

SENGHOR OPENS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL COUNCIL

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(President Senghor's address on 26 February, recorded)

(Summary) "Mr. Chairman and Counsellors: The day of inauguration of the Economic and Social Council is for me a turning point, a confirmation of the economic and social policies of the Senegalese Government. This creation of your assembly clearly expresses the desire of the Second Republic to base its policy not on speeches as in the past but on facts and to direct it toward economic development, which is indispensable to social development. One cannot effectively combat disease and ignorance if one does not first of all abolish misery." This fact applies to all regimes and all ideologies, whether they are capitalist or communist, liberal or socialist. "Any politician who would ignore this fact, which is proven by experience and commonsense, will lead his country to catastrophe. There are many examples of this in the world."

What was the reason behind the creation of the Economic and Social Council? It was motivated by two reasons: The first is that although it is simple in principle, the problem is infinitely less so in its application. The necessity for planning has finally forced the attention of the capitalist countries. There are several methods of planning as well as several ways of envisaging the development of productive forces. "This is to say, it is necessary to seek the advice of technicians and to have professional technicians directly help to increase production. The National Assembly, like the government, is composed of politicians who are not always familiar with economic problems. My second reason has to do with social psychology. Economic and social laws require, for their application, the understanding and acceptance of both those who must vote them and those for whom they are made. To be effective, therefore, a plan must be discussed, if not prepared, in common with the employers and the workers, with those who bring their capital, and with those who bring their arms." As a matter of fact, the plan must be the fruit of a dialogue between the summit and the base.

"Mr. chairman and members of the council, although you do not have executive, legislative, or judicial power, your role will be no less important in the determination as in the execution of national policy." To be effective, this policy must be based on economy and have socialism as its objective.

Mr. chairman and counsellors, I wish to refer you to the provisional reports on the nation's accounts for 1959-1962, which every member of your council must have and consider as his bible.

These reports will reveal to you that the annual per capita income in Senegal in 1962 was 41,650 cfa francs, that is six times less than the annual per capita income in France, which is about 500,000 old metropolitan francs.

I must point out to the civil servants and state agents that while production has increased by about 15 percent over the past three years, our expenditures have increased by about 300 percent. This is due in large measure to the increase in the number of civil servants as well as to salary increases and revisions. "It is therefore clear that our material situation can improve only under three conditions: The first is that the number of our civil servants must not increase monstrously. In this connection, instructions have already been given to the minister of public service and labor. The second condition is an increase of output by civil servants. And the third is the maintenance of the rate of increase of national production. These three conditions also apply to the wage earners in the private sector. In fact, the problem will not be solved if we engage in the infernal race of salary increases. The problem must be analyzed as a whole so that an overall solution may be found for it among the masses.

The three difficulties from which the nation is suffering are: unemployment, mediocre and hardly competitive prices, and low productivity. We can solve the problem of unemployment only by (methodical?) and persistent efforts toward industrialization, which embraces construction. You know that for over a year the government has been giving serious consideration to this problem. This was part of the factory project we had approved. At present we are tackling the problem of construction and housing. In order to make our prices competitive externally, we must, in addition to the productivity I shall soon mention, maintain internal prices. Consumers and trade union leaders in particular will be invited to help us control prices.

Now comes the question of productivity. Increased productivity added to control will on the one hand help us reduce the external prices of our manufactured products and make them more competitive. "It is in this connection that we must look at the material and moral situation of the workers. Since it is impossible to increase the price of groundnuts, we must increase output. This is the aim of the (word indistinct) operation we shall launch during the coming agricultural season. We must increase acreage output in the next three years by 25 percent, thus gaining more than we lost (adapting?) to the world market."

But, in order to make this operation succeed, we need more human resources--technicians and other people to train our peasants. We have decided to double the training of personnel in our schools of agriculture and to extend our work into the rural areas, providing backing with all necessary substructures. Furthermore, we need to create research and experimental centers to enable us to diversify our agriculture.

Meanwhile the quadripartite organization which we have just formed for the economic use of the Senegal River basin has the special duty--other than to provide electric power--of reclaiming hundreds of thousands of acres of land through building dams for the cultivation of rice, cotton, and sugar cane. "This last project and our project for reclaiming 200,000 acres in the district of Casamance are long-term projects, but we can expect to make use of a portion of the claimed land for the cultivation of cotton in a few years."

These projects I have just mentioned require major reforms in our cooperative structures. It is evident that our agricultural cooperatives are cooperatives only in name because they often have no rational structure. "It is indispensable that agricultural cooperatives embrace all the farmers of the same area without discrimination. This should be the same with the fishermen and shepherds cooperatives. I have complete hope that by upholding this effort of ours, we will achieve our objectives in rural economy by the end of the four-year development plan."

"The mistake of Karl Marx and his followers was that they neglected agriculture and stock farming in favor of industry and the peasants in favor of the artisans. This mistake explains the lack of economic balance in the socialist countries." The guarantee for capital invested in this country is precisely the adequate profits which the investors have the right to expect, but it lies morally in the Senegalese people's commonsense and objectively in our investment code. "As you all know, capital investments and technicians are necessary conditions for all economic development, especially in the underdeveloped countries no matter what their ideologies may be. This is the reason why it is not in our interest to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. This is why we must guarantee to the investors the fair profits which they claim for their investment. I repeat that since it is not in our interest to nationalize foreign industries, we do not intend to nationalize them. Quite on the contrary, the investment code guarantees (absolute?) security to the investor."

With the creation of the agricultural-produce marketing board by the first republic, most of the traditional commercial firms left the provinces for Dakar. This resulted in a commercial vacuum to the detriment of the consumers and to the greatest advantage of the small tradesmen, who charge exorbitant prices for their goods. "The problem cannot be solved by the nationalization of small tradesmen, or more precisely by reserving it for the Senegalese nationals alone, as certain people have asked me to do. I know that many small tradesmen are foreigners. To be more precise, they are either Africans or Asians whom the solidarity of the third world groups forbids us to drive away. What is more, their departure would not solve the problem."

What is required in commerce? The essential thing is to supply the masses, especially the provincial consumers who are far from Dakar, with all the commodities and manufactured articles they require under the best possible conditions and at the lowest possible prices. This service, which is of a national dimension, cannot be left to the care of small tradesmen. Its realization requires capital as well as organization and professional training, all of which, I admit, are difficult to acquire."

To solve the problem, the traditional commercial firms must launch a chain of distribution centers. Another way to solve the problem is to multiply and develop syndicates. This experiment was tried by the First Republic but it was halted before any result was achieved. "The syndicates have three objectives in view: to group all the former tradesmen who have been thrown out of business by the socialization of our rural economy, to turn these tradesmen into modern businessmen, and finally to create an effective distribution network throughout the country." The achievement of these objectives requires capital. It also requires a rational organization, which depends on the professional training of the African tradesmen.

We also need consumers' cooperatives. Such cooperatives, which fall within the framework of our democratic socialism, have had successful results in Europe. They play a purifying and moral-improving role in commerce. Let us have the courage to admit that in Senegal, the experiment of consumers' cooperatives did not have a more conclusive result than the other experiments I have already mentioned. "Why? It is because we are not yet decolonized. It is also because we have not yet abandoned the petit bourgeois spirit of nepotism which is gnawing all our economic organs from the inside."

"I shall never cease to repeat that to achieve economic growth for development, nothing can replace capital, technical training, work, and honesty. Anything other than these is a mere battle of words and demagoguery." I often say that these four organizations are not contradictory but complementary in the transitional period in which we are living between capitalism, which monopolizes everything, and democratic socialism. It was Mr. Khrushchev himself who warned the underdeveloped states against the temptation to rush and (who advised?) that what is good must be taken out of capitalism. "As far as I am concerned, I accept Mr. Khrushchev's advice. Moreover, certain failures experienced in the third world group invite us to be prudent and clearheaded."

Confronted with our present situation and considering that none of these four organizations has so far obtained any conclusive results, I have made two major decisions: the rural economy will continue to be progressively socialized. In this connection, all peasants, fishermen, and herdsmen will be integrated in a cooperative network with a rational structure (in order to?) solve the problem of the former African small tradesmen. Concerning the other sectors, I mean industry, banking, and commerce, they will be free provided they are in keeping with the provisions of the development plan. I must emphasize that these sectors will not be nationalized but controlled. A ministerial council has already examined the problem of commerce in general and of the former small tradesmen in particular. Another ministerial council will be held very soon on the problem. Yet another council has considered the problem of cooperation, that is, producers and consumers cooperatives and urban and rural cooperatives.

As for commerce, I have already defined its aims and functions. I must point out that it must be based on competition, which does not prevent but encourages price stabilization and control. The urban producers and consumers cooperatives will be subjected to laws and regulations inspired by Europe but adapted to African reality. If these cooperatives are well managed they can successfully compete with the capitalist enterprises because they will have a limited profit margin. "The overall income earned by the Senegalese people in 1962 amounted to 132.62 billion francs. The share of the wage earners of the public and private sectors, who represent less than 10 percent of the population, was at least 50 billion francs against 47.8 billion francs for the rural masses, who represent 80 percent of the population. Here lies the great social injustice in Senegal which must move us if we are true socialists. The state will therefore continue to assist the rural cooperatives whether they are producers or consumers cooperatives. These cooperatives will be exempted from taxes."

"Mr. chairman and members of the council, you would be wrong to think that our economic and social policy is only pragmatic. As a matter of fact, it draws inspiration from a method, or rather a doctrine--that of the African way to socialism, which I have already defined on several occasions. Why do we not just say socialism instead of the African way to socialism?" This is because the present conditions in Senegal are not similar to those prevailing in Europe in the middle of the 19th century and also because scientific socialism, which was invented some 100 years ago, was, according to its very author, destined to transform the economic and social realities of a specific part of the world--capitalist Western Europe.

Like any other ideology, scientific socialism is scientific, that is, it expresses truth in that it translates the laws of reality in a given locality and during a given period, that is Western Europe in the middle of the 19th century. This socialism would not be scientific and would not express the whole truth if it is applied, for instance, to the Senegal of 1964.

Before going further, I must point out that according to Marx himself, social justice is the opposite of communism. Social justice is based essentially on the formula "to each according to his work." I do not deny the fact that certain peoples realized their revolutions and built their nations thanks to the dictatorship of the proletariat. But who are the proletariat? Some 100 years ago in Western Europe they were the masses of workers who toiled under conditions which you cannot fully imagine. Men, women, and children were reduced to the level of beasts by a monstrous capitalism which had nothing to do with either planning or social security. Today the proletariat--the outcasts of fortune--are the peasants.

"Mr. chairman and members of the council, during your discussions I would like you to always remember these facts about the problem: We are living through an accelerated time in history whose main fact in this 20th century is the totalization and socialization of the planet Earth. We must not confine ourselves to living through this history; we must help make it by making Africa's contribution, including Senegal's, to it." There cannot be social justice where there is poverty. The African way to socialism is the more easy to follow in that there have never existed social classes in black Africa. We must resolutely take this path. We will at all costs take this new path in all modesty and patience but without any psychological complex. "It is not a question of rejecting the theoretical and practical contributions by America, Asia, and especially Europe. On the contrary, conscious of our backwardness as far as science and technology and as national economy are concerned, we will continue to welcome these contributions with gratitude."