

## **September 1978**

### **Report on the Visit to Ethiopia by the Soviet Party-Government Delegation**

#### **Citation:**

"Report on the Visit to Ethiopia by the Soviet Party-Government Delegation", September 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Translated for CWIHP by Daniel Rozas.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121062>

#### **Summary:**

The Soviet Union along with other socialist countries were invited to Ethiopia to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution. The report discusses Soviet-Ethiopian relations, improvement of the Ethiopian political situation, the arms race, and foreign policy.

#### **Original Language:**

Russian

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

Confidential

REPORT

on the visit to Ethiopia by the Soviet party-government delegation, headed by candidate member of the CC CPSU Politburo, first Deputy Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, V. V. KUZNETSOV

The Soviet party-government delegation traveled to Ethiopia on 10-20 September of this year [1978] on an official visit, by the invitation of the Supreme Military Administrative Council (VVAS).

The Soviet delegation, together with representatives of other brotherly socialist countries, took part in the celebrations of the fourth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution. During its stay in Ethiopia, the delegation had two meetings with cde. Castro who was in Addis Ababa by the invitation of the Ethiopian government, during which there was an exchange of opinions regarding the situation in the country.

Following the conclusion of the celebrations, Soviet-Ethiopian talks were held on the question of bi-lateral relations development, as well as on international issues. The delegation had meetings with the VVAS Chairman, Mengistu Haile Mariam. The chief political results of the visit were reflected in the joint Soviet-Ethiopian communiqué on 21 September of this year.

In addition, we would like to inform you of the following. The Ethiopian leaders provided detailed information to the Soviet delegation regarding the internal political situation in the country. In particular, Mengistu emphasized that, thanks to the brotherly internationalist assistance of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, the situation in Ethiopia has recently changed for the better. The complicated and difficult stage of the Ethiopian revolution, when the question "to be or not to be" was facing socialist Ethiopia, has now drawn to a close. As a result of the restructuring of the armed forces on a new foundation and its purge of alien class elements, the army is transforming into a true national revolutionary force. The peasants are standing firmly on the side of the revolution. Mass social organizations have been established: professional unions, all-Ethiopian peasant association, youth and women's organizations.

Having characterized the military-political situation as favorable overall, the Ethiopian leaders emphasized that right now the most important task is to reestablish and develop the economy that had been destroyed by the war. In connection with this, the VVAS intends to unfurl a broad campaign to mobilize the masses to lift the economy and, above all, to develop agriculture so as to insure the food supply for the population. The Ethiopians are planning to increase also the production of export goods in order to guarantee the repayment of loans provided to Ethiopia by friendly countries.

Taking into account that the campaign to lift the economy will be carried out within the parameters of Ethiopia's development along the path of socialism, it is the opinion of the Ethiopian leaders that the class struggle in the country and pressure from outside should be expected to increase. In this regard, they emphasized that Ethiopia will continue to require comprehensive support from socialist countries, particularly in receiving coordinated and broad economic assistance from them. The Ethiopian leadership asked in this regard to take into account the extremely difficult current economic and financial situation of the country. In the course of the discussion, Mengistu admitted that the VVAS does not yet have scientifically based plans for economic development and that he still needs to address this question.

The VVAS leaders noted that they regard the current stage of Ethiopian revolutionary development as national-democratic, when petite and middle bourgeoisie are also taking part in the revolution. In addition to this, Ethiopia has every possibility of developing along the path of socialism, from which stems the national-democratic

revolution program.

Confirming the Ethiopian leadership's intention to establish an avant-garde party of workers, Mengistu at the same time noted a number of objective difficulties that must be taken into account in establishing this party in Ethiopia: the small number and political weakness of the working class, the conservatism of Ethiopian peasants, the illiteracy of the majority of the country's population, and the influence of petite bourgeois ideology. There is also a danger of a spread of Maoism and Euro-communism in Ethiopia. Mengistu believes that in the present circumstances, the party being established will unavoidably include representatives of the different social segments that took part in the revolution.

The Ethiopian side did not linger on the details of the ways for resolving the national question in Ethiopia. Touching upon the question in Eritrea, Mengistu expressed the thought that, as a result of the destruction of significant separatist forces, the immediate threat of this province's separation from Ethiopia has been averted.

The Ethiopian leaders emphasized a number of times their strong intentions to continue developing multi-faceted cooperation with the Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist community, seeing in this the main guarantee for a successful development of the Ethiopian revolution along the socialist path.

On our part, we stated that we view the Ethiopian revolution as a part of the world revolutionary movement and affirmed the steadfast course of the Soviet Union to render Ethiopia different kinds of assistance and support in its struggle with internal and foreign reactionaries. Having supported the Ethiopian side's plans at this stage of the revolution to focus the Ethiopian people's attention on resolving economic problems, the Soviet delegation noted that an instrumental role in this will have to be played by the mobilization of internal resources and the political work with the masses. We announced the Soviet Union's readiness to render assistance in the drafting of plans for the national economy and the preparation of national Ethiopian cadres.

We pointed out the importance of taking practical steps in establishing an avant-garde party and expressed readiness to continue assisting the Ethiopian friends in this, including by preparing political cadres. We also expressed the opinion that it is necessary to employ political measures in settling the situation in Eritrea.

As part of the continuing development of Soviet-Ethiopian cooperation in the economic realm, there was a signing of the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation and the Agreement on the Creation of an Inter-Governmental Soviet-Ethiopian Commission on economic and scientific-technical cooperation and trade.

In the course of the meetings and discussions, there was also an examination of questions pertaining to bi-lateral cooperation in the strengthening of Ethiopia's defense capability. We expressed agreement to continue rendering the necessary assistance to Ethiopia in this matter. The discussions with the Ethiopian leadership demonstrated that the Ethiopian and Soviet positions on the most important current international problems coincide. VVAS Chairman Mengistu and VVAS General Secretary Fikre-Selassie stated Ethiopia's complete support of the political course of the socialist community countries in the international arena.

The Ethiopian leadership shares Soviet Union's perspective on the importance of increasing the struggle for relaxing international tensions and ending the arms race, stating that it will support the Soviet Union on all these questions at international forums, including the UN.

Mengistu sharply criticized the foreign policy course of the Carter administration. He characterized Sadat's line on questions pertaining to the Near Eastern problem as treason, and condemned the plans of reactionary Arab regimes to turn the Red Sea into an "Arab lake." Affirming his full support for the national-liberation movements in Zimbabwe, Namibia and the South African Republic, the Ethiopians stated their readiness to render practical assistance to these. They also emphasized that they will act in the non-aligned movement in such a manner as to secure its anti-imperialist focus.

During the course of the meetings and discussions with the Soviet delegation, the Ethiopian leaders spoke sharply against the great-power-aspirant, expansionist

course of the current Peking leadership. The condemnation of Peking's policy, as heard in Haile Mariam Mengistu's speech on 12 September in which he characterized it as reactionary, anti-revolutionary and anti-socialist, drew particularly great political resonance. This was the first public statement of this kind made by a leader of an African state.

During the discussion of the situation in the Horn of Africa, we focused attention on the importance of adopting a flexible diplomatic policy by Ethiopia, in particular, demonstrating initiatives for a political settlement of Ethiopian-Somali relations, including within the parameters of the OAE [Organization for African Unity].

The Ethiopian side stated that it is prepared to enter into negotiations with Somalia with the aim of seeking methods for reconciling Ethiopian-Somali relations. However, such negotiations would be possible only when Somalia renounces its territorial claims on Ethiopia.

The Soviet delegation meetings and discussions with the Ethiopian side had a spirit of comradely openness and mutual understanding. They affirmed that the Ethiopian leadership intends to continue the course of developing cooperation with the socialist community countries.

As a result of the visit, the Soviet delegation formed the opinion that at the present time the internal and foreign political situation of Ethiopia has grown stronger. In our view, the progressive nucleus of the VVAS is being consolidated, and Mengistu's personal authority has grown.

The continuing success of the Ethiopian revolution's development along a socialist path will apparently depend to a great extent on whether the Ethiopian leaders succeed in strengthening unity among the leadership and achieving broader support of the working masses for the course being carried out by the VVAS to resolve the immediate economic problems and settle the national question.

Bearing in mind Ethiopia's role in Africa and the significance of the Ethiopian revolution to the general strengthening of anti-imperialist forces on the African continent, it appears expedient, in our opinion, to support the Ethiopian leadership in its progressive activities, to continue working actively with them, coordinating the activities of the socialist countries with respect to Ethiopia and exchanging appropriate information, particularly on economic problems.