

TOP SECRET MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION OF [SED] COMRADE LAMBERZ WITH THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA, COMRADE PEPE, ON MARCH 3, 1978 [BERLIN, MARCH 4, 1978; BASED ON THE NOTES OF COMRADE GENERAL MAJOR JÄNICKE]

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[...]

Comrade Pepe's estimate of the situation:

There is a good development in the East. There are still Somali troops in the area of Jijiga. Dire Dawa and Harer have been liberated. Currently concentration on Ethiopian side against Jijiga.

Regular Somali troops are withdrawing to the border; intend to leave guerrilla fighters in Jijiga as bridgehead. The problem of the Ethiopian troops not taking any prisoners was discussed with Mengistu; it was Mengistu's concept to take prisoners but it had not yet achieved complete awareness among the troops.

On the trip of the envoy of USA President Carter to Addis Ababa:

The American desire to keep the trip secret was not accepted. USA were concerned that Ethiopia would break off diplomatic relations. USA would be ready to respect the revolutionary development in Ethiopia and grant aid to Ethiopia if its neutrality was guaranteed. They would perhaps be willing to deliver money and spare parts.

Problems in the relationship Ethiopia-USA were not the fault of the Carter Administration but of its predecessor (for example non-compliance with weapons and material deliveries).

The United States' main concern was Soviet and Cuban presence. The United States would not support Somalia as long as Ethiopia was operating on its own territory.

Mengistu explained to the USA envoy: It was his right to ask for advisers to come to Ethiopia, and they would stay as long as necessary. The Carter administration was to blame for the strained Ethiopian-USA relationship (role of the CIA etc.). He emphasized the neutrality of Ethiopia which would develop toward socialism. He would not be ready to switch allies.

Mengistu's response was so good that the USA envoy immediately withdrew the demand for the immediate removal of Soviet and Cuban advisers; he demanded the withdrawal of the Cubans after the end of the Somali aggression; then the withdrawal would be necessary since otherwise this would result in a threat to USA strategic interests.

The United States attempts to get an economic foothold in Ethiopia. Possibly deliveries of arms, equipment etc. would follow to "further confuse the situation".

Comrade Pepe pointed to the fact that after the situation in the East would clear up some forces could try to perform a change of course in Ethiopia. (Something similar to [radical pro-Soviet and anti-American MPLA faction leader Nito] Alves in Angola.)

At the request of the Cuban comrades, Mengistu spoke publicly about the presence of Soviet and Cuban advisers. Nevertheless, the press continually claims that Ethiopia is still fighting by itself. Reason for this unclear.

With respect to the "Red terror", Comrade Vivo mentioned this to Mengistu. Now there is a certain positive change . There is talk of "revolutionary legality".

[...]

[Source: Stiftung "Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv"(Berlin), DY30 IV 2/2.035/127; document obtained and transl. by Christian F. Ostermann (The National Security Archive)]