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# Problems of African Policy

## A Bit by Bit Approach Might Succeed; Grand Plan Dubious

By Joseph E. Evans

NAIROBI, Kenya—If developing a U.S. policy for Africa depends on trying to understand what the African people are like, it also depends on trying to understand what other problems we face in the great heartland of the continent below the Sahara and above the Union of South Africa.

And the truth is that the U.S. is bedeviled by a host of problems in this area, some of them almost beyond its control.

Take Communism, for instance. The danger of Communist gains is the central reason the U.S. is concerned about developing a policy or getting deeply involved in tropical Africa at all. Yet in the struggle for Africa, if that is what it is, the Communists have one enormous advantage over the U.S.: They can and do say anything the Africans—or at least the political leaders and the tiny group of educated people—want to hear. Moreover, as though to simplify the Reds' task, the leaders and intellectuals are sometimes pretty naive.

So the Communists can coldly, callously, cynically, with gallons of crocodile tears, set about making Lumumba a martyr. But it is much more than Lumumba. With total irresponsibility, they can say they are for the immediate independence of all African states no matter what chaos may ensue as in the former Belgian Congo. They are for African nationalism, pan-Africanism, the African personality; against colonialism, against the West, in effect against the white man.

In a word, their job for the present is to make trouble, infinitely easier than the U.S. aim of being helpful and constructive.

### A Big Appeal

The Communists have a further advantage in that their type of one-man, one-party dictatorial system appeals to the vanity of leaders like Guinea's Sekou Toure and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. Also it is much simpler to run an African state on the Soviet model than to operate through the complexities of political freedom and parliamentary democracy.

At any rate, the Communists and their African helpers are busy in many ways and many places. Guinea and Ghana, of course, are strongly under Red influence, and this is being extended to Mali. With the help of the United Arab Republic and Ghana the Reds are providing military and other aid to the Congo's Stanleyville regime of Antoine Gizenga. Nigeria will almost certainly accept Soviet-Bloc aid in the near future. Here in Kenya the Communists give financial support to individual politicians like Mr. Oginga Odinga. Throughout the area they offer thousands of scholarships for indoctrination behind the Curtain.

The pro-Communist Ghanaians, not so incidentally, seem to be all over tropical Africa. One of their tactics is to try to infiltrate trade unions with their Red-lining ideology and organizational concepts; they are trying it in Kenya and, apparently, with more success at the moment, in Nigeria.

None of this means the Communists are sure to win over all tropical Africa; in fact that seems unlikely. Even in Guinea and Ghana, as the Africans get to know them, they encounter resistance. They would almost surely encounter external resistance if they attempted military conquest. Within Africa, anti-Communist forces are not powerless. Says a Britisher here in Nairobi: "If we thought that granting independence in the next few years would deliver Kenya to Communism, we would hold on indefinitely." (Others are not so sure the drive for independence could be stayed this late in the day.)

What is plain, however, is that the Soviets' totalitarian structure gives them the power to utter whatever tripe they think will sound good in Africa, to give aid no matter how uneconomic, to make room for Africans in their schools. The U.S., being both responsible and responsive to an alert public opinion, cannot do these things to anything like the same extent. How can the U.S. ask Harvard to admit 600 Africans when there is not enough room in many American colleges for Americans?

Even apart from the specific threat of Communism, the U.S. runs into numerous difficulties. There is, naturally enough, monumental ignorance of America, some of it taking rather funny forms. And in some cases our colonialist allies have not helped much to relieve the ignorance.

For example, in Leopoldville some Congolese heard a man speaking English. "What's that?" one African asked another. "Oh," replied the other, "it's a dialect used in a remote part of Belgium." Then again, a Congolese child asked an American chum

If the U.S. were as big as Belgium. When told it is much bigger, the African boy got very excited and rushed off to impart to his friends the astounding news that there is actually a country in the world larger than Belgium.

Among educated Africans, moreover, there is considerable suspicion of the U.S., not all of it necessarily instigated by Communists. Our Negro problem is at the top of these educated minds. An intellectual in Ghana, a reasonably pro-West man who has visited the U.S., says he simply cannot understand how we can go on treating Negroes as inferiors in what is supposedly the world's model of democracy. "If you didn't preach so much about democracy," he adds, "it might not be so bad."

What these people do not, in truth, understand is that there is always a certain amount of natural segregation in the world so long as people are at all free to choose their friends and neighbors; that the progress of the American Negro, in terms of civil rights, is remarkable; and that the economic and political conditions of American Negroes are vastly better than anything generally obtaining in tropical Africa.

Sending American Negro ambassadors is no sure-fire way of allaying these suspicions. Such an ambassador may be cultivated and talented, but obviously what matters is whether an ambassador is a good ambassador, not whether he is black or white. Not surprisingly, some Africans view a Negro ambassador as further grounds for suspicion, figuring he has been sent both to butter up and to deceive them into thinking our race problems are not as bad as they positively know they are.

Another source of suspicion, and a double-barreled one at that, is our alliances with colonial or former colonial European powers. In places like Guinea, Ghana and to some extent Nigeria, we are sometimes regarded as little more than stooges of London and Paris. "You don't mind taking independent action in Lebanon or Laos," asserts one African, "but did you help Sekou Toure when France left Guinea flat? Did you help Lumumba when he appealed to you? No." But in a place like Kenya, still under British rule, the opposite suspicion prevails among some people. The white settlers here believe Washington is busily pressuring London to grant independence far sooner than they consider safe. More broadly, there is suspicion that the U.S., seeing that Britain has just about had it in this part of the world, is getting set to take over—including commercially through "big business."

### The Williams Implication

Is it possible for the U.S. to work out an understanding with its N.A.T.O. partners whereby it could take an African line seemingly more independent of them and more in accord with African aspirations? Perhaps, but in the chronically rickety condition of N.A.T.O., not many would make very large bets on it.

More importantly, is it wise or right for the U.S. to identify itself, willy-nilly, with African aspirations? Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams' implication—whatever he actually meant—that the blacks should have independence whenever it suits them does not look so good in the light of the events in the Congo.

As for Kenya, no serious student believes the blacks here are ready for self-government. We are not, after all, dealing with American colonists of the 18th Century who had highly developed political instincts and attitudes. Most of the black Africans live in exceedingly primitive material and cultural conditions; barely 60 years ago, when the British settlers started coming out, they were living in a state of unalloyed savagery in Kenya.

What, then, can the U.S. do in the way of developing a policy?

The closest thing to a new policy so far is the so-called peace corps for Africa and other underdeveloped areas. But this in itself is not a policy or anything else. As with official ambassadors, it depends entirely on what kind of people are sent and what they do. If they are youthfully naive, no matter how well-trained in a job specialty, they will not help the U.S. If they are working side by side with African laborers, they will not have much opportunity to influence the people who are in control, namely the politicians and intellectuals.

The peace corps program, incidentally, is not being greeted with wild jubilation hereabouts. One Nairobi newspaper editorializes that it might be a good idea, but of

course as with all U.S. and Russian aid offers, it must be treated with reserve and suspicion.

Some Americans here think the peace corps is a gimmicky operation which doesn't do anything about fundamentals. What is necessary, in their opinion, is some method of involving Americans structurally as it were in African affairs—politicians to talk African politics with African politicians and if possible work with them, union members to do the same with African unionists. But even if this were a desirable approach, it clearly is far easier said than done effectively.

In the opinion of others, the U.S. lack should be a massive assault on tropical Africa's educational deficiencies. To do anything substantial about education, however, would be incredibly costly. And education, though a highly emotional word nowadays, must be regarded with a certain amount of dispassionateness. If you send an African to America and he is not qualified or gets stuck in a low-grade college, he will not be happy about America.

Moreover, even if it were possible to bring a rapid improvement in African education, it must be asked what they are being educated to do. Where are the industries or other jobs to absorb them? Unemployment is high throughout the area. In a country like India, a serious problem leading to political restiveness is that of the educated unemployed.

### A Pitiful Illusion

Others say large-scale U.S. aid in general is the answer; we must provide rapid economic development. Apart from the inability of the U.S. to afford that kind of spending, anyone who knows anything about Africa and Africans must consider the notion of rapid economic development a pitiful illusion. Literally billions could be poured into this area without producing any real economic development to speak of.

In this connection, some officials of African governments are opposed to channeling U.S. aid through the United Nations, a device apparently favored by U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson and others. They say the U.N. is too flizzy and long-winded and time-consuming. They want American experts, not U.N., and they want direct bilateral deals with the U.S.

In the opinion of some Americans in Africa, the emphasis of U.S. aid should be on helping companies in countries like Nigeria, for instance, instead of just handing money to other governments that may turn totalitarian or Communist. Says one: "America is a business country and yet business has little influence in foreign policy. If we hope to see parts of Africa develop in freedom, then it's time we acted as though we understood the connection between free enterprise and political freedom."

The conclusion would seem to be this: It is all but impossible to construct a grand, formal "policy" to keep Africa surely out of Red hands and get it into friendly association with the West. But perhaps an abstract policy is not needed anyway. More effective might be a sensible, patient and reasoned effort to demonstrate to individual and influential Africans that our only concern is their best interests, even when they are incapable of seeing their own real interests.

Certainly it is no foregone conclusion now that the Communists must win and the U.S. fall. In time, as the anti-colonialist clamor gradually subsides, Africans may be able to perceive the dangers of flirting with Communism and the advantages of friendship with the West. In the meantime they have demanded the responsibility of independence, and most of them have got it or are getting it. That is their responsibility, not Washington's.

For America, the most dangerous experiment would be to decide the U.S. must match its skilled, wily and wholly unscrupulous Red foe with a new Machiavellianism of its own. If the U.S. were to base an African policy simply on what it thinks Africans want to hear, it would be forfeiting its claims to responsibility and morality. If the U.S. Government were to start ordering its citizens around in pursuit of its African goals, it would be doing something drastic to the fabric of our society.

To gain tropical Africa and lose something of our own free institutions would be the poorest sort of profit.

(This is the second of two articles on the problems of U.S. policy in Africa. The first appeared March 20.)