

## **CALL ME BY MY NAME: A debate with Debteraw, XX**

Wolde Tewolde alias Obo Arada Shawl

November 17, 2007

In the beginning, EPRP's shared goal was to exercise the right to practice to change the government of the Prime Minister of Aklilu Habtewold and his brothers through **peaceful** and **democratic** means. Peaceful and democracy were unknown to the people in power.

Ethiopian security forces routinely tortured, beat, mistreated detainees under interrogation to obtain confessions or incriminating **information**. In several cases, Ethiopian authorities subjected student activists, nationalist and other critics of the regime to forced exiles and an option to go to the mountains and lowlands of

- Bale,
- Eritrea,
- Godjam,
- Ogaden and
- Tigrai.

EPRP began to undermine the regime by instilling the concept of Revolution, a political Revolution. They call this revolution as the Eway Revolution. It included the present physical geography of Eritrea and Ethiopia. Conceptually, the Eway Revolution encompassed the Blue Nile in the west, the Red Sea in the east, and the Yellow in the North and the Green in the south. This Eway Revolution has bloomed to the full in present day Ethiopia.

- The Eway Revolution walked through Mountains, Valleys and Deserts of Ethiopia. News of the Eway Revolution has spread fast locally and internationally. The Ethiopian University Service became the agent of change for the entire of Ethiopia. The University National Service became competitive with the American Peace Corps. The so-called Red State of Hamasien and the so-called Blue Amhara state just like the Red and Blue of American Democratic and Republican have become the focal point for contention. The Leftist (Grazmatches) the Rightists (Kegnatzmatches), along with the millions of Ethiopians in the middle valorize
- Justice,
- Faith,
- Compassion,
- Respect and
- Hope for everyone and everybody, yet the expense of **forgiveness**.

With this background the Monarchy of Ethiopia gave power to its citizens without fight. The beginning of the end had arrived in September 1974.

“Who is the next leader, please stand up!” was the demand and cry of all Ethiopians. By that time, two schools of thoughts have already been mushroomed between those who opted for Military Rule and those who supported the Civilian rule. The military supporters led by Mieso as was expected went head on to confront not only the Nationalist guerrilla fighters but also against the civilian Ethiopians. And so the party of EPRP became the victim of the Military regime for 17 solid years (1974-1991).

EPRP has been a school for democracy since its inception, helping its members and supporters learn to care about the world and talk about their political concerns. It was also true that EPRP also taught its members how to silence its opponents mainly through poems and writings. At times, it had to use its members of EPRA to resort to force. But EPRP’s strength was in persuasion via the publication of DEMOCARCIA and through its members’ discipline. Essentially EPRP was and is a breeding organization for many political leaders. It should be commended for its training for democracy.

The problem was that the majority of Ethiopians did not understand whom the “personal leader of DEMOCRACIA.” The Military junta has been pursuing for the publication of DEMOCRACIA – the political organ of EPRP to catch the ringleader. The editors of the publication were few but the contents of DEMOCRACIA were the voices of all EPRP members, its supporters, its sympathizers and of the populace at large.

EPRP has believed in the history of Ethiopia that city-states, nation-states and member-states were existent long before the advent of Haile Sellassie I. All what EPRP wanted was to create a state (space) that would be peaceful, affluent and democratic, in other words, the attempt was to create a software for Ethiopia. In order to implement this shared Ethiopian dream, EPRP continued to work with the urban and the rural population of all nations and nationalities. While continuing with its vision and mission EPRP has met its first obstacle from within itself. A faction or Anja has emerged. What is this Anja thing? The procedure was simple but the consequence was devastating not only for EPRP but for the whole nation of Ethiopia. It was the first breach of Trust among Ethiopians.

What is it about?

Simply it is about **Collective Leadership**. Two individuals by the name of Berhane Meskel Redda and Getachew Maru refused to abide by the majority of the decision of party. In every Organization, particularly when it is a democratic one, one cannot go against the decision of the majority. It is only proper to fiercely debate and discuss for ones’ ideas and opinions to convince the majority, but once it is decided, it is over, it has to be carried out by the decision. Unfortunate as it was at the time, the two individuals have done their share of destruction to annihilate EPRP, the party they themselves have created. What an anomaly! “They kicked away EPRP.”

Once the damage was carried out by the “new EPRP” in the cities, Menghistu further demanded the “new EPRP” to eliminate also the Army of EPRP, otherwise, Menghistu told to the Anja leaders that they could not be accepted to Menghistu’s alliance. It was a big challenge for them but they informed him that they support the Peasant Revolution. Nobody knows whether they meant it or it was an impossible task. And so the DERG

leader alias of Seded group went after Berhane where he was captured while trying to escape out of the country. I have met the person who and how he captured him. It was a sad story of a failed leadership to tell.

Why was this a failed leadership? There were two main reasons, a cultural and an educational.

“Temelket Alamahn, Teketel Alekahn” was deeply ingrained in Ethiopian mentality. At the height of EPRP, there was no leader in person totally in contradiction to the Ethiopian culture and tradition. EPRP wanted to make sure that every individual could be or would be a leader. That was and is the concept of EPRP’s democracy. The Party has paid a heavy price to institute this concept. It was not all for nothing though that the party has sacrificed. In terms of democratic slogan, the term has become a household word in Ethiopia. In terms of application, EPRP members have joined and became members or leaders in different organizations. This is a plus for EPRP unlike many claims and counter claims. Once the dust settles, the truth will come out. For the time being, let me give you some anecdotes from EPRP’s diary.

In the Kebele where I lived, an old man advised the youth of the time not to confront the Military regime because according to him, he said “ Ethiopians do not have underground places like foreign countries, please my children,” he said, “ do not think about underground movement.” The then Youth League, the now Middle Aged said told to themselves, until the Official of the Kebele understands what an underground means, that they can work openly even by using the Kebele Office. And so they did. The entire towns, cities of Ethiopia were engulfed with underground activities. And we all know the rest of history. **The clandestine leadership of EPRP has done its work.**

The Eway Revolution also became popular in the whole countryside of Ethiopia. The DERG refused to accept reality and the youths and militias began to refuse to go to war. As Ethiopian parents became unwilling to send their children to the Revolutionary War, the DERG began to force them and so they send their children with weeping and crying.

In order to stop the invincible and invisible Eway Revolution the DERG cadres were gone wild for campaigning to stop the cry of parents. I want to share with readers a typical incident of campaign that I encountered in the town of Dejen, Godjam Administrative Region. It was during the campaign for annihilating EPRP. The officials of the DERG had gathered the police, the merchants, bank and government officials and many residents of the town. In front of the gathering, the cadre said the following, “ Why are we weeping when we send our children to the War Front? What has happened to the guts (WENE) of Belay Zellek, Tewodros, Yohannes, Minilik and others? Ethiopian used to celebrate when they go to the war front. Why is this different?” he asked. As usual in those days, everybody was silent. But an old man got up and responded in the following manner. “ My son, you have said the bravery of Belay Zelleke, the Minilik, the Tewodros and the Yohannes. I do not wish to repeat it.” He continued to say “ But my dear cadre, we are sending our children **without leaders**. You DERG leaders are here and our children are there. What can our children do without leaders? You tell me. In fact, this is

a consolation for our children's death to weep and say goodbye." He finished his opinion and sat. Readers can imagine how the DERG cadre became speechless and paralyzed.

The story of these morals is meant to relate to the current situation of EPRP leadership dilemma. EPRP collective leadership teaches its followers about courage so that its members and followers learn to emulate EPRP's leadership behavior rather their words. Courage demonstrated is likely courage learned. What is courage? It is the absence of fear. The lesson members need to learn is how to face the fear of the unknown, being mindful of security considerations, choosing battles carefully. There is a difference between being foolhardy and being brave, though. The foolhardy face predictable danger that could be avoided; the brave accept danger with all necessary precautions, because it is unavoidable or because it is important to make a statement at that time.

EPRP teaches its members to stand up for its beliefs in the world at large but must demonstrate courage in its organizations. The Party of EPRP has shown both courage and fear. The EPRA did not show trustworthiness. Self-trust is evident in a person's self-esteem and confidence. Risk taking and experimentation, unavoidable, unreasonable, inconsistent or unreliable - the less likely in a stable environment without stability EPRP is hard-pressed to trust self or other.

There is a missing link in EPRA's history but there is no missing link in the history of EPRP. The struggle of EPRP will continue unabated with or without individual leadership or professorship. It is all about P (principle) and not about B (benefit) or B (blood).

Unfortunately, CIA of America and Mosad of Israel jointly decided that the Red State of Eritrea and the Blue Region of Ethiopia should be together. A Christian leader of EPLF and an all-Christian region of Tigray was their basis for their idea of unity during the 1991 assumption of power. This false premise have created havoc in today's' Ethiopia. By the same token, they blocked EPRP not to participate in London Conference. Tacitly, I have to assume that they have given a permission to annihilate EPRP from the scene. In the same way that the DERG was looking through the wrong prism to annihilate EPRP from the source, TPLF the brain child of America is peeping through the wrong prism to kill EPRP from its source. Where is the source of EPRP, one might ask?

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**IMMORTALIZE, IMMORTALIZE AND IMMORTALIZE DEBTERAW!!!**

This is the last piece for a debate with Debteraw; the next articles will be Solutions with Debteraw.

For comments and criticism

