

Compaoré nunmehr als Präsident der jetzt Vierten Republik. Ob es den bei den - nicht unumstrittenen - Parlamentswahlen vom 24. Mai 1992 erfolgreichen Parteien gelingen wird, das Land auf dem Weg der "Ent-armung" voranzubringen, muß auch und gerade nach der Lektüre der Studie von Schmitz zu hoffen bleiben.

*Karl-Andreas Hernekamp*

*Hurst Hannum*

**Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination. The Accomodation of Conflicting Rights**

University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, 503 pp., US \$ 44.95 (cloth)

Hurst Hannum, now Associate Professor of International Law at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, has served as Executive Director of the Procedural Aspects of International Law Institute under whose auspices this excellent and well-structured book was written.

In part I, the author introduces at length the necessary definitions and theories of, e.g. sovereignty and self-determination, widely accepted terms, but "at best murky" (p. 14/15), explains historical developments and states "how it should be".

"Part II examines in some detail claims for 'autonomy' which have been advanced in nine very different contexts, from the protection of the traditional culture of the Saami in northern Scandinavia to a very modern assertion of political and economic autonomy by the inhabitants of Hong Kong" (p. 13), taking into account history, economic development, political manipulation and interference from external powers.

Part III gives an overview of contemporary and historical "autonomous" entities, some of which could serve as examples for future autonomy arrangements. The focus is on solutions and remedies which have been attempted, some successful to a degree, others not.

The book is not merely the result of academic expertise and extensive theoretical research. Hannum literally travelled around the world to get his materials and first-hand information. The latter clearly shows in the analysis of the nine case studies: Hong Kong, India, Kurds and Saami, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Spain, Sri Lanka, and Sudan. All these cases seem to represent something essentially different, but they share the great desire of the "peoples" concerned to acquire political autonomy "on the part of some segment of a larger society which is currently organized into a state" (p. 4). All of them underline the fact that cries for autonomy, self-government and independence are the same everywhere. The thesis is that although origin and course of the conflicts are unique, there exists a basic similarity in potential remedies that could be instructive. It is Hannum's suggestion "that a new principle of international law can be discerned in the interstices of contemporary definitions of

sovereignty, self-determination, and the human rights of individuals and groups, which will support creative attempts to deal with conflicts over minority and majority rights before they escalate into civil war and demands for secession" (p. 473).

Hannum's work is more than timely as the problems discussed here have become so painfully urgent, which becomes especially evident where Hannum points out Yugoslavia as an example of a microcosm "in which both ethnic and autonomous problems as well as possible solutions can be examined" (p. 123/124). Yugoslavia, the seemingly shining example, has recently ceased to exist. The author realized that the inevitable delay between writing and publication would mean that some of his descriptions would not be perfectly accurate anymore (p. 126), but even he could not foresee how gravely affected some countries and peoples would so soon be (e.g. the Kurds). He did feel though, that "a new age of intolerance is more likely to follow than is an era of mutual respect and tolerance for all" (p. 455), blaming the absence of mature political leadership, the pursuit of short-term political goals. That hardly comes as a surprise. How can political leaders make the world a better place, if all they care about is the next election?

"The proposition [...] that every people should freely determine its own political status and freely pursue its economic, social, and cultural development has long been one of which poets have sung and for which patriots have been ready to lay down their lives."<sup>1</sup>

It sometimes seems as if poets have stopped singing, as if willing patriots are dead for good. Yet, they are needed to raise a new awareness and give courage to search for honest solutions.

Hannum's book is one of the leading American textbooks in the field of human rights, possibly because it is not simply a law book. It is a book about ideas, values, possible solutions.

"Individuals must be the ultimate beneficiaries of collective rights" (p. 110), "tolerance and plurality [...] essential values in the twentieth century and beyond" (p. 26).

Let me then remind you that "law is also a symbol..." (p. 477).

*Dagmar Reimann*

<sup>1</sup> John P. Humphrey, Political and Related Rights, in: *Theodor Meron* (ed.), *Human Rights in International Law: Legal and Political Issues*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2 vols., 1984, p. 193.