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N. Authority 5012958
By D NARA Date 4/10/88WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONSECRET/NODIS/XGDS**1973-6-5, US, Nixon, African Leader**

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

President Nixon
President William R. Tolbert, Jr., of Liberia
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME:

Tuesday, June 5, 1973
11:05 a.m. - 12:00 Noon

PLACE:

The Oval Office

The President: You don't need military equipment like that.

[The press entered.]

Tolbert: We have to be prepared, but we don't want to tie up funds like that.

The President: Do you still have your house since you moved into the President's house?

Tolbert: Yes, I still have it. I still go there.

The President: I remember it well. I never ate so well.

Tolbert: Many thanks for sending Mrs. Nixon to my inauguration.

[The press was ushered out at 11:10 a.m.]

The President: You want pens, not swords.

The affair tonight will be dinner. We will sit next to each other. We can talk socially or privately. This is your first time visiting here as Chief of State. On the nonofficial visits -- there is little difference -- we put it on just like a state visit.

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EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY 5(B) (3)
AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED ON Imp. to Det.

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We were both Vice Presidents long, long ago.

Why don't you tell me all about yourself and your country?

Tolbert: I am happy to be here. Your country has been very helpful to my country.

First, congratulations for all you have done as President. I have admired your bold new initiatives for peace in the world.

The President: That is very kind. We work at it. We have to do it together.

Tolbert: The relations of our two countries have been special.

The President: Of all the countries in Africa, they have to be special.

Tolbert: It should now be very special, because we are personal friends. What can be done in a very special way can be very beneficial to both of us. It blesses those who give and who receive it.

This special relationship would enhance the way the world sees the way the United States treats its friends. I am engaged in my country in a war against poverty, ignorance, disease. My goal is to change that condition. I inherited these serious economic conditions and I am attacking it.

Over 60 percent of the children are out of school.

Parts of the country are cut off from other parts.

Most of the people live on subsistence.

I want to bridge the gap between the educated and the uneducated, between the haves and the have nots.

I have admired the way you people do things -- your self-reliance. I am teaching this to my people. Our aim is a rallying of the spirit into a new national self-consciousness and self-reliance.

In only nine months time, we have realized \$4.5 million. It seems small, but it is the spirit. I work and work; I work 18 hours a day. I am obsessed to change my country.

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In Africa there is a revolutionary spirit in many countries. They are not patient to change things by evolution. I say revolution is wrong; the answer is evolution, but with speed.

If we carry on vigorous agricultural programs, we can develop an improved standard of living, and a money economy. Parts of the country are isolated. In one area I visited, they didn't even know the national anthem when it was played.

We are friends indeed. Friends need friends. I give you what I have -- all the confidence in you that I can give. You have done so much. I am attracted to you -- we are much the same. We are pioneers, bridgebuilders, sometimes misunderstood.

The President: It is part of the price.

Tolbert: We are prepared to die for a cause. We have our inter-African problems. I try to keep friendly relations with my neighbors so I don't have to spend all our money on defense. I have excellent relations with my neighbors. They look up to me for guidelines. Economic strength strengthens one's will. If Liberia develops, my voice on your behalf will be stronger.

At a recent OAU meeting, they wanted me to be Chairman, but I need to concentrate on Liberia. I can lose myself in one cause -- and now it must be Liberia, not Africa.

That is the situation. Our problem is a serious economic situation. Sometimes when we speak out, there are hazards. To protect our coastal area, we need boats; our older ones are out of commission. We need it for economic reasons.

On May 19 we started some development in every province of the country, on the anniversary of our Rally for Development.

I brought you a copy of my OAU speech. We should go all out on social-economic development, regionally, bilaterally, multi-laterally. This concept was accepted. I am trying to set an example, developing close cooperation with our neighbors.

Now a word on the Middle East. I spoke to President Sadat, who conveyed to you his regards. He wants to be friends. The Middle East is the corner of the whole world. It is a complicated problem.

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We have Security Council Resolution 242 and the OAU resolution approving it. The resolutions are okay, but it takes people of courage to implement the resolutions.

I am friendly with both sides, so I can talk to both. Some people want to cut off relations with Israel -- but I say we must be able to talk.

The occupied areas -- we must figure out how to guarantee Israel's security before giving up those areas.

I talked to Mrs. Meir. One way to move would be to give up some of the unimportant areas. There must be recognition of the territory and security of Israel. Mrs. Meir and President Sadat both want me to visit. You, with your courage, perhaps and you can give pointers.

The President: We are trying to help. You are suggesting what is an interim settlement. If Israel would agree, Sadat says he would work for an interim settlement only if a final settlement is also understood. Israel's elections are a tough period. We are talking to Israel publicly and privately. If Sadat would give a little. Israel is concerned with its territory and security; Egypt is concerned with its sovereignty, and must have back every inch of its territory. Israel says "We need some for our defense."

You may tell President Sadat you passed his message. There is nothing I would like more than to get the problem off dead center. If we could get an interim settlement, with some general idea of an overall settlement. . . . If Egypt would move a bit, maybe we could get Israel to move. Egypt says an interim settlement would become permanent.

I will take to heart your concerns. I hope you will work at it.

War would be a tragedy. Israel would win now, but not in five or ten years. Time is on the Arabs' side.

If Egypt starts a war, it would be beaten unless the Soviet Union intervened.

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If both sides could agree to some general principles, and then move on concrete steps, then perhaps we could get moving. Egypt resists that.

Tolbert: We can try. President Sadat said he is interested in having relations with your country. He seemed to be in earnest. That is one reason he kicked out the Russians.

Sekon Toure asked me to give his regards. He is anxious for closer economic relations with us. The resources of Guinea are enormous. They are intact. The people have gone through a struggle and have benefitted themselves. They have strong character. I personally would like American influence to dominate there. Toure lives under fears. He fears a Portuguese invasion in reaction to some of the African positions he takes.

The President: I will keep this in mind.

Tolbert: You can't lose. If there is greater leaning toward the East because of the economic benefits, the East will develop other -- political -- ties.

I see the situation as a friend. All I can give is moral encouragement.

The President: One thing is important. Nobody fears Liberia. You can be a friend to all and a moderating influence on radicalism. There is a storm of radicalism running through the area -- true revolution. If you can influence your fellow presidents for progress, not extremism. The future of Africa will not be made by extremists but by those like you -- who are progressive.

You need self-help, development, and welcoming private enterprise.

Uganda -- that's too bad. He is acting like a madman.

Tolbert: I had to talk to him, and it helped.

The President: You can help in these things. Is Burundi hopeless?

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Tolbert: It's not hopeless. We are looking into it. Even the situation between Ethiopia and Somalia. Somalia wasn't even going to come to the OAU. I got him to come and we set up a border crossing to use our good offices to settle it. This is Africans settling African problems.

The President: You can play a constructive role.

With regard to bilaterals, we will do what we can.

We are in a difficult situation, but we will do what we can. If we can't, our friends understand.

Tolbert: Of course.

The President: You are interested in the world. We are meeting with China and the Soviet Union. We opened up a dialogue with China; we will be meeting with the Soviet Union again on SALT, etc. But our talks will not be at the expense of our friends.

Our concentration this year on the Soviet Union and Europe will not be at the expense of Africa. Secretary Rogers went to Africa. Latin America is not like Africa. You are the only African country with a special relationship with us. Others are tied to Europe. But we are greatly interested in Africa and that will become apparent. This is an important area of the world. We are working on the hot spots in the world in order to hold down the danger, and the U.S. must deal in an imaginative way with the superpowers.

Your trip will mean that we have not lessened our interest in the people of Africa. It has resources; the governments are new -- except yours. There are problems -- Rhodesia and Zambia, South Africa -- it's important there to rule out the use of force. Sending a UN force to South Africa isn't realistic and won't work. We don't need more war. We are just ending a long war; we know that peace (short of surrender) is better than war. We will defend our interests, but we are interested in peace, not war. We don't want to discriminate against anyone. Tell your African friends we don't have designs on anyone.

Our meetings with the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union don't mean that I agree with Communism, but the world is so small that we must learn to live together.

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