

Republic and Zaire, on the other, took place in 1975. Nigeria's General Gowon stated that he also was prepared to meet with Mr. Vorster if he "should decide to come to Nigeria". A loan of 25 million French francs was made by South Africa to the Central African Republic. According to a statement by Prime Minister Vorster in March 1975, other loans would be available to provide financial and technical assistance to Africa.

However, these "small steps", to use Dr Kissinger's expression, on the road paved by Mr Houphouët Boigny are still being met with much hesitancy and very firm opposition. The twenty-fourth session of the Council of OAU Ministers in Addis Ababa in February 1975 upheld the condemnation of "dialogue" that it had already expressed in June 1971, by rejecting the idea of any dialogue with the South African regime that did not have as its sole purpose to obtain recognition for the legitimate, infeasible rights of the oppressed and the elimination of apartheid. Mr Houphouët Boigny refused to accept a decision such as this, which had been approved by only 28 out of 41 states, and even denounced the OAU as an organization that was in danger of becoming "an organization of illusions".

The question of what the dialogue entails will become clearer if we examine the Ivory Coast head of state's reasons for espousing it. He in no way condones South Africa's racial policy. Furthermore, he refuses to visit South Africa until a "visible change" becomes evident. Why dialogue? He believes that no efforts should be spared in seeking to avoid in Africa the type of conflict that has occurred in the Middle East. If war broke out, South Africa would invade certain neighbouring countries. Interviewed by a South African newspaper in October 1975, Boigny indicated that this would then enable South Africa to negotiate for the evacuation of the occupied territories, and that apartheid would become a secondary consideration, as is now the case with the Palestinians.

Unanswered question

The fundamental question, whether or not dialogue is really possible, remains unanswered. Senegal, which, with the Ivory Coast, is taking a few steps towards dialogue, is asking what some of the conditions should be and has proposed that the exchange should involve the governments of Rhodesia and South Africa, the national liberation movements, the white liberals and the nationalist movements. When Dr Kissinger was in Dacca last May, Senegal's Foreign Minister made

specific reference to the content of this dialogue, calling for the withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia, renunciation of the "Bantustan" policy and concessions to nationalist movements. But he seemed to harbour no illusions as to its chances of success, observing that the white liberals had been shown to lack sufficiently strong support. He also saw the heads of these countries as living in the past, retreating into history, having lost the contest through their "insane and suicidal" policies.

Important aspects

A number of equally important aspects warrant our attention here. To begin with, the idea of "dialogue" as it is often expressed appears unequal and lacking in reciprocity. Meetings between African heads of state and the Rhodesian or South African leaders cannot change the situation unless the former are in a position to pressure the latter by offering them something sufficiently attractive to obtain — or squeeze — appreciable concessions from them. Otherwise, however sincere the conversations — they could not be called negotiations — might be, the eventual or hypothetical result would hinge entirely on the good will and graciousness of the South Africans or on their sudden awareness of the relevance of arguments aimed at persuading them to give up policies that had been followed for over ten years by Rhodesia and for more than 30 years by South Africa. Such an outcome is inconceivable. Nor could offers of investment and technical co-operation on the African continent be regarded as an attractive *quid pro quo*, as the political risks a change in government or attitudes would involve would make these investments too hazardous. Israel's attempt to break out of isolation by a policy of active involvement in Africa, which lasted for about ten years, is proof of this.

On the other hand, a dialogue conducted by the United States and the European powers with the South Africans could be effective if the former were truly determined to make the South Africans listen to reason. Present indications do not point strongly in this direction. Last January, President Senghor entreated the international community to face up to its responsibilities with respect to South Africa, which was "contradicting the purposes and principles of the UN every day". We all know what France's answer to this was. It continued to sell arms, as well as nuclear-power plants — the non-military use of which is impossible to guarantee. The United States is in no hurry to inter-

Appreciable concessions will come only from pressures