

July 13, 1977
**Conversation with Provisional Military
Administrative Council (PMAC) Chairman Mengistu
Haile Mariam**

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Summary:

Demonstrates Soviet willingness to provide good offices to Somalia and Ethiopia in normalizing their relationships in July 1977. Even as late as July, Moscow believed the conflict between the two states could be solved through peaceful means.

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[July 13, 1977]

[Moscow]

We contacted PMAC's Chairman, Mengistu Haile Mariam, in respect to [our] recent talks in Moscow with the first vice-president [of Somalia] Samantar about an Ethiopian-Somali meeting for the normalization of relations between the two countries. At the same time, we informed him about the Somali leadership's views on the range of issues that could be discussed at this meeting.

In response to our information, Mengistu expressed his readiness to meet President Siad in any time and in any place. PMAC's Chairman believes that the meeting should be aimed at discussing the problems for the uniting of both countries' efforts in the fight against the forces of imperialism and reaction, in the interests of the further development of the revolutionary process in the Horn of Africa. He noted that the outstanding issues between the two countries would be discussed at the negotiating table after the improvement of the situation in this region, amid the conditions of peace and cooperation between the peoples of Ethiopia and Somalia.

Mengistu once again confirmed that Soviet Union's good offices for the organization of Somali-Ethiopian meeting would be useful.

Thus, from Mengistu's statements, which represents the Ethiopian leadership's reaction to what had been said in Moscow to Samantar, transpires the following conclusion: importantly, both sides can rely on - first, the determination to avoid a military conflict against each other, and, secondly, the desire to settle mutual relations by means of dialogue.

By maintaining close, friendly and frank contacts with the Somali and Ethiopian leaderships, we are, of course, aware that there are serious difficulties in the relations between the two countries, but we see something else as well. There are higher interests which impel the leaderships of Somalia and Ethiopia to continue the efforts toward overcoming their differences, and there is a thread - the idea of organizing the meeting - which if grasped would help unravel the contradictions, inherited by the peoples of both countries largely as a legacy of the colonial past.

The Soviet Union, as we said earlier, is ready to provide good services for the organization of such meeting, of course, with the respective wishes of both parties.

Moscow considers it useful to inform the Somali leadership in confidence about the issue, in which it is obviously interested, namely [our] recent talks with French Foreign Minister Louis de Guiringaud on Djibouti.

France, according to Louis de Guiringaud, favors Djibouti's independence, which will be declared on June 27 this year. We were also told that the French side is not going to keep a military base in Djibouti. However, France would respond positively should the future government of Djibouti requested administrative and economic assistance or such for the formation of its defense forces.

The Soviet side stressed that it is in favor of Djibouti's full independence, and is ready to establish normal relations with it and support its request, if it chooses to make one, for its admission to the United Nations and other international organizations.