

Southern Ethiopia-the playground of Meles Zenawi. By Yilma Bekele

Most locations are just bland places. There is not much variation in the topography. Look at Google satellite map of Africa and you will see what I mean. Endless flat land, a stretch of desert, an occasional river or a few hills is the norm. Our Ethiopia is different. In the North we have the Semen Mountains rearing high as if trying to reach heaven. With their rugged nature and sharp escarpments they kept us safe for centuries. They were our natural defense. The North is keeper of our old history. With its exotic monasteries, ancient obelisks it is here Jesus walked and Mohamed (may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him) sent his family for safety.

In the East our low lands are as fierce as the warriors they give birth to. There is no place lower than Afar depression on mother Earth. Loo and behold today it is considered the birthplace of the Human race. It is here mankind is thought to have become bipedal.

The West is where the mighty Nile flows with our water and soil to nurture that other civilization in the land of the Pharos and the great pyramids. It is also home to the famous tropical forests of Gambella and every animal life one can think of. With its lush landscape and colorful people this is where man feels one with nature.

The South is where God took his sweet time to create paradise. Who would deny that after visiting the Rift Valley? The lakes of Langano, Shala and Hawasa, the caves of Wolayeta, the natural splendor of Arba Minch, the hot springs of Wondo Genet make a grownup cry with joy. Our creator blessed us with beauty and wealth when he made our home.

The South is also where God's curse has befallen us for all our sins. He sent us Meles Zenawi to teach us the price of vanity. I am really sorry to write in such a way in this week of Easter. But truth has to be told. Meles Zenawi is a curse on the land of the Habeshas. Such venomous hate one might say. I believe I am entitled to that. For twenty years the regime has rained death and destruction on our land and people. I am not imaging it. All what I say is verifiable fact and recorded history. Spare me your tolerance and indignation please. You wouldn't think that if you stand in the shoes of the discarded and displaced.

You see my friend our TPLF leaders grew up isolated and alone in their little hamlets up north. There was no diversity. To Adwa and vicinity as Gertrude Stein will say 'there is no there, there.' That is why when they conquered our country they did not know what to do with the South. The diversity confounded our warriors. They know that they hated the Amhara, they loathed the Oromo, they were not really concerned about the Afar, the Gambellan, or the Somali but the South was a foreign land to our northern warriors. That is why when they created the Bantustans they lumped all the Southerners into one big bowl and named it 'Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region.' What a defanged name is what comes to mind when you hear this twisted designation.

The South is where TPLF asserted total control unlike in the other Bantustans. The South is where Meles Zenawi exercises his renowned divide and rule principles as an art. TPLF arrived with ready-made political Parties for every Bantustan they created. Local faces were chosen from the prisoners of war they have acquired during their struggle. The puppets were already versed in accepting their TPLF masters as the final word on any and all issues. Thus all the local boys were assigned a baby

sitter or a minder from Adwa. The South has Abate Kisho a Sidama with Bitew Belay as the real power. Corporal Kuma Demeksa of Oromia was taken under the wing of Solomon Tsimo and Hilawi Yesuf lorded it over Addisu Legesse in the Amhara Bantustan.

Abate Kisho was a simple sports teacher from the town of Leku near Yirgalem. He was not at all ready for prime time and it showed. He even has the audacity to side with one faction over the other during the TPLF drama. It was pathetic to see Meles haul his ass to jail with some trumped up charge. The current Foreign Minister replaced him as the new toy. By 2001 the Sidama people were becoming hip to this patronizing practice and demanded a certain amount of autonomy or self-administration as granted by the Constitution. Meles replied with tough love and sent his Agazi forces to teach them a lesson. Even the US State Department noted this wanton murder of unarmed protesters in Hawasa. Melese Marimo the vice president and perpetrator of this crime was rewarded for his ordering of the massacre by being sent to South Africa as an Ambassador, of course with the First Secretary a TPLF cadre in charge. That is the normal operating procedure in all the Embassies.

The issue percolated and during the election of 2005 the Southerners answered by siding with CUD (Kinijit) and were able to trounce the regime's candidates. In 2006 Meles convened a meeting in Hawasa and was able to mollify the locals with some bizarre actions. The renaming of 'Southern University' to 'Hawasa University' was seen as a triumph of Sidama assertiveness. The current puppet Shiferaw Shigute was crowned as the new face of Southern independence. Abate Kisho was released from Federal prison and sent back home poor but alive and a good symbol of what could happen when natives fill their head with funny notion of being equal.

Of course the raping and pillage of the south continued unabated. There was no stone left unturned to cultivate animosity between the different tribes and keep them at each others throat. The Sidamas were made to compete with the Wolaitas, the Siltes were divorced from the Gurages, and the Konsos were made to envy the Derasas etc. etc. The cadres encouraged turmoil and civil war. As in the rest of our country Southern Ethiopia was full of drama with the TPLF active in every village fanning the hate flame.

Ethiopianess was discouraged while allegiance to tribe was glorified. Meles and company have done their homework in how to create havoc on our country while in their caves. They did not dream of building hospitals, schools or factories but were busy drawing maps, creating language barriers and perfecting the Kilil concept. The South was their dream come true. Our common language was their first casualty. It was deemed inappropriate. Trained teachers were sent away to their respective Bantustans and the English alphabet became the language of the schools in Sidama. Without adequate preparation, without trained teachers, without books available the Southern children were left to fend for themselves. It was sad to witness a simple application that has to be written in one language to be translated to another when it reaches Hawasa the capital city. The South was made unable to communicate within its own Bantustan. It was a crime. The TPLF party was the orchestrator of such tragedy.

Shiferaw Shigute is the Frankenstein monster Meles created. He is the son of Meles Zenawi. Like his parent he is devoid of empathy and proud of his betrayal of his people. Look at him closely and you will see Meles - indifferent, arrogant and know it all. From his expensive Savile raw suit with matching ties to his air of superiority he is the kind that makes his maker proud. When his own Party found him

guilty of abuse of power and voted to oust him, our fearless step child thumbed his nose at the assembly and said “I did not do this alone, we shared the money with the wife of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Azeb Mesfin. If we are going to be accountable, we should both be judged by the law. If we have to return the Birr, we both have to return it” and stormed out of the meeting. His stepfather reversed the decision of the assembly. Like father like son! It is Shiferaw Shigute practicing ethnic cleansing today or rather it is Meles Zenawi using his toy boy that is displacing our people. It is the concept of Kilil coming home to roost.

Why am I going thru all this recounting our ugly history is a valid question? It is because the past is important to avoid making the same mistakes again. We learn so we don't repeat that which has not worked. I am not obsessing about the things that we cannot control but rather I am hoping we learn from it so we can focus on tomorrow where we have the power to build a better Ethiopia. The do's and don'ts of today are based on the lesson from the success and failures of yesterday.

Thus we learn from human history to see what works and what to avoid. The quest for liberation and a building a better Ethiopia for all will be accomplished if based on that principle. Each and every one of us is the building stone for it to succeed. Some folks were upset because I criticized a few physicians for their enabling activity regarding building a 'referral hospital' in our country. People feel upset when asked to boycott Ethiopian Airlines or avoid drinking Woyane beer. We advocate such action not out of hate but precisely because such form of 'peaceful resistance' have proven to work. There was a time when the West led by Britain and the US tried to justify their investment in South Africa by claiming they were creating jobs for the poor African masses. It was not true. They were realizing huge profit from slave labor.

What did Black South African say about that? Steven Biko, the charismatic young leader wrote 'those who professed to worry over Blacks suffering if the economy deteriorated had missed the point. We're already suffering' He often reminded us 'those who live in constant fear of being shot, beaten, or detained without charge, for those whose children already live in abject poverty and near starvation, an economic downturn is not the major area of concern.' Nobel Laureate Albert Lutuli, president of the African National Congress in one of his speeches said

“The economic boycott of South Africa will entail undoubted hardship for African. We do not doubt that. But if it is a method which shortens the day of bloodshed, the suffering to us will be a price we are willing to pay.”

We are not saying anything different. Your investment in Meles's land scheme, your patronizing Meles's Airlines, your partying in Alamudi's hotels, your support of the so-called hospital is hurting our people. No need to qualify it with good and bad investment, it all goes to the same pot.

As some of us are preparing to celebrate Easter let us not forget what it really means. Easter is Jesus Christ's victory over death. It is a time of renewal and rebirth. Let us work for the rebirth of our glorious history. Let us resurrect the spirit of our forefathers that stood united and were able to hand us a proud history. Our love for each other our tolerance of the little imperfections in each of us is what our country needs in this time of hopelessness and apathy. Happy Easter.

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Resources used:

http://www.ethiomeia.com/courier/awassa_tplf_drama.html

<http://www.ethioinfo.org/2012/02/shiferaw-shigute-implicates-pms-wife-in.html>

<http://www.sidamanational-liberation.org/documents/06meles.pdf>

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41603.htm>

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