

August 26, 1977

**Record of Soviet-Somali Talks, Moscow (excerpts),
with Somali aide-memoire, 10 August 1977**

Citation:

"Record of Soviet-Somali Talks, Moscow (excerpts), with Somali aide-memoire, 10 August 1977", August 26, 1977, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1620, II, 32-59; translated by Sally Kux.

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Summary:

Record of Soviet-Somali Talks, Moscow (excerpts), with Somali aide-memoire, 10 August 1977 regarding Soviet evaluations of the situation in Somalia and the Somali-Ethiopian conflict

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

From the journal of
L.F. Ilichev

Secret. Copy no. 8
26 August 1977

No. 2289/GS

Record of a Conversation
with the Minister of Mineral and Water Resources of Somalia,
Head of Delegation of Experts
Hussein Abdulkadir Kasim
(second level)

The head of the [Somali] delegation returned to Moscow from Mogadishu on 7 August 1977. Meetings took place at the residence of the Somali Delegation from 8-12 August 1977. On 13 August the head of the delegation returned to Mogadishu.

12 August

[H.A. Kasim stated:] [...]As regards the position of the Soviet delegation, it has become clearly defined for us in the course of the conversations which have taken place. We have noted your reaction to the Somali point of view concerning the Soviet working document.

We would like, in the spirit of comradeship, H.A. Kasim added, to express our deep thanks to the Soviet side for the enormous efforts which it has made in the search for a common platform at the Somali-Ethiopian meeting. Our delegation fully shares the view that the Soviet mission of good services is continuing. However, given the current situation the Somali delegation considers it imperative to return to Mogadishu to report on the situation, which has taken shape during the negotiations to the CC SRSP and to the government of Somalia.

[I] underscored that the Soviet Union intends to continue its good services mission. I thanked my interlocutor for his high estimation of the efforts of the USSR in the search for a mutually acceptable resolution, directed at the normalization of Somali-Ethiopian relations.

At the same time, I ascertained, as a result of the separate meetings and conversations which had taken place with the Somali and the Ethiopian delegations, that both parties still maintained uncompromising and virtually mutually exclusive positions.

Nonetheless, the Soviet delegation considers, as before, that in the development of events nothing has happened which would make unrealizable the execution of the Soviet working document. This document remains valid and in fact acquires even more significance, insofar as the escalation of military actions continues. It goes without saying that the Soviet side is aware of the difficulties which have arisen and understands the approach of each of the delegations in their consideration of the current issues. But it would obviously be hasty to come to conclusions of any sort which would "slam the door." On the contrary, the door is open to the search for a rational solution to the questions which stand between the two countries, with both of whom the Soviet Union has friendly relations.

I expressed my gratitude to my interlocutor and to the members of the Somali delegation for their cooperation with the Soviet side. The discussions which took place were characterized by candor, as befits discussions between friends. I also expressed the hope that, after their consultations with their leadership, the Somali delegation would once again return to Moscow in order to continue this exchange of opinions.

In conclusion, I inquired as to when the Somali delegation intended to return to Mogadishu.

H. A. Kasim responded, that the delegation would depart on the Aeroflot flight on Sunday, August 13.

Having expressed his thanks for the hospitality which was accorded to the Somali representatives in Moscow, H. A. Kasim requested that we continue our discussion privately.

In a tete-a-tete conversation, H. A. Kasim said the following.

First: The Somali delegation had received an alarming communication about certain schemes concerning Ethiopia. As is well known, Somalia values the fact that Ethiopia maintains friendly relations with the Soviet Union and that Ethiopia has proclaimed the principles of socialist orientation. In spite of the fact that Somali disagrees with Ethiopia's evaluation of these principles and that, in the Somali view, Ethiopia has not yet found the path of genuine anti-imperialism, nonetheless, one may hope that the steps which Ethiopia has taken at the present time will lead to constructive results.

Although the available information presents a picture which is far from complete, it is considered in Mogadishu that Ethiopia could "slip through our fingers" and go over to the other camp. It would be shameful for history if, at the very moment when efforts are being undertaken to organize negotiations between Somali and Ethiopia concerning significant issues, Ethiopia should return to the camp of its traditional allies in the West.

[My] Interlocutor said that as the Soviet side knows, Somalia hopes to create a strong government in East Africa, which would unite Ethiopia and Somalis on a socialist basis. This hope is expressed not with the intention of tossing about catchwords, but on the strength of the fact that these two countries are close in terms of ethnicity, geography, and, Somalia hopes as before, ideologically. If the creation of such a united government should be successful, it would represent a force and a buttress which is imperative for the socialist development of East Africa.

This is why in Somalia we are concerned by such communications and consider it imperative to bring them to the attention of the Soviet side.

Second: Ethiopia has come forward with rather resolute declarations in the press and on the radio to the effect that Ethiopia intends to teach Somalia a lesson which Somalia will never forget, and also to the effect that Ethiopia intends to lead an open war against Somalia, having received in the meantime, assistance from socialist countries, including, among others, the Soviet Union. The Somali delegation would like to ask the Soviet representatives, in their capacity as friends, if there is a measure of truth in this. The Somali side considers that a force is at work in Ethiopia, if not in government circles, then in other sorts of circles in Addis Ababa, which is creating a war hysteria. That is why the delegation considers it imperative to inform the Soviet side about this.

[I] expressed thanks for the information. I noted that the initial communication of the Somali delegation was of an excessively general nature. The schemes of imperialist

and reactionary Arab circles and their intentions are generally well known. Imperialism and reactionism intend to strike a blow not only at Ethiopia, but also at Somalia. They are not happy with the socialist course which has been proclaimed in both of these countries. Naturally, it is imperative to be vigilant.

The situation, which has developed in the relations between Somalia and Ethiopia, in the view of the Soviet side, is favorable to the realization of the goals of imperialism and reactionism. The path down which Somalia has started with the aim of creating, in your words, a "socialist monolith" in East Africa, is likely to undermine the goals you have placed before yourself. We are aware of the fact that in Ethiopia there are reactionary forces, that there is an internal counter-revolution, that there is a struggle going on in Ethiopia.

However, according to our information, the core leadership of Ethiopia is taking a progressive course. Here, unfortunately, we disagree with you in our evaluation.

As is well known, in a discussion with the Soviet ambassador, Siad Barre declared that the Somali government did not oppose the granting of assistance to Ethiopia by the Soviet Union within the framework of the agreement which exists between the two countries. We offer assistance to Ethiopia, just as we offered assistance to Somalia, but, as you are aware, this assistance is intended to serve the aim of defense, not aggression.

[I] said that I had not happened to see in the press declarations of the Ethiopian leadership to the effect that they intend to "teach Somalia a lesson." It is possible, that this matter is the work of the mass media. Unfortunately, the mass media in both countries has strayed too far in their mutual accusations. Therefore the Soviet Union has appealed not to give free rein to emotions, but rather to act with reason, proceeding not from national interests, but rather from international interests, from the interests of strengthening the position of progressive forces. A dangerous situation has now been created and if it is not gotten under control it may develop into a serious conflict, the irreversibility of which would be fraught with serious consequences.

Therefore the Soviet leaders, as friends, advise your leaders to weigh all of the circumstances and to approach this matter from a broad public and international position. The Soviet Union hopes to avoid a conflict in the relations of two countries, with both of whom it has friendly relations. The most important task now is to stop the escalation of tension, to put an end to the bloodshed. It appears to us that there is no other basis for a settlement now than that one which was proposed by the Soviet side in the working document, which the Ethiopian side has accepted and which, unfortunately, the Somali side has refused to accept.

Up to this point the course of negotiations, as it appears to us, does not satisfy your two delegations, but the Soviet side is also not satisfied, although the Soviet side is taking all possible steps. Nonetheless, we consider it imperative to continue our efforts toward reaching a turning-point in the events which would be satisfactory to the interests of the forces of progress and socialism.

H.A. Kasim noted that Siad Barre, in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador, had indeed said that Somalia did not object to assistance, including military assistance, offered by the Soviet Union to Ethiopia. However, he also spoke of the necessity of maintaining proportions. My interlocutor declared that he would like to express his candid hope that the Soviet Union would approach with understanding the issue that, until the time has arrived when the question of the part of Somali territory has been resolved, the Somali revolution will be in danger. Moreover, this danger does not come from within, but rather from the very part of the Somali territory which is now under Ethiopian rule. A similar danger is caused by the enormous efforts to achieve

national liberation made by Somalis, who are living on territory which does not form a part of Somalia. In order for Somalia to contribute to the building of socialism all over the world, all of the Somali nation must stand firmly on its legs.

At the meeting of Siad Barre with the former president of the PMAC of Ethiopia Tefere Bante, it was proposed that the latter should become the leader of a federation of Somalia and Ethiopia in order that this might resolve the national question. However, Ethiopia responded negatively to this proposition and, as a result, the situation which has been created in Western Somalia is already getting out of control. H.A. Kasim expressed the hope that the Soviet side fully understands the meaning of these words.

[I] declared that I could only repeat what I had already said and that I hoped that its meaning was correctly understood by the Somali side. I added, that it is necessary to realize all of the responsibility which will lie on Somalia, if there is no cessation of military actions.

The following people were present at the discussions: on the Soviet side was the head of the DPO of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, O. N. Khlestov; the head of the Third African Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, V. A. Ustinov; on the Somali side was member of the CC SRSP, Director of the Somali Development Bank, Jama Mohammud; member of the CC SRSP, Head of the Department of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry of the CC SRSP Ahmed Mohammed Duale, the Ambassador of the Somali Democratic Republic to the USSR, Ali Ismail Warsma, the Military Attache of the Somali Democratic Republic to the USSR Salah Hadji.

The discussions were translated by the Third Secretary of the Translation Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, S. V. Berezhkov, and transcribed by the Third Secretary of the Third African Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, R. A. Ibragimov.

Deputy Minister
USSR Foreign Affairs
(signed and typed) L. Ilichev

[attachment]

Delivered by the Somali
delegation to the Soviet
delegation at the meeting of
10 August 1977*
Translated from English [into Russian]

Taking into account the fact that the Somali government has appealed to the government of the USSR to offer its good services toward the resolution of the territorial dispute between Somali and Ethiopia with the objective of reaching a fair, peaceful, and stable resolution of this territorial dispute;

Likewise taking into account the concurrence of the USSR in carrying out its international socialist obligations to undertake a similar mission of good services after receiving the full concurrence of the governments of Somalia and Ethiopia;

Taking into consideration that the government of the Somali Democratic Republic has empowered this high level delegation to represent itself in discussions and

negotiations on the aforementioned question;

Taking into consideration likewise, the exchange of opinions between the Soviet and the Somali sides in the course of the last week of July and 8 August 1977;

Responding to the appeal of the Soviet representative, made to the Somali delegation on 8 August 1977 to present a working document which might serve as the basis for discussions;

Recognizing the fact that the colonialization by Ethiopia of a significant portion of Somali territory and its population represents the sole reason for the tension which has been created at the current moment in the Horn of Africa and that such tension without any doubt is not consistent with the interests of the people of the given region, but rather only serves the interests of their common enemy, international imperialism and neocolonialism;

Being firmly convinced that the primary cause of the lengthy dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia is the continuing colonialization and military occupation by Ethiopia of a significant portion of Somali territory and its population and that the decolonialization of this territory takes absolute priority over all other questions;

Taking into consideration the fact that a discussion of the consequences of the colonial occupation, which is being carried out at the present time by Ethiopia, without a discussion of the central question of decolonialization makes it impossible and futile to conduct constructive negotiations;

Proceeding from the Leninist principle of the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination, human dignity, liberty and national sovereignty, a principle which is clearly fixed in the United Nations Charter and which was subsequently reflected in Resolution 1514 of the UN General Assembly, and likewise from the fact that any policy of Ethiopia, which is directed at the perpetuation of colonial rule over the aforementioned Somali territory and its population, is in clear contradiction to this noble principle;

The Somali delegation proposes the following in the capacity of a basis for discussion:

"The decolonialization of the Somali territory and its population, which finds itself under Ethiopian rule."

* When the head of the Somali delegation delivered the document, he called it a working message, laying out the views of the delegation regarding the principal question.--S.B.

Translated by S. Bereztkov

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1620, ll, 32-59; translated by Sally Kux.]