

THE CENTENARY OF DOGALI

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ADDRESS MADE BY COMRADE MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
CENTENARY OF THE VICTORY OF DOGALI

It is quite well known that human dignity is one of the basic ideals for which immense sacrifices have been paid throughout history. The battle waged for this ideal in this ancient land of ours is indeed overwhelming. In the course of our millennial history, succeeding generations in Ethiopia have been able to erect the monument of their ardent love for independence and for the Motherland, which has long been their unique identity, upon a sturdy foundation by withstanding and repulsing all aggressors who strove to transgress their sovereignty in various epochs.

Whenever expansionists, invaders and colonialists, holding aloft different aims and objectives, sought to challenge our independence through the ages, Ethiopia's beloved children have dauntlessly raised their arms, have fought heroically and emerged in victory. In general, ours is a history replete with glorious feats in defence of national sovereignty and independence. We are very proud that we are heirs to the legacy of a constellation of heroes who chose the ultimate sacrifice rather than succumbing to indignity or surrendering their independence. Just as the various aggressive assaults launched against us in the course of our long history were essentially the same, the struggles we waged to withstand them also bear the same character. While expansionists and colonialists strove to saddle us with the yoke of their oppression, we retaliated so as not to surrender our independence and national dignity. If the whole state of affairs is discerned in its totality, it is possible to conclude that the intent of our enemies from ancient times upto the present, irrespective of certain variations in form, is one and the same, our firm stand of invincibility, too, is one and the same.

As the succeeding generations of this country drew lessons from the examples of those who preceded them and preserved its independence, it is inevitable that the present generation, too, draws upon the heroic legacy of its forebears in order to discharge its historic responsibility. Since it cannot make history anew if it remains unaware of the fact that it is heir

to a pridetworthy historical legacy, it leans firmly upon the achievements of the past and forges ahead. It is thus by recalling its exemplary value in deep reverence that we commemorate the centenary of the victory scored by the heroes of Dogali against a modern European colonial army on the Red Sea Coast of Ethiopia.

All peoples who have successfully defended their freedom and dignity, the territorial integrity of their country and their unity from foreign aggressors shall always occupy a special and resplendent chapter in history. And the example of those champions of the people who have played forefront roles transcends all times and territorial confines.

The Ethiopian army, which enshrouded in a cloak of shame the Italian occupationist army which had come to covet our country, and its commander, Ras Alula, shall always be remembered for their exemplary valour.

The Battle of Dogali is a source of pride not only to Ethiopia but to the entire peoples of Africa, for it was a confrontation through which we withstood and ultimately crushed the aggressive campaign launched on our front by the European colonial powers in accordance with their covenant to divide our continent among themselves on the arrogant pretext of "civilizing Africa, the Dark Continent." On the other hand we cherish the belief that it was not only the Italian occupationist forces but also the entire colonialist bloc that was then defeated.

The victory of Dogali is one of the glorious exploits which render special significance to our stable history which is inscribed in blood. The victorious exploits which shall remain lasting historical relics of the noble sacrifice paid in the name of independence in this land of ours are indeed numerous. While the battles of Gundat, Gura, Metema, Adwa, Walwal and others can be mentioned among the earliest, one can enumerate many more recent battles in which Ethiopia's beloved children have displayed glaringly heroic feats.

It is utterly impossible for our mentality to succumb to an enemy because the reverberating call of the bell of struggle resounding from these arenas of victory which are living testimonies of the heroic struggle of our resolute compatriots are ever present amongst us. We can by no means attain mental tranquility unless we fully ascertain the rights and the freedom of our people.

We fully well realize that love of freedom, heroism or longstanding history alone do not enable the people of a nation to fulfill all their needs. While we take pride in the fact that our country has long maintained its independence and dignity and in the invincibility of our forefathers, it is highly decisive that we especially boost our economic construction so that we may be able to lay down a reliable foundation for our sustenance and for lasting respect.

As is quite well known in our contemporary world, keeping the enemy at a bay on the threshold of one's borders is not enough to preserve one's own independence, use one's right to self determination and forge ahead along the path of development. The attainment of economic and social strength is the primary guarantee or prerequisite for avoiding enemy assault in the first place, and for repulsing and defeating the enemy in the case of such an assault. Complacency in this regard is tantamount to encouraging the aggressive designs of the enemy or inviting aggression.

As is to be discerned from the foregoing analysis, the historic responsibility of defending the honour of the Motherland entrusted to the present revolutionary generation calls not only for withstanding and repulsing the aggression of the enemy like its forebears had done but also for a relentless struggle to eliminate the backwardness which has long rendered us vulnerable to enemy aggression. The outcome of this struggle will not culminate in withstanding and repulsing the enemy but will also enable us to easily discourage the aggressive assaults that have consistently dogged our steps throughout our history.

There has been no instance when Ethiopia strove to transgress either the territorial integrity or the independence of others. There has been no occasion when Ethiopians complacently observed the transgression of their country's territorial confines, their rights and independence. The fact that our country's history is replete with glorious heroic exploits indicates nothing but the sacrifices we paid so as not to succumb to indignity. Otherwise, we have neither the obsession nor the desire for war. As it was yesterday, our ideal today and tomorrow remains to be peace and progress.

Within the turbulence of past historical conditions, our heroes had to be born in the heat of battle. The process of development under the conditions prevailing today requires all round struggle, and as such calls for the birth of outstanding

heroes in the defence of our sovereignty as well as in the various spheres of economic construction.

Comprehensively defined, independence implies the elimination of all conditions of vulnerability to aggression and the attainment of self-sufficiency in all spheres. As backwardness remains to be the source of all our problems, we must forcefully struggle to rid ourselves of this cardinal foe. Even though the developmental gains we have so far registered through our indefatigable endeavour are highly encouraging in general, we have to redouble our effort; we must work forcefully and struggle relentlessly in view of our avowed goal of bringing about the prevalence of a genuinely comprehensive independence and stable social life in our country. Since our efforts involve broad popular participation, our guiding principle in this fervent struggle must aim at the attainment of concomitantly broad and speedy outcomes. Accordingly, each and every working citizen must realize that the accomplishment of his compatriots is a historical responsibility entrusted to him and thereby strive to discharge it to the best of his capability in his respective sphere of deployment.

The example of the victory of Dogali is ever alive!