

AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON AFRICA

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 6, 1962

TO : Executive Board members
FROM : Staff
SUBJ.: Perspectives on ACOA program

OUR GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

Ever since its beginning, the ACOA has been oriented toward those areas of Africa that are not yet independent. Although this does limit our outreach, it is legitimate for us to continue to do this, in view of our size, in view of the fact that no other organization is giving specific attention to these areas, and in view of the fact that the problems in these particular areas are going to be even more severe in the next few years than they have been in the past. Therefore, the general perspective of our program from our point of view should be our sympathy with the desires of the African people for equality and independence, and our desire to help them in any way we can. Furthermore, our purpose is to work for an American policy which will reflect these concerns of ours. I do not believe that the time has come when the ACOA has to make a decision as to whether it will go out of existence when all of Africa is independent, or whether it will develop a new type of program oriented towards a different problem. With the very difficult struggle ahead in South Africa, South West Africa, the Portuguese territories, and the Rhodesias, there is a time-consuming task which the ACOA still faces. The problem of achieving independence in those countries which are now sovereign in Africa has been relatively uncomplicated (with the exception of Algeria) when one compares them with what is likely to take place in the next few years in southern Africa.

It is likely then in our judgement, that southern Africa should continue to be the area of concentration for ACOA programs and projects in the year ahead.

PROGRAM AREAS

Projects and programs which the ACOA develops fall generally into the following categories:

1. Concern with US Policy Towards Africa: Although we have especially concerned ourselves with US policy toward the non-self-governing territories, this has not been and should not be exclusively the case. What we have done in relation to the Congo crisis is an example. The Committee should be prepared to do certain specific things in relation to other critical problems such as the Congo that arise in the days ahead. Through statements which we have prepared

../..

and publicly issued, through correspondence with government officials, through conversations with government representatives and occasionally the organization of delegations to talk with government representatives, and in other ways we have attempted to influence the direction of US policy.

2. Activity in the United Nations: This has included work with petitioners, the preparation of informational material, keeping up-to-date on current issues affecting US policy.

3. Public Informational Activities: (a) the publication of AFRICA TODAY and pamphlets; (b) scheduling speakers; (c) holding press conferences and working through the media of the press, radio and television; (d) holding of public meetings, demonstrations and conferences; (e) being of assistance to African visitors and leaders coming to the United States.

4. Defense and Aid Activities: This work has been carried on primarily through our Africa Defense and Aid Fund which continues to be of direct assistance to Africans engaged in the struggle for freedom.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

In order to do an effective job on projects one has to achieve a balance between the worthwhileness of whatever the projects might be and the staff and the finances to carry the projects out. Due to a variety of factors the temptation has always been overwhelming to take on more than we should attempt to do with the resources which we have available in money and staff. Perhaps it is unavoidable that this should continue to be the case. Nevertheless, we think we should make the attempt to narrow our program objectives down so that we can attempt to do fewer things on a bigger scale and accomplish them with greater effect.

With this in mind, we list projects that we are already involved in and that it seems to us should be given priority. They are listed as major, minor and secondary items. Major items are those that involve maximum staff effort. Minor items are those that involve more limited staff time. Secondary items are those that the staff gives minimal time to but may be done principally through volunteer efforts.

Major Items:

1. Emergency Relief to Angola: We should attempt to get organized groups in the general community supporting this program by campaigns in churches, trade unions, student groups, etc.

2. Appeal for Action Against Apartheid: This should be geared to Human Rights Day on December 10, and should be supported by demonstrations and public meetings held all across the country. An attractive brochure with the names of many international figures should be used for public distribution. A pamphlet on the case for sanctions might be prepared as reference material for the campaign.

3. Literature Program, including publication of at least two pamphlets, and ten issues of AFRICA TODAY. Also, expanding the pamphlets we carry issued by groups elsewhere.

4. Working with Petitioners.

Minor Items:

1. Africa Freedom Day, 1963.

2. Speakers Program, including organizing nation-wide speaking tours for such persons as Basil Davidson, and African leaders, as well as organizing spot engagements for qualified Americans and for Africans who are here temporarily.

Secondary Items:

1. Organization of an Afro-American Leadership Conference on American foreign policy toward Africa, to be held in the fall.

2. The setting up of two regional conferences dealing with the crisis of southern Africa.

3. A Program of Hospitality for African Visitors: This should be done primarily through volunteers, although it would take some time in staff coordination. One of the problems here would be what it would cost the Committee if the hospitality includes taking the visitors out to dinner and to the theater at our expense.

It should be noted that any listing such as the above cannot possibly take into account the many specific requests which come to the staff almost every day and that somehow or other there has to be individual responsibility for. This includes talking with and taking care of visitors coming in or petitioners, arranging for radio or television time or a press conference, giving someone suggestions as to who might speak to their group, preparing a statement on a given issue which is being debated publicly.

The staff will prepare detailed memos for Board consideration of what is involved in implementing these projects as well as detailed plans on fund-raising.

STAFF

Our Committee will probably continue to be understaffed for what we attempt to take on. We suggest that the system of staff organization which we embarked upon last fall should continue this next year. Responsibilities would generally work out as follows:

1. Executive Director: Over-all responsibility for administration and keeping a finger in most every project and program. Specific responsibilities depending on how things develop.

2. Assistant Director: Major responsibility for the fund-raising program, both for the general budget and for the Africa Defense and Aid Fund. Also, over-all responsibility for the mailing list and the membership expansion of the organization.

3. Publications Director: Editor of the magazine, and responsible for the pamphlets, both our own and others that we distribute. Also responsible for some aspects of public relations work through press conferences, public statements, radio and television contacts.

4. Projects Director: Responsibility for the larger projects and on-going projects in which the Committee is involved. This would include special responsibility for the Appeal for Action campaign, certain organizational aspects of ERA, speakers program and conferences.