

Amb. Imru Zelleke's Opinion - Power struggle for what?

14 December 2007

Ato Hailu Shawl is an engineer and Dr. Berhanu Nega an economist, both are educated. I don't see where the "old guard" and "new guard" differ since both believe in the same political manifesto, unless what you are saying is that an economist is better than an engineer. For all I know the vast majority of world political leaders, past and present, are neither engineers nor economists. I doubt if it counts much in politics.

The difference between Hailu and Berhanu is simple. Hailu has left his comfortable life and dedicated his time and his fortune for the freedom and welfare of the Ethiopian people. For years he has defied the regime and campaigned throughout the country organizing amass movement, transformed the All Amhara Party into the All United Ethiopia Party. Together with his colleagues, travelling by car, by mule and often on foot he has established direct contact with the people and built a constituency of over a million members for AUEP. Refusing to surrender and make deals with the regime against the wish of majority of the people, does not qualify him as a dictator. Some people seem to have a visceral hatred for him, which I can't understand since most of them don't even know him in person. Ideological and political differences are normal in politics, but vicious slanders, lies and hateful tantrums are not acceptable in a healthy and honest political dialogue.

The Kestedamena group came into being only a very few months before the election and hardly had time to build any constituency of consequence, it simply rode piggyback on the older parties AAEUP and EDP-Medhin. Besides that Dr. Berhanu runs for the Mayor-ship of Addis Ababa and not for any national electoral post. It seems also that even the Mayor-ship was a concession to him by Dr. Admasu. I have nothing but respect for Dr. Berhanu and his professional qualifications. However, in terms of politics I don't see what qualifies him for the leadership of a national movement to which his contribution is almost negligible, but for his own ambition of course, ambition for leadership is normal for a politician. However, this must be expressed at an appropriate time and place in Ethiopia, amongst the voting people; and certainly not at the cost of the party's unity. Especially, in front of foreign powers who play a major political, economic and military role in our country, and whose national interests

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dictates the stability of the area at all costs, albeit the resulting tragic consequences to the inhabitants. Even stranger is the behaviour of a miniscule minority in the Diaspora, who want to impose their choice of leaders on the people of Ethiopia, from ten thousand miles away. The tragic parody that has been acted by some groups supporting one faction against another at the expense of the "real" popular movement that was Kinjit, shows merely the same behaviour as the past, that the pretensions of a "personality and his acolytes" are more important than the whole people of the nation.

Speaking In general, in Ethiopia the 'educated' class that has come to politics and power for the past forty years, has brought nothing but disaster for the country. Although there was some good intention behind their action, it was tarnished and spoiled by unreasonable ambition, ignorance and excessive greed for power. What is seen now days is the same pattern of unbridled thirst for power, irresponsibility and complete disdain for the people. For the educated a "degree" has become implicitly or sub-consciously a right to govern and to rule the "amorphous masses", irrespective of their wishes. So far this assumption has not worked, in fact it has alienated the "educated" from the people, and denied them a leading role in the destiny of the nation. The famous revolution has ended up in a blood bath that still endures till the present. Millions of people are still starving; millions have permanent mental short falls for lack of appropriate nutrition; we have fallen into an ill-conceived ethnic quagmire; our economy is completely dependent in foreign aid; crony capitalism and corruption dominate national development; our best qualified people are migrating and in exile; literacy has increased in correlation with lowest standards of education in Africa; etc. etc. In spite of huge input of foreign money and aid Ethiopia is still amongst the least developed nations in the world. Do our people deserve this state of affairs?.

Someone asked if there was an Ethiopian philosophy? We have long history through which our country has been under the influence of the post-Christian Ancient Testament followed by Sixteen centuries of **Christianism** and Thirteen centuries of Islam, two great religions; in addition to indigenous cultures and mores. We have developed our own alphabet, we have a

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rich language and have developed our literature. We have poetry and citations. We have Zere-Yacob, Yared and many other thinkers.

Our ethos is based on Humanism "Sew", "Hig", "Siraat", "Meht", "Netsanet", "Imnet", "Balebetnet",

and such notions that are the basic tenets of Democracy; even though we have survived throughout ages under feudal rule these norms have more or less remained as our basic social guidelines. I am not a philosopher I don't know if the composite of all the above engenders a philosophy or not. Therefore, I take refuge in the position of country priest who when asked "Lemindinew Medhani Alem teblo yetesseyemew?", answered "Yaleneger indezih tesseyeme bileh new?". I leave the answer to our philosophers.

One thing I know for sure is that the problems of country need a serious answer. Actually it is not the Answers that are lacking, but the honest and unqualified commitment by each for the "National Good".

Imru Zelleke
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