

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

Annual Report of the Executive Director

March 9, 1959

The Year in Retrospect

Perhaps it would be fitting to begin this Annual Report to the Executive Board with a brief summary of the more important developments in Africa during 1958. It is against the background of these events that the urgency of the task of the American Committee on Africa can be seen. Nineteen fifty-eight was a year in which great events transpired in Africa. The power of African nationalism grew tremendously. The way was paved for new countries to become independent in 1960. And one country, Guinea, was thrust upon the world scene as an independent republic. By voting "no" in the referendum on the DeGaulle constitution, the republic of Guinea became the newest independent nation in the world. But this was only one of the developments particularly affecting French territory in Africa which indicated the breaking up of an empire. Virtually all of the remaining thirteen French territories have decided to become autonomous and therefore responsible for the internal workings of their own governments. Without doubt this means that within a very few years most of what is now French Africa will be independent, but undoubtedly retaining some economic ties with France.

Nineteen fifty-eight was a year in which highly significant conferences were held in virtually all parts of Africa. In April, in Ghana, the first Conference of African Independent States met. All of the independent countries of the continent, with the exception of the Union of South Africa, attended the Conference and participated fully. A permanent organization was established that now has its headquarters in New York. The secretariat is composed of the permanent staff representatives of the independent countries at the United Nations.

In North Africa a conference of Morocco, Tunisia, and the Algerian FLN was held in Tangier and laid the foundations for an eventual North African Federation.

In French Africa important conferences were held in Bamako and in Cotonou. These conferences not only indicated that the French territories wanted independence but also that they hoped to establish a federation.

In mid-September a conference with non-governmental representatives coming from Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland, and Zanzibar was held in Tanganyika. A permanent organization called the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa was set up. On a regional basis this represented the same kind of permanent organization which grew out of the All African People's Conference held in early December in Accra. Through these conferences African nationalists expressed their conviction that a balkanization of the continent must be avoided as various territories become independent. The necessity for regional federations was enunciated not only in the decisions of the All African People's Conference, but in the conferences held in French territory and the Tangier conference. A beginning also may have been made with the announcement of a plan of union for Ghana and Guinea. The loan of 28 million dollars by the Ghana government to Guinea was a concrete evidence of the intentions of these two countries to be of help to one another.

The urgency of developments in Africa made themselves felt in the annual meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations. There were so many issues on

the agenda of the meeting involving Africa, that the session has been commonly called "The Africa Session." One step toward the creation of an effective UN program in Africa came with the establishment of the Economic Commission for Africa. The first meeting was held in Addis Ababa at the end of the year.

If on the whole the year 1958 could be characterized as one in which creative progress was made toward independence amid gropings toward the idea of regional federation, there were also signs of serious deterioration. The Algerian war continued with the useless loss of life. Relations between all of North Africa and France continued to deteriorate at a rapid pace. It is obvious that the only way in which a sound relationship between North Africa and France can be established is by ending the war in Algeria. There is no sign that this will happen soon. The bombing of the Tunisian village, Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef, in February was a dramatic expression of the deterioration of relationships. Also there was continued retrogression in the Union of South Africa. Prime Minister Strydom died and in his place Dr. Verwoerd came to power, an even more extreme advocate of apartheid than was Strydom. The chasm between the European and the non-European population grew deeper and tensions greater.

Another area of the continent in which there seemed to be continued deterioration in the relationships of the Africans to the Europeans was in the Central African federation. There the government of the Federation is in the hands of the European minority. Under Sir Roy Welensky, the Prime Minister, the Federation is campaigning for independence in 1960. If this independence came, it would probably parallel the government by European minority which exists in the Union of South Africa. Therefore this is being bitterly opposed by the organized Africans in Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The United States policy showed at least some signs of responding to the urgency of nationalist developments in Africa. The section of the State Department dealing with African affairs was greatly expanded. New consulates and new offices of the United States Information Agency were opened in various parts of the continent. An Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs was appointed for the first time. The United States continued to follow an equivocal policy on some of the most crucial issues, particularly on the question of demanding that Portugal cease perpetuating the fiction that her African territories were really provinces, rather than non-self-governing territories. Some observers saw hope that there would be an eventual shift in American policy on the Algerian question in that the United States abstained rather than voting against the resolution backed by the African-Asian countries in the United Nations for a settlement of the Algerian question by negotiation. There was a step forward in the United States policy as related to South Africa in that for the first time the United States representative spoke out in direct criticism of apartheid in South Africa. But on the whole the United States was still plagued by its traditional policy of seeing Africa as an extension of Europe rather than as an entity in its own right. Nevertheless there is some sign of hope that the urgency of African developments will lead to a more enlightened American policy in the year ahead.

Activities of the American Committee on Africa

What follows is a listing in brief form of various activities of the American Committee on Africa during 1958.

1. South Africa. The Committee put a great deal of time into making arrangements for Dean Erwin N. Griswold, of the Harvard Law School, to attend the opening of the treason trial August 1, 1958, as an international observer. Special funds were raised in order to make Dean Griswold's trip a possibility. In this

connection the help of the Sidney Hillman Foundation was indispensable. Dean Griswold spent a little more than a month in South Africa and worked closely with the leading defense attorneys. Without question he made a significant contribution. As one of the defense attorneys put it, "The main contribution of Dean Griswold was that his presence made the Judges act more like judges than would otherwise have been possible." The Committee was not able to take very much advantage from a publicity point of view of Dean Griswold's presence in South Africa because if his presence there had been linked to the Committee it would have meant that his usefulness would have been greatly curtailed. Unfortunately this was also something which plagued us upon his return to the United States.

The other main activity relating to South Africa was the continuation of our efforts to aid those who are being tried for treason. In this connection it should be mentioned that Mrs. Mary-Louise Hooper has been acting as the representative of the Defense Fund on the West Coast. In effect she has been a volunteer staff worker. The Executive Board should know of the amazing amount of time and energy that Mrs. Hooper has put into the work. We sent \$8,320 on to the Treason Trial Defence Fund in Johannesburg.

2. The Nkrumah Dinner. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister of Ghana, visited the United States for about a two-week period toward the latter part of July. Among his principal public appearances and public statements was one made at a dinner which the American Committee on Africa co-sponsored along with the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the Waldorf Astoria. Approximately 1,100 attended this significant event. Dr. Nkrumah spoke of the ACOA as follows:

"The American Committee on Africa also bears good testimony to the growing interest which many Americans in all walks of life are taking in Africa and its many problems. I am sure that the work of this Committee will continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship and understanding which exist between us."

3. The All African People's Conference. Four representatives of the Committee traveled from the United States to Accra to be fraternal delegates at the first All African People's Conference. The four, in addition to the Executive Director, were Frank Montero, William X. Scheinman, and Homer A. Jack. These four were joined at Accra by Richard Sklar, who had been studying for the year in Nigeria on a Ford Fellowship. Not only was the Conference itself one of the utmost importance but the ACOA delegation seems to have made its presence felt. Key representatives of the United States government and of organized labor in the United States have made this known to us. Our four representatives at the Conference spent two days in Washington following their return in discussions with State Department officials and members of Congress reporting on the Conference and urging the necessity of a more dynamic American policy if the United States is not to lose prestige greatly among the African people.

4. Kenya African Elected Members Defense Effort. In May of 1958 Tom Mboya and six other African Elected Members of the Legislative Council in Kenya were tried in court on charges of conspiracy. The Committee received urgent requests to give what aid it could to help with a defense fund. After careful consultation it was decided that at least a limited effort could be made by the staff toward raising funds. We raised and sent on to the African Elected Members Organization in Kenya \$2,254. This effort, small as it was, was a highly significant indication to the African leaders in Kenya that they had support from Americans in their struggle for justice.

5. The issue of Portuguese colonies. Ever since Portugal became a member of the United Nations she has refused to comply with the request of the Secretary General that she report on her non-self-governing territories. The position of the Portuguese government is that she has no non-self-governing territories, and that her large areas of Angola and Mozambique in Africa are really parts of Portugal proper. Probably conditions are worse in Portuguese territory in Africa than in any other part of the continent. Nevertheless there are only limited ways in which the facts about these terrible economic and political conditions can be brought to the attention of the world. For the second straight year at the United Nations General Assembly one of the most important issues for the African countries was the question of Portuguese territories in Africa and their relationship to the Division of the United Nations on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories. This year our Committee prepared two documents. One was a carefully prepared mimeographed document which was sent to all of the delegations to the United Nations pointing out that Portugal was in violation of the Charter of the United Nations by not making reports on her non-self-governing territories. Secondly, the Committee published a manuscript written by Professor Marvin Harris of Columbia University on the problem of labor and education in the Portuguese territory of Mozambique. This also was made available to all of the delegations at the United Nations and we are told was of real importance to them in giving them perspective on the problem of Portuguese Africa.

6. The Status of South West Africa. Every year since the United Nations was formed the question of the status of South West Africa has come before the General Assembly for consideration. South Africa, which is the administering power, increasingly has treated the territory of South West Africa as if it were an integral part of the Union. This year there was a hopeful break-through in that the Union of South Africa agreed to allow a Mission from the United Nations to visit South Africa in order to talk over the status of South West Africa with government officials. This mission was composed of representatives of three countries: the United States, Great Britain, and Brazil. In preparation for the visit of the Mission to South Africa, the American Committee on Africa sent a delegation of some ten people to talk with Walter N. Walmsley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in the State Department and the United States representative on the Mission. The purpose of the discussion with the United States representative was to urge the United States not to give ground to South Africa and to urge that South Africa bring the territory of South West Africa under the trusteeship system of the United Nations. Representatives from the following organizations participated in this discussion with Walmsley: International League for the Rights of Man, Episcopal Churchmen for South Africa, American Association for the United Nations, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, United Auto Workers, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Americans for Democratic Action, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and of course the American Committee on Africa.

7. Recognition of the Republic of Guinea. Guinea became an independent country at the end of September. Our Committee immediately sent congratulatory messages to President Sékou Touré and also send telegrams and letters to President Eisenhower, Secretary of State Dulles, and Mr. J. C. Satterthwaite, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the State Department, urging recognition of Guinea and United States aid to Guinea. It took a little more than a month for the United States to recognize Guinea. There was a great deal of hesitancy in Washington to move too quickly, inasmuch as France was bitter because the people of Guinea had voted against the DeGaulle constitution. We hope that our efforts, which included a letter from our Vice-Chairman in the Letters column in the New York Times, helped to speed up United States recognition of Guinea.

8. Meetings. Following are some of the meetings or receptions the Committee organized. On February 24th a luncheon was held at the Brass Rail Restaurant for Professor Julius Lewin of the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. In June Archbishop Joost de Blank of Cape Town, South Africa, spoke at a meeting held at Community Church in New York on the South African situation. A reception in honor of Sylvanus Olympio, the Prime Minister of French Togoland, was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Tree in November. A public meeting was held at the Carnegie Endowment International Center on the Algerian question in early December where the speakers were Michael James of the New York Times, M'hammed Yazid of the Algerian National Liberation Front, and Hans Kohn of City College.

9. Speakers. During the year the Committee took some responsibility for two persons who arrived in the United States from South Africa and one who did not arrive from Nyasaland. The Committee was largely responsible for making arrangements to bring Miss Violaine Junod of the University of Natal to the United States. She spent about a year in the United States traveling in many parts of the country and doing a great deal of speaking. The grant to cover her initial expenditures was given through the Phelps Stokes Fund for tax-exempt purposes. Second, Ronald Segal, the editor of Africa South, was in the United States for about three months toward the end of the year. He spoke many times from the East Coast to the West Coast under the auspices of the Committee.

A great deal of planning and effort went into the arrangements for a speaker's tour for W. M. Chirwa of Nyasaland. For some reason which has never been clearly explained, he did not arrive on October 6th when he was expected, and no word has ever been heard from him. For a while we were concerned that something might have happened to him, but subsequently learned that for reasons of his own he just never left Nyasaland. We were able to arrange for substitutes for some of the meetings which Chirwa was supposed to address, but on the whole this experience was an unfortunate one for us during 1958.

10. Speaking Dates. We furnished speakers for about 35 to 40 different groups -- church, labor, school, community, etc. Of these the Executive Director filled about half the engagements; the others were filled largely from among African students and other Africans in this country and from Board members of the ACOA.

11. Literature. The literature program has consisted of the following:

First, publication of Africa Today. Six issues of the magazine have come out. The policy on the distribution of Africa Today changed during the year. Up to last year the magazine was sent to virtually all contributors. The new policy is that it will be sent only to those who subscribe and to those who are among our larger contributors. The circulation of Africa Today at the moment is 3,000.

Second, the Committee initiated the publication of Africa Today Pamphlets. Two were published: the first by Lorna Hahn of Temple University, on Algeria, and the second by Marvin Harris of Columbia University, on Mozambique. Five thousand of the Algeria pamphlet were published and to date about 750 have been sold or distributed in other ways. Five thousand of the Mozambique pamphlet were printed but approximately 2,500 were distributed as a special issue of Africa Today, and of the remaining 2,500 approximately 300 were sold or given away up to the end of 1958. We are still getting many quantity orders for the Mozambique pamphlet, and the probability is that we will run out of our stock in the course of a few months' time. We need to do a much better job in promoting the pamphlets that we do publish. But this part of

our literature program is one that has very great importance. I think that the fact that the distribution of the Algeria pamphlet has not gone so well is not entirely due to lack of work on it in the office. It is also due to the general attitude of the American public to the Algerian question and the fact that the particular pamphlet we have was written when the Algerian question itself was in flux. The situation has changed considerably since the time the pamphlet was written. Orders for the pamphlet are still coming in, however, and we should sell all of them eventually.

Third, we published in mimeographed form the Africa-UN Bulletin. We have not attempted to circulate this widely. It goes to a special group of about 300 concerned people. Elizabeth S. Landis is the editor of the Bulletin and it does an important job of keeping those especially interested in African developments at the United Nations abreast of events.

Fourth, the Committee carries approximately thirty titles of pamphlets published by other organizations, especially the Africa Bureau of London and the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg. During the year we sold about \$280 worth of pamphlet material.

12. Students. The Committee receives hundreds of letters in the course of a year from African students studying in the United States or wishing to come to the United States from Africa. We receive requests for loans, for travel grants, and for scholarship funds. We respond to each one of the letters either by referring the student involved to an organization which may be able to be of some assistance to him, or by indicating some of the schools and colleges here where he can apply and where he may receive some scholarship help.

Also we give limited help to students who get in touch with us about part-time employment. This is not an aspect of our program to which we give much time, not because it isn't important, but because there are other things that take priority. Dale Harrison handles this aspect of the program. About twenty-four students were given some help in finding jobs in 1958.

13. Tax Exemption. In May we finally heard from the Bureau of Internal Revenue that our application for tax exemption had been denied. The grounds for denying it were that our activities are too political. William B. Landis, attorney with Mudge, Stern, Baldwin & Todd, wrote a lengthy and effective brief in reply to the decision of the Bureau. In September Mr. Landis and the Executive Director went to Washington and spent about two hours with three officials of the Bureau discussing the case. We are still awaiting final action by the Bureau on our appeal.

14. Mailing List and Mailings. At the beginning of 1958 there were about 10,000 contributors and subscribers on the mailing list of the organization. At the end of the year approximately 3,000 had been added. The list grew primarily by arrangements made with other organizations to exchange a portion of our lists. Such exchanges were made with about fifteen organizations. The number of pieces that were sent out, excluding the mailings to those already on the American Committee on Africa list, was 86,000. We dropped approximately 600 from our list at the end of the year because we had not heard from them for more than two years. There were an estimated 3,600 on our list who did not make a contribution during 1958 but who had contributed during 1957.

15. Finances. Finance reports have been sent to the Board earlier this year, including the auditor's report.

16. Organizational Subcommittees. The committees within the organization that took a considerable amount of staff time and attention include:

- a. The Editorial Board.
- b. The Finance Committee.
- c. The UN Committee.
- d. The Steering Committee.
- e. The Organization Committee.

17. An Appraisal of the Year. Nineteen fifty-eight was a very busy year for the Committee and for its staff. The one thing that is most obvious from a staff point of view is that additional staff is necessary if the program itself is to be expanded. This is particularly important on the executive level. If there is to be a more active program and the program is to be more effective in dealing with basic policy issues, it is essential that there be additional staff. It is to be hoped that efforts presently being made to accomplish this end will be successful.

The Committee maintained five fulltime staff workers during 1958 and at the same time paid off approximately half of the debt that we had at the beginning of the year. If everything works as expected during 1959 we should be able not only to expand our staff but to pay off the rest of the debt we owe.

It would be impossible for the organization to accomplish nearly as much as it does unless there were devoted members of the Board and others not on the Board who give generously of their time to the work of the Committee. Although the organization has its internal problems, members of the Board are on the whole to be congratulated because of the seriousness with which they view the work of the Committee and because of the time and creative energy which so many give to its program.

It is important that there be a Committee publication that goes to everyone on the mailing list with regularity. Too many of those on the mailing list receive only appeal letters and do not receive regular reports of activities. It is to be hoped that in 1959 such a newsheet or bulletin can be instituted.

There is no question about the fact that for the next few years events in Africa will capture the attention of the world. This should mean that if the American Committee on Africa at all fulfills the responsibilities which it assumes, it should be able to expand in its program, in its staff, and in its finances. Nineteen fifty-nine should be a crucial and challenging year.

George M. Houser