

September 1979

Report on A. N. Kosygin's Official Visit to Ethiopia

Citation:

"Report on A. N. Kosygin's Official Visit to Ethiopia", September 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated for CWIHP by Daniel Rozas.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121061>

Summary:

Meeting and negotiations between A. N. Kosygin and Haile Mariam Mengistu. The report discusses Ethiopian use of force to solve internal conflict, concern over neighboring countries, agricultural initiatives, and Mengistu's plan to create a new political party in Ethiopia. The meeting concludes with an agreement that the Soviet Union will provide assistance to Ethiopia in exploration of oil, education, and machinery.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Confidential

REPORT

on cde. A. N. Kosygin's official visit
to Ethiopia on 10-16 September of this year

The chief political results of the visit are reflected in the joint Soviet-Ethiopian communiqué, published on 18 September of this year [1979].

In addition, we would like to report on the following.

During the negotiations and discussions with A. N. Kosygin, [Haile Mariam] Mengistu, touching upon the situation in his country, noted that the internal political situation in Ethiopia at the present time has generally stabilized, and right now the national-democratic revolution is confidently going forward. In the opinion of the Ethiopian leadership, a possibility has been created for concurrently resolving the issues presented by the protection of the revolution and the social-economic development of the country. At the same time, the Ethiopian leaders realize that the question of insuring Ethiopian security has not been taken off the agenda, and the struggle ahead is still difficult.

Mengistu pointed to the separatist movement in Eritrea, which is receiving support from foreign reactionary forces, as one of the pointed problems. The fight with separatism in Eritrea is regarded by the Ethiopian leadership as a class war. The counter-revolutionary forces, relying on nationalist elements, are active in other areas of the country as well, including the central regions. There continues to be a tense situation in Ogaden. We gather the impression that the Ethiopian leaders, despite the fact that the national question in Ethiopia continues to be pointed in nature, are not putting forward any concrete programs for a political resolution, relying mostly on the use of force.

The Ethiopian leadership is concerned by the coordinated anti-Ethiopian line being carried out by a number of neighboring countries, particularly Somalia and Sudan. The leaders of the VVAS [Supreme Military Administrative Council] stated that they are trying not to complicate relations with neighbor countries and expressed support for the establishment of peace and good neighborliness in the Horn of Africa. On our part, we urged the Ethiopian leadership to undertake specific constructive steps toward normalizing relations with neighbor countries through negotiations.

Mengistu informed us of plans to create an avant-garde party in Ethiopia. He stated that the commission for the establishment of the party will begin its work in October of this year. The party, emphasized Mengistu, will be built on the ideological foundation of scientific socialism. The party is contemplated as the ruling party and the only one in the country. It will unite politically mature workers, poor and middle peasants, soldiers, and representatives of the intelligentsia who have proved their dedication to the revolution.

In our opinion, the formation of the commission for the establishment of the party is an important step toward a practical resolution of one of the key questions in Ethiopia's successful development. Stemming from this, the CC CPSU intends to give the commission practical assistance in the area of party building.

In addition to establishing the party and strengthening the defense capabilities of the country, the Ethiopian leadership regards the resolution of the most pressing national economic questions as one of its chief current tasks. It attaches great significance to the development of agriculture as a fundamental sector of the economy, as well as the creation of an energy base through the development of oil and gas resources and the utilization of existing hydro-resources.

The Ethiopian leadership informed us of the plans for deepening agrarian reform, which has now entered into a new phase--agricultural rebuilding on a cooperative foundation. There is a goal to establish agricultural production cooperatives.

The talks and discussions with Mengistu demonstrated that the positions of the Soviet

Union and Ethiopia concur on the essential questions of the present time. Mengistu was in complete solidarity with all of our essential views on the international situation. He attentively follows the foreign policy course of the Soviet Union and the coordinated actions of the brotherly socialist countries in the international arena, and his own opinions and views are constructed on this basis. The Ethiopian leadership actively supports the policy of the socialist community countries, which is directed at expanding the process of reducing tension and disarmament, and consistently speaks out with an anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist position in Africa and condemns the hegemonic course of the Chinese leadership. All this, in our opinion, creates a good foundation for activating the foreign policy cooperation between the socialist community countries and Ethiopia.

During the talks, meetings and discussions, Mengistu and the other Ethiopian leaders consistently emphasized the huge significance that the assistance from the countries of the socialist community played in the success of the Ethiopian revolution and expressed the desire for a continuing development of multi-faceted cooperation with them.

On our part, we emphasized the Soviet Union's international solidarity with the Ethiopian revolution and our principled line to continue rendering comprehensive assistance and support to socialist Ethiopia.

As a result of the visit, an agreement was reached by which the Soviet Union would render assistance in the construction of an agricultural machine factory, the expansion of the oil refinery in Assabe, oil and gas exploration, and further strengthening of the Ethiopian defense capability. The USSR will supply Ethiopia free of charge with sports equipment, transport equipment, and school and writing accessories that are needed in the campaign against illiteracy.

The Ethiopian national-democratic revolution, in our view, is developing along the right path. The political course of the VVAS is aimed at creating conditions for a gradual construction of socialist foundations in the country. Mengistu himself is increasingly becoming a more experienced political and government figure, characterized by a realistic class approach toward domestic and foreign policy questions. His stature as a trans-national leader of the Ethiopian revolution has also noticeably strengthened.

Despite the fact that in the five years following the revolution the progressive regime in Ethiopia has had successes in strengthening both the domestic and the international conditions of the country, the situation is still difficult. The USA and other western powers are not leaving any attempts to influence to their advantage the policy of the Ethiopian leadership with the help of economic levers, coordinating their actions to reach these goals. The Ethiopian leadership, not to mention the state apparatus, includes officials in favor of more active ties to the West, as was demonstrated by the working group discussions on various questions of Soviet-Ethiopian relations and certain international problems.

The visit confirmed that at the present time Ethiopia is one of the African countries closest to the socialist community. Noting this situation and our mutual interest in supporting Ethiopia in its path of socialist development and its anti-imperialist course in international affairs, it is our opinion that we should continue to further expand cooperation with this country in all areas, in order to continue moving it closer to the socialist community. We believe that it would be particularly expedient to draw Ethiopia to participate in conferences coordinated by brotherly socialist countries on certain international questions.