

June 1977

**Report from CPSU CC to SED CC, Information about
the Visit to the Soviet Union of Somalia Vice
President Samanta**

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Summary:

Report from CPSU CC to SED CC, Information about the Visit to the Soviet Union of Somalian Vice President Samanta and discussions concerning the Somali-Ethiopian tensions and Soviet-Somali relations. Late May-early June 1977

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Report from CPSU CC to SED CC, Information about the Visit to the Soviet Union of Somalia Vice President Samanta, late May-early June 1977

Strictly Confidential
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I N F O R M A T I O N

on the visit of the First Vice-President of Somalia Mohammad Ali Samantar to the Soviet Union in the end of May-early June

At first Samantar was in Moscow unofficially, then at joint agreement it was decided to publicize the fact of his presence in the Soviet Union.

Samantar held conversations with the CC CPSU Politburo member, Minister of Foreign Affairs A.A. Gromyko and the alternate member of the CC CPSU Politburo, CC CPSU Secretary B.N. Ponomarev. Upon conclusion of these talks Samantar was received by General Secretary of the CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev. They discussed on a principled level the main directions of the Soviet-Somali relations and reaffirmed a political line of the USSR and the SDR, aimed at the development of cooperation between them in various fields.

In the course of conversations in Moscow, aside from the issues of the Soviet-Somalian relations, a major focus was on the issues connected to the situation in the area of the African Horn, on which [issues] our side laid out the position that is well known also to the Ethiopian leadership. Soviet-Ethiopian relations, for understandable reasons, took a special place in the conversations.

Samantar concentrated his attention on the disagreements between Somalia and Ethiopia on the territorial question. In justifying the positions of the SDR he mentioned the well-known Somalian arguments. Samantar did not dispute the revolutionary character of the regime of Ethiopia, as the Somalis have done before. Yet he hinted that not everything is normal in the domestic situation in Ethiopia, that the rights of the persons of Somalian extraction who live in Ogaden are still allegedly impinged upon. Samantar said that the leadership of Ethiopia, instead of turning to persuasion as the main tool of bringing the population [of Ogaden] over to its side, all too often resorts to arms.

Our side repeatedly underscored the idea that the main thing now is to avoid military confrontation between Somalia and Ethiopia. We drew [his] attention to the perversity of a situation when two states - Somalia and Ethiopia - who set themselves on the path of revolutionary development are at loggerheads. Of course, we know about the differences of opinion between Somalia and Ethiopia, first of all on the territorial issue. But if a war breaks out between them, only imperialist forces would gain from this. Such a war not only would lead to grave consequences, it would also turn against Somalia and would allow reactionary forces to put a noose around its neck.

L.I. Brezhnev stressed in this regard that one should not allow a military confrontation to flare up between the two progressive states of Africa, and that all issues and disputes between them should be resolved in a peaceful way, at the negotiation table.

As to the domestic situation in Ethiopia, we declared it was not our business to discuss such issues. The Ethiopians themselves should resolve them.

In our opinion, there were two important points that surfaced in the course of the

discussions.

First. If earlier we had the impression that the Somali leadership vacillated with regard to a meeting with the leadership of Ethiopia and to a mission of good-will on the part of the Soviet Union in the organization of such a meeting, now Samantar declared that the Somalis are ready for this.

In response to our direct question when and on which level the Somalian side would expect to hold such a meeting, he said that any time would be good for them, but did not mention any dates. In Samantar's opinion, at first there could be a ministerial meeting, and a final stage could be held as a summit. At the same time, Samantar let us understand that before the organization of such a meeting we should define a range of issues for discussion, by emphasizing that for the Somalis in the focus is still the territorial issue. Concerning the participation of Soviet representatives in a meeting, Samantar did not define their level, did not say that it [the level] should be high.

Second. Of great importance is Samantar's declaration that the Somali leadership would not on its own initiative unleash an armed conflict with Ethiopia. He said it twice during his meetings with A.A. Gromyko and B.N. Ponomarev. He made a similar pronouncement in his conversation with L.I. Brezhnev.

True, Samantar spoke about a scenario of provocation of such a conflict on the part of external imperialist forces or their helpers. To this we reacted in the following way: if such forces were around, then both sides, Somalia and Ethiopia, should not respond to such a provocation, but should display state wisdom and vigilance.

On the whole, the visit of Samantar to Moscow was, in our opinion, useful. It shows that the leadership of Somalia does not drop the idea to begin, with assistance of the Soviet Union, a dialogue with the leaders of Ethiopia in order to normalize relations between the two countries.

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