

NPMP NSC Files VIP Visits Ethiopia - State Visit of Emperor Haile Selassie I,
July 7 - 10, 1969 [1 of 2] Box 914 Folder 04/054

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

NO. 110100-19 103
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *A/*

BRIEFING

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July 6, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Emperor Haile Selassie
of Ethiopia -- Tuesday, July 8, 10:30 a.m.

Ethiopia is our closest friend in Africa. Our purposes in this visit are (a) to show the new Administration will continue that relationship and (b) to honor the Emperor as a moderate, pro-Western leader with a potential peacemaking role in African quarrels.

The main problem in doing this is to reassure Haile Selassie of our support without being drawn into his own parochial and exaggerated view of threats to Ethiopian security. The Emperor has an appetite for U. S. arms which we can neither satisfy under present military aid limitations nor justify in terms of our own estimate of his position. Moreover, military concerns divert the Emperor from economic development -- where we can help and where prompt action is crucial to Ethiopia's stability and thus to our interests in the country.

The Emperor

At 76, on the throne for over half a century, Haile Selassie sees himself as one of the towering figures of modern history. He assumes not only his acknowledged role as Africa's elder statesman, but also a stature and wisdom in world affairs beyond the Continent.

His outlook was clearly shaped by the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in the thirties -- his dramatic but futile appeal to the League of Nations, a bitter wartime exile, a restoration only to find court intrigue and Communist efforts at subversion. Added to these experiences was the traditional fear of Christian Ethiopia being overwhelmed by surrounding Moslems. The product in the Emperor is a virtual siege mentality, in which Soviet arms aid to neighboring Somalia, Sudan and Yemen seems larger than life. The West, he fears, will repeat the mistakes of the thirties if it underestimates the threat to Ethiopia. Thus, the Emperor

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sees a common interest with the U. S. in making Ethiopia a bulwark against a Communist-Moslem thrust into the Horn of Africa.

To these views (and most others) the Emperor brings both a passion from tragic experience and a sensitivity born of a royal self-esteem. Yet, as you know from your earlier meeting with him, these deeper qualities that determine his thinking may be deceptively obscured beneath a quiet, almost somber exterior in his personality.

Ethiopia's Domestic Situation and Foreign Policies

At home the Emperor is caught, like most modernizing monarchs, in a dilemma of his own making. He has built a modern state from feudal fragments, surrendered some prerogatives to a constitution, and educated an urban elite -- all in the interests of a stronger nationhood against the external danger. Now he is finding, inevitably, that these steps have only created greater political momentum -- particularly among the young -- toward a surrender of autocratic powers which he is determined to preserve.

Thus the student riots this spring at the Imperial University in Addis Ababa, and a growing concern (which we should share) that the Emperor's death will usher in a period of political chaos. Basic reform of the government is probably not possible while the Emperor is alive. But a serious effort to spur economic development could provide an escape valve for the volatile energies and frustrations in Ethiopia. The Emperor took a halting step in that direction last February by bringing younger progressives into key economic jobs in his Cabinet. These men could make the difference between orderly change and a blow-up in Ethiopia. As with the Shah of Iran and his reformers over the last decade, we have a stake in their success. It remains an open question whether the problem is soluble. Modernization may make royal rule impossible but failure to modernize may produce an explosion.

Beyond this dissidence at the center, the Emperor's most immediate problem is the continuing insurgency of the Eritrean Liberation Front -- an irredentist Moslem movement claiming the extreme northeastern corner of Ethiopia. The Front is armed by radical Arab states and is increasingly sophisticated at sabotage. Harsh reprisals by Ethiopian troops have also helped to strengthen the appeal of the insurgents among the local population of Eritrea. The army seems well able for the moment to prevent any major gain of territory by the insurgents, but the rebellion is a worry and a drain on valuable resources. The outcome will depend to some extent on the degree of assistance coming to Eritrea from across the Red Sea - Yemen and Aden especially.

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The Ethiopians fear greater support for the Front from the new leftist regime in the Sudan, just as they suspect continuing Somali irredentism on the southern border despite the recent detente between Haile Selassie and Prime Minister Egal of Somalia. Ethiopian foreign policy, in fact, has banked heavily on the detente with Somalia to free their flank while facing the extension of Soviet influence, via the Arab states, into the Red Sea Basin. The border truce with Somalia will probably hold because Egal is a strong, inward-looking leader. But the new radical government in the Sudan and the Soviet courtship of Southern Yemen compound the Emperor's fears.

Our best intelligence judges, however, that (1) the Sudanese leftists have their hands too full at home (including their own insurgency in the Southern Sudan) to pose a major threat to Ethiopia, and (2) the Soviets are still on shifting sands in Southern Yemen, where a Yemeni detente with Saudi Arabia, already developing, could all but cut the Russians out.

Aside from regional concerns, the Emperor continues to be a strong supporter of UN peacekeeping and African Unity. He was a founder of the OAU. Both the OAU and the UN Economic Commission for Africa have headquarters in Addis. You will recall the Emperor has made several -- albeit unsuccessful -- efforts to mediate the Nigerian civil war on behalf of the OAU.

US-Ethiopian Relations

From the early fifties, the Emperor has managed a skillful balancing act between de jure "non-alignment" respected throughout the Third World and a de facto special relationship with the U. S. We have been the heaviest contributor to their economic development, a primary market for their important coffee exports, and the ultimate quartermaster for the Ethiopian army and air force.

Our economic aid now runs about \$20 million per year. Military assistance is \$12 million yearly. In return, we enjoy a major communications ██████████ station at Kagnew, just outside Asmara in Eritrea. We operate under a bilateral agreement that runs to 1978. Kagnew's location provides advantages that would be either difficult or impossible to duplicate. Yet it could be a vulnerable target for the insurgent Eritreans, and gives the Ethiopians the usual host-country leverage in extracting military aid for base rights.

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In summary:

- The Emperor comes here as an ally to (i) cement old ties, (ii) alert us to what he sees as a common and immediate peril in the Horn of Africa, and (iii) get more military aid.

- We invited him as an old friend to: (i) reassure him of our support, (ii) prompt him to move forward on critical economic progress, but (iii) hold the "price" of good relations -- and thus interests such as Kagnew Station -- at the present level of military aid, which is sufficient to the Emperor's real needs.

At Tab A are suggested Talking Points.

The attached State Department briefing book is worth scanning if you are interested in greater detail on the economic or military aid programs.

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TALKING POINTS

Opening

-- You last saw the Emperor in Addis in 1967.

-- Invite him to give his reflections on the broader state of world politics. (This bow to the Emperor's wisdom should set a good tone but will lead, in any event, to his local concerns.)

Military Aid

The Emperor will recite Soviet and Arab designs on Ethiopia and the Red Sea basin. He may exaggerate Soviet arms deliveries, and conclude Ethiopia urgently needs more U. S. military help.

Your Points in Reply

-- We are watching the area carefully and are most sympathetic to Ethiopia's security concerns.

-- We want to assure the Emperor of our strong continuing support in his defense needs. Our traditional relationships in security matters are clearly in our common interests.

-- But the picture is not altogether bleak:

- (1) The radicals in the Sudan have absorbing internal problems.
- (2) So too are the Yemenis pre-occupied internally, and the Soviet inroad there is not secure.
- (3) Prime Minister Egal's re-election is a strong factor for continuing detente -- which the Emperor's statesmanship helped build with Somalia.
- ✓ (4) In any case, we think Ethiopia's forces can meet any threat from neighboring armies that are poorly trained by comparison.

-- The Congress is very concerned about U. S. military help sparking arms races or diverting resources from development.

-- We have managed to maintain our military aid to Ethiopia in the face of Congressional cuts only because we are concerned about the Emperor's problems. (Ethiopia gets over 60% of U. S. military aid to Africa.)

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By TDM/RW NARA, Date 11/29/97

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Economic Aid

The Emperor may catalog economic progress: the Cabinet reshuffle to give development new priority and financial reforms. But he will stress the need for more aid.

Your Points in Reply

-- We think steady economic progress is critical to Ethiopia's stability and thus to her strength against external dangers.

-- We applaud the Emperor's recent steps and his personal concern in development. We want to help every way we can -- including a new \$5 million agricultural sector loan now under discussion.

-- Our resources are necessarily limited, however. Ethiopia should also look to the World Bank, IMF and U.S. private investment. We will help them where we can in these efforts.

Nigeria

-- You are deeply concerned about the starvation in Nigeria/Biafra. We know how hard the Emperor has worked for peace in this tragedy. But the need is greater than ever for new initiatives in light of the new Federal Nigerian policy on relief.

. The Federals insist that only daylight relief flights may go into Biafra.

. Yet Biafra insists there must be some third party guarantee of such a daylight air corridor against surprise bombing of Biafran airfields.

-- Does the Emperor see any OAU role in solving this problem of third party guarantees in relief? Could the OAU act jointly, for example, with the United Nations?

-- Or might Ethiopia, as it has in other peacekeeping activities, combine to act with other Africans, including friends of both Nigeria and Biafra?

-- Beyond an urgent resumption of relief, the only answer to the suffering is a peaceful settlement in Nigeria.

-- Does the Emperor see any role for the OAU, for Ethiopia, or for the U.S. in helping bring this about?

-- We are most anxious to explore these possibilities with the Emperor while he is here.

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By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/99