

## How the opportunists "fight" for democratic rights!

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A people's struggle for freedom and sovereignty is far-reaching characterized by ups and downs. The revolutionary struggle of the Ethiopian people since 1974 clearly reveals this fact.

In fact, the year which has just passed by, constitute an important stage that is marked by the devotion and courage of our comrades who have sacrificed their lives in the service of the Revolution. During this stage there has been successive popular victories and occasional defeats, offensive and defensive periods, phases of development of the struggle as well as its relative stagnation, moments of euphoria and crisis. Though threatened by total undermining the revolution in our country has often proved to revive and advance its way irresistibly forward to the final victory.

The different stages marking the tortuous road of the revolution in Ethiopia have many diversified aspects. The revolutionary offensive of the broad masses has not only limited itself to the extermination of paid-assassins of reactionaries and the spread of red terror, but also, has paved the way for the achievement of political, ideological and organizational tasks necessary for the victory of the revolution, and for the people's victory over reactionaries and opportunists of all brands. In like manner, the counter-offensive of the reactionaries has not limited itself to the systematic liquidation of our comrades in arms, it has also undeniably created conditions that are favourable for discrediting the political, ideological and organizational victories that have been obtained.

When the reaction takes the offensive, the mass organizations weaken, their political hegemony progressively makes way for the anti-popular structure of the old order, the ideological positions "recognized by all" are questioned, and ideological clarity makes way progressively for confusion fomented by reactionaries.

Such is the situation that characterizes Ethiopia of today. The reactionary offensive which began in March 1977 and has constantly been gaining new impetus has not only been limited to political assassinations. Directly connected with this phenomenon is the weakening of Kebeles ( Urban dwellers Ass.), Revolution Defense Committees, Peasant and workers' organizations, the progressive disappearance of democratic liberties, the resurgence of sabotage due to bureaucracy, ideological confusion encouraged by the opportunists, the reappearance of theses rejected in the past, etc. Such are the everyday realities which prove beyond doubt that the revolutionary movement is today on the defensive.

The purpose of this article is to uncover the nature of the reactionary campaign begun on the ideological front. This reactionary offensive today tries to breed confusion over ideological achievements, pretends to reanimate the "debates" on questions which have already been solved; in short, it aims at spreading the venom of right-wing opportunism.

When the reactionaries want to busy themselves with the people, they always revert - and the history of revolutions all over the world has amply proved this - to their "left-wing" posture so as to better carry out their insidious undermining of the ideological front. The peoples of Ethiopia know the crimes committed by the "left" opportunists of the EPRP. The EPRP has definitely been defeated in the ideological struggle, so we are not going to tarry any further on this question. Today those who want to question this ideological victory over the EPRP, those who want to breed confusion, are right opportunists. The appearance and the strengthening of right opportunism is directly connected with the decline of the revolutionary movement and with the rise of right-wing elements in general. This vacillating element of right opportunism, claim to reanimate "the debates" on democratic liberties. It is essentially under this pretext that they breed total confusion on the ideological level.

The democratic question is one of the fundamental questions of the national democratic revolution. This



question being directly related to that of land. Lenin often spoke of "the question of land and liberty." Moreover, there was a time when the priority of this question was recognized by all.

Before the right opportunists declared quite simply that "it was not necessary to proclaim democratic liberties since enough of them already existed," (!) no one, not even the outspoken reactionaries openly opposed the people's democratic claims. In order to fight these claims, the right made use at that time of left opportunists. Remember the EPRP slogans encouraging the peasantry not to organize itself into associations, under the pretext that "peasant organizations were instruments of fascism" (!). Today this same right has changed tactics and now uses the intellectuals among right opportunists. To reveal the bankruptcy of the right opportunists, it is worthwhile to recall the victories won against the "left" opportunists in the debate over the question of democratic rights.

In giving the DERG "critical support", the revolutionaries distinguished themselves from right and left opportunists. In the position which they adopted, the question of democracy was given prominence. When the DERG took progressive measures, the revolutionary forces supported them despite attacks by "left" opportunists. Conscious of the fact that these measures could only be applied by the people, the revolutionaries fought for democratic rights so as to create a favourable condition in which to apply the progressive measures. Without seeking to "save their stake" they firmly condemned each and every anti-democratic step of the DERG. In short, the true progressives waged an unrelentless war for the democratic rights of the masses.

Under the rule of the ENDALKATCHEN government (1974) the democratic claims of the masses gained support from all progressives. Thus, the reaction, unable to fight these claims, sought to spread confusion over the question of "for whom"? and "why"? democratic freedom had to be proclaimed.

It is from this period that the EPRP ideologists demanded democratic liberties for all Ethiopian citizens in

the articles that appeared in the "revolutionary forum" of the official newspaper "Addis Zemen". The revolutionaries strongly attacked this bourgeois approach to democracy by demanding in turn for democratic rights for the broad masses and only for the broad masses, thus echoing the slogan: "Democracy for the oppressed".

After denouncing the content of the reactionary slogan: "Democracy without restrictions!", which meant democracy for all the social classes, it was necessary to specify that freedom for the oppressed social classes had to be unrestricted. Thus the final slogan was: "Democracy for the masses, without restrictions!" This specification was necessary because some reactionary elements in the DERG and right opportunists were trying to force through their own slogan: "Democracy for the masses, but with restrictions (!)"

Let us now examine one of the aspects of the debate that was going on at that time. In December 1975, the DERG launched a "petty-bourgeois socialism" under the label of "Ethiopian socialism", and on the same occasion announced the forthcoming creation of a "unique socialist party". The position of the revolutionary forces was categorical on this question. It was a matter of fighting against the creation of such a party, bureaucratically imposed, and to fight for the respect of the people's rights of organization. To the DERG and right opportunists, the question of democracy was intimately related to the creation of a one party system. "Grant" democratic rights after the creation of a one party system and under the control of that party: such was the intention of the DERG and right opportunists. It was in order to stalemate this policy that a debate was engaged on the theme: "Democracy, but why?". The alternative put forward by the revolutionaries was clearly stated during this debate: no to the one party system, democracy for the masses so that they could organize themselves according to their class interests and thereby lay the foundation of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist United Front.

This debate, therefore, offered the opportunity of fighting against the limits imposed by the one party sy-



stem, and of showing the necessity for the founding of a party of the working class, of democratic parties, of the organization of the masses, and of the United Front. Thus the slogan "Democracy for the masses, without restrictions!" came out victorious.

The ideological struggle of the revolutionary forces over the question of democracy did not stop at this level. After losing the fight on the previous points, the reactionary elements of the DERG and the right opportunists fell back on the question: "Democracy when?" Some still cling to the argument that "If democratic freedom is proclaimed today, the reaction will use it. Consequently, one should wait until the people's degree of consciousness and organization is sufficiently developed and the reaction sufficiently weakened." However, this argument has not paid off. The Ethiopian people have understood that this was a trap, for, if in order to weaken the reaction it is necessary to raise the people's level of consciousness and of organization, this can only be done effectively by the proclaiming of democratic liberties - a prime condition. Having understood this reality, the people are consequently asking for immediate proclamation of democratic liberties.

In summary, we can say that it is through a relentless ideological struggle that the revolutionary forces have rightly counter-struck the different attempts of the reactionaries and right and left opportunists. The questions concerning democratic rights have clear, precise and firm answers. These just positions have been largely adopted by the masses.

Today, some try to question these ideological achievements. If we examine the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution, the common platform of all the progressive forces, we find that it clearly reveals the victories won over the reactionary forces in the ideological struggle. This programme, which was proclaimed after the ideological defeat of the "left" opportunists and in the heat of a revolutionary offensive, clearly answers the questions regarding democratic liberties. It is clear that the attempts of right opportunists "to set the debate going again" only aim at betraying the

revolutionary contents of the Programme. The Programme resulting from the victories over the reactionary forces, says without ideological ambiguities "... Hence, the following steps require immediate implementation: 1/ The revolution can advance forward only if the popular masses are made politically conscious, and are organized and armed. But in order to do these, all sectors of the oppressed classes must be furnished with the opportunity to learn, to teach, to organize and be organized. For all these, it is imperative to put into practice an unrestricted exercise of democratic rights for all anti-feudal, anti-imperialist and anti-bureaucratic capitalist forces. These forces will be immediately accorded full freedom to speak, to write, to assemble, to demonstrate peacefully, to organize and be organized."

With the aim of putting this victory into action the "Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs" (POMOA) immediately drafted a bill approving "democratic rights for the people, without any restrictions". Under the pressure of rightist elements of the BANTE/ALMAYEHU clique the bill was rejected by the DERG. It should be recalled that immediately after this clique was crushed, the present head of State as well as the "Union of Marxist-Leninist Organisations" underlined the importance of proclaiming the bill.

In short, before the sudden change of right opportunists always in the forefront in betraying the revolution, and more particularly in a moment of a counter-revolutionary offensive, the question of democratic liberties was rightly asked, and this after an acute ideological struggle. Today the situation has changed and this ideological victory, won through a most stubborn struggle, is threatened at its base.

We shall content ourselves here to the attempts made by the opportunists of the right to discredit these achievements. We shall analyse a text which appeared in the 33rd issue of the review "Revolutionary Ethiopia", organ of the "Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs" (POMOA), today controlled by the right opportunists.

In this issue of "Revolutionary Ethiopia", a "reader" asks for an explanation of the slogans which appeared



during the demonstration of September 12 ("Immediate proclamation of democratic rights for the people, without restrictions", "Democratic rights for the masses", "The masses will win democratic rights through struggle") The editors of the review answered: "Three different positions exist today on the question of democratic rights." According to them, the three positions are grouped together in the three slogans mentioned in the readers question. Further on, the editors call on the population to follow the debates which will soon appear in the columns of newspapers in order to adopt the "correct" position.

We are asking those people the following question: have you already forgotten the great debate over democratic rights, which profoundly marked the struggle between the two lines, with the EPRP opportunists? Do you think that the masses have already forgotten the ideological achievements obtained in this struggle? As for us, we have no reason to answer favourably to the invitation by right opportunists for a "new debate" on the question in the columns of newspapers. We stand firmly with the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution and with the bill which resolves the question in an effectively revolutionary way. That being said, we shall not allow the opportunists to spread confusion among the masses regarding their ideological achievements. True to the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution, which has been accepted and approved by the masses, we shall denounce all deviation and attempts at confusion.

The right opportunists claim that there exists today "three distinct positions". But in actual fact there are only two: Those who remain true to the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution, and those who back away from it.

If the "Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Organization" broke the privileged links it had with MEI'NONE, it is because its leadership has felt the necessity to back away from the fight for the immediate proclamation of democratic rights. The "Proletarian League" is in the fore front of those who, today, questions the necessity of fighting for the proclamation of democratic rights without restrictions for the masses. In their view, the "without restriction" is ambiguous and consequently it

is necessary to re-examine the debate ended one and a half years ago. It is also necessary to re-examine the Programme of the NDR which specifies that democratic rights should be granted to the masses without restrictions. The "Proletarian League" prefers the slogan: "Democratic rights for the masses!" But the question is, why should "without restrictions" be eliminated when it concerns democratic rights? Does all that not come to promoting the slogan: "Restricted democracy for the broad masses?" This same slogan was put forward when the DERG refused to acknowledge the masses' right to organize themselves freely, when the regime was thinking of founding a "unique socialist party" which would control the application of democratic rights. The intention of the "Proletarian League" is clear: reconsider the masses' right to free organization, restrict democratic rights through control by a one party system. Moreover, they clearly stated this in their central organ, since, according to them, "Before the proclaiming of democratic rights, it is necessary to found a workers' party." When the leaders of the "Proletarian League" oppose the demand of the revolutionaries and affirm that democratic rights should be proclaimed after the founding of a "workers' party" and under the strict control of the latter, the difference between them and the reactionary forces is no longer the question of knowing whether democratic rights should be proclaimed "immediately or later." It becomes a question of choosing between, on the one hand, the founding of an authentic proletarian party, an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist united front under the leadership of the proletarian party and genuine representative mass organizations, and on the other hand, the founding of a so-called "workers' party" formed by some opportunists and notorious bureaucrats who would inevitably transform the mass organizations into an appendix of the bureaucracy.

The demand "immediate and unrestricted democratic rights for the masses" is a revolutionary demand which has clear perspectives. The slogan of the leaders of the "Proletarian League", "Restricted democracy for the masses!" in accordance with their "notion" of organization is a demand which will inevitably ensure the victory



of a handful of reactionaries as well as the supremacy of bureaucracy and the treacherous petty-bourgeoisie.

It is however significant that those who are today accused of having "fled the revolution" are those who have remained true to the demand: "Immediate and unrestricted democracy for the masses!" But, if our memory is right, following the crushing of the TEFERI BANTE/ ALIEMAYEHU clique, accused of having delayed the proclamation of democratic rights, today's opportunists were curiously in the vanguard of the fight for democracy. In the common declaration of the five marxist-leninist organizations, they, too, had taken the offensive alongside the people. In February 1977, the broad masses intensified their offensive by taking free revolutionary actions. The reactionaries were harassed from all sides. During this period, the opportunists, true to themselves, cried out loudest. They declared everywhere that "democratic rights were more necessary than ever in order to wipe out the reaction." They called for increased repression of the reactionaries. In the declaration of the marxist-leninist organizations, they were unanimously in favour of "the fight for the proclamation of democratic rights." Nevertheless, this "unanimity" only lasted for the time of the revolutionary offensive. When the revolutionary movement took to the defensive, and the revolutionary victories were being threatened, the ardour of the opportunists calmed. Once again, true to themselves, they progressively abandoned their claims and allied with the enemy. They showed clearly that they were unable to face a stronger enemy, that they had the tendency of allying with him in whose favour the balance of power played, without worrying about his nature. While the reaction has taken the upper hand at all levels: acceleration of repression, reintegration of bureaucrats in key-posts, liberation of reactionary political prisoners, etc., the opportunists, in order to justify their collaboration, affirm that the reaction has been wiped out and that democratic rights, which they themselves asked for, are today respected. Thus the demand: "Immediate and unrestricted democratic rights for the masses!" is in their view, a demand without an essence.

In fact, in order to hide their treason, the opportunists have to choose between a lie and nonsense: either affirm that the Counter-revolution has been wiped out totally, or support the thesis claiming that democratic freedom is not necessary despite the offensive launched by the reaction. Whatever their acrobatics may be, the concrete situation in Ethiopia proves them wrong. Consequently, the real choice they have is the following: either return to the right position or hold to their own, surely to be rejected by the people and thrown into history's dust-bin.

As for the revolutionary forces, their choice is made: surge forwards with the Programme of the National Democratic Revolution, unrelentlessly denounce all opportunist deviations, and face the the reaction with determination.

On the question of democratic rights, the revolutionary forces wave the slogan: "Unrestricted and immediate democratic rights for the masses!" and fight for the proclamation of the bill drafted by the "Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs" (POMOA) of those days. We demand the liberation of our comrades imprisoned at the instigation of the bureaucracy, and we shall fight to wipe out the pressure of the old bureaucracy of Haile Sellassie on the mass organizations, in order to strengthen the popular structures wherever they may be. Finally, the revolutionary forces systematically denounce the confusion perpetrated by right opportunists, in order to uncover their true nature.

The struggle begun will be unrelentless, but the victory of the authentic revolutionary forces and of the broad masses is ineluctable.

**DOWN WITH THE TREASONERIOUS OPPORTUNISTS!**

**FORWARDS WITH OUR PROGRAMME!**

**IMMEDIATE FREEDOM FOR IMPRISONED REVOLUTIONARIES!**

**DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM, FEUDALISM AND BUREAUCRATIC CAPITALISM!**

**A CONSCIOUS, ORGANIZED AND ARMED REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE OF THE MASSES WILL TRIUMPH!**