
**ADDRESS BY OSAGYEFO DR. KWAME NKURUMAH,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION
OF THE VOLTA POWER, 22ND JANUARY, 1966**



Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today to formally inaugurate hydro-electric power from the Volta.

What you see before you is the happy result of the faith and determination of our people and their friends. It is the outcome of the readiness of the United States Government, the World Bank, and other financial institutions, which, apart from our own contribution to the scheme, have granted loans and other forms of assistance in this great enterprise. It is an achievement in co-operation and joint endeavour.

I am personally happy that so many of those connected with this scheme are here with us today for this inauguration. In addition, I am pleased that His Holiness Pope Paul VI has seen fit to send a Papal nuncio to witness the ceremony. On behalf of myself, and the Government and people of Ghana, I extend to you all a sincere welcome.

We had looked forward eagerly to welcoming in our midst today Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. We had wished her to unveil the plaque commemorating the part which the late President Kennedy, and President Eisenhower played in this endeavor. Mrs. Kennedy is unable to be with us today. She has, however, written to tell me that she hopes to visit Ghana with her children in the very near future. I have assured her that a warm and truly Ghanaian welcome awaits her.

Next to the late President Kennedy and President Kennedy and President Eisenhower, I must make mention of my friend Edgar Kaiser, whose faith and enthusiasm for the Volta Project provided the spark that brought it to life when the prospects for its continuation were at their lowest ebb. It is a pity that Edgar's father, Henry Kaiser cannot be with us. He has been a tower of strength and inspiration to Edgar and myself throughout our efforts on this project.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By this inauguration ceremony, our great and dynamic Party, the Convention Peoples Party, has kept faith with the people. In our Party Election Manifesto in 1951, we made a promise that when we were voted to power, we would do everything possible to bring the Volta River Project into being. From that time, this scheme has been one of our greatest dreams. My faith in it never faltered, in spite of the disappointments and frustrations created by the difficult and intricate financial negotiations involved.

I have on a previous occasion, told the story of my meeting with Edgar Kaiser in New York, in 1958, which proved to be an important watershed in the story of this scheme. I cannot minimize the part played by Chad Calhoun as a go between Edgar and me. My meeting with Edgar Kaiser illustrates the way, in which individuals of faith and goodwill can contribute to close relations between people and nations, between governments and governments.

With Edgar's characteristic way of "getting down to brass tacks" – to use an American slang – he

took me straight along to see President Eisenhower who happened to be in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York where I was also staying. It was there that Eisenhower expressed surprise that the United States had delayed consideration of this scheme for so long. There upon he turned to him and asked, "Then why don't you get on with the damned thing?" It was then that "the damned thing" – this giant hydro-electric scheme – was triggered back to life.

Even then, years of further negotiations followed. Throughout, we had to demonstrate by resolution action and practical decisions our determination to go ahead with the project by all means. Thus in 1959, when the financial arrangements were still incomplete, I decided that, whether we succeeded in raising loans or not, we would go ahead with the scheme from our resources. I therefore gave orders for the preliminary works to be constructed, namely: the Tema-Akosombo highways, the necessary access roads to the site, and the building of a new township in Akosombo. By this time we were nearing completion in Akosombo. By this time we were nearing completion of the construction of the Tema Harbour and Township, which were also essential parts of the preliminary works. And so we commissioned Kaiser Engineers to undertake the preparation of the necessary plans and tender documents. These decisions, risky as they then appeared, gained for us at least a year in construction time and its equivalent in money. It was this calculated risk, which really gave the impetus to the scheme. In all this Edgar Kaiser share our optimism and gave us full support and encouragement.

I wish I had time here to discuss in detail the magnitude of Edgar's contribution. However, I will mention only one: the Kaiser Company's re-examination of the project enabled us to lower substantially the cost of the entire project, a reduction which was a critical factor making construction of this vast project economically feasible.

It was not until the 16th of December, 1961, after three years of negotiations that the legal documents providing for the financing of the project, said to be the most complicated of their kind were signed.

The financing of the project on such a scale involved many Governments and International Agencies. Its achievement was largely due to the sympathy and understanding of the late President Kennedy. He had a positive belief in this Volta River Project. I was the first President to meet him after his inauguration. From that very moment I knew that whatever differences of opinion we might have, they could be discussed rationally. It was characteristic of Kennedy that despite the opposition of forces both in his Cabinet and Congress, he put his full personal weight behind the scheme. Indeed, at one time he stood alone in his Cabinet on this matter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in a World of contradictions. These contradictions somehow keep the world going. Let me explain what I mean. Ghana is a small but very dynamic independent African State. We are trying to reconstruct our economy and to build a new, free and equal society. To do this, we must attain control of our own economic and political destinies. Only thus can we create higher living standards for our people and free them from the legacies and hazards of a colonial past and from the encroachments of neo-colonialism. In such a world we certainly need great friends. The United States is, and rightly so, adopting a conception of dual mandate in its relations with the developing world. This dual mandate, if properly applied, could enable the United States to increase its own prosperity and at the same time assist in increasing the prosperity of the developing countries.

Edgar Kaiser, President Eisenhower and President Kennedy, were genuinely interested in this project because they saw, behind the cold figures and the rigid calculations, that the Volta River Project was not only an economically viable project, but also an opportunity for the United States of America to

make a purposeful capital investment in a developing country. In other words, they saw in the Volta Rive Project a scheme which they felt could benefit both Ghana and the United States,

It was on this common ground of our mutual respect and common advantage that our two countries – Ghana and the United States – made the contract from which this grew this project. The result of this contract is living proof that nations and people can co-operate and co-exist peacefully with mutual advantage to themselves, despite differences of economic and political opinions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Four years ago today, in January, 1962, I set off the blast which marked the beginning of construction of this scheme. Since then, we have witnessed a marvel of construction, organizational efficiency, and administrative achievements.

You see, before you, in all its majesty, strength and power, the Akosombo Dam, 463 feet from the lowest foundations and twenty-two hundred feet long, which has tamed the turbulent waters of the Volta, turning them into the beautiful vast lake which will ultimately cover over three per cent of the surface area of our country. Due to the fact that the River Volta is very deep at this very point, over two-thirds of the Dam lies hidden beneath the surface of the water. The result of this is that this huge structure blends harmoniously and imperceptibly into the natural landscape, giving the impression that this Dam and its vast lake are not man-made, but creation – a creation of nature.

To the east are the two Spillways with their twelve gigantic gates. Further east is the Saddle Dam, closing a gap in the hills, a large Dam in its own rights. To the west of the main dam is the Power House wherein are installed the large turbines fed by water tumbling down the huge penstocks, and generators which will provide the country with electric power, nearly ten times the present power production in the country from all sources. We have enough power for our immediate needs from the Volta Dam and for the Aluminium Smelter, which VALCO is now constructing at Tema. But we are ready and prepared to supply power to our neighbours in Togo, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta. As far as I am concerned, this project is not for Ghana alone. Indeed, I have already offered to share our power resources with our sister African States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The story of the Volta River Projects will not be completed without reference to the 80,000 people who had to be moved from their villages and resettled in other areas, because of the formation of the Volta Lake. The story of this resettlement scheme is an epic in itself. I would like to pay tribute to the thousands of families who were called upon to move from their traditional homes, in the interest of the nation. Today, as we inaugurate Volta Power, they can share in the joys of the country, in our sense of achievement, and in our gratitude for the sacrifices, which have made this project possible.

I must also record with pride the important role, which thousands of Ghanaians have played at all, levels and in all aspects of the scheme. As we move into the new phase of our development, we have every confidence that all Ghanaians who have worked on this scheme will bring to bear on the problems of our nation and continent, the experience they have acquired in the implementation of this scheme. And here I would like to pay tribute to the work Sir Robert Jackson and the Staff of the Preparatory Commission who prepared much of the detailed over-all planning on which this scheme is based. I must also say a special word of thanks to Mr. Frank Dobson, Chief Executive of the Volta River Authority and all the members and executives of the Authority. They have done a grand job. In this connection, I must congratulate the contractor Impregilo and Company. This consortium of giant Italian Construction Organisations combined their strength and skill to build the Volta Dam. It

was a magnificent and challenging job, and they have done it magnificently.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Volta River Project is a concrete symbol of the type of international co-operation which can, to quote my friend Edgar Kaiser, help to “forge world peace”. It is perhaps the greatest tragedy of today’s world that billions of dollars, rubles and pounds should be spent every year on military armaments and on wars. If the money wasted on wars and war preparations were invested in projects like the one spread out before us, these enormous capital funds could revolutionize the economies not only of the developing world, but also of the developed countries. It would in fact eliminate what is the major threat to world peace, namely the ever-widening gap between the developed and developing nations. Unless this gap is closed, no peace effort of any kind can save mankind from ruin and ultimate destruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is in this spirit of fruitful collaboration for a better world for all, that I welcome you here to inaugurate the Volta River Project. Let us dedicate it to Africa’s progress and prosperity. When, in a few moments, I turn the switch to shed the full radiance of Volta Power on this scene, may it symbolize not only a great achievement of Ghana, but also be a light leading us on to our destined and cherished goal – a Union Government for Africa. Only in this way, will Africa play its full part for the achievement of world peace and for the advancement of the happiness of mankind.