

August 7, 1977

**Soviet Ambassador to Ethiopia A.P. Ratanov,
Memorandum of Conversation with Mengistu**

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Summary:

Soviet Ambassador to Ethiopia A.P. Ratanov, memorandum of conversation with Mengistu regarding Soviet support for Ethiopia and support from other nations for Somalia

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Record of Conversation
with the Head of the PMAC
MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM
7 August 1977

I visited Mengistu Haile Mariam (Legesse Asfaw, member of the Permanent Committee of the PMAC, also took part in the conversation).

1. In accordance with my instructions from the Center [Moscow], I informed Mengistu about the measures taken by the Soviet leadership in support of Ethiopia.

Mengistu requested that I convey his deep gratitude to the Soviet leadership and personally to L.I. Brezhnev for the information about these measures. We deeply trust the Soviet Union, he said, and are relying on its future support, since the situation in the border regions of Ethiopia is becoming more and more complicated. Somalia continues daily to bomb the cities of Dolo and Barre [sic]. There are Somali troops in the western Ogaden and we are now observing the movement of Somali units into the northern part of this region. Ethiopian troops have seized arms which appear to be NATO arms. According to certain, as yet unverified information, the French have begun use their aircraft to deliver French arms to Mogadishu. The Sudan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, under the cover of Eritrean separatist organizations, are transferring their detachments and arms into Eritrea. Sudan is supplying the separatists with American arms as well as arms they have recently received from the People's Republic of China.

Our struggle, Mengistu underscored, has the nature of a class struggle, and we are doing all we can to defend the revolution and to bring it to a victorious conclusion. At the same time, taking into account that the Ethiopian revolution is just a part of the larger revolutionary struggle, Mengistu continued, I feel a need to continue the consultations with Comrade L.I. Brezhnev which began in May of this year. I likewise appealed, he noted at the same time, with a letter to Comrades Fidel Castro and Erich Honecker in which I proposed that I meet with them in Berlin in the hope that together we might travel to Moscow to meet with Comrade L.I. Brezhnev in order to discuss in greater detail the situation in the interior and exterior of Ethiopia.

Mengistu did not answer the question of the Soviet Ambassador as to whether the current situation would allow him to leave the country. He confined himself to the remark that the old machinery of State required replacement[;] however, the PMAC was currently not yet in a position to do this due to the lack of revolutionary cadres, etc....

In the course of further conversation Mengistu asked [us] to examine the possibility of offering assistance likewise in fortifying the region of the Red Sea coast (supplying coastal batteries).

Mengistu likewise spoke out in favor of sending a Soviet military delegation to

Ethiopia in the immediate future in order to strengthen contacts between the armed forces of the two countries in accordance with the previously approved plan of exchanges in the area of the military. In his opinion, an Ethiopian military delegation might visit the Soviet Union with the goal of familiarizing themselves later, when the military situation had been stabilized.

2. [I] carried out my instructions regarding the question of the Soviet-Ethiopian negotiations on opening a direct sea route between the ports of the Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

Mengistu spoke in favor of the opening of such a route and of concluding an agreement on this issue as well as on the issue of an intergovernmental agreement on shipping.

3. [I] carried out my instructions regarding the question of the Republic of South Africa's impending nuclear arms testing. Mengistu welcomed the Soviet Government initiative on this issue (TASS announcement). At the same time he remarked that at the last OAU [meeting], Ethiopia had proposed to include on the agenda for the Assembly the issue of the threat of the creation of a nuclear arsenal in the Republic of South Africa with the assistance of Western powers; however, the bloc of the so-called Francophone countries rejected the Ethiopian proposal. At the current time, said Mengistu, it is imperative that the socialist and progressive African countries develop a campaign to prevent the fortification of the military power of the Republic of South Africa which threatens all of Africa.

In conclusion, Mengistu requested once again that we convey his gratitude to the Soviet leadership and to Comrade L.I. Brezhnev.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
TO SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA
/s/ A.RATANOV/

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1636, ll. 102-104.]