

ATTACK OF CONVOYS IN ERITREA

By Emnetu Tesfay

The article in Stavanger Aftenbladet of 20th november refers to recent attack of convoys by the EPLF. There is no denial that the attack was performed at the time stated. But the most important information regarding the circumstances under which the attack was performed was not elaborated. And the choice of source for information was not the EPLF offices but United Nations officials stationed in Ethiopia and Ethiopian authorities, who, according to experience, have little chance of telling the whole truth.

It is a universal knowlege that there is a war of independence going on in Eritrea and about 80% of the country is under the control of the EPLF, the organization fighting for the independence of Eritrea. The world knows too, that there is drought and famine in Eritrea and the northern provinces of Ethiopia. In 1984, in order to creat a suitable condition for the donores and reciepants, the EPLF proposed a cease-fire which was appreciated by the relief organizations operating in the region. This proposal which originated from the genuine concern of the people was flatly rejected by the military leadership in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government even deny that there is war in Eritrea and that a big part of the area is outside its control. The cease-fire is still valid. But when the Ethiopian goverment rejects the cease-fire proposal, it is all clear as to who is concerned about the well-being of the hungry people and who is not.

Recently the Ethiopian authorities were unusually making laud noises about famine in the north. If they have real concern for the people they should agree to a ceas-fire. But the fact is that they were making all the noises because they thought it would give them the opportunity to transport their troops and military hardware under the cover of relief operations. The Ethiopians have changed tone but not the policy of using famine as instrument in their war effort. According to information coming from Eritrea the attack was inavoidable. All the evidences that equipments belonging to the military authorities were in the convoy. Indeed hoisting flagsdoes not confirm the innocense of the convoys when one is dealing with a government of the Ethiopian type.

The article quoted an Ethiopian foreign minister`s statement calling the attack "a demonstration of the egoistic attitude of the EPLF". Who would believe what an Ethiopian foreign minister says? He is a minister today and a defector tomorrow. Who would believe what an Ethiopian minister of relief or his assistants say? Tomorrow they will follow suit of their predecessors and ask for asylum in America. In Ethiopia ministers, generals, ambassadors say what they say for survival and not because it is true. After defecting they usually reverse all they have said when they were serving the Ethiopian government. Therefore quoting an Ethiopian official is both a waste of time and space. But some reporters seem to be very forgetfull fo contemporary history.

The purpose of writing this article is that the report in Stavanger Aftenbladet was very selective by singling out just one part of the story. Instead of inquiring with those who can give the information in its totality it prefered to quote a potential defector. The report also gives a picture that the EPLF is against delivery of relief aid and that it has no concern of the hungry people by attacking food convoys. But the fact is that the EPLF is part and parcel of the hungry people while Ethiopia is an alien colonial power which can not feed even its own people.