

A Footnote on the Relationship of ACOA to UPA-FNLA-GRAE

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I write this footnote for the record. It will be of interest to a few people. For many years I have put aside the temptation to write what might be called a "defensive" footnote in comment on a rumor which has circulated for more than a decade. This involves the rumor that the ACOA was a conduit for American government (i.e. CIA) funds to UPA-FNLA-GRAE. The wide circulation of this rumor has been a sobering experience for me. If ACOA has been a conduit, I had to be the instrument. No one else could have been. I had the contacts with Holden Roberto and the UPA at the critical period involved - from 1960 to 1963 (although my relationship with him goes back even further). I also am alone in knowing how false the rumor is. But how does one prove something false when it involves undercover activities performed by the CIA?

The circulation of this rumor has been sobering because I have learned how incorrect facts can seem to be "fact" after they have appeared in enough places and have been repeated innumerable times. There can be a McCarthyism (guilt by association) of the left as wrong as that of the right. The fact that I have had an association with Holden Roberto and that Holden has received CIA assistance, does not mean that I have been an instrument of CIA assistance.

I don't expect this memorandum to put the rumor to rest. But at least it will put the facts in writing for those who are interested.

First, what is the rumor? In essence it is that ACOA passed U.S. government money to Holden Roberto, or to the UPA of which he was president, early in the 1960's. I have come across this rumor in many places. The first place that I know of where it appeared in writing was in the Congo Journal, Courrier d'Afrique, February 5, 1962, published in Leopoldville. The article was written by Antoine Matumona, one of the leaders of the Democratic Party of Angola (PDA) which very soon thereafter joined in the front with the UPA to form the FNLA and subsequently the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile. Matumona wrote "If one believes the numerous bits of gossip in circulation" the UPA was receiving substantial material and financial support from the American Committee on Africa. Further, Matumona wrote, that this aid has been given on the condition that the UPA would not ally itself with the MPLA "which American circles accuse of being pro-communist." It should be emphasized that Matumona based his statement on "numerous bits of gossip."

In 1973 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal published a booklet entitled Portuguese Africa. On page 35 of this publication there is the amazing sentence which reads "The first of these three (GRAE) was created by the American Committee on Africa to forstall the second (MPLA) which is inspired and aided by communist powers." I wonder what the factual basis was for this assertion? This statement at least in part is contradictory to the Portuguese position taken in a pamphlet published in 1961 entitled The Communists and Angola. In this pamphlet the beginning of the armed struggle in Angola is looked upon as the creation of communists. On page 6 of this pamphlet the American Committee on Africa is looked upon as an organization doing the work of communists. It reads "A propaganda campaign in the United States against Portugal was carried on by the American Committee on Africa, which at the time listed on its letterhead the names of approximately 70 prominent Americans...the letterhead with the names prominently printed on it however was systematically used to issue propaganda that echoed the charges (over)"

of the Soviet ambassador in the Angola debate" (at the United Nations). Further a letter dated January 19, 1962 from the Portuguese American Committee on Foreign Affairs, financed by about 40 overseas Portuguese companies, reads in part "You may not know that the American Committee on Africa is carrying on a hard propaganda campaign to turn the people of this country against Portugal, with the aim of breaking our links to an unwavering foe of Communism, supporter of NATO, and supplier to the United States of an advanced defense base in the Azores."

This kind of propagandistic position was not bothersome at all. It was to be expected from a rightwing government and its adherents in the U.S. However it becomes much more difficult to accept false information when it comes from ones friends and fraternal organizations. In October 1969 the Angola Comite of Holland, published its first edition of a pamphlet entitled Portugal and NATO. ACOA even distributed many copies of this pamphlet because the material in it we thought was very reliable and important, in spite of the fact that it had material damaging to the reputation of ACOA. On page 37 appeared the sentences "A stop was put to the use of public funds by the American Committee on Africa for work in Angola. An agent of the Portuguese Secret Police PIDE had discovered that Roberto Holden's Angola independence movement, GRAE, was supported with money from the American tax payers via this committee." The footnote for this piece of information was from a publication in Bonn, Germany entitled Angola 1966-67 and issued by the Friederich Ebert Foundation. I took this question up with one of the editors of the Dutch publication, Dr. E.J. Bosgra and he indicated he thought the information was reliable because it came from a social democratic source in West Germany. I protested against this. Whether Bosgra believed me or not, I was relieved that this portion was deleted from further editions of the publication.

On a number of occasions I discussed this question with Dr. Agostinho Neto and believe he finally was satisfied that it was not true. We developed a good relationship, and I have talked with him many times including Luanda in 1975.

I was rather surprised the first time I met Mateus Neto (who is no relation to Agostinho Neto) when he was the Minister of Information in GRAE in Kinshasa. He subsequently became the Minister of Agriculture in the Transitional government of Angola in January 1975. He studied in Sweden. He told me, in far from an amused tone, of once being expelled from a meeting in Sweden because GRAE was accused of accepting American money, supposedly going through ACOA making GRAE the tool of the CIA. Neto said to me "What I want to know is where is the money?" The fact is, I had to tell him, there never has been any American government money through ACOA.

Before dealing with a summary of the facts of what my relationships have been with Roberto and his organization, let me deal with three circumstantial pieces of evidence which should be taken into consideration by those who tend to believe the rumor. First to an objective onlooker ACOA would seem to be a poor instrument as a conduit for CIA funds. The CIA does have front organizations which have served it as a conduit for money. Either the CIA works through such fronts or camouflages its secret contributions through large organizations that can hide the money in their massive operations. The ACOA would be <sup>an</sup> unlikely instrument on either count. Where would we put the funds so that they wouldn't show? During the time in question (the early 1960's) the ACOA had a very modest, subsistence budget. Where would we hide the funds so that they wouldn't appear on an audit or some other report? Our Executive Board oversees all finances of the organization. I have never had any discre-

tionary fund at my private disposal. I suppose there might be ways of doing it, but why would it be worth the bother with an organization with as small a budget as ours?

Second how could I fool my close associates? I would have to be either a very successful Jekyll-Hyde character (for such an operation would contradict my public posture in criticizing U.S. policy) or an amazingly adroit Scarlet Pimpernel. I am neither. I have been executive director of ACOA since 1955 and helped found the organization in 1953. Our board has always been composed of persons unalterably opposed to the CIA operation. I wouldn't have lasted a moment in this position if I was suspected of the kind of double-dealing which would have been involved. People like Peter Weiss, Betsy Landis, Bill Booth, Bob Browne, Bob VanLierop, Janet Hooper, Jennifer Davis and many others would have found me out. It would be impossible for me to have hidden such skullduggery over such a long period of time. To my knowledge none of my close associates have ever questioned my motives.

Third, when in 1967 the National Student Association broke the story about extensive CIA funds going through various non-governmental agencies with many of them named, ACOA was never listed as either a recipient or a conduit. Two other Africa-centered organizations were named. If there was to have been a public exposure of ACOA as an instrument in any way of CIA, this would have been the time for it to come out. Nothing was said about ACOA in this respect because there wasn't anything to say.

What are the facts about my relationships with Holden and his organization? My first trip to Africa was in 1954. I was on the continent from May to the end of September. The trip was my idea alone growing out of my support for the anti-colonial struggle just shaping up in Africa. With the help of a few friends with whom I had been associated in the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Congress of Racial Equality, I raised enough money from individual contributions to cover the costs of my trip. I took a six months leave of absence from FOR and CORE to make this trip. In late August of 1954 I arrived in the capital of the Belgian Congo, Leopoldville. I stayed at the Union Mission House where I had some contacts and where it was inexpensive. During the last day I was there before embarking into Angola for two weeks, I was called away from the supper table when a long-time missionary from the Congo answered a knock at the back door and returned to say "There are three 'natives' who have asked for you." He further said, "They are Angolans. I know them. I wouldn't bother with them if I were you." (the way this missionary put it was a comment, not on all missionaries, but on the mentality of some).

I went to the back door and met the three Angolans. The tallest of them and the leader who spoke some English was Barros Necaca. His nephew, some 9 years younger than himself, Holden Roberto, was also there. The third was an Angolan who was working in the Portuguese Consulate in Leopoldville. Barros was the leader of a group of Angolans from northern Angola who as yet hardly had a name. They tried to meet visitors coming through Leopoldville to whom they could present their case. They had met other Americans before me. Needless to say I was fascinated to make this contact. Among other things the Angolan who was working in the Portuguese Consulate told me that the Portuguese authorities had been following my itinerary down the west coast of Africa. They knew that I had received a visa for this visit in New York. This was my first contact with Angola.

There may have been an exchange of a letter or so between myself and Barros

when I returned to New York. The next substantial contact came in 1957 on my second trip to Africa. By this time the organization had a name, the Union of the Populations of Northern Angola. They talked about reconstituting the Ancient Kingdom of the Kongo. I knew nothing about what this meant at that time. When I returned to New York after this second trip, I received further letters and a petition to the United Nations from Barros. He wanted me to deliver material to the proper officials. I complied, but also wrote to him to say that I thought their objective of reconstituting the Ancient Kingdom of the Kongo was much too narrow to be of interest to the United Nations. I think I might have had a small influence in helping this group of Bakongos reconsider their obviously narrow tribal base.

I made one other contribution which I think was helpful to what was then the UPNA. I had become acquainted with Kwame Nkrumah and even before that with his chief advisor on Pan African Affairs, George Padmore. Plans were being made for the All African Peoples Conference. I brought the existence of the UPNA in Leopoldville to Padmore's attention. Likewise I informed Barros (not Roberto because he was not then the leader of the group) of plans for the AAPC. Therefore UPNA received an invitation to attend the conference to be held in December 1958 and Holden Roberto was chosen by the group to represent it there.

Roberto took a couple of months to reach Accra. He escaped across the Congo River to Brazzaville, worked his way to Point Noire where he took a boat to Douala. Then a combination of hitchhiking, walking, bus travel, and a plane trip finally got him to Accra well before the AAPC was to convene. He wrote me from Ghana saying that he had met Padmore. From this time he was pretty much taken care of by Ghana. I had some contact with him. He wrote for the Accra paper under the name of Jose Gilmore. <sup>Jose Gilmore</sup> In looking through an old visitors guest book in our office for 1961, the name "Gilmore" appears for March 1961. Roberto worked out of the Republic of Guinea UN office at that time.

Roberto arrived in New York several days before the Security Council meeting of March 15, 1961. He told me at that time in a very cryptic fashion "Watch for March 15th". My own feeling is that he was surprised himself by the extent of the violence which took place and the attention given to it.

Up to early 1960 I don't even recall that I knew about the existence of the MPLA. I had only been to Luanda once, in 1954, and this was before the MPLA was organized. It worked in an underground fashion as long as it stayed inside Angola. Its representative did not attend the first All African Peoples Conference in Accra, but was at the second in Tunis in January 1960.

The next significant development in my relationship with the UPA (it had been renamed at the time of the AAPC and "northern" had been dropped) was at the end of 1961 and early 1962. I had talked with Roberto about taking a trip inside Angola with the forces of the UPA. Professor John Marcum, then at Lincoln University, joined me on a two week walking trip with the UPA forces. Just prior to this we had organized a program which we called Emergency Relief to Angola (ERA). This was a program to help supply medical material to aid the hundreds of thousands of refugees who poured from northern Angola into the Congo. So one of the purposes of our trip into northern Angola was to deliver medicines which we had collected.

Towards the end of 1962 we decided as part of our ERA program that we should supply a doctor to work with the humanitarian organization which the UPA

had established and which was called SARA (the Service for Assistance for Angolan Refugees). We heard from a young doctor by the name of Ian Gilchrist who had been raised in a medical missionary home in southern Angola and who at the time he contacted us was doing medical work in Sierra Leone. He was anxious to work for the cause of Angolan freedom. We made an arrangement with SARA for Dr. Gilchrist to be attached to their work under the supervision of a Dr. Jose Liahuca. For two and a half years Ian Gilchrist and his family worked on a subsistence basis with SARA in Leopoldville and traveled through the lower Congo. I don't think we supplied more than \$5,000 a year for the expenses of the Gilchrist family. We did supply some medicines and we also bought a VW Station Wagon which served as an ambulance.

The Gilchrist period with UPA-SARA came to an abrupt end in June 1965. Alexandre Taty, who had been the Minister of Defense in GRAE, attempted a coup against Roberto's leadership and attacked the UPA headquarters in Kinshasa in the middle of the night. His effort was not successful. However Holden and some of the others thought that Gilchrist had been implicated in the plan for this coup. He was the object of a hunt by the security agents of UPA and undoubtedly would have been arrested had he not escaped from the country. He came to New York where we spent long hours talking about the situation. My relationship with Holden never quite recovered from this development. I am sure Gilchrist was not involved in the attempted coup. The suspicion of him grew out of a tribalism in UPA-GRAE. Because of Gilchrist's association with southern Angola and the fact that he spoke the language of the Ovimbundu, he frequently talked with persons who later left GRAE such as Liahuca and Savimbi.

I had visited Leopoldville-Kinshasa a number of times. June 1963 I even visited the military camp at Kinkuzu on the same occasion that some African nationalists were there including Sam Nujoma of SWAPO and Ndabaningi Sithole of then ZAPU. On a couple of these occasions I had visited the headquarters of the MPLA and their humanitarian organization called CVAAR during the brief period they were in Leopoldville. I had met some of the leaders of the MPLA including Mario d'Andrade. d'Andrade remained president of MPLA until Neto escaped from prison in 1962. Understandably I always received a cool but correct reception at the MPLA office. The MPLA leadership was suspicious of me whenever I visited their headquarters because they certainly knew of my contact with the UPA. The relationship between these two organizations was very strained and it was to get worse. I was fairly innocent about this at that time and only knew that I was in an awkward position between the two forces.

In the U.S. the ACOA gave certain limited assistance to the UPA-GRAE. They had a succession of representatives here who called upon our Committee for assistance, as many other liberation movements did. Our emergency help consisted of meeting telephone bills, small travel expenses, etc. For some years we were in touch with Carlos Cambando, and following him, Paul Touba when they were GRAE representatives in New York. The MPLA never had any representative in the U.S. *until much later.*

The executive board of ACOA had a basic policy discussion on our relationship with the liberation movements of Angola in 1970. The decision <sup>which</sup> was made at that time was to abide by the formula "the Primacy of the MPLA". From that time on ACOA made every effort to be helpful to MPLA. We sent more assistance to support medical programs of MPLA for instance, than we'd ever sent to UPA-FNLA-GRAE.

Just for the record at no point has anyone from the U.S. government ever approached me, or to my knowledge any person associated with ACOA and suggested that we be a conduit for government funds to GRAE or FNLA or UPA. I know that I have never dispensed any such funds, nor have any gone through ACOA.