

ዓለም አቀፍ የኢ.ት.ዲ.ዲ ተማሪዎች

ፊደራሽን ቡላቲን

BULLETIN OF THE WORLD WIDE FEDERATION OF ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS

Vol. 2, No. 1

in collaboration, Geneva, Swiss

ጥቅምት ፳፻፲፯

፳፻፲፯

October, 1974

Editorial

THE BURNING QUESTION OF OUR MOVEMENT

It is now more than ever clear that the legitimate political demand of the popular forces in Ethiopia for the urgent constitution of a provisional democratic government to execute and implement the immediate revolutionary demands of the masses has become one of the burning questions of our movement. At this crucial stage of the struggle the triumph of revolutionary democracy or conservative reactions depends on the incontrovertible fact whether this popular will finds concrete expression in the creation of this democratic organ of power or in its trampling under the iron boots of forceful military domination of our political life.

The historical importance of this provisional democratic government at the present is dictated politically by the urgent need of the revolutionary process in the brief period of transition of power from that of autocratic rule to a popularly elected democratic government of the people. The immediate revolutionary tasks of this provisional democratic government are precisely clear:

1. Until a popular constitution is discussed, drafted and ratified by a popular assembly elected by direct universal suffrage, it should decree and implement the UNCONDITIONAL RIGHT OF THE MASSES for freedom of press, speech, assembly and the right to form political parties, mass organizations, popular committees, associations etc.
2. It should enact and implement a decree that should guarantee the destruction and disbandment of counter-revolutionary institutions and organizations of the old order, and conduct at the same time under the eyes of public control the radical reorganization and re-structuring of the armed forces, the police, the courts, the prisons, etc. and their infusion with popular and patriotic elements of the population. It should protect as well the right of the masses to organize their own popular militia and safeguard the right of citizens to carry and possess firearms.
3. Until a popularly elected democratic government of the people work out a basic policy on the agrarian question and implement the revolutionary demand "land to the tiller", the provisional democratic government should enact a decree to the effect of nationalizing all lands, and declare officially the abolition of rent, services and other feudal dues and obligations.
4. Until a popular assembly elected by the people work out and ratify a full scale programme of nationalizations and decides on the path of economic development of the country, and until these revolutionary measures are implemented by a popularly elected democratic government of the people, the provisional government should enact a decree to the effect of nationalizing all FOREIGN OWNED industries, companies, banks, means of transport and communications, agricultural plantations, mines, etc. which are vital to the economic life of the country; and demand the immediate confiscation of the property of the royal families and other notorious enemies of the people.
5. In its immediate foreign policy, the provisional democratic government should adopt and follow a neutral policy based on the equality and sovereignty of all nations and the non-interference of one nation in the internal affairs of another, and strictly demand and implement the cessation of all FOREIGN military bases, harmful institutions and agencies, military personnel and staff from the country.
6. And most important of all, it should prepare, supervise and conduct the convocation of a popular assembly and the free election of a democratic government of the people in the immediate future; and assure the unrestricted dynamic participation of the

popular masses and their authentic organizations in electoral process and put the mass media of the state freely at their disposal without any exclusive privilege to any social group, political party, mass organization etc.

These in essence constitute the immediate tasks of the provisional government. And yet, the precise definition of the character and social make-up of this organ of power is of tremendous political importance more than the correct formulation of its immediate revolutionary tasks, for the successful and thorough consummation of the later depends absolutely on the popular structure and democratic content of this government.

The provisional democratic government draws its revolutionary authority and power only in as much as it is the expression of popular will and grows out of the popular INSTITUTIONS, mass organizations, committees, militant groups and circles created by the revolutionary process and no less in as much as, is democratically constituted by their elected representatives. No other social group can usurp their legitimate power, neither pretend to speak in their names and defend their interest nor become the sole arbitre of the revolution. The masses are the makers of history and it is their creative collective power that can alone decide the destiny and the political future of the country.

The demand for the creation of a provisional government is not an idyllic dream as the **RIGHT OPPORTUNIST** trend in our movement miserably try to blabber but is dictated politically by the urgent need of a popular organ of power to execute and implement these immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement. And neither its constitution is unfeasible as these arm-chair revolutionaries authoritatively preach, for the militant revolutionary movement of the masses has provided a new dynamic structure of popular institutions, committees, mass organizations, groups and circles which could go into the democratic constitution of the provisional government. What miserably pedantry and lack of political vision that this impotent clique in our movement cannot provide a concrete political alternative to this transition of power and the proper organ necessary that could be instrumental in its execution, except that frantically shrieking the strategic slogan "Down with imperialism and feudalism". It should be observed that the position of **RIGHT OPPORTUNISM** in our movement contain a dangerous liquidationist character, By evading the concrete issue of transition of power, it disarms the masses politically and exposes the revolutionary movement to the swindling and usurpation of its legitimate right by a self-styled military junta.

It is a fact now that an army junta is in the process of consolidating its political grip and expediting its absolute monopolization of political power by flaunting the popular will which emphatically called for the immediate constitution of a provisional democratic government. It has now resorted to employ a dose of violence mixed with open threat, intimidation and show of force to assert its exclusive hegemony. It has arrogantly ignored this legitimate demand of the masses and cynically replied with the formation of a phony "civilian advisory group". It has forcefully contained and repressed the pockets of revolutionary democrats and patriotic groups in the armed forces from affirming the popular will. And it is now abusing the trust and confidence of the masses with deceptive promises of "a free republic", while by skilful play of propaganda it is trying to divide and weaken the high tide of the mass movement.

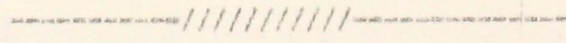
The junta in the guise of "a provisional military government" has now officially expressed its firm commitment to facilitate the constitution of a new "democratic and anti-communist government". Moreover, it has imposed strict curfews and warned the masses to refrain from the act of demonstrations, work stoppages, strikes, open mass meetings and political rallies. It has scrapped away the "constitution" and quietly dissolved the parliament. Despite the strong and revolutionary demand of the masses it has conspicuously failed to formulate a clear political programme for the period of transition. In one stroke it abolished the autocracy and yet in another appeal invites a paralyzed prince to take the crown. So far no radical measures have been employed to execute and implement the immediate tasks of the revolutionary movement. The legitimate demands of the people including that of the rank and file soldiery have

been absolutely ignored. In short, the junta has now openly began to expose the different facets of its anti-democratic character and its latent fear of the masses.

It is only the TAILIST TREND in our movement that could not grasp and follow the inexorable movements of events towards this critical confrontation. As far back in February, during the heat of the revolutionary offensive against the Autocracy, the inception of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces was initially the spontaneous product of the political discontent and mutiny of the rank and file and low-ranking soldiers. "Some of the members of the committee were democratically elected by the rank and file soldiers. A large but as yet unknown number of officers were either indirectly smuggled in or directly appointed by the officers" from above. And yet it is an open fact that "these elements are from the elite circle of the military with which counter-revolutionary experience and long ideological tie with the C. I. A. The Guardian of September 13, 1974 referring to the composition of the committee stated that "Many are american trained. . . . A surprisingly large number of the members of the committee are lawyers." It is now beyond doubt that a no less negligible number of the members of the Coordinating Committee have a counter-revolutionary character and a reactionary political history notorious for their cruel participation in the bloody repression of workers, students, peasants and nationalist movements throughout the country, people who served "body and soul" the Autocracy and stink Great nation chauvenism. The careerist and opportunist officers who yesterday rode rough-shod tyrannically over their men may also take the chance of swindling the rank and file soldiers to slip quietly into the committee as "decent and patriotic" men of the day.

This irrefutable fact destroys the illusion about the magic spell of the military and petty-bourgeois mythology that arose in our very eyes which assert with the most stinking dose of servility that the army alone can now provide the only capable political leadership and "save" the country! Even then, we feel at this moment, it is as yet precisely difficult to decide absolutely about the counter-revolutionary character of the army, for we are strictly incapable of assessing correctly the extent of influence and power of revolutionary democrats and patriotic groups within the forces.

In our eyes, the decisive battle between revolution and counter-revolution both within the Armed Forces and in the political life of the country at large will be decided by the urgent political question whether the popular will triumphs in the constitution of a provisional democratic government or in its defeat to be replaced by rabid cry of "law and order!"



CONTENTS

- 1. Editorial
- 2. Letters To The Editor
- 3. A New Era of Struggle: Mamo Zeleke
- 4. WWFES Statement on the Provisional Military Government
- 5. Message of Solidarity and Resolution
- 6. Literary Review and Comments: Albert Camus and His Idea of the Absurd
- 7. Poem by Rene Castello

- ጽሑፍ
- ፩. ሪዕስ ጽሑፍ
 - ፪. የእ.ኤ.አ. ግ. ሰጠክሪ ምክር ቤቱ ለ/ገጽ ማሰራጨ
 - ፫. ሰጠክሪ ግ. ግ. ገጽ 3/1/67
 - ፬. ስለ "ጊዜያዊ ስልጣን መስጠት" ማሰራጨ ግ. ገጽ 3/19/66
 - ፭. ስለ "ጊዜያዊ መስጠት" ስለ/ ማሰራጨ ግ. ገጽ 12-66
 - ፮. የእ.ኤ.አ. ግ. ሰጠክሪ ግ. ገጽ 3-67 ግ. ገጽ ስለ/ገጽ ማሰራጨ
 - ፯. ስለ/ገጽ ማሰራጨ ግ. ገጽ 7/67

- 4 -

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor;

I have read your Bulletin and I found it very interesting. As we know, today, our country is in a revolutionary situation, but to make this revolutionary situation stronger, we have to raise the consciousness of the oppressed people of Ethiopia. This needs the integration of us with the people. Specially at this time you should be very tactful and find any possibility that the reader can receive your Bulletin. If we want to know what role the imperialists play in our country, about feudal oppression, the blood-suckers and so on... the only possibility at this moment is just to write to our brothers abroad (just like you). Therefore, I kindly ask you to be your subscriber, if there is something to pay to be a member I will gladly do it. Additionally, I ask ^{you} to send me all your previous publications and books dealing with Marxism-Leninism, since I want to form a study group. But, before I do that I should be well-read myself and I hope you will do your best to help me.

very truly yours,
GONA KEBEDE, HARRAR, Ethiopia.

Thank so much for writing us. We will do our best to supply you with relevant materials you asked. Like all other brave comrades at home, who have correctly understood the urgent tasks of Ethiopian revolutionaries, we whole heartedly encourage you in forming Marxist-Leninist study groups. Let hundred of Marxist-Leninist schools of thought and study groups blossom.

EDITOR.

Dear Editor;

I am one of the activist elements of our student movement which is based on the political line of anti-feudalism and anti-imperialism. Due to the February mass popular movement we have withdrawn from the University. Even now, the military junta which is in power is trying to force us to go to the rural areas. Therefore, in light of these conditions some of us have deemed it necessary and indispensable to form study circles. And to do this, I think we should have some theoretical works and guidances which are relevant to our country. Therefore, I think your beloved and lesson giving Bulletin of the WWFES will solve our problem, and I beg you earnestly to send me your popular Bulletin and I want to be your subscriber. I am optimist that you will respond me positively.

Comradely yours,
MESFIN BESHAH,
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

It cannot be a surprise to Ethiopian revolutionaries that the junta that usurped the right of the masses has come out openly revealing its fascistic nature. In collaboration the well known C.I.A. agents the junta has started an unholy "crusade" to liquidate revolutionary forces. Under such circumstances, what you comrades at home are striving to do, i. e. forming study groups, is the immediate task of Ethiopian revolutionaries. The clock has struck that Ethiopian revolutionaries start to get organized at all levels. It is our principled duty to encourage you in your sacred duty of forming study groups. We will send you our bulletin and other relevant and available materials if they ever reach you.

Editor

Dear Editor,

I have been reading your bulletin since last month. I used to borrow it from some of my friends who get your issues. But at present I want to get your issues directly from you. That is why I decided to correspond with you. I have got some doubts on which I want you to help me, namely:

1- how much shall I pay to get your issue? 2- How many copies do you publish in a year? And I also like to know more about the bulletin of the WWFES. I am sure you will help me to get rid of my problems.

Waiting for your reply
Saleh Ali
Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

Nice to receive your short letter. We will send you all issues of our publications. As our bulletin is monthly, we publish approximately ten issues except for the months of August and September if things go allright. We don't endeavour to explain to you about the WWFES on this issue for space reasons. We have sent you a letter instead. Keep on writing us.

Editor

Dear Brothers;

I have seen your bulletin which I would like to read regularly. Would you please add my name to your list of subscribers.

Fraternally
Sam Sarr
Cardiff, Britain

IN COMMEMORATION OF COMRADE
MESFIN HABTU

On November 1, 1971, a very shocking news came from New York about the mysterious death of Comrade Mesfin Habtu. The death of Mesfin, at a time of the revolutionary battle of the Ethiopian Student Movement against the social-chauvenists in North America and elsewhere, was a serious blow to our movement and the Ethiopian revolution in general.

Mesfin's revolutionary record can be traced back from his heroic and dedicated service as a leader of USUAA, NUEUS and ESUNA. Mesfin had served the Ethiopian Student Movement with unreserved commitment and dedication. He had been in jails many times and suspended from the university. These hardships were so little to this Ethiopian revolutionary that he had continued his service to the cause of the our revolutionary movement.

Along with Tilahun, Walleligne, Getachew, Martha and the others, Mesfin Habtu is the unforhetttable martyre of our movement and the peoples of Ethiopia. As an ardent enemy of national and class oppressions, Mesfin Habtu had heroically fought the neo-colonial autocratic regime of Haile Selassie on the one hand and the social-chauvenists and narrow nationalists on the other. Within our movement he had advocated for the equality of all nationalities and their right for self-determination thereby crushing Great nation chauvenism and social-chauvenism on the one hand and narrow nationalism on the other. The Ethiopian student movement and the peoples of Ethiopia will pay tribute to this champion of democracy not merely by annual commemorations but by extending this recognition of the right and equality of all nationalities to its actual consummation through the national democratic revolution for whenever we think of him we think of the revolution.

NEWS AND INFORMATION

The popularized question

It is to be remembered, that after the removal of the reactionary government of Aklilu by the ferocious uprisings of the broad Ethiopian masses in February, the fascist ruling-class and its commanding ally U.S. imperialialis~~ms~~, made an attempt to lengthen their numbered-days by appointing another aristocrat, Endalkatchew to form a "new government". However, this day-dream was met by the ever-increasing vigilance of the Ethiopian people. It was at this very critical moment that the students, workers, teachers and other democratic forces creatively forwarded the timely and concrete slogan saying that, "Endalkatchew's government should be removed" and "a provisional democratic government be established". Even now, when the military Coordinating Committee has established its own military government, this slogan has been more popularized by the prevailing concrete political situations in the country. In fact, even within the armed forces itself the Air-Force, the Technical department of the army, the Body-guard and the Army-Aviation sections have demanded the "the establishment of a provisional-democratic government" and the due respect of the fundamental democratic ~~desires~~ and rights of the people.

In reply to these democratic calls, the Military Junta arrested and mishandled the delegates of the above mentioned sections of the armed forces. Immediately, the University students of Addis Ababa protested against these anti-popular measures and demanded the release of the delegates. However, the junta gave its deaf-ear. Moreover, it has been reported that seven members of the Technical Department of the Army (some of the delegates which were arrested on Oct. 10-1974) were brutally massacred by the Military junta. ^{and this} clearly shows the true colour of the self-appointed military government, i.e. its anti-popular and anti-democratic nature.

The anti-popular activities of the junta are not limited only against democratic elements within the armed forces, but also against all sectors of the society which struggle for a democratic Ethiopia and oppose a military rule. Recently, the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces, has arrested a student from the University of Addis Ababa, TIBEBE BERHANE, charging him for agitating for the establishment of a "provisional democratic government". Moreover, it has arrested many other students, whose number is not yet known and a University Marxist-professor, based on the same "charges".

Students-protest abroad

The World Wide Federation of Ethiopian Students made a call to all Ethiopian students abroad to make a demonstration on Sept. 27, 1974 in support of the timely slogan "a provisional democratic government must be established" raised by the people and to express the unwavering solidarity they deserve; and to condemn the recent attitude of the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces to be the sole ruler of the country, its anti-popular and anti-democratic measures (activities).

Accordingly, many Ethiopian student unions made their protests against the junta by demonstrations, propaganda works, sending letters and telegrams.

The Ethiopian Students Union in North America expressed protests against the junta and its solidarity with the Ethiopian toiling masses by holding a demonstration and occupying the Office of the Ethiopian Mission in the United Nations, in New York city, for some time. It also sent its concrete demands to the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces.

Similarly, the Ethiopian Students Union in West Germany protested by rallying many progressive organizations, both German and Foreign, in a demonstration held in Bonn. Besides, on Sept. 28, 1974, the E.S.U.G. participated in a demonstration held in Cologne, to express its solidarity with the peoples of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau, on the occasion of the "African Week". After exposing the current situation in Ethiopia, the E.S.U.G. presented resolutions and were unanimously carried on by 1000 participants of the African-Week manifestation.

(the resolutions are to be found in the next pages...)

The Ethiopian Students Union in Holland, likewise, made its demonstration with full cooperation of other progressive organizations, in Amsterdam. The participants finally went to the U.S. Consulate and presented a letter to be forwarded to the President of the U.S.A. The main content of the letter was, the demand for the immediate dismantling of the U.S. government's and Haile Selassie's regime secret military - agreements (Defence-Agreements) and the removal of all U.S. military bases from Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian Student Unions in the U.S.S.R. and Hungary have also made their protests by sending a letter of protest and telegram to the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces, respectively.

The declaration on foreign policy

According to the declaration of the Coordinating Committee of the Ethiopian armed forces, it announced that its foreign policy will be based on the principle of non-alignment, where all the agreements and pacts made with foreign nations in the past will remain the same and obtain their due respect.

This declaration clearly shows that the Coordinating Committee affirms all the agreements which made Ethiopia a neo-colony and enslaved its people. Particularly,

the military, economic and cultural agreements made with the U.S. government which facilitate the latter's imperialistic control over Ethiopia and which is one of the main causes for the underdevelopment of the country, has been taken for granted by the Coordinating Committee in its foreign policy. Where is the anti-imperialist nature of the "provisional" military government" that was internationally propagated ?

This being the actual foreign policy of the military junta, it declared that its guiding philosophy is "Ethiopia Tikdem (first) ; Akorkwashwa Yiwdem(Down with its Plunderers) " , to put on its nationalist mask . It is obvious, that if Ethiopia is be the first benefactor of its resources, all foreign domination in economical, political, military and cultural aspects should be crushed primarily and replaced by an independent socio-economic structure where all the property is owned by the people and used for the people, i.e. the total destruction of imperialism from its roots. But these gentlemen of the junta seem to underestimate the vigilance of the heroic Ethiopian masses. On the one hand they allow the continuation of the brutal exploitation and oppression of the people by imperialists and feudalists and on the other ~~hand~~ they claim that their guiding principle is "Ethiopia tikdem- Akorkwashwa yiwdem". WHERE is their destination ?

The return of Veterans

Reports coming from home, show that Americans are intensifying their intruding activities by rotating around the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces of Ethiopia. The C.I.A. which has obtained a world-wide reputation for its counter-revolutionary works and invention of inhuman provocative, torturing and massacring methods (e.g. Chile) is spreading its tentacles in Ethiopia at this very moment- possibly for another mission. Particularly, the return of the widely known notorious C.I.A. agents such as Dean Paul, Clapaham, Mr. Scott, Markus Hearystrom, etc.... and their activities in Addis Ababa deserves a special attention. Here, again it is important to notice the, "declaration of the military junta on its foreign policy in light of the current intensification of the C.I.A. activities in the country; as the struggle of the Ethiopian people is becoming more concerted than ever and in light of the anti-popular measures taken by the junta.

The pressing demand

Among the pressing demands of the Ethiopian people is the trial and execution in a popular court, of the fascist Haile Selassie and his criminal colleagues who were responsible for the death of thousands and starvation of millions. Though this question has been repeatedly raised by the people, the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces did nothing tangible except paying its lip-service and brushing aside the question , showing its reluctant attitude towards fulfilling any popular demand.

A dishonest amnesty

When the Coordinating Committee announced its amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles, it denied the heroic Eritreans fighting for the liberation of the Eritreans masses, saying that, " they are trying to divide Ethiopia". It also refused to issue passports to Eritrean exiles. The Eritrean question cannot be seen isolated from the deposed fascist rule of Haile Selassie's government which forcefully--annexed Eritrea and tried to crush Eritrean people's resistance by its inhuman "kill all and burn all" hitlerite policy. The Eritrean question can only be solved by democratic means i.e. the recognition of the right of the Eritrean people to self-determination up to and including secession. But, not by using the Mussolinite policy of mass massacre practised ^{recently} by the the military forces under the Coorrdinating Committee against the Eritreans in the village of Omajar in Eritrea. Therefore, ^{and} if the amnesty is to be fair, honest, it should include all the political prisoners and exiles who are victims of the fascistic rule of Haile Selassie, i.e. including Eritrean prisoners and exiles.

THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE WORLD-WIDE FEDERATION
OF ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS

The Second Congress of the WWFES was held in Berlin, from Sept.1 till Sept.8-1974. The Congress was widely represented by delegates of Ethiopian Student Unions from all over the world, for the first time in the history of the Ethiopian Student Movement.

What made the Congress more spectacular was the presence of delegates (the President and Secretary) of the Union of the University Students of Addis Ababa, the vanguard of the Ethiopian Student Movement, which was unable to send representatives for the past seven years, due to the fascistic repression imposed on our comrades at home, by the feudal regime of Haile Selassie. The comrades were given a militant revolutionary welcome by the Congress, chanting, "USUAA! USUAA! USUAA! ..!" Other Ethiopian Students Unions represented were ; the E.S.U. in North America, in Algeria, in the Sudan, the World-Wide Ethiopian Women Study Group (these being the member unions) ; the E.S.U. in Cairo, the E.S.U. in Europe and many of its members. Besides, there were many delegates of foreign progressive organizations who expressed their revolutionary solidarities with the ESM. Some delegates came from afar- the delegate of the African Red Family from England, the delegate of the Liberation Front of the Peoples of Oman from Algeria and the delegate of the Communist Party of Canada Marxist-Leninist from Canada. Others, expressed their revolutionary solidarities by sending letters and telegrams.

The broad representation of Ethiopian Students in this Congress, the depth of its content matter and successful outcomes, clearly show the high qualitative stage the Ethiopian Student Movement has reached. This is a "hard-blow" against those very few elements in our movement who try to castrate its revolutionary and partisan (to the oppressed masses) nature by preaching that the "primary" task of the Ethiopian Student Movement is to ensure the benefit of its members; who by opposing the reorganization of the ESM in a global scope under a federal structure, and preaching a very loose structure were trying to turn the wheel of history backwards to regain its demolished face of a social club of the past.

At the end of the Congress, the new officials of the WWFES for the year 1974-75 were elected.

- PRESIDENT-----to be nominated by the homefront (NUES or USUAA) -presently vacant.
- VICE-PRESIDENT-----BEKELE GEBRE MARIAM (ESUNA).

SECRETARIAT

- 1. SECRETARY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS-----ZEKARIA ABDULAH (ITALY-ESUE)
- 2. SECRETARY OF PUBLICATIONS-----YOHANNIS KIFLE (SWISS-ESUE)
- 3. SECRETARY OF WELFARE-----NEGUSSIE MENGESHA (W.GERMANY ESUE).
- 4. TREASURER-----Zewdu H. Mariani (ESUNA)

The Secretariat of the WWFES is preparing a detailed report of the 2nd Congress and it will be released soon.

EDITORIAL BOARD; According to the Constitution of the WWFES^{amended} in its 2nd Congress, the WWFES will have an Editorial Board, constituted of seven board-members which is led by the Secretary of Publications.

Members of the Editorial-Board are the following:-

- 1. MELLESSE TEKLE-----ADDIS ABABA - USUAA
- 2. TAMENE BITEMA -----W. GERMANY - ESUE
- 3. AYELE BEKELE -----CANADA - ESUNA
- 4. FEKADE -----W. GERMANY - ESUE
- 5. AMEL MOHAMED -----EGYPT - REGIONAL UNION OF ETH.S. IN MIDDLE-EAST & N.AFRICA
- 6. TEFASELLASIE -----SWISS - ESUE
- 7. SEREKE B. MERES-----HOLLAND - ESUE

A NEW ERA OF STRUGGLE : BY MAMO ZELEKE

Events have not taken us by surprise. On the famous historic thursday morning a group of officers entered silently the library of the Jubilee palace and read to the emperor a proclamation accusing him of having "utilized his power and dignity of his position for personal benefits" and announced curtly to him that he has been deposed henceforth.

This action to depose the monarch has been received calmly by the population who had continued as usual to attend to their daily affairs, and this is absolutely an evidence that Haile Sellassie, the last of the absolute monarchs, has become since along time a stranger to the actual realities of Ethiopia.

Evidently, the Coordinating Committee of the armed has not arrived at this historical decision by themselves alone. A rapid glimpse of events preceding the deposition of Haile Sellassie and the designation of the paralyzed prince Asfa-Wossen as the new king of the country, testifies how many of the monarchy have been impelled in this respect by the popular pressure of the masses.

Recapitulation

Phase one: An unprecedented wave of militant demonstration and strikes affecting diverse sections of the economy and involving the oppressed masses coincided with the mutiny of the armed forces to lead to the resignation and later to the arrest of all the cabinet members of Prime Minister Aklilu Habtewold. A new Prime Minister, Endalkatchew, was nominated.

Second phase: The conflict between Endalkatchew and the popular masses began in earnest. The effigy of the Prime Minister was burnt by the students, his deposition was demanded by many leaflets and clandestine tracts, and in a series of articles which appeared in the journals his plan of reform was rejected by the population. The division of the army between "moderates" and "radicals" accentuated and finally brought-forth the arrest of many progressive officers accused of preparing a coup d'etat. In the process the big feudal nobilities began to skilfully maneuver to take again the upper-hand of the situation. Finally the army again intervened when hostilities between the Air force and the pro-government paratroopers assumed very grave proportions. The big feudal-lords and certain members of the cabinet of Endalkatchew were arrested.

Third phase: The reactionary military committee created by Endalkatchew was dissolved and a new Coordinating Committee of the armed forces composed of eighty members was constituted. The political and social agitation and distribution of anti-government tracts continued incessantly.

A new Prime Minister, Michael Imru, was named and a new cabinet comprising officers was reconstituted. The original draft of the new constitution was made public. Aman Andom came to be the chief d'etat of the armed forces.

The nomination of the aristocrat Imru as prime minister did not diminish the intensity of the Ethiopian political crises. Whatever his pretentious reformist and liberal tendency, Imru did not get the confidence of the people. To the contrary, his nomination increased the anger of the masses and especially this time against the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces itself. In one violent attack against the Committee a clandestine tract entitled "TATBO CHIKA" referred to the replacement of the aristocrat Endalkatchew by aristocrat Michael as "an insult to the Ethiopian people." At the same time a clandestine journal edited regularly (called "DEMOCRACIA") criticized the military for their inefficient and lukewarm action and apparent fear of the masses. The fact that Imru kept in his cabinet members of the preceding cabinet of Endalkatchew and nominated well known reactionaries like Colonel Belatchew Jemaneh as minister of interior did nothing except arousing and increasing the popular anger.

The new commission of inquiry created to investigate into the corrupted activities of ministers and government officials began to publish reports which rendered jealous even those newspapers and journals which feed on scandal sensations. It was revealed that all the old order had been implicated in a vast and notorious system of organized corruption and robbery, the embezzling of public funds, appropriation and land grabbing, and the deposition of huge sums of money in foreign banks, etc.

The publication of the draft of the new constitution (after amendment by the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces) found the Ethiopian people engaged in a dramatic and conscious agitation which still continued against the old order. And when the people began to discuss openly the draft of the new proposed constitution, the military clearly realized how many of the population had already advanced extremely radical demands.

The rejection of the draft of the proposed constitution by the people was made for many reasons.

- 1) The place which the clause reserves for the monarchy. Eventhough, the absolute nature of the regime had been destroyed, the sovereign still remains " above the law."
- 2) The ambiguous position on the fundamental question of forming political parties. The draft of the new constitution declares " unless it is utilized for division of Ethiopiapolitical parties may be constituted."
- 3) The affirmation that the king should be a believing member of the Orthodox

church, and the absence in the clauses of any guarantee of the right of equality between different nationalities.

The draft of the proposed constitution was attacked equally by the Left and Right.

From the left the organized students and the intellectuals attacked it as "reformist" "monarchist", and "being very far from the demands of the labouring masses." From the right, the hierarchy of the church (the higher clergy) attacked it for having separated church and state.

Again, once more, there was a political impasse. The country dragged itself without an efficient leadership. Even though, the nomination of Aman Andom and the subsequent discussions had contributed to reinforce the unity of the Forces, the fissure among the members of the Committee persisted most of all on the question of including the members of the Air Force (anti-monarchist) in the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces. And this is still that which has to be overcome.

But the unity of the Committee was still far from being perfect. Many are those in all the journals and especially in the Western bourgeois press and mass media, who came up with fallacious answers to the question. It has been affirmed that the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces had been agitating from the beginning according to a detailed plan. This thesis not only forgets the internal struggle and conflict between the members of the Coordinating Committee but also denies the preponderant role played by the masses.

What are the facts? Since Michael Imru became prime minister on the 22nd of July, the popular anger did not cease to be manifested. In fact the popular anger was so much broad and profound that it ended ultimately by turning absolutely against the military. Without mentioning the different tracts distributed clandestinely demanding the deposition of Imru and the formation of "a provisional popular democratic government", one can cite the precise demands presented by "the Voice of the University Students". Not only the students have published a complete list of corrupted officials (which included officers) who had to be arrested but the executive Committee of the union of the University Students of Addis Ababa had sent two 13 page letter to the Coordinating Committee exposing the basic political demands of the students and the people, among which are the dismissal of Imru, the destruction of the feudal mode of production, the abolition of the monarchy, the creation of a ~~provisional popular democratic government~~ and on the preparation of a new constitution by the elected representatives of the masses. These demands were also shared by the popular masses.

However, the arrest of several members of Imru's cabinet, the dynamic pressure of the masses, the total incapacity of the ruling circles to present a viable govern-
t

mental front have pushed the military to intervene directly. The fact that these operations have led ultimately to the palace is no more surprising. Already the emperor had found himself in direct confrontation with the military when he gave harbour and protection to feudalist and bureaucratic elements in his palace. Besides, it was considered by the masses as purely ridiculous to arrest and judge only the ministers without touching "the veritable source of all oppression". Despite the mass pressure, however, the military was still hesitating in demonstrating the notable fact that the Committee was dominated by moderate elements who regarded the crown as "the symbol of unity". Hence, they were contented only in arresting certain characters around the emperor in order just to isolate him only without going any further.

But the demonstration of the retired Congo veterans and their pensions led the Committee to take more serious measures. This demonstration "of the Congo veterans" which took place on 13th of August expressed a veritable defiance to the Committee. Its representatives who were sent to discuss with the veterans were molested and mistreated in general. Some hours later rumours began to spread throughout the city to the effect that the armed forces were divided and that they were on the verge of confrontations. Other rumours equally placed the Congo veterans as victims of direct intrigue and manipulations by the imperial palace and the emperor's entourage. The immediate reaction of the armed forces to all this was a spectacular demonstration of their striking power and unity: a big parade in which all branches of the armed forces (including the Air Force) have participated. And three days later, precisely on the 16th of August the crown council (sanctuary of the federalists) and the special military committee of the palace together with a special tribunal of the emperor were dissolved.

Little by little, gradually the armed forces arrived or became close to the conclusion already reached by the masses that without chasing Haile Selassie from power no significant action will be done.

This clearly shows how the frontal attack against the emperor and the royal-family had reached its logical conclusion. The imperial palaces were nationalized; and hostile posters showing the monarch feeding his dogs contrasting with the victims of the famine appeared in the streets of the capital. And despite the imposition by the Committee against popular demonstrations, thousands of students, the unemployed and the workers organizing a march sang and shouted, "Down with Haile Selassie!", "Haile Selassie, thief!", "hang Haile Selassie!"

The Coordinating Committee impelled by this popular anger were compelled to intensify and harden its campaign against the emperor. The commercial activities of Haile Selassie (He was the owner of St. George brewery, Lion bus transport, Haile

15

Selassie foundation) were rendered public, and sometime later all these were nationalized and the activities of the emperor were considered "a national scandal which must be sanctioned". The newspapers, the radio and the television confirmed what the people already knew but did not say about this merchant.

Apart from his commercial activities we came to know that the monarch has amassed a fabulous wealth estimated at 12 billion dollars and that he has squandered 25000 dollars to erect a monument for his dead pet dog while thousands of Ethiopians were dying from hunger. His adamant refusal to repatriate the funds which he had deposited in Swiss and other foreign banks developed from a " storm in a tea cup " into a powerful movement which eventually " broke the lion's neck". The eldest daughter of the emperor, Tenagne Work, was arrested , and significantly on the occasion of the Ethiopian new year the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church omitted the name of the emperor from his traditional new year message but instead gave his blessings to the movement of the armed forces' Coordinating Committee. On the 12 of September the monarch was deposed.

There seems no doubt that Ethiopia has effectively entered a new era. We could repeat that " Ethiopia is now witnessing the end of the reign, the downfall of the king of kings " (see 'Afrique-Asie') No. 52). It is in fact an era which commenced last february but which will continue for a long time. The eviction of Haile Selassie hasnot put an end to the crucial problems facing Ethiopia. In reality we are just in the threshold of a new history.

A delicate Unity

The Coordinating Committee created a provisional military government. It has suspended the constitution while preparing a new one. It has dissolved the parliament and prohibited all forms of manifestations and strikes. And it has demanded the paralyzed crown prince, Asfa Wossen, under treatment in Geneve to come to assume the title of king. All this brought into surface the seething opposition of the masses who have been manifesting since February. In the countryside the pressing demand for the distribution of land is becoming more and more acute and already unconfirmed reports announced that two guerilla fronts have been created - one in Harrar in the south, and the other in one of the northern provinces. The rejection of the demands of the students and the teachers by the military to try and execute Haile Selassie has excited the anger of the masses against the Committee which refused to deliver the autocrat into justice. The continuous rupture and break between the army and the civilians came to be manifested when thousands of students went out into the street demanding a popular civilian government.

Four officers who came to address the students said to them that "the revolution is anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and anti-communist". The student leaders, in particular Getachew Begashaw expressed forcefully their demand for the creation of a provisional popular-democratic government with the support of the labouring masses, that all foreign interests should be nationalized and all parties including the communist party must acquire a legal existence. Despite the employment of troops to neutralize them, hundreds of students demonstrated in defiance crying "We want a civilian popular government".

To the pressing demand that the masses want to participate

The army until now remained insensible to the pressure of the masses who want to participate in the government, to the demands of the teachers, to the demonstration of the unemployed and to the claims of the trade unions (abolishing of the -- the monarchy, establishment of a popular republic, freedom of speech, press, association, and the right to strike). It is an open secret that the mounting revolt in the countryside has still provoked a dire disagreement among the members of the Coordinating Committee. It is now almost certain that the coming days and months will show how the military will react to this opposition. Already they try their best to deflate student power in the urban areas by sending the young people into the rural areas. On the other hand the students, especially two of their leaders who had participated in the Second Congress of World Wide Federation of Ethiopian Students in Berlin, where a common strategy was adopted, are on their guard against any eventual action by the military. All this indicates that the Committee is everything but anti-imperialist. They have shown so far a remarkable restraint against all foreign interests (to the country they are appealing daily for foreign investment). Above, ^{all} they are in direct contact with the United-States (Aman Andom) payed a secret visit to U.S. on the 26th of August during which it was rumoured he was given the green light to depose emperor Haile Sellassie). And the evidence lies, above all in the enormous quantities of arms sent by Washington and the return of the celebrated C.I.A. agents to the country such as James Paul, Joseph Murphy etc. must deserve a special attention.

It is true that the Coordinating Committee of the armed forces is not a monolithic, e que group. There is no doubt that the coming events will demonstrate further cracks in the facade of their unity.

Above all, however, one thing remains certain. Ethiopia has no effectively entered a new era of resolute struggle. The downfall of cruel and tyrannic autocrat regreted by no one other than a handful of reactionaries will no doubt announce the beginning of a new page of Ethiopian history. It is a foregone conclusion that nothing will be the same again and in that in the periods to come the Ethiopian masses will demonstrate concretely the potency of their struggle which it must be

said has burnt into ashes one of the most ferocious dictatorships in history and will not be extinguished until the realization of their fundamental liberty and freedom.

N.B. This article was originally published in French in a popular newspaper called 'AFRIQUE-ASIE'. The editor bears the entire responsibility for any error of translation made, and lack of a better presentation and style of the article.

----- //-----
RELEVANT QUOTATIONS

"It is to this end that we must direct all our efforts, and the achievement of that end will depend, on the one hand, on the accuracy of our appraisal of the political situation and the correctness of our tactical slogans, and on the other hand, on whether these slogans will be backed by the real fighting strength of the masses of workers."

"It is exceptionally important at the present time for Social-Democrats to have correct tactical slogans for leading the masses. There is nothing more dangerous in a revolutionary period than belittling the importance of tactical slogans that are sound in principle."

"By the Party's tactics we mean the party's political conduct, or the character, direction, and methods of its political activity. Tactical resolutions are adopted by Party congresses in order to accurately define the political conduct of the Party as a whole with regard to new tasks or in view of a new political situation. Such a new situation has been created by the revolution that has started in Russia, i.e., the complete, decisive, and open break between the overwleming majority of the people and the tsarist government. The new question concerns the practical methods of convening a genuinely popular and a genuinely constituent assembly (the theoretical question concerning such an assembly was officially settled by Social-Democracy long ago, before all other parties, in its Party programme). Since the people have broken with the government and the masses realise the necessity of setting up a new order, the party which set itself the object of overthrowing the government must necessarily consider what government should replace the old, deposed government. There arises a new question concerning a provisional government. To give a complete answer to this question the party of the class-conscious proletariat must clarify: 1) the significance of a provisional revolutionary government in the revolution now in progress and in the entire struggle of the proletariat in general; 2) its attitude towards a provisional revolutionary government; 3) the precise conditions of Social-Democratic participation in this government; 4) the conditions under which pressure is to be brought to bear on this government from below, i.e., in the event of there being no Social-Democrats in it."

"On the other hand, the resolution (of the 3rd congress of the RSDLP -- Bolshevik wing-. Ed.) deals with a provisional revolutionary government only, and with nothing else; consequently, the question of the "conquest of power" in general, etc. does not at all come into the picture."

"Of what significance is a provisional revolutionary government in the present revolution and in the general struggle of the proletariat? The resolution of the Congress explains this by pointing at the very outset to the need for the 'fullest possible measures of political liberty', both from the standpoint of the immediate interests of the proletariat and from the standpoint of the 'final aims of socialism'."

"Thus, the section of the resolution which have just reviewed fully appraises the significance of a provisional revolutionary government both in its relation to the struggle for freedom and for a republic, in its relation to a constituent assembly, and in its relation to the democratic revolution which clears the ground for a new class struggle."