

SENEGAL

SENGHOR INTERVIEWED ON AFRICA, WORLD AFFAIRS

Paris LE MONDE in French 20 Mar 76 pp 1,7 LD

[Philippe Deoraene undated Paris interview with Senegalese President Leopold Sedar Senghor: "The Year 1976 Could Be Catastrophic for Africa"]

[Text] [Question] Following the new constitutional reform, you can now be reelected for life. Does this imply that, at a time when certain people thought you were contemplating retirement from politics, you have decided to seek a new mandate?

[Answer] Since my election in 1960, it has been my constant concern to prepare what I call "post-Senghorism". Indeed, the prerequisite for any harmonious and lasting development is stability and above all political stability, but with democracy.

The measure to which you refer is merely one of several elements of the constitutional reform and will in no way alter my choice of date for my retirement. In reality, this measure will mainly concern my successor, practically speaking. You will naturally understand why I do not give you the date of my voluntary retirement. As the Senegalese proverb says: "He who lies in wait does not cough."

[Question] What is the aim of your decision to promote the introduction of a tripartite system in Senegal?

[Answer] Our draft constitutional reform is aimed inter alia at making progress in Senegal toward a democratic system, not only in fact but also formally, in the European style. It is a question of allowing the three currents of opinion which exist in reality in Senegalese society--"democratic, liberal," "democratic socialist" and "Marxist-Leninist or communist"--to organize themselves as legal parties and propose their own "model of society" to the Senegalese people. Even more than the African press, public opinion has certainly taken an interest in the Senegalese plan for a tripartite system. Naturally, politicians in many African countries have been afraid that Senegalese tripartism might be contagious. We have reassured them all by stressing that our "democratic socialist" revolution is not exportable and that each nation must work out its own "model," as we have done in Senegal by making a "black African interpretation of Marx and Engels."

[Question] What is the Senegalese position on the Cuban intervention in Angola? Do you share the viewpoint of Mr Moynihan, who regards the Cubans as the "Gurkhas of the USSR"?

[Answer] Mr Moynihan is known for his trenchant phrases. I do not like his style, which lacks subtlety and therefore truth. Furthermore, in Senegal our policy is not based on moods or nerves but on principles.

I will say that Cuba does not interest us as such. We have always regarded the civil war in Angola as a cultural rather than a political problem. In general, for Africans, it is a question of choosing not an ideology but independence vis-a-vis all blocs, which alone will enable us to choose our ideology freely and, if it is of non-African origin, to rethink it as Africans and for Africans.

That is why we condemned Cuban intervention at the time, as well as South African and Soviet intervention, in accordance with Article 3 of the OAU Charter, which bases our organization's action on Africa democracy and nonalignment vis-a-vis "all blocs"; in other words, when there is a conflict among Africans within a nation or between two neighboring African states, an African solution to an African problem must be found among Africans.

The Soviet Attitude

[Question] What do you think of the Soviet attitude in Luanda, Conakry, Mogadiscio and Maputo?

[Answer] Soviet intervention in Angola is no more justifiable than American intervention would be. A nation's rights do not depend on its power but on the fact that it is a nation.

The Soviet presence in Conakry, Mogadiscio or Maputo poses another problem. Within the framework of bilateral cooperation, any state can request technical assistance from another state. For instance, we receive French technical assistance in the military field. I nevertheless consider it dangerous to world peace for a developing state to provide a base for a developed state, for the more bases there are in the world, the greater the risk of a third world war. That is why, by agreement with France, we transformed the French base in Dakar into a few mere "facilities."

[Question] Do you intend to take a personal initiative to bring about the resumption of the dialog between Pretoria and black Africa, or do you believe that this dialog has become pointless?

[Answer] We have repeatedly defined the Senegalese position very clearly. We regret that we have not been listened to. Our attitude toward the South African Republic results from our faithfulness to the two OAU declarations on the subject issued in Lusaka and Mogadiscio. The Lusaka declaration states that white South Africans have the same rights but also the same duties as all other African citizens. The Mogadiscio declaration urges African states to fight apartheid.

In conformity with these resolutions, Senegal's consistent policy has been, on the one hand, to implement strictly the sanctions decided by the OAU and the United Nations--South Africa was our biggest phosphate customer--and, on the other, to promote dialog, not between the South African Republic and the OAU member states but among the different ethnic communities of the South African Republic: whites, black Africans, Indians and those of mixed race. It was to assist in this dialog that I wrote to Mr Vorster, demanding the release of all political prisoners and requesting permission for a Senegalese magistrates' delegation to carry out a survey among all the ethnic communities to determine the opinion of each community.

Mr Vorster did not reply favorably to my letters. Other proposals have been made to me since the declaration of independence in Angola. It is well known what the South African Republic's attitude was in the Angolan civil war and that it was unanimously condemned. The fact remains that the two complementary declarations of Lusaka and Mogadiscio still appear valid to me.

[Question] What is the Senegalese Government's position in the West Sahara dispute?

[Answer] In disputes and, of course, conflicts among African states, the Senegalese Government's attitude has always been not to fan the flames but to advocate dialog to arrive at a dynamic compromise.

In the case of the Western Sahara, we suggested, very early on, "global negotiations" among the three states which would have enabled them to settle all the disputed questions and, above all, to organize dynamic cooperation, especially in the economic field. Unfortunately, we have not yet been listened to. This has not discouraged us and we are continuing to act toward this end. Only recently I sent a messenger to several Arab heads of state to request their mediation because, in the present situation, the Arab League is still the most appropriate organization for this purpose. Ultimately, it would be a question of negotiations within the framework of the two UN resolutions, again complementary in this case, passed in accordance with the opinion of the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

We took the same attitude in the Djibouti affair, when Senegal was chosen by the OAU to participate in the commission of inquiry. I can tell you frankly that 1976 could be a catastrophic or even tragic year for Africa because we have acquired the bad habit, when there is a conflict between two African parties or states, of failing to engage in dialog and calling on a non-African power, preferably a superpower, to settle the dispute by armed force. "He who lives by the sword," as the bible says...

[Question] A conference of Arab and African foreign ministers will take place in April. What concrete results do you expect from this meeting? Does Arab-African solidarity really exist?

[Answer] We expect a great deal from this meeting, which will represent the first step toward organized Arab-African solidarity. I do admit that such solidarity does not yet really exist, but a basis for it does and this is of fundamental importance.

In fact, all kinds of bonds--geographical, ethnic and cultural--militate in favor of Arab-African solidarity. It was not by chance that among the armies of Xerxes the "West Ethiopians", that is African negroes and Arabs, formed part of the same army. However, we Senegalese believe that the cultural basis should be and in fact is the strongest of all bases. This is why, as from this year, on the arts side of intermediate and secondary schools (A1, A2 and A3), Senegalese pupils will have to choose a classic language (either Latin or Arabic). You could tell me that we are swimming against the stream of French development in this sphere. But I have said that we intend to think and act independently and for ourselves.

[Question] You have allowed the provisional government of Papua New Guinea to open an agency in Senegal. Will you help this "government" to secure the right to be represented at the coming conference of nonaligned countries in Colombo and support it diplomatically? Why are you interested in this movement?

[Answer] We have acted with regard to Papua New Guinea in the same way as we have acted with regard to the Palestinians, whom we have helped to establish a "national state." The Papua people differ from the Indonesians both racially and culturally. The Papua people are blacks whereas the Indonesians are a mixture of the black and yellow races. Even though their languages and cultures are connected with the Malayan-Polynesian civilization, they are different.

The main reason for our attitude, both in this case and in other cases, has been this: Since it became independent, Senegal has supported all movements for authenticity, especially negritude, that is, the blacks' right to work in an independent state for the revival and development of the qualities of their civilization.