

HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY ADDRESSES NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Abidjan Ivory Coast Domestic Service in French 1600 GMT 25 November 1965--N

(President Houphouet-Boigny's speech to the National Assembly in Abidjan on 25 November 1965, live)

(Summary) Speaker of the National Assembly, chairman of the Economic and Social Council, chairman of the Supreme Court, deputies of the National Assembly, and economic and supreme court advisors: I recall the time when I was sitting on the benches of the various bodies and had the duty of defending the interests of my fellow citizens, and I always pleasantly recall my work in the Parliament. Today, times have changed. The people of the Ivory Coast have made their deputy the President of the republic. As for you, the members of the National Assembly, you are now sitting in an Assembly charged exclusively with running your country. It should therefore be with joy and pleasure that you must defend and build it.

"I am now in your midst for a while. Why? Some people believe that my step has an immediate and direct connection with the events which we experienced recently. It is true that our country, although fully occupied by daily tasks, has been the object of attacks which are known to you. It was necessary to reply to these attacks; and this we have done with vigor, because the silly things which were said troubled us, as you know.

"Surely, Sekou Toure intended to achieve three aims: to discredit me before my people; discredit us at the national, international, and especially at the inter-Africa levels; and provoke us into a violent reaction against our Guinean brothers who fled from his regime to the point of forcing them to leave our borders. He wasted his time; he failed woefully. Our unfortunate Guinean brothers are still at home here. They can remain (?indefinitely if they wish) and they will be treated like our brothers. (applause) "It is not through insults, false accusations, malpractices and slander that Sekou Toure will be able to stop the mass exodus of his best Guineans to the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Upper Volta, which Guinea has described as countries with fewer potentialities. It is not through malpractices that Toure will effect the return of Guinean scientific and technical intellectuals whom Guinea requires for its harmonious construction and who because of Toure's inhuman policy fled the country, to France in particular. We do not hate anybody, even those who are unmindful of the most precious duties entrusted to them. We want Sekou Toure to live. He does not bother us at all. (sentence indistinct)

"We also continue to have our grievances against President Kwame Nkrumah, despite the unfortunate distraction of Sekou Toure. As we had anticipated, no sooner had the OAU conference ended than commandos trained in Nanking (as heard) and maintained in Accra resumed their fight against our states, especially against Niger. If the OAU wants to surmount its internal contradictions and answer the call of our continent, which yearns for unity, a point which can no longer be doubted, we must face dangers squarely so that through brotherly discussion and firm and precise meetings we may be able to surmount these contradictions in the greater interest of Africa. However, if we allow Kwame Nkrumah systematically to violate solemnly undertaken agreements and Sekou Toure to use the meetings to insult, slander, and torture innocent people, we allow for disunity, which would be disastrous, whether one likes it or not, for the whole of Africa. And this is what we must avoid at all cost.

"We have many things to accomplish together if we want to achieve the total decolonisation of Africa, the disappearance of apartheid, the harmonious development of the continent through the hard and perserving work of all its sons and daughters, to catch up with others on the path of progress, and thus realize an economically and politically independent Africa, and Africa equal to other continents and in peace with others, a neutral, a truly neutral Africa. (applause)

"We join our efforts with those of all our colleagues in search and implementation of the most practicable ways of achieving these aims. We shall never imitate those who adopt policies for which they have no means and who believe they can serve Africa through revolutionary proposals which are not followed by positive and rational actions. While awaiting with absolute confidence the verdict from Addis Ababa, a verdict which will render us absolutely blameless, please, I ask you to turn with me this definite page on the pettiness of Sekou Toure." (applause)

I have come to visit you and speak to you about our country's tasks just as the time you are about to start to play the important role which the country entrusted to you for the next five years. Gentlemen, I do not intend to review all the matters you have to examine during your mandate. Such a list would be too long. I want to emphasize two important ideas on which you should concentrate your thoughts and actions if you are to respond to the country's yearnings: unity and development.

"To create the conditions of a country's life is not an easy undertaking. We witnessed this fully in the years before independence. But once the essential has been achieved--and by this I mean a country's attainment of full sovereignty--the building of any state is nothing but the establishment of institutions and structures and also the development of human and material resources. We have created this state particularly through the help of your Assembly. On the other hand, if what we have achieved is neither perfect nor totally completed, at least we know that this state exists."

The growth of a nation and the achievement of its unity are long and exacting tasks which require everyone's cooperation. "Certainly, the long and difficult struggle which preceded independence, the role played by the party, and our trials for five years, enabled us to understand the importance of and necessity for national unity and peace. We must not ignore the fact that we still have a very long way to go. We must make more efforts to achieve our aspirations in both the social and economic fields.

'The achievement of our aspirations also depends on the competence of the government. Deputies of the National Assembly, the achievement of national unity depends on you. I am convinced that you are not representatives of any particular district, region, or ethnic group but representatives of the nation and members of a unique national group." Neither are you spokesman of farmers, workers, traders, civil servants, or any particular class. You are spokesmen of a nation comprising farmers, workers, traders, and civil servants.

"I must add that the strength and capability of any country to resist attacks from outside and its ability to detect foreign and hostile elements depend on the internal unity it enjoys. Any united country is able to defend itself when the need arises." If you are united, you will be able to accomplish the task ahead of you. You will also be able to examine together the problems of the economic and social development of the Ivory Coast, which will in due course be presented to you.

National development is not and can never be set aside only for technicians, traders, or businessmen. National development requires the contribution of everybody and is aimed at improving the living standard of all our citizens. (applause) When in the Ivory Coast we speak of independence, freedom, and dignity, we first think of man. We in the Ivory Coast hold the view that every Ivory Coast citizen has the right and duty to understand the meaning of national development. Every Ivory Coast citizen must also be able to associate himself as much as possible with the various stages of national development. You must rest assured of my determination to have you participate daily in the implementation of the social and economic policies of the government. "The need for unity and the constant interest attached to national development must determine the effectiveness of your actions.

"Perhaps our success will continue to arouse miscalculated and disguised jealousies. But who cares? We do not care about jealousies, because our success will result in the happiness of Ivory Coast citizens who, sooner or later, will form a united front against outside attacks. (applause) Ladies and gentlemen, we must disregard insults directed against us. Instead of wasting time to reply to our insulters, we must build more colleges, schools, and new hospitals. (applause) We must eschew rumormongering and focus our attention on building more roads, railways, and factories. Our increased and diversified agricultural products and the increasing interest of foreign investors will show that we have chosen a path of success and happiness."

Our external policy remains unchanged. Our country is determined to be one of fraternity and loyalty. "Our country is determined to be loyal to principles and to all our amnestied people. Loyalty must be at the base of all our actions. We must be tolerant of all opinions which are not in conformity with ours. Our attitude must always be to observe (comparer) and not to condemn. (applause)

"African countries must, through concerted determination, help Britain to find a lasting and good solution to the Rhodesian crisis. Needless to say, we must redouble our vigilance against Peking." (applause)

In the beginning of this speech, I spoke about the importance of being serious-minded and that we are determined to take things more seriously. I think that we require serious-minded people in the Ivory Coast and in Africa. Respect and consideration are not given to people on application but on merit and to whoever merits them. To this effect, Mr. Chairman and deputies, I know that the country, party, the government, and I can rely on you. (applause)