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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 28, 1976
 TIME: 3:45 p.m.
 PLACE: White House

SUBJECT: President Ford's meeting with
 Sierra Leonean President, Siaka P. Stevens

PARTICIPANTS: US

SIERRA LEONE

President Ford
 Secretary Kissinger
 William Hyland, NSC
 Ambassador Samuels
 (notetaker)

President Siaka P. Stevens
 Foreign Minister Minah
 Ambassador Palmer

(Notetaker Samuels arrived late; following picks up from his arrival.)

President Ford: Our policy is now cut out clearly in favor of self-determination. We are against radicalism but we have suggested an alternative in the direction of a moderate solution. Secretary Kissinger had a constructive trip to Africa and was well received. His Nairobi speech was especially important as it indicates positive directions that could benefit the entire developing world. The United States will proceed on these initiatives.

President Stevens: Mr. President, I am indeed grateful for your finding time in your busy schedule for this meeting, as I realize how busy you are and how late my request for meeting you was made. We see United States policy and the Secretary's recent statements as very good. I was especially happy with his reception in Tanzania, as I consider President Nyerere an important African leader. I have been very well treated during my visit to your country, and I sense a new tone in the relationships between us has been set by your new ambassador. There is, however,

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(Drafting Office and Officer)

6/3/76

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

State Dept. Guidelines, State Decree 3/12/04

By W, NARA, Date 7/24/04

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~~TOP SECRET~~ - XGDS (3)
 CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

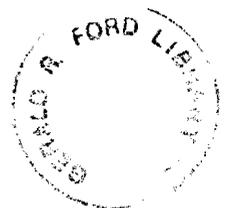


one point that I wish to stress: The ties between the United States and Sierra Leone should be more advanced. There is a long history of contacts between American missionaries and missionary educational institutions in Sierra Leone. We shall never forget that history. Unfortunately, due to a misunderstanding four or five years ago there was an estrangement in our relations. I hope that period has been forgotten. Sierra Leone knows the importance of the United States in the world. We want to bask under the umbrella of the United States in the future. We are working closely with Liberia and we know how close your relations are with them.

President Ford: Yes. Yesterday I said good-bye to Ambassador Peal who was leaving for Moscow after a long period in Washington.

Secretary Kissinger: There is no obstacle on the United States side to better relations. I would have stopped in Sierra Leone if there had been more time, but unfortunately I had to cut out certain friendly countries. I did, however, ask President Tolbert to send a message to you informing you what we had talked about.

President Stevens: Yes, he sent his Foreign Minister to see me... There is one book you should read that indicates that old relationships between Sierra Leone and the United States exist. It is called Amistade. It is about a slave ship that was heading from Africa to the United States. As it neared New York, the slaves gained control of the ship. There was an extensive legal dispute over whether the slaves had done right or wrong. Eventually these slaves were freed and returned to Sierra Leone where they had a significant impact.



President Ford: I would like to read that book; maybe the Library of Congress has a copy.

President Stevens: When I was at Bethlehem the other day I talked with the Chairman of Bethlehem Steel who has a sister who was a missionary in Sierra Leone. There were many missionaries from Ohio and the Midwest. They started important educational institutions in our country such as Albert Academy.

President Ford: Are there many American missionaries today?

President Stevens: Yes, but their number is increasing. They are still performing very valuable services.

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. President, what outstanding problems do you see between the United States and Sierra Leone.

President Stevens: Several years ago the United States considered my government leftist. Some considered me a communist. They felt I was leaning to Sekou Toure. That's foolish, I am old enough to be his father. We were not leaning any way.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, there was a period when there was tension in our relations but that should not affect our relations today.

President Ford: Yes, we want to work with you. We consider your country a bulwark of strength in that part of the world in spite of your size.

President Stevens: (smiles in obvious satisfaction.)

President Ford: In fact, I am sending my close friend, Governor Scranton, to Sierra Leone next month.

President Stevens: Yes. I have changed my schedule so that I can be in Freetown when he arrives... We have learned that a flag flying independence does not mean very much.



President Ford: That's right; you can't eat independence.

President Stevens: Our policy presently is to try to attract private investors. We treat investors properly.

President Ford: Where might there be opportunities for private investors in Sierra Leone?

President Stevens: Our first priority is in agriculture. One important area is mining. Three quarters of our country has not been surveyed geologically. We are very anxious about that. Last year an iron ore mine that had been active for many years closed down. That seriously hurt our economy. Bethlehem Steel indicated that they would be interested in a three year exploration license of a new site in Tonkilili and that perhaps they can use some of the facilities of the closed mine at Marampa. We are pleased about that. We are also pleased at the good reception that we received at the IMF and IBRD.

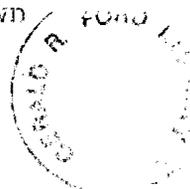
President Ford: Can any of your agricultural products be exported?

President Stevens: We formerly exported rice but as our population grew we had to import it. We would like to return to exporting rice. We also export palm kernels, cocoa, coffee and rubber, although nowhere on the scale of Liberia.

President Ford: Do we have a student exchange program in Sierra Leone?

Ambassador Palmer: Yes, with Kalamazoo College.

President Stevens: Yes. The exchanges are going satisfactorily. Three of our parliamentarians are touring the United States now. Then there are your Peace Corps volunteers. They are doing very good work. They will especially go to parts of our country up country that our own people won't go to.



President Ford: I am glad to hear that the Peace Corps is doing a good job. We have been trying to encourage older people to join the Peace Corps, especially those with mechanical skills. Do you have any of those in your country?

Fon. Minister Minah: Yes, we have some older ones but most of ours are younger and involved in teaching. We would like to get more of those with skills. We would particularly like to get some to assist on our self-help projects--building hospitals, schools and roads.

President Ford: Have you had a chance to meet any members of Congress while you have been here?

President Stevens: No. I have been on a very tight schedule.

President Ford: Yes and Congress is in recess... Well, Mr. President, we are anxious to work with you to improve our relations. Let me assure you that this Administration will pursue the new southern Africa policy vigorously. We would be grateful for any counsel you might give us on that.

President Stevens: We shall work closely with President Tolbert on these matters, but let me assure you that I feel your policy is on the right course.

Secretary Kissinger: At the OAU meeting in July there is one thing that is very important. We hope that the resolutions will take account of the efforts the United States is making and that the OAU doesn't attack us on issues we care about. We have our own domestic critics too. If our change of policy is not reflected in a lessening of the criticism our critics will be given added ammunition and ask what positive results the United States will get from such a changed policy.



President Ford: Yes, that is very important.

President Stevens: Yes, we have been quite disillusioned internationally, especially over the high oil prices and the failure of the oil countries to help us. We feel that no one is paying attention to us.

Fon. Minister Minah: Mr. President, we also wanted to mention appreciation for our having been returned to the list of countries that receive United States assistance. I know what hard work Ambassador Samuels went through on our behalf and I know how much we appreciate that.

President Ford: Yes, we will begin that assistance in the fiscal year 1977 budget. That begins in October.

Fon. Minister Minah: When Secretary Kissinger did not visit Freetown it made us feel a bit left out.

Secretary Kissinger: I was short of time but did ask President Tolbert to brief you and now Governor Scranton, a close friend of the President and me as well, will be visiting Sierra Leone soon.

President Stevens: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving so graciously of your time.



MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION

June 28, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: WILLIAM G. HYLAND

FROM: Roger Harrison

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation between President Ford and President Stevens of Sierra Leone

The attached draft notes, taken by Ambassador Samuels at the May 28 meeting in the White House between the President and President Stevens of Sierra Leone, are forwarded for your approval and decision on appropriate distribution.

Paul: what do we do with memos?

Attachment

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, SEC. 3.5
NSC MEMO, 11/18/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES
BY KA, NARA, DATE 7/26/04

