

МЕЖДУНАРОДНО-ПРАВОВОЙ ЮБИЛЕЙ

ИНТЕРВЬЮ

INTERVIEW OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION MR. PAUL KURGAT

KJIL&IR: Your Excellency, first of all, we would like to congratulate Republic of Kenya with 50 years of its independence.

Ambassador Kurgat: Thank you very much.

KJIL&IR: And we also just celebrated 50 years of establishment of our diplomatic relations. So, it's quite a big year in our history. Could you kindly tell us, what was the history of independence struggle in Kenya?

Ambassador Kurgat: Kenya, like most of African countries and other developing countries over Asia and Latin America, as you know, was colonized. And Kenya was colonized by the British. The native people were deprived of rights, deprived of economic and political freedoms. Historically, I think, we were influenced by the liberations that came in the end of the Second World War. Our people participated in Second World War and coming back home they had a clear notion that it was possible to be liberated, and struggle was started. Another aspects is that there was an influence of the USSR and the USA, international labor organizations, liberal parties in these countries.

Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, with George Padmore came to work to Moscow in 1929, and he went back in 1932-1933. They studied in the Communism University of the workers of the East. This was the early contact between Kenya and the USSR.

Definitely, from his actions and writings, he did not become a member of the Communist party. He was much more interested in liberation of Kenya. So, by 1950-s we already had different communities all over the country (Bongoma, central Kenya, Mombasa) – it was a mass movement in Kenya. And, therefore, Kenyatta and Odinga found a common ground and, together with groups of people behind them, moved the course of movement of liberation until the year 1963. USSR took its opportunity in 1960 to draft a UN resolution on liberation of colonial countries. So, it was Russia who pushed the international forum for liberation of African states, including Kenya, and Asian countries and Latin American states.

KJIL&IR: Sometimes we could read that several African states, namely Kenya got its independence. I always argue with such expressions claiming that it has won its independence. It was a liberation war...

Ambassador Kurgat: It was a serious war. People went to say that there are only 2 countries in Africa that won independence and that it was not given to them. These countries are Kenya and Algeria.

KJIL&IR: You're Excellency, what was the main difference between liberation war in Kenya and liberation struggles in other African countries?

Ambassador Kurgat: The Kenyan liberation war was very bloody. The country was already branded «the White Highlands» that the British didn't want to leave.

KJIL&IR: What were the main features of your independent development? As far as we know, you started with African socialism, then went through so-called Africanization policy. What are the main achievements of Kenya during the 50 years of your independence?

Ambassador Kurgat: There were three goals which Kenya wanted to achieve: provision of education, provision of health services and elimination of poverty. Talking about achievement of these lines, the number of primary and secondary schools, universities in Kenya has tremendously

increased. Today we have 811 903 primary school candidates. We have over 20 public universities and related institutions, almost the same number of private universities and colleges. The level of education increased tremendously as well. Comparing to the 1960-s and 1970-s, the number of Kenyans going abroad for education has dropped. It's a positive fact.

In terms of health services, we have at least one major hospital in every region (so-called level 5). We have legislated the ways of treatment of some diseases, like malaria. We distribute for free the nets to avoid malaria. Currently, there is a work on a free treatment of cancer. We have magistrates in that field.

In terms of eliminating poverty, it is a challenge for Kenya as well as for other countries, including not only provision of healthcare and education, but also creation of rooms, of jobs. We are now devolving into regions – the funding's will be channeled to the regions. The administrators there will identify the projects that can help the youth at the regional level, the national level. This is happening.

KJIL&IR: You're Excellency, could you tell us about the main principals, the main directions of Kenyan policy on international arena? What's the role of Kenya in international relations?

Ambassador Kurgat: I can start from 1964, when Jomo Kenyatta was appointed as chairman of OAU attempts to resolve the Congo crisis. Moreover, in 1974-1975 Kenya was a defender of Mozambique and Angola in their wars of independence, seeking to reunite all the fractions together. By the 1980 Kenya was already in the UN peacekeeping system and we went to Zimbabwe, participated in many other peacekeeping operations in Africa. And what is commonly known in Kenyan armed forces is 'Kenbat', that is a Kenyan battalion that even went to Yugoslavia. Very interesting: when you come to our country, you will find out where the soldiers are coming from. Somebody's place is called Kosovo, another's place is called Bosnia. All of them are because of soldiers arriving from peacekeeping operations, who buy houses and give them the names of the places where they served. At the UN our diplomats quite pushed a lot; early in 1970-s, you remember how Kenyan diplomats worked on the moving of the UNEP to Nairobi. I think its major achievement to have the only UN organization situated in Africa, what makes Nairobi the major diplomatic center. We have been sending our people into international organizations. We believe as a country that the UN is the forum to solve international issues and push international agenda.

KJIL&IR: Talking about the role of Kenya in international law, I have to stress the big contribution of Kenyan lawyers. The biggest example is the concept of exclusive economic zone that was presented by Kenya and now it is a generally accepted norm of international law fixed in UN convention of the law of the sea. Nowadays Kenya is arguing before the ICC and I'm expressing my own opinion, but I have to say that I feel that Kenyan position is stronger than the position of the Court. So, we see that Kenya has a very strong school of international law.

Ambassador Kurgat: Yes, we have very serious professionals. One of our Attorney-Generals – Amo Suaku – was among these people who worked out this concept of exclusive economic zone. So, we have worked through our mission to New York, through our diplomats and through our lawyers to develop these legal issues on international arena. Even the law of the space – we made some contribution there. You are right – we have strong international lawyers, strong schools, strong people doing international relations and good will of the Government of Kenya.

KJIL&IR: Let me turn to the topic of Kenyan-Russian relations. These relations have more long history than their diplomatic relations. Could you tell us what were the early relations between our states before we established diplomatic ties? You've already mentioned the visits of Kenyatta...

Ambassador Kurgat: Yes, as I said, before opening the diplomatic mission there was less contact, but there were early Russians who visited the continent, visiting Ethiopia, the Eastern coast of Africa, including Kenya. If you go to Saint Petersburg, there is a museum «Kunstkamera».

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There were people who made collections of art from Kenya: the first people coming there were anthropologists, and later more art was collected from other Europeans, especially the Swedes. That is an early stage. Then comes, as I said, independence. Well, shortly before independence, during the struggle for independence, Russia was involved through the UN forum to push for independence, as I said Kenyatta was here [in Russia] to push forward the liberation, to give lands and rights to the people, political parties, to operate economy and political activities as free people. I think that's where Kenyan-Russian relations start. But also, since education was so limited to Kenyans by the British, very few people were allowed to have it, you know, very few schools existed. Most of people who went to school were sons or daughters of chiefs. The majority of people was not able to secure education in Kenya and either walked or went by bus or by train to schools in Uganda. And again it was limited to primary or secondary. From 1954 when the USA-USSR relations changed crucially, Russia opens up for a mass foreigners coming in for education. And some Kenyans interestingly started taking train to Kampala, then walking north to Sudan, then taking ship to Cairo and were flown from KANU office there to Moscow. They could study here or some of USSR satellite states like Bulgaria, Poland etc. Two things opened during that time. There was the political push and Kenyatta to have USSR support for Kenyan independence. And they came here to attend the conference «The human resources development» – that students found out, they already knew that independent Kenya needed qualified people. They started coming here to get education.

KJIL&IR: *In some academic literature we could find the information that Kenya appointed its Ambassador to the USSR the day before the proclamation of independence. Could you tell us a bit more about this unique case?*

Ambassador Kurgat: According to one of our leading historian's professor Betwan Alanogot, it was already known that the independence day was coming, on the 12th of December, 1963, they said we didn't have diplomats; we had to put together people of different professions. Kenya, Kenyatta and Odinga had to prepare, because the most immediate task was to have people for going out and lobbying for the country's development in the international forums, in the capitals of major countries – USA, UK, Russia, China, France – in brief, the Big Five. Therefore, then Jomo Kenyatta and Odinga, who were close comrades in liberation, had to prepare some people. I want to say that maybe that was our earliest coalition form of government. People had to be put ready and maybe that's why Ambassador to USSR was appointed a day before independence. It was urgent that people went out immediately at independence to start lobbying for development agenda, claiming the place of Kenya in the international arena.

KJIL&IR: *Just two days after the proclamation of your independence it was announced that Soviet Union and Kenya established diplomatic relations. Could you give our readers a general overview of how diplomatic relations developed during Soviet times?*

Ambassador Kurgat: During the Soviet times the main link between USSR and Kenya bilateral relations was education. If we look over the years, there was a period where students went up to a thousand in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Especially, in engineering, medicine, science in general; and limited – international relations, international law. So, that was the line of relations. There were some other contacts and ways of cooperation, too. Russia built for Kenya a hospital – Nyanza General Hospital, its other name is «Russia». This happened because of close relations between Kenyan Vice-President Odinga with Soviet Union. As I said, he doesn't seem to have shared the ideology of being a communist, favoring communism for Kenya, but what I tend to know now from writings, readings and interviews is that he favored not communism as such, but cooperatives as a way in which majority of the citizens would be shareholders of governmental property. That was about African socialism. Maybe they were saying the same thing in different language...

KJIL&IR: *Our relations started with quite an enthusiasm, but the whole 50 years were not in the same line and sometimes we got difficult time. For example, you participated in boycott*

of Olympic Games in Moscow. So, could you tell me a little bit more about these times when our relation were not so good, maybe even a little bit frozen?

Ambassador Kurgat: There are two points to be noted. Firstly, Kenya, being a member of the UN and believing in peaceful resolution of conflicts thought that the USSR intervention in Afghanistan was wrong. Secondly, there were partners of ours, development partners. As you know, in the UN there is a real game with votes and arm twisting (if you do this, we will do this...etc.) behind the scenes of diplomacy. But I think not even this but the fears of such a behavior of the USSR played the key role. We thought, 'if this happened to Afghanistan, one day that might happen to us!' What we supported on the level of the UN and OAU was the principle of non-intervention to other peoples' affairs. But generally, Kenya-Russia relation had been doing well.

KJIL&IR: Let's talk about modern level of relations between Kenya and Russia. And let me ask you, what are the main economic projects that we have between our states?

Ambassador Kurgat: We have Russian companies getting interested in Kenya. Last year we had higher-level visits: the Prime minister of Kenya Raila Odinga visited Russia and took part in Saint-Petersburg international economic forum. He made contacts with Russian companies – e.g. Lukoil which is already working on how to go to Kenya, how to map the areas for oil extraction. So, the oil and gas sphere is one of the best examples of positive development. There was another high level visit of the Energy Minister of Kenya where there was a discussion on possible participation of Russian companies in power engineering activities in Kenya. Currently, we have a Russian company bidding for generating energy, called Efesek – we are still waiting for results. There is a company in Kenya already selling the Russian jeep, Russian vodka 'Standart'... Russians are best in promoting Kenyan tourism, bringing Russian for sightseeing in Kenya, facilitating their stay and movements there. Right now, as I'm talking to you, there are several Kenyan companies selling flowers to Russia. We have 'Redland Roses', 'Masai flowers' and other big brands. There are contacts and mutual interests in flowers, tea and coffee. Kenyan tea is very unique. If you try mixing it with something else, everybody will notice. The Russians have a good taste of Kenyan tea! Kenyan tea is doing very well on the market and is pressing to do more. The other one sector is tourism, as I said. We have a couple of charter flight to Mombasa, to Nairobi; all of them stop in Dubai. So, more and more Russians are traveling to Kenya for tourism, more and more Russians are even setting places to do business in Kenya (there are 2 or 3 of them). There is a great support of 'Renaissance capital' popularizing us to shop, to be a destination for investments. On a personal level I visited companies that are interested in business with Kenya, persuading them to invest... Although, the volumes and numbers comparing to other countries, especially Russia, are low. I think it's a good start in a post-soviet era. We've had speakers from both Russia and Kenya visiting each other, speaking, expressing interests. On the educational front, we have private students coming to study medicine. Nowadays, Russia is the third largest producer of medical doctors for Kenya after University of Nairobi and Moi University. So, it's very good.

KJIL&IR: Let me ask you, what were the newest international treaties concluded between Kenya and Russia? Maybe, some of them are under your guidance as an Ambassador of Kenya to Russia?

Ambassador Kurgat: Yes, among new treaties we may mention one treaty on tourism. Another treaty is on aviation. Now we are working on some other treaties, including treaty on culture...

KJIL&IR: You've just mentioned that there is a work on a treaty on cultural affairs. And my last question was exactly about the culture. We all know that Africa generally and Kenya particularly are very rich in culture. And for example I'm not surprised that namely the former Russian Ambassador to Kenya Mr. Egoshkin was appointed a chief of the Russian-Central African Cultural Center – the first one ever! So, what are the main events planned by the Embassy in terms

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of culture? Maybe in this year which is very important in our relation... So, what can we expect on cultural level this year?

Ambassador Kurgat: This is very important issue. I hope to work very close to Ambassador Egoshkin on which cultural events can be done. We have a cultural troupe to Kenya and Kenyan troupe to Moscow, as well as Kenyan community to Moscow who could perform some traditional dances. We could also exhibit Kenyan art. We could make a Kenyan Tea Day, a Kenyan Coffee Day – to bring together these cultural aspects to facilitate getting to know Kenyan culture by Russians. And vice-versa. It's very interesting when you are asking somebody if they are going to Kenya, you hear the answer 'No, it's too hot there!' [laughing] And your Ambassador one time called me and said 'Mr. Ambassador, it's very cold in Nairobi!' And I told him 'Your people will not believe you that there is cold!' You know, Nairobi has a different climate, sometimes hot, sometimes cold. But the Russians, who tried going there once, are going and going there again. Of course, the Government has done and is doing much in providing security. As you know, we are neighboring the troubled Somali, but we have put all the measures to the ground, the country is safe and all.

KJIL&IR: *You're Excellency, thank you very much for your answers. Let me again congratulate you and all peoples of Kenya and wish you more and more years of independence, and to develop our relations more successful under your guidance!*

Ambassador Kurgat: Thank you.

ИНТЕРВЬЮ ЧРЕЗВЫЧАЙНОГО И ПОЛНОМОЧНОГО ПОСЛА СССР и РФ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КЕНИЯ (1989-1992) Владимира Сергеевича КИТАЕВА



А.Мезяев: *Владимир Сергеевич, мы только что отметили 50-летие установления дипломатических отношений между Советским Союзом и Кенией. Вы были Чрезвычайным и Полномочным Послом в этой стране. Расскажите, пожалуйста, о том, как началась Ваша дипломатическая миссия в Кении и как развивались наши отношения в этот период...*

В.С. Китаев: В конце 70-х годов судьба меня забросила на африканский континент. И с африканской проблематикой мне довелось проработать 15 лет. Если можно так сказать лирически, моей первой любовью была Европа, а Африка – это моя вторая любовь. Я с большим уважением отношусь к народам Африки, африканской культуре, африканской цивилизации. Континент очень большой, разнообразный, население около миллиарда человек, очень интересные люди, доброжелательные, общительные, называют друг друга «братья и сестры»...

В 1978 году я прибыл на дипломатическую службу в Алжир, затем был послом в Гвинею. В 1987 году меня вызвали на совещание в Москву и предложили стать заведующим Африканским отделом МИДа, я согласился. Потом уже, когда в 1988 году МИД возглавил Э.Шеварднадзе, три африканских отдела в МИДе объединили в один, а меня направили послом в Кению...

Кения очень интересная страна. Отношения с ней развивались у нас не прямолинейно и непросто. В Кении большое влияние имели и имеют сейчас англичане. Это была их любимая

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