

HEZBAWI MEKETE in Toronto- Laced With Gold. (2)

In the first part, the gist of the Hezbawi Mekete was presented by highlighting the sharp contrast between what the enemies of Eritrea see and dream of and the response of the people, which is manifested by the people's call to defend the motherland. Indeed, defending a precious land which is literally and figuratively a place of gold.

The previous week, when the time and date of the meeting was announced there were some doubts about possible scheduling conflicts with various community activities that regularly take place on Sundays. Well, people who come from the land of God and Gold don't need any directives to set their priorities, especially when it comes to defending and asserting the common values that we have as one Eritrean family. Any threat to the unity and continuity of this family gets automatic response as was demonstrated also here in Toronto on Sunday, Nov 25. The hall was filled to capacity; official estimates put it around 700.

Obviously, there was also the presence of few lost souls, some sneaked in leaving the rest clowning around at the entrance of the hall. Apart from their ill-natured presence, there were also hilarious moments to laugh at the reactions of curious or agitated participants as they walk into the hall watching the mini drama of the hired/disillusioned clowns. How about one of their cheer-leaders unconsciously blowing into the portable microphone down with *isepa!*—Amharic acronym for EPRP, an Ethiopian opposition party which came almost into extinction after the Derg red terror in Finfine back in 1977!! "What? Who?" wondered one observer stunned in disbelief on the absurdity of using a slogan which is neither relevant nor timely.

One *Ade*-elder woman- most likely coming from a Sunday church service went past those noisy clowns and made a cross sign as she got inside the Hall. Then she turned back and gets a bit closer to those clowns and said: "You will get what will finally beget the Woyanes." That is what she can do; express her condemnation to those who are already cursed by their respective families and the community.

Their mini drama hit its climax when Ambassador Ahferom arrived. Most of the clowns, totaling less than a dozen middle aged men, carried cameras. One can see all going nuts with their boring/hilarious slogans and flashing their cameras

from all directions. Who knows how much would the best shots fetch when they reach the offices run by “Freedom Houses” and their affiliates?

Well, they did their assigned job, a sorry call for oppression, so to speak, and the Hafash went on with its serious business more reenergized with the in-your-face slanders of the clowns. How to effectively respond to the future moves of the puppeteers that hold the strings of those puppets.

The meeting started about 3:00 pm with one minute silence. Ambassador Ahferom was the keynote speaker. He is the first ambassador assigned to Canada and Sunday’s meeting was also his first official meeting with the Eritrean community in Toronto and surroundings. If Hezbawi Mekete were not the main topic of discussion, I guess the Nesvun deal would have been one. Yet, in one way or the other, there is still the gold factor beneath the surface; firstly, without it, the Eritrean community in Toronto and generally in Canada couldn’t have increased its chances of getting its own Maple ambassador—no more Yankee ambassadors☺--; secondly, isn’t it all about our gold that is coveted by those who know nothing else except open pits in Africa? Essentially, Hezbawi Mekete represents a unique and intangible deterrence whose real strength is found within the hearts of the Hafash that values what others cannot see inside this land of gold.



In his speech, Ambassador Ahferom had only made one reference to gold when he said “If there is no strong unity within the people of a given nation, any amount of gold or oil with which it is endowed, doesn’t mean anything.” He reiterated that this is our best asset; moreover, he underscored that our appreciation to the price of independence is the main drive to protecting our sovereignty and our unity as one people; as such, no one should expect us to entertain servitude.



He elaborated on the concrete steps that we can contribute to the defense and development of Eritrea. Among other things, he stressed on a) the need to build strong communities. b) Engage in the development schemes going on in Eritrea. c) Take our share in assisting the families of Martyrs. After briefly mentioning the Warsay Yekeallo Plan, he discussed about the collusion of the US Administration with the Woyanes in their bid to scuttle the EEBC verdict. Ambassador Ahferom finished his briefings and the Q&A session followed.

As was described in the first part of the report, one of the lost souls took the microphone and ached on words that only reflect the image of Eritrea as seen from a Woyane-like mind or from those who covet our gold and pearl. There was also another question of similar category, but originating from those few young folks who have intellectually been the captive victims of institutions and groups run by the "Freedom Houses."

After the initial hullabaloo, the participants steered the discussion to the business at hand. What activities are going to be included? How are we going to organize and run those activities? The Ambassador indicated that a committee should be formed from this assembly and that a selected committee will be tasked to

organize activities like community outreach and fundraising.



“Time is a relentless witness” commented one ex-Tegadalay. “Since Eritrea and its leadership stayed the course, time is now doing its part in bringing out the truth.” He concluded, “Like America, that has its interests in our region, Eritrea has also its own interests.” Isn’t this a typical stance of Eritreans, which is expressed in different forms and tones underlining our disposition to reciprocity and mutual respect? Hopefully the “powers” would seriously read into such mind-set before they resort further into their delusional routines which only attempts to fight Time and also People.

The next order of the day was a brief deliberation by PFDJ Toronto chapter executive committee. Temesghen Haileab, Michael Tewelde, and Tekle Haile took turns stressing that the most important aspect of Hezbawi Mekete is in the relentless fostering of our mental strength so as not to succumb to enemy propaganda and rumor mills. Bstay. Temesghen reiterated that Hezbawi Mekete is not a new phenomenon in our history of struggle. He said that starting from the pre-armed struggle through the pre-independence era up to the present, brings us into the third Hezbawi Mekete.

Speaking of Hezbawi Mekete, who can deny the contribution that our mothers and sisters and daughters made in the long history of our struggle? Btsyti. Netsehti Haile, chairwoman of NUEW chapter accentuated the role of Eritrean women in our struggle; and what better words does one expect than her ajoKum-ajoKn.

The podium was then left to Negusse Tewelde, chair of ECAO—Eritrean Canadian Association of Ontario. In conjunction to what the ambassador stressed earlier, he said that as a community, we find ourselves much more organized with a variety of our own social, religious and community institutions at our disposal;

the picture was quite different in 1998 i.e. during the first phase of the current Hezbawi Mekete.



Since the first phase of the current Hezbawi Mekete, there has always been youth participation; for instance, the CPR—Canadians for Peace Rally – has been active until the last couple of years. This time however, we see a new kid on the block, so to speak. For obvious reasons, they are better informed. Moreover, coming out of the recent successful youth conference held last October in Toronto, their level of awareness has been sharpened not to be easily confused or distracted by the now waning false paradigm of fake freedoms that has had a widespread grip on most research and learning institutions.

In a power-point presentation Henok Mobae, a computer science graduate from York, outlined the genesis of the so-called border conflict, emphasizing the evolution of the EEBC resolutions. He then discussed the Bolton memoir and how it provides us with valuable evidence in defending our position. He stressed that what Mr. John Bolton wrote is obviously not a new revelation as far as Eritreans are concerned, but it proves to the international community the complicity of the US Administration in the reneging of the Woyanes to abide by the ruling of the Commission.



The “Al Shebab” action kept on heating when Fenan Araya, a political science student at York, took over and proceeded by pointing at what he called a new weapon that the United States uses to subdue nations without firing a single bullet. He gave concrete examples on how our enemies use the media to project a bad image, especially at instances when something significant happens in the on going development efforts of Eretra.



He challenged the audience: "what do we do after this meeting is over, just sit and wait till the next public meeting? " He stressed that especially the youth should inform themselves and defend actively Eritrean progress and image. Before concluding his presentation, Fenan reminded the participants to take a copy of selected articles that the youth group had prepared to be distributed among young Eritreans.



The presentation of the young Shaebians-in-the-making electrified the audience and set the stage to the election of the Hezbawi Mekete committee with their most stressed word, PRIORITY, still buzzing in our ears. It didn't take much time, when Btsay Mobae G/Izghi volunteered and the nomination process rolled on smoothly and all the nominees obliged without hesitation; yet, another manifestation that characterizes the uniqueness of Hezbawi Mekete. Eleven members, including three women and four reserves were elected in less than thirty minutes; as mentioned above, it was a very rare occurrence, in terms of the time required and the flow of assembly proceedings. The members of the newly elected Hezbawi Mekete were asked to come on stage and a draft resolution both in Tigrigna and English was presented. The active presence of the youth group was still evident until the end when Thomas Negusse, an engineering student at UFT read the English version of the draft resolution.



At this stage, still something was missing that has to be included in the resolution. The audience was asked for input; indeed, that was the part that Tegadalay Hedrom stressed earlier as an item of first priority in our participation of Hezbawi Mekete. Many hands were raised, and the first proposal came from Tekle Simon, which came not in a form of amendments in the wording or order of the items in the draft proposal, but in concrete terms. He shot: "Me and my family \$1000. " Then Daniel Araya matched the pledge. Well, it didn't take time before the proceedings turned like an auction. A passionate discussion followed, with Haile Mebrahtu sustaining the \$1000 pledge while poking his usual jokes; Berhane Ghebre, then came forward and proposed \$500. The discussion then gravitated towards the need for determining a minimum amount of contribution per person; and eventually the \$500 mark was finalized by acclamation.



The chair asked the participants to stand up and join hands. In unison the assembly loudly reaffirmed:

- **First and foremost our survival as a nation!!
- **We stand by our people and government!!
- **We renew our pledge to give our support to the defense and
The development of Eritrea!!
- **Victory to the masses!!



That was the climax of the moment as in many places around the world when Eritreans are sending an unwavering message reminding and also warning the centers of domination and exploitation that the Eritrean people will never kneel down. With the same defiant spirit and energy, Eritreans living in Toronto and surroundings successfully finalized and officially declared to be part of the present Hezbawi Mekete reaffirming their commitment to join forces in defending and developing our land of gold, the land of Martyrs.

Awet nHafash!
Haileab Luul Tesfai
Toronto.

