

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, December 14, 1969
5:00 p.m.

~~SECRET/EXCLUDED~~

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY KISSINGER

ACTION

FROM: Roger Morris *Roger*

SUBJECT: Bureaucratic coordination on Nigeria/Biafra

As the President instructed, State is now preparing recommendations on further steps in the relief effort following the Biafran rejection of our recent initiative and the decision by the Red Cross to bow out of a direct operational role. Their position will probably boil down to (a) continued financial support for a nighttime airlift while (b) trying to lower the American profile (in planes and volunteer crews) to lessen the risk of a Federal shoot-down and the resulting diplomatic confrontation with Lagos. The paper is due at the opening of business Monday.

Meanwhile, on the political front, Under Secretary Richardson did use his European trip to broach a joint US-UK-French effort to spur peace negotiations. London's reaction was warm, and they are ready to start talking details at staff level. The Quai was more coy, but Schumann obviously has to consult the Elysee before responding. Once the French make up their minds, they too will probably keep the initiative alive.

Some time within the next two weeks, therefore, we will have to decide on the next step with both the British and the French. That will bring us to concrete issues such as the form of mediation, what we expect London to say to Lagos, Paris to tell the Biafrans, etc.

Having begun this process, however, we now find ourselves at an impasse within the US Government. The Secretary of State -- though he had signed off earlier on a Richardson recommendation to carry out the peace probe -- has now decided on further thought that he is strenuously against any US political role to try to settle the war.

The result is that the machinery in State has come to a standstill. Newsom has been reprimanded by the Secretary for both relief and peace moves, and probably fears any further US initiatives will cost him his job. (The Secretary reportedly told Newsom this morning that we should be glad the Biafrans rejected our relief initiative, since he ((Secretary Rogers)) would have had to order the repudiation of our offer in any case).

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We are, in short, stuck out on a limb in implementing the President's September 9 decision, and specifically in following through with approaches already made (and presumably authorized) to the British and the French.

I see three alternatives:

- (1) A written directive to State on the President's decision to follow an even-handed and active probe of the negotiating possibilities;
- (2) Yet another effort through Elliot Richardson to persuade the Secretary to take this course; or
- (3) A direct discussion between you and Secretary Rogers.

My own judgment is that a written directive is no substitute in this case for a direct talk between Principals. And I do not believe Richardson, who has already tried in vain to sell the Secretary in a low-key, can be expected to take up another try. Richardson's staff tells me that they will encourage him to try to clear the air, but he is in a delicate position to say the least.

I see only one clear remedy for this problem -- that is for you to sort it out directly with Secretary Rogers.

Recommendation. That you discuss our policy toward Nigeria/Biafra with Secretary Rogers in order to arrive at operational coordination consistent with the President's policy.

I'll talk to Secretary; draft talking points _____

Prepare written directive _____

I'll handle with Elliot Richardson ✓ _____

Speak to me _____