



ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY

Secretariat
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ANNEX VII

SPEECH BY MAITRE K.W. KAMANDA, ASSISTANT SECRETARY-
GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY AT THE
OPENING OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC,
CULTURAL AND HEALTH COMMISSION.

Mr. Chairman
Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I first of all be allowed to say how thankful we are to the Prime Minister Sir S. Ramgobram, to the Government and People of Mauritius, both for the extremely warm welcome extended to us in the spirit of the best traditions of hospitality worthy of the land of Paul and Virginia, as well as for the kindness and the enthusiasm with which they have consented to host the meeting of the OAU Specialized Committee on Education, Science and Culture in this island of serenity and harmony.

The scope of our agenda which covers the problems of education and training, culture and natural resources, health and nutrition, science and technology in Africa constitutes an eloquent testimony of hope that the OAU and the people of Africa place in the outcome of this meeting which we expect will impress its mark on the process of the overall development of Africa.

The size of the attendance of African States to this gathering on culture, science and technology, on the other hand goes to show the great interest that such problems rightly arouse in Africa today.

We would certainly be guilty of an ingratitude all the more unforgiveable as it is not African, if we were to omit to express our most sincere thanks to the representatives of the many

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international organizations and UN Specialized Agencies that have agreed to come and contribute to our work with their sympathy, their invaluable know-how and their vast experience.

The greatest challenge that Africa in particular and the countries of the Southern Hemisphere in general are condemned to take up is that of development.

Development is a global process of structural changes. It is the balanced and harmonized organization of growth. All vital sectors of the Nation's activities should be impressed with a harmonious tempo of growth if development effort is not to result in any deadlock. An outgrowth is an ugly spectacle whereas development is a beautiful thing because it is what we are all striving for.

The real problem is that of avoiding growth without development, and attaining development within growth.

The African States, member of the OAU have well realized that to enjoy the full benefit of political independence one must secure economic independence as a prerequisite. This is why, today, from the North to the South, and from the East to the West of the African Continent, independence and economic development have become pass-words. This is why at the beginning of the second decade of the OAU, the Heads of State and Government of Africa adopted the African Declaration on Economic Co-operation, Development and Independence which define the guidelines for the individual and collective future action of the African States, after having made an agonizing reappraisal of the premises on which they based their development, and their conception of co-operation between nations.

Let us face it: It is time for cultural development in Africa to come to enhance the economic development we are striving to achieve.

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This is imperative. It is by virtue of a movement of the mind that rejects humiliating mental slavery, it is by virtue of an intellectual effort; it is by virtue of the affirmation of our cultural identity that around the thirties, we rejected that depersonalizing assimilation, rocked the foundations of colonization, shook the yoke of foreign domination and paved the way for the advent of political independence. It was not economic activities or considerations that took us to political independence.

This is why, if we are to be really independent and be masters in our own home, economic development should go almost hand in hand with cultural development or ideological development as others might say.

From the very beginning of the existence of humanity, from Aquilon to the Austral and from the Orient to the West, man, whatever the pigmentation of his skin, has meditated on his origins, on the problems arising from his existence, on his raison d'etre and the motivations of his very existence, on the purpose of his existence, on his future, on the state of his relations of coexistence with this great nature so motherly and unmerciful at times, and indeed on life mysterious beyond this world.

To all these questions, man wherever he had been on this planet has found answers which at a given period of his evolution have been able to satisfy his intellect and the exigencies of his mind.

Answers to the very first questions which were fundamental, have dictated the way of life, the habits, and the options of each people. They therefore came to be the vision of the specific world that underlies human activities among a given people in a given country.

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It is within the framework of a specific vision of the world that the culture of a people is born; in other words it is the whole gamut of the spiritual and material values that this people creates and forges throughout its evolution in time and in space.

This brings me to say that each people had found answers to the problems of its existence, and had established a specific system representing its vision of the world. Each people had established its culture, its civilization and its own social values. The black-African was no exception to this movement of humanity. No culture is superior to any other because no people is, and no race is.

It is therefore a testimony of the empty vanity of the colonizing west for having endeavoured to judge the other peoples, other peoples' values and cultures, by exclusive reference to the criteria of a civilization or a culture that is basically relative. It is therefore an insolent vanity, and an insolent aberration to have tried, and to continue trying to universalize criteria established by one people, in a given country with specific climatic, geographical, physical, psychological, historical, and philosophical conditions.

As the expression of human essence, and as the manifestation of a vision of the world - as all people have created cultures and civilizations and all peoples have found answers to the problems superior to the other. Who indeed could establish or could have been able to establish such a hierarchy without any concerted authority ?

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It is useful, however, to compare and analyze cultures and civilizations of different peoples, to see what approach was given to what problems, and how such concept and such values were evolved elsewhere, for indeed one may find elsewhere, that there are better developed ideas and techniques that may spare one the pains of having to undergo the bitter experience it requires. One field may be more developed in INCA or MAYA culture and civilization than in ZIMBABWE culture, but another field may equally be more developed in ZIMBABWE culture than among the INCAS.

But indeed to totally accept a foreign culture is to accept alienation. It is therefore fitting to rise against imported prejudices, western prejudices of which unfortunately Africans are sometimes guilty.

Africa should reject Metropolitanism, Euro-centrism and all other vulgar and depersonalising egotisms, for the sake of her autonomous development; and for this, Africa should learn to know and to love her culture.

Colonialism came into Africa through the door of cultural negation.

By denying our culture, colonisation denied us everything including the human essence. It was thus that the continuity of our culture was disrupted, and that our autonomous development slowed down for centuries. It was thus that our gods were cast away. It was thus that our lands were taken because "God couldn't tolerate that amidst the movement of universal energy there should lie this great inactivity, this prodigious inertia, I dare say this provoking dumbness to restore it, this untimely stagnation, to the universal movement". (AIME CESAIRE)

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None better than Aime Cesaire with his pungent style has better described the arrogance of the usurper as he does in his book "Et les Chiens se taisaient" "And the dogs barked no more" in which the colonial administrator says

"And allegedly we stole their land ?
Oh, No ! but it is not the same thing.
We took it !

From whom ?
from nobody !

God gave it to us"

It was thus that our people were held to be incapable of thinking, for as the colonial administrator of Cesaire also said: "It is moreover a moot point as to whether in the world there are, apart from us any other people that think and I really mean thinking and not ruminating a confused jumble of hazy ideas that come up in lukewarm palpitating and dormant brains and who, without us, could count the peoples and establish the accounts of the world ?

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Such are the ideas that brought Colonization, Apartheid, Racism and Economic Exploitation to Africa.

It is therefore clear that in order to secure our real independence and our political and economic development we must affirm our culture just as our objectives, a culture which translates the genius of Africa and which is not impermeable to the language of modernism, a culture which stimulates energies all levelled at development; for our development should not necessarily be according to the

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western pattern and therefore it should not draw inspiration from western culture ...

In default of this we would be facing a fundamental contradiction which will stultify our autonomous development.

See what is happening in the west today! This profound trauma, they call HIPPIEISM, this constant calling into question of the Consumer Society ! See how this flower of life that is the youth is imprisoned in obsolete standards, in this dehumanising machine which crushes man, in this conflict between consciences and the money and profit civilization which makes guineapigs of men; pollution, the rape of nature which will be punished by NATURE'S law of compensation. Is this a model for development ?

It is therefore within the prospects of the accelerated development of Africa that we should approach the problems of Education, Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. We have come to Mauritius to study the contribution of Culture, Education, Arts and Science to development, in other words the conditions under which they can determine our development.

Many references have been made to the prodigious development of Japan, the Soviet Union and China during this century. What happened in these countries ? What was their secret ? Tibor Mende has the answer to this question: "It so happened that these countries were not colonised by the West and that their socio-cultural heritage therefore has not had to directly face the physical coercion which accompanied Western industrial civilization. In the second phase, during the territorial expansion of the West, all these three countries remained living socio-cultural entities, with their internal crises indeed, but continuing to believe in their own values, not to say their own superiority. Their confidence in themselves was not encroached upon,

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and they were aware of the existence of forces of innovation and adaptation working in their own territories. Whatever the foreign influences were that came in, the center of gravity of these countries had remained, as regards essential decisions in their own territories" Mende - "from Aid to Recolonisation" -

The forces of innovation and adaptation exist in Africa. It is up to us to find them and to use them.

Nowhere in the world, be it in Africa, Asia, or Latin America has western industrial civilisation and its social attitudes and its techniques really penetrated as to conspicuously transform economic physiognomy and way of life. If not, after centuries of colonisation and attempts to assimilation, Africa would be as developed as Europe. The phenomenon of cultural parallelism in colonial Africa is well known, and calls for no discussion. Generally speaking therefore Western industrial civilisation was imposed on top of totally different cultures, social systems and values, and non-western civilisations".

The result is that in these areas Western civilization did not bring about great development, or deep economic changes that can be called development.

If on the other hand in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Southern Brazil western civilization brought about sizeable economic changes, this is simply because nearly all the population here is of European origin and was brought up in European culture.

This makes it imperative for us to believe in our culture, our values of civilisation, and to reassert them and draw from them our development impetus.

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Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Science and technology are cultural values. They are a way to development. But the same science and the same techniques do not always correspond to different levels of development.

Illiteracy, cultural lateness, the incompatibility and the inadaptability of educational systems to the objectives could become sizeable drawbacks to the development of new ideas inherent in Science and Technology.

Science is the prodigious and constant effort of man to refuse the unknowable and to penetrate the unknown. We should therefore encourage inventiveness, initiative, and creativity among Africans, and can never sufficiently repeat the necessity for us to use our African experts in our development effort, instead of others, of equal competence, precisely because our own experts vibrate with the rythms and pulsations of African culture, and can know our anxiety and impatience.

It is not in the interest of Africa to always identify herself with others and run to sign international conventions on the protection of invention patents or intellectual property. This may even thwart our progress. On the other hand, it is healthy to fathom the depths of our creative capacities.

The time has come for Africa to speak of cultural development and cultural cooperation.

If at the end of this gathering in Mauritius Africa could if not boast of a Charter for cultural development, at least define the guidelines of the conditions African Culture, Education, Science

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and Technology should satisfy in order to make its great contribution to development in Africa, future generations shall honour your clear-sightedness and wisdom. This would be the greatest tribute that posterity could pay to an effort of which all those who have had the merit of being rightly clearsighted in the history of man and his society can be proud.

On this commemorative day of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, let us meditate for a moment to think of all the oppressed and exploited people in the world, in Africa, in the Middle East, in South-East Asia and elsewhere.

We would like to hope their fundamental rights and liberties, as human beings, will be recognized by all the nations of the world; we would like to hope that man will cease to be the greatest enemy to man.

1974

Speech by Maitre K.W, Kamanda, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity at the Opening of the Meeting of the Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission.

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