

## OBAMA'S BAD WOMEN

Hama Tuma

Michelle Obama aside, Barack Obama has a penchant for very bad women. Wendy Sherman, the windbag of Foggy Bottom, and Gayle Smith, the new USAID chief who loves dictators, and the notorious Susan Rice are cases in point. Smith has been around more time to do more damage and to contribute to the putrefaction of the Clinton--Obama policy on Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular.

Gayle Smith first let her white face get burnt by the Sudanese sun in 1984 when she came over to fulfill her role in the destabilization of the pro soviet regime in Addis Abeba. She was a correspondent in Cairo and conveniently made her way to the Sudan and as a journalist and aid activist leeches herself on the then rebel fronts called the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and its then puppet the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, the same one that is now in power in Addis Abeba and is being praised by Susan Rice and Wendy Sherman. Gayle even went to the so called liberated areas, became the lover of one of the top TPLF leaders (Yemane Jamaica--an EPLF fighter seconded to supervise the TPLF), learned some Tigrigna, advised TPLF women to set up a union and wrote fan articles on the two fronts and other secessionist groups not forgetting to attack and belittle the pan Ethiopian organizations like the EPRP. She had fellow travelers in Dan Connell, James Firebrace, Paul Henze, Alex de Wall, Oxfam, World Vision, UNICEF the Norwegian Council of Churches and many other dubious groups and fellows with more suspicious connections and motives. As some observer had written, Gayle Smith was the connection between the CIA and the Tigrean front and behind the diversion of aid for the famine victims to the TPLF coffers to buy arms from China and favors from the Sudanese regime.

Bono calls Gayle a force of nature though he does not mean gale, catastrophe, hurricane, and total disaster-- all of which she was for Ethiopia's future. Bob Geldof, on his part, has refused to admit that he was either duped or persuaded to be part of the food aid swindle, and will likely refuse to admit the nefarious role of Gayle Smith. But, she was a disaster indeed. When the pro soviet regime fell she ended her "journalistic" cover and moved on to become the chief of staff of USAID and later the special

assistant to Clinton and head of the African affairs in the National Security Council. In both these positions, she gave aid and advice to the now dead dictator called Meles Zenawi, the boss of her lover Yemane.. According to one reporter, as an NSC serious member " *she rose early every morning to help prepare the National Security Estimate, the report given to the President first thing every morning at the start of the Presidential work day. Every morning, rain or shine, she was in the White House ready to brief President Clinton and answer any questions he may have about the various activities of the CIA et al in Africa*". Gayle Smith remained so smitten by the Ethiopian dictator that she backed him on his war with Eritrea, his election rigging and tyrannical rule. So much so that Obama sent her along with Susan Rice to the dictator's funeral to heap eulogy on the enemy of Ethiopians thereby sprinkling salt on the open wounds of our people. Worse still, Gayle Smith had a hand in bringing forward Susan Rice, the Madeline Albright disciple, to the attention of her boss Anthony Lake.

Wendy Sherman is, on the other hand, the fourth ranking official of the US State Department where she serves as undersecretary for political affairs. A feather weight by Smith's standards. this social worker was, during the Clinton Administration, a Counselor of the United States Department of State and Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State specially on North Korea Policy, Recently, she reared her head in Addis Abeba to stamp the repressive regime as democratic and the coming May general election as fair and just. Statement that must have shocked the regime itself as it knows like everybody that the coming election is as rigged as the earlier ones. Sherman appeared as a windbag with little or no knowledge of the Ethiopian reality. The Washington Post politely called her comments "irresponsible" but Ethiopians are not obliged to be polite towards her. A dog does bark for the master who feeds it. Sherman is a "Riceist" and if this word rhymes with another she may also be one. Her wanton and more than irresponsible words echo that of Susan Rice, the darling of African dictators who are pro American unlike Beshir and Mugabe. It will be a waste of time on my part to explain to Sherman why her words shame her to the core but she knows the situation no less than most. She knows of the repressive laws against NGOs and the Press, how the so called anti terror law is used to stifle dissent, how the regime is the predator of the free press, how the election board and the election laws serve the regime, how the regime holds more than forty thousand political prisoners, the torture in jails and ghost prisons, the sale of children and young women unto modern slavery, the massive corruption, the ethnic discrimination and so on and on. She knows the regime is ethno-centrist, if not fascistic, and outright authoritarian with a visible Stalinist nostalgia--totalitarian-- but as a good diplomat she lies and sleeps with the enemy of democracy (figuratively for her and literally for Gayle Smith).

On top of all this is Obama, the big time disappointment for Africa with Samantha Power at the UN (heaven forbid!) and the inept Kelly as the foreign minister (he popped into Somalia recently and declared to the world things are turning around for the better!). We await his never to come apology. Obama promised a lot to Africans but failed to respect any of his words. He cuddles and supports dictators and, under the cover of an anti terror war, has unleashed destruction in the Horn, to Libya in North Africa and Yemen across the Red Sea. The instability in the region brings to the fore the primary responsibility of the misguided (Rice, Smith, Sherman, Vicki Huddleston and co. ) American foreign policy with Obama playing the drone master. However, to be fair to the conceited Americans, I must reveal to them that those in power in Addis Abeba have had a long experience in duping visitors and making wide eyed fans out of them. They were trained by none other than the likes of Gayle Smith. The visits to the so called liberated areas were organized like the visit of the Potemkin villages, women farming the land, guerrillas being welcomed by ululating village women, prepared fighters acting world savvy and asking prepared political questions on the international situation and the visitors leave mesmerized, some comparing their experience to utopia being built amidst war and penury, Worthwhile to read the reports and articles by Smith and her likes during the eighties. The arrogant Geldof was "robbed" in broad daylight but I am inclined to believe that he was an accomplice to or in his own fate. and he is refusing to admit his bad actions because he can't accept he was outwitted by thieving guerrillas in plastic sandals.

Gayle Smith as chief of staff of USAID gave the TPLF \$30 million in food aid for Tigrai. She is expected to us the agency to give more help to the brutal regime. Nothing new is expected from Rice and Sherman. Nothing new from Obama too whose confused and war mongering policies will continue to wreak havoc all over the world. And if at all Hilary wins the Rice and Smith band may have it even better than now. After all, Hilary and her daughter danced in the street of Asmara, Eritrea , and together with her husband called the ruler there (along with Meles, Museveini and Kagame) "one of the new democratic leaders". Just think where this praise took all of them! At the end of the day, what is going on is crude and cruel real politics. Obama and his bad women (and men) serve, as they should, America's interest. They hobnob with and help tyrants because the tyrants are their own blood soaked SOB s. Donald Yamamoto was not yet ambassador to Ethiopia when opposition figures went to meet him at the State Department to complain

about the rigging, stealing of votes and killings during the 1997 general election. He replied to their complaints and said (not verbatim); we know more people than your number (193) have been killed. We have photos of snipers on rooftops indiscriminately shooting and killing protesters. We know but we cannot touch Meles. America needs him. End of speech. America's policy has been anti African from time immemorial, it has worked against nationalist African leaders. It was behind the murder of Lumumba and the installment of the dictator Mobutu, it helped foil the coup against Haile Sellasie, it overthrew Nkrumah, it fully backed Apartheid and categorized the ANC and Mandela as terrorist, and more. What is odd for Africans to expect a pro African stance from Washington, London or Paris.

America needs Rice, Gayle Smith and other surreal windbags like Wendy Sherman to defend and foreword its national interests that are still imperialist by all standards. Its allied are retrograde monarchies like that of Saudi Arabia or repressive regimes like the one in Ethiopia praised by Rice, Gayle and Sherman, Sleeping with dictators has for long been the pleasure of America whose rhetoric otherwise sounds hollow the core. Sadly also, America needed Obama himself, alas and we console ourselves by saying the darkness of night will not prevent the morning from coming.