

NEWS & VIEWS

"La'Addisitu Ethiopia"

The Amharic bi-monthly Newspaper of Me'Isone (La'Addisitu Ethiopia) in its number 3 issue wrote under the heading: "The Past Eleven Years."

La'Addisitu pinpointed the imperative necessity of the unity among all democratic and patriotic Ethiopians as it was commonly felt today on the basis of the opulent political experience gained in the last eleven years.

In addition to reminding the importance of such concerted struggle, the editorial also stated that in the absence of such unity, the repressive rule of the Ethiopian Military Dictatorship will be perpetuated and so will the elongation of the anguish of the Ethiopian people.

Furthermore, Me'Isone reiterated its position by stating that the current political differences that are prevalent among the opposition and fighting forces in Ethiopia must not be an impediment towards such unity. Full agreement on the political, economic, and social issues shouldn't be set as a prerequisite for such a timely and indispensable unity among all Ethiopian Democrats and Patriots. It is indisputable that our common objectives are national independence, domestic peace, and the establishment of a democratic government in accordance with the consent of the Ethiopian peoples.

The editorial further underlined the democratic concept: "To strive for the establishment of Democratic Ethiopia means the democratic resolution of differences among the peoples of Ethiopia and the practicing of mutual faith and credit among the political forces which aspire for national sovereignty, peace, equality and the well-being of the people."

Amnesty International's Urgent Appeals

In a circular letter, dated the 25th of January 1986, Amnesty International expressed a serious concern about the recent "disappearances and extrajudicial executions" of political prisoners in Ethiopia. According to Amnesty's statement, sixty political detainees have been executed secretly by the Military Government in early November 1985. The executions have taken place after a secret review of the detainees' cases by a special committee composed of representatives of the Ministry of National Security.

Furthermore, Amnesty International has affirmed "receiving consistent reports in recent years of many political detainees in Ethiopia being secretly given prison or death sentences without any recognized form of trial and without any opportunity to present a defence or appeal."

In conclusion, Amnesty made a strong appeal to all humanitarians to express concern about the alleged "disappearances" of political prisoners in Ethiopia.

In another recent appeal (Fall 1985) Amnesty International calls for the release of Ethiopian women prisoners, among whom were Tsehai Tolossa, the Director of the Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church Women's Organization and Martha Kumsa, a journalist and an author. The other two allegedly "disappeared" Ethiopian women prisoners since 1979, for whom Amnesty appealed, are Dr. Nigist Adane and Konjit Kebede. Both Nigist and Konjit are prominent members of the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (Me'Isone).

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Protocol Agreements, Ad Infinitum

The Ethiopian Military Government and the U.S.S.R. signed another round of protocol agreements pertinent to their bi-lateral economic relations. Mikhail Sergeychick, Chairman of the State Committee for Foreign Relations arrived in Addis Ababa to sign the agreements with the Military Government officials on the Sixth U.S.S.R. - Ethiopia Joint Commission meeting, which took place on October 18, 1985. Signing the protocol, Mr. Sergeychick appraised the bi-lateral economic relations "as being strengthened periodically and the results achieved up to now have been fruitful." (emph. NE)

It is true that the relationship has incontestably strengthened between Kremlin and Mengistu's regime in the last nine years; however, other than the incredible build-up of military armaments, nothing has been achieved in the economic sphere as far as Ethiopia is concerned. Notwithstanding the fact that Ethiopia's outstanding \$2 billion debt for armament purchases from U.S.S.R. , the Soviet Union has not even donated a moderate amount of relief aid to the famine victims, let alone to provide any significant assistance for the over-all economic development of the country.

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A Decree on Famine Donation

The deadline date set by the Ethiopian Military Dictatorship for Private Sector's contribution to the fund for the famine was the 10th of November, 1985. Last February the government enacted a decree to the effect that all employees shall contribute 10% of their monthly income to the relief fund. Since then, a total of \$1.3 million has been collected. According to the decree, rigorous sanctions would be imposed on private shop owners and craftsmen who fail to pay the

the designated portion from their income to the relief fund.

The compulsory nature of the decree with its sanction entails the switching off the government's primary responsibility and accountability of the escalating famine crisis toward the urban population in spite of their considerable donations in 1974/75 and since 1980. What could be a point in fact, here, is the 72 million Birr raised in 1980 through similar compulsory order by the Military Government. However, the government hasn't even discharged a minimum responsibility of providing an official statement of report to the public relating to the disposition of the fund until now.

What is also outrageous is that for like many previous schemes of the government, a superfluous and parasitic office was set up to (mis)manage this special relief fund.