

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 7, 1963

TO : Executive Board  
FROM : George M. Houser  
SUBJ.: My discussions in Washington on January 22 and 23

I had two full days of discussions in Washington and I am briefly summarizing, for your information, some of the things that came up in these talks. Among the people I talked with were Wayne Fredericks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Congressman Barratt O'Hara, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa; George High on the Angola and Mozambique desk of the State Department; James Thompson, Chester Bowles' executive assistant (Bowles himself was out of the city); Samuel Belk of the White House staff working under McGeorge Bundy; Robert Oakley of the International Organizations section of the State Department working on African affairs; Ed Mulcahey of the Central African Federation desk; Jesse McKnight, Deputy Director of the Office of Eastern and Southern African Affairs; Walter Pincus of Senator Fulbright's staff, working on the hearings of foreign lobbies, and others.

The salient points can be summarized as follows:

1. The American Committee on Africa is the primary whipping boy for both the Portuguese and the South African Governments. Our name has come up frequently in the Azores negotiations, for example. Also, I was told that Eric Louw, the Minister of External Affairs of the South African Government called up Chester Bowles and protested against the fact that his wife was listed on our letterhead. Apparently Louw did not get much satisfaction from Bowles.

2. Items relating to Portuguese territories

a. It is pretty well assumed that the Azores negotiations will be drawn out as long as possible by the Portuguese. Right now there is a working agreement for the remainder of this year, allowing the United States to continue to use the base. There is no signed agreement and it is not expected that there will be. The Azores are the only thing that the Portuguese have to bargain with. Several people with whom I talked somewhat off-handedly said that if the Portuguese tried to push the United States too far, the US might just take the Azores over. I wouldn't know whether to take this seriously or not.

b. Holden Roberto wrote a couple of strong letters to President Kennedy about US policy and a reply never came from the Government. I was told that when Kennedy heard that no reply had been sent, he was quite disturbed. On the last day that Roberto was here, he did receive a phone call from Wayne Fredericks which had been authorized from on high. Apparently

the Government didn't want to put anything in writing, but they did want to mollify Roberto.

c. It was pretty well agreed that the seeming settlement of the Katanga problem opened up new possibilities for the Angolan rebels, with a lengthened border between the Congo and Angola. It is expected that there will be renewed activity soon. The feeling expressed by various persons in the State Department was that the only thing that would make US policy more vigorous would be external activity, i.e. activity outside of the United States itself. As it was put to me, the United States can act only on so many issues at a time and will not seek to make crises in African affairs, unless it is forced upon the Government.

3. It is expected that the foreign aid bill will have a very difficult time in Congress and that Africa will probably suffer. The hope was expressed that the American Committee on Africa would help to push Congress to do as much as possible for Africa.

4. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is beginning hearings early in February on American agencies doing lobbying on behalf of foreign governments. The first week of these hearings will be taken up with appearances before the committee of State and Justice Department personnel. After a recess of several weeks, representatives of the foreign lobbies will be called before the committee. The Foreign Relations Committee is not inviting other organizations to appear, at least at this time.

5. A number of the people I talked with expressed the hope that the Committee might be able to find some spokesmen in both Houses of Congress who could effectively present our position. They seemed to imply that this kind of pressure would be useful to them in their work within the State Department.

6. There was a general feeling that the Congo operation had gone better than might have been expected, although the future is by no means clear. There was satisfaction that only a few lives had been lost, as the statistics available indicated. Apparently only eight UN troops were lost, and about 50 others, including Tshombe troops and civilians.