

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JS-7
The Secretary-General

P.O. Box 5113
Nairobi, Kenya
30 Sep 63

Mr. Richard H. Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Drive up Delamere Avenue onto Nairobi's "hill" and on your left through the trees you see the great, dun bulk of the East African Common Services Organization building. Behind its Pentagonesque facade is the nerve center of the civil aviation, harbor, meteorological, postal, railway, research, and tax collection services of the three East African countries.

EACSO is the successor to the East Africa High Commission established in 1948 by the Colonial Government to administer the inter-territorial services of Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda. The coming independence of these countries meant that the relationships between them would be changed and in June, 1961, delegates from East Africa met in London to consider the reorganization of the High Commission. As a result of this meeting, control of the organization passed from the three Colonial Governors to the political leaders of the territories. EACSO came into being with its ratification by the legislature of newly-independent Tanganyika in December, 1961.



A.L. Adu, O.B.E.

An executive body and a legislature direct EACSO. The Prime Minister of Kenya, the President of Tanganyika, and the Prime Minister of Uganda together form the East African Common Services Authority and determine EACSO's policy. Five Committees (triumverates) composed of one Minister from each of the three countries control the Services. The Central Legislative Assembly consists of the Committee members, nine members from each country elected by their respective legislatures, and the Secretary-General and Legal Officer of EACSO.

The Secretary-General, EACSO's principal executive officer, is the administrative head of an organization that employs some 60,000 people and that has an annual budget of just under £40,000,000. His is a difficult job, demanding diplomatic as well as executive skill, for he must cope with the often conflicting personal and political desires of three national leaders. The present Secretary-General is A.L. Adu,

O.B.E., a tall, soft-spoken, cultured Ghanaian.

Amishdai Larson Adu was born on 22 October 1914 in Boso in the Eastern Region of present-day Ghana (known as the Gold Coast before its independence) in the area of the Guan branch of the Akan speaking tribes. His father died when Adu was four and his mother subsequently married one of her husband's relatives, the successful owner of an export-import business, who later became paramount chief of the Boso area. To this day, Adu feels deeply grateful for his step-father's affection and guidance. Both his parents were strong Presbyterians and at the age of seven, Adu entered the Presbyterian mission school in Boso, where he says he was, "quickly licked into shape." From Boso, Adu went to the regional intermediate boarding school at Num, also Presbyterian, and became senior prefect during his last year --"after this job, I had had enough of school politics." At the age of fifteen, Adu enrolled in Achimota, the secondary school in Accra famous for the number of national leaders it has produced. Like many other schools in the colonies, Achimota, with its School Certificate degrees, forms, and prefects, was patterned after an English public school, yet its founders encouraged their students to take pride in their African past. Adu loved the school, got good marks, and won a scholarship to Cambridge.

Adu found his chemistry studies at the University demanding, but was able to join the Student Christian Movement and became its Secretary in his final year. Because of, "a real passion to understand the social problems of England at the grass roots level," he spent part of each summer vacation working in camps for the unemployed.

After graduating from Cambridge, Adu returned to Achimota as a science teacher. Three years later, he began his career in administration when the Colonial Government appointed him and Dr. K. A. Busia as Assistant District Commissioners, the first Africans to be members of the Gold Coast colonial administration since the middle of the nineteenth century when there had been an African Deputy Governor. After five and a half years of moving around the Ashanti Region, Adu became a District Commissioner . His Ashanti years gave him what he considers to be the best possible administrative training. "Either you are able to make your own decisions and take the consequences or not. The good administrators are soon sorted out."

Adu proved that he was a good administrator and in 1949 the British made him Joint Secretary of the Committee on Constitutional Reform (the Coussey Committee). A year later, with the beginning of "Africanization", he took charge of the expatriate and African staffing of the Civil Service. He recalls that nationalistic pressures were less in those days and that, "Africanization could be put in its proper background" of long-term manpower development starting with training at the pre-college level. In the New Year Honors of 1954, the British Government made Adu a member of the Order of the British Empire for his work in this position.

When, with the approach of its independence, the Gold Coast established an embryo Ministry of External Affairs in 1955, Adu became its first Secretary with responsibility for selecting and training its staff. In 1959 his Government promoted him to the post of Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office and head of the Ghanaian Civil Service

In July, 1961, President Nkrumah named Adu Secretary of Ghana's National Council for Higher Education and Research, giving him the responsibility for country-wide manpower development and for carrying out the President's higher education policies.

In the year before he began this new job, Adu had chaired a Localization Committee in Nyasaland and a Salaries Committee in Tanganyika. During his stay in Tanganyika, he met President Nyerere and when the time came to choose the head of the new EACSO, Nyerere asked Adu if he could put his name on the list of candidates for the post. (He was the only African on the list). Adu's appointment as Secretary-General was announced in February, 1962 and he arrived in Nairobi on the 27th of March. Since his arrival, his schedule has given him little time for anything other than brief moments of relaxation with his wife, three sons, the oldest of whom enters Cambridge this fall, and daughter.

Adu's term as Secretary-General has been marked by the divergence between his opinion and that of some trade union leaders and African politicians. He has insisted that the pace of Africanization in EACSO be controlled so that previous standards of efficiency are maintained, while his critics demand a black face in every position of importance now.

Only in one unusual instance has Adu supported rapid, wholesale Africanization. Last July, the Uganda Government notified its Asian non-designated officers (the middle rank of employees) that they would cease to receive certain privileges, such as overseas leave, that they had shared with personnel recruited outside East Africa. Hoping to prevent EACSO from taking similar action, its Asian non-designated officers submitted their resignations. They soon regretted their rashness and asked Adu to return them. To their horror, he refused, saying that they had tried to "blackmail" him.

The departure of these employees will hurt the Services, particularly the Railways and Harbors and the Post Office. In some cases, there are no qualified Africans to replace the outgoing Asians and Europeans must be recruited from overseas at a high cost. In others, the quality of the Services will deteriorate until the new job-holders gain experience.

Much contention still clouds this whole affair. Most of the Asian community and some Europeans think that Adu submitted to labor and political pressures in refusing to allow withdrawal of the resignations. Adu vigorously denies this. As would be expected, the African trade unions are delighted by the Asian exodus.

However, the unions do not usually applaud Adu. They are annoyed by his refusal to rush Africanization, by his insistence on high standards and on a training period for Africans before they take over from Europeans. Walter Ottenyo, the militant leader of the Railway African Union, has bitterly accused Adu of being dominated by the General Manager of the Railways and Harbors and by the Postmaster General, both of whom are Europeans. Also, during the past session of the Kenya House of Representatives, several Members denounced Adu as a "foreigner" and an "expatriate" who should be dismissed. These criticisms touch Adu, but he is too good a civil servant to change his standards simply

because they are questioned.

Ever since he accepted the post of Secretary-General, Adu has said that he would not stay beyond the two year term of his contract. As a result, the recent announcement that at the end of the year he would move to Dar es Salaam to replace George Ivan Smith as Personal Representative in East and Central Africa of the U.N. Secretary-General came as no surprise. When I talked with Adu, I felt that he disliked the political bump and hustle of his EACSO job and that he looks forward to the less contentious U.N. post.

I asked Adu for his thoughts on the proposed East African Federation.

"The politicians are unduly optimistic about federation," he said, "the experience of other countries has shown that successful federation takes a long time. The politicians are optimistic because EACSO has worked well and they want to translate the good will it has created into a federation. I personally think that the federation is not such a sure thing as they think. Enthusiasm for the idea comes in waves; just before Tanganyika became independent there was much excitement about federation, now with Kenya's independence, there is more. Perhaps in the future there will be a wave strong enough to create it."

Adu seemed more interested in the possibility of a single continent-wide African nation.

"It must come unless Africa is to be dependent forever on the benefactions of Europe and America. We must husband our resources for our own well being. Without a strong political organization at the top there will be little chance of bringing about rational economic and social arrangements for the people of Africa. In West Africa, a unified Africa is an article of faith which every African should work for and have. Maybe this faith is a creature of our environment; perhaps Ghana believes so strongly because she is a small country that needs to belong to a larger group to be safe, politically and economically. But this is no dream, it is a necessity: we can manage now, but what of our children?"

Adu's career has increased in scope with each change of job; from Ghana to East Africa to East and Central Africa. As one of the best of Africa's first generation international civil servants, he may well help to create this continental African state.

Sincerely,


John Spencer