

May 9, 1977

**Memorandum of Conversation Between Soviet
Acting Charge d'Affaires in Ethiopia S. Sinitsyn and
Political Counselor of the US Embassy in Ethiopia,
Herbert Malin**

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Summary:

Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Acting Charge d'affaires in Ethiopia S. Sinitsyn and Political Counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, Herbert Malin regarding US policies towards Ethiopia and worries by the US about Soviet-Ethiopian rapprochement

Original Language:

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RECORD OF THE CONVERSATION
with the Political Counselor of the USA
Embassy in Ethiopia, Herbert Malin
9 May 1977

Today at the reception at the Pakistani Embassy, Malin (acting Charge d'Affaires in connection with the recall of the latter to a meeting in Abidjan of USA ambassadors) characterized the state of Ethiopian-American relations in the following manner:

The decision of the PMAC about the closing in late April of a number of American organizations in Ethiopia (a group of military attaches, the strategic radio center in Asmara, a biological laboratory of the USA Navy, and an information center in Addis Abba), and also the abrogation beginning on 1 May of this year of the 1953 agreement "On the preservation of mutual security" (the Embassy received a verbal communication from the Foreign Ministry of Ethiopia about this) came at an unexpected time for the USA and raised the question of the formulation of a new USA policy towards Ethiopia in light of these conditions. This policy, Malin stated, was not yet formulated. Although the Ethiopian authorities exhibited the necessary correctness towards personnel assigned by American organizations, and with the exception of press campaigns, no hostile actions whatsoever against American citizens were observed here, nonetheless the Embassy of the USA is aware that the USA would find it difficult to institute stable business-like relations with the current Ethiopian regime. The closing of the USA economic assistance mission here [USAID] cannot be excluded. Obviously, relations in the military sphere will be broken off, although some Ethiopian military personnel continue to be trained in the USA (pilots, etc.). Under the present conditions, Washington probably will not hurry to name a new ambassador to Addis-Ababa.

According to Malin, however, all this does not mean that the USA intends to "get out of Ethiopia," considering the significance of this country for the African continent and the strategically important Red Sea region. The USA, as before, is opposed to splitting off Eritrea from Ethiopia and in favor of the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, and has made the Ethiopian government aware of this repeatedly. At the same time the USA is concerned about the possibility of the development of a crisis situation between Ethiopia and neighboring countries and about the obvious lack of trust by the Ethiopian government in American policy in this region.

Malin considered the visit [to Moscow] by Mengistu to be a "Soviet success" and a reflection of the transition by the current Ethiopian regime to an orientation primarily towards the Soviet Union, above all in the military sphere and with the specific aim of obtaining modern weaponry. In his view, however, the Ethiopian-Soviet rapprochement could complicate relations between the USSR and Somalia and some other Arab states, and, at the same time, enhance instability in the region.

For my part, I told Malin that our policy towards Ethiopia is principled, not directed against any third countries, and responds to the interests of strengthening peace and security in the region.

NOTES: In private conversations with us, American representatives, relying on "various sources in Washington," do not hide the fact that they are irritated by the "Ethiopia's recent anti-American actions," and this country's lack of trust in the USA. At the same time, comments by Westerners reveal that in the back of their minds they are wondering whether the Soviet Union "could assume the entire burden of assistance to Ethiopia."

It is obvious that, pursuing a policy to the detriment of the Ethiopian revolution, the USA and other Western countries will still try to maintain certain spheres of influence in this country. Thus, during the sessions of the IBRD's [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development's] "International Development Association" a no-interest credit of \$40 million was extended to Ethiopia for the purpose of road building and irrigation.

Acting Charge D'Affairs
of the USSR in Ethiopia

/s/ S. Sinitsyn

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1638, ll. 142-144; translated by Elizabeth Wishnick.]