

# GHANA: THE MORNING AFTER (III) THE ACCRA CONFERENCE

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**April 14.**

TOMORROW is the opening day of the first conference of eight independent African States.

Throughout to-day, planes have arrived with delegations from Ethiopia, Liberia (President Tubman has two planes, the one is called his "baggage carrier"), Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, the Sudan and the United Arab Republic. Each delegation is met with formal "British" ceremony: guards of honour, delegations of Ministers, salutes, military bands. Until last night the band has been rehearsing (from records) the national anthems of the different countries. It manages to play the right one on each occasion. The Prime Minister of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, drives away from the airport in his black Rolls-Royce. Five air-conditioned Cadillacs have been bought for leaders of delegations.

This is a good moment to recall the origins of this conference. It started from a conversation between Dr. Nkrumah and President Bourguiba of Tunisia during the latter's visit to Ghana at its independence celebrations in March, 1957. I remember talking to M. Bourguiba at the time: an intelligent, assured and dapper man. He appeared to think that it was important that the initiative for such a conference should come not from Arab, but from Black Africa. He insisted, too, that only independent countries should be invited. No observers from the dependent territories. That would embarrass Governments and confuse the purpose of the conference. It was important also that all States should be invited, including South Africa.

South Africa's reply to the invitation had been the suggestion that the Colonial Powers should be invited as well. This proposal was put to the other invited countries. They all turned it down. And so South Africa excluded itself. But there had been mutterings in other quarters. President Tubman and his 100-year old Republic of Liberia felt that Ghana was a little presumptuous in taking the initiative so soon after its appearance on the world scene as an independent State. The ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia was anxious about the agenda. Cairo said it

was happy to take a back seat. But Ghana's powerful, though not yet independent neighbour, Nigeria, was considerably huffed by its exclusion.

Even to-day, the Prime Minister of the Nigeria Federation and the Prime Ministers of the Regions are careful to air their sense of grievance.

Meanwhile, at Parliament House, the finishing touches are being put to the conference arrangements. A working committee of officials from all the participating countries, headed by Ghana's unruffleable and efficient head of External Affairs, Mr. Yao Edu, are sorting out a last-minute crisis precipitated because of Tunisia's objection to interpreters supplied by the Central Council of Technical Assistance South of the Sahara (a body sponsored by the Colonial Powers). The question is settled by flying in a U.N. team of interpreters. On the wall at the entrance of the glistening white Parliament House, a vast map has been inlaid, marking the boundaries of the participating countries: large green blobs, like oases in the desert.

Hourly there are cancellations of arrivals by members of the world Press. They appear to have lost interest now that Col. Nasser (on the eve of his visit to Moscow) and President Bourguiba (in the midst of his post-Sakiet crisis) are not attending.

### April 15.

A blue, hot, sticky day. There are no crowds in the streets: but hundreds have gathered outside the Parliament House to see the delegations arrive at spaced intervals. Everything moves like clockwork. The massive bronze statue of Dr. Nkrumah glistens in the sun. On one side of the statue is the legend: Founder of the Nation. On the other side is written: Seek ye first the Kingdom of Politics, and the rest will be added thereto.

Each delegation is met with ceremonious welcome by Dr. Nkrumah, his face puckered with a frown that breaks into a warm smile as he steps out to shake the hand of the leader of each delegation. The Police Band plays the appropriate national anthem. Dr. Nkrumah whispers: "It is a wonderful day. I never thought it would really come to pass."

Parliament House is crammed with diplomatic personalities. The French Ambassador has decided not to attend personally; he has sent his deputy. He must know what is likely to be the spirit of the speeches. Yesterday he called on Dr. Nkrumah and

counselled moderation.

Three Algerian leaders have arrived uninvited in Accra. They are impressive, intelligent men, and they demand to be heard. Another uninvited guest is a gargantuan, bonhomious man from Haiti. He says he is the Ambassador-at-Large of the largely-Negro Republic in the Caribbean. The Ghanaians shrug in disbelief. Who has ever heard of Haiti?

Promptly at 9:30 a.m. the leaders of the delegations enter the Assembly Chamber. A minute later Dr. Nkrumah, quietly and without any preliminaries, declares the conference opened. "I recognize," he says, "the leader of the Ethiopian delegation."

Prince Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie, son of the Emperor of Ethiopia, walks fumblingly to the rostrum set against the splendour of a large green and yellow *kente* cloth embroidered with Ghanaian flags. He is short, shy and olive-skinned; his hair stands up like a schoolboy's. His speech shows his English public-school training. It is formal and pleasant. To mark this occasion he announces that his "illustrious father" has decided to create 40 scholarships annually for African students to come to Ethiopia. A more forceful speech comes from the Ethiopian Minister of Commerce, Ato Abebe Reta. He makes it unmistakably clear that whatever Tibetan-like isolation his country has affected in the past, it has now moved into the mainstream of the new Africa.

"Our regret," he says, "is that the free peoples of Africa represent but one-third of the total population of this continent. Although we count some 70,000,000 inhabitants, twice as many await to see the dawn of freedom. Nor is it a question solely of political freedom. In certain parts of Africa the most inhuman regime of purely racial discrimination is being perpetrated under the guise of so-called democratic government. It becomes the duty of us, the independent nations of Africa, to mobilize world conscience and public opinion with a view to eliminating the injustices of this most inhuman practice."

And later he adds that "our deepest promptings must be far more than a mere defensive reaction against the forces of colonialism."

The Moroccan Foreign Minister, M. Ahmed Balafredj, is pedagogic, precise and neat. He opens the first onslaught on French colonial policies without any show of emotion. He is a literary man who joined the Moroccan reform movements 30 years ago, became the Director-General of Istiqlal, and

suffered imprisonment and exile. His major theme is the war in Algeria.

Morocco, he says, supports the cause of Algerian freedom. His demand is for the removal of foreign troops from his country. "Their presence in our country is incompatible with the status of independence." His judgment on the conference is simple and direct: "Africa is born." Its task, he adds, "is to go to the rescue of our friends who are fighting for their freedom."

Like M. Balafredj, the Foreign Minister of Libya, Dr. Wahbi Elbury, is a literary man: he is plump, youngish-looking, sad-faced, and wears dark glasses. "The Algerian cause," he declares "is indisputably the most urgent among the problems of our Africa." Libya firmly opposes all policies of racial prejudice. And he defines as one of the important issues of the conference the promotion of understanding "among the different races and religions of Africa, especially among the Arab countries and the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara."

This, too, is the theme of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Tunisia, Dr. Sadok Mokkaem, a bald, serious-looking, middle-aged man.

President Tubman of Liberia speaks with a delicious American accent. His oratory is memorable, his mood Lincolnian. There is no hint of his earlier resentment against the upstart Ghana.

"Through hardship and humiliations we, as Africans, have demonstrated the qualities of patience, perseverance and endurance", he begins. "I believe that through the possession of such qualities we are destined to assume a new role in world affairs." But he warns: this is possible only if the people of Africa can overcome their suspicions and envy of each other.

In the field of international affairs he comes out, unexpectedly sharply, on the side of 'non-commitment' between the two great world blocs.

All these leaders are listened to in silence and with respect. The first man to enthuse the conference is the Foreign Minister of the Sudan, Mohammed Ahmed Mahjoub. He is a striking Arab: tall, languid yet forceful. He is a convinced Fabian, and proclaims his attachment to Socialism. In foreign affairs he advocates neutrality between the Eastern and Western blocs, but co-operation with either if such association is beneficial; non-alignment with any of the Arab blocs; avoidance of military pacts; encouragement of African liberation movements;

acceptance, on suitable terms, of foreign economic assistance.

Independent African States, he says, will betray the cause of the African peoples still struggling for freedom, if they allow their democratic principles to be corrupted. "It does not lighten the burden of the slave to realize that he will exchange for his foreign master one of his own kith and kin. But we all know how easy it is to confuse one's own advantage or the advantage of one's class or clique with the general good. It is just as easy to rationalize the substitution of coercion for persuasion in the name of progress and economic development."

The reputation of the agile and shrewd Foreign Minister of the United Arab Republic, Dr. Mahmoud Fawzy, stands high at conference. His appearance is deceptive; short, bald and sharp-featured, he looks like a successful and cautious family lawyer. His first shaft is driven swiftly. Why, at the first meeting of African States, are they all speaking in non-African languages?

His own State, he continues, is Asian as well as African. "Indeed, the inception and the self-assertion of this so new and yet so ancient east African west Asian Republic has been incisively typical of, and in close parallelism with, the sprawling and regenerated Afro-Asian existence that was given resonant expression to in Bandung and is now, here in Accra, having its say again with perhaps a particularly African accent."

For the first time the angry problem of Palestine is raised at the conference. Dr. Fawzy shrewdly and repeatedly links Palestine with the question of Algeria. Among the eight points which he presents for decision to the conference is a demand to "express with particular emphasis our support of the rights of the Arab nation of Palestine."

The last speaker of the morning is Dr. Kwame Nkrumah himself. He looks serious. His theme is that "We are here to know ourselves . . . to explore ways and means of consolidating and safeguarding our hard-won independence; to find workable arrangements for helping our brothers still languishing under colonial rule; and to examine the central problem which dominates the world to-day, namely, the problem of how to secure peace."

He has a special word of warning against "the new forms of colonialism that are now appearing in the world." In condemning racialism, he says: "When it becomes a guiding principle in the life of any nation, as it has become in some parts of Africa,

then that nation digs its own grave." His speech is a plea for toleration, and for "letting bygones be bygones."

Africa, he adds, is the last remaining stronghold of colonialism. "We must give every possible encouragement we can to African Freedom fighters, to whom we are linked by a common destiny." His slogan for the conference is: "Hands off Africa! Africa must be free!"

The ovation he receives is overwhelming.

#### April 16.

The conference is now in private session. It has established Steering, Political, Economic and Cultural Committees to discuss the agreed agenda.

Messages from all parts of the world are streaming in. The first comes from Mr. John Foster Dulles, the U.S. Secretary of State, who looks forward to the success of the conference and pledges American support for "the constructive efforts of the States of Africa to achieve a stable, prosperous community, conscious of its interdependence within the family of nations and dedicated to the principles of the United Nations Charter."

This message makes the main banner headline in the semi-official paper of the Ghana Government.

There is also a message from the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, and one from a conciliated Prime Minister of Eastern Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

The issue before the conference is what to do with the Algerian delegation. The United Arab Republic would like to have them seated as observers at the conference. But all the other delegations object to this proposal. By the end of the day it is agreed that the Algerians should be allowed to present their case to the conference, while not being admitted to the body of its membership.

In the evening, there is a splendid ceremony at the Sports Stadium. Ghana's army "square-bashes" in the best British military traditions; African gymnasts show their prowess; and in the cool, arc-lit evening, African traditional dances. The eight African leaders sit in a row on a raised dais. In the centre sits the Governor-General, Lord Listowel. It is he who takes the salute each time the Ghana Army marches past. And as he rises, behind him stand up the Officer Commanding the Army, a "Punch" British General, and an equally typical stereotype of a Commanding Police Officer. The African troops are

commanded by their European officers. Dr. Nkrumah has made no self-conscious attempt to keep his British senior officials out of sight on this auspicious ceremony of welcome. Wherever he goes, he is accompanied by his European ADC; and his Egyptian wife's companion is the attractive wife of the Attorney-General, Mrs. Geoffrey Bing.

A Sudanese friend whispers to me: "Dr Nkrumah must be very sure of himself to flaunt his British officials in this manner."

### **April 17.**

To-day there arrives from Moscow a belated message of congratulations from Russia's president. Also, shoals of cables from African nationalist movements. And pressing cables from Palestine Arab organizations.

The conference spends all day listening to the testimony of the Algerian delegation and, later, the exiled leader of the French Cameroons, Dr. Felix Roland Moumi, who has found sanctuary in Cairo.

While the conference appears to be agreed on the broad principles of its policy on Algeria, it has not yet agreed on certain aspects of it; mainly, it appears, the proposal of the United Arab Republic to supply direct aid to the Algerians.

The French Press corps is particularly tense. One of the French journalists tells me that, after speaking to the Algerians, he has become convinced that France is doomed to failure in her Algerian policy.

### **April 18.**

The Algerian question is practically disposed of. Unanimously the conference has agreed to recognize the right of Algerians to independence; deplores the bloodshed, and urges France to withdraw its troops and to enter into immediate negotiations with the Algerian Liberation Front; appeals to the nations of the world to exercise pressure on France to adopt a policy in conformity with the principles of the U.N. Charter; urges the friends and allies of France to refrain from helping her, whether directly or indirectly, in her military operations; and pledges every possible effort to help the Algerian people towards the attainment of independence.

Only the last contentious issue—the question of offering direct aid to the Algerians—remains unresolved.

**April 19.**

This issue, too, is now resolved. The United Arab Republic's proposal is finally rejected. Instead, the conference agrees that a mission should be sent as soon as possible to the capitals of the world to insist, in the name of Africa, that Algeria's independence should be recognized.

The question of the French Cameroons and of French Togoland are disposed of, also.

France's use of military force in the Cameroons is condemned; she is requested to observe the principles of the International Trusteeship system and to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of the Cameroons by opening direct negotiations with their representatives.

On French Togoland, the conference recommends that France should co-operate fully with the United Nations Commissioner in order to ensure fair and democratic elections in the territory.\*

By now the news of the election results in South Africa have been heard. They appear to cause no surprise. There is also the news of the arrest of Tom Mboya and his eight colleagues in the Kenya Legislative Council. "What a time to choose to make these arrests," comments a Tunisian delegate.

The conference committees are now dealing rapidly with the resolutions prepared for them by drafting committees. There are reports that the United Arab Republic is trying hard to win support for a resolution condemning Israel. So far, without success.

One of Ghana's delegation withdraws from the conference to represent his Government in Jerusalem at the tenth anniversary celebration of Israel's independence.

**April 20.**

Sunday. The conference continues to meet in committee. One of the decisions taken is that April 15 (the opening day of the conference) should be celebrated every year throughout the continent as Africa Freedom Day. How many April Fifteens will there be before the conference's aims are realized? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty?

The representatives of foreign countries in Ghana are apparently deeply interested in the way the conference is going. At first, one got the impression that some of them thought the

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\*These elections have now taken place, resulting in a sweeping victory for the opposition Unity Party, which demands complete independence from France.



“natural” divisions between Arab Africa and Black Africa, between Muslims and non-Muslims, would prevent any real agreement. But they are beginning to have second thoughts.

A Tunisian friend tells me: “I am particularly impressed by the almost complete identity of policy between Tunisia, Ghana, Morocco and the Sudan.” His explanation for this is that these are countries that have had similar political experiences, and that they have all produced democratic political systems in their countries. (This is not entirely true, of course, of Morocco.)

The accepted idea that the Arab States have more in common with each other than with the African States is, apparently, a myth. The United Arab Republic, which is playing a forceful hand, is largely isolated. Its main support, on occasion, comes from Libya. Libyan politicians believe in “realpolitik”. It is the bridge between the North-Eastern and the North-Western Arab States.

There is a good deal of interest in the lobbies about the idea of a Federation of the Maghreb which would unify Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Such a Federation (to be discussed soon at Tangier) might offer a possible basis for a solution of the Algerian crisis. The United Arab Republic, however, is strongly opposed to the proposed Federation. It naturally wishes these Maghreb countries to join its own movement for Arab unity.

Ethiopia and Liberia are proving far less conservative than was at first feared. The Sudan, which is willing, when necessary, to dissent strongly from the proposals of the United Arab Republic, is playing a dominating role.

#### **April 21.**

The hope that the conference would be able to finish its business by to-day has been shattered; partly, I am told, because of the failure to agree on the framing of an acceptable Palestine resolution.

To judge by the preliminary drafts of resolutions, it appears that the African States are basing their policies on two basic programmes, which are becoming the political scripture of Africa. For Old Testament, they are taking the Ten Points of the Bandung Declaration. And for New Testament, the United Nations Charter.

#### **April 22.**

The conference ended to-day with a flourish of resolutions and

speeches repeating the ceremonies of the opening day. Everybody is enthusiastic and elated by the success of the conference.

The Palestine dilemma has been neatly solved. There is, at least, the appearance of complete agreement. It forms part of the ten-point declaration covering the Conference's policy on International Peace and Security.

Point 8 expresses its deep concern over the non-compliance with United Nations resolutions, and calls upon Member States to respect such resolutions.

Point 9 expresses its deep concern over the question of Palestine, which is a disturbing factor of world peace and security, and urges a just solution of the Palestine question.

Point 10 expresses its deep concern over the South West African and similar questions which are disturbing factors of world peace and security, and urges a just solution to them.

This order, I am assured by several delegation leaders and conference officials, is not accidental. It represents the spirit of the discussions that produced this compromise. I am told the delegates felt that neither the Jews nor the Arabs were observing the U.N. decision on Palestine, and that the resolution reflects this. There is no question of blaming one side or the other.

Yet at a press conference Dr. Fawzy, the United Arab Republic's leader, takes a completely different view. He hails the resolution as a "great victory". He suggests that the conference record shows the correct interpretation of the resolution to be that the delegates recognize the legitimate rights of the Arab peoples of Palestine. I ask Dr. Fawzy how such an interpretation can be reconciled with the fact that Ghana has active and cordial relations with Israel? But he insists that his own version is the correct one.

From the Secretary-General of the conference I gather that this is not so. The resolution means only what it says: compliance with the U.N. resolution.

Back at the closing session. Another fiesta of speeches. Most of them in praise of the new-found unity; all of them richly in praise of Dr. Nkrumah, whose stature has gone up greatly among all the delegates. His own assessment of the way the conference went is interesting:

"I can truthfully say," he began, "that no conference in which I have participated—and only last year I was privileged to attend the Prime Minister's Commonwealth conference— has ever

reflected so much natural understanding. It is certainly not just a figure of speech when I say that if, formerly, the Sahara divided us, this is certainly not the case to-day. The former Imperialist Powers were fond of talking about 'Arab Africa' and 'Black Africa'; about 'Islamic Africa' and 'non-Islamic Africa'; about 'Mediterranean Africa' and 'Tropical Africa'. These were all artificial descriptions which tended to divide us. At this Accra conference, these tendentious and discriminating epithets are no longer valid. To-day, the Sahara is a bridge uniting us. We are one, an entity symbolized by our united African Personality. Indeed, we have an even wider association with the Asian and African nations, and that still wider one represented by the United Nations.'

The Accra conference will be repeated biennially in different African capitals. The next one will be in Ethiopia. Between conferences, the eight African States will maintain liaison through their permanent representatives at the United Nations.

The stage is set.

## DECLARATION OF THE CONFERENCE OF INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES

We, the African States assembled here in Accra, in this our first Conference, conscious of our responsibilities to humanity and especially to the peoples of Africa, and desiring to assert our African Personality on the side of peace, hereby proclaim and solemnly reaffirm our unswerving loyalty to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Asian-African Conference held at Bandung.

We further assert and proclaim the unity among ourselves, and our solidarity with the dependent peoples of Africa, as well as our friendship with all nations. We resolve to preserve the unity of purpose and action in international affairs which we have forged among ourselves in this historic Conference, and to safeguard our hard-won independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to preserve among ourselves the fundamental unity of outlook on foreign policy so that a distinctive African Personality will play its part in co-operation with other peace-loving nations to further the cause of peace.

We pledge ourselves to apply all our endeavours to avoid being committed to any action which might entangle our countries to the detriment of our interests and freedom; to recognize the right of the African people to independence and self-determination and to take appropriate steps to hasten the realization of this right; and to

affirm the right of the Algerian people to independence and self-determination and to exert all possible effort to hasten the realization of their independence; to uproot forever the evil of racial discrimination in all its forms wherever it may be found; to persuade the Great Powers to discontinue the production and testing of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons, and to reduce conventional weapons.

Furthermore, mindful of the urgent need to raise the living standard of our peoples by developing to the fullest possible advantage the great and varied resources of our lands: we hereby pledge ourselves to co-ordinate our economic planning through a joint economic effort, and study the economic potentialities, the technical possibilities and related problems existing in our respective States; to promote co-ordinated industrial planning either through our own individual efforts and/or through co-operation with Specialized Agencies of the United Nations; to take measures to increase trade among our countries by improving communications between our respective countries, and to encourage the investment of foreign capital and skills provided they do not compromise the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of our States.

Desirous of mobilizing the human resources of our respective countries in furtherance of our social and cultural aspirations, we will endeavour to promote and facilitate the exchange of teachers, professors, students, exhibitions, educational and cultural and scientific material which will improve cultural relations between the African States and inculcate greater knowledge amongst us through such efforts as joint youth festivals, sporting events, etc.; will encourage and strengthen studies of African culture, history and geography in the institutions of learning in the African States; will take all measures in our respective countries to ensure that such studies are correctly orientated.

We have charged our Permanent Representatives at the United Nations to be the permanent machinery for co-ordinating all matters of common concern to our States, for examining and making recommendations on concrete practical steps for implementing our decisions, and for preparing the ground for future Conferences.

Faithful to the obligations and responsibilities which history has thrown upon us as the vanguard of the complete emancipation of Africa, we do hereby affirm our dedication to the causes which we have proclaimed.