

## WHY THE STRUGGLE FAILED?

### BACKGROUND

This question has to be answered. Unless we respond to this question truthfully and objectively, there is no guaranty that the future struggle will succeed. Within a short period following the election of May 15, 2005 result, the struggle, instead of vehemently being upheld and defended, it was literally abandoned. The opposition leadership unaware of the reality that the unity of Ethiopia is at stake abandoned the struggle. They abandoned the struggle before they were taken to jail.

What were the fundamental reasons for its failure? In my opinion, the fundamental reasons were, from the outset: a) the lack of clear identification of the branches of the struggle and latch on to it, and, b) the lack of prioritizing the branches of the struggle identified, which is a very critical aspect of managing the struggle. Once the branch of the struggle is identified and prioritized, then focusing on the proper branch of the struggle would be the logical thing to follow.

In Ethiopia, I argue that, there are two major branches of political struggle. One of them is the struggle for existence (hiliwina) of Ethiopia and the unity of its people combined. One of the major benefit particularly in protecting the unity of Ethiopian people is, as I have indicated in my earlier articles, to protect and stabilize the interests and the aspirations of the Ethiopian minority ethnic groups. This aspect of the struggle is extremely important to move forward together and to develop together, a logical process for long lasting cohesion and stability. We shouldn't lose sight of this political and social situation in Ethiopia. The second branch of the struggle is, democratic rights, human rights and the rule of law combined. It is very important not to mix these two branches of struggle. I argue that, what led to this miserable failure of the struggle is because the focus was not on the first branch of the political struggle. As to why this branch of the struggle should have been taken as the primary objective I will come back to it later.

Before sharing my opinion on the two major branches of the struggle, I would like to touch upon four record-holding activities that led to the victory of May 15, 2005. That is the victory achieved being by the people of Ethiopia. Even though the opposition party leaders fled away from it the Ethiopian people can and rightfully claim the victory. So, what are the four record-holding activities achieved before and on-the-day of the election of May 15, 2005?

#### **1. The forming of the coalition of the opposition political parties.**

One can, in full confidence, state that this is the activity that clearly stream lined and put in motion the process of the struggle for the victory of May 15, 2005. The four political parties, before merging, formed a coalition strictly based on the strategy to beat Meles Zenawi and guaranty the coalition to win at every level of the contest. Here is the strategy that was established before going into the election. The four parties, in unison, decided to field only one representative against Melese's one representative at each election Kebele. Therefore, instead of two or more representatives of the opposition parties competing against one of Meles's, they

decided to choose from among themselves the strongest one to represent Kinijit. Hence the distinguishing names, AEUP/Kinijit, EDP-Medhin/Kinijit, Kestedemena/ Kinijit and EDL/Kinijit. Note that Kinijit is the common denominator. This was the strategy that effectively dealt with Meles Zenawi. Without this strategic setup, the election of May 15, 2005 may have not been won. In my opinion, as long as Meles Zenawi is in power, this is an experimentally proven model to be followed to win the future election.

## **2. Well disciplined organizational activities of each member organization.**

This disciplined organizational activities is the sum of: a) a strong, dedicated and disciplined leadership, b) strong, dedicated and well disciplined cadres or member-activists, c) well and effective organization of their time, their energy and their resources, d) an extensive reach out that effectively produced numerous offices and supportive Kebele community in the network. Ultimately, this was the part that decided the outcome of the election of May 15, 2005. And, e) well established organizational structure.

< br> To achieve the type of success of May 15, 2005, one has to follow exactly what have been done up to and including the election day. Even those leaders who were part and parcel of this unrivaled activities have to go through this process to arrive to the record level they themselves established. It is a record to be targeted, either to surpass it, or, to reach to the same level of achievement.

## **3. Well disciplined participation of the society.**

To have a turn out of about 26 million absolutely determined voters who resisted adverse natural elements, that is, after heroically and effectively resisting banishment, torture, witnessing the killing of compatriots by Meles Zenawi's ruthless security forces is simply phenomenal. There are two points to be observed here. One of them is the dedication, and the effectively hands-on involvement of the opposition political parties particularly at the grass roots level. Please refer to the five points indicted above. The second one is the resiliency and the perceptiveness of the people of Ethiopia. The future struggle has to reach to this record level, or break it, and to come up with the turn out of this magnitude.

But, unfortunately, the full participation of the society by itself does not complete the job. As we have witnessed, it did not. At this point, go back to Ethiopia and imagine a traditional farmer. This farmer, after going through the demanding cultural practices, got a bumper crop of wheat. He harvested the wheat with the help of his neighbors and collected it on threshing and winnowing area (wudima), where he would separate the grain from the chaff. But this farmer, for some reason, left it there to rot. This was exactly what the leaders of the opposition forces literally did to the election of May 15, 2005. History will judge them. If one sensed contradictions in the body of this article, my whole argument revolves around the behavior of the opposition political leaders before and on the day of the election of May 15, 2005. One would see two distinct and concrete behaviors of the leaders. The first behavior linked to the five points and the second behavior linked to the abandonment of the struggle, that is, after the day of the election of May 15, 2005.

## **4. The demonstration of May 9, 2005.**

About three million people of Addis Ababa came out in support of the opposition political parties. This was, and still is, a formidable force that opposition political parties were unable to tap into. It would be one of the most disgraceful legacy to be left behind by the current opposition political parties. I don't think they would regret it either. Why, because, they were not emotionally and organically into the struggle. It appears, they have taken the struggle as a profession. What the heck, if they loose this year they will try and probably win next time. Perhaps almost all the political leaders are paid for what they do. The treatment they receive wherever they go is another added value. Unfortunately, what does not come to their mind, or, perhaps they are deliberately blocking it out from their mind, is, that, next time around the erosion of the unity of Ethiopia and its people will be stronger. By the way, in my opinion, all the essential elements that require to remove Meles Zenawi and his mafia group from power are there, intact, in Addis Ababa, without involving the provinces. The provinces will catch up later.

Even though, it is really very sad to have failed so miserably, there are at least two very important experiences that the future struggle can draw from: a) there is an experimentally, if you will, proven concrete activities that the future struggle ought to target to achieve what was achieved before, and, on May 15, 2005, that is, the five points itemized above. And, b) the extent to which the political consciousness of the people of Ethiopia have reached. Let us not forget that the demonstration of May 9, 2005 and the election result of May 15, 2005 are the culmination of the cumulative political and social interactions among the Ethiopian society for many years that started before Emperor Haile Selassie's rule. How did they reach to this level of political consciousness? Through the sacrifices of those bold determined political activists particularly at the grassroots level, that resisted torture and the psychological impact of the killing of their comrades. It is built on blood.

Therefore, in Ethiopia the era of teaching democratic system to the people of Ethiopia have long passed. Those political organizations who even think about doing it should be ashamed of themselves for their lack of clear understanding the political situation in Ethiopia. What the people need is constant retooling. The society is consciously and unreservedly into the struggle. Unfortunately, the leadership of the opposition political parties lacked the gut and the determination to use such well prepared society, a society which is ready to put its life on the line. Here are examples that clearly show how the leadership of the opposition parties were inconsistent and gutless. By doing the following

they abandoned the force that lined up behind them. The opposition leadership after telling the people particularly of Addis Ababa, a) to prepare for demonstration, b) to stay home not to go to work, c) after scheduling a public meeting that included representatives from the provinces, they stooped to the maneuver of Meles Zenaw and canceled all of the activities one-by-one. The 17 years of experience they have had with Meles did not teach them a single lesson, as to how to deal with the regime particularly with Meles Zenawi. It appears they have made themselves impervious to any experience. Unfortunately, they are cultivating into the society, particularly the younger generations, unproductive political culture. By the way, what they did, also shows how the implants of Meles Zenawi inside the opposition parties executed their assignment to the letter.

Let me come back to the question why the struggle miserably failed after achieving the five points I mentioned above. Looking back, and imagining into the process where the opposition forces led the political struggle to pass through, mind you they were the ones who facilitated the activities to achieve the five record holding activities that I mentioned above, one could, in my opinion, clearly see where they went wrong and what they were fundamentally lacking. As they very systematically formulated the strategy to win, they did not, individually or as a group, carefully identify and prioritize the branches of the struggle to back it up with. I argue that it is extremely important to identify the branches of the struggle and then prioritize them. Once prioritized, one would be forced to follow it up to the letter. That is, one would not let Meles Zenawi steal and get away with the victory clinched by the people of Ethiopia.

### **Branches of the political struggle**

As I have indicated earlier, in my opinion, there are two major branches of political struggle in Ethiopia today: a) the struggle for existence (hiliwina) and the unity of Ethiopian people combined, and b) the struggle for democratic rights, human rights and the rule of law combined. Given the political and the social conditions being witnessed today, the conditions created by Meles and his mafia group, there is no alternative except selecting the first one as the primary objective to deal with first. The mistake made by the opposition forces from the outset was not taking the struggle for “existence (hiliwina) and the unity of Ethiopian” as their primary branch of political struggle. Given the unity of Ethiopia is at stake, and once this situation is imbedded inside one's mode of thinking, no one in good conscious will sleep comfortably. As to the secondary branch of the political struggle, the immediate removal of Meles and his mafia group would usher in the protection of democratic rights, human rights and the establishment of the rule of law. In my humble opinion, this secondary branch of the political struggle cannot be as strong as the driving force as the primary one. Because one is dealing with and identified enemy bent to destroy Ethiopia. Therefore, one would not sleep until the enemy is removed.

Why should this branch of struggle be taken as the primary branch of struggle? Because, Meles and his mafia group divided Ethiopia into regions along ethnic and language lines. They did this with a deliberate intention to weaken the unity of Ethiopia and finally breaking it apart. This was their malicious and vindictive plan well orchestrated while they were in the forest.

Therefore, the reason for primarily focusing on the struggle for existence (hiliwina) and the unity of Ethiopian people, is that, the longer Meles and his mafia group are left to rule, the stronger the impact of the on the unity of Ethiopia and its people. Therefore, to shorten and stop the erosion Meles and his mafia group must be removed immediately. Had the focus of the opposition forces been on this branch of struggle, they would have not allowed Meles to steal the election and get away with it. The urgent solution to the impact of the erosion on the unity of Ethiopia would have forced, unconditionally, to challenge Meles to the end, and to the extent of sacrifices of any nature.

What was very amazing was that while Meles and his mafia group were doing their best to break apart Ethiopia under the nose of the opposition forces, they did not stand up and vehemently challenge the regime. Had it not been for the strong bond holding Ethiopia together, hence the

refusal to play into the hands of Meles and his mafia group, Ethiopia would have been disintegrated long time ago under the nose of the opposition forces. Here is my follow up argument. If Meles and his mafia group were taken to court, when the time comes, for treason, would there be any valid reason as to why the opposition forces should not be taken to court for treason too? By not taking any measurable concrete step, that is, by silently watching, while the regime was and still is trying to break apart Ethiopia, the opposition forces should be considered as collaborators in the process of the destruction of Ethiopia, therefore should be taken to court for treason.

## **The Solution**

1. Numbers 1 to 3, including this one, are to build up for the ultimate solution which would be discussed in number four. To start with, since the struggle is, right now, at the bottom rung of the ladder, the opposition forces, here after opposition forces mean those who are completely inside the camp of the Ethiopian people, have to start planning multifaceted strategy to overcome the suppression of the regime, systematically and with extreme caution, that is, never to leave any crack for implants of the regime. Past experience have shown very clearly, how those implants of Meles's regime inside Kinijit have done to the struggle.

2. Instead of complaining about Meles's oppressive move to stop the activities of the opposition forces down to the Kebele level, stand up and start to systematically strengthen the structure as well as the network of the organization in order to forcefully resist and stand up against the move of Meles's security forces. It is not going to be easy but it has to be done. It is the responsibility of the opposition forces to break and come out from this oppressive encirclement they are in, at any cost. It is an undeniable fact that the people of Ethiopia are ready, always, to stand behind the opposition forces and face any challenge. In a military fight, when one of the adversary groups is surrounded and pinned down in a spot, it has to fight vigorously and break the enemy line and come out of the siege or surrender. This is exactly the situation in which the opposition forces inside Ethiopia are in, today. So, which one is going to be the choice of the opposition forces, to break the enemy line and come out and push forward, or surrender even with people-power behind them?

3. The unity of Ethiopia and its people is deliberately being eroded by Meles and his mafia group. It has been trying it for the last 18 years without any physical challenge from the opposition forces what so ever. Therefore, this is the right time to take up this branch of struggle, namely, the struggle for the existence (hiliwina) and the unity of the Ethiopian people, as the motto and continue the struggle aggressively without any compromise. Here, it does not mean to completely abandon the struggle for democratic rights, the human rights and the rule of law combined. Commonsense should dictate, as to when to pick it up, depending on the situation of the moment. For example, right now, Senator Russ Feingold, (D-WI), Chairman of the Subcommittee on African Affairs introduced a bill, "Support for Democracy and Human Rights in Ethiopia Act of 2008." It will be appropriate to pick up this human rights issue and follow it up. This particular activity, in my opinion, directly or indirectly will liven-up the primary branch of the political struggle.

4. The ultimate solution is, of course, to remove Meles and his mafia group from power and take

them to court for genocide and treason. The suggestions from 1 to 3 above are to speed up the determined and the decisive process for the removal of Meles and his mafia group. There are two ways to remove Meles and his mafia group:

a) Once one is well organized, that is physically and mentally in mesh with the people through solid sets of activities by overcoming the blockings and the oppressive environment created by the mafia group, the opposition parties have to come out and declare their participation in the election. It is the responsibility of the opposition parties to clear the way that lead to the election day by people-force. I argue that, for a legally operating opposition parties their means of installing the power of the people on the land is by means of election. If not by the election means then it has to be either by an up-rise, or by armed struggle, or a combination of these two. As the result of full participation of the people in the election, when there comes the chance of May 15, 2005 election, there is no doubt that Meles and his mafia group will be beaten again. It is absolutely the responsibility of the leadership of the opposition forces to clear the road to the election by paying any price if necessary. If Meles and his mafia group tries to steal the election, as it did in May 2005, then use the people-force that forced Meles to clear the way for the election. Here the analogy of pinned down soldier s comes to mind.

b) The second strategy to remove Meles and his mafia group is to force Meles to resign by using the people-force that is already formed through the solution #1 and #2. Simply put, use an up-rise to remove Mels and his mafia group. Let us not forget that the 1 to 3 items under solution are interplaying here.

### **Once Meles Zenawi is removed who is going to replace him?**

By the way I have challenged this argument a number of times before. I will challenge it again. Most of the time this spineless question is asked by some spineless elites. These are the elites who are devoid of critical thinking. To briefly show the fallacy of their argument, what was the managerial ability of Meles Zenawi when TPLF entered Addis Ababa in 1991? Do your own homework and come up with the answer to this informative question.

The leaders of the opposition forces, both inside Ethiopia, and those in the Diaspora have accumulated experiences that did potentially prepared them to assume power at any time under any condition, if they have the gut and the determination to do it. In fact, the leaders of most of the opposition forces were highly cultivated by the activities they were engaged in, for many years, including beyond the era of TPLF. I think this is a fact that one cannot deny. How can one forget the participation of over 26 million people in the el ection of May 15, 2005? What took place after the day of election cannot wipe out what the political leaders did up to and including the day of the election. What exposed them is what they did after May 15, 2005. The time they spent in jail, if there were any contribution it did, would be to expose those implants of Meles Zenawi and their collaborators. Bottom line is, rest assured, potentially, any one of the leaders of the opposition parties can replace Meles Zenawi. Further more, potentially, any one of the existing opposition parties can replace TPLF.

Mankelklot

P.S. My next article will be why Ethiopia should stay in Somalia?