

History and background

ACOA was started in 1952 by Goerge Houser, a former Methodist minister and draft resister (was imprisoned during WW II). It's purpose was education and political agitation about African independence. The main base of support and leadership was church related and other liberals, mostly around New York. Many members of the board were (and continued to be until the last few years) Goerge's "old cronies" from WWII days.

After the early 1960's, when many African countries gained political independence, the emphasis in ACOA shifted towards southern Africa, specifically those territories still under white domination. At this time, ACOA was the only group working around Southern Africa issues in the U.S. In 1964, ACOA exposed the relationship between U.S. economic interests and white minority regimes, with the pamphlet, "Partners in Apartheid". They launched a boycott against 10 American banks (Chase, Ist National... and our own Continental), which became quite a big issue in New York, and a broad coalition of church and political groups (eg. SDS) were drawn into the Southern Africa

In the late '60's, several Black Americans came to work on the staff of ACOA, or were appointed to the Board. At this time there were no Black organizations focusing on Southern Africa, and there was a push to try to build a constituency in the Black community. As a basically white, liberal organization, ACOA proved not to be the base from which to operate. As it was not possible to "take over" ACOA with Black leadership, many of these people left to work with newly forming groups.

Relationships with Movement leaders: Because of Houser's long association with ACOA, and his periodic trips to Africa, and that for years ACOA was the only organization in the US for movements to relate to, he knew almost all the leadership of the early '60's (the African elite wasn't so big, after all). He has made it a point to maintain fraternal relationships, and is probably one of the few white Americans who can walk into an OAU meeting and know most of the people there. Because of this "personal approach" to political relationships, George has continued to relate to people most of us would consider politically questionable.

GRAE: Houser met Holden Roberto in 1957 in Leopoldville (4 years before armed struggle began). He informed Holden of the All African People's Convention, which Holden managed to attend in 1958 (Accra) where he made contact with other African leaders, and subsequently received support from Lumumba, Padmore, Nkrumah, and Fanon. When Holden came to the U.N. in the early '60's, he did so on a Guinea travel document and sat as a member of their delegation. In 1963, the OAU recognized GRAE (through 1971, although OAU still recognizes FNLA). Houser believes ACOA "was in good company in our relations with Roberto". In 1962 Houser and George Marcum (scholar) were invited to spend two weeks in northern Angola with UPA (precursor of FNLA). From 1963-65 ACOA sponsored a doctor for GRAE in Leopoldville. He was later implicated in a plot to remove Holden, and left the country. Thus ACOA has had an image of "supporting GRAE", and has from time to time been accused of channeling CIA support to GRAE, though no concrete evidence has been presented.

In 1969-70, with more progressive members of ACOA board and staff, a struggle went on for the sole recognition of MPLA as the only Angolan movement. The present position is that "MPLA is the most successful movement in Angola", though others are mentioned (FNLA and UNITA) in the annual "summary of the liberation struggles." All funds are to go only to MPLA (\$3,000 from Africa Fund in 1971-72).

BOARD: For years the ACOA Board was a rubber stamp of whatever Houser wanted. With more progressive members, and a new chairman (Judge Booth), the board has occasionally opposed George outright (eg. funding for NWRC which GH wanted to cut to 1/3, the Board insisted the full amount be granted). Members of staff are definitely not George's puppets, although they all find it difficult working with him.

HISTORY OF ACOA RELATIONSHIP WITH NWRC/ Eileen

In summer, 1971, when Prexy was leaving ACOA, he recommended that some kind of continuing effort be assured so that at least Southern Africa literature would be distributed (one of his functions as ACOA field staff). I was looking for money, so he proposed me to ACOA. I wrote a proposal for ACOA's participation in a "third world information center", ~~and~~ which included a stipend for one person to work 10 hours a week on solely literature distribution on behalf of the liberation movements. No political organizing in the name of ACOA was planned. "The Chicago Literature project" was funded as of November, 1971. I receive a \$100/month stipend; NWRC received \$100 for facilities, and \$46 /month is for misc. telephone, publicity, travel etc.

Rationale for Receiving Money from ACOA

At the outset I considered ACOA relationship as a good way to get a little money to do a necessary task in support of the liberation movements. NWRC and CCLANG didn't exist at this point, although CAIC was beginning to get organized, and we had a vision of a third world information center. The ACOA money helped put that vision into reality. At that time, we were all looking for some part-time work to keep ourselves alive and which would enable us to do political work around anti-imperialist struggles.

1) What are our points of agreement with ACOA regarding Southern Africa?

- oppose U.S. economic involvement, see it as supporting white, minority oppressive rule, actively work for withdrawal of U.S. economic interests
- oppose U.S. military and political support of minority regimes
- oppose U.S. aid to Portugal through NATO, demand end to Azores agreement
- support the armed struggle of African liberation movements; seek to inform American public, raise financial support
- support sanctions against Rhodesia; consider Smith regime illegal
- support majority rule for an undivided Namibia, no UN/SA compromise
- seek to educate and agitate around American involvement in Southern Africa seen as leading us into "another Vietnam"; consider American involvement as "imperialist."

2. What are our points of disagreement?

- CCLANG specifically support MPLA, PAIGC, and FRELIMO, and no other movements; it has no position on Namibia, Zimbabwe, or Southern Africa movements; ACOA has supported all movements fighting against Portuguese colonialism and white minority rule, although most financial support (and propaganda) goes to MPLA, FRELIMO, PAIGC. Also support ANC-Zimbabwe, and political prisoners in S.A. and Zimbabwe (through its own "Africa Defense and Aid Fund")
- though not explicitly stated, CCLANG works for a socialist regime after independence (thus our support for the most socialist movements); ACOA has no position other than "majority rule".
- CCLANG sees Southern Africa as part of a larger struggle against imperialism, and as a strategic point where imperialist can and will be defeated. We link the struggle to what is happening in Indo China, Latin America, Middle East, and the U.S.A. ACOA as an organization focuses strictly on ~~Southern~~ Africa, and has resisted (1970) linking South Africa with Israel, primarily because of Jewish donors who were influential at the time, although members of the staff pushed for it.
- CCLANG stresses the victories of the liberation movements, how we can learn from their struggles, the role of women, the role of theory, etc. ACOA's emphasis is more on the "just struggle for liberation" and "freedom from oppression"
- ACOA considers it important to lobby in Washington, testify before subcommittees of Congress and the U.N., agitate with businesses, bring legal suits, discourage tourism and cultural exchanges, etc. CCLANG has never engaged in these activities, and probably considers them non-essential to the struggle.
- CCLANG works more with local constituencies, trying to relate Southern Africa to Chicago, has more direct contact with other groups, more stress on material aid. ACOA is less concerned with building a base, although it

has twice attempted to do field work outside of New York. It's work is more oriented towards research and pushing through established channels.

- CCLAMG tries to operate on principles of collectivity in decision making, organization, and leadership. ACOA is centered around one executive, is more bureaucratic and less democratic.

3. Personal differences with ACOA

The points of disagreement above summarize my differences. These are primarily about what goals or type of government wanted for Southern Africa (and elsewhere) towards which we think we're working ("socialist" as against "majority rule"), and seeing S.A. as part of a world-wide struggle against imperialism, especially U.S. It is important that the most progressive forces, representing the true interests of the people of Africa and the world, regain control of the resources and land of Southern Africa, and thus remove yet another area from the penetration and neo-colonial domination of the Western Capitalist powers. (business, military, political)

4. How does ACOA influence us? Or the NWRC? Or me? How do we feel our position on Southern Africa is compromised by working with ACOA, or a center which received ACOA money? Or having a member of CCLAMG receive ACOA money?

To my knowledge, ACOA has never put any pressure on us to follow one program or restricted another, or even said what kind of literature we should and shouldn't sell. I personally have not felt compromised by this relationship, nor do I feel obliged to be a spokesperson for ACOA. I do not hide the affiliation; neither do I publicize it. No one has ever raised serious objection with me on finding this out.

5. How has our/NWRC/my relationship with ACOA facilitated our work around Southern Africa

- provided 1/3 operative expenses for NWRC (rent, utilities, phone)
- provided free literature
- provided a small stipend for one person to take more time with Center business, or taking around literature to churches, schools, conferences, to a variety of groups that would never come to the Center.
- provided a small amount of money for telephone, car expenses, literature lists, postage, general propaganda.

6. How have we/NWRC/I influenced ACOA?

We have not taken this as a major task, since we have very little daily contact. I have written periodic reports to ACOA on what's happening at NWRC, and how money is being used. I attended one Board meeting, and engaged in a long struggle with Houser over continuing funds, which the Board supported.

7. Has anybody we worked with raised questions about, or refused to work with us because of, our relationship with ACOA? Not to my knowledge.

8. Who does ACOA support? Through regular budget, \$1000 goes to FRELIMO office/NYC. Through Africa Defense and Aid Fund, \$3000 is channeled to organizations working to help political prisoners. Africa Fund (a special non-profit organization Fund set up by ACOA), the following contributions were made in 1971-72:

PAIGC - medical and educational services	\$25,000
Mozambique Institute	19,009
Angolan Refugees	200
SAM or MPLA	3,000
Political prisoners/ Zimbabwe	250
Aid to Zimbabwean student and refugee	200
Books to South Africa	268
Defense of Namibians	492
Hereros (Namibians) for local bulletin	4,000
observer at Namibian strikers' trial	1,205
Assistance to Refugees	1,849
Assistance to exiled students	2,389
Emergency Fund	1,000
Research and education	19,000

The main publications of ACOA recently have been funded through Africa Fund, and includes: "Apartheid and Imperialism: US Corporate Involvement in S.A."
 "Allies in Empire: U.S. and Portugal in Africa"
 "Namibia: U.S. Corporate Involvement"
 fact sheets on IBM, GM, Polaroid, breaking sanctions, strike in Namibia, etc.

9. Connections with State Department/CIA

These accusations have been made of ACOA, especially since the 1969 uncovering of CIA involvement with the international program of N.S.A. Frequently these accusations reflect a confusion of ACOA with other groups which do have state dept. connections (eg. African American Institute, African American Labor Center (AFL*CIO). In examining these accusation, we should ask:

- who is making this accusation
- on what evidence, and for what reasons
- is this meant to help or hinder the work of the liberation movements
- what evidence have we found.

D. Possibilities for funding of NWRC

- short of ripping of a bank,
- we could get it from friends (tried, clearly pledges will not bring in enough)
- ACOA
- Churches (several have funded radical causes eg. ARG, NACLA, NARMIC, CAGLA, AIS, African Liberation Day, J)
- Foundations (doubtful, but some have)

I list these in descending order of political agreement around Southern Africa. We are certainly closer politically to ACOA, than to the Churches (ambiguous policies on corporations and liberation movements), or foundations (clearly opposed to our goals). Precisely because we are closer to ACOA, than say to the churches, we find ourselves in a position of tension. We need to clarify our precise differences, as well as areas of agreement, and distinguish where we can and where we cannot work with ACOA. The same procedure should apply to other organization, whether or not we receive money from them.

11. Recommendations

If we are still undecided by the end of this meeting, I suggest we consult with individuals and groups whose opinion we value (eg. Prexy, Bob, AIS, AASC, reps of liberation movements)

If we decided to recommend cutting all relations~~x~~ with ACOA financially, we should discuss it thoroughly with other groups at the NWRC. We should also suggest and actively explore alternative sources of funding.

I propose that we continue the present arrangement, ~~xxxxxx~~ on the basis that CCLANG./NWRC/ or any individuals affiliated therewith are not compromised by ACOA, and that we are more in agreement with ACOA than with other possible sources of funds. If CCLANG finds it impossible to continue as a group given this relationship, I would support ending it.

I further suggest that CCLANG/CALC/ NWRC re-evaluate the way the money is administered, with the possibility that it be otherwise distributed.

Finally, I would pose to CCLANG (after all this!), is ACOA the real question?