

STATEMENT ON BEHALF
OF
THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

ON
APARTHEID, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND COLONIALISM
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

HELD IN KITWE, JULY 24TH TO AUGUST 4TH 1967

BY

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates:

On behalf of the American Committee on Africa with which I am associated as its Vice-President, I express thanks for being accorded the opportunity of addressing a few short remarks to the Seminar.

The present position of the American Committee on Africa on the subjects with which this Conference is concerned, Mr. Chairman, is I believe well known to the representatives of all observer organisations in attendance here and the history of our identification with the freedom movement on the entire continent of Africa can, I am confident, be attested by the political leaders of most of the States that have cast off the yoke of colonialism since the end of the Second world War.

For the information of those delegates to whom the American Committee on Africa may not be known, I pray your indulgence Mr. Chairman, to advise them that for most of the last two decades, the American Committee on Africa under the guidance of Co-Chairmen Donald Harrington and A. Philip Randolph and the executive direction of George Houser, with Peter Weiss as its President, has organized financial assistance for the support of Africa's freedom fighters, for her embattled anti-colonialist leaders, for the sufferers of pre-independence repression, for South Africa's political prisoners and the victims of apartheid and continues to extend its efforts in aid of the various liberation movements and leaders on whom the unfinished task of completing Africa's freedom falls.

Modest as our financial resources have been, Mr. Chairman, we have done what was possible from our Defence and Aid Fund supported entirely by contributions privately donated by concerned Americans. Our Committee has also supported the cause of African freedom by our introduction of many African leaders to the American people on a wide scale.

The American people have not been, and are not well-informed about the real issues in Southern Africa. The result is, Mr. Chairman, that in the United States there has existed and persists an apathy towards Africa's critical problems. Some racialist forces, deeply entrenched in strong positions of political power in the United States, look with favor on the policies of Apartheid being extended in Southern Africa. These are the same baleful influences that seek to obstruct the forces of freedom generated by the Civil Rights movement in the United States and that would turn the clock backwards to deprive black Americans of those rights of partial citizenship which they have at great cost won. These are the groups that seek to perpetuate "separate but equal" anomalies in the American society for the purpose of keeping the black man in his place.

Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, the American Committee on Africa continues to make progress in its effort to inform and arouse the American people in respect to the true situation in Southern Africa and the way in which slowly but surely, the lines of a mortal struggle are being drawn, the ultimate outcome of which, though shrouded in the future, is without alternative. We pledge our unrelenting commitment to this work of enlightenment and persuasion.

Lest the impression should be left with the members of the Seminar that the American people will be indifferent to the outcome of the struggle against apartheid, I wish to assure them that nothing could be further from the truth.

So much has been said regarding the subject matter of the Seminar that I believe, like you, Mr. Chairman, that the substance of our collective

interest has by now been amply ventilated. Without doubt, it has been clearly shown how the colonialist and white minority governments of Southern Africa continue to be strengthened and hardened for conflict by the trade, aid and investments that flow from other states and territories. This debate that is going forward here in Kitwe, has brought out that while the colossus on the North American continent is perhaps the most guilty of all of the States concerned in strengthening the system of Apartheid, this is true primarily by reason of the great weight and influence that she possesses, the fact that those who advise her leaders are frequently more obsessed with the protection of property and profits than with respect for human dignity; and are often so completely racist in their persuasion that they prostitute their country's charter of liberty enshrined in the Declaration of Independence.

There is no denying that this great nation, if her course is not soon changed, may yet find herself in the unenviable position of being actively aligned with the repressive States of Southern Africa allied in cold war pattern in gruesome heated warfare, the blood of Africa's patriots dripping from her hands.

The traditional supporter of South Africa, the temporizer with Smith's Rhodesia, the little imperial island across the English Channel, is of course the greatest trader and investor - and another major villain in the piece. These two, taken together are partners in the crime of evasion and avoidance. They talk together, act together, support one another in every matter or situation of mutual interest. The fate of the millions of Africans affected by apartheid and the defiance by South Africa of the United Nations and the record of Portuguese inhumanity, are of slight interest to them. Whenever the chips are down and the Security Council faces a decision affecting neo-colonialism and the freedom of the people of Southern Africa, all sorts of specious and technical reasonings are by them dragged out to evade and avoid the moral responsibility of the implementation of policy decisions for doing right and defying wrong, - except of course when the decision being made is one that neither of them feels should presently be implemented such as that of bringing South West Africa under United Nations dominion and control.

But, Mr. Chairman, as we look further at this crazy-quilt of trade and other relationships we find that in examining the statistics, not only is the trading with the oppressor states being spurred by those to which I have referred, but some Socialist states, other European States, like France and West Germany, and even regrettably certain African States continue to trade with and furnish labor to the enemies of African freedom; from the land of the Rising Sun the ships with increasing frequency ply to satisfy the greed of her merchant princes at the price of the freedom of their black brothers in Southern Africa. No, Mr. Chairman, there are few guiltless ones and until and unless there is a total and complete quarantine of the Southern African oppressor states and territories, there will be no change whatever in the progress and strengthening of racialism and inhuman exploitation of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa short of the War of Liberation. I repeat, Mr. Chairman, there must be a total and complete quarantine of the Southern African oppressor states and territories.

In our Committee's paper filed with the Secretary of this International Seminar the Committee's attitude and opinion on these matters, with our recommendations, have been set forth in detail. Because neither the United States nor Britain is prepared to have any confrontation with South Africa and Portugal, nor Britain with Rhodesia, the United Nations is emasculated as an effective instrument to expel South Africa from Southwest Africa or

to suppress the Ian Smith rebel regime in Rhodesia.

The liberation movements in Southern Africa have ineluctably and correctly reached the conclusion that they must themselves generate the force to bring down the colonialist and white minority regimes in Southern Africa. They cannot now rely on the United Nations nor on the big powers. Nor can they assume that the independent African States have the present capability to supply the power to effect the necessary results. The great Afro-American freedom fighter, Frederick Douglass, stated a century ago that 'he who would be free must first himself strike the blow.'

As one diplomat rudely and crudely put it to a liberation leader since this seminar began "Don't expect us to do your dirty work for you"! And the reply was equally firm, correct and clear "The struggle for freedom may have to be bloody, but dirty never can it be called." It seems that the Rubicon of Southern African struggle has already been crossed and that the only means of liquidating the most degrading way of life designed for man by man since the American chattel slavery system and Hitler's master race theory were rejected, will be by constantly increasing the force by violence necessary to end the terror and the tyranny.

As this engagement mounts, Mr. Chairman, as it logically must, it is to be assumed and expected that the great powers will take sides, and the danger of a world conflagration will arise. Indeed the danger is already obvious - this being the reason for our presence here. The deluge is already upon us.

I must warn you Mr. Chairman that the reality of the situation in the United States will not be helpful to the liberation movements for the foreseeable future. At best I could now describe the official American position as one of reluctant concern. Officially our Government would like to sweep the whole complex of Southern African issues under the rug and preferably to see them just disappear forever. For the time being the United States will tend to accept the status quo in all of Southern Africa with the possibility of an occasional piously critical speech or two and the further possibility of limited, very limited, action implying disapproval or racism.

While it is difficult to distinguish between the private establishment and the Government, the United States is not a monolithic state. One must make a distinction, Mr. Chairman, between official Government and establishment policy on the one hand and the attitudes of many millions of Americans, black and white, on the other. There are strong forces at work in our country, not yet vocal enough however, entirely sympathetic to the struggle against racialism in Southern Africa. These forces are in labor, the liberal Church, the civil rights movement, the American student movement and our so-called grass roots people, and some in the Congress as well. It is our hope in the American Committee on Africa that by a coalition of these forces the Government of the United States will be pressured into the adoption of a dynamic policy in support of the freedom struggle in Southern Africa. Similar action has been taken in other critical times with good results - it can be done again.

In the meantime, many of us are unhappy at knowing that our country's spokesmen attend important international conclaves like this one, unable to offer either leadership or direction, barren of any program of positive value to these world forums, fiddling in effect, while the lamp of world peace burns low and the fate of our brothers in Southern Africa, to whom some twenty-

two million Americans feel closely related by ties of common ethnic and geographic origin, is relegated to the vagaries of the outcome of a seemingly unending and largely unaided struggle for freedom and human dignity. The Afro-American people we assure you Mr. Chairman, as well as many other Americans, draw no comfort from this dismal perspective and will be working to change the situation. There is still time in this Seminar for the distinguished representative of our country to give some positive and meaningful expression of hope for support to the struggling people of Southern Africa in their determined quest for freedom.

The American Committee on Africa, as one of the Constitutional members of the International Defence and Aid Fund, also urges delegates to the Seminar to support the three recommendations made by the Fund's President Canon Collins in his address to the Seminar, viz:-

1. To support the Fund's special money-raising efforts.
2. To call upon member States to make direct contributions to the International Defence and Aid Fund and to the United Nations Trust Fund.
3. That member States be asked to make direct contributions to the Fund earmarked for developing its work under clause 3 of its terms of reference: "to keep the conscience of the world alive to the issues at stake".

We therefore emphasize as our recommendation the urgency for the expansion of the United Nations Trust Fund to include the Portuguese territories and Rhodesia as well as South Africa; and that the other recommendations from the non-governmental organizations which we have assisted in framing in the course of the Seminar be favorably considered as already placed before this body.

I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for the time granted to me to make these comments to the Seminar. I return to the United States to press for the further activation of the American Committee on Africa in a renewed program within the United States and the United Nations for the elimination of apartheid, racial discrimination and colonialism in Southern Africa, to arouse the moral conscience of our nation so as to develop the widest appeal for material assistance to the victims of apartheid and the opponents of racialism and colonialism in Southern Africa.

You, Mr. Chairman, in your brilliant analysis of the problem of apartheid to this Seminar on behalf of the Republic of Tanzania quoted from the lines of the great English poet Oliver Goldsmith this passage:

"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates and men decay".

Mr. Chairman, should you by any chance have intended a veiled reference to my country, may I assure you Sir, that although unquestionably the accumulation of the wealth of the United States is vast, the people of this nation are by no means in a state of moral dry-rot. They are largely misled, misinformed and mis-directed. They are capable of reacting like decent, intelligent, and enlightened human beings. Do not be surprised Sir, by the passage which I will now quote you in conclusion to show the way in which the American mind has from time to time expressed itself: I quote:

"This country and its institutions belong to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the form of their government, they have the constitutional right to amend it or the revolutionary right to abolish or overthrow it."

These, Mr. Chairman, are the words of no wild-eyed revolutionary, but of the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln. Our people have chosen the path of using Constitutional measures to amend and influence their government and its policies, a method which we intend to preserve and improve by constant struggle until absolute democracy is attained. The people of Southern Africa however, do not have any choice but to engage in violent revolution to overthrow and abolish the evil systems of apartheid and racist minority rule.

And the members of the American Committee on Africa and countless other Americans recognise too well that no American can be secure and truly free as long as the people of Southern Africa are and remain oppressed.

I thank you, Sir.

Hope R. Stevens