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Authority WD 969000  
By AT KARA Date 4-9-68

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(Drafting Office and Officers)  
4/18/69

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Approved in S, 4/21/69 **Memorandum of Conversation**

Time: 4:45 p.m.  
DATE: April 17, 1969  
Place: The Secretary's Office

SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward Africa

PARTICIPANTS: His Excellency Burudi Nabwera, Ambassador of Kenya  
Mr. Leo P. Odero, Counselor of the Embassy of Kenya

The Honorable William P. Rogers, Secretary of State  
Mr. Terence A. Todman, Country Director for East African Affairs

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After an exchange of courtesies, the Ambassador said relations between the United States and Kenya were excellent and he had nothing of a bilateral nature to raise. However, he wanted to mention two points concerning U.S. policy toward Africa in general. First he wished the U.S. would formulate and follow an independent policy toward Africa instead of always following the lead of other major Western powers such as the U.K. and France. He said the practice of following others occurred during the previous U.S. administration and appeared to be continuing.

The Secretary said he could not agree that the U.S. did not act independently. It was true that we did not rush in with solutions to every problem, but when we did act it was in accordance with our own best judgment. We did not believe that we could solve all African problems and, furthermore, we felt that the independent, responsible African states wished to and could take care of most situations on their own or through their multi-lateral organizations. He said the U.S. was prepared to discuss any problem raised with us and to help in any way it could, but did not feel it should take unwarranted initiatives. He cited the example of Nigeria where the U.S. position was different from that of either the U.K. or France. Instead of becoming involved with either side to the Nigerian conflict, the U.S. was doing everything it could to provide relief to the victims and yet the U.S. was being blamed for not solving the problem.

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Ambassador Nabwera said that Kenya welcomed the U.S. position on Nigeria which was similar to its own. Kenya regretted that the U.K. and the USSR had provided arms to the Nigerian Federal Government and that France, for its own reasons, was supplying arms to the Eastern Region. That outside interference complicated the situation and made it more difficult for a solution to be achieved. The Ambassador said the particular area where he hoped the U.S. would act independently and strongly was with regard to southern Africa, including South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies. He expressed the hope that the U.S. would use its considerable power and influence to bring about a solution in the interest of the Africans.

The Secretary stated that on the principles involved, the U.S. stood with the Africans and there would be no change in U.S. policy in that regard. However, the U.S. did not have as much power and influence to affect situations as it was often credited with having. Also the U.S. did not believe it should initiate or support irresponsible, impractical, unrealistic statements or acts which could do nothing to improve a situation or might even be counter-productive. We would do whatever seemed practical and useful to uphold and promote our principles, but we recognized, and hoped others would recognize, that our power to affect situations was not very great.

The Ambassador said the other point he wished to mention was the impression among Africans that the U.S. was not giving much attention to Africa. He hoped that the Secretary's next trip, instead of being to Europe or some other part of the world, would be to Africa so that he could get to know the realities of the continent.

The Secretary said he had been to West Africa some years ago and would be happy to visit the continent again, and particularly East Africa, as soon as he could. The conversation then turned to a discussion of tourism in East Africa after which it ended.

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