

TOWARD A NEW AFRICA POLICY

Report—1976 African-American Conference—Maseru, Lesotho

TOWARD A NEW AFRICA POLICY

CONFERENCE REPORT

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

MASERU, LESOTHO

NOVEMBER 29—DECEMBER 3, 1976

Jane Wilder Jacqz

The African-American Institute

BOOK DESIGN Roberta Intrater
Ad Infinitum Photo/Graphics

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FOREWORD

This report summarizes presentations and discussion at the seventh conference of African and American leaders to be organized by The African-American Institute and an African government—in this case the Government of Lesotho. The conference was held at The National Assembly in Maseru from November 29 to December 3, 1976. It was both the largest and, by many accounts, the best meeting since the series began in 1968.

A total of 111 Africans and Americans attended the conference, along with more than 50 official observers. Among the 60 African participants were the Deputy Prime Minister of Tunisia; the Foreign Ministers and Deputy Foreign Ministers of Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia; the Ministers of Finance of Lesotho and Zaire; the Minister of Health of Botswana; and the Ministers of Agriculture and Education of Lesotho. African participants represented 23 countries and five southern African liberation movements (from South Africa and Zimbabwe). Countries represented for the first time in the nine-year program were Angola, Egypt, Guinea, Libya and Mozambique.

The American delegation of 51 persons included two U.S. Senators and 11 Members of Congress, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and the Assistant Administrator for Africa of the Agency for International Development, nine corporate executives, leading editors and publishers, black political and civil rights leaders, foundation executives and others concerned with U.S. policies toward Africa. Among the American observers were 13 administrative and legislative assistants to Senators, Representatives and Congressional committees—a key group insofar as Africa-related legislation is concerned.

The overwhelming response from Africans and Americans may be attributed to several factors: the location of the conference in a country entirely surrounded by South Africa, growing American interest in southern African issues and heightened African commitment to the cause of majority rule and independence in southern Africa, the prospect of changes in American policies toward Africa as a result of Jimmy Carter's election earlier in November, and a growing recognition among both Africans and Americans that these meetings can contribute to increased understanding of issues, a sense of fellowship and commonality among participants and, at least indirectly, the development of new U.S. policies toward Africa.

As the report indicates, many American participants, including Senators, Representatives and the black Americans present (see "Statement by the Afro-American Participants," Appendix 1) promised on their return home to seek increased American support for majority rule and human rights in southern Africa as well as expanded development aid and private invest-

ment for the black independent "frontline" states bordering South Africa. Many participants are in positions to affect U.S. public opinion, media coverage of Africa, corporate policies, legislation and U.S. foreign policy. It is worth noting in this regard that three American participants have already joined the new Administration in policy-making posts: Hon. Andrew Young, now Permanent Representative to the United Nations; James A. Joseph, newly-appointed Under Secretary of the Interior; and Goler Teal Butcher, the new Assistant Administrator of AID for Africa. Another participant, John R. Lewis, is expected shortly to join the Carter Administration as Deputy Director of ACTION.

Discussions at the conference focused on economic relationships between the United States and Africa, especially development assistance and the role of transnational corporations in Africa, and on southern African issues, including the independence of Zimbabwe and Namibia and the economic, political and social plight of South Africa's black majority under apartheid.

I would like in this brief foreword to pay special tribute to the South African participants in the Maseru conference. South African liberation movement leaders, who would face long jail sentences or death if forcibly returned to their homeland, risked over-flying South Africa in order to attend. Other South Africans, still living in the Republic, displayed extraordinary honesty and courage in the discussion of life under apartheid. And we were all ineffably moved by the brief appearance at the conference of five young South African refugees—of whom four were children—who had fled arrest after the June uprisings in Soweto.

I want also to express the Institute's deep gratitude to the Government of Lesotho for its hospitality and administrative arrangements and to the Carnegie Corporation of New York and The Ford Foundation, whose grants have made this conference series possible. The Institute acknowledges also the leadership given throughout by members of the Directing Committee for the conference: Senator Dick Clark and Hon. C.D. Molapo, co-chairmen, and Representative Yvonne Brathwaite Burke; Earl W. Foell, Managing Editor, *Christian Science Monitor*; John R. Lewis, then Executive Director, Voter Education Project; H.E. Edward Olusola Sanu, Nigerian Ambassador to the United States; Hon. Mohamed Sayah, Deputy Prime Minister, Tunisia; Hon. Greenwood B. Silwizya, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Zambia; and Hon. Dr. Munyua Waiyaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kenya.

Because of the quality of discussion and the importance of the subject matter, we consider it a privilege to bring the conference deliberations to a wider audience by means of this report.

WILLIAM R. COTTER
President
The African-American Institute

May, 1977

1 MAJOR ISSUES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

When Lesotho's Foreign Minister C.D. Molapo stepped forward to open The African-American Conference on a hot November afternoon, there was a strong sense in the Senate Chamber of anticipation, even excitement. Almost 200 persons had traveled many thousands of miles over several days—often by charter plane—to be present in that room. All were keenly aware of their physical location—a few hundred yards from the South African border, in a country completely surrounded by South Africa—and of the presence of black South Africans who either had fled arrest in their home country or would return home after the meeting at some personal risk. Delegates were aware, too, that the imminent change of Administration in Washington signalled possible changes in U.S. policy toward Africa and that at least some Americans present would help to shape new policy.

SOUTHERN AFRICA—MYTHS AND REALITIES: THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS

In his opening address The Rt. Hon. Dr. Leabua Jonathan, Prime Minister of Lesotho, focused initially on "myths" promulgated by minority governments in southern Africa, including the myth of white racial superiority. The Prime Minister called on the international community to "ensure that the blight of racism is removed from southern Africa," warning that "the alternative is clear: racial holocaust . . . brutal racial strife and . . . the extinction of world civilization as we know it." A second myth, the Prime Minister observed, is that South Africa has achieved détente with Black Africa:

"Clearly, Mr. Vorster's regime is not about to depart from the doctrine of apartheid. Indeed, if anything, Mr. Vorster's measures have been designed to strengthen the security of the system of apartheid within South Africa. Thus any talk of détente with Black Africa outside the framework of the basic OAU resolutions is wishful thinking or, at worst, dangerous self-delusion. For we (Africans) want freedom and justice, not détente with oppression and exploitation. Since Mr. Vorster made his famous promise, not one piece of apartheid legislation has been removed from the South African statute books. On the contrary, a spate of repressive legislation has passed the South African Legislative Assembly."

Observing that southern Africa is a powder keg

Any talk (by South Africa) of détente with Black Africa outside the framework of the basic OAU resolutions is wishful thinking or dangerous self-delusion. We (Africans) want freedom and justice, not détente with oppression and exploitation. Since Mr. Vorster made his famous promise, not one piece of apartheid legislation has been removed from the South African statute books. On the contrary, a spate of repressive legislation has passed the South African Legislative Assembly.

The Rt. Hon. Dr. Leabua Jonathan

ready to explode at any time, the Prime Minister affirmed his government's support for the majority's struggle "for self-determination and basic rights." This struggle may necessitate violence:

"My government has never advocated violence as a solution to human problems. Nor do we support armed struggle for its own sake. And yet, violent struggle is often the only option left to oppressed people. If today the youth of southern Africa are ready to take up arms, it is only because for too long their lives have been blighted by the brutality of apartheid, and the dignity and self respect of their parentage denied by white minority rule. Fifteen years ago, the men and women of Sharpeville fell under the bullets of racism. Today the children of Soweto are facing the same guns. The carnage in Soweto and other black townships of South Africa is the clearest testimony to the brutality of apartheid. The graves of the black children who died at the hands of the South African police will forever remain symbols of the callousness of racism."

The Prime Minister turned next to the "myth" of separate development—a "euphemism for apartheid"—condemning Pretoria's attempts to destroy the territorial integrity not only of South Africa but also of Namibia (South-West Africa) by "balkanizing both of these territories on ethnic grounds." The bankruptcy of this policy is evident, he suggested, from its failure to preserve the "cultural identity" of different white groups in South Africa, its view that resident urban blacks are "citizens of different homelands . . . in which they have never lived," and its condemnation of blacks—who comprise 70 percent of the population—to occupy 13 percent of the land. The Prime Minister observed that the majority of the South African people has never been asked whether it approved of separate development.

To accept separate development, "another myth born in the dark recesses of the racist mind," is "to aid and abet racism," he concluded.

The Prime Minister then summarized recent developments in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Namibia. He affirmed the clear and undeniable right to freedom and majority rule *now*—not after two more years of compromise—of the people of Zimbabwe and condemned the Smith government's incursions into Mozambique, falsely justified on the grounds of "hot pursuit." The Prime Minister also condemned the Turnhalle Conference on the future of Namibia as a "futile exercise" since it does not involve participation by the South-West Africa People's Organization of Namibia (SWAPO). He called on Pretoria to allow SWAPO to participate freely in political activity in Namibia.

Turning to American policy toward Africa, the Prime Minister said that the United States and other western powers are "not entirely immune from blame" for the oppression of black people; they have often described the black struggle against colonialism as "Communist-inspired" and have failed to see it in its true perspective. The Prime Minister warned:

"Issues should not be confused. The struggle in southern Africa is not between capitalism and Communism. It is not Russian- or Chinese-inspired. It is a struggle for liberation—for freedom and justice. Aware of these facts, America should not condone the South African situation but should categorically denounce and condemn it. Failure to do so will create a political vacuum which will be filled by someone else . . . The United States and her allies should realize that Africans are by nature not Communists. They are desperately fighting for freedom and dignity. Either assist them or let them seek help

Conference participants arriving at the Maseru airport were welcomed by Lesotho Foreign Minister C.D. Molapo, center. Pictured here, from left, are Representative Silvio O. Conte, AAI Vice President Frank E. Ferrari, Representative Charles Whalen, Jr. and Manhattan Borough President Percy E. Sutton from the United States.



wherever they can get it. Do not label our struggle for self-determination and human dignity as 'Communist' and thus associate yourselves with racist regimes which are deliberately misleading not only the world but also their supporters."

Developments Affecting Lesotho

The Prime Minister concluded his address with comments on southern African developments directly affecting Lesotho, including South Africa's recent closure of the southeastern border of Lesotho as a means of pressuring the Lesotho government to recognize "the Transkei Bantustan." The Prime Minister emphasized: The closure "will have no impact whatsoever on our position on Bantustans. We shall continue to reject the concept of Bantustans as a cover for racism and apartheid." Referring to the Labor Agreement signed by Lesotho and South Africa on August 24, 1973, the Prime Minister noted that this agreement provided for 15 ports of entry between South Africa and Lesotho. On October 15, 1976 the South African government unilaterally closed three border posts "in violation of the letter and spirit of the Agreement." The South African government has not only failed to abide by the provisions of the Agreement regarding amendments but also refused to provide a satisfactory explanation of its breach of the Agreement. Under these circumstances, the Lesotho government has appealed to the United Nations to intervene and to help Lesotho meet the emergency situation that has been created. The Prime Minister described this situation:

"Over 200,000 of our people in the districts of Qacha's Nek, Quthing and Mokhotlong are affected by the closure of the border. My Government has had to formulate urgent plans to provide for their relief. Additionally, we now have to implement, as a matter of urgency, all development projects that will contribute towards access of the people in these districts to the lowland areas of Lesotho. Furthermore, my Government is bound to lose customs revenue as a result of the closure of the three border posts. No amount of posturing on the part of the authorities of South Africa will absolve them of their responsibility for the creation of this situation."

The Prime Minister summed up Lesotho's position with an old Sesotho proverb, "There cannot be peace in our modest home so long as we have to sleep next to a troubled elephant." He pointed out that Lesotho provides scholarships, accommodations and jobs for a large number of refugees from the minority-ruled countries of southern Africa. Its radio station continues to give a balanced picture of international views concerning apartheid. The Prime Minister concluded his address as follows:

"The repercussions of recent events in Soweto and other black townships in South Africa are being felt in all the countries neighbouring South Africa. There is now a steady stream of refugee school children to Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. We are committed to providing refuge to these children, and we are particularly conscious of our responsibility to accord them treatment that cushions the shock of their experiences in South Africa and their sudden status as refugees. This is a task that is already stretching the capability of my Government in providing adequate educational facilities

My government has never advocated violence as a solution to human problems. Nor do we support armed struggle for its own sake. Yet violent struggle is often the only option left to oppressed people. Fifteen years ago, the men and women of Sharpeville fell under the bullets of racism. Today the children of Soweto are facing the same guns. The carnage in Soweto and other black townships of South Africa is the clearest testimony to the brutality of apartheid. The graves of the black children who died at the hands of the South African police will forever remain symbols of the callousness of racism.

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for them and clearly calls for assistance on the part of the international community.

"As I have already indicated, these are, undoubtedly, contributions to the liberation struggle. Our geographic position in the heart of South Africa presents immense catalytic potentialities for change. Lesotho is the southernmost outpost of African liberation on the African continent. In this murky area of white minority rule, my country stands out as a beacon of freedom and non-racialism. The struggle for the liberation of southern Africa is very much our own struggle.¹ The successful outcome of that struggle will be a victory for us too. In a larger sense, it will also be a victory for Africa and for humanity, for notions of racial supremacy will cease to bedevil relations amongst men and nations . . .

"An old man—a black South African, a teacher, a chief, a freedom fighter—articulated a vision of a future Africa. He was a man who, at the age of 69, died at a railway crossing because he was nearly blind and deaf, and the freight train that struck him down would not stop. When he ended his lecture in the Oslo University auditorium after accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Chief Albert Luthuli drew this vision: "In a strife-torn world, tottering on the brink of complete destruction by man-made nuclear weapons, a free and independent Africa is in the making, in answer to the injunction and challenge of history, 'Arise and shine for thy light is come.' Acting in concert with other nations, she is man's last hope for a mediator between the East and the West, and is qualified to ask the great-powers to 'turn their swords into ploughshares' because two-thirds of mankind is hungry and illiterate; to engage human energy, human skill, and human talent in the service of peace, for the alternative is unthinkable-war, destruction, and desolation; and to build a world community which will stand as a lasting monument to the millions of men and women, to such devoted and distinguished world citizens and fighters for peace as the late Dag Hammarskjöld, who have given their lives that we may live in happiness and peace. Africa's qualification for this noble task is incontestable, for her own fight has never been and is not now a fight for conquest of land, for accumulation of wealth or domination of peoples, but for the recognition and preservation of man and the establishment of a truly free world for a free people."

AN AFRICAN OVERVIEW OF POLICY ISSUES IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Africans' views of southern African issues—and of U.S. policies toward southern Africa—were the principal subjects of a major address by Hon. Brigadier Joseph N. Garba, Commissioner for External Affairs of the Republic of Nigeria. Early in his address, Commissioner Garba commented on America's "non-policy" in Africa:

"Until very recently, and perhaps until the collapse of the Portuguese colonial empire in Africa when the United States got so excited about imaginary Communist penetration in Africa, America had no African policy. The view of policy-makers in Washington seemed to be that the affairs of the newly-independent states in Africa south of the Sahara were a business of their former colonial masters alone, even though the addition of so many new African states to the United Nations membership had profoundly changed the complexion of world politics. Indeed, official U.S. attitude seemed to be that even those African territories which were still under colonial domination should be allowed to remain so. That, at

least, is the conclusion that one can draw from the American government's attitude to the former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, the Cape Verde Islands and São Tomé and Príncipe, and the same inference certainly holds true for the U.S. government's position on Zimbabwe following the rebel leader Ian Smith's illegal seizure of independence from Britain in 1965.

"As we can all vividly recall, when most of Western Europe and Canada joined hands with African nations in condemning the inhuman treatment and oppression of Africans in the former Portuguese African dependencies, the then Fascist



government in Lisbon was receiving all possible material and moral support from the American government, which thus enabled it to prosecute a war of genocide against defenseless Africans in their own God-given land. And long after many other countries in the Western Alliance had enforced the United Nations embargo on the purchase of Rhodesian chrome, the United States was still importing this main-stay of the Rhodesian economy from the rebel regime.

"There is another illustration of America's 'non-policy' in Africa which I should like to mention . . . It concerns the United Nations Trust Territory of Namibia, which is at present illegally occupied by troops of the apartheid regime of South Africa. When Dr. Kissinger embarked on his Southern African initiative, hopes were raised in Africa that he would now set in motion the machinery for a peaceful settlement in the region by first securing the consent of the South African government to withdraw from Namibia, in accordance with United Nations Resolutions and the decision of the International Court of Justice. As we all know, Namibia is, in no sense, a South African dependency. Constitutionally, it is under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, acting through its Commissioner for the territory. Furthermore, there is a well established and

¹Lesotho has subsequently become a member of the group of "frontline states."