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DRAFT REPORT ON THE THIRD ALL AFRICAN PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE HELD IN CAIRO  
from March 25 to 30, 1961

by George M. Houser

I recently returned from attending the Third All African People's Conference which this year was held in Cairo. I was also privileged to have attended the first two such conferences - Accra in December 1958, and Tunis in January 1960. As is now generally known, the All African People's Conference as a permanent organization was established when the first conference was held in Accra in order to provide a meeting ground for African leaders from all parts of the continent, to establish a base for pan-Africanism, and to quicken the struggle for independence and equality in all parts of the continent. It is a political organization with political parties and trade union organizations as affiliates. Its permanent Secretariat is located in Accra, and the present Secretary-General divides his responsibility between the All African People's Conference and his governmental position as the Resident Minister of Guinea to Ghana. The Secretariat staff also includes representatives of other African countries such as Ghana and Algeria.

The opening and closing sessions of this third Conference were held in the auditorium of Cairo University. But the business sessions of the Conference and the commission groups met in the Senate chamber of the Parliament. The Conference had originally been scheduled to begin on March the 23rd but was delayed for two days for an unexplained reason. Most of the delegates had arrived by the 23rd or the 24th.

Cairo is a large city with a population of at least three million people. I imagine that any one of these three million who either listen to the radio or who read the papers were aware that the All African People's Conference was taking place. Vacant walls around the city were plastered with All African People's Conference posters. Large banners were suspended across major Cairo boulevards during the Conference with slogans such as "Unify Congo as One Country", "Death to Lumumba's Murderers", "Colonialists and Imperialists Hands Off Africa", "Down with Verwoerd's Government", "Freedom to Kenyatta", etc. Similar banners were placed in the auditorium at Cairo University and in the Senate chamber.

In addition, large photographs of Patrice Lumumba, Jomo Kenyatta, Roland Felix Moumie (President of the Union of the Populations of the Camerouns who was poisoned in late 1960) and John Kale (representative for about three years in Cairo of the Uganda National Congress who died in a plane crash in 1960) added to the symbolism of the Conference. Pictures of these four African leaders, three of whom had died or had been killed since the last All African People's Conference, were prominently displayed in many of the numerous halls or centers where Conference business was carried on.

The seriousness with which one views what was said at this Conference depends in final analysis on whom the Conference was speaking for. There was no question about the importance of the First All African People's Conference in Accra, for it was the first conference of its kind and a permanent organization grew out of it. The mere fact that the Conference had been held added impetus to the struggle for independence in various parts of Africa. Representation at this third All African People's Conference compared quite favorably both with Accra and Tunis. The greatest single group of countries not represented at Cairo were the newly independent countries forming the French Community in Africa. But these same countries had been very poorly represented in the first two conferences as well. Niger was represented by the Sawabé Party, a movement with a large following, but presently banned. Republic of the Camerouns was represented only by the U.P.C. which has been in opposition to the government of the Camerouns.



On the whole, with the exception of the French Community countries, the African independent states were well represented at Cairo. There was this one noticeable difference however, especially in the delegations of Ghana and Guinea--their representation was not on as high a diplomatic level as had been true at the other conferences. Interestingly enough, there was a much stronger South African delegation at Cairo than had been true at either of the preceeding conferences. This was due to the fact that since the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960, many of the leaders both of the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress have left South Africa and are now in exile. Most of the not-yet independent territories that are organized in what is called the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa, (PAFMECA) including Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, had strong delegations at Cairo. The Congo was represented only by the Gizenga faction from Stanleyville. The Nigerian delegation was considerably weaker than at the previous conferences with representation coming only from the Northern Elements Progressive Union, an opposition party in the north, and the Nigerian Youth Congress. Although the AAPC is made up of non-governmental groups, representation of the independent territories through political parties is tantamount to government participation since most of the independent states have one-party systems.

To summarize the representation, there were two hundred and seven delegates representing some 58 organizations coming from 31 countries.

In addition to the regular delegates, there were <sup>two hundred</sup> ~~two~~ observers from almost thirty countries including a number of African countries. Since each delegation was allowed only five members, there were extra persons present from a number of the countries. For example, there were about twenty-nine from Kenya in Cairo and only three organizations represented--the Kenya African National Union, the Kenya African Democratic Union, and the Kenya Federation of Labor. Thus only fifteen delegates from Kenya would be allowed. There were about a half a dozen observers from the USSR and perhaps a slightly larger group from the People's Republic of China at the Conference. East Germany, the Italian Socialist Party, Northern Korea, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Poland, Yugoslavia also had observers on hand. In sharp contrast to the two previous conferences, there were only three American observers on hand, including myself. The other two were George Loft of the American Friends Service Committee and Mrs. Mary Louise Hooper, who is the West Coast representative of our Africa Defense and Aid Fund.

Mr. James Callaghan, the expert on colonial affairs in the Labour Party of Britain, attended. Mr. Fenner Brockway, leader of the Movement for Colonial Freedom in Britain, was there also.

It was rather significant that the Reverend Michael Scott, who at the previous conferences had been allowed to register as a delegate representing Chief Hosea Kutako of South West Africa, was not permitted to be a delegate at this conference. Mary Louise Hooper had also been a delegate at the two previous conferences, having been designated as such by Chief Albert J. Luthuli, the President of the African National Congress in South Africa. But this also was not permitted at this conference. Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, who for years was the President of the South African Indian Congress, and who now is in exile from South Africa, was also just listed as an observer for the Indian Congress rather than as a delegate. This meant that at this conference, there were no delegates from South of the Sahara who were not black African.

One way to see this Third All African People's Conference in perspective is to contrast it with the two previous conferences. A first point of contrast involved a lack of emphasis on non-violence. Non-violence was hardly mentioned at all.



On the other hand, it was assumed that violence would be necessary in order to gain freedom for the Portuguese areas of Africa, for the Union of South Africa and South West Africa. At the Accra conference, the question of violence versus non-violence was one of the major issues of discussion. At Tunis, much less attention was paid to non-violence, although President Bourguiba in his opening address had indicated his preference for non-violent methods. But no such note entered into the deliberations at Cairo.

Secondly, there was no internal struggle for power or for control of the Conference. At the Accra conference there was internal jockeying for position, especially between the Ghanaians on the one hand, and the Egyptians on the other. The symbol of this struggle was Nkrumah versus Nasser. There also was some jockeying for position at the Tunis conference. But in Cairo, everything seemed to be pretty well under control between Abdoulaye Diallo, the Secretary General on the one hand, and the Egyptians, led by Dr. Faoud Galal, on the other. Probably the only possible challenge for leadership could have come from the East and Central African group. But delegations from these territories are quite satisfied to work primarily through PAFMECA.

Thirdly, there was no single issue which was an obviously divisive one in the Conference. At Tunis a year ago, there was some marked difference of approach to the organization of an All African Trade Union Federation. There was no counterpart of this kind of an issue at Cairo. This does not mean that there were no differences of opinion, but rather that no single issue divided large groupings within the Conference one from another.

Fourthly, this Conference was more aggressive and perhaps more self assured than either of the two preceding conferences. Undoubtedly, this was due to the fact that Africa has emerged as a significant factor in international power structures. The African states are the single largest block within the United Nations. Most of Africa is now independent; this may be one explanation for virtually no emphasis upon non-violence and probably also accounts for the rather aggressive anti-Western statements which were made by so many of the delegates.

What can be said about the major emphasis of the Cairo Conference? What is it one would think of a year or so hence as being typical of the issues raised and debated at Cairo? First, and by all odds the most important, is the question of the Congo. The atmosphere of the Conference was created in a particular way by Congo events and Lumumba's death. This in spite of the fact that there was virtually no expressed difference in analysis of factors which led to the Congo disaster. One of the high points of the Tunis conference was the dramatic announcement that the Brussels round table discussions of the Congolese leaders with the Belgians had agreed on Congo independence for June 30th 1960. This was greeted with a truly spontaneous demonstration of the whole Conference. What a contrast this was a little over a year later with the Congo an independent country to be sure, but divided among almost warring factions, with outside interference the order of the day, and with the United Nations an ineffective instrument for bringing about either internal or external peace.

Although there may have been some individuals or a few delegations that might not call wholeheartedly for the recognition of the Gizenga regime as the legitimate central government of the Congo, this opinion was not publicly expressed. The position of the Casablanca powers dominated the Conference approaches. The United Nations was looked upon as the instrument of the imperialists for exploiting and dominating Africa. Secretary General Hammarskjold was attacked as the handmaiden of the imperialists and colonialists. There was no simple formula drawn up that would bring the crisis in the Congo to an end, but the generally expressed position was that the United Nations had failed in the Congo, that the West was completely



responsible for what had developed there, that Tshombe and Kasavubu were stooges of the imperialists. Virtually no speech left out lengthy reference to the Congo situation and practically every speaker paid homage to Patrice Lumumba. The disillusionment of the Congo experience was easily the most important factor in creating the mood of the Conference.

Secondly, major attention was given to the concept of neo-colonialism, and this was definitely tied in with the Congo crisis as well. President Nasser furnished the keynote for the emphasis upon neo-colonialism in his address opening the conference when he said, "Many thought imperialism in Africa had ended, had given up its aims and started to remove its banners, prior to pulling out. The fact was however, that imperialism was determined to stay and resolved to keep in hand everything it had usurped and denied to the legitimate owners." At the Tunis conference there had been a great deal of emphasis upon neo-colonialism also, but there had been no Congo experience to give emotional content to what was being said. In Tunis the emphasis was primarily on a guarded mistrust for any power from outside the African continent that offered to give assistance because as many delegates stated there, "Political domination can go out the frontdoor while economic domination comes in the back."

One of the most marked differences between the Accra or Tunis conference and Cairo was that at this third conference, a point of attack was made by many delegates directly upon the United States. The United States was looked upon as the leader of the neo-colonialist powers. Some of the delegates said that Portuguese control would not be able to maintain itself without firm United States backing. The recent vote of the United States in the Security Council against Portugal on the Angola question was looked upon as a tactic to fool the Africans. Perhaps it was to be expected that speeches of this kind would be made by representatives of the Union of the Populations of the Camerouns, but it was a little more surprising to hear a very strong anti-US speech made by Ronald Ngala, leader of the delegation representing the Kenya African Democratic Union. On the other hand, James Gichuru, leader of the delegation from the Kenya African National Union, made a careful speech in which he explained that neo-colonialism to him did not mean that there would not be normal trade between African countries and European countries nor that loans might not be accepted if no strings were attached.

Perhaps several facts might illustrate the generally critical attitude toward the U.S. G. Mennen Williams, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, had sent a message of greeting to the Conference. However it was not read to the Conference although messages from Nikita Khrushchev, Jawaharlal Nehru, Chou en Lai, and others were read. In fact the message was not even mimeographed and distributed to the delegates as a good many other messages had been. It was only listed routinely with all other messages as having been received.

The leader of the Liberia delegation, at the conclusion of his speech to the Conference, announced that he had with him a check for \$25,000 American dollars which was being contributed by his country to the expenses of the All African People's Conference. This Liberian representative had emphasized the word American, I believe rather unwittingly. It was a strategic mistake at this particular conference where American prestige was low. The delegates received the announcement of the check with laughter and in the talk around the hallways many questions were raised as to whether the Conference ought to accept the check if it was in American dollars.

There was some feeling of concern among several delegations that the traditional neutralism of the African countries was being lost at this Conference. Delegates' speeches laid much emphasis on the neutralism of Africa. Perhaps the phrase "anti-Western neutralism" would best describe the Conference approach to the international power struggle. The Soviet Union was hardly mentioned at all except



by implication and then not critically. The Liberian and the Ethiopian delegations, in private conversation with others at the Conference, indicated that perhaps this was the last time they would attend the All African People's Conference because balance had been lost. The Soviet Union was not specifically called a neo-colonialist force. The United States most definitely was.

Does this emphasis necessarily mean that the Communists have captured control of the All African People's Conference, as some observers claimed? I would dispute this. Communist propaganda has certainly made inroads. Furthermore, the African disillusionment with the Congo experience is something which fits in with the ultimate Communist line. But the reasons which give rise to similar positions between many African nationalists and Communist representatives are different in origin. Nevertheless, there is cause for concern that at least at this All African People's Conference, neutralism had lost its balance and was leaning backwards so far in its criticisms of Western encroachments on Africa, that it looked as if it was in danger of falling into the lap of the East.

One must be careful not to make too hasty a judgment on this point however. It must be remembered that the United Arab Republic not only follows but perhaps is a leader of the general line taken at the Cairo Conference and yet the known Communists in the UAR are in prisons. Furthermore, the Union of the Populations of the Camerouns, which for so long had its central office in Cairo on money which had presumably been given to it by the UAR government, no longer is open and indeed an Embassy of the Republic of the Camerouns (to which the UPC is deeply opposed) has been opened in Cairo.

Thirdly, a very aggressive attitude was taken in calling for an end to white domination in South Africa and for an end to Portuguese control in Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea. The fact that there were a relatively large group present from South Africa and that they were refugees since the Sharpeville massacre of a year ago, certainly added to the importance of the discussions on South Africa. Also there were new representatives present, also refugees, from South West Africa. Furthermore, the recent outbreaks of violence in Angola added to the urgency of the problems there. Generally there was a feeling of confidence that with the help of the African independent states, the exploitive regimes would not last too many more years in these troubled areas of the continent.

Fourthly, although not a dominating fact at the conference, divisions between delegations from various countries, or even between delegations from the same country, attracted attention at Cairo. The representatives of Somalia and of Ethiopia made very critical references to one another, growing out of the border dispute between their two countries. At one point, the Conference Chairman, Dr. Galal, even stopped one of the Somalia speakers and asked him to delete from his speech certain very critical references he had made to Ethiopia.

Likewise, two of the political parties representing Zanzibar made rather scathing attacks upon one another on the floor of the Conference. And, in another instance, representatives of Kenya political parties attacked one another even to the extent that a leader of one group implied that a leader of another was an American stooge. A further sign of African divisions that perhaps typified this conference more than either of its two predecessors, was the fact that only one group from Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, with headquarters in Conakry, was present in Cairo. The other principal group, the Union of the Populations of Angola, with headquarters in Leopoldville, was not present. The reason for this was that the UPA felt that if it attended the conference in Cairo, action would be taken against it by the Kasavubu regime in Leopoldville.



Fifthly, a great deal of emphasis was placed upon pan-Africanism and unity. Yet the discussion in this conference was in a setting that could not be as optimistic as was the case at Accra two years ago. Pan African unity had broken down in relation to the Congo situation. No effective unity of independent African states has yet occurred. The Ghana-Guinea union has not gone too far, The Mali Federation has broken up. And yet delegate after delegate quite sincerely was calling for unity.

What can be said about the future of the All-African People's Conference?

It is likely that the A.A.P.C. will remain in existence for several years to come, but that its importance will diminish because initiative and power in Africa lie with the independent states and the formal organization of the Conference of Independent African States. This is a natural concomitant to the simultaneous increase in the number of independent African states and decrease of colonial areas.

A great deal of the action proposed by the A.A.P.C. is directed at the Conference of Independent African States and the African delegations at the United Nations. And the A.A.P.C. depends primarily upon the independent states for financial support. Therefore, the A.A.P.C. is increasingly assuming the role of a pressure group urging that the independent states take prompt action against South Africa, Portugal, etc. But the A.A.P.C. is only partially successful in this role because the independent states are themselves represented in the A.A.P.C. through their major political parties and trade unions, and as colonial areas become independent the balance of power expands on the side of the independent countries.

Furthermore, the A.A.P.C. faces some competition from P.A.F.M.E.C.A. (the Pan African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa), through which the not-yet-independent territories of east and central Africa primarily work at this time.

Because of the rapid pace of change in Africa, perhaps the most significant contribution of the All-African People's Conference will prove to have been made in its first three years of existence.

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