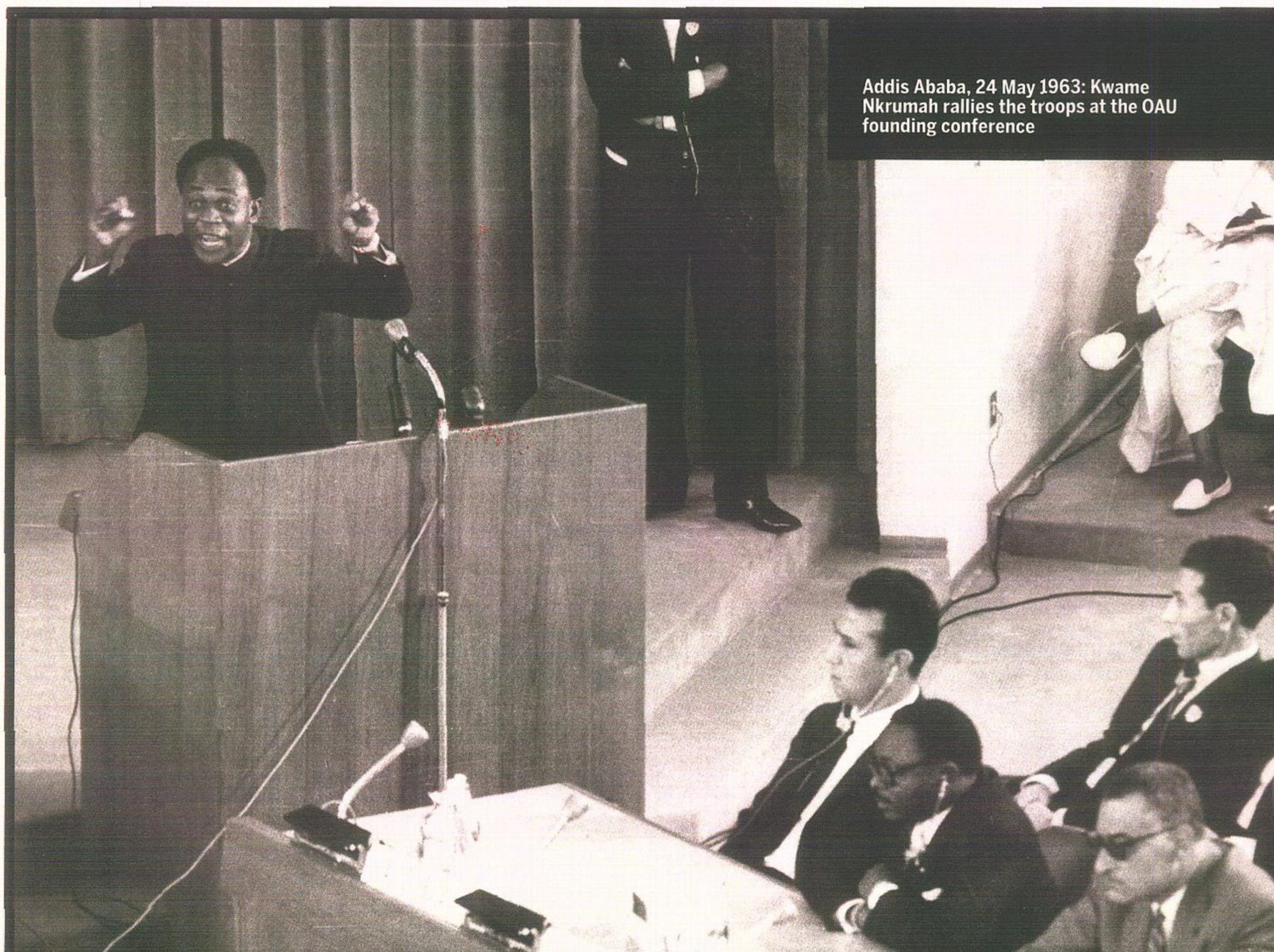




Addis Ababa, 24 May 1963: Kwame Nkrumah rallies the troops at the OAU founding conference

Kwame Nkrumah **‘The people of Africa are crying for unity’**

The African Union has its roots in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). It is thus fitting to look back in order to look forward. On 24 May 1963, as 32 independent African countries met in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, to find ways to unite the continent, Ghana's then president, **Kwame Nkrumah**, gave one of the greatest speeches of his life, a speech which has since become the definitive blueprint for a strong, but so far sadly elusive, African unity. As the AU celebrates its 10th anniversary, we publish here an extract to remind us of how far Africa has come and how far it still has to go; and on *page 32* another extract from a landmark African unity speech given by Tanzania's founding president, Julius Nyerere, 34 years after Nkrumah's 1963 speech.

I AM HAPPY TO BE HERE IN ADDIS ABABA ON THIS MOST historic occasion. I bring with me the hopes and fraternal greetings of the government and people of Ghana. Our objective is African union now. There is no time to waste. We must unite now or perish. I am confident that by our concerted effort and determination, we shall lay here the foundations for a continental Union of African States. A whole continent has imposed a mandate upon us to lay the foundation of our union at this conference. It is our responsibility to execute this mandate by creating here and now, the formula upon which the requisite superstructure may be created.

On this continent, it has not taken us long to discover that the struggle against colonialism does not end with the attainment of national independence. Independence is only the prelude to a new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct our own economic and social affairs; to construct our society according to our aspirations, unhampered by crushing and humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference.

From the start we have been threatened with frustration where rapid change is imperative and with instability where sustained effort and ordered rule are indispensable. No sporadic act nor pious resolution can resolve our present problems. Nothing will be of avail, except the united act of a united Africa. We have already reached the stage where we must unite or sink into that condition which has made Latin America the unwilling and distressed prey of imperialism after one-and-a-half centuries of political independence.

As a continent, we have emerged into independence in a different age, with imperialism grown stronger, more ruthless and experienced, and more dangerous in its international associations. Our economic advancement demands the end of colonialist and neo-colonialist domination of Africa.

But just as we understood that the shaping of our national destinies required of each of us our political independence and bent all our strength to this attainment, so we must recognise that our economic independence resides in our African union and requires the same concentration upon the political achievement. The unity of our continent, no less than our separate independence, will be delayed if, indeed, we do not lose it, by hobnobbing with colonialism.

African unity is, above all, a political kingdom which can only be gained by political means. The social and economic development of Africa will come only within the political kingdom, not the other way round. Is it not unity alone that can weld us into an effective force, capable of creating our own progress and making our valuable contribution to world peace? Which independent African state, which of you here, will claim that its financial structure and banking institutions are fully harnessed to its national development?

Which will claim that its material resources and human energies are available for its own national aspirations? Which will disclaim a substantial measure of disappointment and disillusionment in its agricultural and urban development? In independent Africa, we are already re-experiencing the instability and frustration which existed under colonial rule. We are fast learning that political independence is not enough to rid us of the consequences of colonial rule. The movement of the masses

of the people of Africa for freedom from that kind of rule was not only a revolt against the conditions which it imposed. Our people supported us in our fight for independence because they believed that African governments could cure the ills of the past in a way which could never be accomplished under colonial rule.

If, therefore, now that we are independent we allow the same conditions to exist that existed in colonial days, all the resentment which overthrew colonialism will be mobilised against us. The resources are there. It is for us to marshal them in the active service of our people. Unless we do this by our concerted efforts, within the framework of our combined planning, we shall not progress at the tempo demanded by today's events and the mood of our people. The symptoms of our troubles will grow, and the troubles themselves become chronic. It will then be too late for pan-African unity to secure for us stability and tranquillity in our labours for a continent of social justice and material wellbeing.

Our continent certainly exceeds all the others in potential hydroelectric power, which some experts assess as 42% of the world's total. What need is there for us to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water for the industrialised areas of the world? It is said, of course, that we have no capital, no industrial skill, no communications, and no internal markets, and that we cannot even agree among ourselves how best to utilise our resources for

"A whole continent has imposed a mandate upon us to lay the foundation of a Union of African States at this conference."

our own social needs. Yet all stock exchanges in the world are preoccupied with Africa's gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, copper and iron ore.

Our capital flows out in streams to irrigate the whole system of Western economy. Fifty-two per cent of the gold in Fort Knox at this moment, where the USA stores its bullion, is believed to have originated from our shores. Africa provides more than 60% of the world's gold. A great deal of the uranium for nuclear power, of copper for electronics, of titanium for supersonic projectiles, of iron and steel for heavy industries, of other minerals and raw materials for lighter industries – the basic economic might of the foreign powers – come from our continent.

Experts have estimated that the Congo Basin alone can produce enough food crops to satisfy the requirements of nearly half the population of the whole world, and here we sit talking about gradualism, talking about step by step. Are you afraid to tackle the bull by the horn? For centuries, Africa has been the milch cow of the Western world. Was it not our continent that helped the Western world to build up its accumulated wealth?

We have the resources. It was colonialism in the first place that prevented us from accumulating the effective capital; but we ourselves have failed to make full use of our power in independence to mobilise our resources for the most effective

take-off into thorough-going economic and social development.

We have been too busy nursing our separate states to understand fully the basic need of our union, rooted in common purpose, common planning and common endeavour. A union that ignores these fundamental necessities will be but a sham. It is only by uniting our productive capacity and the resultant production that we can amass capital. And once we start, the momentum will increase. With capital controlled by our own banks, harnessed to our own true industrial and agricultural development, we shall make our advance.

We shall accumulate machinery and establish steel works, iron foundries and factories; we shall link the various states of our continent with communications by land, sea, and air. We shall cable from one place to another, phone from one place to the other and astound the world with our hydro-electric power; we shall drain marshes and swamps, clear infested areas, feed the undernourished, and rid our people of parasites and disease.

Camels and donkeys no more

It is within the possibility of science and technology to make even the Sahara bloom into a vast field with verdant vegetation for agricultural and industrial development. We shall harness the radio, television, giant printing presses to lift our people from the dark recesses of illiteracy. A decade ago, these would have been visionary words, the fantasies of an idle dreamer. But this is the age in which science has transcended the limits of the material world, and technology has invaded the silences of nature.

Time and space have been reduced to unimportant abstractions. Giant machines make roads, clear forests, dig dams, lay out aerodromes; monster trucks and planes distribute goods; huge laboratories manufacture drugs; complicated geological surveys are made; mighty power stations are built; colossal factories erected – all at an incredible speed. The world is no longer moving through bush paths or on camels and donkeys.

We cannot afford to pace our needs, our development, our security, to the gait of camels and donkeys. We cannot afford not to cut down the overgrown bush of outmoded attitudes that obstruct our path to the modern open road of the widest and earliest achievement of economic independence and the raising up of the lives of our people to the highest level.

Even for other continents lacking the resources of Africa, this is the age that sees the end of human want. For us it is a simple matter of grasping with certainty our heritage by using the political might of unity. All we need to do is to develop with our united strength the enormous resources of our continent.

What use to the farmer is education and mechanisation, what use is even capital for development, unless we can ensure for him a fair price and a ready market? What has the peasant, worker and farmer gained from political independence, unless we can ensure for him a fair return for his labour and a higher standard of living? Unless we can establish great industrial complexes in Africa, what have the urban worker, and those peasants on overcrowded land gained from political independence? If they are to remain unemployed or in unskilled occupation, what will avail them the better facilities for education, technical training, energy, and ambition which independence enables us to provide?

There is hardly any African state without a frontier problem



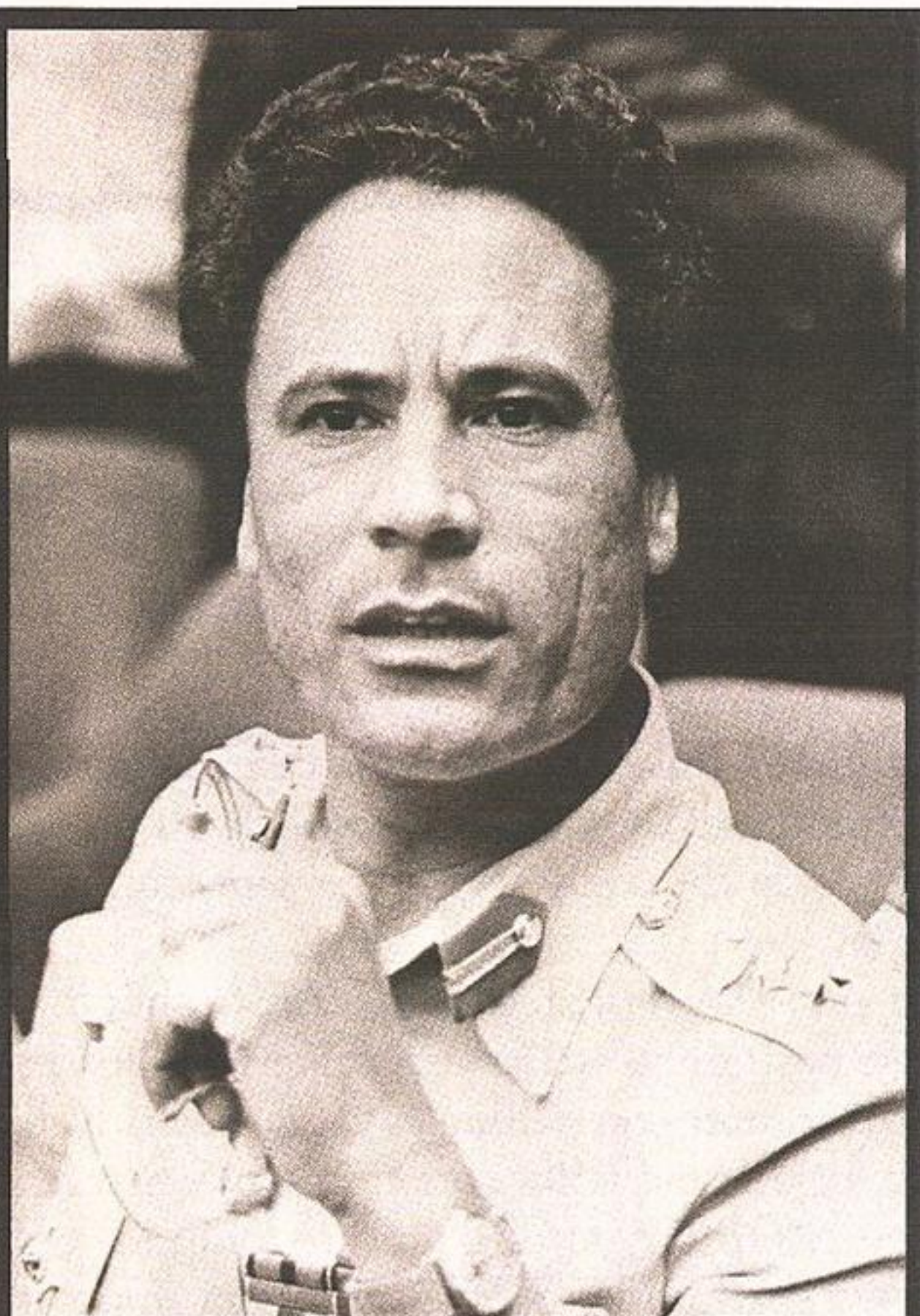
“Unite we must. Without necessarily sacrificing our sovereignties, big or small, we can forge a political union.”

with its adjacent neighbours. It would be futile for me to enumerate them because they are already so familiar to us all. But let me suggest that this fatal relic of colonialism will drive us to war against one another as our unplanned and uncoordinated industrial development expands, just as happened in Europe. Unless we succeed in arresting the danger through mutual understanding on fundamental issues and through African unity, which will render existing boundaries obsolete and superfluous, we shall have fought in vain for independence.

Only African unity can heal this festering sore of boundary disputes between our various states. The remedy for these ills is ready in our hands. It stares us in the face at every customs barrier, it shouts to us from every African heart. By creating a true political union of all the independent states of Africa, with executive powers for political direction, we can tackle hopefully every emergency and every complexity.

This is because we have emerged in the age of science and technology in which poverty, ignorance, and disease are no longer the masters, but the retreating foes of mankind. Above all, we have emerged at a time when a continental land mass like Africa with its population approaching 300 million is necessary to the economic capitalisation and profitability of modern productive methods and techniques. Not one of us working singly and individually can successfully attain the fullest development.

Certainly, in the circumstances, it will not be possible to give adequate assistance to sister states trying, against the most difficult conditions, to improve their economic and social structures. Only a united Africa functioning under a union government can forcefully mobilise the material and moral resources of our



Left: Amara Essy, the OAU's last secretary general. Above: Muammar Al Gathafi, who drove the founding of the AU, was in the army when the OAU was founded

separate countries and apply them efficiently and energetically to bring a rapid change in the conditions of our people.

Unite we must. Without necessarily sacrificing our sovereignties, big or small, we can here and now forge a political union based on defence, foreign affairs and diplomacy, and a common citizenship, an African currency, an African monetary zone, and an African central bank. We must unite in order to achieve the full liberation of our continent. We need a common defence system with African high command to ensure the stability and security of Africa. We have been charged with this sacred task by our own people, and we cannot betray their trust by failing them. We will be mocking the hopes of our people if we show the slightest hesitation or delay in tackling realistically this question of African unity.

We need unified economic planning for Africa. Until the economic power of Africa is in our hands, the masses can have no real concern and no real interest for safeguarding our security, for ensuring the stability of our regimes, and for bending their strength to the fulfilment of our ends. With our united resources, energies and talents we have the means, as soon as we show the will, to transform the economic structures of our individual states from poverty to that of wealth, from inequality to the satisfaction of popular needs. Only on a continental basis shall we be able to plan the proper utilisation of all our resources for the full development of our continent.

How else will we retain our own capital for own development? How else will we establish an internal market for our own industries? By belonging to different economic zones, how will we break down the currency and trading barriers between African states, and how will the economically stronger amongst us be able to assist the weaker and less developed states?

It is important to remember that independent financing and independent development cannot take place without an independent currency. A currency system that is backed by the

resources of a foreign state is *ipso facto* subject to the trade and financial arrangements of that foreign country.

Because we have so many customs and currency barriers as a result of being subject to the different currency systems of foreign powers, this has served to widen the gap between us in Africa. How, for example, can related communities and families trade with, and support one another successfully, if they find themselves divided by national boundaries and currency restrictions? The only alternative open to them in these circumstances is to use smuggled currency and enrich national and international racketeers and crooks who prey upon our financial and economic difficulties.

Our resources

No independent African state today by itself has a chance to follow an independent course of economic development, and many of us who have tried to do this have been almost ruined or have had to return to the fold of the former colonial rulers. This position will not change unless we have a unified policy working at the continental level. The first step towards our cohesive economy would be a unified monetary zone, with, initially, an agreed common parity for our currencies. To facilitate this arrangement, Ghana would change to a decimal system.

When we find that the arrangement of a fixed common parity is working successfully, there would seem to be no reason for not instituting one common currency and a single bank of issue. With a common currency from one common bank of issue, we should be able to stand erect on our own feet because such an arrangement would be fully backed by the combined national products of the states composing the union. After all, the purchasing power of money depends on productivity and the productive exploitation of the natural, human and physical resources of the nation.

While we are assuring our stability by a common defence system, and our economy is being orientated beyond foreign control by a common currency, monetary zone, and central bank of issue, we can investigate the resources of our continent. We can begin to ascertain whether in reality we are the richest, and not, as we have been taught to believe, the poorest among the continents. We can determine whether we possess the largest potential in hydro-electric power, and whether we can harness it and other sources of energy to our industries. We can proceed to plan our industrialisation on a continental scale, and to build up a common market for nearly 300 million people. Common continental planning for the industrial and agricultural development of Africa is a vital necessity!

So many blessings flow from our unity; so many disasters must follow on our continued disunity. The hour of history which has brought us to this assembly is a revolutionary hour. It is the hour of decision. The masses of the people of Africa are crying for unity. The people of Africa call for the breaking down of the boundaries that keep them apart. They demand an end to the border disputes between sister African states – disputes that arise out of the artificial barriers raised by colonialism. It was colonialism's purpose that divided us. It was colonialism's purpose that left us with our border irredentism, that rejected our ethnic and cultural fusion.



Nkrumah talks with Ferhat Abbas (c), the Algerian nationalist leader, and Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba in Tunis in March 1961

“We will be mocking the hopes of our people if we show hesitation or delay in tackling realistically the question of African unity.”

Our people call for unity so that they may not lose their patrimony in the perpetual service of neo-colonialism. In their fervent push for unity, they understand that only its realisation will give full meaning to their freedom and our African independence.

It is this popular determination that must move us on to a union of independent African states. In delay lies danger to our well-being, to our very existence as free states.

It has been suggested that our approach to unity should be gradual, that it should go piecemeal. This point of view conceives of Africa as a static entity with “frozen” problems which can be eliminated one by one and when all have been cleared then we can come together and say: “Now all is well, let us now unite.”

This view takes no account of the impact of external pressures. Nor does it take cognisance of the danger that delay can deepen our isolations and exclusiveness; that it can enlarge our differences and set us drifting further and further apart into the net of neo-colonialism, so that our union will become nothing but a fading hope, and the great design of Africa’s full redemption will be lost, perhaps, forever.

The dangers of regionalism

The view is also expressed that our difficulties can be resolved simply by a greater collaboration through cooperative association in our inter-territorial relationships. This way of looking at our problems denies a proper conception of their inter-relationship and mutuality. It denies faith in a future for African advancement in African independence. It betrays a sense of solution only in continued reliance upon external sources through bilateral

agreements for economic and other forms of aid.

The fact is that although we have been cooperating and associating with one another in various fields of common endeavour even before colonial times, this has not given us the continental identity and the political and economic force which would help us to deal effectively with the complicated problems confronting us in Africa today.

As far as foreign aid is concerned, a United Africa should be in a more favourable position to attract assistance from foreign sources. There is the far more compelling advantage which this arrangement offers, in that aid will come from anywhere to a United Africa because our bargaining power would become infinitely greater. We shall no longer be dependent upon aid from restricted sources. We shall have the world to choose from.

What are we looking for in Africa? Are we looking for Charters, conceived in the light of the United Nations’ example? A type of United Nations Organisation whose decisions are framed on the basis of resolutions that in our experience have sometimes been ignored by member states? Where groupings are formed and pressures develop in accordance with the interest of the groups concerned?

Or is it intended that Africa should be turned into a loose organisation of states on the model of the Organisation of American States, in which the weaker states within it can be at the mercy of the stronger or more powerful ones politically or economically and all at the mercy of some powerful outside nation or group of nations? Is this the kind of association we want for ourselves in the United Africa we all speak of with such feeling and emotion?

We all want a united Africa, united not only in our concept of what unity connotes, but united in our common desire to move forward together in dealing with all the problems that can best be solved only on a continental basis.

We meet here today not as Ghanaians, Guineans, Egyptians, Algerians, Moroccans, Malians, Liberians, Congolese or Nigerians, but as Africans. Africans united in our resolve to remain here until we have agreed on the basic principles of a new compact of unity among ourselves which guarantees for us and our future a new arrangement of continental government. If we succeed in establishing a new set of principles as the basis of a new charter for the establishment of a continental unity of Africa, and the creation of social and political progress for our people, then in my view, this conference should mark the end of our various groupings and regional blocs.

But if we fail and let this grand and historic opportunity slip by, then we shall give way to greater dissension and division among us for which the people of Africa will never forgive us. And the popular and progressive forces and movements within Africa will condemn us. I am sure therefore that we shall not fail them. To this end, I propose for your consideration the following: As a first step, a declaration of principles uniting and binding us together and to which we must all faithfully and loyally adhere, and laying the foundations of unity, should be set down.

List of OAU, AU chairmen

Name	Country	From	To
Haile Selassie	Ethiopia	25 May 1963	17 July 1964
Gamal Abdel Nasser	Egypt	17 July 1964	21 Oct 1965
Kwame Nkrumah	Ghana	21 Oct 1965	24 Feb 1966
Joseph Ankrah	Ghana	24 Feb 1966	5 Nov 1966
Haile Selassie	Ethiopia	5 Nov 1966	11 Sept 1967
Joseph Mobutu	Congo-K	11 Sept 1967	6 Sept 1968
Houari Boumedienne	Algeria	13 Sept 1968	6 Sept 1969
Ahmadou Ahidjo	Cameroon	6 Sept 1969	1 Sept 1970
Kenneth Kaunda	Zambia	1 Sept 1970	21 June 1971
Moktar Ould Daddah	Mauritania	21 June 1971	12 June 1972
King Hassan II	Morocco	12 June 1972	27 May 1973
Yakubu Gowon	Nigeria	27 May 1973	12 June 1974
Siad Barre	Somalia	12 June 1974	28 July 1975
Idi Amin	Uganda	28 July 1975	2 July 1976
S. Ramgoolam	Mauritius	2 July 1976	2 July 1977
Omar Bongo	Gabon	2 July 1976	18 July 1978
Gaafar Nimeiry	Sudan	18 July 1978	12 July 1979
William Tolbert	Liberia	12 July 1979	12 April 1980
Leopold Senghor	Senegal	28 April 1980	1 July 1980
Siaka Stevens	Sierra Leone	1 July 1980	24 June 1981
Daniel arap Moi	Kenya	24 June 1981	6 June 1983
Mengistu Mariam	Ethiopia	6 June 1983	12 Nov 1984
Julius Nyerere	Tanzania	12 Nov 1984	18 July 1985
Abdou Diouf	Senegal	18 July 1985	28 July 1986
D. Sassou-Nguesso	Congo-B	28 July 1986	27 July 1987
Kenneth Kaunda	Zambia	27 July 1987	25 May 1988
Moussa Traore	Mali	25 May 1988	24 July 1989
Hosni Mubarak	Egypt	24 July 1989	9 July 1990
Yoweri Museveni	Uganda	9 July 1990	3 June 1991
Ibrahim Babangida	Nigeria	3 June 1991	29 June 1992
Abdou Diouf	Senegal	29 June 1992	28 June 1993
Hosni Mubarak	Egypt	28 June 1993	13 June 1994
Zine Abidine Ben Ali	Tunisia	13 June 1994	26 June 1995
Meles Zenawi	Ethiopia	26 June 1995	8 July 1996
Paul Biya	Cameroon	8 July 1996	2 June 1997
Robert Mugabe	Zimbabwe	2 June 1997	8 June 1998
Blaise Compaore	Burkina Faso	8 June 1998	12 July 1999
Abdelaziz Bouteflika	Algeria	12 July 1999	10 July 2000
Gnassingbe Eyadema	Togo	10 July 2000	9 July 2001
Frederick Chiluba	Zambia	9 July 2001	2 Jan 2002
Levy Mwanawasa	Zambia	2 Jan 2002	9 July 2002

African Union (AU) chairmen

Thabo Mbeki	S. Africa	9 July 2002	10 July 2003
Joaquim Chissano	Mozambique	10 July 2003	6 July 2004
Olusegun Obasanjo	Nigeria	6 July 2004	24 Jan 2006
D. Sassou Nguesso	Congo-B	24 Jan 2006	24 Jan 2007
John Kufuor	Ghana	30 Jan 2007	31 Jan 2008
Jakaya Kikwete	Tanzania	31 Jan 2008	2 Feb 2009
Muammar Al Gathafi	Libya	2 Feb 2009	31 Jan 2010
Bingu Mutharika	Malawi	31 Jan 2010	31 Jan 2011
T. Obiang Nguema	E. Guinea	31 Jan 2011	29 Jan 2012
Yayi Boni	Benin	29 Jan 2012	Incumbent

As a second and urgent step for the realisation of the unification of Africa, an All-Africa Committee of Foreign Ministers should be set up now. The Committee should establish on behalf of the heads of our governments, a permanent body of officials and experts to work out a machinery for the union government of Africa. This body of officials and experts should be made up of two of the best brains from each independent African state. The various charters of existing groupings and other relevant documents could also be submitted to the officials and experts.

We must also decide on a location where this body of officials and experts will work as the new headquarters or capital of our union government. Some central place in Africa might be the fairest suggestion, either in Bangui in the Central African Republic or Leopoldville [Kinshasa] in Congo. My colleagues may have other proposals.

The Committee of Foreign Ministers, officials and experts, should be empowered to establish: (1) A commission to frame a constitution for a Union Government of African States. (2) A commission to work out a continent-wide plan for a unified or common economic and industrial programme for Africa; this should include proposals for setting up: a common market for Africa; an African currency; an African monetary zone; an African central bank; a continental communication system; a commission to draw up details for a common foreign policy and diplomacy; a commission to produce plans for a common system of defence; a commission to make proposals for a common African citizenship. Africa must unite! ■NA

Endnote: The day after Nkrumah's speech, the 32 independent African nations assembled in Addis Ababa failed to go the full hog for a strong United States of Africa. Instead they settled for a loose and weak Organisation of African Unity (OAU) whose Charter was signed the same day (25 May 1963) by the following countries: Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Kinshasa), Dahomey, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Libya, Malagasy, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanganyika. Tshad [later Chad], Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, UAR [Egypt], and Upper Volta [later Burkina Faso].