

June 29, 1977

**Memorandum of conversation between Soviet
Ambassador to Ethiopia A.P. Ratanov and Mengistu**

Citation:

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<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/111848>

Summary:

Memorandum of conversation between Soviet Ambassador to Ethiopia A.P. Ratanov and Mengistu discussing the negative repercussions of possible conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia and the request for Soviet assistance from the Ethiopians to help with the withdrawal of Somali forces from Ethiopian territory

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Russian

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RECORD OF THE CONVERSATION
with the President of the PMAC,
MENGISTU HAILE MARIAM
29 June 1977

Today I visited Mengistu Haile Mariam and, as authorized by the Center [Moscow], outlined the Soviet position on Ethiopian-Somali relations, highlighting the threat that military conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia would pose to the revolutionary achievements in both countries.

Mengistu then thanked the Soviet leadership for its efforts in pursuit of the normalization of Ethiopia-Somali relations and stated the following:

The PMAC's position on Ethiopian-Somali relations remains unchanged - it supported and continues to support the improvement of relations with Somalia through negotiations and the restoration of cooperation with this country in the struggle against a common enemy - imperialism. In light of this, the PMAC assumes that, unlike Sudan, which completely went over to the side of imperialism, Somalia remains a country which claims to adhere to scientific socialism and has friendly relations with socialist states, a situation which would create favorable conditions for the restoration of friendly relations and cooperation between Somalia and Ethiopia, and also influences the study of Marxism-Leninism and the establishment of close cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist states.

In response to the appeal from the Soviet government, the PMAC would like to emphasize once more that Ethiopia does not have any aggressive intentions with respect to Somalia. The PMAC already informed the Soviet government that it has accepted the proposal by Siad Barre to organize a Somali-Ethiopian meeting on an expert level. Clearly, Ethiopia will not go to this meeting as a supplicant, but as an equal partner.

Ethiopia is prepared to contribute to the efforts of the Soviet Union to prevent Somalia from shifting to the right, as can be observed today. As far as Ethiopia is concerned, Somalia is already engaged in subversive activities against it in the guise of a Front for the Liberation of Western Somalia, the headquarters of which is located in Mogadishu. Armed units of this front have taken some villages in eastern Ethiopia. These units are even armed with Soviet-made anti-aircraft missiles. Naturally, Ethiopian forces must combat the units of this force.

In conclusion, Mengistu made a request to the Soviet government to lend its support to efforts to achieve a withdrawal of Somali forces from Ethiopian territory. Responding to a question from the Soviet ambassador, Mengistu said that relations between Ethiopia and the Republic of Djibouti were not bad, but that the leadership of this Republic, fearing annexation by Ethiopia or Somalia, agreed to a French military presence. Under these conditions, said Mengistu, if it were possible to restore cooperation between Ethiopia and Somalia, then these countries could affirm that they guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Djibouti, which would facilitate the withdrawal of French forces from Djibouti and the

development of this state along a progressive path.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA

/s/ A RATANOV

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1636, ll. 74-75; translated by Elizabeth Wishnick.]