

DAY after day, week after week, month after month, I have called loud and persistently for African political and economic unity. I am sure that I have been misunderstood sometimes even by friends. Enemies of African prosperity have a vested interest in misinterpreting my motives.

Our Constitution provides for the surrender in part or in whole, of our sovereignty, if necessary, in the interest of African unity. Let me make it clear that this is a condition which we in Ghana are prepared to accept in order to promote the cause of unity in Africa. We would not, of course, presume to make conditions for others. Indeed, I can envisage a strong and effective union without surrender of sovereignty.

In my view, a united Africa—that is, the political and economic unification of the African continent—should seek three objectives:

Firstly, we should have an overall economic planning on a united continental basis which would increase the industrial and economic power of Africa. So long as we remain disunited, so long as we remain balkanized, regionally or territorially, we shall be at the mercy of colonialism and imperialism.

There is a great contrast in this respect between Africa and Europe today. Whereas Europe is making frantic efforts in the direction of economic and political integration, Africa is sadly being torn apart by the manoeuvres and intrigues of neo-colonialism.

Secondly, we should aim at the creation of a Joint Military Command. I do not see any wisdom in our present separate efforts to build up or maintain vast military forces for self-defence which, in any case, would be ineffective in any major conflict. If we examine this problem realistically, we would be able to ask ourselves this pertinent question: which single state in Africa today can protect itself against an imperialist aggressor?

Recently, anti-apartheid leaders have alleged that South Africa is building great military might

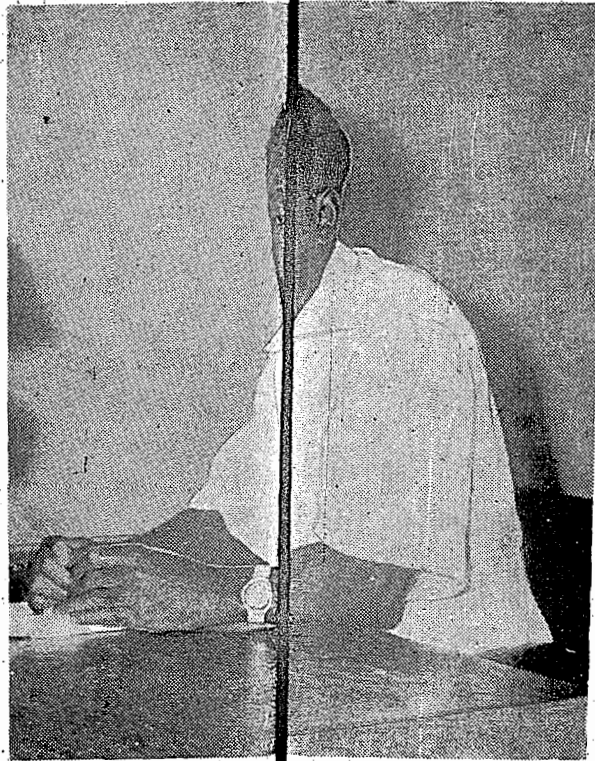
with all the latest weapons of destruction, in order to crush African nationalism. If this is true, only the unity of Africa can prevent South Africa from achieving such an aim. If we do not unite and combine our military forces for common defence, the individual States, out of a sense of insecurity, may be drawn into making defence pacts which will endanger the security of us all. There is also the expenditure aspect of this problem. The maintenance of military forces imposes a heavy financial burden on even the most wealthy States. For young African States, who need every penny they can get for development, it is ridiculous—indeed, suicidal—for each State, individually, to assume such a heavy burden when the weight of this burden could be easily lightened by sharing it among themselves.

The third objective which we should have in Africa comes from the first two which I have just described. If we in Africa set up a common economic planning organisation and a joint military command, it follows that we shall have to adopt a common foreign policy to give political direction to our national continental defence and our national continental economic and industrial development planning.

In the higher reaches of our endeavour, it should be possible to devise some constitutional structure which secures these objectives and yet preserves the sovereignty of each country joining the Union. For example, countries in such a union will naturally maintain their own constitutions, continue to use their national flags, their national anthems and other symbols and paraphernalia of sovereignty which they don't have to surrender. Our survival depends upon the political unity of Africa. The forces that

Towards a united Africa

by Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah



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unite us are far greater than the difficulties which divide us at present.

I have referred to the need for economic planning on a continental basis. It is most important that African leaders must now begin to find the best and quickest means by which we can pool our economic resources together for our mutual benefit. If we achieve this, we shall raise in Africa a great industrial, economic and financial power comparable to anything the world has seen in our time.

It must be said, however, that we cannot establish such sound economic links in Africa without giving them sound political direction, force, and purpose. We must therefore come to grips with the major and basic issue of African unity which alone will make the artificial boundaries and regional demarcations inherited from colonialism obsolete and superfluous.

In my own view, local associations, regional commonwealths and territorial groupings will be just another form of balkanisation, unless they are conceived within the framework of a large union based on the model of the United States of America or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. When the first thirteen States in the North American Continent tried to promote the idea of a United States of America, this was ridiculed as an empty dream which was vigorously resisted by many.

And who would have thought that seventy-five different nationalities at various levels of economic, social and political development in Russia could have been welded into the mighty force which the Soviet has become within this comparatively short space of time? I believe that Russia even began with three States. It is therefore for African leaders to continue to work ceaselessly in order to give flesh and

blood to the fond hope of African Unity to which we are all so resolutely dedicated.

The example of Europe which is left in confusion after centuries of mutually-destructive economic warfare and competition, because it has so far failed to build a sound foundation for political action and understanding must be a lesson to us all. I know that when we speak of political union, our detractors are quick to observe an attempt to impose leadership and to abrogate sovereignty. This is not the case. It would be futile to expect that so soon as millions of our people secured their release from colonial oppression they would wish to surrender that sovereignty to an ideal, however great and laudable it may be.

We are realists enough to know that no one seeks a revision of present boundaries unnecessarily. Indeed, it will be naive to ignore the reality of these territorial relics of colonialism. But this notwithstanding, under a major political union of Africa in which the limits of our present territorial sovereignty are not ignored, there could emerge a United Africa, great and powerful working for the complete and total mobilisation of the economic planning organisation under a common political direction. Imagine the strength of such an economic force in Africa with the combined potential of all that we now possess and the fabulous mineral and agricultural resources which we are yet to uncover.

Once this was achieved, what would be needed is a common foreign policy which took the basic overall requirements of Africa in international relations into account; and if all this were to be capped with a unified military force, the picture of the restoration of Africa's dignity and greatness would be complete. This should be our aim and goal; this must be our task.

I have emphasised in my discussions and speeches that the political union of Africa would not only be a strong guarantee for peace, but also a great instrument for world economic prosperity.