

THE VISIT OF PM ABIY AHMED: SUMMATION

Tecola W Hagos (1 August 2018)

“Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.” Immanuel Kant, [Trans. Isaiah Berlin]

I. In General

The events of the past one week are truly noteworthy, in some respects even historical. I hear people often invoke the stupendous sequences of events as Providence, a Divine intervention to save Ethiopia from looming catastrophic end. I think such optimism is premature. We are dealing here with layers of events just beginning peeling. I think we will soon discover trends and fragments of intriguing events that would indicate the existence of the grand plot to destroy Ethiopia completely. I think there is an evil genius who had been working on such a scheme and the destructive process with the death of Engineer Semegnew Bekele is beginning to unfold. I think it is a lot more sophisticated and deliberate and not guided by some divine hand, but by the hands of that evil genius. PM Abiy Ahmed, Lemma Megersa et cetera may well be innocent victims, just dreamers like the rest of us.



I have exhausted my body and mind in trying to make sense of all the hype in the United States in connection with the best organized campaign events for PM Abiy here in the United States, and the tragedy of the death of Engineer Semegnew Bekele back home in Ethiopia. I am going to rest some now that the visit by PM Abiy Ahmed and Members of his Delegation to the Ethiopian Diaspora in the United States is finally over. No question they created a phenomenon not seen in the United States on a visit by foreign leaders in the last forty years of my stay in the United States. To me, such monumental event was overshadowed to a great degree by my grief on the untimely death (assassination) of Engineer Semegnew Bekele, a man I truly admired for numerous reasons. But life must continue with all its warts.

It is possible that we are living in the last days of our ancient and great country, Ethiopia. The greatest threat to the continued existence of Ethiopia is the fanatical Muslim dominated Oromo liberation movements that are spearheaded by Muslims like Jawar Mohammed. There is no doubt it is a minority movement but a potent one because of its religious overtone and association with historic enemies of Ethiopia; Egypt, and Arabs. The Minnesota rally is a clear evidence of the strength and direction of such individuals. Look how they effectively monopolized the broadcasting of the event at Target Center and staged a lopsided event that undermined *Ethiopiawinet* and enhanced secessionist movements.

II. Conferences and Participants (Scored A+ to F)

Very many issues need be entertained when one deals with complex events. Please, do not ever allow Mengistu Hailemariam ever come to Ethiopia our Holy Land (that is one redline I will not allow anyone to cross, even God). In fact my bone of contention with the PM is his willingness to forgive such Red Terror criminals. With that understanding of my position on past barbaric, blood thirsty leaders, I am thrilled with the visit of PM Abiy Ahmed with his Delegation the Diaspora Ethiopian population in the United States. My assessment of the PM's visit to Washington DC, Los Angeles, and St Paul Minnesota are of mixed bag: some great success and some utter failure.

- a) **Washington DC [Overall Score – A+] [Abiy – A+] [Organizers - A] [Ethiopians - A] [Tamagn – A, for kissing the shoes of Abiy in humility, but do not do it again for that is one tradition we do not want to pass down to the next generation][Professors/Professionals – C-]:** By far the

largest (over thirty thousand) and most enthusiastic (to a point of hysteria) gathering of Ethiopians was also the most diverse and definitely pro-Ethiopia crowd. This crowd that was diverse and beautiful in many ways satisfied me the most. The one deficit in the crowd was the lukewarm participation of the Tygrean community even though there were thousands of individual participants. Ethiopians of DC and Metropolitan area, I truly thank you very much for you lifted me up with your enthusiasm for Ethiopia.

I have pointed out earlier in general that the behavior of professors and professionals who organized meetings of semi-private nature to be very disappointing even embarrassing. Despite such assessment, I gave the DC conference the highest score for its inclusiveness, enthusiasm, and *Ethiopiawinet*.

b) i. The Reconciliation of Orthodox Synods [Orthodox Fathers – A+] [Abiy – A+];

The historic reconciliation of the Orthodox Church Synods is a truly monumental event. PM Abiy Ahmed is responsible for such reconciliation. Not only did he discharge his Ethiopian Christian duty, but as the Prime Minister he went way above his station in inviting the Patriarch and several Church Fathers to join him in his official Ethiopian Plane flight home on Wednesday: a beautiful conclusion to a Tsunamic week.

ii. 18th Annual Bedr Convention [Muslim Community – A+] [Abiy – A; Lemma -- A]

I watched for the first time this Convention process, and I was mesmerized as it unfolds with all its glory the greatness of Ethiopian Muslim brothers and sisters. PM Abiy was the guest speaker and he gave a wonderful speech about unity, responsibility, and compassion. I realized that Abiy Ahmed is also a koranic scholar. This man is a bona-fid genius. Lemma Megersa gave also a short and potent speech.

c) Los Angeles [Overall Score - A] [Abiy – A; Lemma – A] [Organizers A-; Al Mariam – B+ (for the pony-tail): Thousands of Ethiopians, slightly less in number than in DC but with not much less enthusiasm, received at the Washington Convention Center PM Abiy and members of his Delegation on Saturday 29 July 2018. The highlight I must point out was the pony-tail of the aging Prof Al Mariam, no less interesting than his patronizing speech. I heard the PM praising Al Mariam for his "*Chewanet*", it is obvious Abiy Ahmed has not read most of Al Mariams writings that are full of *Belgina* insults and ridicule of EPRDF officials and the people he labeled as "TPLF-Tigreans." Nevertheless, I am glad that the PM and his Delegation made the trip to Los Angeles.

d) St Paul Minnesota [Overall Score - B] [Abiy – A; Lemma – A+] [Secessionist Oromos - F] [Organizers – D-; Jawar – F]: On 30 July 2018, PM Abiy Ahmed and his Delegation visited St Paul, Minnesota. The crowd was about ten thousand and much less than DC or Los Angeles, but to some degree some members of the crowd succeeded in rubbing me the wrong way because of the way they flaunted the divisive "Oromia" liberation flags and slogans that overwhelmed the Center. Because they were manipulated into a corner, the rest of the Ethiopian Community allowed Jawar Mohammad complete Media monopoly through his OMN. He played out his little game to the full. The presence of a small contingent of Tygreans and the Tygrean songs in the cultural vignette and also as background did not help the poisonous atmosphere either.

The organizers made a monumental error by creating a politically divisive rally rather than a welcoming all-inclusive environment for their guests. It was very clear that the PM and the other Members of his Delegation were very uncomfortable listening the ranting of Jawar and the Chairman of the Organizers Committee. In a multi ethnic crowd the only official language should have been Amharic, after all it is the official language of the Motherland where over seventy percent of the population understand that language. PM Abiy tried to remind the

divisive crowd that unity includes them too. He specifically admonished the youth entertainers for not including items from the Amhara people and apologized for that spurn. The Afar women in the receiving line and at the song presentation were totally out of place. They have no real connection with the secessionist Oromo crowd nor do they have their own axe to grind against the Motherland. They were there just being exotic and beautiful.

I believe the PM and his Delegation made a mistake accepting the proposal of Jawar and his group to add Minnesota to the tour. Jawar and his group who wanted to stage their divisive political program using the presence of PM Ahmed did succeed immensely in that, but they exposed their narrow ethnicity and limited vision too.

III. Professor Ababa Fekade – a cut above

Ethiopian intellectuals at the Watergate Hotel meetings Washington DC were an embarrassment to see them in such disgusting prostration to the leader of a political organization that they demonized a few months ago. Professor Ababa Fekadu is the lone honorable intellectual who publicly pointed out the shameful participation of those Ethiopian professors and professionals who were few in number in their respective cliquish organizations such as Vision Ethiopia. Ababa is the exception. Although I have some reservations on some of her views on ethnicity, I have great admiration for her courage to stand for her principles against waves of populism and opportunism.

Ababa accused the many intellectuals without identifying them by name or by group names, such as Vision Ethiopia and others of “intellectual malpractice.” She also identified PM Abiy Ahmed as *azenagi* and *adenzash* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vVc57qO1jM]. Her remarks in the Radio program *Ethiopia Andenet*, was clear, very penetrating, and well-reasoned. She explained effectively why she was skeptical about the many pronouncements of PM Abiy. I do agree with some of her skepticism even though I do give PM Abiy full credit for bringing some relief of joy and hope to millions of Ethiopians in long decades of sorrow and discontent.

We have witnessed through the social media many Ethiopians testimony of anguish who had suffered real physical pain and mental torture in the hands of security and detention officials of EPRDF’s past governments. People of Ethiopia who were hopeful that overthrowing the butcher Mengistu and his blood-soaked Government would usher in a just and liberated Ethiopia in the hands of the new incoming leaders of the EPRDF were subjected to the continuation of the abuse and denial of their human rights. What a betrayal it was since 1991 to date.

IV. Conclusion of Sort

As I stated above the death of Engineer Semegnew Bekele is far more important and most significant challenge facing Ethiopia than the feel-good visit of Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopian Diaspora in the United States. At times, the visit seems absurd and pointless. A few weeks ago, I wrote in an article that there is no pressing need to visit Diaspora Ethiopians in the United States. I still think that my assessment then is true today, and it is unfortunate that the PM did not heed my suggestions. What I see now is the same life-reality setting in back breaking the backbones of immigrant Ethiopians in grinding poverty and hard work in the-good-old-USA; nevertheless, it has enhanced the citizenship credo of *Ethiopiawenet*.

A legitimate question that one could ask is whether the PM achieved what he was aiming at by coming to the United States that he could not have achieved by delaying his trip by few months. This is a rhetorical question of degrees rather than an inquiry for absolutist answers. Despite the efficient program/itinerary of the PM there were serious errors, for example, there was no visit to the

Congressional Leaders—a serious oversight in my view. Another serious deficit in the PM's visit was missed opportunities to meet business leaders specially leaders of international corporations. At the very least PM Ahmed should have visited at least one or two Universities and invited Presidents of Universities for discussions.

It would have been a source of great pride for both men and women of the Diaspora had the First Lady addressed the Diaspora. The beautiful First Lady is no pushover but member of the fighting forces of the EPRDF and an excellent speaker, for I have watched on video how effectively she addressed a group of employees of volunteer organizations and also contingents of well-wishers in Addis Ababa. I was also very much impressed with Ahmed Shidie, Minister of Government Communications, by his demeanor and how effectively he managed the release of information that they should have allowed him to address the Somali Ethiopians in the St Paul Conference. He is a polyglot too just like PM Abiy, and an address in the Somali language would have greatly recognized Ethiopian Somalis as the integral part of Ethiopia and promote the unity of Ethiopia.

No matter how I cut it, the visit of PM Abiy Ahmed and his Delegation was uplifting, life affirming, and exhausting too. I have written highly critical articles of PM Abiy, he had more than made-up with this visit and overcome my skepticism to a great extent. I conclude here by writing that we give PM Abiy Ahmed and President Lemma Megersa our trust and help them achieve their vision of a united and wealthy Ethiopia with happy and fulfilled Citizens. However, do not forget the fact that they are human beings with limitations. Do not expect miracles to happen overnight even though what they have done so far looks miraculous. Now that you are all back safely in our much-loved country bringing with you the Great Orthodox Ethiopian Church Fathers, I wish you all the best. Thank you Abiy Ahmed and Lemma Megersa for the beautiful vision of Ethiopia you painted in my imagination with your incredible speeches. Words Matter! I thank all the Members of the Delegation for visiting with Us. God Bless All. Long Live Ethiopia the Beautiful.

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[NB: Do not be concerned too much with what appear to be contradictions in my thinking and writing. I charge you all to work it out and make sense of it.]