

DAKAR AND BAMAKO

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To this day the question of why the Mali Federation collapsed is being debated. What we do not recognise, however, is that passions are still too high for the parties involved to be able to judge with impartiality. We continue to abuse each other, and to publish white papers to justify ourselves. But fully to understand the causes of the collapse, we will have to wait on history.

The Mali Federation was born on 17 January 1959, with Senegal, Soudan, Upper Volta and Dahomey as members. But the last two States finally decided not to commit themselves to the Federation, and it is now known that their withdrawal was encouraged by the French Government and by the Prime Minister of the Ivory Coast. The Federation was accordingly established by the two remaining partners: Senegal and Soudan. They agreed readily enough to seek independence within the French-African Community; but that independence once granted, differences over the structure of the new State arose that proved virtually insoluble. Soudan wanted a unitary structure, with a presidential régime similar to that of the United States. Senegal wanted a parliamentary régime and a loose federation, leaving a large measure of autonomy to the constituent States. The main reason advanced by Senegal in support of its case was that other States would find it easier to join such a federation in the future. Soudan, on the other hand, felt that only a strong federation would have the means to develop harmoniously a country stretching from Gao to Dakar.

A policy meeting between the leaders of the two States took place in April 1960. Discussions did not go smoothly; a friendship already strained could be mended only imperfectly. Argument centred on what principle should be adopted in redistributing the leading offices of the new independent Federation; and it was apparently agreed that offices should be divided on a fifty-fifty basis—Senegal to have the Presidency of the Republic, Soudan the Presidency of the Cabinet. Senegal decided on the candidature of M. Léopold Sédar Senghor, then President of the Federal Assembly of Mali. But the Soudanese refused to accept this. They wanted M. Modibo Keita to be Head of Government and Head of State, and offered Senegal the

Vice-Presidency and the Presidency of the Federal Assembly.

Meanwhile, the nomination of Colonel Soumare as Commander-in-Chief of the Army brought new conflicts, the Soudanese supporting Soumare while the Senegalese supported Colonel Fall. Both colonels were Senegalese; but Soumare had been born in the Soudan and enjoyed the friendship of Modibo Keita.

The final blow came when Modibo Keita deposed the Senegalese President of the Cabinet from his post as Mali Minister of Defence. The Senegalese were enraged. The Mali Federation collapsed on the night of 19 August 1960; and friendship between the two countries has been compromised ever since.

Soudan (now Mali) is a huge country, which was brutally colonised. Senegal barely suffered from colonisation. It actually helped the French to colonise other countries, which is why the expression "Senegalese sniper" has stuck. In the Soudan, then, the idea of African liberation is paramount. And this liberation must bring with it a complete separation between past and present: the Africanisation of cadres, expulsion of French armed forces, and the taking over of all public services by the Soudanese themselves. In Senegal, events take their course more quietly. This is partly because, since it was first colonised, the country has had Senegalese technicians; Africanisation started early.

Political parties too are organised differently in the two countries. Soudan has a single party, with a structure like that of the Communist Party, though it is not by any means Communist itself. The Union Soudanaise was founded as a section of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, led by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Ivory Coast; wherever it has established itself, the R.D.A. has tended to become a monopoly. It has always caused other parties to disappear, and disorder has often accompanied the process. But that was under colonialism, and the French were nearly always its accomplices. The Soudan party does not concede that there is any other path but its own. In practice, there is a single youth movement, the trade unions are united, and so are the women's movements. So effectively has this unity been brought about that the party is supported by the entire population. In every village, the secretary-general of the party branch is a key figure, for it is he who receives the orders from headquarters which the villagers are to carry out. Soudan, however, has one major difficulty—the Touaregs of the north. They do not propose to bend to the

'Negroes' who rule Bamako. They have kept all their own social customs, and the present government is forced to take their wishes into account. At present it is not the young men who have studied in Europe who hold the reins of power in Mali. It is the older generation, who founded the R.D.A. in 1946. That is why, in actual fact, Mali policy is really very cautious.

In Senegal, the main political party, the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise, has never been as strong or as centralised as the Union Soudanaise. Since a certain degree of unity was achieved between the followers of M. Senghor and those of M. Lamine Guèye, however, the internal struggle continues only sporadically. There is of course the Parti Africain de l'Indépendance, which was dissolved for wanting to 'communistise' the country, and the leaders are apparently still in gaol. Another party exists, the P.R.A.—Senegal, but it is limited in following to Casamance in the south.

The economic objective of Senegal is an African socialism. This socialism is far from a copy of scientific socialism; for it is a socialism which above all takes account of the particular character of the people and the country of Senegal.

Economics therefore played a part in the crisis of the Mali Federation. Senegal is at the beginning of a process of industrialisation, and Cap-Vert, the region near Dakar, is already well advanced. Industrial exploitation of the phosphates at Taïba is under way. In contrast, Soudan has no industry. The Office of the Niger, which cultivates a great deal of rice, has never balanced its budget. Capital investors in Senegal cast a suspicious eye upon the Marxist socialisation projected by Soudan.

So each of us proceeds on his own way. There is no immediate prospect of reopening the railway between Dakar and Bamako. The Mali Minister of Finance recently said so. It is clear that economic rupture hangs over the two partners. Who suffers most, would be difficult to say. Everyone suffers, that is certain.

Politically, Senegal has drawn nearer to the Conseil de l'Entente (the grouping of West African States led by the Ivory Coast under Houphouët-Boigny), which means in fact, to the Ivory Coast. Senegal was also among the original 'Twelve'—the French-speaking States who met at Brazzaville on 15 December 1960 and at Dakar on 30 January 1961. Mali has tried to preserve its neutrality, but it participated in the Casablanca Conference, which ranges her with Guinea and Ghana in West Africa.