

WHO SPEAKS FOR

Africa?

A REPORT
ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE

American

Committee on Africa

Changes are sweeping Africa

"Nothing can stop the changes sweeping over Africa," said Tom Mboya, Kenya's leading young political and labor figure, on his recent successful tour of the United States under the auspices of the American Committee on Africa. What are some of the events changing this continent of over 220,000,000 people?

In 1950, three African countries were independent. In 1960 there will be 13. As the decade ends, the pace of Africa's drive toward freedom increases. In 1958, the following significant steps were taken:

- The first Conference of Independent African States met in Ghana in April.
- The French territory of Guinea became independent.
- The Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa was created.
- The first All African Peoples Conference was held at Accra in December with delegates from 28 African countries, and fraternal representatives from all over the world including four from the American Committee on Africa.

IN THE UNITED NATIONS, the agenda of the 1958 General Assembly was commonly called "The Africa Session" because so many issues on its agenda involved Africa. The Economic Commission for Africa was established and first meetings held. For the first time a UN Mission was given permission to visit South Africa to discuss the status of South West Africa, increasingly taken over by South Africa as an integral part of the Union.

IN THE UNITED STATES, an Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs was for the first time appointed. New consulates and offices of the U.S. Information Agency were opened in African countries. But American policy was still dominated by the traditional view of Africa as an extension of Europe. The growing desire of Africans for equal rights and self-determination has been recognized by Americans with a seeming reluctance puzzling to Africans.

Many difficulties have been met in the African struggle for independent political and economic development. In *Algeria* war continues, with relations between North Africa and France deteriorating rapidly. At the other end of the continent, Prime Minister Verwoerd of *South Africa* presses the racist policy of *apartheid*, with tensions increasing between white and non-white, and 91 opponents of *apartheid* indicted for "treason".

In the *Central African Federation*, Africans of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, unwilling parts of the white-dominated Federation, fear an "independence" duplicating South Africa's. Riots, killings by police, arrests of African leaders attest further to the unrest.

In *Kenya*, attempts of non-white Kenyans to share greater political and economic benefits have met with "emergency" restrictions, arrests of leaders, confusion of political action with the terrorism of Mau Mau.

In the Portuguese territories of *Mozambique* and *Angola*, evidence has been documented of exploitation and virtual slavery of Africans while Portugal, claiming her colonies as "provinces," refuses to report to the UN.

“. . . an important influence in both continents.”

MBOYA TOUR

“The American Committee on Africa’s contribution to Afro-American understanding is already an important influence in both continents,” said Tom Mboya. A major contribution to this understanding was Mr. Mboya’s six-week tour of the United States in 1959, sponsored by the Committee, during which he spoke at nearly 100 meetings from Massachusetts to Florida, New York to California. Mr. Mboya also appeared on numerous nation-wide radio and television programs and was received by the press with such comments as: “. . . Mboya is able to pursue his theme of ‘Africa for the Africans’ in terms of morality and logic that are unarguable.” (editorial, *Chicago Daily News*). . . . “It was no accident that the biggest hit of the World Affairs Conference was Tom Mboya, an ambassador-at-large for Africa’s independence movement. The packed-house audience of 2,000 Friday and the standing ovation it gave his speech were tribute to his eloquence.” (*Denver Post*). . . . “Certainly, if Africa can produce other young leaders with just half the brilliance and sincere dedication of Tom Mboya, then I want to do whatever I can to help keep them rolling off the assembly line.” (Jackie Robinson’s column in *New York Post*). . . .



AFRICA FREEDOM DAY

For the first time, April 15, 1959, was observed as Africa Freedom Day. The Committee sponsored a celebration at New York’s Carnegie Hall attended by nearly 3,000 people. Key speakers were Tom Mboya and Gov. G. Mennen Williams of Michigan, with A. Philip Randolph, Harry Belafonte, and Ambassadors from most of the African Independent States also on the program. Established in 1958 by the first Conference of Independent African States to be commemorated “until all Africa is free”, Africa Freedom Day received wide acclaim throughout the world, with greetings sent to the Committee’s New York celebration by many African and American leaders.

Prime Minister Sylvanus Olympio of French Togoland stated in his message: “May I express the hope that your organization will continue to be a source of inspiration and hope for millions of African freedom fighters, for there can be no lasting world peace when so many African territories are subjected to foreign rule.”

Charles T. O. King, Liberian Ambassador to the UN, wrote: “You can hardly imagine what great effect this gesture of your Organization has had in cementing closer friendly relations between Africa and the United States.”

Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia, said in his message to the Committee: “The cause which you espouse is a noble and just one and, with the help of Almighty God, will triumph.”

ACOA's role in African affairs

The American Committee on Africa has played a constructive part in many of the events shaking Africa, and has provided a specific channel for Americans to express their sympathy with legitimate African aspirations for greater freedoms.

THE SOUTH AFRICA DEFENSE FUND of the Committee had sent by the summer of 1959 nearly \$50,000 for the legal defense and welfare of the 91 defendants charged with "treason" for opposing South Africa's *apartheid* program. Dean Erwin Griswold of the Harvard Law School, an international observer at the opening of the 1958 treason trial, provided important information to the Committee with his thorough reporting.

LEGAL AID TO KENYA—The Committee also responded to requests for legal aid to arrested African leaders in Kenya with a contribution of over \$2,000, and plans to expand such aid to similar cases throughout Africa.

REPRESENTATION AT ALL AFRICAN PEOPLES CONFERENCE—The four Committee representatives who attended the All African Peoples Conference in 1958 spent two days in Washington on their return, discussing with State Department officials and Congressmen the necessity of a more dynamic American policy in gaining influence and friendship among Africans.

PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES—The Committee prepared an important document for UN delegates in regard to Portugal's refusal to answer the Secretary General's request for a report on its non-self-governing territories. The Committee also published a manuscript by Prof. Marvin Harris of Columbia University on labor and education in Mozambique, which was made available to all UN delegations and was considered of great value in its consideration of the problem.

SOUTH WEST AFRICA—In preparation for the visit of the UN Mission to South Africa to discuss the status of South West Africa, the Committee organized a delegation from ten organizations to visit the U.S. representative on this mission, urging that South Africa bring South West Africa under the trusteeship of the United Nations.

RECOGNITION OF GUINEA—The Committee urged immediate U.S. recognition of and aid to Guinea on its gaining of independence in September 1958, and it is believed that these efforts helped facilitate official U.S. recognition of Guinea which occurred a month later.

Other activities of the Committee

included sponsorship with the NAACP and the National Urban League of a large public dinner in 1958 for Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana. Over 1,000 attended this event at the Waldorf-Astoria, at which Prime Minister Nkrumah stated: "The American Committee on Africa bears good testimony to the growing interest which many Americans in all walks of life are taking in Africa and its many problems. I am sure that the work of this Committee will continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship and understanding which exist between us." The Committee also sponsored a reception for Prime Minister Sylvanus Olympio of French Togoland in November, 1958.

PUBLIC MEETINGS have focussed on such important questions as that of *apartheid* in South Africa, with speakers including Anglican Archbishop Joost de Blank of Cape Town, Professor Violaine Junod of the University of Natal, and Ronald Segal, editor of the magazine *Africa South*. Mr. Segal also spoke throughout the United States under the auspices of the Committee. A meeting was held on the Algerian conflict with speakers Michael James of *The New York Times*, M'hammed Yazid of the Algerian National Liberation Front, and Prof. Hans Kohn of City College of New York. Speaking engagements for numerous church, labor, school and community groups were filled by the Committee's Executive Director, and Board members or Africans in the United States invited to speak for the Committee.



LITERATURE PROGRAM

Publications of the Committee were revised and extended during 1958, with the bi-monthly magazine *Africa Today* going on a subscription basis, and with the initiation of the *Africa Today Pamphlets*. The first pamphlet published was on Algeria by Professor Lorna Hahn of Temple University; the subject of the second was "Portugal's African Wards" by Marvin Harris of Columbia University. An *Africa-UN Bulletin* with news of African developments at the UN during the General Assembly was published in mimeographed form. Pamphlets of other organizations are also handled by the Committee, such as publications of the Africa Bureau of London, and the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg.

HELP TO AFRICAN STUDENTS

Whenever possible the Committee has given help to African students by referring them to job openings, or to organizations or institutions which may handle their requests for loans, travel grants, or scholarships. The Committee receives hundreds of such letters each year, although it has been able to give only limited assistance.

What about the future?

The American Committee on Africa is supported by nearly 10,000 contributors. Wider support is needed as demands on the Committee's resources grow along with public interest and need for information. Additional staff is imperative if the program is to be expanded.

The Committee maintained five full-time staff workers during 1958. Fund-raising efforts early in 1959 enabled the Committee to get on firmer financial footing and to take first steps in staff expansion with the addition of a full-time Assistant on the Defense Fund, and a new Associate Executive Director in July. Other temporary staff members have been added for specific functions; at least two more permanent members must be added in the course of the year.

Program plans for the future include bringing other African leaders to the United States, an expanded publications program, increased work on issues affecting Africa which arise at the United Nations, and expanding the South Africa Defense Fund to include similar situations occurring elsewhere in Africa.

It would be impossible for the Committee to accomplish nearly as much as it does without devoted members of the Board and others who give generously of their time in administrative and editorial conferences, research and other extensive and important work for the Committee.

During the next few years, events in Africa will capture the attention of the world as that continent awakes and new nations are created. If the American Committee on Africa is to fulfill its responsibilities in giving voice in this country to African hopes and intentions, the organization must continue to expand its program, its staff, and its financial base. Nineteen-sixty should be a crucial and challenging year for the Committee.



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