

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

ACTION

September 20, 1969

~~SECRET-NODIS~~

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*
SUBJECT: Norman Cousins and Nigeria/Biafra

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/99

Wednesday evening Roger Morris of my staff saw Cousins, as a sequel to my conversations with him in California. He is just back from Paris where he met quietly with Biafran Foreign Minister Onegbula.

Cousins has a shrewd and well-informed appreciation of the realities of the civil war. He is convinced there is no doubt that the Biafrans want to negotiate, and quite possibly are looking toward some kind of reunified Nigeria. (They sent the same signals to Clyde Ferguson very clearly during his last trip to Geneva on relief matters.)

Cousins' message Wednesday, however, was that his usefulness as a prober was probably exhausted. Foreign Minister Onegbula is willing to talk further in a very quiet exploration, but is anxious to come here to talk to us directly. Cousins thinks it would be much less satisfactory, though still acceptable to the Biafrans, if he (Cousins) went back to see Onegbula in Paris.

The object of this further exchange would be to pin down exactly how the Biafrans would propose to relate any negotiations to the OAU, what role they would expect of the US, and what public concessions they might be willing to make at the outset to help bring along the Feds. Cousins got only vague answers on these questions during his last trip; the Biafrans asked for this week to consult Ojukwu.

I strongly recommend that we keep this dialogue going, and preferably with a signal to the Biafrans via Cousins that my staff would be available for a secret informal session to explore the question described above.

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

We could ask Cousins to return to Paris. But the Biafrans obviously want some proof they're in a serious conversation with the Administration, and a talk here would give us maximum control as well as an undiluted appraisal. The penalty for a leak, as always, would be complete disavowal. Nor does our seeing the Biafrans commit us to anything. This would be a simple exchange of views in line with a dinner meeting Elliot Richardson had with a Biafran Ambassador some weeks ago (which has never leaked).

In any case, we promised Cousins a prompt reply. I think he deserves it for following our earlier request with both precision and discretion.

Recommendation -- That you authorize me to tell Cousins that a member of my staff would be available for a strictly quiet, informal meeting with a Biafran representative in the next few days.

Approve *JRW* Disapprove _____

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By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/99