

# Comical Zen of Ethiopia appears in comedy

By Abebe Gelaw

Nobody knows for sure whether the Prime Minister harbours a grudge against his parents. While he was a rebel fighting with his Derg counterpart, Colonel Mengistu, he changed the name his parents gave him at birth. It seemed that the Premier did not even ask for their permission when he ditched his real name Legesse and adopted Meles. Like any parents, his dad Ato Zenawi Asres and his Eritrean-born mum, the late Weizero Alemash, must have felt furious when they learnt that their mutinous son was no longer the Legesse that they used to give bread and butter.

Now the PM has appeared in a comedy with a new Chinese name. The funny play, which was staged on the greatly entertaining public media, depicted him as a great leader of boundless wisdom. The play, which surfaced on ENA, Walta and the Ethiopian Herald on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September'05, hilariously entitled, [\*The defence fo \(sic\) Ana Gnomes \(sic\), sorry, Hanna Gomes \(sick\)\*](#), featured Meles as a comic character called **Premier Zen**. Readers are cautioned here not to confuse our Prime Minister's newly adopted name with that of the current Chinese Vice-Premier, **Zen** Peiyan.

At this critical juncture where the PM (*Pictured below enviously inspecting the Chinese army*) who has been pitifully rejected by his subjects, and his old Western friends and allies are also giving him the cold shoulder, the Chinese are offering him a shoulder



to cry on. So the support of the Chinese, whose news services, Xinhua and People's Daily, have already joined forces to doll out positive stories to repair his irreparable image, appears all the more crucial. Incidentally, the Chinese are now getting more and more involved in all kinds of ventures in Ethiopia. Palatial sources have not yet given any plausible reasons why our own Meles adopted or wilfully accepted a new Chinese name. But there is a

suspicion that the high level Chinese military delegation, which met Premier Zen in Addis last August, may have also pressed him to change his name as part of the preconditions for a full military assistance from the rising superpower. By the way, the CC of the Chinese Communist Party has already sent a congratulatory message to Comrade Zen and his party on "winning the free and fair election." Ho-ho-ho!

During his talks with the Chinese delegation, led by Lieutenant-General Zhu Wenquan, Premier Zen may also have asked his new allies to send him the heroic battalion and the unmerciful Chinese battalions that successfully crushed the pro-democracy protests at Tiananmen Square. In case the Ethio-Chinese amicable relations go from strength to strength and lead to the unification of the two nations, the Chinese President, Comrade Hu Jintao, will have to call our PM "Comrade Zen of Ethiopia", in order to avoid a bitter row with his namesake the Chinese Vice-Premier, Comrade Zen.

While researching on the meaning the funny but bizarre name for an Ethiopian ruler, I came across a Buddhist school of thought by the same name that means **waking up to the present moment**. By implication, this makes Premier Zen the awakened one though waking up to the present moment is becoming unbearably stressful for him.

That might be the reason why he had long sleepless nights scribbling his knotty thoughts in that odious letter, which should not have been thrown out of the safe of his highly fortified and guarded palace for the whole world to enjoy.

Let us leave that aside and turn our attention back to the extraordinary public media circus. Unfortunately, Ato Bereket is currently misfiring and some of his best shots are backfiring causing injuries to Premier Zen so badly that he may not recover sooner. A few days ago, the Herald allowed the Premier to make a fool of himself by publishing that longest tantrum ever told in history in the form of a letter to the editor. It has now come up with a comedy masterpiece, featuring the Premier as a wise but comical character. Comedy is, after all, is meant to make people laugh at any cost, no matter how absurd it may appear. I admit Herald has accomplished a good mission of making the PM look like the famous and heroic character called Comical Ali of Baghdad.

I will leave out any mumbo-jumbos, which have already been well served in the PM's letter or report. The commentaries are mine, not of the PM's newly discovered Shakespeare called Ogbolu. As the play contains some intimate details that a foreigner wouldn't know, one can suspect that Sylvester Ogbolu Esq. could be one of the PM's numerous pseudonyms. Here are some excerpts from the play. (Please bear no malice against the PM for any of his usual offensive or foul language.)

### [The defence fo \(sic\) Ana Gnomes, sorry, Hanna Gomes](#)

By "Sylvester Ogbolu, Esq."

"The elections were generally adjudged by various observers, both domestic and international, **to be exemplary, free and fair**, but Ana Gnomes (sic), sorry, Hanna Gomes (sic), begged to differ, by writing a tendentious report which Premier Zen thought was full of garbage even though, there were lumps of truth in the report written by Ana Gnomes (sic) , sorry, Hanna Gomes (sic)...."

### On Revolutionary Democracy

**“SO the Defence Counsel:** Please Premier Zen, just introduce yourself properly.

**Premier Zen:** I am Premier Zen, and I am a fighter for the rights of the Ethiopians.

**SO the Defence Counsel:** You are a fighter; does that make you a revolutionary?

**Premier Zen:** Yes, I consider myself a revolutionary.

**SO the Defence Counsel:**... so that means that you are also a democrat. Are you not?

**Premier Zen:** I am also a democrat. Your assumption is correct Mr. Defence Counsel.

**SO the Defence Counsel:** That means you are a revolutionary democrat, and you believe in revolutionary democracy ” . . .

[ Here we go!...Our beloved Premier Zen is still a guerilla fighter, as he recently confessed on CNN, fighting against the rights of poor people of Ethiopia. But Mr. Zen contradicted himself a bit by declaring that he is a

democrat. We know that he has long been fighting with the people due to his insistence on imposing his revolutionary democracy and the refusal of his subjects to buy his 'visionary' hotchpotch. Unfortunately, the comedy fell short of giving us some clues as to how his revolutionary democracy was born. Democracy is a slow process that evolves out of a stable society. On the contrary, revolution cannot be achieved without some kind of rush, uprising and radical movement to shake off an old system. In other words 'revolutionary democracy' is a hybrid born of a slow evolutionary process and a fast radical movement. My layman's interpretation of revolutionary democracy leads me to conclude that it is a lovechild of the "The Tortoise and the Hare". God knows how they fell in love to each other.]

### On starvation and epistle

... **“SO the Defence Counsel:** Are you married Premier Zen?

**Premier Zen:** Yes, I am a married man. I am married to the beautiful Etiye Azeb.

**SO the Defence Counsel:** Could you please tell the readers of The Ethiopian Herald, why you did not eat the food that was cooked by Etege Azeb (*Pictured below in the top Okura Garden Hotel Shangai*) on the 25th and 26th of August 2005?



**Premier Zen:** I am an adult man; I have the right to eat or not to eat my wife's food. What has my eating or not eating my wife's food got to do with your defence of the writer of ... the EU-EOM Statement? What has love for my wife got to do with it?

**SO the Defence Counsel:** Please Premier Zen just answer the question...tell the readers of The Ethiopian Herald, and indeed all Ethiopians, and all foreigners

residing in Ethiopia the reason for your drastic action.

**Premier Zen:** Well, since you insist on your line of strange questioning, I will answer you. I did not eat because I was under a personal oath.

**So the Defence Counsel:** What personal oath were you under?

**Premier Zen:** I had personally vowed that I would neither eat nor drink anything until I had responded to the tendentious EU-EOM statement written by the good lady ” ....

[Comment: Wow! In this episode, the Premier Zen, singing Tina Turner's song dreadfully, starved himself to death by refusing to eat First Lady (Etege) Azeb's food for two solid days and nights while labouring hard to write his 14,000-word epistle, which has firmly secured his place in the Guinness Book of Records. If he had fasted and meditated for so long, he must have come up with some new chapters for the Holy Bible preaching love, reconciliation, forgiveness and peace among peoples of the world. Alas! As an atheist and follower of the late Albanian cult leader, Mr. Enva Hoxha, he was just fasting for his own political resurrection without any prayers to Almighty God. He

missed a great chance of not only becoming a holy leader but also being canonized as Saint Zen of Ethiopia.]

### On the June 8 massacre

“**Premier Zen:** After the elections, the good lady and her gnomes, based on their exit polling, ‘hinted’ the Opposition parties that they have won the elections; because of which the Opposition parties became irrationally emboldened and started instigating people to commit post-election violence, with the unfortunate result that some lives were lost.

**SO the Defence Counsel:** So why did you wash your hands?

**Premier Zen:** I washed my hands for the third time, *to symbolize the innocence of myself, my party and my government* (sic) over those unfortunate deaths. ...

**SO the Defence Counsel:** Who do you think should be blamed for those deaths?

**Premier Zen:** We should blame the instigators of violence, and those that meddled in the process. I mean those who were invited to observe the elections, but opted instead to become part of the problem.”

[“And Jesus said, I say to you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you shall deny knowing Me three times.” (Luk 22:34) The Holy Bible also tells us that a few minutes before sentencing Jesus to death, Pontius Pilate washed his hands before the multitude, as a sign that he was innocent of the crucifixion of our Lord. (Mat 27:24) According to the play, Premier Zen washed his hands three times. Pilate also washed his hands and Peter denied knowing Jesus three times and that, according to our spiritual fathers, symbolizes denial and betrayal. Those innocent kids who were mowed down on that fateful day by a death squad must be turning in their graves. Did Mr. Zen order a full investigation into the atrocities or offer a message of condolence and apologies to the bereaved families of the slain school kids? But why should he after washing his hands?]

### On the Derg

... “**SO the Defence Counsel:** Are you telling this court that when some of you EPRDF members were fighting to free this country from tyrannical oppression...?

**Premier Zen:** Precisely. In fact, Ato Hailu Shawel, Chairman of the CUD, worked for the Dergue regime.

**SO the Defence Counsel:** Wow! This is unbelievable! You mean somebody who selfishly served the Dergue regime when you EPRDF guys were risking your lives to free Ethiopia...?

**Premier Zen:** This is the point we have been trying to make all along – that in spite of our problems as a country - that Ethiopia has emerged as a pluralistic and democratic society!”

[Comment: Over fourteen years have passed since Derg (I) was ousted by Derg (II) and yet Premier Zen is still stuck in the mud of blaming Derg I for all his own blunders. He knows for sure that man who killed three people is equally

criminal before the law with another who killed 30,000. There is no such thing as a greater and a lesser atrocity. The Premier seems to forget all the time that the Colonel is now in exile and his accomplices are either killed or jailed. No need to incriminate innocent engineers and civil servants who served their country. It is the PM who is now on the throne residing rent free in the Emperor and Colonel's Grand Palace. Did he ever complain that the former rulers wasted a lot of money building expansive and opulent palaces? No! That is probably the only thing Premier Zen the Great doesn't enjoy blaming. His Shakespeare should have advised the great leader to move on rather than playing the blame game for so long. As Don Shula said: "The superior man blames himself. The inferior man blames others." Mr. Zen needs to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is a superior ruler by starting blaming nobody but himself for his an endless predicament."]

### On leadership and election victory

**“SO the Defence Counsel:** And do you belong in this category of strong African leaders?

**Premier Zen:** I have a renewed mandate from the Ethiopian people following the confirmed results of the 15th May 2005 election and subsequent bye-elections (sic) that have been generally adjudged to be free, fair and democratic.”

[Well! We have witnessed that Premier Zen's coronation was conducted by a great defence lawyer that money can't buy in many parts of the world. If one hires the President of the highest court of appeal in the land as a defence lawyer, there is little doubt that the fortunate employer can win even the most hopeless cases. Premier Zen's invincible defence lawyer, Chief Justice Kemal Bedri, is a mismatch for anyone, as the sharp EU observers discovered. For the New Year, Premier Zen the Great should graciously allow all judges to take "leaves of absence" and set up their own law firms to enable them to work as defence lawyers to supplement their incomes. They can also render a great service to the nation by performing the miracle of resurrecting dead and buried losers as winners! Under his great leadership, which is beautifully described in the play by Mr. Zen himself, we must seek shortcuts to achieve "speedy development" in all spheres of life.]

In conclusion, the greatly entertaining comedy featuring Comical Zen of Ethiopia is quite enjoyable. But one should point out the fact that the Premier has re-cycled some of his bland misdeeds in the play. The annoying replay that we have seen time and time again for over fourteen years is his addiction to flogging a dead horse. Instead of torturing a dead horse like the Derg, Mr. Zen needs to gallop on the back of reality and be more inward looking to discover his own transgressions and shortcomings. That may make Mr. Zen's shows much more amusing and fascinating to watch.

Thank you so much Comical Zen the Great! How can we survive without you? We, Mr. Zen's subjects, need to move on with renewed hopes and visions for a better future.

Check out the full comedy:

<http://www.waltainfo.com/Conflict/Articles/2005/Sep/article07.htm>