

December 1, 1971

**Message from Hungarian Ambassador in Moscow
Gyula Rapai, 'Somali Head of State's Visit to the
Soviet Union'**

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Summary:

Summary of Siad Barre's visit to Moscow in November 1971.

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Top Secret !

Moscow, 1 December 1971

Subject: The Somali head of state's visit to the Soviet Union
[...]

On November 29, an embassy staff member received the following information from MID's Somalia desk regarding this subject:

As it is known, General Mohamed Siad Barre, the Somali head of state, led between November 16 and 22 this year a high-level delegation (of essentially the entire Government) to an official friendly visit to the Soviet Union. They visited Moscow, Volgograd and Tashkent and held talks with L. I. Brezhnev and A. N. Kosygin. The delegation also met with N.V. Podgorny, and had talks at the most important ministries and state executive committees.

The Soviet side, of course, accorded the delegation with a proper welcome and gave it the intended high political significance. The Soviet negotiator was greatly satisfied by the fact that the Somali delegation, feeling the importance of the visit, was thoroughly prepared for the negotiations, which were very useful to both parties and were ultimately successful. (It should be noted that Soviet negotiators do not bestow upon all Third World delegations the recognition of such preparedness and knowledge of the subject-matter.)

The negotiations on international issues contributed to the clarification of positions, and there was no disagreement on fundamental issues. Essentially, both parties' positions on key international issues such as peace and security, aggression in Indochina, the Middle East crisis, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the need to fight against racism coincided. Both sides assessed the activities of the Organization of African Unity.

The Soviet side deservedly acknowledged Somalia's active policy with regard to African issues and the expressed readiness of the African peoples (Somalia, among them) to wage a struggle for social progress and political independence.

Both sides evaluated the role and the importance of the United Nations. The Soviet side, welcomed Somalia's UN delegation (which is under strong central command) full willingness to cooperate with the Soviet Union, which was deemed important for the success of the proposals raised at this world forum.

A joint statement issued on negotiations does not reflect Somalia's position on the conflict that erupted in Hindustani peninsula. The Somali officials explained that they believe the conflict should be settled by political means within the Pakistani military administration and politicians representing the interests of East Pakistan and its people. However, as Pakistan has occupied an important place in the Muslim world, they did not want to have their views published in the declaration.

The [Somali] comrades declined to comment on Somalia's issues with its neighboring countries, Kenya and Ethiopia, and on French Somalia they merely said that the problems are not to be dealt with in the discussions.

Somalia maintains relations with the socialist countries in general terms. The Somali guests said that Somalia was determined to the cause of social progress, and requires the support of the socialist states. Their relationships with every socialist country is as good as with the Soviet Union, but they hoped they will achieve a substantial improvement in this respect.

Significant progress has been made in Soviet-Somali bilateral relations. These relationships play an important role in terms of economic and technical cooperation.

In economic terms, the development of agriculture is of paramount importance to Somalia. Advanced tools and methods are needed for the increase of cultivated land area and to enable arable farming. It was agreed that the Soviet Union will help with the utilization of the land in the lower Juba River. The river has been improved by the introduction of irrigation systems and electric power plant of about 5,000kW. Modern agricultural technology can also help Somalia. The guests showed a very thorough and professional interest in the methods of farm organization in which they may also need assistance.

The Soviet side was ready to assist in the development of fishing and fish processing. Agreement was concluded in principle on fishing boat movement and the establishment of fish processing plant. The cooling capacity of the port will be increased in order to facilitate meat exports from Somalia and improve scheduling.

The Soviet Union will extend the capacity of the radio stations in Mogadishu as well as in a rural town.

The list of issues covered in the agreement are only in principle. The details to clarify the relevant agreements and contracts are to be concluded in the nearest future (probably later this year) when a delegation of Soviet expert arrives at the scene.

In addition to the above, a new step in the evolution of bilateral relations, by means of the signing of a Consular Convention, was made during the visit.

As you can see, the Soviet side is ready for a strong expansion of economic cooperation, although they are aware that for some time trade with Somalia can hardly be made on the basis of mutual benefit. However, the fact that the country is geologically unexplored and that it is almost impossible not to find any mineral deposits, which is to form the solid base for a sustained economic recovery in a more distant future, should be taken into account (Oil exploration should not be ruled out).

(As this report does not go over Soviet-Somali military cooperation, I would just add Somalia's strategic importance.)

Soviet side clearly sees the serious problems and the tasks for the Somali economy. They are aware of the political problems within the state, for which the political leadership shares a big share of the responsibility. However, the [Somali] head of state is considered to be a prudent politician, who is a convinced supporter of the cause of social progress and who favors better relations with the socialist states. It would be difficult to answer the question of how Siad Barre sees the practical implementation of socio-economic transformation based on the principles of scientific socialism. He himself has outlined it as the expansion of the economy, the public sector; the creation of appropriate propaganda organs, which would build up a socialist spirit within the population; and, finally, in terms of foreign policy, working together with the socialist states in the pursuit of socialist foreign policy principles. Regards the Soviet Union as a role model.

The Somali head of state's determination toward socialism and his respect for Soviet Union's implementation of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism bears witness in his reception speech to the Supreme Council on November 16 as well as in a statement in Moscow News.

(The value of the latter - as the Soviet comrades have noted - only increased by the fact that the interview occurred without the usual preparation and the Somali head of state produced spontaneous, impromptu responses.).

In confidence, Siad Barre announced his country was studying the possibilities of organizing a strong, united party.

Based on the above, it is quite logical to expect that the socialist states are going to practically implement safeguards, so that unlike many other developing countries, Somalia will not enter in politically dangerous competition for Western help. On the other hand, it also seems a logical conclusion that when Somalia gets the necessary support from our side, it will be prepared to take fuller commitment to the cause of socialism.

Since, essentially, the socialist countries' willingness to help with these issues determines their positive or negative outcome, the Soviet side seriously considers its potential to release quick, productive and efficient help, which is to be strictly adapted to the country's actual needs, and which can produce tangible results in the short term through relatively small financial contribution.

There is indication that Siad Barre hoped for more substantive support from what he is currently receiving from the Soviet Union. However, he is sincerely pleased with his political debut and is content that he has managed to win the confidence of the Soviet Union.

The issue of financial support was ultimately based on a realistic approach: during the negotiations it was willingly admitted that Somalia is only one of the recipients of the Soviet Union's help, which tried to help other countries in Somalia's situation.

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Gyula Rapai
Ambassador