



# STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BINGHAMTON

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 30, 1982

TO: ACAS Executive Board Members  
Others mentioned in letter

FROM: Immanuel Wallerstein, Co-Chair, ACAS

RE: Our immediate future

The meeting in Washington, D.C. of the Board clearly exposed both the strengths and weaknesses of ACAS as presently constituted. The strength lies in the unquestioned need all associated with ACAS feel for the existence of an organization that can bring to bear the expertise and even more the prestige of Africa scholars in support of African liberation. The basic weakness is that we have been an organization of 150-odd members with about 10-15 people who give time as well as dues. It has become clear that, even at a minimal level of activity, we need 400 members and 30-40 people who give time. With 10-15 workers we exhaust ourselves and cannot maintain the pace. The heavy turnover of the Executive Board in five years is one piece of evidence. The generalized desire of the 10-15 active people to reduce time input (as expressed recently) is another.

The question therefore is how to move the whole enterprise from our present unsustainable level to that of a viable structure. We decided on the following basic strategy: (1) arrange a general meeting of ACAS on Dec. 6, 1983 (immediately before the Boston ASA meeting) of a kind that would produce the viable structure from that point forward; (2) Sustain the infrastructure of the organization until then.

In order to respect everyone's present abilities to offer time, we divided up tasks between now and December 1983. I am writing to reconfirm this division of tasks and to ask all of us to respect our own commitments and that of others. The three major sectors of activity for the next year are:

- (1) preparation of the ACAS general meeting
- (2) production of the ACAS Newsletter
- (3) response to political crisis situations as they emerge, as well as maintaining the membership.

The main purpose of my letter is to make clear that, if we are to respect people's commitments, the three segments must operate relatively autonomously and in a self-sustaining manner.

I have assumed responsibility with Dave Wiley for task (1). This is the make-or-break session for ACAS. If we are to survive and flourish, we must persuade a large number of people that ACAS can be a pro-active (not reactive), eminently political organization. The sessions must therefore be oriented to developing a program of action in the U.S. for the two-year period following the ACAS general meeting (on the presumption that we will have such a general meeting every two years). We must emerge from the meeting with a set of directives to ourselves and the enthusiasm with which to do the task. It is therefore crucial that the meeting be well-planned, and well-attended. Experience also dictates that the meeting should not be overlong.

Dave and I have therefore worked out the following kind of structure for the meeting.

10-12: a plenary session, which will be a general stocktaking, not of US policy under Reagan but of what the various groups have in fact been able to accomplish. Jim Turner and I will organize this session and both of us will talk. We'll try to involve as co-participants Randall Robinson, Jean Sindab, and Jennifer Davis.

1-3: Four workshops simultaneously on the following four loci of prospective political action.

- (a) Southern Africa in Washington, D.C. (executive & legislative branch)
- (b) Southern Africa in rest of U.S. (any community-level activity such as divestment)
- (c) political action vis-a-vis rest of Africa (notably Zaire, western Sahara, Horn, but not limited thereto)
- (d) U.S. government and Africa scholars (politics of cooperation with government; attempts of CIA, DOD, USIA, etc. to enlist scholars)

Bill Minter has agreed to organize panel (a), Alan Cooper will organize (b), Nsongola (c) and Dave Wiley (d). The responsibility of each organizer is threefold:

- (i) prepare, alone or with any help he wishes, a draft political program (what ACAS would want to get done in following two years)
- (ii) find 2-3 persons who will be ready to serve as a panel to discuss, debate, criticize statement which will be pre-distributed
- (iii) preside over collective rewriting of this program in workshop session itself

3:30-5:30: Concluding session will have three parts:

- (i) Reports from workshop. Adoption of the programs of action
- (ii) Discussion of structure of ACAS (I will prepare a set of written proposals for the debate)
- (iii) Election of new officers and executive board

Dave and I will be back to all of you later with more details and about how to get people to come. I will say now that if we can't get at least 100 people to show up for this general meeting, it will be impossible in my opinion to propel the organization to a level where it will be self-sustaining.

Task (2) is the Newsletter. Three persons have assumed the joint task of getting it out. Hunt Davis has agreed to be Production Editor. George Shepherd has agreed to be the Executive Editor (principally the decisions on what to include). Joel Samoff, using the existing network of the Research Committee has agreed to obtain substantive contributions for the newsletter. The rest of the Executive Committee should also submit news items to George Shepherd.

It is my hope that three newsletters can be produced between now and the Dec. 1983 meeting - circa February, June, and October 1983.

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Final task (3) is primarily "crisis" response. Chris Root has agreed to maintain our liaison in Washington and in case of urgent need to activate the telephone network. Allan Isaacman will continue to work on such matters as the Brutus case, etc., Marylee Wiley will maintain the membership rolls and Tom Shick will help in recruitment. Carole Thompson will organize our educational panels at the ASA meetings.

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The way to keep these activities self-maintaining is for people who have business concerning them to deal directly with those in charge and not via anyone else.

Specifically, if you have an input to our Dec. 1983 general meeting, write or call me or Dave Wiley. If you have something to put into the Newsletter, send it directly to George Shepherd. In particular, please do not use Allen as a relief man for other tasks. If there are any problems about coordinating tasks or smoothing over rough spots, Jim Turner and I as co-chairs will handle it. Refer problems to us. Please everyone respect these guidelines.