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## THE SIXTH FRANCO-AFRICAN CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF STATE AND THE 16TH SUMMIT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

The curtain-raiser to the 16th summit of the OAU held in Monrovia, Liberia, in July was the 6th Franco-African conference held in Kgali, Rwanda in May.

The Franco-African summit, which received little coverage in South Africa, was important mainly because it set the tone for the OAU summit by addressing the twin issues of Pan-African security and human rights which were considered at both conferences to have been root causes of Africa's limited development.

Although the Franco-African summit in Kgali was held in an atmosphere approaching a return to normality after the bloody Shaba insurrection of 1978, and the security issue was consequently played down by many of the 22 delegates who attended the conference, President Leopold Senghor of Senegal told reporters not to have the false impression "that security has ceased to pre-occupy Africa." The Kgali summit, he said, had to be seen as a continuation of the previous year's 5th Franco-African summit held in Paris which subsequently became known as the "summit of fear", because in the wake of developments in Shaba province continued survival of some governments at the conference was open to question. Indeed, for at least one government at Kgali a year later, that of Zaire, the climate of fear had not entirely evaporated. With fresh intelligence reports at hand that 600 of General Mbumba's "troops" were readying themselves for a fresh assault on Kolwezi to take advantage of the vacuum left behind by the withdrawing Pan-African peace-keeping force (from Togo, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Senegal), it occasioned no surprise that delegates to Kgali accorded Mobutu the sort of welcome normally reserved for survivors of an air crash. Many observers at the summit expressed little doubt that another Shaba uprising before the end of 1979 was probable, unless something was done to bolster the ineffective Zairian Commandos currently guarding Kolwezi Fort - and unless effective attempts were made to create a permanent military safety-net to protect the French-speaking states of Africa from across-border aggression.

President Senghor favours the creation of regional defence groupings and he vigorously championed a common defence system at behind-the-scenes meetings with delegates at Kgali. Several French speaking states belonging to CEAO (Communaute economique de L'Afrique de L'Ouest) have already concluded a non-aggression pact and mutual defence agreement.

(signed in June 1978 by Senegal, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Togo) but Niger has since withdrawn from the arrangement. Further difficulties have also been caused by Gabon, which is seeking a different defence alignment within the Conseil de L'Entente which unites the Ivory Coast, Niger, Togo and Upper Volta, and it appeared by the end of the summit that there was general consensus that the security of the French speaking states of Africa was inextricably bound up with the security of Africa as a whole. Accordingly the summit, after noting a formal report on security problems presented by President Senghor (and after insisting on security for African states to ensure their economic development, and for the need for greater solidarity between its members), proposed that concrete steps for the realization of some form of collective security be taken within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its regional bodies.

President Giscard d'Estaing, who was at the summit, emphasized the prime need for development, an increase in investment aid and for the study of security questions from an economic angle. He spoke in this context about the possibility of creating demilitarized zones and proposed that African leaders examine ways and means of limiting the current spate of arms imports into Africa. Giscard declared he would like to see Africa increasingly associated with the great task of disarmament.

From considerations of security the summit addressed Euro-African relations, and besides requesting France to convey the concern of French speaking Africa to the EEC on the international economic situation and its bearing on African development, delegates tackled the thorny question of human rights - in particular whether some form of human rights clause ought to be inserted in a renewed Lomé convention. It was finally proposed that a clause referring rather vaguely to "the promotion of the human being" be inserted either in the preamble to the convention or in some other context acceptable to the parties concerned. In any event it was made clear that discussion of human rights would be kept general and that a renegotiated Lomé agreement would not contain some specific human rights stipulation, a violation of which would allow the West to automatically "punish" offending states by severing aid under Lomé etc. One should not infer from this, however, that the summit was not concerned with the effects that human rights violations in Africa were having on continued foreign investments. Indeed, the summit appointed a commission of enquiry into the alleged massacre in the Central African Republic. This commission visited Bangui in June and found in mid-August that Emperor Bokassa I had not only condoned but possibly personally participated as well in the slaughter of school children protesting the cost of new school uniforms.

After Kgali, and by way of an intermezzo before the OAU meeting in Monrovia in July, Giscard enthusiastically promoted the idea of a "trialogue" with President Nimeiri of the Sudan - the then president of the OAU. The triologue aims at a political rapprochement among the members of the EEC, the OAU and the Arab league, and is regarded by Giscard as a cornerstone of international harmony. The concept of triangular co-operation has previously been mooted by the West Germans.

In Monrovia the delegates to the OAU conference took a long hard look at Africa's future and determined that limited economic growth, an absence of human rights and continuing political instability have been

inextricably intertwined in Africa's problems since independence from colonial rule. There was a general consensus that adherence to human rights principles by African states would aid in creating the stability needed for development aid, and it was as a result of this feeling that the conference began to structure a theme of economic development coupled with a human rights programme. African leaders advanced several linked proposals which included a planned revision of the OAU charter, a special meeting in Lagos (Nigeria) to plan an African Common market and the beginnings, finally, of a human rights charter. Human rights and African security were seen as inseparably linked; e.g. Amin's reign of terror was widely cited as having contributed in no small measure to the Tanzanian decision to invade Uganda, with unsettling effects for countries elsewhere in Africa. It was a general apprehension of this sort of continued regional violence and the implications of running wars for African development in general which finally prompted acceptance in principle by the OAU that an African Defence Force (ADF) be established. Although the actual mechanism of such a force remains in question, there can be little doubt that this was a most important decision by the conference.

Other agreements reached were:

That the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe Rhodesia be recognized as the sole representatives of the Rhodesian people. The conference also agreed to review the whole process of assistance to liberation movements.

There was a new call for air and shipping sanctions against South Africa. Among the human rights violations mentioned in the proposed African charter of human rights which the OAU agreed be drawn up, are apartheid, racial discrimination, trade imbalances and the use of mercenaries. It was therefore logical to propose steps against South Africa, but perhaps ironical to do so in Liberia, whose constitution specifies that only "persons of negro descent" can become citizens, vote or own land.

On the Middle East the OAU reasserted the Palestine Liberation Organisation's right to self-determination, but at the same time gave qualified support to the Camp David Peace accord between Israel and Egypt.

On the economic front the conference passed a declaration (the Monrovia declaration) which recognized the failures of the past and the need for future united action to bring about continental self-reliance.

The 16th conference of the OAU, like previous OAU conferences, was characterised by in-fighting and walk-outs, but it will probably go down in history as representing something of a turning point in African affairs - not least because it will have been the first OAU conference to adopt resolutions on general human rights for the African continent. However, it was also notable for some honest introspection and enquiry about Africa's ability to prosper and develop in the late half of the Twentieth century. There was a willingness to bridge the "narrow nationalisms" that have bedevilled regional economic co-operation and to tackle a continental approach instead.

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