



By Peter Tase

Ilir Meta's charming ambivalence towards NATO and Albanian Politics

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) turns 70 in April, 2019, on March 29th, the Republic of Albania as well commemorated its tenth anniversary as a full-fledged member of the transatlantic alliance; Tirana is among the 29 North American and European countries that are part of this political and defense cooperation. [1]

According to General John R. Allen, president of the Brookings Institution and a retired four-star general who commanded NATO's International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces in Afghanistan: "the NATO is extraordinarily important today; it is, I think, not just a bulwark for the security of the transatlantic relationship, but as we see challenges to democracy more broadly expressed in particular in the transatlantic relationship, I think NATO is a bulwark there, as well. It's not intended to be, but I think the common values, common interests, [are] things that we share in the context of our heritage. NATO as a bulwark, [is] not just for military security and the defense of the transatlantic relationship, it also creates stability in the political sense as well." [2]

In this context NATO has failed to identify threats from within, counter its inner menace, promptly reveal ties of Tirana's statesmen with Moscow and take serious measures to contain and monitor the leaking of confidential information reported to channels of Foreign Intelligence Service by President Ilir Meta and his confidants.

Shortly after swearing the oath of office in July 2017, President Ilir Meta and the country's de-facto first lady Monika Kryemadhi are the main instigators in seriously ruining the balance of power among Albania's three branches of government; and tarnishing Tirana's image in the world and the Balkan region knowing about their suspicious activities in signing underground exorbitant lobbying contracts in Washington D.C., with McKeon Group (while their countrymen are succumbed into extreme poverty) a six month contract that reached over a quarter million US Dollars; while the origin of these funds has indiscriminate ties with Oligarchs on the eastern valleys of Urals.

According to Besar Likmeta, an investigative journalist of BIRN - Albania, Mr. Meta paid McKeon Group over US\$ 15,000 per month, to secure a spot in President Donald Trump's oath of office ceremony in January 20th, 2017, six months before Meta's election as President of Albania. [3] McKeon Group is a Lobbying Company led by former Republican U.S. Representative Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, it is a private firm specialized in shaping specific regional and geopolitical conversations within the halls of Congress for the benefit of countries such as Albania; but in Meta's case, the latter as a swank and extravagant leader of Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI) and Albanian Parliament, paid an ostentatious fee to only secure a ticket for the presidential inauguration ceremony, something that Albanian Embassy in Washington or his excessive staff in the Albanian National Assembly could have arranged with the greatest of ease. [4] In February 2016, Ilir Meta's party began spending over US\$ 120,000 in lobbying contracts with Global Security and Innovative Strategies (GSIS) [5], all through consecutive months. Until today, in spite of Meta's undercover ties with eastern geopolitical actors, it is unknown the source and origin of these large sums of money, nor we know the contractual concept of this agreement; so far the tangible contributions of this agreement to Mr. Meta's political party (LSI), let alone generate a positive image for Albania and its economy, are recondite. However key exponents of LSI, have established ties with various institutions of Russian Federation, a partnership that enables the former to finance its violent protests in Tirana's boulevards. Moreover, LSI's violent domestic maneuvers and strategy embraced by its illiterate, untamed leadership are another testimony to the porous bureaucracy in Albania's opposition movement and illustrates a high level of corruption that has permeated on Albania's

top institutions and sectors of executive government, including Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs. [6]

These tawdry realities in Washington and communications with Moscow highlight Brussels (EU) reluctance to recognize *in cauda venenum*, while NATO has condoned the Meta-Kryemadhi affairs despite the fact that the country's first couple is the main architect of eroding democratic values and openly violating the Albanian Constitution. Ilir Meta, a junta type ruler serving as President, while his wife controls Albania's second largest opposition party (in charge of setting up violent protests against Government and Parliament Offices in Tirana), are strategically undermining the control mechanisms in order to maintain power and secure patronage systems and opportunities for self-enrichment. Simultaneously, while Tirana has earned an overall negative reputation abroad, Prime Minister Edi Rama is striving to reduce social inequality, curtail mismanagement of public funds, fight corruption, boost rural-agricultural tourism and promote public infrastructure.

President Meta's ties with Kremlin and Eastern Agents of Influence, as well as his illicit activities within the Balkans region, are increasingly becoming a threat to Albania's Western-oriented Foreign Policy, its Transatlantic Defense Posture and above all harming national economy and industry.

The leadership of North Atlantic Treaty Organization must immediately appoint a team to conduct an overall investigation on President Meta's underground ties to wealthy oligarchs, look into the origins of his excessive wealth and examine LSI's exuberant resources allocated to pay lobbying groups in Washington and Brussels, at a time when Albanian Embassies in London and elsewhere have no money to make national flags that have a properly shaped double headed Eagle. [7]

Resources and references

[1] <http://top-channel.tv/2019/03/29/nato-zbarkon-ne-tirane-shqiperia-10-vjet-ne-aleance/>

[2] <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/20190329-NATO-Final-Transcript.pdf>

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