

March 11, 1960

House Foreign Affairs Committee--  
Hearings on the Mutual Security Bill

STATEMENT OF PETER WEISS, VICE-CHAIRMAN OF  
THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

I am happy to be afforded this opportunity of making, on behalf of the American Committee on Africa, a few comments on our mutual security program as it affects Africa.

My organization, whose national committee is composed of a group of distinguished American citizens in all walks of life, including nineteen members of the Congress of the United States, has devoted itself since its inception in 1953 to creating an informed public opinion on African affairs in this country. For this purpose, the Committee keeps in constant touch with African leaders, by bringing them to this country on lecture tours and by having its own staff and directors make periodic visits to Africa. Thus, Mr. George Houser, the Executive Director of the Committee, who is here with me today, and I have recently returned from two important conferences, the second meeting of the All-African People's Conference in Tunis, and the second session of the Economic Commission for Africa in Tangiers, and I trust that the impressions we gathered at these two meetings may be of some assistance to this committee.

Julius Nyerere, one of the great leaders of contemporary Africa, who is universally expected to become Tanganyika's first African prime minister, has provided the keynote for my statement. Mr. Nyerere, who has been visiting our country for the past month, has said: "The United States has missed the political boat in Africa, but it is not too late to catch the economic boat." Since these hearings are primarily concerned with economic matters and since, in any case, it is more profitable to look forward to the boat we can still catch than to the one which left us behind, I shall concentrate on the second part of Mr. Nyerere's statement.

Before doing so, however, let me simply review in outline what I believe Mr. Nyerere meant by his reference to our shortcomings on the political front. I think it can all be summed up by saying that we have tried to strike an impossible balance between our traditional sympathy with the efforts of nations, large and small, to put themselves in a position where they can shape their own destinies, and what is usually referred to as "the realities of the cold war." On issue after issue, particularly in the United Nations, we have put our genuine sympathy for the aspirations of the African people to freedom and dignity into the balance against our traditional loyalties to our European allies, only to be forced in the end to adopt positions which we knew all along to be right, but judged imprudent to support in public.

To take only one example: At the last two sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, we finally closed ranks with world opinion in condemning the inhuman policies of the South African government, after abstaining on so clear an issue for the six previous sessions, much to the dismay of our true friends in Africa, such as Mr. Nyerere. The irony of this situation, as of many similar ones, is that we have presumably been going slow in order not to get too

far ahead of our European allies, only to discover suddenly that it is we who are behind them. I refer to the fact that, since the beginning of this year, both Prime Minister Macmillan of Great Britain and Mr. Luns, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, the two countries closest to South Africa, have made statements strongly condemning the racial policies of the South African government, while we have still to hear a similar declaration from Washington.

We have, in other words, been substituting a diplomatic juggling act for a dynamic policy towards Africa. We have been balancing the pluses and the minuses of any given issue in an effort to make the equation come out to zero and we have, unfortunately, succeeded in most cases. Political and moral leadership in this century, or in any other, is not written with zeros. If this seems like strong language, I should like to refer for a detailed documentation of my thesis to the excellent study on United States foreign policy in Africa prepared for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Program of African Studies of Northwestern University and published last October.

Let us now turn to the economic boat. The considerable rise in the portion of our total foreign aid expenditures going to Africa last year as compared to the previous years is an indication of the government's awareness of the rising importance of the African continent. I believe we must do even more, and do some of it by methods different from those we have applied in the past. I do not, however, wish to be understood as making a special plea for Africa only. The big problem of our century, aside from keeping the human race from blowing itself up before the century is over, is to bridge the ever-widening gap between the standard of living of the so-called developed and that of the so-called undeveloped countries, only some of which happen to be African. These words, developed and underdeveloped, by the way, are euphemisms which hide an ugly truth, and only future historians will be able to evaluate the damage which their adoption may have done to intelligent thinking about world problems. Something undeveloped, after all, is not something to get particularly excited about. The term has a clinical ring to it; it appeals to the statistician or economist, rather than to the ordinary citizen who puts up the bulk of our mutual security money. The plain truth of the matter is that the world today is divided into a few rich lands being swept along to ever greater riches by the momentum of their own wealth, into a great many poor lands which do not seem to be able to break out of their poverty and a handful of lands which seem to be crossing the great divide between the one group and the other. This is, admittedly, an over-simplified picture, but I believe it is less dangerous to oversimplify than to hide the truth altogether under a mass of statistics, which is often the case in debates on economic development.

Statistics, of course, can be used to prove both sides of an argument. I shall not take this committee's time with my own, but respectfully refer it to the facts and figures contained in a recent pamphlet by the one American who probably knows more about this problem than any other. I refer to "One Hundred Countries--One and a Quarter Billion People" by Paul Hoffman, currently being distributed by the Committee for International Growth. Mr. Hoffman's main points are these:

- 1) Real per capita income during the past decade has been rising in the rich countries of North America and Western Europe at an annual rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  and in the poor countries of Africa, Asia,

and Latin America at a rate of 1%. Unless this trend is reversed, it will mean a further widening of the gulf between the rich countries, whose leader, the United States, has an annual per capita income of over \$2,000, and the one and a quarter billion people living in the 100 poor countries, who, as a group, have an annual per capita income of \$100.

- 2) A relatively modest increase in the amount of capital currently being invested by the rich countries in the poor ones could accelerate the growth of the latter to the point where they could begin to catch up with us.
- 3) Giving the economies of the poor countries a real boost is good business for the United States. Failing to do so, on the other hand, may have grave consequences for the economy of the United States, as well as for its political position in the world.
- 4) This job cannot be done efficiently unless it is divorced from international politics and it cannot be divorced from international politics unless it is done through the United Nations.

I should like, in the brief time remaining to me, to say something about this last point. At both of the recent African conferences to which I referred earlier, there was much talk about "neo-colonialism." The delegates, and they represented some of the best brains and highest officials of the African continent, were not too precise in their definition of this term. Basically, however, they used it to mean continued economic domination after the end of political domination by foreign powers. In reply to this, we could, of course, say to the African leaders, as we said last week to Fidel Castro, "If you don't like our grants, or our subsidy, or our loans, or our investments, why don't you go cry on somebody else's shoulder?" The trouble with this approach is that the other shoulder is right there, waiting to be cried on.

I think it would be better politics, therefore, to listen to the thoughts of the recipients of our foreign aid funds concerning the channels through which they would prefer to receive these funds. The unanimous feeling in Africa, as corroborated by Ambassador Lodge when he returned from his visit to that continent in January, is that the proper channel is the United Nations, through whose mechanism this job can be tackled as a cooperative enterprise rather than as a matter of charity or as a matter of jockeying for political position.

Now something very interesting is going on in this city at this very moment. Mr. Dillon is meeting with representatives of Canada, Japan, Great Britain, Western Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, and Portugal to try to persuade these other countries to put up more money for economic development. As an American taxpayer, I welcome this initiative. However, as someone who has recently exchanged views with African leaders on the problem of foreign technical and economic assistance, I wonder if we know what we are doing. The African coun-

tries, and I believe the same is true for Asia and Latin America, have been saying that they prefer multilateral to bilateral assistance, because they believe only the former has any chance of being free from political strings. Now Mr. Dillon's Development Assistance Group, if it comes into being, is going to be multilateral all right, but it will be multilateral outside the United Nations, which is decidedly not the kind of "multilateral" which our under-developed friends have been talking about. If there is one thing Africans want even less than bilateral aid from Washington or Moscow, it is multilateral aid from a Western bloc and an Eastern bloc. In their view, with which it is difficult to find fault, such aid can only intensify the political aspects of economic assistance and could only increase the temperature of the hot seat on which they are placed every time they accept a \$100,000,000 loan from the Soviet Union or from the United States.

As we know, the Russian economic offensive in the undeveloped countries is proceeding at an accelerated pace and the Soviet Union is no more willing to forego the assumed advantages of giving aid directly than we are. Before we decide, however, to take the Russians on in this bilateral race, I think we had better be sure that we are prepared to run it with them as far as they choose and are able to go.

The Soviet bloc has already seized the initiative from us in one burning issue of world-wide concern, that of disarmament. Would it not be a refreshing change, if, instead of trying to see whether, for each country drawn into the Soviet orbit by Russian economic aid, we can set up a counter-satellite by the use of Western funds, we took a bold step forward towards advocating the internationalization of world economic development? Such a step would be economically sound and at the same time enormously popular with Mr. Hoffman's one and a quarter billion people.

Finally, some brief comments about specific aspects of our African aid program:

- 1) Private investment can do a whale of a job, not only to aid economic development, but also to make friends for America, if it is handled by people who are aware of the economic, social, and political realities of the situation within which they operate. This is true of such companies as the Liberia Mining Company in Liberia and the American Metal Climax Company in the Rhodesian copperbelt. It can do much harm if it simply allies itself with European or African ventures of an essentially colonial character, as is true for certain American interests in the Union of South Africa.
- 2) We need to be more flexible in our scholarship and exchange of persons programs. Why must students be able to speak English before they can come here on government grants? Why are there no similar requirements for African students going to Scandinavia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, or the Soviet Union?
- 3) As long as we are not willing to throw our foreign aid money into a common kitty, we must be willing to take the political consequences of some of our bilateral disbursements. One of

the high points of the All-African People's Conference in Tunis was the dispatch of a message to President Eisenhower and to the Congress asking that American military and economic aid to France cease until a just solution of the Algerian war has been worked out. The notion is widespread among Algerians and other Africans that France could not have held out until now against the Algerian rebels without the material support of the United States.

- 4) Straight loans or grants are sometimes not the things most needed by a developing economy. The African countries, as major suppliers of certain raw materials, look to the United States, as a major consumer, to help in the stabilization of commodity prices. To the extent that our program of farm subsidies is sound domestically, a similar program would be sound on an international scale.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.