

CALL ME BY MY NAME: A commentary on EPRP's split, XXI
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Encounter

On Friday morning, a day of freedom, I came across of an old friend by the name of Kebede Essatu, a poet and a revolutionary of a kind. I always tease him whenever I see him. He had sacrificed his education for the sake of EPRP and thereby for the sake of the Ethiopian Eway Revolution. This time he somewhat teased me about the split of EPRP leadership? According to rumors he said that EPRP leaders have split and have shared the Party's asset. Or, he further asked me if there is a process of reconciliation as he came to read it on websites.

Although I do not know much of the reconciliation process, I know that there is no dividend to be shared out to anybody. However, we continued the discussion about EPRP's leadership row. I told Kebede to look for the truth. "What is the truth?" he said in his usual emotional mood. I continued to explain in the following manner:

"We all should ask," I said to Kebede, "Who holds the truth?" Did the truth about EPRP leadership in America gone with Belayneh alias known as Mersha or is it still with Assefa aka Fassika? How do you know where the truth is? Kebede asked me again? There is no truth, he seemed to utter in his inner own voice. Off hand, I told him what I have heard from the participants in the Conference as the truth. And our discussion went on for a while. Ato Kebede and I can only talk about EPRP's leadership in America. The leadership we know about EPRP is around these two individuals in relations to the areas known as North America and Canada. That is all.

I reminded Ato Kebede that every time, there comes a fundamental change in a nation or a country or a system of government, there is bound to be a shift and a hope for finding one's niche. We have seen this during the collapse of the ancien regime of Haile Sellassie I, where a lot of people had shifted with the wind even by betraying the Monarchy - whose legitimacy comes from EGZIABHER

When the DERG whose legitimacy emanated from the military power came to end; there was a shift for which Kebede himself was a witness. By the way I have encouraged Ato Kebede to go to Addis Addis when he told me that he had three goals in mind.

- To demand the release of Debteraw and his comrades
- To open a branch office for EPRP and
- To participate in the drafting of the Constitution of Ethiopia.

Now, it is the same thing, there seems or there is a perception that the TPLF is going to collapse any time soon and therefore, there is a glimpse of hope within some groups that it is time for them to be on the bandwagon.

Kebede asked me what I think about the split in EPRP's leadership as many have asked me before, and here is what I think.

This was not narrated to him as he was with some body and that we did not want to bother the other person with our somewhat private but serious discussion.

HISTORY

31 years ago, on September 11, 1976, the military government known as the DERG officially declared EPRP as the public enemy number one. The DERG by declaring this proclamation proceeded to wipe out EPRP. A peaceful dissent by EPRP was met by savage torture and murder of its members and supporters.

After 17 years, the DERG was the one that was wiped out and not EPRP.

According to the reports made by Belayneh, Woyane, Shaebia and the Sudanese government launched a war against EPRA and presented themselves as true Ethiopian democrats. Simultaneously, EPRP was excluded from the London Conference that was meant to hand over power to the insurgents, on the pretext that they do not have a Fighting Army like that of OLF, TPLF and Shaebia.

After seven years, all of the peace loving and democrats of Woyane and Shaebia exposed themselves in bloody battles resulting in an endless war of nerves and wasted resources. Above all, the TPLF and the EPLF fighters is becoming dustbin of history. Only their leaders are reported to live comfortably and luxuriously.

After 16 years, TPLF and Shaebia are still remained unpopular governments. But the EPRP collective leadership is still remained intact with both integrity and loyalty to the Eway Revolution.

Why is this anomaly has occurred? Is it the leadership style that mattered? Or is it the democratic style that is at work?

In other words, Shaebia imprisoned 15 of their leadership comrades, Woyane dismissed five of their leadership comrades, and Kinjit fired 5 of their leadership. Ask your self whether EPRP leaders have fired their fellow leaders. Absolutely not. Only member's votes can put them down. Where is the democracy in action? I leave this for the readers to answer.

It is now a truism that is what is most important is not a country's first election, but its second and subsequent elections. And what matters is not simply that people have the right to vote, but they are offered a real Choice, under conditions that are truly free and fair. EPRP believes that this phenomenon is not happening in Ethiopia today.

Elections are one part of a democratic symphony. This should have been a reminder for Kinjit leaders and members. A full orchestra is required, including markets that reward initiative; legal structure that prevail justice, police that respect due process; and a press

corpse that is free to pursue the facts and publish the truth. EPRP has learnt this not only from history books but also from bitter experience in Ethiopia.

Split Over Democracy or DEMOCRACIA?

Let me go back and speak with Kebede. Leadership and Relationship with EPRP was never about property or financial gain. It is about understanding and working together.

Two individual of EPRP collective leadership members became dictators. Assefa and Hama Tuma were labeled as dictators of EPRP. Are they really? Assefa's dictatorship is very well known in North America. Kebede knows it and Berhanu Shalleka knows it because both claims that Assefa has never oppose them let alone to dictate them.

What about Hama Tuma? Hama Tuma is a satirist. He cuts through the baloney and gets to the truth. Wit has its place in Ethiopian politics, and people always like to laugh where Mr. Hama Tuma offers them in his writings. But funny can be a distraction from the serious stuff that Hama conveys to Ethiopians. Hama Tuma writes about Ethiopian elites, the African leaders, Texan Ethiopians etc. Ethiopian culture, opposition to the war in Somalia involvement and the way Eritrea is separated from Ethiopia and so on and so forth. Mr. Tuma has always been funny in his writings for a lifetime of making people laughs and critically think. Ato Tuma tries to sound deadly earnest even, in truth, a little ponderous at times as he seeks to be a real democrat. What comrade Hama now needs is gravitas. True democracy is never achieved- it is always a pursuit

If EPRP that love liberty is weary, then those who love power will always sweep all of us away. That is indeed the fear of Hama Tuma and it is a legitimate fear. In other words, DEMOCRACIA is an Ethiopian version of democracy.

As to the question of Ato Mersha, we have gone through this before. When Kiflu Tadesse wrote a history of EPRP, we have agreed to respect each other and do the right thing until Ethiopia offers an opportunity for EPRP to be a candidate as a political party. When that time comes, Ato Mersha can campaign that he has never stopped the entire journey of EPRP's long struggle and that he has been wounded in the battle whereas Ato Kifle can claim by saying that he had written a partial history of EPRP but stopped somewhere in between. I thought we have agreed on this. Ato Kiflu has parked so to speak while Ato Mersha was actively involved in bringing back the former EPRP members back. At the beginning Ato Mersha's attempt was noble but somewhere I lost him when he was deeply involved in bringing old leaders and intellectuals back to struggle. His task was not about recruiting, it was rather about convincing individuals with new ideas or telling the future plans of EPRP. It is true that ideas can bring people but people cannot bring ideas. I am not opposing that he should not bring back old comrades to the struggle but they should be convinced first why they come back. After all EPRP is for everyone and everybody. But what every one should accept is that there is one and only one EPRP Organizational Tree and a center. In terms of space and time, there is AAssimba, there is Tselmti and Mercato, i.e. ATM.

In order to walk away from EPRP's path of struggle, one has to evaluate what the stated programs of EPRP were. For your evaluation, they are written down in the following.

EPRP's declared programs

1. Replacement of the military by provisional popular government
2. Recognition of basic democratic rights
3. Political prisoners should be released
4. Eritrean question must be resolved peacefully and democratically
5. Peasants must be armed
6. Economic demands must be fulfilled and
7. Ethiopia must be free from foreign domination

How many of these demands are met today? I leave the answer to the readers of this article.

CONFUSED OR CONFUSING?

SECURITY, PROSPERITY AND VALUE for all Ethiopians is at stake. Debteraw's CULTURE AND FAITH is calling us for an action. Let us free him to free Ethiopia.

Here is how things should work with EPRP collective leadership

EPRP has three layers of leadership.

- Organizational leadership,
- Ideological leadership and
- Political leadership

They all work as a team and are known as **collective leadership**.

Organizational

A= V-V-V, i.e. voluntarism-vote-victory

The question of priority is very important not only for EPRP but for the whole civilized world. EPRP appeals to voluntarism by educating, persuading or agitating. No threat or cheat. In other words, the Machiavellian type of attaining power by any means necessary is not its forte. YETM FISCHER DQUATUN AMCHW roughly means the end justifies the means. Instead EPRP teaches, "the means justifies the ends." Once this is accomplished, then volunteers will be organized to participate or in this case VOTE.

After a vote, then they considered their mission as VICTORY. But other organizations and parties do vice versa. Most of them, they prefer, victory first. Judge for yourself, which is better. EPRP members or associates whether former or current do not regret of being associated with EPRP for precisely because they were volunteers before victory. I do not want to blame all our intellectuals for not deciphering the Latin letter of "A". Our Geez letter of "LE" is reversed.

Ideological

B = 13

Decipher the letter **B**,

Spin the letter **□**

Put them together and

Be whatever you want to **BE**

There are three categories of people, those who search for BENEFT = B

Those who search for BLOOD = B and

Those who search for BELIEF = PRINCIPLE

I hope when we talk about EPRP leadership, we are referring to PRINIPLE and not to blood is thicker than water or is there a benefit for me. If we are going to judge about EPRP's leadership, it is always about the belief and value for Ethiopians. Those who look for better financial benefit or for their kin's and kiths, EPRP is not for them. EPRP has been and still is a haven for Integrity, Love and Trust.

Political

C = Culture

Like any culture, the Ethiopian culture is very complex. Although many educated individuals attempted to challenge and change the Ethiopian culture, EPRP did not even try to change let alone to challenge the culture. By the way culture in the Ethiopian context culture is “a state of mind” while in the Eritrean context it is about telling yourself about yourself. What a contrast!!!

Conclusion

Only a popular and democratic government could give Ethiopians and Eritreans a chance to unite and survive. That had been the goal of the popular movement, which was betrayed by the intervention of the military. The soldiers did not relinquish power as they have initially promised (See “Confession” in Amharic by Tesfaye Lemma.)

Woyane did not hand over power to the elected Kinjit groups. And there is no guarantee that from now on, that EPRDF will hand over power if they loose in the coming elections.

Power of the people comes only when and only when the seven points of programs as proposed by EPRP comes to fruition. Although these were written and demanded a long time ago, they are still valid, after all DEMOCRACIA – the organ of EPRP warned all of us by writing the following: “ALEBABSEW BIYARSU BE'AREM YIMELESU.”

For comments and criticism

