

September 6, 1977

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

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Summary:

Memorandum of Conversation, Soviet Ambassador to Ethiopia A.P. Ratanov with U.S. Charge d'Affaires A. Tienkin regarding US feelings of improved US-Ethiopian and US-Somalian relations and US lack of interest in Soviet military aid to Ethiopia

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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 "disappearance" 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 rumors. 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

Ethiopia, but at the same time aims to convince Somalia and Ethiopia of the need to seek peaceful regulation of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict and that the Soviet Union considers Ethiopia to be a non-aligned state, having the right, as all other states do, to have normal relations with socialist states as well as with the Western states. He added that the support of the Soviet Union for Ethiopia's socialist orientation is defined by the fact that it [this policy] was chosen by Ethiopia itself and answers to the needs of its socio-economic development. However, this policy of socialist orientation presupposes normal economic and trade ties with all countries, the existence of a private sector, mixed state-private firms, etc.

Tienkin remarked that he agreed with this, that the Ethiopians themselves chose the path of socialist orientation. In Tienkin's view, the Ethiopian leaders have really begun to emphasize their non-aligned course more than they had in previous statements.

During the discussion, Tienkin did not try to reproach the Soviet Union and did not even show any interest in Soviet military aid to Ethiopia. He was most interested in the issue of Soviet-Somali relations (the results of Siad Barre's trip to Moscow, etc...)

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR TO
SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA /s/ A. Ratanov