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**Record of negotiations between Somali and Soviet
Officials in Moscow (excerpts)**

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Summary:

Record of negotiations between Somali and Soviet Officials in Moscow (excerpts) regarding the resolution of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict and possible negotiations between Somalia and Ethiopia concerning territorial disputes.

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Record of Negotiations between Somali and Soviet Officials in Moscow,
25-29 July 1977 (excerpts)

From the journal of L.F. Ilichev
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Record of a Conversation
with the Minister of Mineral and Water Resources of Somalia, Head of Delegation of
Experts
Hussein Abdulkadir Kasim
(first level)

The Somali Delegation of Experts arrived in Moscow on 24 July 1977. Meetings took
place at the residence of the Somali Delegation from 25-29 July 1977.

25 July

In a one-on-one conversation which took place on the initiative of H. A. Kasim, before
the beginning of the first meeting the Minister announced that the Somali delegation
had arrived in Moscow with a feeling of good will and with absolute faith in the efforts
of the Soviet Union to offer its good services toward the resolution of disputed issues
between Somalia and Ethiopia. The Somali delegation, in the words of Kasim,
experiences doubt, however, as to the candor and good intentions of the Ethiopian
side, taking into account that Somalia had repeatedly proposed to Ethiopia to resolve
the disputed issues within the framework of creating a federation of the two
governments, to which Ethiopia reacted by publishing the protocols of secret
negotiations between the two sides and by carrying out a campaign attacking
Somalia in the press.

As is well known, other African and non-African countries attempted to play the role
of mediator in the settlement of the disputed questions between the two countries,
but these efforts were not crowned with success.

The Somali delegation considers that the object of discussion at the forthcoming
meeting of experts, in addition to the substance of the disputed issues between the
two countries, should include neither the tension in relations between the two
countries, nor the questions of demarcation or of changing the borders, but rather the
colonial situation which currently characterize a part of the Somali territory and the
population living there, which is under the colonial government of Ethiopia. The
Somali delegation considers that no country should call itself a socialist country, or a
country which adheres to a socialist orientation, if this country continues the colonial
oppression of a people and a part of the territory of another country. This colonial
situation arose in the time of the existence of the Ethiopian Empire and up to Somali
independence. In the opinion of the Somali side, the changing of the name Abyssinia
to Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Empire to Socialist Ethiopia did not change in the
slightest degree the state of affairs. This is why the Somali delegation considers that
the central question for discussion at the forthcoming meetings of the delegations of
experts from the two countries is the question of granting self-determination and
independence to the oppressed Somali minority, which lives within the borders of
Ethiopia.

At the forthcoming negotiations, continued the Minister, there are two alternatives:

either [his aforementioned proposed topic, or] to limit the discussion to a range of secondary problems, which would be tantamount to simply beating about the bush. Somalia considers, that the military actions currently being conducted are the actions of Somali patriots in the colonial territory who are struggling for their right to self-determination and independence, therefore the first question on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of experts should be the question of decolonialization, and, only having resolved that question, will it be possible to move on to the discussion of other secondary questions, such as the lessening of tension in relations between the two countries.

H.A. Kasim noted that the currently existing situation is a result of the fact that Ethiopia, over the course of many years, violated the territorial integrity of Somalia, [and] oppressed and annihilated Somalis, living in the colonized territory.

In conclusion, H.A. Kasim underscored the readiness of the Somali delegation to assist the Soviet side in fulfilling its mission of offering its good services at the meeting of the delegations of experts from Somalia and Ethiopia.

For my part, I declared that the tension which has been created in the relations between two countries, with both of whom we are friendly, is the cause of great alarm and anxiety. I underscored the impossibility of resolving the disputed questions by means of the application of force, particularly given the contemporary global situation. I took note of the real danger that such tension might be used by enemies of Africa, enemies of progressive transformations in Somalia as well as in Ethiopia. I remarked that there are no questions in the interrelations of socialist countries or countries of socialist orientation, which could not be resolved without the application of force, by peaceful means. The Soviet side, offering its good services, sees its task at the forthcoming meeting of the delegations of experts in the following:

- 1) To create an atmosphere of good-will between the two countries;
- 2) to ensure an understanding of the fact that it is impossible to resolve disputed questions through force;
- 3) to undertake efforts to ensure that as a result of the meetings of experts there would be recommendations elaborated to the governments of both of these countries with the goal of creating a situation of friendship and good relations as a basis for resolving the disputed questions which exist between Somalia and Ethiopia.

I indicated that the Soviet side did not intend to impose any particular resolution of the disputed questions between the two countries.

After the conclusion of the one-on-one conversation a meeting of the Soviet representatives and the Somali delegation of experts took place.

I greeted the delegation of Somali experts and expressed satisfaction with the fact that the Somali and Ethiopian parties had decided to begin a dialogue toward the normalization of their relations in Moscow.

I announced that, having concurred with the request of President Siad that we offer our good services in organizing and leading the meetings between representatives of Somalia and Ethiopia in Moscow, the Soviet side was guided exclusively by its international obligations to offer assistance to countries with whom we are on friendly terms, by its interests in the development and strengthening of all-around cooperation with them.

I noted that we treat the parties without biases of any sort, in a friendly and candid manner.

I expressed the hope that the forthcoming Somali-Ethiopian meeting would lead to positive results. I said, that it would not be candid for us not to say that the current situation in the region had grown complicated and that decisive and immediate measures were necessary. We would hope that the two delegations would strive from the very beginning to create a business-like atmosphere, to show their good will, [to take a] constructive approach and not to take categorical positions, which have the nature of ultimatums, and would rule out even the slightest possibility of conducting negotiations.

We are convinced that the normalization of the situation in the Horn of Africa and the establishment of friendly relations with Ethiopia is in the interest of Somalia. It is clear that a peaceful situation, and friendly ties with Ethiopia would create more favorable conditions for the successful resolution of complicated problems pertaining to the national economy, which confront this country, in its attempts to raise the well-being of the Somali workers.

I said that we would like hear the full opinion of the Somali delegation concerning the range of questions, which the delegation considers necessary to submit to a joint discussion, and likewise concerning the procedure for the meeting, in particular, with regard to its general duration, and other procedural questions. From our side, we have no intention of imposing any temporal limit on the meeting and are prepared to take into account, insofar as it is possible, the wishes of the two parties in this regard.

I noted further that, as we know, the Somali side proposes to discuss the issue of the Ethiopian government's concession of the right to self-determination of national groups. We are unable to predict beforehand what might be the position of the Ethiopian government, but we can surmise, that such a formulation of the question will most likely be interpreted by the Ethiopian government as interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.

We know, as you do, that the Ethiopian leadership in its programmatic documents announced its intention to resolve the nationalities question on a democratic basis. It goes without saying that the realization of such a program requires the appropriate conditions.

To our mind, the examination of the issue of normalizing relations between the two countries at the meeting of experts, and precisely this, as we understand, is their first and foremost task, should not be made conditional upon the preliminary resolution of fundamentally disputed questions. This is a point of view which we have expressed more than once to the Somali leadership and it was not met with objections by their side.

The meeting of the delegation with the good services of our side would be genuinely successful if it was concluded by the elaboration by the experts of recommendations to their governments concerning the steps which would lead to the normalization of Somali-Ethiopian relations.

The Soviet side is prepared to cooperate and to offer all possible assistance to the experts of both sides in their elaboration of recommendations for their governments, but does not plan to insist on any particular position. We are prepared to assist actively in the search for a mutually acceptable resolution. If the desire should be expressed, the Somali and the Ethiopian delegations may meet without the participation of the Soviet representatives.

We would be prepared after the meeting with the Ethiopian delegation, if it should be deemed necessary, to engage in further discussion with the Somali experts with the objective of working out a unified approach, of identifying a range of questions, which would be appropriate to discuss, and likewise of identifying procedural questions.

The views which might be expressed in this connection by our delegation, may be reduced, in summary, to the following;

1) the acknowledgment that the continuation of tensions between the two countries is not consistent with the interest of the Ethiopian and Somali nations;

2) the renunciation by the two sides of the use of force in the resolution of disputed questions; the attempt to apply every effort to their settlement by peaceful means, by means of negotiations;

3) the obligation of the two sides to maintain peace and security on their borders, to abstain from every sort of hostile activity, from engaging in hostile propaganda against one another by means of the mass media and to foster, in every possible way, those efforts which will lead to the development of friendly relations;

4) the efforts of the two countries to take measures which are directed at developing economic, trade, and cultural relations, at developing connections between voluntary organizations in the two countries, the exchange of experience, etc., and, in particular, the readiness of the two sides to conduct regular mutual consultations at all levels.

It goes without saying that first and foremost it is necessary to cease military activities on both sides.

The principled efforts of the Soviet Union toward the development of all-around cooperation with the Somali Democratic Republic are well known. Our country has never been guided in its policy by opportunistic considerations. The Soviet Union will continue in the future to strengthen its friendship and revolutionary solidarity with the nation of Somalia, to offer assistance and support in full accordance with the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between our countries.

July 26

[...] [I] Remarked for my part, that the interlocutor repeated all of those factors, which had been expressed by him during the previous discussion. Meanwhile, the situation in the Horn of Africa continues to become more complicated and explosive. We think that this situation dictates the necessity of introducing certain amendments to the considerations of the two parties.

From the declaration of the Somali delegation it follows that the delegation possesses the authority to discuss only territorial problems. We were told that the efforts of the Somali leadership, the efforts of the leaders of certain African countries, and likewise the efforts of Comrade F. Castro in the settlement of the disputed problems of Somali and Ethiopia did not meet with success. From this [fact] should the conclusion be drawn that, insofar as the efforts of third countries have not been successful, the disputed questions must be resolved with the assistance of arms, by means of open military actions? Our point of view is that all disputed questions should be resolved by peaceful means, by means of negotiations. For the sake of this objective no efforts of any sort should be begrudged.

The Soviet side regarded with satisfaction the declaration of President Siad that Somalia would never, not under any circumstances, attempt to resolve disputed questions with the assistance of arms. This was discussed in the message to L.I. Brezhnev, and the same declaration was made by the Somali party-state delegation which visited the USSR in the previous year. In a word, we have been assured of this more than once and on various levels. We have treated this declaration with complete faith.

However, certain information we possess bears witness to the fact that open military actions have currently commenced. Regular military units in Somalia, using tanks and aviation, have crossed the Somali-Ethiopian border. I want to stress, that we are discussing concrete facts, not conjecture.

From our point of view, in order to resolve any sort of problem which has arisen between states, first and foremost it is necessary to have a favorable atmosphere. We, as the party which is offering its good services, consider that the central task should now comprise the cessation of military actions. This is the appeal we make to both the Somali and the Ethiopian sides.

It is our opinion that the issue currently stands as follows: either the Horn of Africa will become an arena where imperialist and reactionary intrigues are carried out, or by our common efforts we will succeed in turning the Horn of Africa into a region of friendly relations and peace.

We appeal to both delegations to take a seat at the negotiating table, to speak forth their own views and, correspondingly, to listen fully to each other's point of view, having devoted their full attention to the search for a path to the normalization of the relations between the two countries.

This is our point of view.

[...] Returning to the bilateral Somali-Ethiopian meeting, H.A. Kasim said, that if the question should be raised concerning the military actions of Somalia against Ethiopia, that the Somali delegation would have nothing further to discuss at the negotiating table. A war is going on between Ethiopia and the liberation movement of the Somali people who live in occupied territory. The struggle is being conducted precisely by this movement, and not by the Somali Democratic Republic.

What military actions should be ceased? After all we are discussing a struggle for liberation, and, as is well known, from the moment of the Great October socialist revolution the Soviet Union has invariably supported liberation movements in all corners of the globe. The very activities of the Soviet Union in the United Nations are a testimony to this fact.

I would like to repeat once more that we are prepared to sit down at the negotiating table, if the Ethiopian side will discuss the territorial dispute as a fundamental issue, but if the Ethiopian side will only put forward the issue of the alleged Somali military actions, then there will not be any progress either in the work of this meeting, or in our bilateral relations.

I do not know, H.A. Kasim said in conclusion, whether the Soviet Union will be able to do anything under these circumstances. Unfortunately, we have the dismal example of the mediation of F. Castro, when Mengistu Haile Mariam declared the inexpedience of raising the territorial question, but was prepared to discuss any other questions of secondary importance.

Trust in our candor, we will regret it if the good services of the USSR do not lead to a positive result.

July 29

[...] Taking into account the separate exchanges of opinion taking place with the main Somali and Ethiopian delegations, the Soviet representative, by way of offering his good services, will introduce for consideration in the course of the work an idea of the first steps, which would lead toward the normalization of relations between Somalia and Ethiopia:

1) The renunciation of the application of force in the resolution of disputed questions. The assumption of immediate measures in the cessation of military and other hostile activities.

2) The assumption by both parties of the obligation to maintain peace and security on the borders.

3) To abstain from conducting hostile propaganda against one another by means of the mass media, to encourage efforts which would lead to the development of friendly relations.

4) The acknowledgment by both parties of the fact that maintaining tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia is not consistent with the interests of their peoples and impedes the unification of their efforts in the struggle against the common enemy, imperialism.

5) The two parties express their agreement to establish and maintain contacts with each other at a variety of levels in the interests of reaching the above-mentioned goals.

[I] underscored the fact that we regard this as a working document which contains the recommendations of the Soviet side, which is fulfilling its mission to offer good services. It goes without saying that we are proceeding from the assumption that it will be brought to the attention of the Somali government.

H.A. Kasim declared that the Somali delegation had nothing to add to the considerations which the delegation had expressed earlier, and offered his assurance that the recommendations which were expressed by the Soviet side, would be brought to the attention of the Somali leadership.

[...] [I] thanked H.A. Kasim for his communication and said that I would like to make note again of certain elements, which were contained in the message of response from L.I. Brezhnev to Siad Barre's appeal to him in May of this year. "In agreeing to offer our good services," announced L.I. Brezhnev, "we approach this matter with seriousness and a sense of responsibility. We think that it should be possible to begin a dialogue on a broad basis with the goal of establishing good relations between Somalia and Ethiopia. We consider that the key which might open the road to cooperation in the search for a settlement to difficult disputed problems lies in neighborly relations in the Horn of Africa."

It is hardly necessary for me to comment on this text; it speaks for itself.

The Soviet Union offered its good services even before the exacerbation of relations between Somalia and Ethiopia. But even after this exacerbation we consider it necessary to continue our mission, in order to achieve the improvement of relations between the two countries, to create a favorable atmosphere for the successful discussion of all disputed issues.

Meanwhile, while our consultations are going on, the Soviet leaders have appealed twice with a personal message to President Siad. As recently as yesterday, L.I. Brezhnev sent President Siad a personal message, the substance of which, in brief, consisted of his desire that the Somali side should take the appropriate steps and should stop the escalation of tension.

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1620, ll. 3-31; translation by Sally Kux.]