

Havana's Policy in Africa, 1959-76: New Evidence from Cuban Archives

by Piero Gleijeses¹

The dearth of documents and historical context has hampered rigorous analysis of Cuba's intervention in Angola in 1975. Despite the interest scholars have shown in the episode, the lack of Cuban documents and the closed nature of Cuban society have prevented them from being able to accurately describe Cuba's actions. I have gone to Havana six times, for a total of six months, since 1993 to research Cuban policy toward Africa, and I have gained access to the archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba (CC CPC), the *Instituto de Historia de Cuba*, the *Centro de Información de la Defensa de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*, and the *Ministerio para la Inversión Extranjera y la Colaboración Económica*. Armed with documents from these closed and never before used archives, supplemented with interviews, a close reading of the press, and U.S. documents, I can shed new light on the Angola affair.

The new documents clarify the evolution of Cuba's involvement in Angola and answer the critical question of whether the Cubans sent troops before or after the South African intervention. They also address the vexing question of Havana's motivation, particularly whether or not it was acting as a Soviet proxy. They document Cuba's longstanding relationship with the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and they place the Angolan crisis in the broad context of Cuban policy toward Africa. From 1959 to 1974 the Cubans intervened in Algeria, Congo Leopoldville, Congo Brazzaville and Guinea-Bissau. More Cubans fought in Africa during these years than in Latin America, and Cuban policy was far more successful in the former than in the latter. The story of these fifteen years challenges the image of Cuban foreign policy—cyni-

cal ploys of a client state—that prevails in the United States. Yet it has attracted virtually no attention. It is a significant lacuna. As a Cuban official told me, “Cuba's intervention in Angola cannot be understood without looking at our past.”²

Whereas those who publish in the *Bulletin* generally use archives that have been opened, the Cuban archives I have used are still closed. This requires, then, an explanation of my *modus operandi*.

There was no established declassification process in Cuba when I began my research. Mindful of the fact that the documents I cited would not be readily accessible to my readers, I decided that I would never use a document unless I was given a photocopy of the original. I badgered Cuban officials relentlessly, arguing that in the United States their word has no credibility, that their testimonies are only valid if supported by documents, and that while one document would suffice to criticize Cuba, five would be necessary to say anything positive. Jorge Risquet, a member of the Central Committee, understood. I owe a great debt to his intelligence and sensitivity. We have come a long way since the day in 1994 when I asked him for all the reports written by the Chief of the Cuban Military Mission in Angola between August and October 1975 only to be told, “You aren't writing his biography. One will be enough.” Two years later, I received all the others. The Cubans established a procedure of which I could only approve: any document they expected to be declassified they allowed me to read in its entirety, whether in Risquet's office or in the archives themselves. Then the waiting would begin. It could take less than a hour or more than a year. As I write, there are several hundred pages of documents that I have been allowed to read but have not yet been given.

About 80 of the more than 3,000 pages of documents that I have received were sanitized after I had read them.

Frequently the edited lines contained the remarks of a foreign leader criticizing his own political allies; thus, to explain why half a page had been sanitized [Doc. 5], Risquet wrote, “the conversation that followed was about internal MPLA matters that [Angolan President Agostinho] Neto discussed with [Cuban official Díaz] Argüelles. It would be unethical to make them public.”³ In the case of three intelligence documents, the sanitized paragraphs would have revealed sources. In other cases the lines (or words) sanitized included comments about African or Asian countries that, the censors believed, would unnecessarily complicate Cuba's foreign relations.

I have also interviewed 63 Cuban protagonists, many of them repeatedly and in relaxed settings. While interviews without documents would be of little use, interviews with documents can be extremely helpful. Furthermore, many of the interviewees gave me letters and journals from their own personal collections, and they alerted me to documents in the government archives, which made it possible to be very specific in my requests to Risquet. The Cuban authorities were well aware of my freewheeling interviews and to the best of my knowledge they did nothing to hinder me. Currently I am complementing my research in Cuba with research in the United States, Europe (particularly Moscow, Berlin, and Lisbon), and, of course, Africa.

Cuba's pre-1975 Africa policy can be divided into three major phases: pre-1964, when the focus was Algeria; 1964-66, when Cuba's attention was suddenly riveted by sub-Saharan Africa—a heady time characterized by Che Guevara's three-month trip through the continent and the dispatch of Cuban columns to Zaire and Congo Brazzaville; and post-1966, a period of growing maturity, highlighted by the long and successful Cuban involvement in Guinea-Bissau (1966-74). Before

Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) were fighting for independence from Portugal. The PAIGC was “the most effective of the liberation organizations in the Portuguese African territories,” U.S. reports stressed time and again.¹⁹

for UNITA), but there is no evidence that Cuba and the MPLA knew about it. What they knew—and indeed it was public knowledge—was that the pro-American Zairean government of Mobuto Sese Seko had sent troops into northern Angola on Roberto's side. By May, Portugal was no longer making any attempt to police even the main crossing points with Zaire and it was reported that over one thousand Zairean soldiers were in northern Angola.⁴¹ Angola, warned Neto, "was being subjected to a silent invasion by soldiers from Zaire."⁴²

By late July, Angola was in the throes of civil war and Havana finally geared into action. From August 3-8, a seven-man Cuban delegation, led by a very senior military officer, Raúl Díaz Argüelles, was in Angola. "Their mission was to pin down on the ground with the leaders of the MPLA exactly what aid they wanted, the objectives they expected to achieve with this aid, and the stages in which the aid should be given."⁴³ They also brought Neto the \$100,000 he had requested six months earlier. [See doc. 5]

Neto wanted Cuban military instructors. He did not have a precise figure in mind, but he was thinking of no more than a hundred men who would be spread out among many small training centers. He also wanted Cuba to send weapons, clothing, and food for the recruits. On the basis of this request, Díaz Argüelles drafted a proposal for a military mission "that would include 65 officers and 29 noncommissioned officers and soldiers for a grand total of 94 compañeros."⁴⁴

This plan was reworked in Havana after Díaz Argüelles returned. The revised plan contemplated the dispatch of 480 men who would create and staff four training centers (Centros de Instrucción Revolucionaria or CIRs). Some 5,300 Angolans would be trained in these CIRs within three to six months. Cuba would send the weapons for the instructors and for the recruits in the CIRs, as well as enough food, clothing, camping gear, toiletries, medicine, cots, and bedclothes for 5,300 men for six months. The CIRs would begin operating in mid-October.⁴⁵ In other words,

Cuba decided to offer Neto almost five times more instructors than he had requested. In Risquet's words, "If we were going to send our men, we had to send enough to fulfill the mission and to defend themselves, because too small a group would simply have been overwhelmed."⁴⁶

Contrary to the widespread image of the Cuban intervention in Angola, Havana had been slow to get involved. The documents that I have seen do not explain this delay, and I have not been able to interview those protagonists who could provide an answer, notably Fidel and Raúl Castro. Perhaps there was, on Cuba's part, a reluctance to be drawn into what could become an open-ended conflict. Perhaps there was reluctance to jeopardize relations with the West when, after a long period of isolation and hostility, they were markedly improving: for the first time, the United States was interested in a *modus vivendi* with Cuba;⁴⁷ the Organization of American States was preparing to lift its sanctions; and West European governments were offering low interest loans. Perhaps Cuba had feared that the dispatch of military instructors would offend even friendly African countries like Tanzania; or perhaps the attention of the Cuban leaders was distracted by the preparations for the first Congress of the Cuban Communist party that would be held in December. "The revolution was institutionalized in 1975," remarks Risquet. "It was a year of never-ending work. This may have played a role. And the situation in Angola was quite confused. In the first months of 1975 there was very little discussion in the sessions of the Political Bureau about Angola. Our focus was on domestic matters."⁴⁸

None of these explanations is very persuasive. By preparing to host a conference for the independence of Puerto Rico, Cuba was signalling that there were limits to the price it would pay for improved ties with Washington.⁴⁹ By sending troops to Syria in October 1973—troops that might well have become involved in a major clash with the Israelis—Cuba had demonstrated its continued willingness to take risks for a cause it believed just.⁵⁰ Some may

claim that Cuba did not move sooner to help the MPLA because the Soviet Union did not want it to. But can one seriously argue that Cuba needed Soviet permission to send \$100,000 to Neto? Others may repeat the canard that Cuba sent 200 military instructors to Angola in the spring of 1975,⁵¹ but the evidence flatly contradicts this. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, one can only note that the Cuban leaders were focusing on domestic matters and that relations with the MPLA since 1967 had not been intense. In July Cuba finally shifted gears. It was as if the music had suddenly changed; Cuba had made its choice, and Operation Carlota was born.

On August 21, Díaz Argüelles was back in Luanda as the head of the fledgling Cuban Military Mission in Angola (MMCA). He reported to Abelardo (Furry) Colomé, the first deputy minister of the Armed Forces. His reports from late August through October (all handwritten) are kept in the archives of the *Centro de Información de la Defensa de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* and are a very important source on the evolution of the Cuban presence.⁵²

Díaz Argüelles' first order of business was to obtain Neto's approval for the 480-man military mission and four large CIRs. "Comrade Neto accepted our offer with great emotion," he informed Colomé in late August. "He was moved. He asked me to tell Fidel that they accept everything."⁵³

The members of the MMCA began arriving in late August, and they kept coming through September, all on commercial flights. There were slightly over 100 by early October. The others came aboard three Cuban ships that had left Havana on September 16-20: the *Vietnam Heroico* and the *Coral Island* docked at a beach near Puerto Amboim "where no one lives" on October 5 and 8 respectively; the *La Plata* reached Punta Negra (Congo Brazzaville) on the 11th. Díaz Argüelles described their arrival in a lengthy report to Colomé.⁵⁴

The three ships brought the weapons and equipment for the CIRs, including 12,000 Czech rifles for the Angolans. (They could not give them

can military historian. Prodded by UNITA, the FNLA, Mobutu and the United States, Pretoria decided to escalate. "The go-ahead was given on October 14." ⁶⁶

That day, a South African column crossed into Angola from northeastern

It is important to put Westad's com-

writes, the Cubans sent their troops to Angola “on their own initiative and without consulting us.” His testimony is supported by other Soviet officials.⁸⁹

To try to impose a Soviet dimension on the relationship between Cuba and Africa regarding the period and events examined in this article seems to me to warp reality to satisfy an ideological bias. Robert Pastor, the National Security staff member who oversaw Latin America during the Carter Administration, wrote much the same to his boss, National Security Advisor

mission].

“6. We will support whatever decision

[Tatu makes].

“7. Avoid annihilation.”

nied me.

This high morale, the large number of our troops and the large supply of material, the nature of the terrain, and the material and psychological condition of the enemy lead me to conclude that there are no big problems for our [defensive] line at Amboim-Ebo-Quibala-Cariango; that we have recovered the initiative in the south; that in the next few days our "active defense" will gain ground in the south. ... Risquet.⁹⁴

[Source: Archives of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee, Havana.]

DOCUMENT 7: Risquet to Fidel Castro, Luanda, 29 January 1976

Commander-in-Chief,

Regarding the Cuban weapons delivered by the USSR in Luanda: We have explained the situation clearly to President Neto, who understood it perfectly without expressing any doubts.

1. "Furry [Colomé]⁹⁵ and I spoke with Neto alone the day after Furry's return [from Moscow where he had gone to report to Fidel Castro, who was attending the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union], and we informed him of your decision to send more troops, fully armed, in order to amass the forces necessary both fully to accomplish the goal of freeing the country from the South African and Zairian invasions and also to be in a position to counter any possible increases in their forces.

We told him [Neto] that some of the new Cuban troops will arrive by boat with their weapons and the rest will come to Luanda by plane, where they will pick up weapons that the Soviet Union is going to send for them.

We explained to him that this will allow us to avoid the unnecessary time, expense and risk of having the Soviets send these weapons to Cuba and then having to transport them to Angola with the troops.

Neto understood and approved without any qualm or hesitation.

2. Three days later, the Soviet general [head of the Soviet military mission in Angola] told us he too would like to inform [Neto], on behalf of the USSR, about the delivery of the Soviet weapons to the Cubans in Angola. We agreed that the most appropriate way would be that he, Furry, and I meet again with Neto alone. And so we did. The general explained in some detail what weapons were being sent.

Neto raised no objection whatsoever, wrote down the most important weapons,

said that he would inform the Political Bureau of this increase [of men and arms], and appeared very satisfied with it, as an additional guarantee to counter whatever the South Africans, the Zairians and the Imperialists might do.

In this meeting, Furry itemized some of the men and materiel that were coming aboard the Cuban ships. He spoke of a regiment.

3. Nevertheless, taking into account the concern you expressed in your cable of yesterday, in the meeting that Oramas⁹⁶ and I had today with the president to discuss other matters (SWAPO, Katangans, etc.), I returned as if in passing to this matter, and I gave him a list of the weapons that will be arriving on future Soviet ships and that are for the Cuban troops.

I added that all the weapons that had arrived in Soviet ships (the 73 tanks, the 21 BM-21s, etc.) so far, as well as the ten MIG-17s, belonged to the People's Republic of Angola.

[I stressed] that the MIG-21s that were coming in the AN-22 planes as well as the weapons that were arriving in the Soviet ships and that were enumerated in the list that I had given him were acquired by Cuba in the USSR and delivered to Cuba by the USSR in Luanda.

We told him that the Cuban troops, with all these weapons, would remain in Angola for as long as it took and for as long as he considered necessary, and that we would take care of the training of the Angolan personnel, so that they would be able to operate the tanks, the planes, Katyushas [rocket-propelled grenade launchers], mortars, cannons, etc. And that if the weapons delivered to the PRA [People's Republic of Angola] were to prove insufficient for the future Angolan army, the USSR would always be ready to provide what was required, etc., etc.

That is, our conversation was absolutely brotherly and without the smallest misunderstanding or reproach. However, we wanted to be absolutely clear—and we left the list as written evidence—so that there could be no misunderstandings, now or in the future.

We consider this matter to be totally clear and settled. Let me know whether you believe that this task has been accomplished or whether you think it is necessary to do something more about it.

Greetings,

Risquet

[Source: Archives of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee, Havana.]

¹ I would like to thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for helping to support this research.

² Interview with Manuel Agramonte, Havana, 2 July 1994. The only two studies worth citing are William Durch "The Cuban Military in Africa and the Middle East: From Algeria to Angola," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Spring/Summer 1978, 34-63 and Gisela García, *La misión internacionalista de Cuba en Argelia (1963-1964)* [The Internationalist Mission of Cuba in Algeria (1963-1964)] (Havana: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, 1990). A garbled account of Che Guevara's struggle in Zaire, based on his unpublished manuscript, is Paco Ignacio Taibo et al., *El año que estuvimos en ninguna parte* [The Year We Were Nowhere] (Mexico City: Planeta, 1994).

³ Jorge Risquet, note to author, Havana, 13 July 1996.

⁴ For full information on sources for Algeria, see Piero Gleijeses, "Cuba's First Venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961-1965," *Journal of Latin American Studies* (February 1996), 159-95.

⁵ José Ramón Machado Ventura, note to author, Havana, 12 July 1995, 1.

⁶ *Verde Olivo* (Havana), 28 June 1964, 51-52.

⁷ See Piero Gleijeses, "'Flee! The White Giants Are Coming!' The United States, the Mercenaries, and the Congo, 1964-1965," *Diplomatic History*, Spring 1994, 207-37.

⁸ Che Guevara, "Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria (Congo)" [Episodes of the Revolutionary War], Dar-es-Salaam, late 1965, 13 (pri-

FAR en defensa de la independencia y la soberanía de los pueblos” [Internationalist missions of the FAR in defense of the independence and the sovereignty of other peoples], n.d., 26-34, Archives of the Instituto de Historia de Cuba, Havana.

⁵¹ *Le Monde*, 14 January 1976, 8; Kissinger’s testimony of 29 January 1976 in U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on African Affairs, *Angola*, 94th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), 17; *New York Times*, 5 February 1976, 12; *Sunday Telegraph* (London), 30 January 1977, 8; Fred Bridgland, “The Future of Angola,” *South Africa International*, July 1988, 32; *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 January 1976, 9.

⁵² See Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, n.d. [late August 1975], 4; Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 2 September 1975, 14; Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 3 September 1975, 9 (signed by Díaz Argüelles but the handwriting is Cadelo’s); Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, n.d. [late September 1975], 5; Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 1 October 1975, 15; Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 15 October 1975, 26; Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 16 October 1975, 2; “Situación militar en Angola. Octubre/75” [Military Situation in Angola, October 1975], November (1?), 1975, 13. Díaz Argüelles also cabled specific requests. See MINFAR “Solicitud de Argüelles,” 25 August 1975 through 26 September 1975, CID-FAR. After Cuba decided to send troops to Angola on November 4, a more senior officer, Leopoldo Cintra Frías, replaced Díaz Argüelles as head of the MMCA. He arrived in Angola on November 11.

⁵³ Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, n.d. [late August 1975], 1, 4, CID-FAR.

⁵⁴ Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 15 October 1975, 2, CID-FAR.

⁵⁵ Díaz Argüelles to Colomé, 15 October 1975, 5, 9-11, 12, CID-FAR. See also MINFAR, “Composición de fuerzas y medios de la unidad incluyendo el incremento del Punto 4,” n.d. [late October 1975]. On the 1965 agreement: interview with Estrada, who was a senior intelligence of-

Books, 1982), 479; Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 56, 146, 187; and Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition* (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1985), 86, 92.

⁹¹ George Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1982), 374. Cuba's role in Shaba and the Horn go beyond the scope of this essay. For Cuba and Shaba, see Piero Gleijeses, "Truth or Credibility: Castro, Carter and the Invasions of Shaba," *International History Review*, February 1996, 70-103.

⁹² The 686 men of the Grupo Especial de Instrucción (GEI) arrived in Algeria aboard two special flights of *Cubana de aviación* that left Havana on October 21, and on two ships, the *Aracelio Iglesias* and the *Andrés González Lines*, which reached Oran on October 22 and 29 respectively. Efigenio Ameijeiras was the commander of the GEI.

⁹³ In this article the ellipsis is used to indicate author's editing. Any sanitized words or sentences are clearly indicated as such.

⁹⁴ On 3 December 1975, Risquet flew to Angola as head of the Cuban Mission in Luanda. As such, he was above the ambassador (Oscar Oramas) and at the same level as the chief of the MMCA.

⁹⁵ "Because of the growing scope of our help to the MPLA," on 25 November 1975 the first vice-minister of the armed forces, Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, had flown from Cuba to Angola to become the head of the MMCA. ("Síntesis," 23-24.)

⁹⁶ Oscar Oramas, a senior foreign ministry official and former ambassador to Guinea Conakry (1966-73), had arrived in December 1975 to serve as Cuba's first ambassador to Angola.

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CASTRO'S TRIP TO AFRICA

continued from page 8

fuegos, Raul Valdez Vivo, Jose Abrantes [*Honecker welcomes Castro, invites him to take the floor—ed.*]

Fidel Castro: [sections omitted—ed.]

We visited Tanzania because of an old commitment. We have built three schools there, sent a medical brigade, and given help in other ways. Nyerere had invited us to talk about economic matters above all. The rise in oil prices had affected Tanzania tremendously. Tanzania needs 800,000 tons of oil a year. The entire harvest of peanut, sisal and cotton crops has to be used for the purchase of oil. The Chinese are still present in Tanzania. They have built a few things there, in particular the railroad. The armed units of the ZANU are trained by the Chinese. Tanzania also carries some responsibility for the split of the liberation movement of Zimbabwe into ZANU and ZAPU. In South Africa armed fighting has begun.

The ANC fighters are trained in Angola. The Chinese had also offered training here. Tanzania considers the developments in Zimbabwe in terms of prestige. [Its involvement] allows it to negotiate with Great Britain and the United States over Zimbabwe and to define a role for itself.

The ZANU has 5000 men in fighting units trained by the Chinese. The liberation fighters in Namibia are also trained in Angola, however. Cuba and the Soviet Union have both set up training camps for this purpose. The ZAPU is supported by Angola.

We flew directly from Tanzania to Mozambique. There used to be differences between us and the FRELIMO, going back to the times when FRELIMO was in Tanzania and Che Guevara had spoken to [Mozambique Liberation Front head Eduardo] Mondlane there. At the time Mondlane did not agree with Che and said so publicly. Thereafter news articles against Mondlane were published in Cuba. Later Mondlane corrected himself, but only internally and things remained somewhat up in the air. FRELIMO took good positions during the liberation struggle in Angola. But in our opinion they were not sufficiently combative. For a time FRELIMO got close to [Tanzanian President Julius] Nyerere. [Cuban Vice President] Carlos Rafael [Rodríguez] had spoken to [Mozambican President] Samora Machel in Colombo, Sri

Lanka, at the Nonaligned Summit Conference in August 1976]. After that we sent a Cuban delegation to Mozambique and I was invited to visit. FRELIMO accepted all of our suggestions for the visit. It was kept discreet, which was convenient for me. Samora Machel was really a surprise for me. I learned to know him as an intelligent revolutionary who took clear positions and had a good relationship with the masses. He really impressed me. We spoke with each other for one and a half days. We support Mozambique. Machel asked us to send 300 technicians. He was interested in Cuba's experiences, especially economic ones. Before this we did not know for sure what influence the Chinese had on him. Now he is getting closer to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. He got a loan from the Soviets for weapons of 100 million rubles. In particular, the Soviets deliver aircraft and anti-aircraft batteries. We were very pleased with our visit to Mozambique. I want to say that we consider this very important.

[Zambian President Kenneth] Kaunda also wanted me to visit him. I had been in Africa for a long time, however, and did not want to extend my stay. Besides which the imperialist penetration has advanced far in Zambia. In the Angola matter, Zambia took a very wrong position, in spite of the fact that she was not forced to do so. We had agreed with Angola not to visit Zambia. A few days before my visit to southern Africa the Katanga [Shaba] battles had begun and [People's Republic of the Congo President Marien] N'Gouabi was murdered. I had been invited to Madagascar, but did not want to stay in Africa any longer. During a press conference in Dar Es Salaam I had categorically denied that Cuba was in any way involved in the Katanga battles. I explained that the situation in Angola was different from those in Zimbabwe and Namibia. I had answered all questions in very general terms.

Things are going well in Angola. They achieved good progress in their first year of independence. There's been a lot of building and they are developing health facilities. In 1976 they produced 80,000 tons of coffee. Transportation means are also being developed. Currently between 200,000 and 400,000 tons of coffee are still in warehouses. In our talks with [Angolan President Agostinho] Neto we stressed the absolute necessity of achieving a level of economic development comparable to what had

the prospects of the liberation movement in Zimbabwe can only improve. It is possible that Angola, Mozambique and Zambia will move forward together. The ZAPU must establish its own armed forces as soon as possible. There are today 6,000 ZAPU men in Angola, and one could make an Army out of them. That would facilitate uniting the ZAPU and the ZANU. I told Neto about this and he agreed. Above all that would be a way to roll back China's influence. Nkomo also understands this. He is very intelligent and talks to Samora Machel a great deal. Unfortunately he is very fat, and so his health is not good.

I told him and others that the personal safety of all the liberation leaders was in danger. The imperialists would be moved to try and murder them all. They've already murdered N'Gouabi and Moyo. Because of this it is absolutely necessary to take steps to increase security measures for the leaders.

The liberation struggle in Africa has a great future. From a historical perspective the facts are that the imperialists cannot turn things back. The liberation struggle is the most moral thing in existence. If the socialist states take the right positions, they could gain a lot of influence. Here is where we can strike heavy blows against the imperialists. The liberation army in Katanga [Shaba] is led by a general. These people used to favor Katanga's secession from Zaire. Later they went to Angola, were trained by the Portuguese and fought against the MPLA, until they went over to Neto's side; now they could not fall out with Neto. They are good soldiers. Its military leader is a general in the gendarmerie who now wants to make a revolution in Zaire. These people are now saying that they are good Marxist-Leninists and that they no longer advocate the secession of Katanga. They went off in four different directions with four battalions. We didn't know about this, and we think that the Angolans didn't either. The frontline states were split 50/50 in favor of supporting the Katanga liberation movement. We gave them a categorical explanation that Cuba was in no way involved in this. The armed groups are marching forward. Their commander sends an open [public] daily telegram to the Angolan leadership and to the Soviet and Cuban embassies in Luanda describing his advances and asking for support. The Yankees are wavering.

They know very well that there are no Cuban units involved. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is charged with speaking to the French and Belgian ambassadors to protest against their countries' involvement and to pressure them to stop. We want them to be worried, so when they are organizing their mercenaries, and to think that our troops are very near.

Angola has a certain moral duty, and a desire, to support the Katanga liberation movement. They also desire it because the Angolan leadership is angered by [Zairian leader] Mobutu [Sese Seko]'s behavior. Angola has asked us and the Soviets to give them weapons for delivery to the Katangans. We should wait for developments, however. Mobutu is an incompetent and weak politician. It's possible that he will not survive this crisis. The frontline states are now in favor of supporting Katanga, while Angola favors direct aid. We don't want to be involved in order not to give the USA an excuse to intervene. As I mentioned we will try to put pressure on Belgium and France.

It will be a great event if Mobutu falls.

In the People's Republic of the Congo there is a confusing situation following N'Gouabi's murder. The interior and defense ministers are competing for the leadership. There are also pro-Westerners in the military council. It is practically certain that the rightists murdered N'Gouabi. But the left wing was also dissatisfied with him as well. In other words there was a relatively uncertain situation there. We sent Comrade Almeyda to the funeral, and hope that the situation will stabilize. We were also asked to send a military unit to Brazzaville. The internal problems of the country must be solved by the Congolese themselves however. We have stationed a small military unit in Pointe Noire, and another one in Cabinda.

There were several requests for military aid from various sides: [Libyan leader Moammar] Qaddafi, Mengistu, and the Congolese leaders. During our stay in Africa we sent Carlos Rafael Rodriguez to Moscow to confer with our Soviet comrades and to Havana for consultations with our leadership. In order to find the best solution we must think through this question quietly and thoroughly and consider it in terms of the overall situation of the socialist camp. Above all we must do something for Mengistu...[section on Ethiopia printed in "Horn of Africa Crisis" section—ed.]...With regard to military aid for the PR Congo and

the Libyans we have not yet come to a decision.

I had consultations with [Houari] Boumedienne in Algeria and asked for his opinion. He assured me that Algeria would never abandon Libya. Algeria is very concerned with the situation in the Mediterranean because of its security interests. It is in favor of supporting Libya, as long as military aid is confined to the socialist camp. That is not only a question between Cuba and Algeria. If we are to succeed in strengthening the revolution in Libya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, the PDRY [People's Democratic Republic of Yemen] and Angola we must have an integrated strategy for the whole African continent.

Angola is becoming closer to the socialist camp. It bought 1.5 billion rubles of weapons from the Soviets. Boumedienne thinks that [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat is totally lost to us. In Syria there is also no leftist movement any more, especially after the Syrians defeated the progressive powers and the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] in Lebanon.

[Indian President] Indira Gandhi gambled away the elections.

In Africa we can inflict a severe defeat on the entire reactionary imperialist policy. We can free Africa from the influence of the USA and of the Chinese. The developments in Zaire are also very important. Libya and Algeria have large territories, Ethiopia has a great revolutionary potential. So there is a great counterweight to Sadat's betrayal in Egypt. It is even possible that Sadat will be turned around and that the imperialist influence in the Middle East can be turned back.

This must all be discussed with the Soviet Union. We follow its policies and its example.

We estimate that Libya's request is an expression of trust. One should not reject their request. Cuba cannot help it alone. [subsequent sections omitted—ed.]

[Source: *Stiftung "Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv"* (Berlin), DY30 JIV 2/201/1292; document obtained by Christian F. Ostermann (National Security Archive); translated for Carter-Brezhnev Project by David Welch with revisions by Ostermann; copy on file at National Security Archive.]

Moscow and the Angolan Crisis, 1974-1976: A New Pattern of Intervention

by Odd Arne Westad¹

For a period of roughly twenty years—from the formation of the Cuban-Soviet alliance in the early 1960s until the Red Army got bogged down in the valleys of Afghanistan in the early 1980s—the Soviet Union was an interventionist power with global aspirations. The peak of Soviet interventionism outside Eastern Europe was in the mid- and late 1970s, and coincided roughly with the rise of detente and the effects of the American defeat in Vietnam. This period witnessed significant efforts by Moscow to expand its power abroad, especially in the Middle East, around the Indian Ocean, and in Southern Africa. But it was also a period in which the traditional cautiousness of Soviet Third World diplomacy was cast away at a peril: By the mid-1980s, many Russians had started to question the costs of the Kremlin's imperial ambitions.²

What was behind the new Soviet interventionism of the 1970s? Which perceptions and motives led Soviet leaders to involve themselves deeply into the affairs of countries outside Europe or their immediate border areas? As the doors to the archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) open, albeit slowly, we are getting new insights into the old problems of Moscow's foreign policy behavior through CPSU documents on a multitude of international crises. This article attempts to address some of the issues relating to Soviet interventions by revisiting one of the main African conflicts of the 1970s: the 1975-76 Angolan civil war.

In the dominant realist interpretation of international relations, the Soviet elite is seen primarily as pursuing a set of interests on the international arena. The primary interest of the elite is the preservation of the Soviet state—an interest which in foreign policy leads to caution at most times, and expansion when possible.³

Was it the *possibilities* for expansion within the world system of states which prompted Moscow's involvement in Africa and Asia? Some analysts, such as Francis Fukuyama, have argued that it was the *U.S.* foreign policy of detente and the defeat in Vietnam which more than anything else paved the way for Soviet expansionism.

military wing—the FAPLA (*Forças Armadas Populares para Libertação de Angola*)—took control of most of the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda in the north. In the main Angolan cities, MPLA organizers, now free to act, started setting up strong para-military groups in populous slum areas, drawing on the appeal of their message of social revolution.²²

Moscow in early December 1974 drew up an elaborate plan for supplying the MPLA with heavy weapons and large amounts of ammunition, using Congo (Brazzaville) as the point of transit. Ambassador Afanasenko got the task of convincing the Congolese of their interest in cooperating. This was not an easy task. Congo had never been a close ally of the Soviet Union—in the ruling military junta were many who sympathized with the Chinese—and it had for some time sponsored both Neto's MPLA rivals and a Cabinda separatist group. The latter issue was particularly problematic, and Agostinho Neto had on several occasions criticized the Congolese leader Colonel Marien Nguabi for his support of Cabindan independence. Still, on December 4 Nguabi gave his go-ahead for the Soviet operation.²³

Though noting the flexibility of the Congolese government, Afanasenko knew that the job of reinforcing the MPLA would not be easy. In a report to Moscow he underlined the problems the MPLA faced on the military side. Both the FNLA, now joined by Daniel

that the rival movements, or at least UNITA, would return to the negotiating table and become part of an MPLA-led coalition government. The Soviet experts did not believe that the United States would stage a massive intervention, nor did they give much credence to MPLA reports of direct South African or Zairean involvement. Their main worry was the Chinese, who had stepped up their FNLA assistance pro-

tions, well knowing that such a demilitarization of the conflict—albeit with a MPLA government in place—was what the Soviets had wanted all along. Havana knew how to placate the great power, although, as we will see below, they exacted their price for doing so.⁵⁷

The second lesson the Soviets believed they had learnt from the Angolan adventure was that the Soviet Union can and must rebuild and reform local anti-capitalist groups in crisis areas. The MPLA, local Soviet observers postulated in 1976, was saved from its own follies by advice and assistance from Moscow, which not only helped it win the war, but also laid the foundation for the building of a “vanguard party.” The Angolan movement had earlier been plagued by “careerists and fellow-travellers,” but, due to Soviet guidance, the “internationalists” were in ascendance. These new leaders—men like Lopo do Nascimento and Nito Alves—understood that the MPLA was part of an international revolutionary movement led by Moscow and that they therefore both then and in the future depended on Soviet support.⁵⁸

It was these “internationalists” who Moscow wanted to assist in building a new MPLA, patterned on the experience of the CPSU. Noting the poor state of the MPLA organization in many areas, the Soviet party-building experts suggested that this was the field in which do Nascimento, Alves, and others should concentrate their activities. By taking the lead in constructing the party organization they would also be the future leaders of the Marxist-Leninist party in Angola.⁵⁹

The Soviets supplied very large amounts of political propaganda to be disseminated among MPLA supporters and used in the training of cadre. The ordinary embassy staff sometimes found the amounts a bit difficult to handle—a plane-load of brochures with Brezhnev’s speech at the 25th CPSU congress, two plane-loads of anti-Maoist literature—but in general the embassy could put the materials to good use (or so they claimed in reports to Moscow). By summer 1976 they had run out of Lenin portraits, and had to request a new supply from the CPSU

Propaganda Department.⁶⁰

The transformation of the MPLA turned out to be an infinitely more difficult task for the Soviets than the dissemination of Lenin busts. Neto’s independence of mind and his claim to be a Marxist theoretician in his own right rankled the Russians and made it increasingly difficult for them to control the MPLA as soon as the military situation stabilized. Some of the Angolan leaders whom Moscow disliked, for instance FAPLA veteran commander and defense minister Iko Carreira and MPLA general secretary Lucio Lara, who was strongly influenced by the European left, strengthened their positions after the war was over. According to the embassy, the influence of such people delayed both the necessary changes in the MPLA and the finalization of the development plans on which the Soviets and Cubans were advising.⁶¹

Differences between the Soviet and Cuban perceptions of the political situation in the MPLA did not make things easier for Moscow. Part of the price which Castro exacted for his general deference to the Soviets on the Angolan issue was the right to argue for Angolan political solutions which were to his liking. Preeminent in Castro’s political equation was the leadership of Agostinho Neto: whom he considered a brilliant man and a great African leader, as well as a personal friend. The Cubans therefore missed no opportunity to impress the Soviets with their view that the MPLA president was the only solution to Angola’s leadership problems, well knowing of Moscow’s suspicions of him. “We have the highest regard for President Neto,” Raúl Castro told Soviet Vice-Minister of Defense I.F. Ponomarenko. “Cuba wants to strengthen Neto’s authority,” the head of the Cuban party’s International Department, Raúl Valdés Vivó, told the Soviet chargé in May.⁶²

The Cubans were, however, always clever at sweetening their tough position in support of Neto by underlining that the Soviet ulenn of thuldrseas I.gola’ivsrlicemy chiernational Deal

From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 65-69, has a useful account of CIA initiatives on Angola.

²⁸ Slipchenko to MO, 6 February 1975, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 68, d. 1982, ll. 48-54, 51; Slipchenko to MO, 24 August 1975, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 68, d. 1982, ll. 238-246.

²⁹ Embassy, Brazzaville to MO, 14 April 1975, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 68, d. 1941, ll. 50-53, 53. For the relationship among the Angolan groups, see Franz-Wilhelm Heimer, *The Decolonization Conflict in Angola, 1974-76: An Essay in Political Sociology* (1982, 1985, 2005) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

Katz, *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Neil Matheson, *The "Rules of the Game" of Superpower Military Intervention in the Third World, 1975-1980* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982).

⁵⁵ G.A. Zverev to MO, 1 March 1976, political



From the diary of
E.I. Afanasenko

SECRET
Copy No. 2
Ser. No. 181
21 July 1975

Record of Conference with
President of MPLA Agostinho NETO
4 July 1975

We received a visit from President of the MPLA Agostinho Neto. I informed him that the Central Committee of the CPSU was closely following the development of circumstances in Angola. The Soviet people are interested in the victory of democratic forces in Angola. In 1975, significant aid has been provided to the MPLA. Pursuant to instructions from the Central Committee of the CPSU, we had a conference with the President of the PRC [People's Republic of the Congo] M. Nguabi, in which the issue of rendering aid to the MPLA was discussed.

Neto thanked the Central Committee of the CPSU for the rendering of assistance. He stated that the leadership of the MPLA had recently expanded its contacts with governments of the African countries. In the course of these discussions, the MPLA is attempting to increase the number of its supporters in Africa. One of the immediate objectives of the MPLA is to prevent the discussion of the issue of Cabinda at the upcoming assembly concerned about the fact that this year [Ugandan leader] Idi Amin, who collaborates closely with [Zairian leader] Mobutu [Sese Seko], will become the Chairman of the OAU [Organization of African Unity]. We anticipate, said Neto, that the president of Uganda will come forward at the OAU assembly with a proposal to discuss the issue of Cabinda. Our meetings in Nigeria and our ongoing negotiations in the Congo with president M. Nguabi, Member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the KPT [the Russian acronym for the Congolese Workers' Party] A. Lopez, member of the Central Committee of the KPT Obami-Itu, and Foreign Minister [Charles-David] Ganao, said Neto, are directed to this very question.

Negotiations between the MPLA and the KPT are proceeding successfully. An agreement has been reached to maintain ongoing consultations between the MPLA and KPT with the aim of developing a common policy and the conduct of joint efforts in Africa and Angola. In order to enhance

propaganda efforts prior to the establishment of radio broadcasting facilities in the country, broadcast of the radio program "Struggle of Angola" will be resumed in Brazzaville.

The president of the MPLA stated that one of the main points in the negotiations with the KPT was the issue of Cabinda. The PRC made the decision not to support the demand of autonomy for Cabinda at the OAU assembly which had been advanced by the Congo and Zaire last February. As to the change of their position on the Cabinda question, the Congolese assured the MPLA delegation that they would terminate assistance to the nationalist Cabindi organization FLEC. Inasmuch as the parties had reached an agreement on the Cabinda issue, the PRC allowed the MPLA to use its territory for the transport of arms, military equipment and other cargo supplied to the Movement by the Soviet Union and other friendly countries. In addition, the Congolese confirmed their decision to close their land border with Cabinda for the MPLA. In order to export supplies to Angola, they allotted the port and airfield at Pointe-Noire. Transportation of cargo is to be carried out by the land and sea forces of the MPLA. Neto was outspoken in his appraisal of the results of the negotiations with the Congolese. He emphasized that the refusal of the Congo to support the Cabindi demand for autonomy represented an important step forward in the normalization of relations between the MPLA and the KPT.

The president of the MPLA proceeded to characterize the domestic situation in Angola. He pointed out that the existence of three national liberation movements in the country was creating a favorable opportunity for reactionary forces in the country, which in turn was leading to a further intensification of political, social, and economic conflicts. Neto pointed to two groups of reactionary forces acting against Angola. The first group he attributed to domestic Portuguese reactionaries. This group is fomenting tensions in the country and provoking a mass emigration of the white population from Angola. The departure of large numbers of technical specialists has resulted in serious damage to the country's economy. The white reactionaries are capitalizing on the support of the present Supreme Commissar of Angola and a large portion of the Portuguese officers. The second group of reactionary forces consists of foreign reac-

tionaries. Neto also included the FNLA in that group.

The president of the MPLA said that the military conflict which took place last June demonstrated the strength of the MPLA's military detachments. Notwithstanding the numerical superiority of the FNLA's forces, the MPLA is no weaker than the FNLA in military terms. Neto declared that the MPLA commands great political influence in the country which is continuing to grow. At the same time, he acknowledged that two northwest provinces of Angola have been controlled by the FNLA since last June. In addition, UNITA commands major influence in Bie and the surrounding regions, where a large portion of the country's population lives.

Neto characterized UNITA as an organization representing the interests of white farmers with reactionary leanings. However, UNITA does not command significant military forces and is attempting to play a role as an intermediary between the MPLA and the FNLA. The president of the MPLA spoke in favor of a tactical alliance with UNITA. The desirability of such an alliance was advocated to the leadership of the MPLA by numerous heads of African governments, first and foremost, by the PRC.

The president of the MPLA expressed doubts about fulfillment of all the agreements signed in Nakuru (Kenya). One of the reasons for the likely breakdown of those agreements is the aggression of the FNLA, which is unlikely to give up its armed provocations. All of this, Neto emphasized, requires the MPLA to continue the development of its armed forces. In this connection it is counting on aid from the Soviet Union. The MPLA has decided to address the Central Committee of the CPSU with a request to furnish additional military and financial aid. At the end of this July, an MPLA delegation will be dispatched to the USSR, headed by member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the MPLA Iko Kareira (commander in chief of the MPLA).

Neto reported that last June, a delegation of the MPLA visited the PRC [People's Republic of China] at the invitation of the Chinese government. Zambia, Tanzania, and the PRC [People's Republic of the Congo] also took part in the organization of that trip. In the course of negotiations in the PRC, the Chinese assured their delegation that they would terminate all forms of

and to achieve an internal settlement on the model of the internal settlement of Rhodesia with the aid of puppets like Chipanga.

The Secretary of the CC MPLA-PT declared that the People's Republic of Angola will continue to support SWAPO. The Angolan leadership, he said, considers that for the peaceful resolution of the Namibian problem the Republic of South Africa should: officially define a deadline for the transfer of Walvis Bay to the authorities of Namibia, after declaring the independence of that country; for a period of transition draw off its troops, which are now concentrated on the border with Angola, to bases in the South of Namibia; immediately liberate all political prisoners in Namibia. P. Luvualu likewise remarked that Angola concurs with the proposed role of the UN in the transitional period in Namibia.

In conclusion P. Luvualu underscored that the maneuvers of Western countries around Angola will not succeed in forcing the MPLA-PT to turn from the path it has chosen. We, he declared, have made a firm and final choice of friends. This is the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other socialist countries. With the assistance and support of socialist states, and first and foremost of the Soviet Union and Cuba, Angola will follow its chosen path.

[I] thanked the Secretary of the CC MPLA-PT for this information. From my side I handed him the text of the Declaration of the Soviet Government on Africa (in Portuguese). I underscored that this is an important political action in defense of the independence of African governments, in the solidarity of the USSR in the struggle of the peoples of the continent against the imperialist interference in their affairs. I noted that the appraisal contained in it of the situation in Africa coincides with the position of the People's Republic of Angola. Then I gave him a translation into Portuguese of the Pravda article regarding the external policies of the USA.

I handed [him] a film on the first congress of the MPLA-PT and the sojourn in the People's Republic of Angola of the Soviet party delegation headed by Comrade A.P. Kirilenko.

P. Luvualu expressed his gratitude to the Soviet government for its unflagging support of progressive forces in Africa. He said that he would immediately bring the text of the Declaration to the attention of

the leadership of the People's Republic of Angola. He likewise expressed his gratitude for the gift of the CC CPSU.

In the course of our exchange of opinions on international problems P. Luvualu asked that I give information about the situation in South Yemen after the unsuccessful government coup.

Embassy advisor S. S. Romanov was present during this discussion.

USSR AMBASSADOR TO THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA
/s/ V. LOGINOV

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 75, d. 1148, ll. 71-75; translated by Sally Kux; copy on file at National Security Archive.]

**Memorandum of Conversation between
Minister-counselor of the Soviet
Embassy in Havana M. Manasov and
Cuban Communist Party CC member
Raul Valdes Vivo, 7 May 1979**

From the journal of SECRET
M.A. Manasov copy no. 3
re: no 265
"24" May 1979

RECORD OF DISCUSSION
with member of the CC
Com[munist]Party of Cuba
comr. Raul Valdes Vivo

7 May 1979

I met with R.V. Vivo in the CC of the Party and, referring to the instructions of the Soviet ambassador, informed him of the discussion in the International Section of the CC CPSU with the members of the Executive Committee of the Jamaican People's National Party (PNP).

R.V. Vivo, having thanked me for the information, noted the significance of this meeting, which will enable the development of the connection between the CPSU and the PNP and, first and foremost, opens the possibility for the preparation of PNP cadres in the Soviet Union.

Then, in the course of the discussion, R.V. Vivo spoke about his recent trip to several African countries, which was carried out on the orders of F. Castro. This trip was undertaken, continued my interlocutor, because of the fact that the information which

we had received from our embassies in a number of African countries is of a subjective nature. In this connection I [Valdes Vivo] was given the task of becoming acquainted with the situation on location, to have discussions with the leaders of Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Nigeria, and likewise with the Soviet ambassadors in these countries, in order to receive

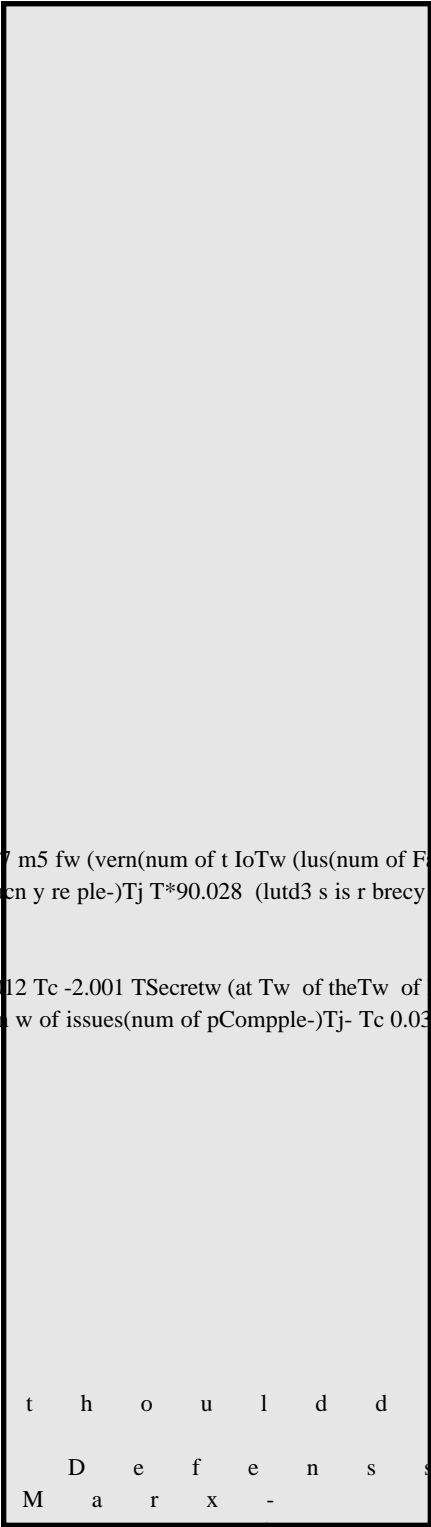
tries.

The active interference of England in the affairs of Zambia may ensure the victory of the puppet government, which would possibly lead to a conflict between ZANU and ZAPU if the unity of their actions are not achieved, noted my interlocutor.

He reported that the armed forces of the ZANU and the ZAPU include in total 24 thousand people (12 thousand in each organization), but unfortunately, these forces are as yet inactive. In the ranks of mercenaries there are 3 thousand blacks and 2 thousand whites.

R.V. Vivo briefly set forth the content of his discussion with the Soviet ambassador in Mozambique. According to his words, during the discussion of the situation in southern Africa, our ambassador noted that according to the theory of Marxism-Leninism, it is impossible to accelerate events in a country where there is not a revolutionary situation and where there is not civilization. "To that I responded in jest to the Soviet ambassador," said R.V. Vivo, "that if comrades L.I. Brezhnev and F. Castro decide that our countries will take part in the operations in Rhodesia, then we will participate in them."

By my request R.V. Vivo briefly informed me about the work of the last plenum of the CC Comparty of Cuba.



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ANATOMY OF A THIRD WORLD COLD WAR CRISIS: NEW EAST-BLOC EVIDENCE ON THE HORN OF AFRICA, 1977-1978

Editor's Note: The Russian and East German documents presented below illuminate the "other side"—other sides, really—of one of the key events that hastened the collapse of U.S.-Soviet detente in the mid-1970s: the Horn of Africa Crisis of 1977-78, in which a regional rivalry between Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as domestic political instability in both countries, became entangled with super-power rivalry and competition for influence in the Third World. While Ethiopia and Somalia had a long-standing dispute over their borders, the immediate causes of the crisis dated to 1974, when a leftist revolution overthrew Ethiopian leader Emperor Haile Selassie, who had been a pillar of Western influence for decades, and to early February 1977, when the Ethiopian revolution took a more militant course when Haile Mengistu Mariam seized control of the ruling "Derg" and eliminated his chief rivals for power, including Teferi Bante, the revolution's erstwhile leader.

The Ethiopian Revolution opened up new possibilities for the Soviet Union to expand its influence in the region, where its chief ally had been Somalia, with whom it had concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. As the documents show, the Soviet Union and its allies, notably Cuban leader Fidel Castro, attempted persistently to keep both Ethiopia and Somalia within the socialist camp. This,

To the extent that the communist states shared information with each other and with Moscow to devise and coordinate policy, as it is assumed they did, Castro's account provided an excellent report card for Mengistu. Furthermore, as it is known from other sources that Castro later flew to Moscow to report on his trip, one may presume that he presented the same glowing assessment of Mengistu to the Soviet leadership.

Mengistu also indulges in a diplomatic contribution to widen the emerging rift between Somalia and the socialist states by discrediting the revolutionary potential of its leadership. In one record of conversation held on March 18, his head of foreign affairs, Maj. Berhanu Bayeh, quotes the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* to point out to Sinitin the possibility of Somalia joining Sudan, Egypt and Syria in a unified political command. He adds that Barre had been on record declaring that Somalia achieved its revolution independently and can acquire help from other countries besides the Soviet Union and its allies. Given the recent Soviet loss of Egypt and Sudan, this information was probably intended to arouse Moscow's apprehension.

Supporting his own professed commitment to Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Union with practical deeds, at the end of the following April Mengistu ordered the closure of the U.S. communications station in Asmara, the U.S. Information Service (USIS) center, and the American military assistance advisory offices, and abrogated the Ethio-U.S. Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement—the official treaty of alliance with the United States dating from 1953. It is also remarkable how Mengistu was apparently successful in projecting himself to the Soviets as a genuine, pro-Soviet, revolutionary leader constantly challenged by nationalist elements within his own Council. In one May 1978 conversation report, Rotislav Ulianovskii, an influential senior Third World policy analyst in the CPSU, instructs his East German counterpart Friedel Trappen, arguing:

Mengistu deserves to be regarded by us as a man who represents internation-

alist positions. By contrast to him, Berhanu Bayeh and Fikre Selassie as well as Legesse Asfaw and others are marked by nationalism although they are faithful to him . . . I emphasize again, we have to apply maximum caution, circumspection and tactfulness toward Mengistu so that the nationalists will not grasp him by the throat.

According to the views of many Ethiopians, including former insiders in the Mengistu regime such as Dawit (cited above), nothing could be further from the truth except for the remark on loyalty. First of all, between February and November 1977 Mengistu had consolidated absolute power. Secondly, he was raised and trained in the traditional Amharised Ethiopian military tradition and therefore, by background, the most ardent nationalist of them all. After the revolution he had repeatedly and successfully maneuvered between dressing up as an ideologue and as a nationalist whenever each was politically expedient. Mengistu evidently fostered this misperception apparently to bolster his own image (as an internationalist) and, at the same time, to limit demands and pressures from the socialist community.

Interestingly, Mengistu's regime repeatedly employed the "China card" to attract Soviet support. In one document discussing Ethiopia's desire to acquire U.S.-manufactured arms from Vietnam with Soviet help, Berhanu emphasizes that "in contrast to the past the PMAC intends to consider this issue with the Vietnamese directly, rather than running to the People's Republic of China [PRC] for mediation." The reference to the past alluded to the leftist elements of the Military Council who were liquidated in the coup. In another conversation report, in July 1977, Cuba's military specialist in Addis Ababa, General Arnoldo Ochoa, conveys to Soviet Ambassador Ratanov that Mengistu had personally assured him about the decline in Ethiopian-Chinese relations following the PMAC's finding that the PRC was providing military assistance to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Mengistu, according to Ochoa, had explained the decision to limit all relations

with Beijing to the minimum and to devise measures against Chinese ideological penetration in Ethiopia. That same month, yet another conversation record, this time between Mengistu and Ratanov, reveals Soviet apprehension about the dissemination of anti-Soviet (Maoist) literature in Addis Ababa. That September, the Ethiopian Foreign Minister Felleke Gedle Giorgis "especially dwelled on the Chinese position on the Ethiopian Revolution" in his talks with Ratanov. Admitting to PRC economic aid at the initial stage of the revolution, he noted the changing Chinese stand as the revolution deepened (perhaps alluding to the forging of closer ties with the USSR). China then began to render comprehensive assistance to Somalia during the military conflict. By February 1978, according to a joint report by the CPSU Third Africa Department and the Political Department of the GDR Embassy in Moscow, the Soviets noted (presumably with satisfaction) Beijing's hostile attitudes toward the Ethiopian leadership as well as the minimal popular support enjoyed by pro-Maoist groups in the country.

Another noteworthy issue discussed in three documents concerns "Operation Torch"—an alleged imperialist conspiracy spearheaded by the CIA to assassinate Ethiopian leaders and destabilize the revolution in September-October 1977 with the help of regional forces hostile to the country. Again allegedly, Ethiopian authorities received a letter revealing the pending plot from unknown sources in Africa

letter provides the names of two American officials, alleged masterminds of the plot, with their ranks and positions at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. If it is true, as Paul Henze asserts in this publication, that even the names are fictitious, it is odd that the Ethiopian authorities convened a socialist ambassadors' meeting in panic instead of easily verifying through elementary diplomatic inquiry and concluding that it had been a fabrication. The theory of a charade—a make-believe drama enacted on false information—will thus have to include the Ethiopians as well as Soviet authorities as actors if it is to be considered a plausible explanation.

In addition, a few other documents provide accounts of some early reservations the Soviet Union and its allies had about Mengistu's handling of certain issues. It should be noted that in earlier Western writings, some of these reservations were usually associated with a later period, after Gorbachev assumed power in Moscow in 1985. But as early as December 1977, a conversation between the East Germans and Ratanov points toward the need for Ethiopia to adopt a mixed economy along the lines of the Soviet NEP (New Economic Program) of the 1920s. The leadership's perception of the national bourgeoisie as an enemy of the revolution and the alienation and exclusion of this group as well as of the liberal-minded functionaries of the state apparatus from the economy and national life is criticized as a dangerous trend with negative consequences. In another conversation the following February, a central player in the CPSU's Africa policy group, Boris Ponomarev, expressed his concern over extremes in the Ethiopian Revolution—the mass executions of prisoners and the government's Red Terror—directing the transmittal of these concerns to Mengistu using various channels.

Finally in this section, the issue of Moscow's relentless prodding of Mengistu to set up a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party to institutionalize the revolution as well as to transform the country into a reliable Soviet ally is a subject addressed by many authors and the focus of my own study.⁵ Primarily

because of Mengistu's resistance, and to the disappointment of the Soviets, the party didn't come into existence until 1984. Two documents presented here refer to Soviet anxiety about repeated delays from the Ethiopian side in accepting the arrival of "a specially selected group of experienced CPSU comrades" to help in the party formation process. One of them notes that "Mengistu apparently has no concept of the cooperation with the advisers [and that] it is necessary to convince him that they could be a real help and relief." Obviously, at this early stage in the revolution, the Soviets did not realize that Mengistu was intentionally preventing Moscow's infiltration into his power structure before completing a prolonged process of weeding out potential contenders and adversaries.

II. Ethio-Somali War

A substantial number of the documents presented here address the Soviet bloc's involvement in the conflict. Indeed, for Moscow, Barre's aggression against Ethiopia, which began in early 1977 under the guise of a Western Somali Liberation Movement and which escalated into full-scale intervention the following July, was both a welcome event and a potentially dangerous development. On one hand, it provided the Soviets with the opportunity to rapidly penetrate Ethiopia, the prized state of the Horn, while, on the other hand, it entailed a potentially painful risk of losing another state where Moscow had already built a presence: Somalia. The documents help in tracing Moscow's policy in the region which began in 1976 as a strategy of courting "Socialist Ethiopia" without disturbing its longstanding friendship with Somalia. By 1978 it had gone through a complete somersault with the Soviet ejection from Mogadishu and its entrenchment in Addis Ababa after a massive supply of arms which decided the outcome of the conflict in favor of Ethiopia. My comments, however, will only briefly focus on three particular issues.

One is on the 16 March 1977 Cuban-Yemen effort at creating a Marxist-Leninist confederation consisting of

Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Yemen. In his meeting with Honecker the following month, Castro provides a detailed report about the attitudes of the two leaders, Mengistu and Barre, toward the proposal. Mengistu is referred to in glowing terms while Barre is described as a chauvinist whose principal idea is nationalism, not socialism. The report vividly shows Castro trapped as a victim of his own ideology. Having erroneously assumed an absolute connection between perceived global trends—depicting socialism as the world's dynamic force—and the local situation in the Horn, he had expected a successful outcome to his efforts. His sharp disappointment in Barre's personality, on which the report dwells, should have been subordinated to the more crucial realization that national and ethnic rivalries peculiar to the region had doomed the confederation from the outset. Also in this document, the Cuban leader, perhaps for the first time, forcefully raised the impending dilemma facing the Soviet bloc in the Horn of Africa. He tells Honecker, "I see a great danger . . . if the socialist countries help Ethiopia, they will lose Siad Barre's friendship. If they don't, the Ethiopian revolution will founder." Faced with an either/or situation within six-eight months, Moscow bet on Ethiopia at the risk of irretrievably losing Somalia.

Another issue warranting mention is a probable justification for the Kremlin's massive air- and sealift of military equipment (worth about one billion dollars), 12,000 Cuban combat troops, and about 1500 Soviet military advisers to Ethiopia in November-December 1977. This measure immediately followed Somalia's unilateral abrogation of the 1974 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR. Why was such an overwhelming show of force necessary? Moscow's apparent objective in this spectacular move was to guarantee the swift and decisive end of the Ethio-Somali war with a quick and unconditional withdrawal of Somali forces from Ethiopian territory. Two documents, the joint memorandum of the CPSU Third Africa Department and the Political Department of the GDR Embassy in Moscow, and the So-

viet Foreign Ministry/CPSU CC International Department report on the Somali-Ethiopian conflict, shed light on a probable motive: "to avoid a situation analogous to the one in the Middle East"—where Sadat was taking his own spectacular initiative in making an unprecedented visit to Jerusalem—from arising in the Horn.

According to the documents, the Soviet Union wanted to avert at all costs the internationalization of the conflict and the possible involvement of the UN Security Council which it believed would be in the interest of Western powers. Such an outcome, Moscow argued, would be possible if an armistice were reached without the withdrawal of Somali troops from occupied Ethiopian territory while Western powers simultaneously pushed for Security Council involvement. A takeover by the Security Council, moreover, would delay a resolution of the conflict in a similar fashion as in the Middle East, possibly increasing the danger for superpower confrontation as the West and other unfriendly states demanded Soviet exit from the region as a precondition and blame it for causing the conflict. The significance of this logic is better appreciated when recalling Sadat's dramatic announcement in early November that he would visit Israel. It was a move that crushed plans for multilateral talks on the Middle East at Geneva and suddenly removed the Soviets from a direct role in the Arab-Israeli peace talks. In the face of such a setback, Moscow apparently showed its determination to anchor just at the other end of the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia in a desperate attempt to balance, in some degree, the loss of influence in Egypt by consolidating a strong presence in the greater Middle East conflict zone.

The final issue of interest in this section addresses one of Mengistu's first reactions about the possible Soviet use of Ethiopian port facilities in the likely event of the Somalia's denying Moscow access to the port of Berbera. He addresses this issue with Ratanov in a conversation dated 29 July 1977. He, interestingly, doesn't provide a clear cut commitment to provide the USSR access to its ports. Instead he states an

understanding of the Soviet dilemma: rendering military assistance to Ethiopia at the risk of losing its opportunity in Somalia. He also articulates Ethiopia's revolutionary indebtedness and obligation to take Moscow's interest in the region into account. The document doesn't make clear whether he was responding to a Soviet request; but, particularly if he raised the issue on his own initiative, the fact he makes such an indirect commitment appears to have been subtle and timely maneuver to attract Moscow toward Ethiopia.

III. The Eritrean Secessionists

An interesting paradox in the Ethiopian revolution can be noted. With the exception of the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) (an entity associated with the remnants of the Selassie era), the other four major organizations which struggled to topple Mengistu's regime all ironically professed allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, just like their principal adversary. While two of them, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the All Ethiopian Workers' Movement (MEISON), all but perished during the violent confrontations of the late 1970s, the other two, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) ultimately succeeded in coordinating their efforts to renounce Marxism after the late 1980s, dislodge Mengistu from power in 1991, and establish two independent states—Eritrea and the Federal Democratic

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actors involved in the decisions that shaped political outcomes.

Interestingly, the documents from the Russian archives appear to have been carefully selected to elide significant “blank spots” even on the issues and period covered. By contrast, the former East German materials, though limited in number, seem more insightful in the concentrated details they provide on one issue in particular: the Ethio-Eritrean high-level mediation.

Nevertheless, within the two-year period covered in these documents there are significant issues that find scant coverage. From the Soviet side these include materials pertaining to Moscow’s intelligence assessment and possible involvement during the Ethiopian power struggle; relations with organizations other than the PMAC; military reports from General Petrov and others in the Ogaden; and early military planning involvement in Eritrea. From the East German side, materials related to its assistance in restructuring the Ethiopian security services would be of high interest. Beyond 1978, So-

charade of negotiations. Unfortunately the documents available to us here do not include parallel reports of dealings with the Ethiopian delegation that was in Moscow during the same period, but it appears that the Somalis and the Ethiopians never even engaged in preliminary face-to-face talks. The reason why is easy to see in written statements each delegation gave the Soviets of its country's position, for neither left any room for compromise or even discussion with the other.

While the independence of erstwhile French colony of Djibouti caused immediate worry, both Ethiopia and Somalia behaved with caution. Ratanov did not react to an offer by Mengistu to support intervention in Djibouti. Ethiopia lacked the strength to intervene alone.

The biggest problem looming in the background of the discussions reported in these documents is Eritrea. It was already the most intractable problem of all for Moscow in its relations with Mengistu. Ethiopian military performance in meeting the Somali invasion was inhibited by the predicament which Mengistu had got himself into in Eritrea. The Soviets were not impressed with the performance of Mengistu's army in Eritrea. An East German document from December 1977 reveals what appears to be Ambassador Ratanov's irritation at Mengistu's intransigence on Eritrea as well as the hope that somehow a basis for negotiation with the rebel movement there might be developed. This became a major Soviet aim during the next decade and led to repeated East German efforts (and some Italian Communist attempts) to bring Eritrean and Ethiopian Marxists together.

In response to Mengistu's urgent pleading, the Soviets agreed during July 1977 to send in urgently needed transport equipment to enable the Ethiopians to utilize some of the tanks and guns the Soviets had already provided as a result of agreements reached during Mengistu's December 1976 and May 1977 visits to Moscow, but the Kremlin was still apparently hoping to limit its commitment. Politburo minutes of 4 and 11 August 1977 confirm decisions

to provide Ethiopia support to defend itself against Somalia, but details have not been declassified. This, nevertheless, appears to be the point at which, de facto, Moscow finally made an irrevocable decision to opt for Ethiopia over Somalia.

Whether or not Ambassador Ratanov agreed with Moscow's continued insistence on further efforts to bring the Somalis and Ethiopians together in negotiations at "the expert level," he followed Moscow's orders and repeated this position as late as 23 August 1977 in a meeting with Cuban Ambassador to Ethiopia Perez Novoa. The Soviets were even more hesitant on the question of manpower, for the main purpose of this meeting with the Cuban envoy was to chastise him for permitting Cuban Gen. Ochoa to promise Mengistu that more Cuban technicians would be coming: "The decision to send Cuban personnel to Ethiopia does not depend on Havana, but on Moscow." Ratanov expressed the Soviet fear that a large-scale introduction of Cubans into Ethiopia could provoke the Eritreans or Somalis to call in troops from supportive Arab countries such as Egypt.

Taken as a whole, these Russian documents seem to have been made available to give a picture of a well-intentioned and relatively benign Soviet Union confronted with a situation it neither anticipated nor desired. The Soviets are shown to be surprised by the crisis, reluctant to choose between Ethiopia and Somalia, and trying to delay hard decisions as long as possible. This does not fit with the general atmosphere of Third World activism characteristic of the Soviet Union at this time. While there seems to be no reason to question the authenticity of the documents themselves, there are obviously large gaps in this documentation. We find nothing about differing views among Soviet officials or various elements in the Soviet bureaucracy, nor about different interpretations of developments between the Soviet establishments in Mogadishu² and Addis Ababa. We see no reflection of options and courses of action that must have been discussed in the Soviet embassies in the Horn and in Moscow as the crisis in-

tensified. We get no comparative evaluations of officials with whom the Soviets were dealing in Mogadishu and Addis Ababa.

The documents also lack any direct reference to intelligence. It is hard to

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ported East Berlin's claim to a *Sonderrolle* (special role) within the socialist camp as Moscow's most trusted and perhaps most significant ally. At the same time, increased trade with African countries decreased the GDR's dependence on Soviet economic support and provided valuable foreign currencies and markets. Finally, the GDR's increased presence on the African continent reflected a growing East German *Sendungsbewusstsein* (missionary zeal) among many SED officials who perceived the export of Soviet-style socialism to Africa to be a crucial element in the growth and eventual success of world communism.

East German leaders seized the opportunity for increased involvement on the Horn of Africa when the end of imperial rule in Ethiopia in 1974 threw the region into turmoil. Despite the success of the New Democratic Revolution in Ethiopia in April 1976, Moscow's position in Addis Ababa remained deeply troubled. To the south, Somalia's

**ABBREVIATIONS USED
IN THE DOCUMENTS**

APRF—Archive of the President of the Russian Federation

CC—Central Committee

CPSU—Communist Party of the Soviet Union

ELF-RC—Eritrean Liberation Front (Revolutionary Command)

EPLF—Eritrean People's Liberation Front

EPRP—Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party

EDU—Ethiopian Democratic Union

FTAI—French Territory of the Afars and Issas, i.e. Djibouti

MEISON—All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement

MFA—Ministry of Foreign Affairs

OAU—Organization of African Unity

PDRY—People's Democratic Republic of

can Military Advisory Group]. In the course of a demonstration of by a group organized by the Military Council on 3 January in Addis Ababa in connection with the above-noted pronouncements of Teferi Banti, anti-American performances by an array of orators were also seen, along with anti-American placards and so forth, although official declarations, including those by Teferi Banti himself, contained no such direct anti-American missives.

At the same time, Malin continued, the Ethiopian government displays an interest in continuing to receive various forms of assistance from the USA, especially military assistance, and frequently talks about the timetable for the delivery of military supplies and so forth. Prior to the change of regime in Ethiopia, American military assistance was at an annual level of 10-12 million American dollars and was administered preferentially on an uncompensated basis (deliveries of arms, ammunition, spare parts, etc.). In recent years, owing to the new policy of the USA in the area of military cooperation with foreign governments, American military assistance to Ethiopia has been granted preferentially on commercial terms, and it includes several types of more advanced armaments, in connection with which the value of the assistance has grown. Thus, the signing of a multi-year contract in 1975 envisions the supply of armaments, spare parts and ammunition in the approximate sum of 250 million American dollars. Already in 1976 the USA supplied Ethiopia with part of those arms, including several "Phantom" fighter planes. This year a supply of several additional fighter planes is contemplated, as well as supplies for the Ethiopian navy, and radar defenses.

Malin noted further that the new Ethiopian administration is pursuing a policy of seeking methods of receiving military assistance from other sources as well, possibly on terms more advantages to it, including from the USSR (he is aware of the visit by the Ethiopian military delegation to Moscow in December of 1976), as well as the PRC [People's Republic of China], although he doubts that the Chinese are capable of supplying Ethiopia with "serious armaments."

The USA, Malin emphasized, does not oppose the "socialist choice" of new Ethiopia and, as before, firmly supports the principal of respect for its territorial integrity,

and is against the partition of Ethiopia. The USA, it is understood, is interested in the guarantee of stability in that region and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

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ther contacts and exchanges of opinions regarding the questions discussed, as to which, for his part, he stated his agreement.

COUNSELOR-MINISTER TO THE
USSR EMBASSY IN ETHIOPIA
/s/ S. SINITSIN

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1638, ll. 28-33; translated by Bruce McDonald.]

**Third African Department, Soviet
Foreign Ministry, Information Report
on Somali-Ethiopian Territorial
Disputes, 2 February 1977**

SOMALIA'S TERRITORIAL
DISAGREEMENTS WITH ETHIOPIA
AND THE POSITION OF THE USSR
(Brief Information Sheet)

Somalia claims a significant part of Ethiopian territory (the Ogaden region) on the basis of the fact that a large number of Somalis live there (around 1 million people).

Ethiopia totally rejects the territorial claims of the SDR, basing its position on the fact that the borders with Somalia were set by international agreements, particularly the Agreement on the demilitarization of the Ethiopia-Somalia border, which was signed in 1908 between Ethiopia and Italy. They also refer to the resolution of the OAU which was accepted in Cairo in 1964, which says that all African states must recognize the borders which existed at the moment when they were granted independence.

The tension in relations with Somalia led imperial Ethiopia to draw close to Kenya (the Somalis did not decline either from demanding the unification with Somalia of the Northern border region of Kenya, which is populated by Somalis) on an anti-Somali basis. In 1963 there was a Treaty on joint defense signed between the two countries.

At the beginning of 1964 a direct military confrontation broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia, although the conflict was soon settled through the mediation of the OAU. The Soviet government also called on both sides with an appeal to quickly cease fire and to resolve all disputed issues in a peaceful way.

During 1970-71 a series of Ethiopia-Somalia negotiations were conducted which ended without result. At the end of 1972-beginning of 1973 a series of border inci-

dents broke out (in the regions of Washen, Bongol, Dolo, and others) which were smoothed over by peaceful means.

The tension in relations between Ethiopia and Somalia many times attracted the attention of the Organization of African Unity. However, efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution to the territorial argument between Ethiopia and Somalia within the framework of the OAU so far have yielded no result.

At the session of the OAU Assembly which took place in Addis Ababa in January 1976, two meetings took place, at Siad Barre's initiative, between him and the chair-
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pia will lead to a split of the multinational Ethiopian state, which will facilitate the unification of the Ogaden territory with Somalia.

The Somali government recently has

USSR AMBASSADOR IN ETHIOPIA
/s/ A. RATANOV

[Source: *TsKhSD*, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1637, l. 85; translated by Mark H. Doctoroff.]

**Soviet Embassy in East Germany,
Report for CPSU CC Summarizing
Visit to Somalia on 31 January-1
February 1977 by Delegation of the
GDR Socialist Unity Party (SED) CC,
18 February 1977**

USSR EMBASSY IN
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
SECRET, Copy no. 1
18 February 1977

TO THE SECRETARY OF THE
CC CPSU comrade B. N. PONOMAREV

We send to your attention according to classified procedures this report concerning the trip to Somalia, Mozambique, and Ethiopia (January 31 - February 11 of this year) by a delegation from the German Democratic Republic, headed by Politburo member, Secretary of the CC SED, comrade W. Lamberz.

ATTACHMENT: above-mentioned document of 41 pages, secret.

USSR AMBASSADOR TO
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

/s/ P. ABRASIMOV

[attachment]

SECRET, Copy no. 1
Attachment to no. 122
18 February 1977
Translated from German

REPORT

concerning a trip to the Democratic Republic of Somali by a delegation from the CC SED from
31 January-1 February 1977

From 31 January to 1 February a delegation from the CC SED, headed by Politburo member, Secretary of the CC, Werner Lamberz visited Mogadishu at the invitation of the leadership of the Somali Revolu-

tionary Socialist Party (SRSP). The delegation comprised: CC Member Kurt Tidke, Candidate-Member of the CC Eberhard Heidrich, Deputy Chief of the CC Section Freidel Trappen.

In accordance with its instructions, the delegation conveyed from the Secretary General of the CC SED Erich Honecker to the Secretary General of the SRSP and to the President of the Democratic Republic of Somalia, Mohammed Siad Barre, a message in response to the letter from Barre dated 24 November 1976, and concluded an agreement on collaboration between the SED and the SRSP for 1977-78.

The delegation received Mohammed Siad Barre, with whom they engaged in a detailed discussion.

Werner Lamberz conveyed greetings from the Secretary General of the CC SED and Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, Eric Honecker, and conveyed some explanations regarding his message. At the same time he stated the SED position with regard to the progressive development in Somalia and reported on the decisions of our party leadership, which were made as a result of the discussions of comrade [GDR Vice President Willi] Stoph in Somalia with comrade Samantar in the GDR. It was declared that the SED will now and in the future, to the extent of its abilities, offer support to the Republic of Somalia. At the same time, particular attention was drawn to the concurrence of the party.

Mohammed Siad Barre expressed his thanks for the message from Eric Honecker and expressed his gratitude for the GDR's manifestation of solidarity with the anti-imperialist liberation struggle. Somalia considers the help, which has been offered by the SSNM brigade in the preparation of specialists, to be particularly useful. Siad Barre in detail elucidated the internal situation in Somalia and, at the same time, particularly underscored the difficulties in realizing the party program.

In connection with the statement by Werner Lamberz concerning relations between the SDR and Ethiopia, Barre first and foremost affirmed the necessity of reaching a peaceful settlement of the problem with Ethiopia. However, at the same time, it was notable that his position on this question was contradictory and not free of nationalist features. He expressed doubt about the revolutionary nature of development in Ethio-

pia and characterized the Ethiopian leaders as chauvinists, and as connected to Zionist

Touching upon his initiative for coop-

is possible to assume a sharp activation of anti-Ethiopia activity by Somalia in close cooperation with reactionary Arab states.

ing the unfriendly position of the Somali leadership towards the “revolutionary regime” in Ethiopia. In the opinion of Nyerere, for the foreseeable future one cannot expect the establishment of a friendly relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia. The maximum one can achieve is to avoid an open clash between Ethiopia and Somalia, by persuading both sides of the need to maintain mutual restraint. Nyerere and Machel said that satisfaction of the territorial demands of Somalia would automatically result in the collapse of the progressive regime in Ethiopia. All three leaders evaluated very highly the position of the Soviet Union and agreed with our opinion that progressive states must more actively come out in support of the Ethiopian revolution and advocate the normalization of Ethiopian-Somali relations....

The main topic of conversation [of Podgorny] with Siad Barre was the issue of the relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia, and also the situation emerging in this region of Africa in connection with activities of reactionary Arab forces. Exchange of opinions revealed that the Somali leadership adheres to its old positions regarding its territorial demands on Ethiopia. Siad Barre justified this stand [by referring] to the pressure of internal nationalistic circles of Somalia.

At the same time Siad Barre did not deny that there were progressive developments in Ethiopia. He distanced himself from reactionary leaders of Arab countries: Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, who sought to liquidate the progressive regime in Ethiopia. Siad called the President of the UAR [Anwar] Sadat a convinced adherent of capitalism, a reactionary, anti-Soviet schemer. In the opinion of Siad, Nimeiry is a man without principles who fell under the influence of Sadat [and] the leadership of Saudi Arabia, as well as the Americans and the British.

Siad declared that Somalia, now as before, seeks to expand cooperation with the USSR. He said that he deems it advisable to hold a meeting with Mengistu with the mediation of the USSR and underscored that only the Soviet Union which possesses great authority and experience could help Somalia and Ethiopia to work out “a formula of honor” that would allow both countries to find a road to reconciliation without losing face....

[Source: SAPMO, J IV 2/202 584; obtained

and translated from Russian by V. Zubok.]

Transcript of Meeting between East German leader Erich Honecker and Cuban leader Fidel Castro, East Berlin, 3 April 1977 (excerpts)

Minutes of the conversation between Comrade Erich Honecker and Comrade Fidel Castro, Sunday, 3 April 1977 between 11:00 and 13:30 and 15:45 and 18:00, House of the Central Committee, Berlin.

Participants: Comrades Hermann Axen, Werner Lamberz, Paul Verner, Paul Markowski (with Comrades Edgar Fries and Karlheinz Mobus as interpreters), Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Osmany Cienfuegos, Raul Valdez Vivo, Jose Abrantes

Comrade Erich Honecker warmly welcomed Comrade Fidel Castro and the Cuban Comrades accompanying him to this internal conversation on behalf of the Central Committee.

We are very pleased about your visit to the GDR and the opportunity to exchange views about the result of your visit to several African and Arabian countries. On behalf of the Politburo I want to repeat that we consider your visit to these countries as important. I ask Comrade Fidel Castro to take the floor.

[first 16 pages omitted--ed.]

Statements by Comrade Fidel Castro:
[...] Before my departure from Aden we discussed with the PDRY leadership the need to do everything possible to arrive at an understanding between Somalia and Ethiopia. I was well received in Somalia. I had asked them not to have any public demonstrations. Siad Barre was very friendly during our first dinner. Prior to my arrival, I had received his reply to a letter of mine regarding the question of relations between Somalia and Ethiopia. I had also sent an envoy to Somalia for discussions with Vice President Samantar and Interior Minister Suleiman. Samantar held to leftist positions, while Suleiman was a representative of the right wing. The discussion of our representative with him was very severe. I had already received considerable information in the PDRY regarding the situation in Somalia. The power and influence of the rightist group continue to increase. The Interior Minister, Suleiman, is doing everything possible to bring Somalia closer to Saudi Arabia

and the imperialist countries. Samantar is losing influence. Everything seems to indicate that he is being driven into a corner by the right.

My first evening I wanted to clarify my thoughts about Siad Barre and the Somali revolution. No serious political discussion took place at this dinner; [Siad] Barre explained to me the evolution of the Somali revolution. The next day, we had an extensive sight-seeing program. We went to a Cuban-built militia training center, an agricultural school, a school for nomad children, etc. We were taken around for hours, although we had not yet had a political discussion, and a mass demonstration had been scheduled at noon in the stadium. I understood that they wanted to avoid such a conversation prior to the demonstration. As the demonstration began, Siad Barre and I had still not had a private conversation, and because of this I was very careful. Siad Barre was very arrogant and severe; maybe he wanted to intimidate us.

In my speech to the mass meeting I talked about imperialist policy in the Middle East, the reactionary role of Saudi Arabia, and the actions of other reactionary powers. I did this even though I knew that there was a considerable trend in the country in favor of closer relations with these countries. I talked about the PLO's struggle, the Ethiopian revolution, and the Libyan revolution, and of progressive Algeria that they want to isolate. I talked about Mozambique, and only at the end about how imperialism is doing everything to reverse the progressive order in Somalia. Siad Barre introduced me to participants of the mass meeting without saying a political word.

Before the mass meeting they had played half of a soccer game. It is unknown whether the soccer game was simply an appendage to the demonstration or vice versa. My speech went against the right wing tendencies and supported the left wing. We observed that almost all of the Central Committee members applauded, with the exception of Suleiman and his people. Samantar was very satisfied, and even Siad Barre seemed content. Nevertheless, the mass meeting was not broadcast live on radio or TV.

Only that evening did we begin to discuss specific problems, at my residence. It was clear to me that we had to be careful because surely the interior minister had in-

stalled bugs. This same evening Siad Barre finally talked about Ethiopia. He compared it to the Tsarist Empire and said that Ethiopia was the only surviving colonial power. Thanks to Lenin's wisdom, the Tsarist Empire had disappeared, but it lived on in Ethiopia. He had proposed to the Ethiopians, some time ago, to establish a federation or even a unification of the two countries. Ethiopia had not reacted then, but was now itself proposing this solution. He spoke very enthusiastically about his efforts to reach a solution with Ethiopia. I used the occasion to tell Siad Barre that I would travel to Ethiopia the next day and asked him if he would be willing to meet with Mengistu. He agreed.

The next day I flew on to Ethiopia. We had earlier agreed that there would be no great reception for me, since at the time they were still fighting the civil war. Shots constantly rang out. Mengistu took me to the old Imperial Palace and the negotiations began on the spot. I found the information that I already had to be confirmed. We continued our negotiations on the following day. Naturally we had to take extensive security precautions. The Ethiopians had come up with a division, and I had brought a company of Cuban soldiers with me. The day of my arrival there were rumors of a coup. It did not happen.

I developed the impression that there was a real revolution taking place in Ethiopia. In this former feudal empire, lands were being distributed to the peasants. Each farmer got 10 hectares. There were also reforms in the cities. It was established that each citizen could only own one house. Plots were made available for housing construction.

There is also a strong mass movement. In the capital, 500,000 people can be rapidly mobilized. In February, our study delegation, after inspecting the army divisions, had determined that of the hundreds of generals, all but two should be chased out. The officers and NCOs have taken over the leadership of the country. Currently, the leadership is considering creating a Party. There is a harsh class struggle against the feudalists in the country. The petit bourgeois powers are mobilizing against the Revolution. A strong separatist movement exists in Eritrea. Threats are coming from the Sudan, while Somalia claims 50% of Ethiopia's territory. There have been border clashes in this area

for 500 years.

Mengistu strikes me as a quiet, serious, and sincere leader who is aware of the power of the masses. He is an intellectual personality who showed his wisdom on 3 February. The rightists wanted to do away with the leftists on 3 February. The prelude to this was an exuberant speech by the Ethiopian president in favor of nationalism. Mengistu preempted this coup. He called the meeting of the Revolutionary Council one hour early and had the rightist leaders arrested and shot. A very consequential decision was taken on 3 February in Ethiopia. The political landscape of the country changed, which has enabled them to take steps that were impossible before then. Before it was only possible to support the leftist forces indirectly, now we can do so without any constraints.

I asked Mengistu whether he was willing to meet with Siad Barre in Aden. We agreed. After concluding my talks I flew on to Aden.

Siad Barre had arrived in Aden that morning. Mengistu did not arrive until the afternoon. I had a conversation with Siad Barre in which he bared his claws. He told me that if Mengistu was a real revolutionary he should do as Lenin, and withdraw from his territory. Siad Barre took a very hard position. I asked him whether he felt that there had been no real revolution in Ethiopia and that Mengistu was not a real leftist leader. He told me that there had been no revolution in Ethiopia. While in Mogadishu he had shown me a map of Greater Somalia in which half of Ethiopia had been annexed.

After my talk with Siad Barre, I told Mengistu about Barre's attitude, and asked him to remain calm. I already felt bad about having invited Mengistu to Aden while there was still a powder keg situation back in his country and that in such a tense situation he was to hear out the Somalis' territorial demands.

With regards to my question about the situation of the Ethiopian army, Mengistu said that there were still difficulties but that he didn't think that there was an acute danger of a coup.

When the meeting started, Siad Barre immediately began speaking. Siad Barre is a general who was educated under colonialism. The revolution in Somalia is led by generals who all became powerful under colo-

onial times. I have made up my mind about Siad Barre, he is above all a chauvinist. Chauvinism is the most important factor in him. Socialism is just an outer shell that is supposed to make him more attractive. He has received weapons from the socialist countries and his socialist doctrine is [only] for the masses. The Party is there only to support his personal power.

In his case there is a bizarre symbiosis of rule by military men who went through the school of colonialism and social appearances. Something about socialism appeals to him, but overall there is still a lot of inequality and unfairness in the country. His principal ideas are nationalism and chauvinism, not socialism.

His goal is old fashioned politics: sweet, friendly words. Siad Barre speaks like a wise man; only he speaks. He is different from the many political leaders that I know. [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat, [Algerian President Houari] Boumedienne, [Mozambique President Samora] Machel, [Angolan President Agostinho] Neto and many others are strong characters. They can also listen and do not take a dogmatic attitude. One can speak with them. Siad Barre really thinks that he is at the summit of wisdom. Until now everything has gone smoothly for him. The Italians and the British made him a general. The revolution was accomplished in a minute, with hardly a shot fired. He put on a socialist face and got economic aid and weapons from the Soviet Union. His country is important strategically, and he likes prestige. Barre is very convinced of himself. His socialist rhetoric is unbearable. He is the greatest socialist; he cannot say ten words without mentioning socialism.

With this tone he began to speak in the meeting with Mengistu. He began giving a lecture on Ethiopia and demanded from Mengistu to do as Lenin had done: do away with the Ethiopian Empire. Mengistu remained quiet; he said that Ethiopia was ready and willing to find a solution and that there needed to be the first concrete steps on both sides to achieve a rapprochement.

Siad Barre theatrically responded that he was disappointed with Mengistu and that he displayed the same attitude as the Ethiopian Emperor. The Ethiopian revolutionary leadership had the same mentality as Haile Selassie. The meeting had begun at 11 PM and a solution was not in sight.

the socialist camp. Above all we must do something for Mengistu. Already we are collecting old weapons in Cuba for Ethiopia, principally French, Belgian and Czech hand-held weapons. About 45,000 men must be supplied with weapons. We are going to send military advisers to train the Ethiopian militia in weapons-use. There are many people in Ethiopia who are qualified for the army. We are supporting the training of the militia. Meanwhile the situation in Eritrea is difficult. There are also progressive people in the liberation movement, but, objectively, they are playing a reactionary role. The Eritrean separatist movement is being supported by the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Ethiopia has good soldiers and a good military tradition, but they need time to organize their army. Mengistu asked us for 100 trainers for the militia, now he is also asking us for military advisers to build up regular units. Our military advisory group is active at the staff level. The Ethiopians have economic means and the personnel necessary to build up their army. Rumors have been spread lately that the reactionaries will conquer Asmara in two months. The revolution in Ethiopia is of great significance. With regard to military aid for the PR Congo and the Libyans we have not yet come to a decision.

I had consultations with Boumedienne in Algeria and asked for his opinion. He assured me that Algeria would never abandon Libya. Algeria is very concerned with the situation in the Mediterranean because of its security interests. It is in favor of supporting Libya, as long as military aid is confined to the socialist camp. That is not only a question between Cuba and Algeria. If we succeed in strengthening the revolution in Libya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, the PDRY, and Angola, we have an integrated strategy for the whole African continent.

Algeria would move closer to the socialist camp. It bought 1.5 billion rubles of weapons from the Soviets. Boumedienne thinks that Sadat is totally lost to us. In Syria there is also no leftist movement any more, either, especially after the Syrians defeated the progressive powers and the PLO in Lebanon.

[Indian President] Indira Gandhi gambled away the elections.

In Africa, however, we can inflict a severe defeat on the entire reactionary imperialist policy. One can free Africa from the

influence of the USA and of the Chinese. The developments in Zaire are also very important. Libya and Algeria have large national resources, Ethiopia has great revolutionary potential. So there is a great counterweight to Egypt's betrayal. It might even be possible that Sadat could be turned around and that the imperialist influence in the Middle East can be turned back.

This must all be discussed with the Soviet Union. We follow its policies and its example.

We estimate that Libya's request is an expression of trust. One should not reject their request. Cuba alone cannot help it. [remainder of conversation omitted--ed.]

[Source: Stiftung "Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv" (Berlin), DY30 JIV 2/201/1292; document obtained by Christian F. Ostermann and translated by David Welch with revisions by Ostermann.]

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, 9 May 1977

From the journal SECRET, Copy No. 2
of Sinitsyn, Ya.S. 26 May 1977
Original No. 203

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 unex-

pected 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

The Soviet side expressed understanding of the difficulties the new Ethiopian leadership encounters inside the country and outside its frontiers. The Ethiopian delegation was informed about the measures the Soviet leadership undertakes in support of Ethiopia in the international arena, in par-

also to the Ethiopian leadership. Soviet-Ethiopian relations, for understandable rea-

Responding to a question from the Soviet ambassador, Mengistu said that relations between Ethiopia and the Republic of Djibouti were not bad, but that the leadership of this Republic, fearing annexation by Ethiopia or Somalia, agreed to a French military presence. Under these conditions, said Mengistu, if it were possible to restore cooperation between Ethiopia and Somalia, then these countries could affirm that they guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Djibouti, which would facilitate the withdrawal of French forces from Djibouti and the development of this state along a progressive path.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA

/s/ A RATANOV

[Source: *TsKhSD*, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1636, ll. 74-75; translated by Elizabeth Wishnick.]

**Memorandum of Conversation between
Soviet Ambassador to Ethiopia
A.N. Ratanov and Cuban military
official Arnaldo Ochoa, 17 July 1977**

TOP SECRET Copy No. 2

From the journal of 24 August 1977
A.P. RATANOV Orig. No. 297

REPORT OF CONVERSATION
with the head of the Cuban military
specialists Division General
ARNALDO OCHOA
17 July 1977

During the discussion held at the Soviet Embassy, the Soviet Ambassador outlined the following considerations on the military and political situation in Ethiopia.

The capture of several strategically important objectives in Eritrea and in the eastern regions of Ethiopia by the separatists and by the Somalis has showed that the PMAC:

1. Underestimated the military capabilities of the Eritrean separatists, and thus did not take serious measures to strengthen the group of troops in Eritrea. At the same time the PMAC was hoping that it would be able to persuade the leadership of the Eritrean organizations to take part in negotiations on the political settlement of the Eritrean problem.

2. Did not expect that the units of the Somali regular army in Ogaden would par-

ticipate directly in the military actions. It is significant that the Ethiopian command did not take measures for building a defensive barrier in the regions adjacent to Somalia. Apparently, the PMAC was concerned that such measures could be perceived by Somalia as an Ethiopian refusal to settle their disagreements with Somalia peacefully.

3. Overestimated its own military capabilities. Did not take into account the fact that the old army practically did not go through the school of revolutionary struggle even though it took part in the revolution, since the main demands of the rank and file soldiers were for a raise in pay and for improvement of the retirement pensions, and a certain part of the officer corps was against the Revolution altogether.

It should be also mentioned that in relation to Eritrea, during the three years since the Revolution the Ethiopian command has never attempted any offensive military operations against the Eritrean armed forces, and that the troops of the Ethiopian regular army were practically dwelling in their quarters.

Only two or three months ago the PMAC, having received weapons from the socialist countries, hastily began to organize new units of the regular army, and the people's militia.

Currently the armed forces of Ethiopia consist of 6 divisions of the regular army (55 thousand people), 8 divisions of the people's militia (about 100 thousand people), and police formations (40 thousand people). However:

1. The Ethiopian army is inferior to the Somali army in the quality of armaments.

2. The members of the people's militia have not had a sufficient military training yet.

All this led to the situation where the separatists were able to establish control over 75-80% of the Eritrean territory, including the cities of Keren, Nacfa, Karora, Decamere, Tessenei. Their armed forces consist of 18 thousand people.

The Ethiopian command in Eritrea has 20 thousand soldiers of the regular army, and it is currently transferring there 5 divisions of the people's militia. This should give it the opportunity to establish control over Eritrea assuming that Sudan does not introduce its armed forces there.

If the military effort in Eritrea is successful, the PMAC hopes that the separat-

ists and the Arab countries who support them would have to agree to a political settlement and accept internal autonomy for Eritrea.

In the Ogaden the detachments of the Front of for the Liberation of Western Somalia (up to 5 thousand people), introduced mainly from Somalia, have recently established control over the most part of the territory. The front is engaged in combat near the cities of Harar, Jijiga, Gode, Dire Dawa.

The PMAC has up to 10 thousand people in the Ogaden. Currently detachments of the people's militia are being transferred there. The Ethiopian command considers the situation in the Ogaden most dangerous since Somalia continues to transfer its military personnel and heavy weaponry to that region.

Therefore, the PMAC has a opportunity to change favorably the military situation in Eritrea as well as in the Ogaden. However, it would need to solve the following problems.

1. To provide the armed forces with the means of transportation (helicopters, trucks, etc.) for a quick transfer of the reserves when and where they are needed.

2. To create fuel reserves and to obtain means of transportation for them.

3. To create reserves of food and medicines.

Also it is necessary to strengthen the political work in the armed forces, for which they would need cadres of political workers, which are currently insufficient.

In socio-political terms the forces of the revolution predominate over the forces of the counterrevolution. Still, even though the PMAC undertook certain measures for the organization of the peasant and urban population (peasant and urban associations have been created everywhere), the level of political consciousness of the broad masses of the population (mostly illiterate) remains very low.

Elements of confusion can be observed in the Defense Council. Mengistu Haile Mariam still remains the main leader of the Ethiopian revolution. The PMAC needs to solve the following political tasks:

1. To take additional measures to strengthen its social base. In order to achieve this it is necessary to make the socio-economic policy more concrete, so that it could assure the peasants that the land would remain in their possession, and that the regime would not rush with collectivization. In ad-

dition, some measures in order to, as a minimum, neutralize the national bourgeoisie, are necessary to assure it that the regime would not expropriate its property.

2. To develop the nationality policy and to make it more concrete (to create autonomous national regions), even though now it would not be an easy task because cadres from non-Amhara nationalities which were discriminated against before the revolution have not been prepared yet.

3. To create a political party and a broad people's front with participation of not just workers and peasants, but also with the national bourgeoisie.

4. To conduct a more active foreign policy, especially toward African countries, to provide support for Mengistu's statements at the OAU Assembly in Libreville [Gabon] that Ethiopia was not going to export its revolution, and that it would follow the course of nonalignment; to make the program for political settlement of the Ethiopian-Somali disagreements more concrete.

In the course of further discussion we came to common conclusions that the difficult situation dictated the necessity of creating in some form a state defense committee, which would be authorized to mobilize all forces of the country for the defense of the revolution; of organizing the highest military command, and at a minimum, of two fronts (Northern and Eastern) with corresponding command and headquarters structures.

We also agreed that the current structuring of the armed forces should be reorganized in the future according to modern military concepts applicable to Ethiopian realities. However, the military incompetence of the officer corps and conservatism of a certain part of it present obstacles to this restructuring. For example, the General Staff currently nurtures ideas of creating tank divisions and an anti-aircraft defense system of the country by removing those kinds of weapons (tanks, anti-aircraft launchers) from existing infantry divisions.

On July 16 the Cuban comrades found out that at the last moment before the group of [PMAC General Secretary] Fikre Selassie Wogderes was about to leave for Moscow it was decided to ask the Soviet Union to supply tanks, armored cars, and the like at a time when they have not yet prepared their cadres for work with the technology they were receiving from the Soviet Union ac-

ording to the agreements signed earlier. Arnaldo Ochoa told Mengistu that such a light-headed approach to serious business might undermine the prestige of the Military Council. Arnaldo Ochoa had the feeling that Mengistu understood what he meant.

Another example of such a light-headed, even irresponsible, approach to the military questions is the idea that somebody is suggesting to Mengistu about the necessity of preparation of a offensive on Hargeisa (Somalia), which would give Somalia a reason to start a more massive offensive in the Ogaden with tanks and aircraft, not to mention the catastrophic political consequences of such a step for Ethiopia.

Arnaldo Ochoa said that the military failures in Eritrea led to certain disagreements within the PMAC. A significant part of the Council proposes that they should now, before any military measures are taken, try once more to engage in negotiations with the Eritrean organizations. The majority of the Council, however, thinks that in the existing circumstances, when the separatists are on the offensive, they would not agree to negotiations, or they would present ultimatums demanding the separation of Eritrea. Therefore, the majority of the Council believes a combination of military and political measures should be undertaken, i.e. to propose negotiations to the Eritrean organizations only after having achieved some military successes.

Arnaldo Ochoa also informed me that in one of their recent conversations Mengistu said that Ethiopian-Chinese relations were becoming more and more complicated with every day. The PMAC found out that the PRC was providing military assistance to the People's Front of Eritrean Liberation. In relation to this, the PMAC made a decision to limit all relations with Beijing to the minimum without engaging in an open confrontation, and to devise measures against Chinese ideological penetration in Ethiopia.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR
IN SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA

[signature] /A RATANOV/

[Source: *TsKhSD*, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1637, ll. 141-146; translated by S. Savranskaya.]

Record of Negotiations between Somali

**and Soviet Officials in Moscow,
25-29 July 1977 (excerpts)**

From the journal of Secret. Copy no. 10
L.F. Ilchev 11 August 1977
No. 2148/GS

Record of a Conversation
with the Minister of Mineral and Water
Resources of Somalia, Head of Delegation
of Experts
HUSSEIN ABDULKADIR KASIM
(first level)

The Somali Delegation of Experts arrived in Moscow on 24 July 1977. Meetings took place at the residence of the Somali Delegation from 25-29 July 1977.

25 July

In a one-on-one conversation which took place on the initiative of H. A. Kasim, before the beginning of the first meeting the Minister announced that the Somali delegation had arrived in Moscow with a feeling of good will and with absolute faith in the efforts of the Soviet Union to offer its good services toward the resolution of disputed issues between Somalia and Ethiopia. The Somali delegation, in the words of Kasim, experiences doubt, however, as to the candor and good intentions of the Ethiopian side, taking into account that Somalia had repeatedly proposed to Ethiopia to resolve the disputed issues within the framework of creating a federation of the two governments, to which Ethiopia reacted by publishing the protocols of secret negotiations between the two sides and by carrying out a campaign attacking Somalia in the press.

As is well known, other African and non-African countries attempted to play the role of mediator in the settlement of the disputed questions between the two countries, but these efforts were not crowned with success.

The Somali delegation considers that the object of discussion at the forthcoming meeting of experts, in addition to the substance of the disputed issues between the two countries, should include neither the tension in relations between the two countries, nor the questions of demarcation or of changing the borders, but rather the colonial situation which currently characterizes a part of the Somali territory and the popu-

lation living there, which is under the colonial government of Ethiopia. The Somali delegation considers that no country should call itself a socialist country, or a country which adheres to a socialist orientation, if this country continues the colonial oppression of a people and a part of the territory of another country. This colonial situation arose in the time of the existence of the Ethiopian Empire and up to Somali independence. In the opinion of the Somali side, the changing of the name Abyssinia to Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Empire to Socialist Ethiopia did not change in the slightest degree the state of affairs. This is why the Somali delegation considers that the central question for discussion at the forthcoming meetings of the delegations of experts from the two countries is the question of granting self-determination and independence to the oppressed Somali minority, which lives within the borders of Ethiopia.

At the forthcoming negotiations, continued the Minister, there are two alternatives: either [his aforementioned proposed topic, or] to limit the discussion to a range of secondary problems, which would be tantamount to simply beating about the bush. Somalia considers, that the military actions currently being conducted are the actions of Somali patriots in the colonial territory who are struggling for their right to self-determination and independence, therefore the first question on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of experts should be the question of decolonialization, and, only having resolved that question, will it be possible to move on to the discussion of other secondary questions, such as the lessening of tension in relations between the two countries.

H.A. Kasim noted that the currently existing situation is a result of the fact that Ethiopia, over the course of many years, violated the territorial integrity of Somalia, [and] oppressed and annihilated Somalis, living in the colonized territory.

In conclusion, H.A. Kasim underscored the readiness of the Somali delegation to assist the Soviet side in fulfilling its mission of offering its good services at the meeting of the delegations of experts from Somalia and Ethiopia.

For my part, I declared that the tension which has been created in the relations between two countries, with both of whom we are friendly, is the cause of great alarm and anxiety. I underscored the impossibility of

resolving the disputed questions by means of the application of force, particularly given the contemporary global situation. I took note of the real danger that such tension might be used by enemies of Africa, enemies of progressive transformations in Somalia as well as in Ethiopia. I remarked that there are no questions in the interrelations of socialist countries or countries of socialist orientation, which could not be resolved without the application of force, by peaceful means. The Soviet side, offering its good services, sees its task at the forthcoming meeting of the delegations of experts in the following:

- 1) To create an atmosphere of goodwill between the two countries;
- 2) to ensure an understanding of the fact that it is impossible to resolve disputed questions through force;
- 3) to undertake efforts to ensure that as a result of the meetings of experts there would be recommendations elaborated to the governments of both of these countries with the goal of creating a situation of friendship and good relations as a basis for resolving the disputed questions which exist between Somalia and Ethiopia.

I indicated that the Soviet side did not intend to impose any particular resolution of the disputed questions between the two countries.

After the conclusion of the one-on-one conversation a meeting of the Soviet representatives and the Somali delegation of experts took place.

I greeted the delegation of Somali experts and expressed satisfaction with the fact that the Somali and Ethiopian parties had decided to begin a dialogue toward the normalization of their relations in Moscow.

I announced that, having concurred with the request of President Siad that we offer our good services in organizing and leading the meetings between representatives of Somalia and Ethiopia in Moscow, the Soviet side was guided exclusively by its international obligations to offer assistance to countries with whom we are on friendly terms, by its interests in the development and strengthening of all-around cooperation with them.

I noted that we treat the parties without biases of any sort, in a friendly and candid manner.

I expressed the hope that the forthcom-

ing Somali-Ethiopian meeting would lead to positive results. I said, that it would not be candid for us not to say that the current situation in the region had grown complicated and that decisive and immediate measures were necessary. We would hope that the two delegations would strive from the very beginning to create a business-like atmosphere, to show their good will, [to take a] constructive approach and not to take categorical positions, which have the nature of ultimatums, and would rule out even the slightest possibility of conducting negotiations.

We are convinced that the normalization of the situation in the Horn of Africa and the establishment of friendly relations with Ethiopia is in the interest of Somalia. It is clear that a peaceful situation, and friendly ties with Ethiopia would create more favorable conditions for the successful resolution of complicated problems pertaining to the national economy, which confront this country, in its attempts to raise the well-being of the Somali workers.

I said that we would like hear the full opinion of the Somali delegation concerning the range of questions, which the delegation considers necessary to submit to a joint discussion, and likewise concerning the procedure for the meeting, in particular, with regard to its general duration, and other procedural questions. From our side, we have no intention of imposing any temporal limit on the meeting and are prepared to take into account, insofar as it is possible, the wishes of the two parties in this regard.

I noted further that, as we know, the Somali side proposes to discuss the issue of the Ethiopian government's concession of the right to self-determination of national groups. We are unable to predict beforehand what might be the position of the Ethiopian government, but we can surmise, that such a formulation of the question will most likely be interpreted by the Ethiopian government as interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.

We know, as you do, that the Ethiopian leadership in its programmatic documents announced its intention to resolve the nationalities question on a democratic basis. It goes without saying that the realization of such a program requires the appropriate conditions.

To our mind, the examination of the issue of normalizing relations between the

two countries at the meeting of experts, and precisely this, as we understand, is their first and foremost task, should not be made conditional upon the preliminary resolution of fundamentally disputed questions. This is a point of view which we have expressed more than once to the Somali leadership and it was not met with objections by their side.

The meeting of the delegation with the good services of our side would be genuinely successful if it was concluded by the elaboration by the experts of recommendations to their governments concerning the steps which would lead to the normalization of Somali-Ethiopian relations.

The Soviet side is prepared to cooperate and to offer all possible assistance to the experts of both sides in their elaboration of recommendations for their governments, but does not plan to insist on any particular position. We are prepared to assist actively in the search for a mutually acceptable resolution. If the desire should be expressed, the Somali and the Ethiopian delegations may meet without the participation of the Soviet representatives.

We would be prepared after the meeting with the Ethiopian delegation, if it should be deemed necessary, to engage in further discussion with the Somali experts with the objective of working out a unified approach, of identifying a range of questions, which would be appropriate to discuss, and likewise of identifying procedural questions.

The views which might be expressed in this connection by our delegation, may be reduced, in summary, to the following:

- 1) the acknowledgment that the continuation of tensions between the two countries is not consistent with the interest of the Ethiopian and Somali nations;
- 2) the renunciation by the two sides of the use of force in the resolution of disputed questions; the attempt to apply every effort to their settlement by peaceful means, by means of negotiations;
- 3) the obligation of the two sides to maintain peace and security on their borders, to abstain from every sort of hostile activity, from engaging in hostile propaganda against one another by means of the mass media and to foster, in every possible way, those efforts which will lead to the development of

friendly relations;

- 4) the efforts of the two countries to take measures which are directed at developing economic, trade, and cultural relations, at developing connections between voluntary organizations in the two countries, the exchange of experience, etc., and, in particular, the readiness of the two sides to conduct regular mutual consultations at all levels.

It goes without saying that first and foremost it is necessary to cease military activities on both sides.

The principled efforts of the Soviet Union toward the development of all-around cooperation with the Somali Democratic Republic are well known. Our country has never been guided in its policy by opportunistic considerations. The Soviet Union will continue in the future to strengthen its friendship and revolutionary solidarity c -0sutionarmeasu may

from the moment of the Great October socialist revolution the Soviet Union has invariably supported liberation movements in all corners of the globe. The very activities of the Soviet Union in the United Nations are a testimony to this fact.

I would like to repeat once more that we are prepared to sit down at the negotiating table, if the Ethiopian side will discuss the territorial dispute as a fundamental issue, but if the Ethiopian side will only put forward the issue of the alleged Somali military actions, then there will not be any progress either in the work of this meeting, or in our bilateral relations.

I do not know, H.A. Kasim said in conclusion, whether the Soviet Union will be able to do anything under these circumstances. Unfortunately, we have the dismal example of the mediation of F. Castro, when Mengistu Haile Mariam declared the inexpedience of raising the territorial question, but was prepared to discuss any other questions of secondary importance.

Trust in our candor, we will regret it if the good services of the USSR do not lead to a positive result.

July 29

[...] Taking into account the separate exchanges of opinion taking place with the main Somali and Ethiopian delegations, the Soviet representative, by way of offering his good services, will introduce for consideration in the course of the work an idea of the first steps, which would lead toward the normalization of relations between Somalia and Ethiopia:

ing of such a route and of concluding an agreement on this issue as well as on the issue of an intergovernmental agreement on shipping.

3. [I] carried out my instructions regarding the question of the Republic of South Africa's impending nuclear arms testing. Mengistu welcomed the Soviet Government initiative on this issue (TASS announcement). At the same time he remarked that at the last OAU [meeting], Ethiopia had proposed to include on the agenda for the Assembly the issue of the threat of the creation of a nuclear arsenal in the Republic of South Africa with the assistance of Western powers; however, the bloc of the so-called Francophone countries rejected the Ethiopian proposal. At the current time, said Mengistu, it is imperative that the socialist and progressive African countries develop a campaign to prevent the fortification of the military power of the Republic of South

the struggle against the common enemy - imperialism.

5) The two sides should agree to the establishment and maintenance of contacts between them on various levels in the interests of achieving the stated goals.

It would be desirable to maintain the order of the points, as they were written in the working document.

8. The Ethiopian delegation hopes that agreement to the aforementioned will lead to a cessation of military actions as well as to the liquidation of the consequences of aggression in the context and spirit of the corresponding decisions of the OAU.

Translated by S. Berezhev (signature)

Original No. 2290/GS

[Source: *TsKhSD*, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1635, ll. 55-57; translated by Elizabeth Wishnick.]

**CC CPSU Politburo transcript,
11 August 1977 (excerpt)**

Top Secret
Single Copy
Minutes

MEETING OF THE
CC CPSU POLITBURO
11 August 1977

Chaired by: Comrade KIRILENKO, A.P.

Attended: Comrades Y.V. Andropov, F.D. Kulakov, K.T. Mazurov, A.Y. Pel'she, P.N. Demichev, M.S. Solomentsev, I.V. Kapitonov, M.V. Zimianin, Y.P. Riabov, K.V. Rusakov.

[...]11. On additional measures for normalization of the situation in the Horn of Africa and on assistance and support for the leadership of Ethiopia. (The issue was presented by comrades Andropov, Kuznetsov, Sokolov).

KIRILENKO: Leonid Ilych [Brezhnev] requested that the Ethiopian appeal be considered as soon as possible, and to do everything possible to give them the necessary assistance. He entrusted Comrades Gromyko, Ustinov, and Andropov to prepare proposals. The Comrades have ful-

filled the assignment.

MAZUROV, ANDROPOV, PELSHE emphasize the importance of the proposed measures for assistance to Ethiopia.

The resolution was adopted.

[Source: *APRF*, f. 3, op. 120, d. 37, ll. 51, 56; translated by Svetlana Savranskaya.]

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

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

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(signature) /A. Ratanov/

[Source: *TsKhSD*, f. 5, op. 73, d. 1637, ll. 118-119; translated by Elizabeth Wishnick.]

**Memorandum of Conversation, Soviet
Ambassador to Ethiopia A.P. Ratanov
with U.S. Charge d'Affaires A. Tienkin,
3 September 1977**

TOP SECRET, Copy No. 2
From the journal of 6 September 1977
Ratanov, A.P. Original No. 339

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION
with USA charge d'affaires in Ethiopia
A[RTHUR] TIENKIN
3 September 1977

By previous agreement I met with A. Tienkin at the Soviet Embassy. During the discussion he made the following comments.

- American-Ethiopian relations. They are not as good as they could be. Nonetheless, there have been some signs of improvement in these relations recently, [which is] what the USA has been seeking. For example, the other day the USA announced its readiness to continue economic aid to Ethiopia. We raised the issue of maintaining staff at the embassy in Addis-Ababa, above all staff in the economic and trade sections (the PMAC, as is well-known, in May of this year liquidated a group of American military attaches and a military adviser, and demanded that the embassy staff be reduced by one half). This time, it seems to Tienkin, the Ethiopian government will be inclined to satisfy the American request.

The USA informed the Ethiopian government that it does not and would not interfere in the domestic affairs of Ethiopia, including in Eritrea. At the same time, said Tienkin, given Ethiopia's current socialist policy, the USA is not convinced that it (Ethiopia) is able to maintain normal relations with capitalist countries.

- In the American view, the PMAC "is going too fast" on questions of social transformation, and in Ethiopia there are forces which would like to go even faster than the PMAC along the path of turning Ethiopia into a socialist state. In particular, the greater radicalism of the leadership of the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement [MEISON], as Tienkin suggests, was a reason for the "dis-

appearance" of that leadership, in comparison with the PMAC.

- Of all of Ethiopia's domestic problems, the most difficult is Eritrea; in comparison with this even the problem of the liberation of the Ogaden seems easy.

- Ethiopia, of course, will not be dismembered and will secure its border with Somalia, however, he (Tienkin) did not see any possibility for the normalization of Ethiopian-Somali differences, insofar as Somalia is unlikely to renounce its territorial pretensions to Ethiopia.

- American-Somali relations. They are improving. The USA even "agreed in principle" to the delivery of defensive weapons. The USA announced, however, that these deliveries cannot take place at present because of the military actions in the Ogaden. The USA also emphasized that their agreement to military deliveries does not mean that they do not recognize the territorial integrity of Somalia.

- Tienkin is aware of the rumours that Israel is supposedly rendering military aid to Ethiopia, but he did not see any clear indications that would confirm these rumours. However, even if Israel were doing something like this, said Tienkin, it would be doing this on its own initiative, i.e. without consultation with the USA on such questions.

For his part the Soviet ambassador emphasized that the Soviet Union supports

Eritrean population autonomy within the bounds of its old territories. They assume that other peoples still reside in Eritrea (e.g. Tigre and Afars). This has to be taken into consideration. Therefore they want to trim Eritrean territory. The area of the Afars around the port of Assab as well as the Tigre are to be separated. This would be almost half of Eritrean territory.

Should the Ethiopian leadership stick with this point of view, it will be difficult to find a common ground for negotiations. (Various peoples live, for example, in Dagestan and Georgia. There are autonomous territories within the individual republics of the [Soviet] Union.) The most important thing is to get both parties to the negotiating table.

The first point of the 9-point program on Eritrea states autonomy with respect to tribes/peoples but not with respect to territories. Mengistu has stated in a previous speech that Ethiopia would be willing to grant more autonomy to Eritrea than it had had before. But he has not yet stated what he meant by this.

On the correlation of forces within the PMAC:

Mengistu has further consolidated his position since the elimination of [Co-chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed forces (DERG) Lt. Col.] Atnafu Abate. He has further gained stature as a revolutionary statesman. One senses in speaking with him that he views things re-

tion Movement. Both sides have the goal to repel the imperialist intervention and build a new humane social order. It is very painful that comrades who are ideologically close are involved in such a conflict. We welcome the fact that Comrade Aforki has the determination and mandate to come to Berlin to find out together with the repre-

Any solution has to be found within the framework of the Ethiopian state although this is uncomfortable for the Eritrean movements. Comrade Ponomarev read a telegram from Belgrade on an information [report] by the head of the bureau of the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] in Baghdad, Abu Nidal (he belongs to the left wing of the Fatah). Abu Nidal has traveled through Eritrea. According to his information, all regions except for Massawa and Asmara are in the hands of the Eritreans. The coastal area is controlled by EPLF under the leadership of Aforki while Western Eritrea is under the control of the ELF (Mohammed Ahmed Nasser). The Eritreans want full autonomy but are also willing to accept an Ethiopian corridor to the sea. The majority of Aforki's organizations consist of Marxist-Leninist elements. Abu Nidal was informed that Aforki was at a meeting in Berlin. He was willing to meet with representatives of the CPSU. Abu Nidal emphasizes that it would be necessary to quickly find a solution since Saudi Arabia and other reactionary forces were exerting strong pressure upon the Eritrean movements.

Comrade Ponomarev stated that the CPSU did not think a meeting with Aforki was necessary after a meeting between him and the SED had just taken place. The SED was to continue its conversations with the Eritreans.

Comrade Ponomarev informed me that the Ethiopian leadership recently approached the CPSU with a request for support in the build-up of the party. A group of experienced comrades of the CPSU has been selected. Its head is a member of the CC. Later, however, Mengistu requested to hold off the sending of these comrades since military questions were the top priority. Comrade Ponomarev favored close cooperation between the Soviet comrades, the Cuban comrades, and the SED group in order to

lem in Ethiopia nor on the specific problems in Eritrea. They have until now not really seriously believed in it and have not seriously concerned themselves with it but instead only considered the demand for a peaceful solution as [in itself] a kind of political solution.

They probably still have the thought in the back of their minds that a peaceful solution of the Eritrean problem will mean a capitulation by the Eritrean movements, which means that the military solution would be the preparation for a further peaceful strategy.

One can certainly not neglect the military measures in this matter, but the Ethiopian comrades still do not have the deep recognition of the necessity of a political, i.e. peaceful solution of the Eritrean problem. Thus just as much as one can certainly argue that the leadership of the EPLF does not have an understanding of the historic importance of the Ethiopian Revolution, one can also argue that the awareness of the responsibility for the Revolutionary development in the entire region is not deeply rooted in the Ethiopian leadership.

[...]It is necessary that we continue our intense efforts on this common line in order to have all participants make a common effort. In this respect the written agreement that was achieved is of enormous significance. The further strategy in the Ogaden will be decisive and of utmost importance for the question of how things will continue, probably also for the solution of the Eritrean problem. Comrade Mengistu certainly did not want to make any concessions on this question as long as he seemed close to being defeated on all fronts. It will be important not to have a growing feeling of capitulation. From this point of view his reservations and hesitation with the promised declaration are understandable.

Now we are rapidly approaching another situation which will lead to certain decisions. There are two possibilities which might be expected after the success against Somalia on the eastern front. On the one hand [there could be] a generous, calm, objective, and thought-out approach to a peaceful solution of the Eritrean problem, an approach which is not caused by coercion, [but] which is based on the authority of victory and which therefore can take advantage of a vastly new possibilities for a peaceful solution. This would be a strategy in con-

formity with a remark by Aforki which relates to the generosity which they - the Eritreans - had expected from the Ethiopians. We would encourage this way of proceeding which would be in conformity with our views. On the other hand, however, a worsening of the situation is possible.

Based on the success at the eastern front and carried by the euphoria of victory and given the possibility to withdraw strong and experienced Ethiopian units, the Ethiopian leadership could aspire to a decisive and quick military solution in Eritrea. Un-

very small. In the last movement in the Northeast there was a smaller loss of human life but the material losses have been very great. The Somalis have over 40 tanks, numerous medium-weight and heavy weapons, flack artillery, armored cars and a great amount of weapons and munitions. In part, they have left behind NATO war material which was not even unwrapped. In the fights around Dire Dawa, the Somalis had to pull back, leaving almost their entire armament.

Up to now, there have been only preparatory blows. Most of the units marked for action have not been deployed yet, and the main blow has not even yet begun. The enemy is fleeing and giving up positions faster than had been expected. We are therefore in a situation where we have to undertake a series of fast actions so that the enemy will not have time to rebuild his forces. It is our plan to complete the main actions by the end of February 1978. This means that by early March we can expect a great victory at this front. This is, as is well known, the time for the next meeting. This will have a great effect. As agreed upon with

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**Soviet Foreign Ministry and CPSU CC
International Department, Background
Report on the Somali-Ethiopian
Conflict, 3 April 1978**

tember 1977 broke off diplomatic relations with the SDR.

During the armed conflict, the PMAC expressed readiness to settle the conflict peacefully within the framework of the OAU, putting forth as an absolute condition the beginning of negotiations with the Somalis on the withdrawal of their forces from Ethiopian territory. Simultaneously the Ethiopian leaders declared principles in public speeches that Ethiopia did not intend, after the liberation of the Ogaden territory, to carry military action beyond the limits of their own borders.

After the destruction of the Somali troops, the Ethiopia MFA asserted in its declaration on 12 March of this year the aspiration of the Ethiopian government to establish peace and stability on the African Horn in accord with the Charters and decisions of the U.N. and the OAU, on the basis of observation of the principles of non-use of force as a means of solving international arguments, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. In the declaration it was further pointed out that the establishment of peace on the African Horn is possible only in the event of Somali retraction of its claims for part of the territory of Ethiopia and Kenya, and also Djibouti, [and] observation by it of international agreements. In it are rejected the attempts of the USA government and its allies to tie the withdrawal of Somali forces to a resolution of issues which fall under the sovereignty of Ethiopia (the presence on its territory of foreign military personnel invited there by the Ethiopian government, the proposal to send foreign observers to the Ogaden).

Regarding Somalia's demand that the population of the Ogaden be presented with the right of self-determination, the Ethiopian leadership declares that a resolution of that issue is a domestic affair of Ethiopia and that therefore it cannot be a condition for a settlement of the Somalia-Ethiopia conflict. The Ethiopian side also raises the issue of compensation from Somalia for the losses caused by the military actions in the Ogaden.

Somalia's position in the conflict with Ethiopia does not meet, as a rule, with support from the members of the OAU, who support the preservation of existing state borders in Africa.

The special committee of the OAU for settlement of Somalia-Ethiopia relations

(under the chairmanship of Nigeria), which met in session in Libreville [Gabon] in August 1977, refused to accept the Front for the Liberation of Western Somalia as a national-liberation movement, [and] called on the governments of both countries to stop hostile actions and to settle their disagreements by, [anomm 0.023 TcasE

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Salam] Jalloud:

The proposals of the Libyan leadership on the settlement of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict have been carefully examined in Moscow. We have communicated to the Ethiopians the recent Libyan desire to receive in Tripoli the chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), based on the fact that only the Ethiopian side itself can make a decisions in this respect. The Ethiopian side had previously communicated to us that Mengistu could not come to Libya at the end of February for negotiations with Siad Barre, for reasons which the PMAC chairman told you personally.

The Libyan side is aware of the Soviet position with respect to the procedure for a political settlement in the area of the Horn of Africa. We have fully explained our point of view during your recent visit to Moscow. There is only one just basis for the settlement of the conflict - this is the mutual respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in domestic matters of the other side. All attempts to achieve a political settlement on any other basis were bound to destabilize such a solution and burden it with new difficulties.

The withdrawal of Somali troops from the Ogaden is only a step in the right direction, conditioned by the existing situation. The conditions for a settlement as officially announced by the Somali leadership, in our

gional autonomy in Eritrea.

It was agreed to inform the leadership organizations of Ethiopia and of the EPLF and have them communicate their positions on the results of the second meeting and the proposals of the SED at a third meeting in the GDR in mid-May.

Thus the second meeting undermined all attempts by the representatives of the EPLF to break off all political contacts and negotiations with the Provisional Military Administrative Council of Ethiopia [as they had previously intended to do].

But the situation involves the acute danger that the fighting over Eritrea will escalate and that the Arab reaction and the imperialists will intervene even further and attempt to internationalize the conflict. This would severely endanger the revolutionary developments in Ethiopia.

The Politburo of the CC of the SED is of the opinion that everything has to be done to achieve a political solution of the Eritrean question. The safeguarding of the revolutionary process in Ethiopia and its territorial as well as political integrity is a necessary precondition for this. The Provisional Military Administrative Council must doubtless have reliable control over its free access to the Red Sea. This, however, must be safeguarded by political and military means. It is our impression following the recent meeting that the Provisional Military Administrative Council is only oriented towards the military tasks in this matter and, despite repeated verbal assurances, has not made any concrete political steps in winning over the Eritrean population for the implementation of regional autonomy.

We therefore think that the Provisional Military Administrative Council should without further delay address an appeal to all willing forces in Eritrea for the peaceful political solution of the Eritrean problem. It would have to render more precisely the proposals it has made so far by concrete suggestions on the implementation of the right for self-determination of the different nations within Ethiopia in order to speed up the process of differentiation within the Eritrean population and to isolate the reactionary, separatist forces in Eritrea.

Based on the results of the last meeting, the Politburo of our Party proposes therefore that the Soviet comrades, in conjunction with representatives of our Party, work out internally possible solutions to the

regional autonomy of Eritrea in the framework of the Ethiopian state in order to communicate them at the appropriate time to the Chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council, Mengistu Haile Mariam.

[Closing remarks]

[Source: SAPMO-BArch, DY30 IV 2/2.035/127; document obtained and translated by Christian F. Ostermann.]

Memorandum of Conversation between [SED] Comrade Friedel Trappen and Soviet Comrade R. A. Ulyanovsky in the CC of the CPSU, 11 May 1978

[Other participants]

Ulyanovsky:

As Comrade B.N. Ponomarev has already pointed out in the last conversation with the comrades of the SED, the CC of the CPSU considers the talks of the SED with the Eritrean movements and the Ethiopian side very useful and positive. We can still say this today. On this basis one should approach the next meeting in June as well as other meetings. We consider the four points agreed on at the last meeting as positive. If both sides really take the four points as a starting point, this would be positive for further development. We are of the opinion that the following main points should be emphasized:

- a) The political solution of the problem and an end to the bloodshed.
- b) The granting of regional autonomy for Eritrea, but, however, no separate national independence.
- c) The unconditional use of Ethiopia's communications with the ports on the Red Sea.
- d) The increased unification of the progressive forces on both sides.

This would be a deeply satisfying platform which could be developed further.

The points agreed upon in the March meeting are contained in these proposals and hence could be developed further at the June meeting. This would create a real foundation for the rapprochement of both sides. The main question is, how honestly, how genuinely, and how deeply both sides will comply with these points. If one could say today that the four points are fulfilled by both sides or will soon be fulfilled, this would be a great relief for us.

The CPSU also works in this direction. It agreed to receive an ELF-RC delegation led by Ahmed Mohammed Nasser at the level of the USSR Solidarity Committee on a confidential internal basis around 20 May 1978. We will use these contacts in order to induce the representatives of the ELF-RC to have direct contact with the Provisional Military Administrative Council. The objective is to find an appropriate solution for Eritrea within the framework of the Ethiopian state. We do not have the intention to hide from Ahmed Nasser our policy toward a unified Ethiopia. The policy of the CPSU is aimed at the unity of Ethiopia. We will try to convince Ahmed Nasser that the future development of the Eritrean people can only evolve in a unified Ethiopian state. In the discussions we will continue to pursue the line of emphasizing the unity between the Marxist-Leninist forces and national-democratic forces in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

We would like to stress that we have to be extremely tactful in our relations with Mengistu Haile Mariam and the PMAC, in particular with respect to the Eritrean question.

Mengistu Haile Mariam does not have an easy stand within the PMAC in this regard. In connection with the well-known Dr. Negede [Gobeze] affair tensions have heightened within the PMAC and this has not made Mengistu's task any easier.

We would like to emphasize that all concrete initiatives on the Eritrean questions have to originate from Ethiopia. This does not mean that the Eritrean side is free of any initiatives. If we put the entire weight on the Mengistu Haile Mariam's shoulders and free Ahmed Nasser or respectively Aforki of any responsibility, this would be one-sided. The Ethiopian side is watching with great jealousy the actions of the CPSU and the SED. Here as well one has to see the connection between Mengistu Haile Mariam's position and the people around him. Mengistu Haile Mariam deserves to be regarded by us as a man who represents internationalist positions. By contrast to him, Berhanu Bayeh and Fikre Selassie as well as Legesse Asfaw and others, for example, are marked by nationalism although they are faithful to Mengistu Haile Mariam.

All steps and initiatives on the part of the CPSU, the CP Cuba, and the SED must be put forward extremely tactfully and carefully not to cause any protests. Frankly, the

problem lies to a certain degree in the fact that we all attempt to square the circle. The one side of the problem is - and we are both working on this - to solve the problem on an internationalist basis. On the other hand there are efforts to solve it on a nationalist basis. This is precisely why, I emphasize again, we have to apply maximum caution,

after concrete results have been achieved on the question of what, who, and to whom in some matter guarantees might be given.

Finally, Comrade Ulyanovsky pointed out that the attempt to keep the Ethiopian leadership from its military advance through us was a very delicate matter. The PMAC was predominantly of the opinion that even a political solution of the Eritrean question was not possible without a strengthening of Ethiopia's military positions in Eritrea and that the liberation of above-mentioned ports and cities can only be achieved by military means. The PMAC assumed that only then [would] actual and basic conditions exist for negotiations with the separatists.[...]

[Source: SAPMO-BArch, DY30 IV 2/2.035/127; document obtained and translated by Christian F. Ostermann.]

SED Department of International Relations, Information on talks of Ahmed Nasser (ELF-RC) in the USSR Solidarity Committee, 7- 8 June 1978

We received the following information from the CC of the CPSU:

The representatives of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity explained the USSR position which is based on the assumption that the solution of the Eritrean question has to be achieved within the framework of a unified Ethiopian state by means of negotiations.

In effect, the three talks which were held with Ahmed Nasser proved that the Eritrean friends are not yet willing to approach the question by giving up the slogan of independence for Eritrea. Their argumentation is that neither side should coerce the other one into negotiations and a solution could only be a result of unconditional negotiations.

In the first conversation on 7 June, A. Nasser indicated that the ELF-RC would possibly consent to a federation. In the following talks it was not mentioned again, and by the time the third talk took place on 8 June, the position of the Eritrean friends had even hardened.

Generally they were at pains to prove that the ELF was the best, the [most] Marxist-Leninist of the Eritrean movements. They pointed out their advantages as follows:

1. The ELF recognizes the progressive

character of the Ethiopian Revolution.

2. It acknowledges the importance of the Soviet-Cuban support.

3. It does not demand preconditions.

4. It is willing to negotiate.

5. It favors the unification on a common democratic basis.

The Soviet comrades estimate that the attitude of the ELF appears to be slightly more flexible as those of the other Eritrean movements but this is, however, only an appearance.

[Source: SAPMO-BArch, DY30 IV 2/2.035/127; obtained and translated by Christian F. Ostermann.]

Winkelmann, SED CC Department of International Relations, to Hermann Axen, 9 June 1978

[Introductory remarks]

Comrade Ponomarev is sending cordial greetings to you. In his opinion, Mengistu's recent speech does not allow for any [new] conclusions with respect to the [Ethiopian-Eritrean] talks in Berlin. Everything should be done as agreed upon. Even after this speech there is no reason for any nervousness.

Comrade Ponomarev had a long talk with Comrade Valdez Vivo on 9 June in which he also had an exchange of views about Mengistu's recent speech. The speech is considered as mostly positive. It corresponds for the most part with the recommendations of the Soviet and Cuban comrades with respect to the current situation and the necessary measures. It is in harmony with the agreements which have been made with Mengistu.

Mengistu's speech, which contains the necessary elements for a peaceful solution of the problem, is the basis for the further work. Mengistu will travel in the next days to Asmara. It is planned to hold a meeting with the population in which Mengistu will explain his program for a peaceful solution. His recent speech is the prelude to this action.

[Concluding remarks.]

[Source: SAPMO-BArch, DY30 IV 2/2.035/127; document obtained and translated by Christian F. Ostermann.]

GDR Embassy in Moscow, 19 June

1978, Memorandum of a Conversation between [SED] Comrade Grabowski and the Head of the Third African Department of the [Soviet] MFA, [CPSU] Comrade Sinitsin

On Mengistu's speech of 14 June

The speech contains statements which can hardly be read without concern. One still has to assume that the military actions of the separatists have to be energetically opposed, that fulmarp* -4 Jun (has to assume)]TJ T* x1

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PLICITLY oppose the separation of Eritrea. The impression that the Libyan leadership basically favors the Arabization of Eritrea is not far off. In no case does it want to see relations among the Arab states, especially among the countries of the rejection front, be burdened by the Eritrean question. The pressure exerted by Saudi Arabia and Egypt can definitely be felt. It is difficult to say whether Arab countries will be willing to deploy troop contingents in Eritrea against Ethiopia. They will undoubtedly take into consideration that the predominant majority of African countries would oppose such a move. In their view, Eritrea is a part of Ethiopia. A separation of Eritrea would run counter to their national interest as strong separatist movements exert de-stabilizing influence in many African countries.

It is remarkable that similar considerations make even [Sudanese President Jafaar Al-] Numeiri waver. His attitude toward

East and the West.

The Westernizers are making use of the fact that certain of the socialist countries are conducting themselves with restraint with regard to the development of economic collaboration with Ethiopia. These countries include Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and also Romania, although this is for different reasons.

The leadership of the PMAC regards resentfully and with a lack of understanding the fact that the Council for Mutual Economic Aid [Comecon], to which Ethiopia appealed with a proposal for the development of collaboration not only on a bilateral, but on a multilateral basis in March 1977, has since that time not made any concrete resolutions, but has rather confined itself to a declaration of the desire for such collaboration.

The Western countries place serious hopes on the fact that the make-up of the State apparatus, as well as a significant part of the officer staff of the military forces of Ethiopia, remains as before. Many of the bureaucrats and officers received their education in the West, and are subject to the influence of bourgeois ideology, and as a consequence of this they regard unfavorably the course of the country toward a socialist orientation and the primary development of relations with socialist countries. The Ethiopian leadership, which understands this well, is unable to replace the State apparatus due to the lack of cadres which have received the appropriate preparation. The regime remains transitional in the country, new organs of authority have not yet been put into place. The country's leadership has only begun the work of creating a basis for this.

Drawing a general conclusion, one can say with certainty that a long-term course for the USA and the Western countries for the struggle for Ethiopia is being plotted. This is evident if only from the fact that, in spite of the Somali adventure, they do not intend to exchange Ethiopia for Somalia. While creating their position in Somalia, they are setting their strategic sights on Ethiopia. This can be seen both from the degree of patience with which the USA, England, and the Federal Republic of Germany are regarding the sharp anti-imperialist attacks in the speeches of the Ethiopian leaders and in the press.

The head of the government, Mengistu Haile Mariam, in a speech he delivered at a

ceremony in honor of the graduates of the capital's university, spoke about the imperialist plot headed by the USA in the presence of the new American ambassador. The People's Republic of China acts as an objective and actual ally of imperialism in the struggle against the countries of socialist collaboration with Ethiopia. The Westernizers attempt as much as possible to use this factor, and do not disdain even to use anti-Soviet propagandistic slogans, which are invented by the Chinese.

From the other side, in spite of the preservation of the anti-imperialist course, which was manifest in the speeches of the Ethiopian delegation at the Session of the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of the heads of government of the Organization of African States in Khartoum, and likewise at the conference of nonaligned countries in Belgrade, we cannot consider that the struggle is over in the ruling circles of the country about questions of the external political orientation and the essence of a policy of nonalignment. In this struggle a significant role is played by the petit-bourgeois influence, which is still quite strong in the officers' circles.

Before turning to the nature of Ethiopian relations with individual Western countries, it is worth noting that in the framework of the general anti-imperialist course, Ethiopia continues to distinguish between the USA and the countries of the Common Market.

The central flame of anti-imperialist propaganda is directed against the USA, England, the Federal Republic of Germany, and, to a lesser degree, against France, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries.

The relations of Ethiopia with the USA have undergone the greatest changes. [The Americans] have eliminated their military objects from the territory of the country, their propaganda apparatus, their military mission; they have cut by one half the staff of the American embassy. The Ethiopian government delayed the agreement for the new American ambassador by three months and gave it only after a serious discussion, in the course of which the Ethiopians warned that if the anti-Ethiopian campaign in the USA, connected, in part, with human rights issues, was not brought to an end, that they would seek to break off diplomatic relations. After this the United States was forced to reach a certain compromise.

In order to preserve whatever remained of their former position in Ethiopia, the USA is trying to use all of the factors enumerated above (economic pressure, Ethiopian nationalism, ties which remain to the state apparatus). To a large extent the condition of Ethiopian finance depends, in particular, upon whether or not the United States buys coffee, the income from which made up in 1977 approximately 75% of the general export earnings of the country. The USA persists in offering economic assistance to Ethiopia, in particular in answer to the circulated appeal from the Ethiopian commission on assistance to the population of the Ogaden and Wollo. At the same time, they underscore that America offers mainly humanitarian aid, while the USSR is generous only as regards military supplies. Meanwhile, in spite of the fact of the worsening governmental relations, economic assistance from the USA to Ethiopia is growing. Thus, according to information of an American