

Question II: Is the Ethiopian Tragedy Unfolding ?

by Imru Zelleke

1 October 2005

What is going on?

That the CUD turned into a single party is good news. However, it seems that the new KINIIT is staggering in its new cloths. Moreover, a distinct picture of its ability to handle a future government is still obscure.

One issue was whether it would enter the parliament or not? No decision has yet been made, why? At first this was a primordial question for the Kinijit, now it is said that the entry into parliament or not is not important.

What is considered important is whether the democratic rights of the people are upheld or not. I thought that boycotting the rubber-stamp parliament was for that very reason. If not, what else is there?

UEDF had called for a worldwide demonstration for October 2/05. At first the Knijit had announced that it would join in this endeavor, then hesitated and later confirmed its participation to the event.

In the mean time the EPRDF is mobilizing all its armed supporters and arresting, beating, torturing and harassing the leading members of the Kinijit and destroying its grass-root support all around the country. The number of arrested opposition party members has reached 859, and the rampage still continues. Offices of the KINIIT and UEDF around the country have been forcefully closed. Meles is conducting an intense international and domestic campaign to vilify and outlaw the opposition as a terrorist group bent on destroying the country. Ultimately, Meles has prohibited any demonstration, refused to recognize the elected Addis Ababa Council, and demanded that the opposition recognize the legitimacy of his rigged-up election and enter his figurative parliament.

He also announced that he will prosecute the opposition leaders personally, as terrorists aiming at overthrowing his regime by force. Faced against this threat of violence the opposition has buckled down and cancelled the Sunday October 2nd demonstration. Whatever the case we must assume that Meles and his gang will pursue relentlessly and with vengeance his persecution of the opposition, until their extinction and any hope of democratization is completely crushed. We can also assume that some members of the opposition will surrender to his dictate, and join the rubber-stamp parliament.

As demonstrated during the Demera ceremony the public is more frustrated and angry than ever. Where is this tremendous wave of frustration and revolt to go? Without clear guidance from a leadership that still seems undecided? Is there time for this kind of political gymnastics?

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Have opportunities being missed?

In spite of all this shenanigan, a new 'People to People' movement has emerged and is calling an all out national strike of all activity for Monday October 3rd. All commercial activity, transportation, the labor force etc. etc. is to stop work until such time that the vote of the people is recognized and acted upon. Somehow, the initiative seems to have passed from the opposition leadership to the people. The public, who is carrying the burden of the persecution and violent coercion of the EPRDF regime, appears to have taken its destiny in its own hands, and has decided not to rot and die in jail and concentration camps.

Better late than never. Trailing after this event the opposition has half-heartedly endorsed a three day strike. Why three days? What is to be achieved in three days? Is the Meles regime supposed to evaporate within this time period? Or, Meles is to succumb to some of the highly self-effacing pleas that are addressed to him? Or, is Meles to stop his persecution and embrace the opposition? Or, after three days the opposition is to join the parliament? If anyone has any illusion that Meles will stop his ruthless oppression after three days, or that some foreign angels are going to perform a miracle, he better forget it.

I believe that under these new circumstances the Diaspora must activate, more vigorously and relentlessly than ever, its support for the people of Ethiopia. This is a battle that we must win, if we are to save the country from disaster. Realizing that freedom has its price, the people have taken a clear stand. A new page of Ethiopian history has been opened, from which a real democracy might emerge.

I know that it is not fair to those in opposition in Ethiopia, to take even more risks than they already have, while I am sitting here in safety. Unfortunately, the dangers come with the territory, and are inherent to the nature of politics.

ETHIOPIA BENETSANETWA LEZEALEM TINOUR.

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