

A M E R I C A N C O M M I T T E E O N A F R I C A

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Executive Board

FROM: George M. Houser

RE: Perspectives on direction and program of the ACOA and the Africa Defense and Aid Fund.

I must apologize for the fact that this memorandum comes at the last moment before the Annual Meeting of the Board. It has been unavoidable.

I also should make quite clear that the thoughts expressed in this memo are mine alone, although a good many members of the Board have discussed them with me and with one another over the last several months. I present these thoughts tentatively and primarily for the purpose of stimulating discussion. We have had a couple of Board meetings in the last year in which we have tried to take a good look at the purpose and direction of the ACOA. These thoughts are an extension of those discussions.

But also there is a particular reason why there must be some new thinking done. Two staff persons, one of whom has been with the Committee for almost five years, will be leaving during the summer. Dale and Barbara Harrison have an opportunity to go overseas as field representatives of CARE, something which they have wanted to do for some time. This will be a loss to the organization. But it makes the task of reappraising our situation all the more urgent since, in taking on new staff, we must be clear as to our program and direction.

My thoughts here are in outline form for there just has not been time to go into the details any more elaborately.

I. Possible program approaches for ACOA. Given the changing situation in Africa and the rapid developments on the organizational front in the U.S. in response to these changes, the following seem to be the possible alternatives for the ACOA in program emphasis:

A. An educational and informational program along liberal lines. This would mean concentration on publications, conferences, speaking tours, and special meetings.

B. A service program. This would mean more work with students, getting into the scholarship business, working on summer employment for students, much more concentration on receptions and contacts with African dignitaries, etc.

(Memo on ACOA program)

-2-

C. Assistance (primarily through the Africa Defense and Aid Fund) to those engaged in the struggle in Africa or those who are the victims of oppression.

D. Concentration on U.S. policy especially with emphasis on the areas of Africa not yet independent or free. This means considerable work at the United Nations as well as in Washington. This also might mean organization of various types of public pressure.

II. Previous discussions we have had would indicate that the ACOA should concentrate primarily in the last two areas. I recommend for careful and immediate consideration the idea of sub-dividing the ACOA and the Africa Defense and Aid Fund in order to more effectively carry out these two programs. One obvious reason for this is that we still have had no answer on the application for tax exemption for the ACOA. We have waited interminably and it is ridiculous to wait any further if we have a plan for moving forward. The ADAF should be able to get exemption.

The thoughts which follow are based upon the idea of establishing two organizations where heretofore there has been one.

III. ACOA program emphasis and organization plan.

A. Issues for concentration in the period ahead.

1) South Africa and South West Africa. A vigorous campaign to promote sanctions should be instituted. This would involve work at the UN, newspaper ads, literature on the issue, statements signed by prominent citizens, work in Washington, action suggestions for organizations sympathetic, some Congressional action - especially speeches in House and Senate, etc.

2) Portuguese Africa. Similar procedures should be followed in regard to Portugal's policy toward Angola and Mozambique with the aim of urging the US to pressure Portugal to change direction.

B. Program methods in order to proceed in this direction.

1) Literature. I would recommend for consideration that our magazine, Africa Today, be eliminated. Obviously in this short space I cannot make a lengthy analysis as to why I think this should be carefully considered. Essentially my reasons are based on the impossibility of a small staff giving adequate attention to this publication. It is a major organizational undertaking of its own. It involved a great deal of staff time and will necessarily detract from the more pin-pointed action emphasis which a stream-lined organization should have. I say this despite the fact that I think Africa Today has improved greatly and has made a fine contribution in the field of African affairs in the United States.

In place of the magazine I propose for consideration a periodical bulletin that will go to everyone on the mailing list. It will consist of an article or an analysis of a single issue at a time (such as the present strife in

Angola, for example) and will make suggestions for action. This will be in line with an action emphasis in the ACOA, and also will keep everyone on the mailing list in touch with what the organization is doing. I also would not eliminate the Africa Today Pamphlets. If an occasional pamphlet is produced, it can make an important contribution.

2) Speakers. Michael Scott has received clearance for a tour around the country. This would fit in well with the South African emphasis. James Gichuru, President of the Kenya African National Union, would like to come. Possibly a special tour for him would work out well financially and organizationally.

3) Work at the UN would be essential in carrying out the above program emphasis.

4) Publicity and general promotion, press conferences, etc.

5) Fund-raising. This must necessarily take a great deal of time.

C. Outreach of ACOA. The Board has spent a great deal of time discussing the new-found concern for Africa in the Negro community. We have tried to take this into account in seeking new members of our Board. Two other proposals ought to be considered:

1) Organizing local chapters of ACOA with particular emphasis in finding Negro leadership in communities across the country.

2) Holding a national mobilization on Africa primarily seeking to involve Negro leadership. This would be a mass conference with attendance coming from all over the country. Six months of hard work would be involved in preparing for it.

D. ACOA Staff required for this task. Three persons on the executive level would be required to begin fulfilling this program. A Director who should be a Negro and who would have responsibility for the bulletin to be published, over-all charge of the campaigns, work at the UN, etc.; an Organizing Director (also a Negro) who would have responsibility for field work, speaking tours, the national mobilization, organizing branches; a Publicity and Fund-raising Director. At least four additional persons would be on the office staff.

IV. Africa Defense and Aid Fund.

A. Program. The program would be an extension of what the Fund has been doing over the last few years -- aiding in the defense of those arrested, giving emergency assistance with political refugees, etc.

B. Offices. One office should be in New York working as closely as possible with the ACOA. A separate Board would have to be set up and immediate work done to achieve tax exemption. A second office should be established in Africa. The logical places for such an office would be Leopoldville

(Memo on ACOA program)

-4-

or Dar es Salaam. The Africa office would maintain direct contact with political refugees and leaders from southern Africa, and also would keep closely in touch with leaders of independent Africa.

C. Staff.

1) Initially in the U.S. there would be a Director and a Fund-raiser and two clerical assistants.

2) In Africa initially there would be a Director and a secretary.

D. Procedure. The immediate fund-raising goal should be for about \$250,000. The campaign could be built around either the Angola or South Africa situation. A reorganization of the present sponsors would have to be undertaken. Also a preliminary fact-finding trip to Africa would have to be undertaken both to get up-to-the-minute facts on the situation and to decide where an office should be located. Choosing the right personnel would be fundamental. The procedure should begin just as soon as the decision has been made.