

November 8, 1977

**CPSU CC to SED CC, Information on 30-31 October
1977 Closed Visit of Mengistu Haile Mariam to
Moscow**

Citation:

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<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110963>

Summary:

The memo concerns the visit of Mariam to Moscow and his meeting with the Central Committee. During the meeting he described the problems facing the Ethiopian regime, primarily the war with Somalia and relations with the other countries in the Horn of Africa.

Original Language:

Russian

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Translation - English

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Confidential

With regard to the request of the chairman of the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) of Ethiopia Mengistu Haile Mariam, he was received in Moscow on 30-31 October, this year, on a closed [zakritii] visit. On 31 October he had a conversation with L.I. Brezhnev, A.N. Kosygin and A.A. Gromyko.

Mengistu informed in detail about the domestic political situation in Ethiopia, about the grave situation on the northern, eastern and southeastern fronts, where the battle is raging against the Eritrean separatists, [and] counterrevolutionary formations and regular units of the Somali army. The separatists succeeded in seizing the main cities of Eritrea, except for Asmara and the port of Massawa. Somali troops occupied in effect the whole Ogaden, with exception of Harar and Dire Dawa.

Mengistu spoke about the hostile activity of Sudan and other reactionary Arab states who plan in connection to the unification of the three separatist states in Eritrea to set up an Eritrean "government" and to proclaim "an independent state." Mengistu confirmed the aspiration of Ethiopia to settle Ethiopian-Somali relations in a peaceful way. He declared that Ethiopian armed forces set the goal of the liberation of Ethiopian territory and do not intend to cross the frontiers of their country.

Mengistu pointed out that an inauspicious situation on the battlefields and the threat of partition that [hangs over] the Ethiopian state has wrought a negative influence on the economic and domestic political situation of the country, undermine faith in the victory of the Ethiopian revolution, [and] encourage activities of internal reactionary forces.

Revolutionary Ethiopia, in Mengistu's words, finds itself now in the enemy's encirclement and aspires to support of first of all the socialist states. By referring to the need to improve Ethiopia's defense under these circumstances, Mengistu made a request to broaden Soviet military assistance.

Expanding on all this, Mengistu spoke about his confidence in a final victory of the revolution, stressing that the masses of people firmly support the revolution and its achievements that are being accomplished in the interests of the people.

On our side we confirmed the principled line of the Soviet Union to give all-sided support to the Ethiopian revolution and to continue the further expansion of Soviet-Ethiopian relations. Mengistu also received an agreement to supply during this year an additional amount of Soviet armaments and military equipment. He also received the principled assurances of the Soviet side to grant the PMAC assistance in working out plans of social-economic development of Ethiopia, including the dispatch to Addis Ababa of certain specialists.

As a comradely advice, [the Soviet side] shared with Mengistu ideas in favor of the accelerated creation in Ethiopia of a party based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, which would further the mobilization of masses to defend revolutionary conquests and to promote the revolution. It was stressed to be important for the PMAC to adopt practical measures to resolve the nationalities question in Ethiopia in order to ensure the support of the progressive regime on the part of national minorities.

For the moment, we are left with the definite impression that in the existing situation in Ethiopia and around it, the PMAC urgently needs further assistance of our fraternal countries through the mechanism of bilateral relations, as well as on the international arena.

[Source: SAPMO, J IV 2/202/583; obtained and translated from Russian by Vladislav M. Zubok.]