**Meles Zenawi and the New Republic of Tigray**

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On a recent interview with ESAT, former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador Herman Cohen made some startling revelations regarding matters that influenced the history of the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia. While I am not a fan of the Ambassador and cognizant of the negative roles he played on the region over the decades, it was shocking to witness the candid responses to the barrage of questions hurled at him by a brilliant ESAT interviewer Abebe Gellaw. This raises some questions. Why now, how does it factor into the political calculations of Meles, and ultimately what does it mean to Ethiopia?

Key: The hegemony of a minority regime is not sustainable. What does that mean?

It means that it is a matter of time until the minority regime will crumble. The role minority regime can play in Ethiopia is on life support. It is a dead man walking per se; a rejected system that could not be revived no matter what. Ambassador Cohen said that Meles failed to realize the vision of his own constitution. Article 39 was meant to provide autonomy to the country’s various regions. Instead, Meles “imposed the same type of authoritarian regime that Ethiopians has always had.” Meles’ actions are in contradiction to the constitution and outright disregarding to the rights of the rest of the country.

For over 20 years, his reign accorded preferential treatment to the state of Tigray. The prevailing opinion is predicated upon the argument that the clique’s objective is to create an independent state, Abbay Tigray. But is there evidence to back this up?

Over the last 20 years, Tigray has had disparate advantages over the rest of the country. After the TPLF came to power, they have redrawn the internal Ethiopian map to favor Tigray to the dismay of Ethiopians in various parts of the country. There are many reports that accuse Meles and his clique of taking fertile lands from different parts of Ethiopia and, made them part of Tigray. Resources are transferred from the Ethiopian heartland to Tigray. This included the banking, major industries, the air force and major portion of the country’s armaments using the threat of Eritrea as excuse. In Tigray, there exists an international bureau. Evidences of building towards greater Tigray are plenty. Many Ethiopians believe Meles literally gave-away major portions of Ethiopian land to Sudan to appease Sudan and to ensure a friendly and non-threatening Sudan. There are regular flights between Sudan and Tigray in a daily basis. The transformation of the city of Mekele and overall, the state of Tigray is intense relative to the rest of the country etc…

Key: “The TPLF was at the gates of Addis. We wanted to make sure that the war ended with what we called a soft landing in Addis and there should be no destruction….We didn’t say takeover the government. We said take over Addis.”

This is clear evidence that TPLF and Meles never enjoyed support of the Ethiopian people. The US, in effect, was forced to accept the inevitable change at a crucial moment in history. According to the Ambassador, Meles promised change but failed to implement any of the reforms he promised.

Key: the US, according to Ambassador Cohen is, primarily interested on its “Strategic Interests.” Human rights and other issues are secondary considerations if at all. The question then becomes, does the minority Meles regime-hegemony serve US national interests? According to Ambassador Cohen, “The hegemonic minority rule of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) is difficult to sustain as Ethiopians are demanding freedom and democracy.”

Given the fact that it is clearly understood that the agenda Meles pursues is unsustainable, and also, given the fact that the US’s key strategic interest in Ethiopia is a united Ethiopia; Ambassador Cohen’s campaign, albeit pushed by a personal motive to sell a book, is likely the modus operandi. Hence, it is clear to all, Meles Zenawi and co must go. Meles Zenawi can no longer ensure US strategic interests for many reasons.

For twenty years, Meles and co shunned goodwill towards any group, individuals, national organizations or nations. Meles played hardball. He used the War on Terror-card against everyone. He used it against Ethiopians, in the Ogaden, Oromo, Somalis and Eritreans. He used every tool at his disposal mercilessly. He imprisoned Ethiopians, Eritreans, Somalis or any Ethnic group that he felt could get on his way. If one is to ask, if there exists any group of people that supports the minority regime in the region the answer is an emphatic no. Ask the Ogadeni’s the Somalis, the Oromos, Eritreans or any group and one will find no loyalty for this regime.

There are many indicators that Meles is on his last legs. For over three years, Meles gambled on associating anything Eritrean with terrorism. The trajectory seemed on the up and up when he proclaimed that the noose is now on Eritrea’s neck and bragged of what is to come. He invested a great deal of time and resources to accomplish what he could not through military and other subversive tactics. He literally gave-away Ethiopia to China and others just to get Eritrea and failed. Meles tried to buy time by talking sanction and Eritrea. He, in effect, muzzled the voice of the Ethiopian opposition because the focus was the sanction. However, that is all the time he could buy because Ethiopians are back with vengeance ready to devour him.

This was highlighted by the recent OLF announcement that clarified a united Ethiopia position. This simple expression of unity jolted the Weyane clique as if hit by tsunami. All one has to do is look at the recent headlines in the mouthpiece website of the genocidal regime Aigaforum. Their incoherent frantic attacks on any Ethiopian opposition are a reflection of the fragility and susceptibility of this group. And they are right to be concerned because for the first time Ethiopians are beginning to speak with one voice. They are talking a voice of unity to an organization that could only survive in a splintered environment, an organization that is truly afraid of a united Ethiopia. When all these groups come together to decide the future of Ethiopia, guess who is going to be on the outside looking in? Meles and his genocidal friends! Meles and co in turn will run for their life if there is a safe haven somewhere.

According to Ambassador Cohen, “Save Addis from destruction” propelled Meles to power. However, TPLF’s main agenda was Tigray not Ethiopia. After 20 years, Meles has put the people of Tigray in a precarious position by placing them in the middle. He cannot out-rightly proclaim independent Tigray while he is ripping the benefits of being a ruler of Ethiopia because his masters will hang him dry. This is reflected by the lack of affection and respect that Meles shows the people of Ethiopia. But how are the people of Tigray faring and, how will they fair in the long term?

The reality is no temporary gain is sustainable unless coupled with peace and stability. Meles Zenawi could not win any peace with any group or nation in the region. He could not unite Ethiopia and certainly, he cannot ensure peace for the people of Tigray. The people of Tigray are surrounded by hostility because the hegemonic agenda Meles pursued in the name of Tigray did not promote friendly ties with anyone.

Meles Zenawi is at a downward spiral, scared and is likely to make erotic decisions as he recently did by “retiring” (expelling) many officers abruptly. It is odd to see Meles, while involved in military campaign in Somalia, releasing officers’ en mass at same time. The reality is, he is scared and he felt that he is removing threats as he repeatedly does. Meles clearly believes that the support he gets from the West is forever. He also believes that they will stick by him regardless of what he does as long as he can ensure their strategic interests. However, US interests cannot be ensured if officers trained by US are chopped-off their duties abruptly as in this case.

When ESAT asked the Ambassador if Meles was in good terms with him, he replied, Meles got angry after the Ambassador spoke-out in the aftermath of the 2005 election massacre. Meles felt that the Ambassador spoke outside the scope of US Ethiopia strategic relations. In effect, bit the hand that feeds his madness. Think how mad Meles will be after the interview. The Ambassador added fuel to the raging fire that is consuming the regime. In other words, Cohen is telling Meles his time is up.

Conclusion,

Meles Zenawi will go down in history as one of the worst leaders for selling his people, Africa and his soul if he had any. He should face justice for corruption, embezzlement, torture, genocide and all the crimes he committed against the people of the region collectively. Meles used hunger, climate change, war on terror, fear, economy, stability etc…to sell his agenda. All is coming to ahead now. The people of Tigray need peace, stability and prosperity. The region also needs it. However, Meles has proven he cannot provide peace, stability or prosperity. The West already knows Meles cannot ensure a united Ethiopia. These are key constituencies Meles has lost. And regardless of what he does, without them he cannot stay in power for long. That is the stage we are in and I do believe Ambassador Cohen’s timing is not accidental. The Ambassador is telling Ethiopians it is time.

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