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### **Reporting on the current situation in Ethiopia-Critical Remarks**

There is controversial reporting by some German and other European media regarding the war that has been taking place since 4.11.2020 in the northern part of Ethiopia, in the province of Tigray. In an article published in Der Spiegel on 24 November 2020, entitled "War in Ethiopia: a country on the verge of disintegration", an unnamed author wrote that the Amharas had committed atrocities such as executions and looting. He also wrote that the Amharas had an old score to settle. In Ethiopia's history, when the country had to defend itself twice against Italy, there were no atrocities against Italian soldiers. In the armed conflicts against Egypt and Sudan, and later against Somalia, the Amharas and other soldiers had always behaved in a civilized manner. In all these conflicts, the Amharas did not commit atrocities such as executions and looting. The source of the allegations cited in this Spiegel article has not been revealed.

Dominic Johnson, who has been working for the TAZ for some time, quotes Dr Abiy as saying "There will be no mercy after this" in his article published on 23.11.2020. With this lurid quote, Dominik Johnson diverts the readers' attention from the real reasons for the war. The author quotes a professor from Mekele University: "How can a government bomb its own people?" Here the reader is given the impression that the central government in Addis started the war, blindly bombing strategic positions that are very relevant to the people. The fact is that the TPLF had destroyed many economic sectors themselves and thus conveyed to the world community that the Ethiopian soldiers initiated the bombing. Even Axum airport, which cost about 500 million American dollars, was destroyed by TPLF militias. In this unverifiable report, Dominik Johnson tries to convince readers that this war is pointless and that the TPLF will fight a guerrilla war anyway using their old familiar methods. Dominik Johnson claims that all Tigrays are under general suspicion and that Tigrays living in Addis Ababa are persecuted and imprisoned. This claim is not in line with reality, because only those who have collaborated with the TPLF government, and those who have amassed wealth not through normal business practices and have been involved in black market activities, are being persecuted. Many of them have accounts abroad and transfer money on behalf of the TPLF. Most of them also owned guns.

Christen Meier, a columnist for the FAZ, writes on 16.11.2020 that "Abiy Ahmed puts everything on strength." He further writes that Abiy Ahmed had broken his own promises made to the committee when he was a Nobel laureate. Dr Abiy had indeed said that he was striving to "create peaceful conditions." But Dr. Abiy Ahmed had not promised that he would stand idly by while his own soldiers were literally executed. When an internal enemy controlled, supported and well organized by foreign forces attacks military barracks, executing scores of soldiers, even a

Nobel Peace Prize laureate obliged to give an adequate response. If the sovereignty of the country is threatened and promptly attacked, the prime minister is obliged to mobilise the army to save the country from disintegration. This also applies to all governments in the world.

Mr. Manuel Eschner writes in the newspaper Der Standard (27.11.2020) with the title: "A war with a history - how it came to the catastrophes in Ethiopia" that the balance that existed until two years ago could not be maintained by Dr. Abiy. According to Mr. Manuel Eschner, the war came about because Prime Minister Abiy relied on the Unity Party instead of an ethnic coalition. In short, the responsibility for the current war in Tigray lies solely with the central government in Addis and not with the TPLF, which has its headquarters in Tigray province. Again, Mr Johannes Dietrich, in an article of 22.11.2020 in the Stuttgarter Zeitung, claims that the world does not perceive the war as a "civil war". In his article he tries to give the impression that the war is being fought between hostile ethnic groups. However, the current war is not a civil war, but is a self-defense against the TPLF and its militias. However, the TPLF is trying to disinform the world community as if this self-defense is directed against the whole population in Tigray. It should be known to everyone that the main aim of the TPLF is to come back to power in order to dominate and plunder the country according to the known methods.

Reading the various newspapers reporting on this war, one gets the impression that the reporters are not well informed. They also do not know under what conditions the TPLF was able to come to power. Both the TPLF, the EPLF and the OLF have waged a proxy war against their own people in the name of liberation war and in the end all these liberation movements have achieved nothing. Normally, a genuine liberation war is supposed to be emancipatory. Those who take up arms in the name of liberation will end up being dictatorial.

However, in order to learn more about the current war, I would like to present some aspects that are relevant to the current situations in a condensed way. With this presentation I would like to draw the readers' attention to the fact that this article is not directed against the Federal Government of Germany, but a statement against the false reports. All governments, including the current government under Dr. Angela Merkel, have always pursued a civilized, constructive and balanced policy towards Ethiopia. I am convinced that Germany will continue to strive for good cooperation with Ethiopia.

### **The political situation before TPLF came to power**

The TPLF has a long history that these journalists are not aware of. After the liberation of Ethiopia from Italy in 1942, children of the bandits (collaborators) who sympathized with fascist Italy tried to regroup. This group led an uprising against the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, but was quickly crushed. Nevertheless, the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie was very weak both politically and economically to undermine the role of Britain. Eritrea was under British administration until 1952. Great Britain handed over responsibility for the area to the United Nations in 1952. Despite a federation agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, this agreement was not respected by Emperor Haile Selassie.

Emperor Haile Selassie's strategically ill-conceived and contradictory policy, which was predominantly a feudal policy, could be exploited by various forces to permanently destabilize

Ethiopia. Meles Zenawi, who became president in 1991 and later prime minister of the country, founded the TPLF. However, the leaders of the TPLF did not come from peasant families, but their fathers were well off and could send their children to selected schools, such as General Wingate School, then run by the British. The rise of Meles and his comrades to guerrilla status began in such schools as General Wingate Secondary School. The student movements organized under the slogan of Marxism-Leninism, with little knowledge of the country's cultural history, sought to deconstruct Ethiopia's history. Instead of a bourgeois and enlightened movement, a student movement developed that was rather destabilizing. The government of Emperor Haile Selassie, which had no solution at hand, favored the situation for such organizations as the TPLF and EPLF, which gathered especially under the banner of Marxism-Leninism. However, the impression must not be given that all members of both the TPLF and the EPLF agreed with the policies of Meles and Isaias Afworki. Many young people who rejected the radical politics of Meles Zenawi and Isaias Afwerki were executed.

The 1974 revolution that led to the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie instead favored such nationality movements as the TPLF, the EPLF and the OLF. The military government, which reacted furiously, waged a bitter war against all these, and other Marxist organizations. Countries that were hardly comfortable with the political situation in the country supported all these movements, which then inevitably destabilized the whole country. In the end, this confused situation led to the fall of the Mengistu regime, who was downright labelled a socialist dictator by the international media. Mengistu Haile Mariam, however, had no socialist education and no Marxist background, but had a purely military education. He was in America several times to further his military training. It was not his socialist training but his military training and his feudalist background that was responsible for his thinking and actions. It must be known to many why the military in Latin America became fascists. The amalgamation of feudalism with unenlightened military training inevitably leads to dictatorial regime. In Ethiopia, however, a revolutionary development took place which the mass of the population could join. Foreign forces wanted to use all means to prevent the reforms in Ethiopia from bearing fruit. The implementation of the reforms could strengthen the self-confidence of the population. Therefore, the implementation of these reforms must be prevented. The fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam then paved the way for the TPLF's seizure of power.

### **TPLF's Seizure of Power**

The TPLF could only come to power with the support of foreign forces. Only with the support of foreign forces could it expand its power and largely control the economy.

After the seizure of power, Meles Zenawi introduced a policy of ethnicization that fascist Italy wanted to practice during the occupation. According to this plan, the hitherto practiced division of the country into provinces, which was also reformed during the period of military rule, would have to be abandoned. Meles Zenawi and Co. were convinced that this was the only way for the different ethnic groups to enjoy real freedoms. This policy was supported by both Britain and the United States. Why both Britain and the United States supported TPLF's policy of ethnicization was not clear. However, such a policy is diametrically opposed to the liberal policies and market economy practices in Western countries. It even prevents the development of market economy and individual freedoms. Since an artificial identity is created, the mobility

of resources such as capital and labor from one ethnic area to another is prevented. It is therefore incomprehensible and illogical why the very forces that fought fiercely against the alleged socialist model to impose a liberal market economy worldwide supported ethnic-based policies for Ethiopia. In effect, the ethnicization policy of Meles and co. took the country back to barbarism. So-called ethnic-based federalism is not federalism in the true sense of the word. True federalism needs political maturity and civil liberties. However, the division of Ethiopia into ethnic units was used by the TPLF. In order to establish Greater Tigray, the TPLF was able to incorporate larger areas and declare them as part of Tigray. The forced incorporation of the territories created tensions between the TPLF and the Amharas.

The introduction of ethnic politics also encouraged the emergence of warlords who could plunder resources in the respective regions. The cunning investors from abroad, who had exploited the ignorance of the respective warlords, instead set their sights on a plantation economy that favored slave-like conditions. Under the leadership of TPLF, the warlords were able to strike a deal with the so-called foreign investors to virtually loot the country. This kind of plantation economy in turn prevented sustainable and systematic economic development throughout the country. There was no value-added or wealth creation. Resources are exported abroad unprocessed. The circular relationship between production, generation of income and consumption necessary for a balanced economic development does not take place.

To control the whole country, the state apparatus would have to be restructured in favor of the TPLF. The TPLF, who had no systematic military training, could rise to the top. The well-trained soldiers from the former governments were systematically removed from their posts. The security apparatus was also filled with people loyal to Meles Zenawi. In addition, the TPLF trained a special military unit, the has fascistic features. The task of these military forces, known in Ethiopia as Agazi, is to persecute and liquidate opposition forces who rejected the system of Meles Zenawi. These special forces have killed thousands of people. Thousands of people were tortured in prisons. In this way, the state apparatus was built in a repressive way. The TPLF government did not even respect its own constitution. The constitution clearly states the functions of all three organs, namely the executive, the legislature and the parliament. Yet, the TPLF government was able to control all these three organs. By completely controlling the state apparatus, the TPLF could do whatever they wanted.

In terms of this analysis, it can be said that there was no government in Ethiopia that represented the people of Ethiopia. In short, for 27 years the people of Ethiopia had a government that did not represent their interests. The country also had no sovereignty. Politics was not understood as an art to systematically build the country, but was understood as an instrument of power to destabilize the whole country. The Ethiopians were neither considered as people who had feelings and dreams. Under Meles and Co. all disputes were solved militarily. This kind of understanding of politics destabilized the whole country, which gradually accelerated the decline of the corrupt regime of Meles and Co. After the death of Meles Zenawi, who was considered the brain of the TPLF, the remaining TPLF people could no longer rule with their old familiar divide and rule method. They were forced to clear the field for new forces.

## **The economic policy of the TPLF**

In the beginning, it was thought that Meles Zenawi's regime would introduce a new economic policy, primarily to eradicate poverty and slowly but surely bring the country out of underdevelopment. Instead, the regime of Meles Zenawi, dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, introduced a neoliberal economic policy that rather blocked the development of a capitalist economy based on science and technology. This also made systematic, resource-saving and sustainable economic development, which would benefit all social strata, impossible.

The elements of the neoliberal economic policy of the IMF and the World Bank are well known. Devaluation of the own currency, privatization of state-controlled enterprises, liberalization of the economy and reduction of social spending etc. to name a few. However, these kinds of measures cannot be called economic policy. Experiences and empirical studies from Latin and Central America and also from many African countries that had to implement the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the IMF and the World Bank prove that the program has a built-in mechanism that tends to distort economic and social developments in each country. It rather favors the emergence of oligarchic forces who cement underdevelopment. It paves the way for the militarization of the state apparatus. The amalgamation of oligarchic forces and militarized state apparatus prevents the development of democratic structures and also the emergence of an enlightened civil movement that exposes corruption practices and the intrigues of governments and their misguided economic policies.

The economic policies of the TPLF, as described above, favored much more the political cadres of the TPLF. In the name of liberalization, the TPLF people were able to buy and control important sectors of the economy cheaply. As a result, they became rich within a few years. Important agricultural resources like cultivation of raw sugar, sesame, coffee, gold and other precious metals, etc. were controlled by the TPLF cadre. These resources were exported abroad unprocessed. These people who could become multi-millionaires within a few years could not make systematic investments that could create jobs. Instead, the service sector flourished, which was more likely to cause social and cultural damage.

The government that was under the control of the TPLF was advised by the so-called foreign experts working at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The staff of this institute are instrumental in the construction of about ten sugar factories. In order to obtain raw materials for these factories, cane sugar has to be grown. The experts advising Meles Zenawi's regime, however, could not properly understand the implications of their wrong advices. As is well known, the cultivation of raw sugar sucks a lot of water out of the soil. Over time, the soil becomes dry. I had the opportunity to talk to some economists of this institute, but they could not convince me with their plans. Ethiopians need food first and foremost. Wheat, teff, millet and other foodstuffs that are very important for people's lives could be grown on this field. In the last 27 years, such "economic hitmen" have had the opportunity to produce poverty and misery on the Ethiopian soil.

If the political, economic, military and social situations are as described above, I do not understand this one-sided reporting in favor of the TPLF. Objective reporting requires that one

should first know the political, military, economic and social situations of the country very well. One must also be able to conduct an empirical study and analyses it theoretically according to scientific criteria. If you were born, grew up, went to school and also studied in Germany and other European countries, you also have the possibility to do some kind of comparative studies. Through the lens of a capitalist economy, state economic and social policies, cultural and technological policies, and other policies as well, one can better judge the undesirable developments in countries like Ethiopia. I am convinced that the journalists who consider the TPLF as the government and try to support and defend the regime have not followed the political economic and social situations of the last 27 years very closely.

### **The war**

After the seizure of power by Dr Abiy Ahmed, the TPLF people tried to come back to power by all means. They used the system they had built for 27 years to destabilize Dr Abiy's regime. They waged a full-scale war throughout the country. They armed renegade people from the Oromo Liberation Front. This group waged a barbaric war in the west of the country, in the Wollega region. They killed Orthodox Christians and set churches on fire. Many Amharas were killed or displaced. More than 3 million people were forced to live on the street. This war should be known to the many church and other development aid organizations working in all areas of Ethiopia. The embassies of Germany and other European countries must also have sufficient knowledge of the political situation in the country. The embassies also have a moral duty to inform their governments about the actual situation in Ethiopia.

In the cities, especially in the capital, the TPLF people are working with radical elements like Jawar, who is funded by Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Again, the TPLF people could get support from the Egyptian strongman. Despite their treacherous policies and their collaboration with terrorist forces, the Abiy regime tried to de-escalate the situation and engage with the TPLF. Most recently, in collaboration with Jawar and other groups, they killed Hachalu Hundessa, one of the most famous Oromo singers. Their plan was to carry out a coup by creating chaos in the capital.

When all these sabotage actions failed, they then attacked and killed soldiers, mostly officers, stationed in the Tigray region in the middle of the night on 4/11/2020. It is estimated that over 800 soldiers were killed. These soldiers had worked well with soldiers from the Tigray for years. They hardly expected to be brutally killed by their comrades. It is well known that about 80% of the weapons and military aircraft are located in Tigray province. Dr Abiy tried in vain to bring back the weapons. With this last card, they thought they were finally marching to Addis to come to power. As a senior Ethiopian officer expressed, despite the loss of their chamberlains, this last action is like a gift from God. With this last action, they have proved that they have no principles and intellectual foundations. Their only ideology is power and greed, and humiliation of the people of Ethiopia.

The killing of these soldiers should not be tolerated. The government is obliged to get rid of such terrorists by all means. It would be irresponsible to allow this barbaric action to go unpunished. This forced war, which in itself is not directed against the Tigrays, has been supported by over 95% of the Ethiopian population. They have supported the soldiers both

materially and spiritually. The soldiers have taken great pains not to cause any material or civilian damage. Now about 95% of the Tigray region has been liberated from the TPLF. TPLF leaders must be held accountable for their atrocities. Those foreign governments and international organizations, in short, the international community, should now review their policies towards Ethiopia. They must ask themselves whether they were right to cooperate with such a regime like that of the TPLF. They must reflect, and ask themselves where this kind of support such kinds of regimes would lead. Such a policy is also not in the interest of the countries that call themselves civilized. The region finally needs peace. The people need real freedoms, resource-saving and sustainable economic development. The resources of this earth are sufficient for all the people on this earth. If you support a regime that tries to democratize its society, promotes individual freedom and pushes economic developments, much can be achieved. Such support is also in the interest of all countries.

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## Cc

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