

THE BRAZZAVILLE TWELVE

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BARRING a few exceptions—some honourable in the sense that, like Sierra Leone, they will soon cease to be an exception; other dishonourable, like Angola and Spanish Guinea, whose overlords show no signs of self-removal—West and Equatorial Africa are now independent. The start of the Pan-Africanist race, however, has been ragged. Though there are such combinations as the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union, and the 'Entente' of the Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta and Dahomey, deep divisions appear to have developed between independent African countries. Many have taken sides by joining either the Casablanca or the Brazzaville Group, while the remainder still sit on the stands, watching with disapproval, and have so far been either unable or unwilling to induce a greater unity of purpose or policy among all the independent African States.

These, though, are early days, and it is impossible to know whether the present divisions in independent Africa will deepen; whether the dream of African unity will be shattered or whether it still has a chance of fulfilment, and in what shape. To begin with, it is easy to exaggerate the depth of the present divisions. There is a tendency to attach fashionable labels to the Brazzaville and Casablanca Groups. To one school of thought the Brazzaville Group seems pro-Western, rational and practical in its approach to international affairs and the problems of African unity; while the Casablanca Group is fellow-travelling, if not actually Communist, and full of unrealisable ideas about African unity. From another standpoint, the Casablanca Group is the true expression of independent Africa, determined to be neutralist in its external relations, and firm in the conviction that for the furthering of unity among African States, the political kingdom has clear priority over the economic. This school considers the Brazzaville Group a sort of front-organisation for French neo-colonialism, and argues that the Group's members have achieved little more than a paper independence. The truth lies somewhere beyond all these assertions, and it is certainly open to doubt whether there are at the present time such fundamental divisions of

political philosophy or political allegiance in Africa as to preclude eventual co-operation, if not actual unity.

The whole history—if a few months' existence merits such a description—of the Brazzaville and Casablanca Groups shows that they were formed and developed to deal with two specific problems: two major ones, Algeria and the Congo; and a minor one, Mauritania. Other questions, such as economic links, political ties, and even defence agreements have come to be considered by the Groups; but the two major points of focus, around which the two Groups developed, are undoubtedly Algeria and the Congo. If these two running sores can be cured quickly enough—and speed is a vital element—then there is an excellent chance that independent Africa's present divisions will not be perpetuated. No doubt there are those who will claim that differences over Algeria and the Congo arose only because of already existing and deep-seated doctrinal differences. They may well be right; though I personally believe that the frontiers of ideas in independent Africa are still loose and flexible, and that there is every possibility of mutual accommodation, provided representative African governments can be established in Algeria and the Congo before the tussle for footholds in Africa by the great powers becomes more predatory.

The so-called Brazzaville Group was formed in October 1960—its first Heads-of-State meeting was at Abidjan in the Ivory Coast, and only its second meeting was held at Brazzaville, the city from which the Group derived its name. Its 12 members are all French-speaking States. Eleven of them are former French colonies—Senegal and Mauritania; the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Niger and Dahomey, all in West Africa; Tchad, Gabon, the Central African Republic and the Congo Republic (Brazzaville) from Equatorial Africa; and finally, the somewhat reluctantly recruited island of Madagascar, whose President did not attend the inaugural meeting but went to Brazzaville. The twelfth member of the Group is not a former French colony; but something very close—namely a former French-administered U.N. Trust Territory—the Cameroun. The original meeting of the Group at Abidjan was organised by M. Felix Houphouët-Boigny, President of the Ivory Coast. And he made no bones about it: he wanted a meeting to discuss whether the independent African States could mediate or in some other way help bring the Algerian conflict to an end without alienating France. Indeed, this hope that the Algerian conflict can be brought to

an end without alienating France, and indeed the belief that this is the best and quickest way of bringing the conflict to an end, has been the cornerstone of M. Houphouet-Boigny's approach to the Algerian problem, and helps to explain why he has always refused to give all-out support to the F.L.N.

For weeks before the Abidjan meeting, M. Houphouet-Boigny had been feeling his way. There were rumours of contacts with President Bourguiba of Tunisia, and of a motion on Algeria which the Ivory Coast was drafting for the U.N. General Assembly. At the Nigerian independence celebrations at the beginning of October, Houphouet discussed his idea for a meeting of French African States on Algeria, and there was much coming and going at Houphouet's rooms in the Federal Palace Hotel. Then a few days later, the Senegal Prime Minister, M. Mamadou Dia, came to Abidjan to settle details of the proposed meeting. As with the Casablanca Group, it is not entirely clear who was and who was not invited to the original meeting. Guinea's leaders, for example, vociferously condemned the conference and said they would not attend; but it was never made clear whether they had been invited. Mali, it seems, had received an invitation of sorts; at any rate she was represented by an observer. Togoland had certainly been invited; but M. Sylvanus Olympio, the Prime Minister, made it a condition of his attendance that Tunisia and Morocco should also be at the Abidjan meeting, arguing that it was manifestly useless to discuss the Algerian problem in any kind of constructive way without the two African States who know most about the Algerian problem. But it seems that the two North African States were not invited. In any case, Morocco let it be known that she would not attend even if invited, since she would definitely not sit at the same table as the 'pseudo-Premier of the pseudo-State of Mauritania', who was very definitely attending the conference. There were no North African representatives at Abidjan, and M. Sylvanus Olympio did not appear. Indeed, he has made no move since then to join the Group.

On the other hand the Madagascar President, M. Tsiranana, who declined an invitation to Abidjan, has since become converted to membership. The most Francophile of all the French African leaders, he let it be known at the time of Abidjan that he considered the Algerian problem to be an "internal French matter" and therefore no concern of the French African States. He has not repeated that contention; but doubtless it will not

be forgotten in Africa. It seems that no representative from the Congo (Leopoldville) had been invited; nevertheless, the President of Congo (Brazzaville) turned up with M. Kalonji, sent as an emissary from M. Tshombe.

The Heads of State and of Government—generally they are one and the same person—were for three days closeted at Abidjan. The communiqué which emerged revealed little: there had been “profound examination” of African problems, notably the Algerian, Congolese and Mauritanian questions; all countries present would support Mauritania’s application for membership of the United Nations, after the country’s proclamation of independence at the end of November; and there would be further meetings. Nothing specific was said about Algeria; but not many days afterwards, M. Mamadou Dia, together with M. Hamani Diori, President of Niger, set off for Tunis and meetings with President Bourguiba and M. Ferhat Abbas, while Leopold Sedhar Senghor of Senegal and Houphouët-Boigny himself set off for Paris.

The communiqué’s remarks on Mauritania were, I think, of great consequence. It was undoubtedly one of the factors which prompted Morocco to organise the Casablanca conference, the object of which, in my view, was not merely to discuss Algeria and the Congo from another angle, but to rally support for Morocco’s claim to Mauritania as a part of Greater Morocco. As for the Congo, the Abidjan meeting did not at that stage intervene, though its participants were already showing their preference for those opposed to Lumumba.

The next meeting of the Brazzaville Group was held at Brazzaville, capital of the former French Congo, in December 1960. The Group takes its name from this city rather than from Abidjan, scene of its original meeting, because it was confirmed at Brazzaville that the Group had long-term objectives and meant to stay in existence, co-operating on economic problems as well as over external policy. Brazzaville showed that the twelve States who attended the meeting—all those who had been at Abidjan, except the Mali observer (Mali had clearly not been invited on this occasion) and with the addition of Madagascar—all shared a desire to remain friends with the ‘*ancienne mère patrie*’, France; all shared in condemnation of various aspects of Soviet policy and showed no desire to encourage a Communist presence in Africa, through economic help or in any other shape; and all were seeking what were qualified as compromise solutions

to the two burning African problems, Congo and Algeria. All present were united on one other issue; they were opposed to the creation of political links between the independent African States. Though they were all in favour of close co-operation over a wide field of action, they still obstinately stuck to Houphouët-Boigny's old thesis that common political institutions in independent Africa were both wasteful and unnecessary.

Here then were twelve countries—all newly independent, most of them economically weak and greatly in need of external help. All were pro-Western, and none wanted to take the plunge away from French technicians and money which might—according to the Guinea or Ghana leaders—bring them 'real' independence, but which in their own view might leave them at the mercy of the Communist powers. All twelve believed themselves to be realists and wanted to deal with the Congo and Algeria problems not on the basis of preconceived ideas of what was right or wrong, but on what was possible. Certainly the Brazzaville Group now claims that the opening of negotiations between France and the F.L.N. has been made possible largely by their intervention. As for the Congo, the Brazzaville Group has made no claims of any sort; but then nobody else can claim to have contributed much to the improvement of a situation which obstinately refuses to be improved.

The Brazzaville meeting again took place behind tightly closed doors. Apart from discussions amongst themselves, the participants "questioned" a long string of Congolese leaders who had been summoned to Brazzaville. They included M. Kasavubu and M. Tshombe, both of whom were received with 'Presidential' honours; M. Kalonji, from South Kasai; M. Sendwe; and M. Justin Bomboko, who was at that time head of Mobutu's College of Commissioners, and who was not then as outspokenly anti-Lumumbist as he has since become. M. Kashamuru, later installed in Kivu, sent an emissary who was reckoned to be there as a Lumumbist representative. Lumumba himself was at that time under U.N. 'guard' in Leopoldville, and no one more closely associated with M. Lumumba appeared in Brazzaville. Mobutu, who had been asked to cross the river and present himself to the inquisition of his equals or betters, failed to arrive.

No witnesses were called to talk on Algeria; but M. Mamadou Dia, the Senegal Prime Minister, had only just returned from the United Nations, where debate of the F.L.N. sponsored

motion—calling amongst other things for a U.N. controlled and organised referendum—was just beginning. At New York, Mamadou Dia had spoken on behalf of the Brazzaville Group and had made clear that the twelve countries would oppose a U.N. referendum, not because they were against international supervision, but because they felt that the motion would amount to condemnation of France and would therefore make it even more difficult for negotiations between the Algerian nationalists and the French Government to begin. When M. Mamadou Dia arrived in Brazzaville, he told his colleagues that those Afro-Asian countries who wholeheartedly support the F.L.N. had been making a determined propaganda assault on the various delegations of the Brazzaville twelve, and that the preliminary voting clearly showed that there were waverers in the Group. Immediate instructions went out from Brazzaville to ensure that the representatives of the twelve would all vote together when it came to the final resolution. The instructions were obeyed, and the paragraph in the General Assembly resolution demanding a U.N. organised referendum had finally to be withdrawn, since it was clear that it would not obtain a two-thirds majority. On the other hand, a Brazzaville Group sponsored motion calling for immediate negotiations on a cease-fire in Algeria and the organisation of a referendum, together with the establishment of an international commission to safeguard the negotiations, was heavily defeated. During the debate much ill-feeling was expressed by Guinea, Ghana and other African States who deplored the Brazzaville Group's failure to stand wholeheartedly behind the F.L.N. and castigated its members as French lackeys. The Brazzaville Group, however, continues to maintain that its stand in the United Nations has done much to create the climate in France which enabled General de Gaulle to throw out feelers for negotiations with the F.L.N. soon after Christmas.

The communiqué which emerged from the Brazzaville meeting in December was much longer than the Abidjan communiqué. In a sense it constitutes a charter for the Group. It has lengthy preambles about the need for peace, for national construction and international co-operation. The first major point in the communiqué refers to Algeria. There must, it says, be peace in Algeria in 1961. France must put an end to the war, and the Algerians be given the right to self-determination. (This item has been variously interpreted; but it is generally believed that the Brazzaville Group has made it clear that it could not continue

to support France, if Algeria were not established as an independent nation in 1961). The Group showed clearly that it feared Communist help to the Algerian nationalists.

The communiqué proclaimed the belief of the Group that a political solution to the Congo could be found at a round-table conference representative of all political parties. The twelve had urged the Congolese visitors to their meeting to arrange such a conference, and Kasavubu and Tshombe had indeed promised to organise one for mid-February. Whether the Brazzaville Group actually urged the Congolese President to invite M. Lumumba to the round-table conference has never been clear, but it is quite obvious that the Brazzaville leaders are not all as single-minded in their support of M. Kasavubu or in their opposition to the Lumumbists as is one of their number—the Abbé Youlou Fulbert, President of the Congo (Brazzaville). All were, however, unquestionably united in denouncing a “new form of colonialism” which consisted of rival blocs trying to recolonise the Congo “either directly or indirectly or through the intermediary of some Asian and African countries”. Once again, the Brazzaville Group’s suspicion of the Soviet Union and of any African country which appeared to be supporting her, had come to the surface.

Next, Brazzaville touched again on the Mauritanian issue. The Soviet Union had vetoed Mauritania’s application for membership of the United Nations; but the Brazzaville States gave notice that Mauritania, a member of the Group and a country which had fought a “heroic though pacific battle for its independence”, could count on the support of the rest of the Group, who would again sponsor Mauritania’s membership of the United Nations.

Finally, the Brazzaville communiqué dealt with long-term co-operation among its members. A detailed agenda was set down for the economic study group which met in Dakar at the end of January, and which agreed on a permanent Inter-State Economic Secretariat, as well as other forms of economic co-operation. It was decided that the Group would meet again on March 15th at Yaounde in the Cameroun Republic, where among other matters a mutual defence pact was to be discussed. M. Houphouët-Boigny’s own party organ, ‘*Fraternité*’, described the Brazzaville meeting as the birth of a new bloc, formed according to a formula long advocated by M. Houphouët-Boigny and devoted to peace and brotherhood. It was clearly not

intended to be exclusive, and would be open to other like-minded States. Incidentally, it is worth noting that by no means all the members of the Brazzaville Group are inside the French Community, and indeed M. Houphouët-Boigny has made it clear that he has no intention of joining it. The Group is in theory at any rate open to English-speaking countries in Africa. The reason why Brazzaville has got off to a relatively united start, however, would appear to be not merely that its members all share certain attitudes to inter-African relationships and to external policy, but also that they all speak French and have shared a common colonial past.

The Casablanca Group's cohesion is perhaps threatened more than Brazzaville's by the differences in 'background' between its members. One of them, Ghana, belongs to the English-speaking group of territories in Africa; Guinea and Mali both have the common background of colonies within the French West African complex, and of political development inside the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*; Morocco and Libya are both monarchies, whose internal policies can scarcely be considered progressive; and finally the United Arab Republic stands even more squarely in the Arab rather than the African tradition than Morocco. Undoubtedly Algeria and the Congo were the motive forces in bringing these countries together at the Casablanca conference. Membership of the Afro-Asian Group at the United Nations had shown them that they shared common views on these two issues, and what is more that they were all opposed to the pro-Western and 'un-African' attitude which the Brazzaville Group had adopted. They wanted to counter Brazzaville's threat to the cohesion of the Afro-Asian Group, while Morocco itself took the initiative in organising the conference because it wanted also to rally support for its claims to Mauritania. The conference had long been rumoured; invitations were finally sent out after the Brazzaville Group had wrecked the F.L.N. sponsored motion at the U.N. and after it had thrown out its second challenge on Mauritania.

Casablanca confirmed, as was only to be expected, that this particular Group supported, above all else, M. Lumumba—and what he stood for—in the Congo, and the F.L.N. in Algeria. Indeed Casablanca virtually gave the F.L.N. *carte blanche*—which, in the weeks following Casablanca, meant a far less belligerent policy towards France than certain members of the Casablanca Group might themselves have advocated.

The political charter at the beginning of the Casablanca communiqué goes considerably beyond the few platitudes expressed in the Brazzaville communiqué. It shows that the Casablanca powers, in contrast to the Brazzaville ones, do believe in the desirability of political links. But are they really all ready to do something about it? The charter itself represents a compromise between Dr. Nkrumah, who wanted rapid tackling of this objective, and others who paid lip-service to the idea without showing any willingness to give up one real iota of political sovereignty. Because of the emphasis on political links, Casablanca, even though it set up an economic committee, still seems far from envisaging the same kind of economic co-operation on which the Brazzaville Group appears to be embarking.

Comparisons between the two Groups are, of course, inevitable. But, it would be a great mistake to indulge in over-classification. Both were formed under the impetus of specific issues, where various countries happened to find themselves in opposite camps. If there are settlements in the Congo and Algeria, then the Casablanca Group may well lose its present cohesion. On the other hand, the Brazzaville Group—if its members succeed in working together—may well find that economic ties do after all lead precisely to those political links which M. Houphouët-Boigny has always deprecated. In the end perhaps, there may yet be a place in the same firmament for Guinea and for the Ivory Coast. Again, the disillusion of the 'Entente' States with France may grow if France continues to oppose, as she does at the time of writing, the kind of co-operation agreements for which these four countries have asked. In that case, some of these Brazzaville countries may stop seeing Communist 'manipulation' in every move made by the Casablanca powers. . . . The trump cards may yet come to be played by those independent African States which have so far kept their distance from the two Groups, but which are nevertheless equally concerned with such matters as the Congo and Algeria, and which also seek greater African unity on the political and the economic plane. They have by no means disassociated themselves from the mainstream of African politics: they are not only actively pursuing their own policies on Algeria and the Congo, but are also preparing for what they consider the right moment to issue a rallying cry to those who believe in African unity. When they do make the call, there may well be answers from countries in both the Brazzaville and the Casablanca Groups.