

**CALL ME BY MY NAME:** A discussion with Debteraw,  
Wolde Tewolde alias Obo Arada Shawl

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*Little Knowledge is dangerous (Anglican church)*  
*Silence is golden (Coptic church)*  
*Too much information is lethal (Vatican)*  
*Wisdom is everything (EPRP collective leadership)*  
*Balancing is an Ethiopian ACT*

So far, the collective leadership and the Party of EPRP have survived many ups and downs. The AB (ANJA & b'TENA) story within EPRP is relegated to history. The concept of B'tena has been realized by almost everybody for its social and cultural havoc. ANJA belongs solely to the leadership style whereas B'TENA refers to the members or followers of the Party. Both leadership and follower ships should equally share accountability and responsibility Anja and Bitena respectively. However, before relegating them into archives, we need to put them in their proper perspectives.

#### Collective Leadership

The first test of the leadership style has happened as a result of the defection of the eight members from the small nucleus of the armed forces in Aassimba, immediately following the land reform proclamation. Among many of the main topics discussed by the central committee in preparation for the conference was the issue of democracy within the Party of EPRP. At the time, many Ethiopian student leaders were conscious of the role of a Secretary General in many Communist movements as an evil ground against its members. Kiflu Tadesse in his book "The Generation" put it in the following manner: -

**In many of the communist parties, the post of the Secretary General had produced very powerful and autocratic leaders. In some cases, the Secretary General replaced the party and became its embodiment. In the days of the student movement, those who seemed ambitious for office were regarded with suspicion. The nature of democracy was deemed important, especially for a clandestine organization where the membership had difficulty in controlling its leadership. The experience of the organization, coupled with that of the international communist movement, had enabled many of the central committee members to look for a remedy to the problem.**

Kiflu continued to write,

**Some EPLO CC members had discovered that the role of the General Secretary could be quite detrimental to the internal democracy of the organization. Some of the leading central committee members had misgivings about Berhane Meskel's attitude and handling of issues as Secretary General. Working in Berhane's absence in Addis Ababa for almost a year, the other central committee members had developed a working relationship they felt was harmonious and effective, and saw no need for supervisory function performed by the Secretary General. The harm that the post caused to the internal democracy of an organization seemed to outweigh its benefits. After some discussion, it was decided to propose an amendment to the constitution abolishing this post as being incompatible with party democracy and to replace it with a central committee secretary with purely technical functions. (Kiflu P: 237)**

Berhane Meskel Redda, the then Secretary General was furious about the power change. That was the basis of ANJA or Split within the EPRP leadership. The Party of EPRP along with its members and supporters has suffered in particular and the Ethiopian populace in general as a result of this split. As every body knows it, it was bloody and devastating experience to all Ethiopians. As it happened concurrently with the Red Terror, it did not only created confusion but also became an anomaly though professor Gebru Tareke unwittingly called it an aberration.

Have we learned from it? I hope so! I am sure had Berhane Meskel got his way, the Party of EPRP would have been in power a long, long time ago. I know thousands have joined EPRP for the simple reason because Berhane Meskel or others like him with impressive personalities were involved in EPRP. But hey, deep at heart all Ethiopians do not want powerful individuals. That is our culture. A collective culture, and I am proud to be one of it. Until we build a system of government like that of USA or some European countries, we cannot afford to have powerful individuals who will eventually be dictators in due course. It is human nature to abuse power unless one is governed by the Rule of Law or controlled by a Check and Balance System of government. For such a struggle, EPRP would be an asset for Ethiopia and a model for all Africa. Is my name compatible with my deeds? I am Debteraw of EPRP. Call me by my name. No individual dictatorship in Ethiopia!

Along this line of collective leadership, EPRP also designed a slogan “People’s Provisional Government”. Why because Ethiopians have to participate not to be led blindly. We are still at that demand after 33 years! What price for Democracia! Signing documents like that of Kinjit leaders in Diaspora is hardly a consolation. EPRP’s leadership and followers are not bonded by signatures but by faith and noble cause. If the collective leadership and the followers at large were working hand in glove, why then B’tena took place? The following paragraphs will elucidate.

#### *B’TENA (Disorganization)*

After being informed or as was during those days, when one becomes conscious, the next step was to get organized. According to the study conducted by EUS (Ethiopian University Service), the northern part of highland Ethiopia was mostly organized on a village or AADI basis. The rest of Ethiopian regions were largely sparsely inhabited and scattered.

The balance between freedom and control came into power play. The supporters of the DERG mainly MIESO have delimited the urban areas into Kebeles and the rural Ethiopia into Gebere (Peasants) Association. EPRP leadership was concerned with this type of delimitations as an infringement on the freedom of peoples’ rights. EPRP followers also have sensed that MIESO’s intension was not genuine. I, for instance knew Wondimu Desta, the French educated architectural engineer who was genuine enough to delimit Addis Ababa into economic zones. But it was abused by the DERG and it is still abused by the current government. This type of KiLiL zoning heavily paralyzes CUD. What a travesty - Zoning for development transformed into chaos and imprisonment!

To counter that attack or rather to overcome this obstacle of freedom of movements, EPRP formed a Zonal sector in the urban centers and a Regional sector in the rural areas.

The rest is history. Members of EPRP have been underground and aboveground for a long period of time with the difficulty of distinguishing the real enemy from the true comrade.

EPRP community was from the beginning a genuine community of individuals who really believe in “unity-in-diversity”. The Party believed then and now, that the greater mental diversity of the members, it is better so long as each can recognize that others however, alien are sincerely loyal to the common enterprise of Eritrea and Ethiopia. As Olaf Stapledon, in his book of Philosophy and Living wrote:

**Genuine community entails that the members of the community shall be bound together in mutual enrichment and mutual obligation either by direct personal contact or by the established will for community. It is impossible to have genuine community without a resolute will that all members of the community shall be treated with respect and kindness which every individual desires to receive from his neighbors. Personal intercourse and the abstract will for community may be regarded as the two kind of cement which consolidate communities.” (Olaf P: 292)**

As it was explained in previous articles in “civilized society”, there is very little to deserve the name. Civilization is after all, is not a modern convenience or a mechanical power. It is only a process of advancing to more civil mode of behavior from a less mode of behavior. In other words, civilly is treating people as persons in services of immediate *social contact* and in *social organizations*. The fabric of Ethiopian culture is congruent with these social relationships and organizations.

Back to the B'tena phenomenon, given the background of EPRP formation after a long movement of students, workers and teachers consolidation, it was natural, that the workplace, the home and the office (WHO) to be in consonance to move foreword to push Ethiopians for a better nation.

But many organizations, governments, Fronts and in particular TPLF was undermining EPRP. The main reason behind EPRP's failure was not as popularly propagated because of B'tena by its own members and followers or by the RED TERROR or by the work of ANJA. It was simply as a result of Woyane's evil doings. Here is why.

**Firstly**, TPLF denied EPRP to operate in Tigrai province.

**Secondly**, TPLF tipped the DERG in Makale to stop EPRP recruits from joining EPRA. It was both an act of sabotage and an act of selfishness'.

**Thirdly**, TPLF hoodwinked or duplicated EPRP in various forms disguised as EPRP similar to the Geek legend of the “Trojan Horse”.

**Fourthly**, TPLF prevented EPRP's from participating in any forum in the country and outlawed EPRP since it came to power in Ethiopia.

**Finally**, the most devastating evil of all-evils was the assault on EPRP's base area of God jam and Gonder and still holding EPRP's leadership like Debteraw incommunicado for over 16 years.

So B'tena is a misnomer. It is neither the fault of members of EPRP leaving the Party nor the fault of the collective leadership for failing to regroup its members; it is the sophisticated work of the TPLF taking advantage of Ethiopian gullibility. It is that simple and obvious.

### Conclusion

The enemy as in 9/11 did not come from outside, rather there was no enemy. We have been told that the Eritreans wanted to sell their country to foreign powers or nations. Sixteen years have passed, yet they have not cut the deal and they do not seem to do that in the near future or ever. The TPLF is an enemy within. It is controlling all aspects of economy and freedom. The concept of KiLiL and Free Market is anti-freedom of movement and anti-socioeconomic freedom respectively.

On the one hand, the leadership of ELF had the tendency of following the Baath Party, TPLF had the ideology of Enver Hoxha, EPLF's leadership were followers of Mao's ideology, Mieso story was about following Marxism-Leninism. While on the other hand, although many EPRP supporters like those of ESUNA, were contemplating to follow varied ideologies, Debteraw's EPRP was against pursuing foreign ideology of any sort. The collective leadership of EPRP aspired to find their own ideologies based on their history and culture- the issue of originality and practicality. It was true that some individual leaders were emulating Che Guevara, Ho Chi Mi and Kafka or from religious history some individuals were in the footprint of Jesus' or Mohammed's or Buddha's goodwill practice thus fulfilling the good will of their fellow men and to all human beings for that matter.

As a policy, EPRP collective leadership has always been inward looking. The previous regime had a policy of hospitality towards foreigners. None of the alumni of Haile Sellasie I University has the desire to work in the ministry of interior. Most of them wanted to be a minister for foreign affairs. What about now? I leave judgment to readers.

### **Q&A with READ**

In all the past conversations with Debteraw, it was intended to spell out **Who** Debteraw is and **What** he stood for; I hope we have achieved something in return. We have come to the conclusion that Debteraw is equivalent to READ, i.e. a Revolutionary, an Educator, an Artist and a Democrat. Our core problem is the inability to READ. Those who read are in a single digit! Do you believe that? We better believe it! In addition, those illiterates have stopped to listening; instead they have resorted to talking. Our slogan or program should be "READ TO ME" DEBU!

For the time being, I have conducted an interview with Debteraw and here are his current thoughts and ideas.

#### **Question:**

Can you tell us in simple words what distinguishes Haile Sellasie, Menghistu and Zenawi or between the Monarchy, the DERG or EPRDF/TPLF?

**Debu:** Haile enjoys mystery; Mengistu prides in false promise and Zenawi is insidious. Haile believes he is one of the chosen people even if he is not. Menghistu believes that he can control everybody including nature. Zenawi believes that he can be a copycat of Melese Tecele who was dedicated to the cause of Democratic Ethiopia. Zenawi wanted to be accepted both as an Eritrean and as an Ethiopian based on blood. But the question is not about biological; it is about an idea of history, culture and political value. It is a fact that he took what he thought was his hero, Melese Tecele without understanding what he stood for. Call me by my name! That is the fallacy of the TPLF leadership who at the same time cannot operate in harmony with themselves. I am sorry to say that many who were born from both sides of parentage are still suffering. EPRP has solved this dilemma long before it started its revolutionary struggle. Unlike Kiflu who wrongly portrayed the ethnic background of EPRP leaders as from this ethnic or that ethnic background, EPRP has waged its struggle on the basis of **common cause, common bond and common experience**. Individuals like Obo Arada Shawl, for instance, have become both Eritrean and Ethiopian simultaneously based on their beliefs of Democracy and Justice.

### **Question**

What does present EPRP stands for?

**Debu:** The letter E stands for both the country and its people. There is no one without the other. That is EP= Peoples of Ethiopia. R=Revolution and P= political party which replaces the line of Haile Selassie who was the 225<sup>th</sup> king of Ethiopia. That is how EPRP got its name. It was a difficult task but it will get there. If there is any letter to be left out, it is the letter R that may be replaced by Respect, Relationship and Rehabilitation.

### **Question**

What is the solution for Ethiopia?

**Debu:** AAGMELAGO is an Ethiopian ideology of futuristic concept embodied in cultural, religious and politics of governance bundled up together. It is a roadmap for progress and stability for the whole of Ethiopia.

### **Question**

It was easy for you to share what you believe in, because of your intuitive, but it is harder for us to back up everything with facts and figures?

**Debu:** Let my work speak for itself. Science and Technology has not touched Ethiopia. By this I do not mean about the science of Earth, Life and Space. I mean of cells, atoms and electromagnetism.

### **Question**

Your sense of humor or organizational skill was exemplary. You were able to transform something from simple to fabulous in less than five minutes, for instance in organizing EPRP, how did you do it?

**Debu:** By becoming down-to-earth humble, open and honest!!!

### **Question**

Who are the men and women behind the idea of EPRP leadership?

**Debu:** The mouthpiece for EPRP was and is the Weekly Publication of Democracia. At the beginning, Tesfaye Debessay, Yohannes Berhane and myself became the editors. All three of us showed what commitment means and what a showdown with oppressors of

life, happiness or health. DEMOCRACIA is my name. Every man or woman whose thoughts and feeling is expressed or written in this Publication is already a leader. Decipher my name – it will also reveal my deeds.

**Question**

What is Earth – Life - Space means to you?

**Debu:** I have studied these mysteries in my father’s monastery. All three are one and the same. The right question is what is politics and what is religion. EPRP’s mission was to ask the questions of WHY and HOW. The question of Why belongs to politics or religion and the question of How is the realm of science.

**Question**

Some people say that EPRP is dead; it should be left in peace. What do you say?

**Debu:** Is this the Truth, Opinion or Fact? It is a TOF (tough) question? Let everybody answer it?

**Question**

Do you have energy leaks caused by judging others?

**Debu:**

I spend my energy on creativity and on restoration. Judgment halts progress. When we as leaders judge others, we inhibit our own forward motion. Also, when we judge others, we are not doing our job because we are not in sync with the energy that moves us forward. Jesus said to Peter, “What business is it of yours what I say to John? Keep your eyes on your own forward motion”. John. 21:21-22. *I say to you one day at a time while focusing on the future.* This should be the motto of EPRP.

**Question**

What advise do you give to leaders?

**Debu:** Leaders must have not only vision and communication skills but also tremendous personal resolve. While leaders attract followers, at any moment they must be able to walk away from them, lest they become followers themselves.

For comments and criticisms: [Woldetewolde@yahoo.com](mailto:Woldetewolde@yahoo.com)