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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

September 30, 1975

SUBJECT: Secretary's Meeting with Foreign Minister  
Kifle Wodajo

PARTICIPANTS: Ethiopia

NODIS REVIEW

Foreign Minister Kifle Wodajo  
Ambassador Mohamed HAMID Ibrahim  
Charge d'Affaires to the US Mekbib Ghebeyehou

US

The Secretary  
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mulcahy  
Wendell B. Coote, Director AF/E  
Harold E. Horan, NSC

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Foreign Minister Kifle: Thank you for receiving us,  
Mr. Secretary. It is a great pleasure to see you again.

Mr. Secretary, our country has been undergoing  
basic changes for the last sixteen months. These  
changes mean different things to different people.  
At times our traditional friends are confounded by  
these changes.

The Secretary: But sympathetic.

Foreign Minister Kifle: We do not expect our tradi-  
tional friends to approve all the changes which we have  
introduced, but we want to be judged by the general thrust

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of the changes. We hope that you will look at the developments in that perspective, and that you will find that the changes are in the right direction. Some of our actions will be transitory and some permanent. We are trying to feel our way. Ethiopia is still a country which is heavily weighted by tradition. There are some excesses in the process of change which undoubtedly have surprised and even alarmed certain quarters. We believe, however, that there will be understanding of the direction in which we are heading.

The Secretary: We consider the changes in Ethiopia essentially a matter of Ethiopian domestic affairs which do not affect our foreign policy, unless Ethiopia does something to injure its relations with the United States. I want us to concentrate on foreign policy and not on Ethiopia's internal affairs. If you think there is disapproval in the United States of Ethiopia's domestic evolution, you are wrong. We are basically sympathetic to the modernization of Ethiopia. The internal changes do not affect conduct of our foreign policy.

Foreign Minister Kifle: We hope that you will be sympathetic

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and understanding of the changes taking place.

The Secretary: We could not always tell the players without a score card, but your domestic evolution is your own.

Foreign Minister Kifle: The attitude which you express has been seen in action. Ambassador Hummel and the Embassy Staff have shown exemplary conduct. I and our representatives in Washington have worked closely with the people in the State Department. Their attitude has been very helpful and has led to good understanding.

The changes taking place in Ethiopia in the main are in response to internal conditions. There is no element whatsoever of anti-foreign sentiment either against the United States or any other external force. Because of this we can pursue a balance foreign policy. We want to preserve our traditional ties with our old friends, especially the United States, but we want to balance this with better relations with the other big powers. In economic assistance, we need to diversify our sources of aid and trade relations, but this doesn't imply that we are reducing our relations with our old friends. We

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merely want to have balanced relations with all countries of the world.

We attach great importance to relations with the United States. A few weeks ago Chairman Teferi Bante explained to your Ambassador our desire to continue to work with the United States. This was a reflection of our deeply felt gratitude for the continued assistance which the United States Government has provided us, especially in timely and generous drought relief. The United States has always been very responsive to our defense needs. The arms discussions which we have had during the last several months have produced results. Items have arrived or begun to arrive and delivery dates for the remaining items established. We are grateful for this response to our defense requirements.

The Secretary: I am delighted to hear that, because it is one of the rare instances in which my instructions have been strictly carried out. Now if you will say that we have not attempted to improve the moral tone in Ethiopia, I will be happy. There is no change in our traditional friendship with Ethiopia. We want to be as responsive as we can to your defense needs.

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Foreign Minister Kifle: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Regarding our ongoing programs of assistance, I am instructed to request from you additional drought relief assistance. We have been living under serious drought conditions for the last eight years. The situation is generally improved, but not to the extent we had hoped for. Another area bordering on Somalia has been seriously hit. The original assessment of requirements by our people was considered highly exaggerated by United States representatives in Addis, but now, after several months, representatives of donor countries and of the international agencies agree with Ethiopia regarding the order of magnitude of our requirements. It is a very sizable order of magnitude - between 1.5 million and 2 million metric tons of grain. We need an immediate response.

The Secretary: Does Ethiopia have a Public Law 480 Title I Program?

Ambassador Mulcahy: Yes, sir.

Mr. Coote: The government has already discussed its requirements with us and we are taking a look at them.

Foreign Minister Kifle: The problem is to agree on the exact figure. This has delayed progress. The United States has not responded on the scale that we have sought. I hope that you might intervene personally to speed up the process to end this controversy. It is a matter of saving people's lives. I was asked to mention this problem to you.

Another request I have been asked to present to you is the continuation of military assistance. We feel that we will need military assistance for a number of years. We would like to talk about the fiscal year 1976 program. We will benefit from the most generous credit arrangement which you can give us. I hope we can start discussions on this right away.

Ambassador Mulcahy: We are just at the beginning of the FY 1976 cycle. Dr. Kifle will be going to Washington and we will be discussing this matter with him there.

The Secretary: Our basic policy is sympathetic. Our basic wishes are to be sympathetic to Ethiopia's needs. We should move as fast as we can. Normally what ought to be decided in four hours takes six months. Nothing happens during that six-month period except the shifting

of papers among middle-level officials who make compromises with each other which lead to no decision. Some day I am going to write a book about this.

Foreign Minister Kifle: I hope you will look into approving the highest amount of credit for Ethiopia within the African share. I know that there are competing claims.

Finally, I wish to state to you, Mr. Secretary, that the Provisional Military Government shares with the United States certain general interests in the area - freedom of navigation of the straits, freedom of navigation of the high seas and prosperity and stability of the area as a whole. This common interest provides a basis for building relations on mutual respect - each recognizing the sovereignty of the other. We hope to maintain a non-aligned policy. We do not want to be a medium for the introduction of big power politics in Africa, nor to be susceptible to designs which other powers might have in the area.

The Secretary: Our basic policy is one of friendship for Ethiopia. We do not want super power rivalry in the area. You have a Soviet base in a neighboring country.

We have no desire to match that in Ethiopia. We want to see Ethiopia develop. We will look sympathetically at military assistance and development programs that will be helpful to you.

Are you still worried about an invasion from Somalia?

Foreign Minister Kifle: Yes, we still are. We have suggested that the Somalis think in terms of using the Juba River for irrigation. There is need for water in that area, but the Somalis refuse to consider it.

The Secretary: You don't expect a major military problem in the immediate future?

Foreign Minister Kifle: We had expected this last year but the drought has seriously affect Somalia. There are also other developments which indicate that some of the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, are exercising constraints on them. The Somalis also recognize that the rest of Africa realizes how much the Soviets are involved in Somalia. But there is an area where we think they might start something. This is in the region of Djibouti.

The Secretary: Against the French?

Foreign Minister Kifle: They might want to move against Djibouti, where they have a claim. They might want to create a situation there where they can move in.

The Secretary: What would you do in such case?

Foreign Minister Kifle: I don't know. We are looking at the options. They might want to make a claim for Arab support in the case of Djibouti.

The Secretary: What about the Americans captured in Kagnev?

Foreign Minister Kifle: Mr. Secretary, we are making every reasonable effort to obtain their release. At one time we knew where they were held, but we refrained from action which might endanger their lives. I haven't received the latest information. I don't know if we are still following their moves. It seems to us that their capture was the result of intramural rivalry in the secessionist movement. We could have given better protection. We discussed this with your people, but your people felt that too much security might attract such moves rather than prevent them.

The Secretary: Please keep us informed on any developments.

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Our basic policy is not to negotiate with terrorists, but it would be helpful if you would keep us informed.

Foreign Minister Kifle: We were surprised at some of with Arab politics. It is part of their efforts to embarrass Egypt.

The elements responsible for the kidnapping are assisted primarily by Iraq and Syria.

The Secretary: Mr. Foreign Minister, it was a pleasure to see you again. I wish you success in Washington. Ambassador Mulcahy will help you cut through the bureaucracy.

Ambassador Mulcahy: With your backing, Mr. Secretary.

The Secretary: You will have that. I stand fully behind this program.

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