

OBSERVATIONS ON TRENDS IN NON-INDEPENDENT
AFRICA'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

A Report to the Executive Board of the American Committee
on Africa

by
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I took my ninth trip to Africa this summer to attend Malawi Independence, July the sixth. After most of my previous trips to Africa I have usually written some kind of a report. But after I came home from this trip I found it difficult to prepare a report. I have long since gotten past the point where I am interested in writing a travelogue. I think essentially my difficulty was that what I might have to say would not present too encouraging a picture of what is happening in the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa. As a part of this, much of the information I picked up on this trip was told to me in some confidence and reflected a kind of in-fighting taking place within nationalist organizations in Africa. Ordinarily one does not put this type of information in writing.

Without violating confidences, I now feel that I can put some of my observations in a perspective that not only is helpful to me in understanding what current trends are in Africa, but perhaps may be of some assistance to members of the Board. It is only incidentally worth noting that on this trip, in addition to spending five days in Malawi during the independence celebrations, I spent several days in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Lusaka, Leopoldville, Lagos, and Accra. I shall not attempt to make any comments on the situation within these countries. To do so would mean preparing as many different reports as countries visited. What I do want to suggest is a perspective within which one might understand a stage in African development that we are now entering into, especially in Southern Africa, and what this means for the ACOA in the look ahead.†

I think we have now entered into a third stage in African affairs particularly as this relates to the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa. This will be a frustrating period because the changes will not occur rapidly. This frustration will be reflected in the various national liberation movements by a considerable amount of internal dissension, splits, struggles for leadership, etc. It will be a frustrating period for those concerned with independence in Southern Africa, but who do not live on the continent, because the pressure of events will not make it essential for the United States or western European countries to adopt more forthright policies. But before dealing a little more in detail with this third stage in African affairs, let me say something about the first two stages.

Most of us became attracted to African affairs during the period of the emergence of nationalist movements leading towards the independence of a great part of the continent. Just ten years ago when our committee was founded there were only four independent African states. The first All-African People's Conference had not even been held at that time. It was fascinating and enthralling to see nationalist movements being born and new leaders arise in virtually every one of the African countries. This had a power and a fascination all its own and represented something unique on the world stage. In this first stage of Africa's development, colonialism was the sole enemy. If there was a struggle for leadership within the various nationalist movements, this was not the focus of attention. Who but the colonialists, the reactionaries, the imperialists concerned only about

their own investments could oppose the right of people to achieve independence and self-government.

We began to enter into the second stage of Africa's development in 1960. Perhaps as good a date as any to pin it to would be the independence of the Congo, in July, 1960. The problems of independence began to make themselves felt. One party states emerged. Border disputes between Ethiopia and Somalia, Algeria and Morocco, Kenya and Somalia received public attention. There were coups and attempted coups. Economic problems made themselves felt and the fact that independence did not immediately lead to full scale employment and prosperity, caused internal dissensions in many countries. There were tendencies toward the formation of blocs in Africa itself principally among so-called Casablanca and the Monrovia powers. In many other parts of the world including the United States, people began asking whether the African countries were really ready for independence. A process of disillusionment began to set in based on very little understanding of what the African countries were actually doing or of progress being made.

And yet in spite of all of this there was more focus on the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa than at any other time. The independent African states, despite problems they might have within their separate countries or between one another, were united in their determination that white supremacy and colonialism must come to an end. The Organization of African Unity was formed that virtually declared war against apartheid and against continued Portuguese domination in its African territories. The African states were able to mount an effective campaign through the United Nations and the great powers of the world had to give more serious attention to the South African and the Portuguese African territories than ever before. The possibility of economic sanctions against South Africa was discussed with great urgency. It was felt that it would be a matter of only a short time before the Portuguese would be driven out of Angola by the rebel forces and that a revolution would start in Mozambique. Although it was generally reasoned that it would take a little longer for African nationalist forces to win a victory in South Africa, the time could not be far distant. It was noted with pride that South African guerilla forces were being trained in other parts of Africa, that sabotage would weaken the power of the South African Government, and that international economic pressures would bring about an economic collapse in South Africa.

It now appears that changes will not take place in Southern Africa as quickly as had been expected. We have entered a third stage in changing Africa. Let us look at some of the evidence of this slowing down process in Africa. First, the Congo has entered a new period of confusion and instability. This has a tremendous effect on developments in Angola. The Angolan Government in Exile has had its headquarters in Leopoldville. It has been permitted by the Congolese Government to have a military training base in the lower Congo area. Rebel soldiers have freely gone back and forth across the Congo-Angolan border with little interference from the Congo authorities. It is by no means certain that Tshombe's attitude will be the same as Adoula's was towards Roberto's government. Furthermore, with the Congolese forces being involved in their own struggle against Congolese rebels, they cannot give very much attention or support to Angolan rebels. At one time it was thought that the Portuguese forces would not last very long in the face of the attacks by the Angolan rebels. It was therefore reasoned that attacks would surely be made from an independent Angola upon South West Africa. This plan of strategy certainly must be completely altered. It was also thought at one time that the independent, but landlocked, countries of Malawi and Zambia might be able to transport their goods across the Congo rather than through Portuguese Mozambique. But it is patently obvious that there is no immediate prospect of developing any such route to the sea. The continued chaos in the Congo has re-

tarded the moves toward independence in Southern Africa immeasurably.

Second, the Angolan Liberation Movement is facing grave difficulties. All of these difficulties are not necessarily attached to events in the Congo. The Portuguese military has become much stronger with some fifty thousand Portuguese troops in Angola. Although there are a larger number of trained Angolan rebel soldiers, they do not have the equipment nor arms to act effectively. There has been no evidence of any fighting deep in Angola for some period of time. The rebel offensive which has been talked about by Angolan leaders, has just not come off. There is some evidence of new splits even within the Angolan Government in exile. There are signs that there is a split on the leadership level at least partly along tribal lines. Although the rebel soldiers still have a high degree of control within a certain area in the northern part of Angola, there control is not nearly as effective as it was even a year ago. There are many more Portuguese patrols there and the paths are landmined. The Portuguese are talking much more confidently than they have in many years.

Third, the struggle in Mozambique proceeds very slowly. Various Mozambique rebel organizations such as PRELIMO, led by Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, and UDENAMO have announced plans for the beginning of an armed struggle. Undoubtedly Mozambiquans are undergoing military training in some parts of Africa. Yet there is not evidence that any active combat will be started seriously soon. Both Malawi and Zambia have made it quite clear that they don't want any armed attack upon Mozambique from their territory. PRELIMO has its headquarters in Tanganyika, but the Tanganyikan authorities have not encouraged the beginning of hostilities.

Fourth, the South African Government is probably stronger now than it ever has been both economically, politically, and militarily. Investments in South Africa are increasing at an unprecedented rate. The striking power of the military is twenty times greater than it was two years ago. Their determined opposition organizations have been banned and the leaders are either in prison, under house arrest in South Africa, or in exile. It is not known what the underground strength may be of either the African National Congress or the Pan-Africanist Congress. Both of these organizations have top leadership outside South Africa, but what is not known is what forces they can effectively lead inside South Africa. The apparent lack of success of these organizations in their campaigns to destroy apartheid is leading to frustration and eventuates in internal disputes.

Sometime during 1965 the International Court of Justice will render its decision in the South West African case. However, even if one assumes that the decision will be that South Africa has violated the Mandate in South West Africa, it cannot be assumed that either the United Nations, or the great powers, or the African states will be able to implement the decision without considerable delay. By a number of maneuvers, the South African Government can postpone final action perhaps by several years. Therefore it cannot be assumed that South Africa's apartheid policy will come to an end through the court decision in the South West African case.

Five, help to the liberation movements from independent African states will be limited. The Committee of Nine, established by the Organization of African Unity, has made contributions to various freedom movements, but this is by no means enough to sustain them. There has been discussion in the OAU of establishing an African Defense Force, but nothing concrete has been done to set it up. In any event there is no immediate possibility that a combined African force would be able effectively to challenge either the Portuguese or the South African military machines. It has been noted that the High Commission Territories of Basutoland,

Swaziland, and Bechuanaland will probably become independent within the next two years. However these territories are so dependent upon trade with South Africa that they will be greatly limited in what they will do to help rebel movements. Leaders of the nationalist movements within these territories have said that they could not permit their territories, after they became independent, to be used as a base for guerilla attacks upon South Africa. Dr. Banda made quite clear at the recent Cairo meeting of the OAU that Malawi would have to maintain correct relations with both Portugal and South Africa. Zambia exports about 15 million pounds of copper a year to South Africa. This will make it difficult for Zambia to wholeheartedly endorse the economic sanctions campaign against South Africa.

Six, the Southern Rhodesian problem remains fluid. Although the African nationalist parties probably do not have the power to wrest control from the white minority, neither does the white minority have the power to go it alone in the face of opposition from Africa and much of the rest of the world. Perhaps it is more likely that African majority rule will come to Southern Rhodesia before either Angola or Mozambique have achieved independence from Portugal. If this did happen, it would mean that on one of the borders of South Africa would be an independent state undoubtedly committed to the overthrow of apartheid.

All the above evidence simply points to the fact that a long and frustrating struggle still confronts those who look forward to the day when apartheid will be a thing of the past and African states will be ruled by those who make up a majority of the people. It is impossible to guess how many years may be involved. But what does seem apparent is that organizations such as the American Committee on Africa will have to adjust to a situation a bit different than might have been prophesied a couple of years ago.

During this period there is likely to be little pressure of events to force the United States to inaugurate a more dynamic policy in relation to Southern Africa. The Portuguese lobby will have an easier time of it to convince the American people that after all the Portuguese are doing a good job in bringing about reforms in Angola and Mozambique. Apologists for the South African regime will be able to point out that after all South Africa is opposed to communism and at least this is one state in Africa where there is stability and prosperity in spite of unfortunate racial policies.

If it is correct that the heat will be off the United States, the task of the American Committee on Africa is to point out again and again as we have in the past that this present stage is purely momentary. It will not last. The contradictions between apartheid and equality are too great to permit an accommodation to be made for an indefinite period. Our task will be to continue to play the role which we have played through the early years of our existence when on the whole Americans, and those in our government, were not giving heed to the dynamism inherent in African nationalism.