

**May 25, 1961**

**Transcript of the Conversation between N.S.  
Khrushchev And The Prime Minister of the Somali  
Republic Abdirashid Ali Shermarke**

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**Summary:**

Khrushchev and Somali Prime Minister Shermarke discuss Somalia's efforts to maintain political and economic independence following decolonization, with Shermarke requesting Soviet assistance for development projects in agriculture, industry, and infrastructure. Khrushchev emphasizes the Soviet Union's support for anti-imperialist movements and offers potential economic cooperation while acknowledging the need to balance assistance with domestic priorities.

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Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE CONVERSATION  
BETWEEN N.S. KHRUSHCHEV AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF  
THE SOMALI REPUBLIC ABDIRASHID ALI SHERMARKE

25 May 1961

N.S. Khrushchev says he is glad to welcome the Prime Minister of the Somali Republic and accompanying officials in Moscow. We appreciate the young Republic's dedication to establishing friendly relationships between nations. We advocate for mutual respect, sovereignty, and non-interference in the affairs of other countries. This is the best form of relations, the best policy.

N.S. Khrushchev further suggests that before the negotiations begin, it would be helpful to clarify who we are. Keep in mind, N.S. Khrushchev continues, that I and my colleagues here are communists. We know that many people are put off by this word, but for us, it fits perfectly. Before the October Revolution, our country was backward. After October [Revolution], we endured two, or rather three wars, and now, despite all these hardships, we have risen to second place in the world in industrial production. And in ten years, we will take first place and leave the Americans trailing behind. We say this directly to the Americans; we do not keep it a secret. We openly share our plans with the whole world. We have accomplished these successes because our system is the most progressive. We are not more intelligent than the Americans, and they are not less intelligent than us, but our socialist system works to our advantage. In America and other capitalist countries, wealth is often equated to intelligence. However, here it is believed that whoever is intelligent, all paths are open to them.

In my opinion, N.S. Khrushchev remarks jokingly, there is already enough propaganda, or you might think I am trying to turn you all into communists. However, N.S. Khrushchev adds, I cannot promise that none of you will become a communist in the future. The germs of communism are a dangerous thing; they spread and take hold very effectively. Neither stone walls, skin color, nor belonging to any particular social group can protect against them. I am a communist, and naturally, I praise communism. But issues of ideology are not issues of our state relations. We consider those who advocate for peace and against war our friends. Those who advocate for war are our opponents. These are the terms of our friendship.

Shermarke says that he hopes N.S. Khrushchev will excuse him if he converses in his native language, even though it may slightly prolong the discussion, and expresses hope that N.S. Khrushchev will enjoy hearing the Somali language.

N.S. Khrushchev acknowledges that he himself speaks his native language and respects his negotiating partner, who also speaks his own language. Besides, he adds, I prefer listening to your language over the English or Italian languages of the colonizers.

Shermarke expresses his gratitude for the wonderful reception extended to him by both N.S. Khrushchev personally and the Soviet government and people. Shermarke notes that, as he mentioned yesterday, the visit of the Somali delegation to the USSR is the first such trip abroad, and this will go down in the history of his country as an important event. The visit of the Somali government delegation, Shermarke emphasizes, demonstrates that the policy of the Somali government is truly independent.

Shermarke sends warm regards to N.S. Khrushchev, the Soviet government and the people from the people and government of Somalia, and he expresses his gratitude on behalf of all of Africa, and Somalia in particular, for the Soviet Union's ongoing efforts in fighting imperialism and colonialism.

Shermarke observes that the Soviet government has a legitimate reason to believe that the liberation of Africa is heavily reliant on the support offered by the Soviet Union to African nations. The map of Africa is currently undergoing significant changes, with new independent states emerging. However, their independence cannot be complete as long as African countries remain economically, culturally, and

socially dependent on imperialist powers. For centuries, imperialist powers have resolved all cultural, economic, and social development issues of African countries in a way that preserved their dominance. Africa has tremendous economic potential. Africans are as intelligent as other peoples, but they have long been deprived of the opportunity to learn. They were not given the opportunity to develop their industry, culture, or economy. Resources were taken from Africa, exported to imperialist countries to be returned to Africa as finished products. These colonial powers aimed to perpetuate Africa's political and economic dependence on them. When they realized this was not feasible, they made some concessions in the political sphere while hoping to maintain Africa's economic dependence on former metropolises. As a result, they managed to get African countries, former colonies of England, to join the British Commonwealth, while former French colonies became part of the French Community. Imperialist powers managed to convince these African countries that they could not develop independently without them. The colonizers rightly calculated that if these countries were economically dependent on imperialist powers, they would also remain politically dependent on them to some extent.

As for Somalia, Shermarke continues, we have only recently gained independence and are facing serious economic challenges, but we are an exception as we have not joined any economic or political alliances of countries. We have chosen our own path. We want to be independent both economically and politically. Our position has caused irritation among imperialist powers and surprise among some African countries, whose leaders have expressed that they are in less difficult situations but are not daring to act independently. In our Constitution, we have stated that our country will not join any bloc but will keep its doors open for friendly relations with all countries.

African countries, Shermarke continues, which depend on imperialist powers, do not have the opportunity to develop independently. The assistance provided to them often comes in the form of charity or is given in a way that perpetuates dependence. Imperialist powers, primarily the USA, England, Italy, and France, promised to help us before we gained independence. However, when we achieved independence and clearly stated that we would accept assistance from any country respecting our sovereignty without imposing any political conditions, the situation changed. Our suspicion that their words would remain mere promises proved true. They did not help us, expecting that it would lead to our economic collapse.

The Soviet Union, Shermarke continues, has provided and continues to provide moral and political assistance and support to Somalia and other African countries. However, the mission of the Soviet Union would be incomplete without backing up this assistance in the economic sphere. We understand that the government of any country, including such a great power as the Soviet Union, has certain obligations, primarily to its own people. However, we humbly request any form of assistance that can be provided to us and other African countries. Africa has significant economic opportunities, and we are not asking for charity. We need support, encouragement, and guidance on our path of independent economic development, and then we will repay the assistance provided to us.

Shermarke emphasizes once again the importance of assistance in the economic and social spheres, as it is known that a country can achieve political independence only by gaining independence in the economic and social spheres.

Our friends and enemies, continues Shermarke, are now watching our mission in the USSR, and it is crucial for this mission to be successful. Imperialists will rejoice if we return with nothing. I sincerely hope that the people of Somalia will be satisfied and the imperialists will not be able to rejoice.

As you rightly noted yesterday, continues Shermarke, good relations have developed between our countries. I would like to formally announce that Ambassador Fomin of the USSR has made significant efforts to foster these positive relations. By his example, he showed what a true Soviet person is, and many people have appreciated this example. We also highly value the mission led by Minister M.A. Lesechko, and we are confident that its members have observed the friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union from both the government and the people of Somalia.

Shermarke notes: N.S. Khrushchev spoke well about communism, and I am convinced that N.S. Khrushchev's words are true. However, in some African countries, mothers

still scare their children with communism because they are deceived by malicious propaganda.

N.S. Khrushchev remarks that at one point, not everyone in our country understood what communism was.

Shermarke says that he is personally neither a communist nor a capitalist. He explains that Africans cannot be capitalists because they do not possess money or property. In Africa, there are no conditions that led to the development of capitalism in other countries. Africa is more inclined towards the socialist camp, although our understanding of socialism differs somewhat from that which has developed here in the Soviet Union. We should wait and see which path Africa will take, but it should be noted that Africa has its own established traditions, and much will depend on which social system can overcome these traditions.

In conclusion, Shermarke emphasizes that Somalis do not have favorable feelings towards imperialists. Some argue that Africans are skeptical of the USSR, but this is not true. Such statements are made only by those under the influence of imperialist propaganda. Africans are looking up to the Soviet Union with hope. Returning to the question of the relationship between the Soviet Union and Somalia, Shermarke emphasizes that due to the USSR's status as a great power, it has a moral obligation to support the young republic in achieving its goals and avoiding dependence on imperialist nations. The specific projects for which Somalia is seeking financing have already been communicated to the Soviet side through the USSR Goodwill Mission.

N.S. Khrushchev expresses his understanding of the position articulated by Shermarke. He says that he shares Shermarke's opinion that complete independence of a country without economic independence is impossible. I was in New York, he continues, at the UN General Assembly meeting when new independent African countries were being welcomed, and I was amazed at how enthusiastically representatives of some of these countries thanked De Gaulle and Macmillan for granting them independence. However, there will come a time when these representatives will understand the true political goals of De Gaulle and Macmillan in Africa. If they fail to understand, there will be people who will replace them.

Imperialist powers, N.S. Khrushchev continues, came to Africa claiming to bring civilization to African peoples, but in reality, they came for plunder, like bandits. What civilization did they leave for the people of Africa? Illiteracy, diseases, backwardness. In former colonial countries, there is no industry, no national workforce. All the wealth of African countries migrated to the metropolises. All people, as you rightly emphasized, says N.S. Khrushchev, are equal in their potential. We too were once called "the Russian bear" in a derogatory way, but now those who used to call us that are afraid of our strength and power. We want the African people to live as freely as the people in the Soviet Union do. Currently, imperialist powers offer assistance to underdeveloped countries only because they fear that the Soviet Union may provide this assistance. However, the approach to providing assistance from socialist countries and imperialist countries is fundamentally different. Imperialists provide assistance only out of fear that young African countries will choose the path of socialism. This is openly stated, for example, by Harriman and some other officials of Western countries.

You need to strengthen your economy, boost agriculture, and develop your own industry. However, the imperialists are not interested in this. Imperialist powers have never been interested in providing genuine economic assistance to African countries. If they were to assist you in developing your national industry, you would stop buying their goods. They do not wish to provide you with such assistance because they want you to buy all goods from imperialist powers.

As for the Soviet Union, it provides assistance without any conditions, tricks, or ulterior motives. It is known that Americans searched for oil in India for 10 years but did not find it. However, our specialists, who came there after the Americans, discovered oil. African countries, N.S. Khrushchev continues, need to develop their national economy and agriculture to feed their people, clothe them, provide them with housing, and education. Imperialist powers fear this. They fear providing genuine economic assistance to African countries because the development of the national economies of African states will deprive imperialists of the opportunity to exploit these countries. They will, of course, assist you - build roads, schools, but not

industry. In India, for example, the Soviet Union constructed a metallurgical plant, whereas capitalist countries would not do this. However, West Germany is also constructing a plant there, but this construction was only in response to the actions taken by the Soviet Union in India.

Additionally, N.S. Khrushchev states that the Soviet Union possesses everything – coal, oil, gold, diamonds, and so on, except for coffee, cocoa, palm oil, and bananas, which could be purchased from African countries.

Shermarke notes that Somalia has the potential to sell a large quantity of bananas and other fruits.

N.S. Khrushchev states that the Soviet Union's economy is planned, which is why we cannot have overproduction and unemployment, unlike, for example, America. In the United States, half of the metallurgical capacities are not utilized. How will the United States assist you in the development of your metallurgical industry? – N.S.

Khrushchev inquires. It goes against the interests of capitalists.

Sooner or later, N.S. Khrushchev continues, people come to realize that the path laid out by Marx, Engels, and Lenin is the correct one. We do not force our beliefs on you, but these ideas will prevail worldwide, although it is not easy to choose which path to take.

N.S. Khrushchev then recounts that Russian peasants, illiterate before the revolution, hesitated and could not immediately choose the path they should follow, but ultimately they followed the communists. Life is relentless, but now, compared to the past, it is easier to understand it because people have examples. The USA, England, and France have reached their current level of development over a long period of time, while the Soviet Union has surpassed almost everyone in 44 years and has become the second most developed economy in the world.

I suggest, says N.S. Khrushchev, that you take a trip around our country and visit our union republics, for example, the Central Asian ones. 40 years ago, they were similar to your country. Now they have become highly developed industrial republics. It is only thanks to the socialist system of development that they were able to overcome the heavy legacy of the past. However, N.S. Khrushchev emphasizes, we are not suggesting that you should also follow the path of socialist development. This is your internal affair. N.S. Khrushchev further states that he is certainly not against Somalia choosing a socialist path, but Somalis themselves need to choose the path to take. Life will show you [what to do]; it is the best teacher.

The amount of aid, N.S. Khrushchev states, we are going to provide you with is still being determined. This assistance will probably be less than what the Somali side would like to receive. But you will have to reconcile with this. If we give everything away, then our people will not want to have such a government. We understand, he continues, that you need help in developing industry, agriculture, healthcare, culture, etc., but in such matters, we proceed based on our real capabilities.

Then N.S. Khrushchev moves on to the question of developing trade relations between the USSR and Somalia. Let's trade, he says. We buy coffee, cocoa, oilseeds, leather raw materials, rubber, lemons, and bananas. We can buy these goods from you as well, and, in return, sell agricultural and road machinery, port equipment, and other industrial goods. We want to develop our relationship with you as brothers. However, we do not want to provide charity; therefore, we support the development of mutually beneficial trade between us. We can, he continues, provide technical assistance, advice, explore mineral resources, and aid in formulating the country's development plans.

We are delighted, concludes N.S. Khrushchev, that you have gained independence and that we vote together on many issues in the UN. Nevertheless, we do not take offense when we vote separately on some issues. This can be attributed to your lack of experience. But we are delighted that you and other African countries are gaining this experience more and more. For instance, at the last session, Nigeria, a state with a pro-English government, voted not with England on many issues, but with us.

Currently, N.S. Khrushchev continues, Africa has awakened and acquired a taste for the struggle. It will fight to achieve full independence. However, we must always remember what the imperialists did in Congo and what happened to Lumumba. On our part, we say that we will support Africa. The Soviet Union is the only country that

is not afraid of imperialist powers. We have a robust economy, weapons, and our people are united like no other people in the world. We are not afraid of external aggression, and we are not afraid of imperialist intrigues within our country.

Shermarke acknowledges that N.S. Khrushchev spoke very well, that he is a great orator, and he, Shermarke, cannot compare to him in the art of oration. He then suggests that if the adversaries of the socialist camp knew how to halt the development of this camp, they would seize any opportunity to do so. However, such opportunities do not exist. They have attempted to do so repeatedly since 1917 and have failed. They fear that the principles of revolution and socialism will be affirmed everywhere. They can see the successful development of the socialist system but cannot halt its progress, so they try to at least slow down the pace of your movement forward.

Across the world, especially in Africa, Shermarke continues, imperialists are actively hindering the progress of countries striving to adopt socialism. Even in our own country, Shermarke notes, after declaring independence, when we decided to establish diplomatic relations with 8 socialist countries, some Somalis, who were bribed by imperialists, claimed that we were in danger. If our government did not have the support of its people, imperialists would have already bribed or deceived their way into overthrowing it. Therefore, it is important to be tolerant of those African states that, while not being friends of imperialist countries, outwardly show them favor, as they are constantly in danger from imperialists.

Returning to the topic of economic development in Somalia, Shermarke states that there are vast areas in their country that are suitable for agriculture, for instance for cultivating cotton, even better than in Egypt and Sudan, growing oil crops, peanuts, the best grapefruits in Africa, and so on. He says that Somalis have a lot of land, but they cannot cultivate it because they lack machinery and technical knowledge. Somalia has a wealth of mineral resources, iron ore, tin, and lead, but they cannot be developed due to the lack of machinery, roads, and underdeveloped transportation infrastructure. If we could, Shermarke continues, develop all of this, the country's economic and trade situation would improve significantly. All of these resources are waiting to be developed.

In our country, he continues, we have a lot of livestock, but we are not familiar with modern methods of animal husbandry. During the rainy season, we have an abundance of milk, which is even wasted. However, when drought strikes, people die of hunger. The main purpose of our visit, Shermarke continues, is to seek assistance from the Soviet Union in developing agriculture and industrializing our country. Imperialist countries have done everything to hinder the development of Somalia's national industry and agriculture. We want to put an end to our backwardness.

Further, Shermarke informs that the delegation includes specialists who can meet with the Soviet experts and identify specific projects that could be considered for financing. These projects, he says, may involve the construction of airports, ports, development of transportation infrastructure, industrialization, and agriculture.

We ask you, Shermarke continues, to provide us with all the assistance you can. I apologize for what I am about to say: the imperialists have talked a lot about helping us, but in reality, they have done nothing. Their actions do not align with their words. We hope that if the Soviet Union declares its willingness to help the Somali Republic, this assistance will indeed be provided. Shermarke then moves on to the issue of Somalia's relations with Ethiopia. He says he would like to inform N.S. Khrushchev about this matter, as it is of great importance to Somalia. Imperialist states have divided Somalia, Shermarke says, into several parts and are trying to pit different ethnic groups against each other. They have succeeded in doing so with our neighbor Ethiopia as well. As it is known, Ethiopia is ruled by an emperor, while emperors and kings are reactionaries opposing progress. The imperialists exploit this fact, having divided Somalia into five parts in the past century and giving one part, the Ogaden province, to Ethiopia. Now, under the pretext of protecting the Ogaden, they incite the emperor against the Somali republic. Recently, Ethiopians shot innocent Somali civilians on the border with Somalia, using American weapons. Our relations with Ethiopia worry us, concludes Shermarke, because third countries are interfering in them.

N.S. Khrushchev is asking about the number of Somalis residing in Ogaden.

Shermarke estimates that there are around 1 million Somali people living in Ogaden, although no official census has been conducted. In the past, Ethiopia did not have control over this province. It was only recently, after the issue of granting independence to Somalia arose, that the British transferred the province to Ethiopia. There is currently no Ethiopian administration there, but there are many Ethiopian soldiers. The US, UK, and France incite Ethiopians against Somalia. Speaking about all this, Shermarke clarifies, we do not wish to be understood as wanting the Soviet Union to support us against Ethiopia. We are merely discussing this to ensure that everyone is aware of what is happening in this part of the world.

N.S. Khrushchev says that he understands Shermarke's position exactly like that.

Shermarke further states that they are interested in obtaining long-term loans that they could repay as their economy progresses. Additionally, he is requesting free assistance in the social sector, as Somalia will not be able to reimburse this aid as the construction and maintenance of schools and hospitals are essential but do not generate income. "We would like," Shermarke continues, "to know the amount of credit the USSR can provide, as we will make our plans accordingly. We do not need all your assistance, your entire loan, right away, but we would like to receive it as we build these facilities." He acknowledges that the USSR may not be able to fully satisfy all of Somalia's requests immediately, but they do not expect that. Shermarke further states that they are ready to sign trade and cultural agreements with the Soviet Union.

N.S. Khrushchev agrees with what Shermarke said, but it is necessary to look into and jointly calculate with Soviet experts the extent and specific areas where assistance should be provided. Your clarification that the requested assistance may be stretched out over a certain period, could facilitate the provision of this aid. I believe, says N.S. Khrushchev, we can assist you in building hospitals and schools, as well as developing agriculture. We can provide you with agricultural machinery on credit, send irrigation specialists to assist you and train your people to operate tractors, machinery, etc. This would be mutually beneficial for both parties. We can also send our agronomists to assist you with cotton cultivation. You will receive additional agricultural products, and in the future, you can use cotton to settle your accounts with us. As you know, we purchase cotton in Egypt and other countries and, at the same time, sell it. Currently, there is overproduction of cotton in the global market, but we guarantee that you will be able to sell it to us on credit at international market prices.

It would be beneficial for you, N.S. Khrushchev continues, to visit Uzbekistan and observe the current state of the republic. Prior to the revolution, the conditions in Uzbekistan were not much different from those in your country. However, today Uzbekistan is a republic with high literacy rates, its own scientific and technical experts, and a well-developed culture and industry.

Further N.S. Khrushchev reiterates that the Soviet Union can purchase peanuts, cotton, and other agricultural products from Somalia. It would be advantageous for you, he says, to develop these industries, and we will be purchasing their products from you. We have lead and tin, but we can also provide financing for the development of these industrial sectors and buy their products from you. This is beneficial for you because then your workers will be employed in production, there will be no unemployment, and at the same time, the living standards of the population will increase. However, we are against making concessions. You must work hard on your own, and we will support you with specialists. We can help you train specialists, engineers, technicians, skilled workers, and others.

We strongly wish, concludes N.S. Khrushchev, to help you strengthen your independence. Currently, we are providing assistance to Guinea, Ghana, Cuba, Mali, Afghanistan, Egypt, and several other countries. We will also help you. You correctly understand that if we say we will provide assistance, we will follow through. Moreover, as the economy and culture advance in Somalia, all Somalis will be drawn towards you. We understand that this is important for you.

We will consider all your requests, N.S. Khrushchev concludes, and inform you about our capabilities.

At the end of their conversation, Shermarke presents N.S. Khrushchev with an ivory chest and an album featuring views of the Somali Republic.

N.S. Khrushchev expresses his gratitude to Shermarke for the gift.

The conversation lasted 2 hours and 30 minutes.

From the Somali side were present: Ali Gonad (possible misspelling of "Garaad") Jama - Minister of Education, Ahmed Haji Duale - Minister of Agriculture, Muhammad Ali Daar - Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sharif Mohammed Noor - Deputy Minister of Health, Abdi Aden Mohamed - President of the National Bank, Ahmed Madden Hussein - Mayor of Mogadishu and other individuals who accompanied Shermarke.

From the Soviet side were present: V.V. Kuznetsov - First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, M.A. Lesechko - Minister of the USSR, A.A. Shvedov - Head of the First African Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and G.I. Fomin - Ambassador of the USSR to the Somali Republic.

Written down by:

V. Kuntsov

Yu. Vinogradov

[Handwritten:

"To Cde. G.T. Shuisky

I think there is no point in disseminating this transcript of the conversation now (a copy was sent to Cde. Mikoyan at the time)."]

/Signature/

7 June