

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: William R. Tolbert, President of Liberia
C. Cecil Dennis, Jr., Minister of Foreign Affairs

President Gerald R. Ford
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy
Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, November 5, 1974
11:00 - 11:30 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office

President: The weather is not very nice.

[The press enters for photographs]

Tolbert: It is all relative. It has been very nice and now its back to normal.

President: Congratulations on your award. [President Tolbert was to receive the "Family of Man" Award from the Council of Churches of Greater New York City on November 6.]

Tolbert: Thank you.

[The press leaves]

President: Who else has received it?

Tolbert: Many heads of State have received it. Also Dr. Kissinger.

President: Secretary Kissinger is traveling. He has unbelievable stamina. I want you to know that Secretary Kissinger has my full confidence and support and our foreign policies will continue as before.

How long will you be traveling?

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~~TOP SECRET~~
CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER



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Tolbert: I am going to Barbados and Guayana, and then I will be going home.

President: I see from your ring you are a 33rd degree Mason. I am too.

Tolbert: Is that so?

President: Yes, but my finger is too big or the ring is too small for me to wear.

Tolbert: I commend you for your great humanitarian spirit. If you are not a humanitarian, what else is there? Without it you can't make a contribution.

President: Without it there is nothing but pragmatism and that is dangerous. My son is studying for the Ministry. He is a Baptist.

Tolbert: Tell him to come to see me. I am still a minister.

President: He is making up for my sins.

Tolbert: No one is without sin.

President: Tell me, Mr. President, what is your appraisal of Africa today?

Tolbert: We in Africa are striving for the fulfillment of the aspirations of equality, justice, and complete freedom. We want a sympathetic Congress and help from your great country.

President: The policy of my administration is in accord with that. We applaud the decolonization of the Portuguese colonies. How is that going in your view?

Tolbert: There are human problems. Security needs to be provided for all groups. But the goal must be total decolonization. We welcome this development, and we are working with the Portuguese to this end.

President: Is it moving fast enough?

Tolbert: What is fast enough? We would like it as soon as possible, but there are human problems.

President: There seems to be no reluctance on the part of Portugal.



Tolbert: The intent seems good, but always we must have actions to correspond with the intent.

You know the situation in South Africa -- with apartheid -- and also the situation in Rhodesia. You are aware of the move in the UN to expel South Africa. Africans thought that would solve the problem. All men and nations of good will must work to solve it. You and other great powers thought that that was not the right way to do it, and you have that right to so express yourselves. The problem is still before us. Now we must work to remove the problem, and you who didn't want that solution should search for an alternative.

President: Our vote was not an indication of support for apartheid.

Tolbert: We never thought so.

President: We thought that was not the best solution for the future of the UN or to solve this difficult problem.

Tolbert: I am grateful for your words and will pass this on to other Africans.

President: I know you are concerned about Rhodesia.

Tolbert: Yes, we are concerned about movement there, and also that South Africa should move to give freedom to Namibia.

President: They are ignoring the UN?

Tolbert: Yes.

Dennis: They have ignored the ICJ and all UN resolutions on the subject.

President: We are grateful for the use of the communications facilities.

Tolbert: We think they help both of us.

May I express our continued esteem for the United States. We have a special relationship, and nothing can change that because it is based on history. We should build on that and strengthen that relationship in ways which can benefit Africa and benefit us both and the world. I have been anxious to meet with you to work to that end.



President: We do have that very special relationship, and my Administration will do everything possible to strengthen our ties.

I know you are concerned about our assistance. We are willing, but, as you know, we have been having problems with Congress on the aid bill. I hope we can get it.

Today we are having a big election. The speculation is the Republicans won't do well, and that is usual. The key is the magnitude of the switch.

Tolbert: I admire the way you told them to vote one way or the other. That is great.

President: We have a poor record of voting in off-year elections. We don't do well compared with other countries.

Tolbert: You expressed it very well.

President: This is the first election in 14 years I have not campaigned!

Tolbert: I ran six times in Congress and twice for Vice President. I will be standing for election in October next year. All our political subdivisions have urged me to stand for reelection. We now have a constitutional amendment proposed to permit the President to succeed himself.

I appreciate your emphasis on rural development because it fits in with our own rural development program.

The magnitude of our needs is so great we always need more, but I am trying to teach my people to be self-reliant. I want you to know we are working hard to improve the quality of life for our people.

President: Do you have a Peace Corps?

Tolbert: Yes. I was instrumental in getting it as Vice President. There are little snags but it works very well.

There is talk of the CARE program being cut back. It is very helpful in our self-help program. For example, it provides lunches for those working on schools, roads, and so on. We do hope those programs will be continued.



President: We will try. You know we didn't have a good crop year. Wheat and rice were good, but corn was bad. A wet Spring, but a dry summer, and early frost all cut our expectations. We do expect a continuation of those private programs. We will support them to the extent we can, based on our crops, inflation, etc.

Tolbert: They mean much to us. We appreciate your help in our public institute project. We are trying to make progress in this field, and your help is very welcome.

President: We want to help in every way we can.

Tolbert: I was touched by your statement of help for those who are working to improve food production. We are trying to be self-sufficient in rice. I am challenging my people not only to be self-sufficient, but to do more to help others who are not so fortunate.

President: We are trying to stimulate world fertilizer production. In agricultural production we will do everything we can to encourage production. Dr. Kissinger is speaking today at the World Food Conference.

What are your principal products?

Tolbert: Rice. We are introducing soybeans, palm oil, citrus.

President: We are trying to get every acre of our back into food. The last decade we were doing just the opposite. Today, every acre is hopefully in production.

Tolbert: The world is in a crisis from the energy crisis. We spent up to \$42 million for oil in one period when last year we spent \$10 million. Inflation has increased the prices of our imports and all this has affected us tremendously.

President: We are working to get reductions. We don't know what they will do with the economy.

Tolbert: We hope they will recycle the funds. We think the food crisis is as bad as the energy crisis and we want to work on both.

President: I agree. We must cooperate.



Tolbert: I preach cooperation not confrontation. Sometimes people talk to divide anything.

I want to raise one more thing: your Cargo Preference Bill. It could violate our treaty of navigation and it would give us great problems.

President: The bill is in Conference now. A number of our departments are concerned with it, including State. We are trying to get the conferees to modify it, but it doesn't look good. If they won't change it, I probably will veto it.

Tolbert: We have sent a letter to State. I would like to give you a copy.

President: Thank you. It is controversial here and we have serious reservations. We will work for changes.

Tolbert: I will be frank before a friend. It would give us big problems.

President: We are also working for repeal of the Byrd Amendment. We can't predict how Congress will act, as you know.

It has been very good to meet you to discuss our problems.

Tolbert: I have the sense that our first meeting was fruitful, that we have a common outlook and can be good partners in bringing peace and harmony. Our relationship is strong, and I think it will help you in your relationship with Africa.

President: I assure you this Administration intends to build on that relationship. I agree this has been a most productive meeting and I look forward to our continued association.

