

September 2, 1977

**Message from Yugoslav Embassy Addis Ababa, 'The
Soviet Ambassador on the Ethiopian-Soviet
Relations'**

Citation:

"Message from Yugoslav Embassy Addis Ababa, 'The Soviet Ambassador on the Ethiopian-Soviet Relations'", September 2, 1977, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Diplomatski Arhiv Ministarstva Spoljnih Poslova Republike Srbije [Belgrade], f. PA, Etiopija 1977, fasc. 34, dos. 5, sig. 447810, s. 1. Obtained and translated by Radoslav Yordanov. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/134779>

Summary:

A detailed view of Soviet reactions toward the Ethiopian-Somali conflict as of early September 1977, showing Moscow's envoy to Addis Ababa's conviction that Ethiopia would emerge victorious from the war. However, this document also gives a somewhat critical view on the part of Yugoslav's diplomat regarding the Soviets' unofficial and unsuccessful attempt to persuade Ethiopia to surrender part of Ogaden in order to appease the Somalis.

Original Language:

Czech

Contents:

Translation - English

SFRJ Embassy Addis Ababa
No. 905
September 2, 1977

Urgent

The Soviet Ambassador on the Ethiopian-Soviet relations:

To provide full support to the Ethiopian revolution and its leadership in order to defend the country from aggression and realize its internal and foreign policies.

To give them the most modern defensive and offensive weapons, not only to cover [their] current needs but also to create a modern and powerful army. To deliver the MIG-21 and 23, T-55 tanks (60 pieces have already arrived), artillery, missiles, etc. The MIG's will arrive with the Ethiopian pilots who will soon complete their retraining in the USSR. Also, to deliver missiles and artillery for the defense of the ports of Sasaba and Masawa to prevent possible Somalia or Arab attempt to occupy the ports and deprive them from receiving supplies. Their fleet will be equipped with a fast missile boats.

Currently, there are [Soviet] 70 experts in Ethiopia, who can train 2,500 Ethiopians. However, Ethiopia has, until now, only determined 350, which the ambassador criticized as sabotage by the Defense Ministry. They are ready to send more experts to fully train Ethiopian troops in handling the new technology. A Soviet delegation comes on September 8th to extend the agreement on cooperation and assistance.

[Soviet Union is] against the Somali aggression and openly stated that it is in Somalis' interest to withdraw from the Ogaden. President Siad Barre's actions are considered extremely rough and vulgar.

He has turned against himself the whole Africa, which cannot agree with the attack by one of OAU's members. Now, he is trying to get the full support from the Arab countries, to whom he serves as a vanguard of penetration in Africa. The situation in the Somali army is not good. Soldiers have low morale and weak willingness to fight. Many senior officers openly complain against the attacks on Ethiopia. The ambassador said that the Somali aggression and adventure will end badly for Somalia. Ethiopian human reserves are inexhaustible. They will not lack any weapons. Somalia cannot sustain in a long war, the victory will belong to Ethiopia.

Somalia is waging an anti-Soviet campaign. Barre's trip to Moscow was his last attempt to convince the Soviet leadership to abandon its support for Ethiopia and provide him enough weapons to continue the war in Ogaden. His demands were not met. There is a serious threat to President Barre's leadership coming from right-wing forces.

The Ambassador estimates that the top PMAC leadership in Addis Ababa will review its foreign policy reorientation. He does not believe in a radical reorientation toward the West, but expects the establishment of normal relations with western countries, including the United States. I agreed with him that it is not going to be a radical reorientation, but most likely be in accordance with Ethiopia's non-aligned position.

The Ambassador also believes that PMAC in this complex situation seems more organized, calmer and orderly. In their statements, President Mengistu and other PMAC members show less radicalism and more wisdom and objectivity in unifying the masses to defend the country and the revolution. There is no doubt that the mass of

peasants and workers are on the side of the revolution.

Intelligentsia is either against the revolution, or, if it considers itself as progressive, as Dr Hailu Fida does, it is away from the masses and the reality, with a formulaic approach to revolutionary solutions, which inevitably brings them into conflict with this process. When Dr Hailu Fida eventually failed to impose himself as the only mandatary for the organization of the working party, he defected.

The situation in Eritrea is considered by far more sever and more complex than this in Ogaden.

In our opinion, in recent days, there is a greater activity on the part of the Soviet Union in the delivery of weapons to Ethiopia and they are taking a clearer stance toward the Somali aggression. Their unofficial attempt to persuade Ethiopia to cede part of Ogaden failed completely. [They] [t]hreatened with the danger of a serious disruption of relations with Ethiopia and efficient delivery of weapons. However, even this small attempt made it clear to the highest Ethiopian leadership with whom they are dealing with, and forced them to reconsider their relations with other countries. There is no doubt that this lesson will have lasting effect on the Ethiopian leadership.

Vojinovic

[...]