

SUMMIT
CIAS/GEN/INF/16
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SPEECH BY HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF BURUNDI
on the occasion of the Summit Conference held at Addis Ababa from
22 May 1963

Your Imperial Majesty
Mr. President
Honourable Heads of State
Respected Delegates to this Noble Conference:

It is for me a signal honour to take the floor on behalf of the Burundi people, of whom I am now the spokesman. This great day sees those responsible for the future of Africa assembled to consider together the problems of their continent that are common to them all. What are those problems? For the most part they arise from the present structure of the world. Africa is today, it must be agreed, in a state of technical inferiority in comparison with the other continents. We cannot suffer this state of affairs to be perpetuated. Moreover, it is because we have adopted a revolutionary attitude toward this situation that we called this conference together, which will give us an opportunity to discover the factors at the root of Africa's underdevelopment; then to study ways of eliminating these unfavourable factors; and finally to discover what new factors there are which are likely to lead our continent to a satisfactory state of development.

Among the unfavourable factors responsible for the underdevelopment of Africa is of course the fact that our continent has only recently been opened up to the rest of the world. Up to the nineteenth century, one might say, Africa remained outside the civilizations which elsewhere flourished increasingly. The industrial civilization, for example, which characterizes the modern world, began developing at the end of the eighteenth century, first in England, then in France, Germany, Western Europe, and finally in North America, thanks to many European inventions. Where was Africa then? Africa then was a mosaic of human groupings showing traces of ancient organizations which had advanced in the form of empires.

Some empires, such as those of Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Nkongo and others had had their splendours. But during the eighteenth century those empires crumbled, for reasons which history has taught us.

The various African civilizations which preceded the colonial era resembled one another from various points of view. For example, the spirit of family solidarity was found everywhere, and the idea of hospitality was similarly general. Indeed, a careful study of the various African civilizations shows surprising similarities which make it clear that African unity is not a chimera-like and superficial construction, but a living entity

which requires only to be translated on to the institutional plane.

Let us now turn to the colonial era. After the opening up of Africa, when figures like Stanley attained fame, we had the colonial system on which was built a marked advancement, whatever the intentions of the European conquerors may have been, but which in the course of time became intolerable, because of certain Europeans in authority who sought to perpetuate the system for the system's sake, to the detriment of the interests and aspirations of the native Africans. From that moment the colonialist factor became and remained henceforth an unfavourable factor for African development, like the geographical factor in the period before the opening up of Africa. Indeed, the African of today is seized with the ambition to discover not only Western Europe, but the entire world, in spite of those who would enclose him in the old Western views. On this account, the African must fight unceasingly against the appetites of foreign domination, whether called colonialism, neo-colonialism or imperialism. It is our present task to unmask and mercilessly to stigmatize every slightest sign of colonialism aiming to undermine the independence of the African States, whether under an economic or a cultural guise. Why must we attack the colonial system? Because the colonial system in all its forms serves chiefly national interests. Moreover, whenever the interests of the colonizer are in conflict with the interest of the colonized, and that is not a rare case, troubles arise, of the kind which threw Algeria into mourning for more than eight years, the Congo from 1959 onwards and still trouble Angola: there are the two Rhodesias and South Africa, and the list might be extended.

We can therefore, sum up the factors unfavourable to development in three categories; geographical, colonial, and post-colonial. In the second part of our speech, we would like to outline the solutions which would provide ways of discounting these unfavourable factors.

As regards the geographical factor, we can already congratulate ourselves on the distance we have covered. Whatever his intentions, the colonizer worked with energy and has ploughed through Africa from North to South, from West to East, so that there is hardly a mountain, forest, stream, river, lake, or valley unknown. Africa is no longer a "Terra Incognita". African cartography is excellent. Only the sub-soil still holds surprises for us, which we hope will be agreeable.

Before long, the purely colonial factor will no longer be a major concern for the Africans. Without being a prophet one can say that within a short time the colonial system will collapse like a pack of cards. International pressure is such that the system is destined irrevocably to disappear.

There remains the group of post-colonial factors. They are many and varied, but all rise from one source: The state of under-development of the African States which binds them to aid from the developed countries. The latter draw profit from it and seek to perpetuate this state of subordination of Africa, particularly by sabotaging efforts to unity Africa, according to the imperialist principle "Divide et Impera". Our enemies are happy to see Africa balkanized. It is certain that a divided Africa will always be a dominated Africa. And yet we must not base ourselves on these considerations and scorn all aid and assistance from abroad. These considerations simply require us to remain vigilant. Burundi for its part gladly accepts all assistance which is not loaded with political or military conditions like those which involve ideological alignment behind one of the two blocs, the installation of military bases on national territory or the maintenance of foreign troops in the country. Burundi will accept foreign aid the more readily, the fewer the conditions attached.

What is the essence of African under-development? Let us analyze this problem in two aspects: the economic and social infrastructure and the superstructure. As regards the infrastructure, it is immediately obvious to any observer that the African States need more means of communication, alongside the improvement of existing means, of industries and so on. A comparison of African infrastructure with the infrastructure of countries like the U. S. A. or the U. S. S. R. shows clearly what efforts are still required in this field to satisfy our legitimate wish to draw level with those countries. You will no doubt see the implications of substantial effort arising out of it. As regards the superstructure, the problems of education and teaching are the most crucial. There are also problems of the institutions - parliamentary, governmental, and judicial - which may still be established. In brief, the state organisation of Africa must be inspired by both independence and progress. In this field, we have need of technical assistance which can come to us only from the advanced states, until we have a full complement of native trained personnel. This, too, implies substantial effort. At this stage we are justified in wondering how much longer Africa must go on appealing to the economically advanced countries to assure its well-being. Realism forces us to admit that Africa will still have need to these countries for a long time. Here we must remember that independence can be defined as free inter-dependence. Thanks to independence the African States are capable if those in authority are serious-minded and honest, or negotiating with the other states, including the former colonial states, on ways of complying with their interests, without sacrificing any of the major benefits of independence and international sovereignty.

These then, are briefly the motives which justify our presence at this memorable summit Conference of Independent Heads of State.

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On this occasion, we have all become aware of the need for African unity, and are resolved to study the means of attaining it, in the political as much as in the economic field. The institutions necessary for this unity will not be long in emerging. Africa will be transformed by it, to make unprecedented progress.