

'Mr "K", Africa and the Common Market' from Le Monde (1 June 1960)

Caption: On 1 June 1960, the French daily newspaper Le Monde describes the way in which, using the visit to the Kremlin of the Malian leader, Modibo Keita, to his advantage, Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, harshly criticises the policy of cooperation between the Six and the continent of Africa.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 01.06.1960. Paris: Le Monde. "M.« K », l’Afrique et le Marché commun".

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Last updated: 01/03/2017

Mr 'K', Africa and the Common Market

The Common Market, with which Mr Khrushchev already crossed swords on Monday during the inaugurations of the Italian Exhibition in Moscow, was once more at the centre of the address which he gave on Wednesday in the Kremlin, in the presence of Mr Modibo Keita.

Although the Soviet Premier made a point of declaring that the USSR 'was not afraid' of the EEC, that in its eyes it was no less than a 'state-monopoly agreement of the Western European financial oligarchy that threatened the vital interests of all peoples and the cause of peace in the entire world', his sympathy went out first and foremost to the countries of Africa, where industrialisation, in his view, will be hampered by the Common Market. It is on them most of all that he is relying to bring the projected response to a successful conclusion: to organise, under the auspices of the UN, a major worldwide conference which would lay the foundations of an 'international trade organisation that would encompass, without any kind of discrimination, every country in the world.' The idea is not entirely new. Mr Firioubine had already proposed it on behalf of his government during the session of the UN's Economic Council. Mr Khrushchev is planning to relaunch it in a more spectacular fashion and, in order to do so, to undertake a vast campaign to win over the African countries that have not already cut their ties with the six Common Market countries.

Mali is one of these countries. This explains why Mr Khrushchev chose that country for his angry denunciation of the damaging effects of collaboration with the former colonial power and, in a general fashion, with all the Western countries. The result of these pressing invitations will only become apparent as time goes by. Yesterday's exchange of speeches already clearly demonstrated the fault-line that separates the politics of non-aligned countries from Soviet ambitions in relation to the Third World.

A certain contradiction could also be ascertained between the attempts made by the Soviet Union to sideline its Western rivals, on the one hand, and its own opportunities on the other, because what Mr Khrushchev was actually asking Mr Modibo Keita to do, and, through him, all the new nations in Africa, was to expel all European technical consultants and to refuse all aid coming from the former colonial powers, the countries of the Common Market or the United States; in short, to break all their ties with the West and to turn towards their only 'real friends': the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries.

However, at the same time, he did not hide the fact that the amount of such aid was 'perhaps less than the aid promised by the others.' Those who would receive it should nonetheless be content with it on the grounds that this aid was the only one which was disinterested, while aid provided by the others, even if it took the form of teachers, doctors and roads, was by its very nature demeaning. All this was said in a particularly acerbic tone, even becoming accusatory at times when the speaker attacked the 'Tshombes of this world who were active not only in the Congo' and 'the honest leaders who allow themselves to get involved in horse-trading with Imperialism.'

Mr Modibo Keita, however, reaffirmed the principles of non-alignment: 'We have chosen the path of cooperation with all countries without exception. We are in favour of not affiliating ourselves with any of the blocs; in our opinion, that is the best proof our decision to maintain our independence while ensuring the harmonious development of our country' This was a polite but firm refusal of Mr Khrushchev's warnings against cooperating with the West. We may, furthermore, imagine that the Soviet Premier would not have been so incisive if he had found before him an interlocutor who held the same views as he did. Moreover, we do not know if Mr Modibo Keita has abandoned his plans to visit Berlin, where he is expected next week after a visit to Prague.