

The Somali Peninsula:

A New Light on Imperial Motives

Preface by Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, Prime Minister (January 1962)

SINCE the Somali Republic became an independent State on the first of July, 1960, the Government has become increasingly aware of the need for the publication of an authoritative guide to its border problems and their origins, in view of the friendly interest, particularly among other African nations, which these problems have aroused.

We Somalis occupy the eastern 'horn' of Africa, the largest, single homogeneous area in the continent. The country consists, for the most part, of scant pastures and two rivers, and has been the playground of international politics for many years.

Our country was divided and sub-divided by Euro-Abyssinian colonialism in the last two decades of the 19th Century. The value of our land was not the motive for annexation because the complexities of our pastoral life offered no inducement to the intruders who were more favoured in this respect than ourselves, for they already possessed an abundance of rich and fertile land in temperate zones.

The aims of annexation, which are analysed in succeeding pages, were dictated by selfish policies which the colonial powers concerned found it expedient to pursue without regard to the interests of the Somali people.

Our misfortunes do not stem from the unproductiveness of our soil, nor from a lack of mineral wealth. These limitations on our material well-being were accepted and compensated for by our forefathers from whom we inherited, among other things, a spiritual and cultural prosperity of inestimable value: the teaching of Islam on the one hand and lyric poetry on the other. Moreover, our forebears developed techniques of animal husbandry which have not been easy to improve upon and applied their

ingenuity to the total utilization of the few natural resources available to them. By their skills we live today, and, with the generous assistance of wealthier nations, we shall lay new foundations, in accordance with our liberal and democratic Constitution, for the spiritual and material enrichment of future Somali generations.

No! Our misfortune is that our neighbouring countries with whom, like the rest of Africa, we seek to promote constructive and harmonious relations, are not our neighbours. Our neighbours are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate boundary 'arrangements'. They have to move across artificial frontiers to their pasture lands. They occupy the same terrain and pursue the same pastoral economy as ourselves. We speak the same language. We share the same creed, the same culture and the same traditions. How can we regard our brothers as foreigners?

Of course we all have a strong and very natural desire to be united. The first step in this direction was taken in 1960 when the Somaliland Protectorate was united with Somalia. This act was not an act of 'colonialism' or 'expansionism' or 'annexation'. It was a positive contribution to peace and unity in Africa and was made possible by the application of the principle of the right to self-determination. We adhere most rigidly to this principle which is linked to our pledge in Article VI of our Constitution that we shall promote 'by legal and peaceful means the union of Somali territories'.

ABDIRASHID ALI SHARMARKE

Mogadishu,

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