

EIR Participates in Tribute To Ambassador Kofi Awoonor

by Lawrence K. Freeman

Nov. 1—A tribute to the late Ghanaian Ambassador Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor, slain in the terrorist attack at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya Sept. 21, was held in New York City on Oct. 29. Entitled, “I Will Say It Before Death Comes,” the memorial was organized by the Multicultural Communications Cooperation and Development Inc., and the African Development Institute.

Awoonor, a novelist, literary scholar, diplomat, political activist, and acclaimed “Poet of Ghana,” was not afraid to publicly criticize the policies of the World Bank, IMF, and the United Nations, in interviews with *EIR*, and on the LaRouche Connection cable television program in the early 1990s (see box). He served as

Ghana’s Ambassador to the UN from 1991 to 1994, and in 1991, he chaired the UN’s Group of 77, which, at that time, represented over 100 developing-sector nations.

The audience of over 70, included young and old from all parts of New York City and the tri-state area, watched a brief video of Awoonor’s 1995 interview on the LaRouche Connection, and listened to a panel of four, including the Consul General from Ghana’s Mission to the UN, Joseph Ackon, and Lawrence Freeman of *EIR*’s Africa Desk, whose remarks appear below.

Following the panel presentations, Koki Muli Grignon, Deputy Chief of the Kenya Mission to the UN delivered provocative and emotional remarks, challenging the audience to take personal action to prevent more acts of terror like the one that killed Ambassador Awoonor in Kenya. Awoonor’s son also addressed the gathering, as part of an intense dialogue for the rest of the evening. The tribute, deemed a success by those attending, was initiated by Prof. Kwame Akonor from Seton Hall University.

Here are Freeman’s remarks.

Tribute to Kofi Awoonor

Let me say how happy and honored I am to be with all of you today, to pay tribute to our fallen hero, Ambassador Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor, and my thanks to Kwame. But also how difficult it is to discuss Ambassador Awoonor and his “father” Kwame Nkrumah in a few minutes’ time in one evening, which would otherwise justify a several-day seminar to discuss.

Ambassador Kofi Awoonor was a unique individual and an even more unique diplomat, because he spoke out truthfully, undiplomatically, on the crucial issues facing the world, and especially the plight of Africa. His public collaboration with my organization was also courageous, since [its leader,] Lyndon LaRouche, had been illegally sent to jail from 1989 to 1994, at the instigation of Henry Kissinger.

Prof. Ibrahim Gambari, then Nigeria’s Ambassador

Awoonor’s Collaboration With the LaRouche Movement, 1991-95

- *EIR*, Oct. 22, 1991, “By a Stroke of the Pen Cancel All Debts”
- Address to the International Schiller Institute Conference, “Peace Through Development,” Berlin, Germany, Nov. 22-23, 1991
- *EIR* interview, June 17, 1993, “The UN Flounders After the Cold War in Africa: The Marginalized Continent”
- Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1995, international observer at the Independent Hearings on the Gross Misconduct of the U.S. Justice Department, in connection with the unjust jailing of Lyndon LaRouche, Vienna, Va.
- Interview on “The LaRouche Connection” cable television broadcast, Sept. 15, 1995.



Ambassador Kofi Awoonor, the “Poet of Ghana,” was killed in the Nairobi, Kenya terrorist attack Sept. 21. He had been an outspoken critic of IMF-World Bank-UN policies toward Africa, and a collaborator of the LaRouche movement internationally.

to the UN, quotes in his foreword to Ambassador Awoonor’s 1994 book, *Africa: The Marginalized Continent*, from Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “The Defense of Poetry,” that creative thinkers are the “unacknowledged legislators of the world”; and includes Ambassador Awoonor in that category of thinkers.

The death of Ambassador Awoonor is not only a great loss to his friends, family, and all citizens of Ghana and Africa, but the world too is suffering from the untimely killing of this genuine African leader in Nairobi, Kenya on Sept. 21, 2013, because the issues addressed by Ambassador Awoonor over two decades ago are still with us today. The world today is trapped in a downward spiraling global financial system; a profound economic crisis today that cries out for a new paradigm of economic development, a new paradigm of thinking.

The lack of economic development of Africa was very dear to Ambassador Awoonor’s heart, and he never tired of criticizing those false conceptions, which unfortunately still dominate popular opinion today, which insist that democracy is achievable without raising the living standards of the people. Ambassador Awoonor emphatically disagreed.

He wrote in the Preface to his *Africa: The Marginalized Continent*, “Democracy is not a feasible proposition within any nation that is plagued by deprivation and grinding poverty.... “Democracy fundamentally must be defined by freedom from hunger, the right to

education and health, and has little to do with multiple political parties.... The crusade for human rights must be stripped of its double standards, for these rights begin only when we recognize the rights that are fundamental to life itself.”

How can the West today still pontificate about democracy and human rights when half of the almost 7 million children under the age of five who died in 2011, were born in Sub-Saharan Africa? That is over 9,000 children a day who never got to develop their God-given creative potential, who died from malnutrition, hunger, diarrhea, malaria, and respiratory infections, *all of which* could have been eliminated if there were real economic development in energy, rail transportation, water management, and food production. These statistics today are barely different than when Ambassador Awoonor wrote about them

almost 20 years ago.

Ambassador Awoonor recounts that, when the developing countries asked the developed world to “help the UN to initiate major water production and reforestation programs in the desert countries of Africa as a long-term solution to African drought, it was as if we were asking for a ten-mile canal to be dug on the Moon.”

That same lack of commitment to actually build the vital infrastructure that would develop Africa, improve the material standard of living, and reduce the rate of death of Africans, is cynically manifest today. Africa has the lowest per-capita energy production on the planet. While the U.S. had an average of 10 kilowatts (kW) of energy per capita, and the world has about 2.5 kW average, Africans have less than half of 1 kW per individual. To actually power Africa’s expected 2 billion population at an appropriate world standard of 30 kW per person by 2060, would require generating an additional 60,000 gigawatts or 60,000,000 megawatts, a 120-fold increase, as opposed to a pathetic 8,000 MW proposed today. A projected 12 billion people on our planet two generations from now would require about 360,000 GW. To power Africa and the world, mankind must embark on a nuclear fission- and fusion-driven economy.

Many other transformative infrastructure projects exist for the African continent, but there is no political or moral will to build them. I am sure Ambassador Awoonor would agree with this perspective for the future of Africa, because he understood the need

for long-term development programs as did Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, and founding member of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). Nkrumah, speaking at the OAU conference on May 25, 1963, said: “We shall astound the world with our hydro-electric power: we shall drain marshes and swamps, clear infested areas, feed the undernourished, and rid our people of parasites and disease. *It is within the possibility of science and technology to make the Sahara bloom into a vast field with verdant vegetation for agriculture and industrial development*” (emphasis added). President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had precisely the same view of transforming the desert when he traveled to Africa during the war.

Ambassador Awoonor found an affinity for the ideas of Mr. LaRouche and his organization, which has been championing for 40 years, the need for a New Just World Economic Order, where poverty is eliminated, and human beings use their creative, noetic powers to advance to new plateaus of economic growth, through the discovery and realization of new scientific principles.

Both rejected the failed proscriptions of the IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, which actually prevented economic growth in food production,

in particular, by outlawing government subsidies for seed and fertilizer, along with the development of water infrastructure.

Ambassador Awoonor is profound, and echoed the thoughts of Pope Paul VI’s 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, when he wrote, “What is needed is a truly new international order constructed on a new global covenant to generate world development which in turn will confer peace.”

This vision is still what the world needs today, and the world desperately needs men of vision like Ambassador Awoonor. Africa, like the West, is suffering from a dearth of visionary thinkers. A truly great leader, like the United States’ last great President, John F. Kennedy, lives in the future. He or she must act to make policy in the present that will benefit one’s nation and mankind in the future, a future created in that leader’s mind, but whose realization may lie one to two generations ahead. A bold thinker like Ambassador Awoonor, whose mind functioned on that elevated level, will be sorely missed in today’s dangerous and troubled times. For the rest of us still living, that means we will have to do more to make up for the departure of this precious soul.

Thank you.

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