

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/EYES ONLY~~

October 6, 1969

*State*

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

(Briefing)

FROM: Roger Morris *RM*

SUBJECT: Secretary Rogers' Meeting with the President October 6  
-- African Topics

My sources at State tell me the Secretary may raise both Nigeria and the Rhodesian Consulate. The following brings you up to date on each, including Rogers' talks at the UN and positions he may be pushing:

Nigeria-Biafra

-- Bilateral Talks at the UN. Rogers saw about 20 African Ministers. (The main reporting cables, with key passages underlined, are at Tab A.) His constant refrain on Nigeria was that we were generous with relief but wouldn't touch the political problems. The rationale for this line, as it came through in various talks, was either that: (a) others were already involved in peace-seeking, or (b) a US mediating role would be difficult and open to criticism.

African reaction to this tack ranged from acceptance to indifference to pique. Most of the Africans, of course, still publicly support an OAU solution. But Rogers had at least three feelers for a US move (Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Tanzania) which he summarily turned off. The Ethiopians, among others, reported to Clyde Ferguson this weekend that they were confused by the Secretary's position following the President's more activist approach with the Emperor last spring. (Ferguson tells me privately that some Africans -- and probably the French -- now suspect we're playing a double game, which has advantages, of course, as well as drawbacks.

-- Developments in the War. The fighting is still stalemated, with Biafran probes back into the fallen capital of Umuahia and very close to Port Harcourt. The arms supply is as high as ever.

There are the vague outlines, however, of two new factors: (1) Trying to retrieve the failure of the recent OAU Summit, Haile Selassie has launched yet another initiative to get the sides to start talks during a 2-week cease-fire. He's leaning on Gowon

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and Biafra's friends -- Houphouet and Nyerere. There are even initial reports that the date for the cease-fire has been set. But the Feds have been adamantly against a cease-fire and Ojukwu distrusts the OAU. ( [redacted] suggests Biafra has scotched this gambit.) Like other African initiatives, this one begins with a flourish and is likely to end with a zero; (2) There are growing hints of a coup against Gowon, probably by Northern hawks frustrated by the stalemate. I'll have a full intelligence report for you sometime today. But you should know the rumblings are there. The implications are: (a) it puts a premium on getting the war settled to preserve a relatively moderate regime in Lagos, (b) it tends to weaken the already limping war effort in Nigeria; watching each other, they scarcely have time to apply themselves to a quick victory, and (c) it could give Gowon greater incentive to negotiate, if the talks were serious and not simply a ploy.

-- State's Line. The Secretary may argue that the Africans heartily support our hands-off policy, and they have their own promising initiative in any case. The hard fact is that there are serious doubts about both these points. ~~One~~ <sup>our</sup> initiative need not rule out an African role, and we should move quickly to do everything we can to get talks started. A hawkish coup in Lagos will only bring us to the logical end of State's policy -- both greater suffering in Biafra and alienation of Nigeria.

#### Rhodesia

The Secretary may mount a new push for withdrawal of the Consulate. State is arguing that we are suffering a major loss with the Africans at the UN.

Rogers took two distinct approaches on Rhodesia at the UN. To some he justified the post on protection grounds and struck almost a take-it-or-leave-it tough line. To others (including the Brits) he promised withdrawal when Salisbury declares a Republic.

In fact, the African reaction <sup>was</sup> surprisingly ~~was~~ mixed between criticism and resignation (this latter reaction included Tanzania!).

In my view, there has been nothing thus far in New York to justify appealing the President's decision -- particularly before the full NSC review of Southern Africa coming up in the next few weeks. (Rhodesian references in attached cables are underlined in blue.)