg and the bureaucracy, between the bureaucracy and the foreign "experts" is growing sharper and clearer. This is confirmed by the recent developments marked within the ruling circles.

Viewed from the objective conditions of the revolution, there-

fore, one may say that Ethiopia is pregnant of another February whose birth is inevitable in the near future.

ME'ISONE, upon which the historical responsibility of leadership is succumbed is consistently struggling both within and outside the country in order to prepare the conditions necessary to defend and advance the revolution to its completion. We are sure that the Ethiopian people will get the support of all progressive and freedom loving forces in the common struggle for peace, democracy, national independence and socialism.

INTERVIEW WITH THE INTERVIEWER

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