

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON~~SECRET//EYES~~

October 29, 1970

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE & TIME: October 25, 1970 - 2:00 p. m.

PLACE: The President's Oval Office

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Emperor Haile Selassie
Ambassador Minasse
Marshall Wright *MW*

After an initial exchange of pleasantries the Emperor spoke at great length in Amharic to Ambassador Minasse, who subsequently translated into English. In his remarks the Emperor made the following points:

1. Ethiopia was grateful for American assistance, and firmly attached to its policy of cooperation with the United States.
2. The Ethiopian security situation has sharply deteriorated in the recent past.
3. Soviet influence in East Africa and the Indian Ocean areas has grown greatly.
4. The Soviets are providing large amounts of modern military equipment to Somalia, the Sudan, Yemen, and the Eritrean Liberation Movement.
5. The Chinese Communists are also active in the area and have established great influence in Tanzania and Zambia through the Tanzam Railroad project. The Chinese Communists are also competing with the Soviets for influence with Ethiopia's neighboring state and with the Eritrean Liberation Movement.
6. All the countries surrounding Ethiopia with the exception of Kenya are now subject to a high and increasing degree of Communist influence and are receiving a high and increasing amount of Communist military assistance.

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E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

7. Ethiopia's position as a friend of the United States and Ethiopia's role -- in the OAU and elsewhere -- as a force for stability in the area, make Ethiopia a bulwark against and therefore a target for Communist influence in the area.

8. The problem is complicated by the fact that Sudan, Somalia, and the Eritrean rebels have claims against Ethiopian territory.

9. The young people in Ethiopia are opposed to Ethiopia's policy of friendship with the United States (for instance Kagnev Station) for they think it endangers Ethiopian security.

10. Ethiopia needs more military help from the United States both for hard security reasons and to demonstrate to its people that Ethiopian policy does meet the country's security needs.

The President said that Ethiopia was already receiving the highest priority of any African country in U.S. assistance programs. He said that our military assistance to Ethiopia comprises about 60 percent of our total military assistance to African countries. The President said we were glad to help and would continue to help but that there were limits on our resources.

The President said that he understood the Ambassador's message to be as follows: The threat to Ethiopian security had increased, and was now more serious than it was assessed to be in American Government circles. Therefore, the military assistance programs which had been adequate in the past were no longer adequate to the need of a deteriorating security situation. The Emperor confirmed that that was the thrust of his presentation.

The President said that he would have a careful look taken at this situation with full weight given to the Emperor's remarks. The President directed Mr. Wright to undertake the study forthwith.

The President told the Emperor that in this Administration, America knew who its friends were and that we did not intend to let our friends down. We understand fully the Emperor's position, and the depth of his dedication to the cause of freedom and national independence. The President pointed out that the Emperor had been an international symbol of those values long before most of the Chiefs of State at the dinner last evening had even entered public life.

The Emperor presented to the President a personal memorandum concerning a request for additional military assistance and a study of Ethiopia's security situation prepared by the Emperor's Ministry of Defense. The President turned these documents over to Mr. Wright, and assured the Emperor that they would be carefully studied and reflected in the new assessment of Ethiopia's assistance needs which we would undertake as a result of the Emperor's presentation.

The meeting lasted one hour.