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Not for publication

American Committee on Africa  
164 Madison Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10016

MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Board, American Committee on Africa

From: George M. Houser

Re: Summer 1972 trip to Africa

September 5, 1972

From May 25 to July 6, 1972 I was on my fifteenth trip to Africa (the first one was 1954). This report does not go into any detail, but gives some of the highlights of what I did and observed and a few conclusions reached. There are quite a few things which of course it would not be appropriate to put in writing because they might be misinterpreted.

1. From the 26th to the 28th of May I was in Brussels for the International Conference on Namibia. The Conference was organized by SWAPO. In a sense it was a sequel to the conference held in Rome two years ago, sponsored by the three principal movements struggling in the Portuguese territories - FRELIMO, MPLA, and PAIGC. There was broad international attendance. Over 400 were registered for the conference coming from all parts of the world. It is very doubtful that any other Namibian organization could have successfully put together such a conference. Therefore it helped to establish SWAPO as the one Namibian nationalist organization with significant international following. SWAPO has been one of the few liberation movements able to maintain good relations with countries and organizations both East and West, although the Chinese were not represented at Brussels. SWAPO was not dominated by any one international interest at the conference.

There were no brand-new approaches for a solution to the Namibian problem coming out of the conference. Some of the papers prepared for it were well-done, but not dealing with essentially new material. The U. N. Council for Namibia was represented at the conference and received support from the conference. The role of foreign corporations was discussed and resolutions adopted were in line with positions already taken by ACOA.

The conference action which received the most international publicity was the appointment of Lord Caradon to head a delegation of distinguished personalities to the next U. N. General Assembly to present the findings of the conference. Caradon, who is, I gather, still in the running for the position of Commissioner for the U. N. Council for Namibia, has accepted this designation. A continuation committee composed of the sponsors and the cooperating organizations of the Brussels conference was formed. It is hoped that particularly in Western Europe new organizational interest and involvement will be created as a result of the Brussels conference.

As with all such conferences, one of the main values of it was an opportunity to meet again and talk with old friends representing many of the liberation movements and support movements from Africa and various countries around the world.

2. I spent about 5 days in London following the Brussels Conference. I will take time only to mention two or three things in passing. The Africa Bureau, which was founded by Michael Scott in the 1950's, has virtually folded up. Some of the trust funds which have been associated with it are still carrying on certain research work, but there is no staff any longer working for the Africa Bureau as such. I gather that it had become almost impossible for the Bureau to raise funds to continue its operation.

On the other hand, the Anti-Apartheid movement seems to be as vigorous as ever and growing. It has played a very active role in the sports campaign against South Africa recently and this has brought it new following and support. It is increasingly dealing with the whole problem of economic disengagement. The A.A.M. people were a little embarrassed that Jeremy Thorpe, a leader of the Liberal Party in Parliament and Chairman of the Movement, was in South Africa at the time I was in London talking not about disengagement, but about reformism within industry as an approach to change. They were waiting for him to return to London to talk with him. I don't know what the upshot of these discussions may have been.

The office of the Africa Bureau, while still being used as a base of operation for the trust funds, is also the headquarters for the Secretariat working on an international study project and conference on the role of international economic interests in South Africa. The Anti-Apartheid Movement is skeptical of this conference and is not working with it. My impression of the effort is that the research work is proceeding very slowly and plans for a final international conference are not developing as rapidly as they are supposed to be.

Although some attention will be given to the disengagement approach, the main weight of the conference will be upon changes which can be brought about within the industrial structure of South Africa.

3. I was in Rabat, Morocco for the one week of the Council of Ministers Conference of the O. A. U. (from June 4 - 10). I used this time primarily for discussion with various representatives of liberation movements there, discussions with O. A. U. staff people, such as Mohammed Sahnoun, and with some of the foreign ministers and other delegates such as John Malecela, now the Foreign Minister of Tanzania. The Council of Ministers portion was preparatory to the O. A. U. Summit Conference the following week which I did not attend. I received observer status through the good offices of Diallo Telli which gave me access to the Hilton Hotel where the meetings were taking place. I have never seen such tight security any place as existed in Morocco and around the Hotel. Every other person seemed to be either a policeman or a plainclothesman. Getting to and from the airport was a major operation. When I was leaving I had to carry my bag for the last couple of hundred yards from the taxi to the departure building because no cars other than official ones were allowed to go to the entrance.

The conference proceedings were really secondary to the main business of the O. A. U. which had to be solved at this session, namely who was going to be the Secretary-General? Diallo Telli had finished his second term and had been with the O. A. U. for eight years. He was not successful in getting a third term and a Cameroonian was chosen. I do not know this new man and I have no comment to make on him. Very few of the people I did know had much acquaintance with him either.

By and large the O. A. U. conference was positive as it dealt with the liberation movements. For the first time movement representatives were given a status which allowed them to attend meetings during the Summit part of the Conference. Usually they have had to remain in the lobbies catching delegates as best they could. The budget of the O. A. U. allowed for a 50% increase in the amount designated for the liberation movements. One million dollars above this was given by King Hassan II of Morocco to the movements. The King, incidentally, was chosen as President of the O. A. U. for the next year. The membership of the Liberation Committee of the O. A. U. was increased from 11 members to 17. Those added included Mauritania, Morocco, Libya, Ghana, Cameroon, and Congo-Brazzaville. It is not clear whether this will have any real effect on the decisions and the actions of the Liberation Committee. Undoubtedly it will make the administrative problems of the Secretary for the Committee more complicated.

Subsequent to the O. A. U. Conference, the head Secretary for the Liberation Committee was changed. George Magombi has been the head for the last several years. The new Secretary will be the former Ex-Secretary of Tanzanian African National Union, Hashim Mbita.

Most of those with whom I talked following the Summit part of the O. A. U. Conference, including Vice-President Chona of Zambia and Vice-President Kawawa of Tanzania thought that this O. A. U. Conference was notable because of the reconciliations it helped to bring about. Perhaps the reconciliation between Libya and Morocco was most dramatic because the Conference was being held in Rabat. From the Liberation Movement standpoint the most talked about was the discussion between MPLA and GRAE which took place just prior to the conference in Brazzaville. I'll have more comment on this later in this report. The past year also was the year in which reconciliation had taken place in Sudan between the Khartoum Government and the forces of the South.

It is very significant that the question of dialogue with South Africa, which had dominated the O. A. U. Conference a year ago, was not an issue here at all. The new Ghana government had come out against dialogue and the new government of Malagasy also. The matter was neither debated in the Conference agenda nor was it much talked about in the hallways.

4. The Angolan Movement. There is not a great deal I wish to put in writing at this time on the movements. In general I came across very little which would cause me to question the position which ACOA has adopted -- that the MPLA is doing the most effective job at this point. This feeling was strengthened by what President Kaunda told me in the forty-five minutes we had together at the State House in Lusaka. He said that he and President Nyerere now treat the heads of MPLA and FRELIMO as equals with themselves, and that they have occasional meetings with Dr. Agostinho Neto and Samora Machel. Kaunda said that one of the evidences of a greater MPLA strength was the fact that there were no recent incidents of Portuguese planes bombing across the border into Zambia from Angola. He said that all of this points to the fact that MPLA action is now further inside the country.

I was not able to see Dr. Neto on this trip. He was travelling while I was in Lusaka and arrived in Rabat during the Summit part of the Conference and was not there during the Council of Ministers session. I talked at some length with the MPLA representative in Lusaka. Among other things he reported to me that he had been asked to take up the question of our looking into a possible trip to the United States by Dr. Neto. Plans are moving ahead for the

construction of both a hospital and a school in Western Zambia at Sikongo and Kasamba. We hope to assist in getting these programs underway.

The only UNITA person I talked with was Jorge Sangumba, their representative in London. Although UNITA is not recognized by the O. A. U. Liberation Committee, it is not uncommon to have knowledgeable and highly placed persons in various African countries and movements speak very respectfully of it, although its strength must be limited because it is receiving no significant help from outside. It wins some propaganda points by virtue of the fact that it is entirely internal.. Some SWAPO people speak well of it. One of the very highly placed Zambian officials says that it is undoubtedly very active, and even one of the leaders of the Anti-Apartheid Movement spoke well of it. I think it is impossible to act as if the movement did not exist. They claim some 1,000,000 in their liberated areas and say that they control areas of Moxico, Bie, and other internal districts. I was told that UNITA is planning a congress inside Angola in 1973.

I spent 3 days in Kinshasa and visited GRAE Headquarters several times. Holden Roberto had gone to Rabat and I did not see him. There was tighter security around GRAE Headquarters than I had ever seen before. This undoubtedly grew out of the attempted coup by some of the military commanders at the military camp of GRAE, Kinkuzu, last March. Mobutu's troops had to be called in finally to bring the situation under control. GRAE leaders said that it was a plot on the part of MPLA people who had infiltrated their movement. MPLA leaders denied this.. Some of the top commanders were involved. There was fighting between Zaire troops and GRAE forces in which quite a few were killed, and others were imprisoned. All of this caused a shake-up within GRAE organization. Emmanuel Kounzika, who had been the head of the Democratic Party of Angola which together with UPA forms GRAE, was supposedly implicated and his whereabouts are not known. Another PDA leader who had been the Minister of Social Affairs in the Government in exile, Ferdinand Ndombele, also had been removed from his post and was nowhere to be found. I gather that the role of PDA is probably even more limited now than it used to be in the Front between it and the UPA. At one time there also was the faction of the MPLA led by Viriato da Cruz which had joined the Front. However this faction no longer exists and therefore is not represented any longer on the Council of the Front for the National Liberation of Angola which is the legislative side of GRAE. GRAE has several thousand trained men in camps in both Zaire and Angola.

5. MPLA-GRAE Unity Talks. Attempts at unity between MPLA and

GRAE are not new. MPLA has always sought this unity not only because it would strengthen the struggle against the Portuguese, but also because of the GRAE base in the Congo which MPLA has not had. I first heard of this new effort in Rabat when an advance representative of the GRAE delegation, Paul Touba, arrived on June 7. He told me that there was to be a meeting in Brazzaville on Friday, June 9. He was not sure it would take place. This effort had grown out of an O. A. U. resolution of the year before which had given the Presidents of Tanzania, Zambia, Congo-Brazzaville, and Zaire the task of trying to bring these two movements together. The reconciliation between Presidents Mobutu of Zaire and N'goubi of Congo-Brazzaville helped to make the meeting possible. Neither Kaunda nor Nyerere were able to be present. Holden Roberto, along with 5 others from GRAE went across the Congo River to Brazzaville in Mobutu's launch. There they were joined by President N'goubi together with Agostinho Neto and two others from MPLA. Not much has been released about the actual discussions. They were reported to have lasted for four hours during most of which time there were only 4 participants - Roberto, Neto, Mobutu and N'gouhi. In spite of the reports which appeared in the press, there were no concrete agreements for unity made. The meeting was more a statement of intention than an agreed-upon formula.

The issue was discussed at the Summit Conference at Rabat where again there was no concrete plan for unity. Roberto and Neto were somewhat embarrassingly prompted to embrace one another in front of the heads of state, according to various reports I got.

Practically everyone I spoke with hoped that the discussions would lead to something concrete, but remained pretty skeptical. It was agreed that the key to any unity plan would be President Mobutu. Since GRAE is so dependent on the Zaire government for material and finances, if Mobutu insisted upon some formula it would probably have to be accepted. I have to remain very skeptical myself of anything growing out of this. It will be prominent on the agenda of the O. A. U. Conference next year because the Commission of the four Presidents still remains instructed to proceed with unity efforts. It seemed to be generally agreed that unity between the two movements would strengthen the drive against the Portuguese. It certainly would be helpful in that MPLA forces would be able to use Zaire as well as Zambia as a point of departure. There was no optimism in most circles that Mobutu was that anxious to increase the pressure on Portugal. Although he has opposed a dialogue with South Africa, this is not his line with Portugal. For one thing, there are some 20,000 Portuguese involved in businesses of one sort or another in Kinshasa.

6. Zimbabwe: I talked with the leaders of the three external

movements in either Rabat, Lusaka or Dar es Salaam. The newest of the movements is FROLIZI (the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe). It was formed out of certain elements which left both ZAPU and ZANU. They claim to also have most of the military forces of the other two movements. Both ZAPU and ZANU deny this. A young man who studied in the United States by the name of Shelton Siwela, is the Chairman of Frolizi. However, I imagine that the more experienced hands of James Chikerema, Chairman of ZAPU, George Nyandro, also a former top ZAPU leader, and Nathan Shamuyarira, formerly of ZANU and now in charge of Foreign Affairs in FROLIZI, are giving the real leadership.

ZAPU and ZANU have formed a joint military command since they held a conference with O. A. U. assistance at Mbeya in Tanzania last March. Although the O. A. U. does not officially recognize FROLIZI as a liberation movement, it does contribute financial aid to its military effort. ZAPU and ZANU are still officially recognized by the O. A. U.

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There was a rather common reaction from everyone with whom I discussed the Zimbabwe movements. They were looked upon with some dismay because so much time was being taken up with infighting and so little with actual activities, inside Rhodesia. The joint military command between ZAPU and ZANU seems to be genuine, but it is limited. The political movements still remain separate, but the military strategy and activities are planned jointly. Herbert Chitepo of ZANU is the Chairman of the Joint Command and Jason Moyo of ZAPU is the Secretary. It is possible that events will force ZAPU and ZANU to go some steps further in forging a unity which will mean political as well as military activity inside Rhodesia.

*ANC*

Everyone I talked with agreed that the hope is in the emergence of the African National Council inside Zimbabwe. This movement was formed to protest the agreement between Britain and the Smith Government. It grew phenomenally. All of the movements on the outside claim to support it. ZAPU and ZANU claim that the ANC could not exist without their support. At least it is true that the ANC became a political possibility only because of the groundwork laid years ago by the other political movements which have been banned for many years. The ANC of course has a tightrope to walk. If it goes too far in its protests against the Smith regime it will be banned like the other movements. If it doesn't go far enough, it will lose political support. It has already been refused the right of distributing membership cards by the government. What it has proven, is that the people of Zimbabwe are not accepting the Smith regime and will at the right time take avenues of protest open to them to oppose the regime or to overthrow it.

7. Internalization of the southern African struggle. Two events of late 1971 and early 1972 have helped to usher in a new era in the liberation struggle of southern Africa. These events of course are the strike of the Namibian workers and the protest against the British-Smith agreement through the ANC of Zimbabwe. These internal protest actions surprised most observers, even including representatives of liberation movements. The great distinction between the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies and in most of the rest of southern Africa is that the former, while having external headquarters, have carried the struggle inside, and have increasingly expanded internal organization as over against external. Because of the strength of the South African government, South African movements have become the most external. The Zimbabwe movements have not been successful in liberating any areas inside their country, and also have been characterized by an external more than an internal presence. SWAPO has had both an external and an internal existence, but has grown stronger probably on the outside than on the inside because they too have not been able to liberate any land areas inside the country.

For many years there have been no effective and discernable political movements arising inside the southern African countries, but this has dramatically changed within the last year as evidenced by the ANC in Zimbabwe and the Ovambo strike. There are other evidences of this in South Africa as internal political action has increased greatly in recent months.

On this trip I was impressed by the way leaders of the liberation movements were talking about the new period which has emerged: this contrasted with two years ago. Especially in regard to South Africa, my attention was called again and again to the significance of the emergence of the South African Student Organization, to the student strikes and protest actions, to the Black People's Convention and in Namibia to the South West African Convention. Whether any of these efforts last or not, there is a new kind of internal political action. To some extent, and in South Africa probably almost exclusively, these new political organizations have grown up quite separately from the external organizations. The external leaders seem to be recognizing in a new sense that they have been out of the country a long time and that they on the outside must begin to relate to the new developments inside the country rather than vice versa. Even the development of new political movements within the Bantustans is something which is seen as significant and has new possibilities for effectively challenging the South African regime.

Some of the South African leaders with whom I talked said that they were in something akin to the pre-Sharpeville era. They were not talking so much of the relevance of guerilla warfare. Rather

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they were talking of the necessity for them on the outside to be training their people to infiltrate back inside so they can become active in whatever movements are arising among students, among workers in the industrial centers, among the peasants. They also have been very much influenced by the concept of black power. Many of these leaders recognize there is a role for sympathetic Europeans but the real leadership and guidance must come from Africans.

It is impossible for me to quote people and use names to give further illustration to the fact that the realization that the struggle is again becoming internalized has taken hold. Nevertheless, this is one of the principal observations which comes out of this trip for me. I prophesy that in the period ahead, as far as South Africa is concerned, there will be less talk about guerilla warfare, and more planning and action for training people to act internally within the industrial area, within the Bantustans, in order to seize on any way to challenge the status quo. In order to remain relevant at all, the external movements will have to begin to relate effectively to the new internal political expressions which are now being born and gathering momentum.

This will face SWAPO with some difficult problems. SWAPO certainly does exist internally. It has not yet been banned by the government. It participated in the founding meeting of the South West African Convention. This particular Convention, as I understand it, has collapsed because it was discovered there were some spies within it. But something new and like it will probably take its place. It will be difficult for SWAPO both to be part of this sort of an internal movement and yet to maintain its tactics of guerilla warfare based on the outside as well.

There is talk among both ANC and PAC people of South Africa of the possibility of a joint conference sometime in the not-too-distant future in order to appraise the situation. The division between these movements makes less sense now with the new developments inside the country. Both ANC and PAC people are trying to relate to what is happening internally, as is also the Unity Movement. Their future viability will depend on how successfully they do this.

8. FRELIMO. I arrived in Dar es Salaam June 25 which was the Tenth Anniversary of the founding of FRELIMO. It was a Sunday and a celebration of the significance of the day was held in the afternoon. There was a standing room only audience of five or six hundred people in a large hall in Dar es Salaam. It was an enthusiastic audience. FRELIMO youth choruses sang freedom songs in between commemorative speeches given mostly in Swahili. Joaquim Chissano, one of the top leaders of FRELIMO, was in charge of the meeting.

I was impressed again on this trip by almost everything I heard about FRELIMO. As mentioned earlier, both Kaunda and Nyerere now deal with Samora Machel as an equal. Almost all sources indicated that FRELIMO was making progress inside Mozambique. This certainly was true from everything I heard in Zambia about the struggle in Tete. I talked with no-one who felt that COREMO approached the strength of FRELIMO.

The only concrete projects of FRELIMO that I was able to visit was the secondary school at Bagamoyo. I was amazed at the progress which had been made in the two years since I was last there. I counted about 20 buildings already constructed, and others are now being built. At the present time there are 133 students there. They are in the fifth and sixth years. Next year there will be another 120 students coming in and a seventh grade will be added. The following year additional students will come in and the eighth grade will be added.

At present there are 11 teachers, most of them Mozambicans, black and white. There is a Dutch couple, and also an East German teacher. My impression of the secondary school not only was that it was growing quite rapidly, but that it was well-disciplined and running efficiently. It is from these students that teachers and leaders of the people of Mozambique are coming. I expect to put out a more detailed report about the Bagamoyo school later.

9. U. S. contacts with the liberation movements: my impression from talking with a few American officials and also with representatives of liberation movements is that the U. S. is farther removed than ever from any significant contact with the movements. Most of the movements just don't bother to have contacts with American government officials any more. There is nothing they can get out of it and it is a liability rather than any sort of an asset. One of the American officials whose job is supposed to be that of keeping in touch with the liberation movements told me that he had a difficult time getting his foot in the door with most of the movements now. There are practically no American officials who are even very well informed on what is happening in the movements. Obviously the most sensitive points are Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, and Addis Ababa. The O. A. U. Liberation Committee has its headquarters in Dar es Salaam. But the American official who tries to relate to the liberation movements in Dar has had little contact or good discussion with the O. A. U. Liberation Committee people for a long time.

10. Publicity. I personally received more publicity on this

trip than most of my previous ones. The reason for this was rather surprising to me but revolved around my attempt to use the visa which the U. N. Council for Namibia had granted me. I have put out a separate report on this side of my trip in the form of my statement to the U. N. Council for Namibia. This effort got wide coverage all over Africa and I guess elsewhere as well with the exception of the United States where I don't think much appeared. There are also risks, however, in receiving publicity. While I was in Dar es Salaam I was interviewed for a section of the Sunday English-language paper -- the Sunday News, in a very fair way. The week after this interview appeared, however, there was a smear article attacking me and the ACOA in the same paper. Given the nature of U. S. government policy over the last several years on African issues and particularly on southern African questions it is not surprising that this happened. The article was done anonymously. Because it was filled with such obvious falsehoods, I have undertaken to reply to it. Anyone who wishes to see a copy of the interview with me, the anonymous smear article, and my reply to it, please let me know and I will send copies to you.