

**33 Years of the TPLF and 32 Years of Meles Zenawi
Suppression in the name of liberation
February 22, 2008**

By Kahsay Berhe and Tesfay Atsbeha

On the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the TPLF, we pay our sincere and due respect for the tens of thousands of TPLF fighters, including our brothers, sisters, friends, schoolmates, neighbours and comrades-in-arms, who gave their lives, so that their remaining compatriots may lead a better life. To these fallen belong also fighters, militias and civilians murdered by Meles Zenawi and his collaborators. According to our information so far, the number of innocent people murdered by the TPLF in Tigray (with the exception of Hawzien and Wuqro) is more than those murdered by the Dergue in Tigray.

The fallen as well as most of the living members of the TPLF took up arms against the military regime, because they wanted human and democratic rights to be respected. Although thousands of young people joined the TPLF with the wish for freedom, the only freedom they made use of, without foreseeing what awaited them was their initial free decision to join the TPLF.

However, the TPLF had a relatively civilised start as far as relationships within its members were concerned. Every body enjoyed a sense of equality; division of labour was accepted, rules and regulations respected, mistakes corrected by reasonable critiques; aggressiveness and all antisocial behaviours were removed in daily discussions. In this sense, the first one and a half years of the TPLF can be remembered as a phase of relative harmony.

The phase of relative harmony was partially maintained by avoiding discussions on decisive issues like the secession of Tigray and the independence of Eritrea for which a tiny group of Meles Zenawi (who became deputy member of the TPLF central committee in 1976) and his cohorts could not expect mass support. These two issues, which were never formally discussed in the TPLF and whose protagonists were not challenged at the right time have proved to be the main dangers to Ethiopian sovereignty. On the one hand, almost all members of the TPLF did not rule out a voluntary unity of Eritrea with Ethiopia, while they were opposed to the Eritrean problem being resolved by force. On the other hand, Meles Zenawi and his group were so obsessed with the aim of separating Eritrea from Ethiopia that their aim looked like a religious doctrine. Therefore Meles Zenawi resorted to imposing his redundant indoctrination in the absence of open discussion. Whereas members of the TPLF endured the indoctrination due to centralism, members of mass organisations abroad used to walk out from meetings. Arbitrary and sporadic acts of murder by the same group were also kept secret for the same reason.

As much as the phase of relative harmony was accepted as a mode of life and struggle by the rank-and-file members of the TPLF, the Meles Zenawi group exerted a lot of effort, exploiting the administrative power at its disposal and the situation of war to snatch absolute power. Barbaric acts of murder, vile acts of cheating and lying were used as instruments to destroy peaceful opponents. These evil methods, after being rehearsed first within the TPLF and then in Tigray, are being widely

implemented in the whole of Ethiopia at large. The mass murders of 1993 and April 2001 in Addis Ababa, 2002 in Awassa, December 2003 in Gambella, June and November 2005 in Addis Ababa and many others were neither accidents nor unintended mistakes but continuations of the policies of the reign of terror by Meles Zenawi, which can be traced back to the armed struggle as follows:

Cheating and destroying the TLF

The leadership of the TPLF invited the TLF (Tigray Liberation Front) in November 1976 to a meeting and proposed that the two organisations unite and form one organisation. The TLF accepted the suggestion and members of both organisations were mixed. The TPLF attacked the TLF while the members of the latter were sleeping, and destroyed the TLF. Meles Zenawi was agitating and warning members of the TPLF of the danger of uniting with the TLF while other CC members of the TPLF were negotiating about unity with their counter parts in the TLF.

The leaders of the TPLF tried to justify their wicked act by a) Accusing the TLF of narrow nationalism although they had declared the aim of the TPLF to be the secession of Tigray and despite the fact that the TLF had united with the TPLF, not standing whatever aims the TLF might have had. b) Accusing the TLF that its leaders were not democratically elected, whereas this was exactly what the TPLF did and does. c) Accusing the leadership of the TLF of a habit of killing its members, though this shows its similarity to the TPLF rather than its difference.

Cheating and execution of young TPLF fighters

The leaders of the TPLF collected young fighters by cheating them that they would let them go home, if they wanted to and executed those, who expressed their interest to go back to their parents at the end of 1976. The purpose of the execution could have only been to terrorise the members, but it was simply primitive and foolish. More fighters escaped from the TPLF and went over to the Dergue after the execution. The murderers have not so far been exposed and brought to justice.

Terror unleashed on the rank-and-file

The rank-and file-members started raising questions and expressing grievances against the leadership, but the leadership reversed the accusation and started propagating that those who talked about grievances were targeting individuals from certain districts and trying to destroy the organisation by eroding the confidence of the members in the leadership. In 1978, at a time, when the TPLF had no problems, as the grievances had down after the TPLF prevailed over the EDU and EPRP, the leaders of the TPLF launched a campaign to expose and denounce those who expressed grievances which was followed by imprisonments and murders. In fact, the problem was simply concocted and called "factionalism". .

The campaign was coordinated by the election board, on behalf of the members of the CC: The election board was supposed to encourage discussions in preparation for the organisational congress of 1979. Some members of the election board opposed the campaign, as a result of which Abadi (Goliad) lost his life and Teshome Tsegay, Gudo, (now living in the USA) managed to escape. The members of the election board who collaborated with the CC were rewarded by being promoted to the membership of the CC.

The campaign proved to be a turning point in the TPLF, in that it terrorised the members to such an extent that they lost confidence in each other and became completely passive. As dissidence became suicidal and any divergence could be misused for denunciation, the repetition of whatever had been said became the safest behaviour. This situation led to the abolition of the expression of differences of opinion as well as to the total exclusion of justice, which has always been a no-man's-land for the TPLF.

The culmination in tyranny

The logical conclusion of the abolition of differences of opinion had to be the prevalence of the ideas and even the personal wishes of a single person. Therefore, it was the turn of the members of the central committee to be subjugated by an individual, after the rank-and-file-members were excluded from the game. Those who collaborated with the Meles Zenawi group in suppressing the simple members had unknowingly suppressed their potential supporters.

By the same token, the members of the CC and Politburo, having been isolated with their own making or negligence from the mass became an easy prey for Meles Zenawi. The MLLT was formed in the summer of 1985 which entailed the shift from the interpretations of Mao to that of Albania. Meles Zenawi demoted Aregawi Berhe and Ghidey Zeratsion (founding and Politburo members of the TPLF) after they were declared to have been elected in 1985. Teklu Hawaz (CC) was murdered soon after, for not condemning Aregawi Berhe and Ghidey Zeratsion in the sheepish Orwellian (TPLF) way. These were, as a group the first victims within the leadership and Meles Zenawi, after having prepared himself for a long time formally became the uncontested Tyrant. Aregawi Berhe and Ghidey Zeratsion were taken by surprise, because the decision for their dismissal was already prepared and they probably did not expect Meles Zenawi to deal with them as he used to deal with simple members.

One of the most striking behaviours of Meles Zenawi is also his strong obsession with the idea of inculcating a backward culture of hatred. Meles Zenawi treats his compatriots, be they members of the TPLF/EPRDF or of the opposition and all Ethiopians either as his slaves or as his enemies, who should either be servile or risk being murdered, harassed, accused with trumped-up charges and prosecuted, incarcerated and denied a peaceful and decent life. Any person, even anyone, who served the TPLF for many years, is automatically an outcast, as soon as Meles Zenawi decides to get rid of him/her. Nine of the founding members of the TPLF, (those who were in the TPLF in February 1975) are still alive: Five of them are in exile (Aregawi Berhe, Ghidey Zeratsion, Kahsay Berhe, Alemseged Mengesha and Asfeha Hagos): Two of them (Siye Abraha and Aw-alom Woldu) are having a hard time inside their own country and two (Seyoum Mesfin and Abay Tsehaye) are accomplices of Meles Zenawi.

In this case, what matters is why these individuals and many others like them, who risked their lives and went through hardships for so many years are not treated humanely by Meles Zenawi as simple citizens. This shows how we Ethiopians have lost our dignity as human beings and as citizens under the rule of Meles Zenawi. There are many hated targets of the tyrant. One such target is the Amhara elite including multi-national organisations, who stand for Ethiopian unity. The regime gives such Ethiopians all possible names like: Chauvinists, Neftegnas (the armed settlers, who do not have an economic base after the land reform), Kinijit, remnants

of the Dergue and Interhamwe. Meles Zenawi, in his speech on the 30th anniversary of the TPLF encouraged the people of Tigray not to fear "them" for the TPLF has knocked out their teeth. The opposition parties against whom Meles Zenawi was encouraging the people were actually CUD Kinijit and UEDF, parties recognised as the legal opposition by the regime and therefore not enemies, whose teeth had been knocked out. Nevertheless, the tyrant tries to demagogically manipulate the people by exploiting ethnic biases to portray the opposition as an enemy. In 2007, Meles Zenawi, again in an interview with demtsi Weyane to an audience of Tigrayans and Eritreans in Tigrigna claimed that Eritreans (Shaebias) were collaborating with former murderers of Eritreans against their former allies (TPLF). Meles Zenawi in both cases, as in others is implying to his listeners to see enemies in the Amharas and driving a wedge between ethnic groups for the sole purpose of divide and rule. Of course, Shaebia is as anti Ethiopian as Meles Zenawi, but even Shaebia, as Meles Zenawi, does not work with individuals, who have murdered Eritreans. But Meles Zenawi underestimating the intelligence of Ethiopians and Eritreans does not hesitate to accuse Shaebia of working with murderers, if Shaebia works with Ethiopians, especially Amharas.

The TPLF used the puppet organisations EPDM/ANDM and OPDO, created mainly from prisoners of war to form the EPRDF. Once again, it seemed in 2001 that the second group of victims from the leadership of the TPLF (Siye Abraha et al) failed to learn from Aregawi Berhe and Ghidey Zeratsion. However, it has to be taken into consideration that Meles Zenawi has an absolute power in the Stalinist structural constitution (even without the Stalinist ideology, as such forms of centralisation can also be used by fascists and religious fanatics) of the TPLF. In addition to this, the fact that the members of the TPLF are accustomed, in fact (psychologically) conditioned to embrace a system which is devoid of justice, democratic procedures and the rule of law enabled and enables Meles Zenawi to do what he did and does. The dissidents had no peaceful means of resolving their differences with their own Frankenstein. Surprising is only, if they had believed, they had any such means.

We have no reason to celebrate the 33rd anniversary of the TPLF, except pay respect for the fallen. It does not make sense to celebrate the victory of one tyrant against another. The TPLF/EPRDF is so far nothing more than a private army of Meles Zenawi, when it comes to suppressing the people. Meles Zenawi has been murdering innocent Ethiopians with impunity, organising fake elections to cheat donors and treat the people like circus animals, paralysing the opposition, controlling all organs of state power and harassing people down to a village level with a horde of cadres for 15 (in the TPLF and Tigray) plus 17 years .

The so called elections were never democratic within the TPLF itself. A lesson should be drawn from the pattern of elections In Tigray. This pattern which is an inherent characteristic of the system does not allow the people to have choices even amongst members of the TPLF. If a certain individual (like Gebru Asrat or Tsegay Berhe) is to be declared elected, he/she is picked from above and the people ordered through the cadres to vote for that individual. The individual knows that he/she owes his/her mandate to the authorities, who can also remove him (like Gebru Asrat) /her depending on the person's loyalty. It would be irresponsible to endanger the lives of the supporters of the opposition by participating in elections under the system of Meles Zenawi. If the members of TPLF/EPRDF sense the need to respect the human and democratic rights of the people of Ethiopia and rectify their own history, they

should get rid of Meles Zenawi and his gang of criminal mass murderers. As for Meles Zenawi and Co., their contradiction with the people of Ethiopia is not a difference of opinion, but an antagonism between perpetrators and victims and this can only be resolved, when the perpetrators are brought to justice.