

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 23, 1971

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Leopold Senghor of Senegal
Marshall Wright, NSC
Jose Deseabra, Interpreter

DATE & TIME: June 18, 1971 - 9:30 a.m. **DECLASSIFIED**
E.O. 12958, Sect. 3.6

PLACE: The Oval Office

By TDM/KW NARA, Date 11/29/97

After an initial exchange of greeting and amenities President Nixon asked President Senghor to speak to Senegal's problems and the state of relations between Senegal and the United States.

In responding President Senghor mentioned two broad categories of problems: (1) those relating to cultural and political independence and (2) those relating to cultural and economic development. He then made extensive references to his cultural and academic background, studies in French schools and universities where he was a classmate of Pompidou, and at the same time brought out the fact that for himself, as well as the Senegalese in general, the French language and culture, while very important, are only a complement since the roots of Senegal culture are essentially in black Africa. From his days in secondary schools in France Senghor endeavored to cultivate and enhance the values of the black African civilization. This latter was expressed by him in his statements about "negritude". He also traced the main phases of his country's accession to independent status within the framework of a French speaking union and the role played in those historic events by both Pompidou and DeGaulle.

Next he dealt more specifically with education and the reforms undertaken in his country. He pointed out some of the differences between Senegal's education system and that of France. He is giving great stress to the study of mathematics and technical and engineering subjects. At the present time half of the math professors in the university of Senegal are native, and it is expected that five years from now all of those as well as instructors in engineering and allied subjects will be Senegalese. Regarding linguistic problems, he mentioned the parallel existence of native languages, of French as a working language and, since 1964, of English being a required subject in

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secondary and technical schools. He went on to describe the part played by Senegal in the Western world as both a West African and an Atlantic country that has had century-old relationships with Europe. He stated that the civilization of the future is now evolving, and that it will be an international and eclectic civilization, rather than a national and parochial one, with each component bringing in its own valuable contribution and sharing the contribution of all other components. For that reason he has advocated the entry of the UK into the European economic community with eventually the English speaking countries of Africa and of the West Indies also joining in a broader association. This is consistent with the idea of a world where different groups of civilizations live in a state of harmony and understanding.

As for Senegal's relations with the United States, those are a natural consequence of the relations of Senegal with Europe, and of the many black people throughout the Americas. Thus Africa feels closer to America than to Asia. In his view when an Afro-Asian meeting was called the presence of Latin America was deemed indispensable and he himself felt much closer to a Brazilian, for instance, than to a Chinese.

He mentioned in passing that his name was Portuguese, that he had Portuguese-named forebears and some Portuguese blood, as did some 100,000 other Senegalese. At this point President Nixon asked whether this could not create political difficulties for him, and President Senghor replied smiling, "Well, that is a political matter and of course that is something else". He then described the cultural pattern of Senegal as being one of a balanced blend in which an educated Senegalese would normally know, at least one of the native languages, French, and very likely English or another language. In this way he felt that more and more Senegalese were in a position to participate in a truly universal civilization.

During his recent trip throughout the United States where he had an opportunity to address university students, black as well as white, he pointed out that the civilization of the 21st century was being molded to a large extent in the United States. The reason why the United States was playing such an important role in shaping the future was not just because of its material wealth and power but perhaps mainly because of its creativity, enthusiasm, and youthful dynamism which are to be found in the United States to a greater extent than in Europe. Also the United States has this great responsibility of carrying on the tradition of blending within itself different ethnic groups such as the Anglo-Saxons, the Latins, Slavs, Germans, and also blacks.

When some black students in the United States asked him whether they should go back to Africa he replied in the negative, saying that if he were young he would want to come to the United States as a teacher because of the role played by the

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United States in shaping the civilization of the future. He added that it was essential that the basic values of "negritude" with all its warmth and vitality be recognized and brought into a full participation in the overall pattern of American civilization. And that is why he believed in and supported the fullest measure of integration in the U.S. as being the only viable solution. It was important for the blacks to feel that they were contributing something to the cultural life of the country and not just acting as mere consumers of culture. That participation in cultural activities was for him a very important element on a par with improvement in the economic status.

In regard to political developments in Africa and Senegal he said at the outset that whatever disagreements might occur at times between his and the Western countries were of but minor importance. What constituted a danger for his country were a rather broad range of Communist activities. In Senegal itself the left wing student movement represented only 10%. He indicated that there had been a shift in Communist influence from the Russian, which was quite prevalent at the time of independence, to the much stronger present influence of Communist China which presented a definite danger since it came not directly from Peking but rather through Paris. It is this strong and well established French cultural influence that explains why certain Senegalese Communists will go to Moscow and upon their return will no longer be Communists, whereas many non-Communist individuals will go to Paris and come back Communists. While the Russian activities are watched, they are not considered particularly dangerous and as a matter of fact the President intends to visit the Soviet Union next year. As for the Chinese Communists they do present a definite danger through their activities out of Paris and out of their embassies in neighboring countries such as that in Nouakchott. Senegal has become a key target country in the Chinese Communist strategy pattern because of its growing political and economic importance. At the present time Senegal is surrounded by three countries, Mauritania, Mali and Guinea where the Chinese Communists are most active, not only in supplying funds but even in advocating violence. An example of that was an attempt by a group of black and French extremists to bomb the French cultural center during President Pompidou's visit to Senegal. However, since it is not too easy to keep a secret in Senegal the authorities were able to take appropriate measures.

Regarding the new policy toward the Chinese Peoples Republic on the part of the United States he understood the reasons of the United States and he himself has been supporting the admission of mainland China to the United Nations while at the same time keeping Taiwan in the organization. After all, there are more than 700 million Chinese and it is important to be able to talk with them. At one time he had to expel a number of Communist newspapermen from China and North Korea. This brought about assassination threats, but he remains undaunted in his determination to defend the independence of his country against any threats

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on the part of the Russians and particularly of the Chinese. The Communist Chinese presence is a growing danger in many parts of Africa since they extend their activities from Somalie to Zambia and are moving more and more into West Africa. In Central Africa they have been very active in Congo (Brazzaville) and now his friend Ahidjo (of Cameroon) is faced with the presence of a Communist Chinese Embassy in his capital. Still he refuses to have the Chinese Communists represented in his country.

President Nixon said that he realized that the Communist Chinese danger was greater to a country like Senegal than that of Moscow. He mentioned the fact that the United States was entering into a new phase in its relations with the Chinese Peoples Republic on a restrained basis involving mainly trade. He stressed that he had no illusions about the designs of the CPR as well as those of the Soviets. He knew they intended to expand their influence wherever they could. Still, there is the need for developing some sort of modus vivendi and some sort of a live-and-let-live policy. The fact is that if 25 years from now the CPR, with more than one billion inhabitants is still outside the family of nations and has developed a major atomic arsenal, that country will have become a truly unacceptable danger. The President referred to the substantial progress made in the arms control discussions with the Soviets and added that even if a perfect agreement were arrived at between the US and the Soviets on arms control that would be of no use in the not too distant future because of the growing danger presented by the Chinese. He was trying to see events in their historic perspective. The US friendship for the Republic of China remains undiminished. But it is necessary to have a pragmatic outlook and think not just in terms of the present but of the future insofar as the leadership position of the United States is concerned. That position seems to require that some efforts be made to ameliorate Peking's isolation from most of the world. He was well aware that in today's world, in Africa, in Latin America, even in the United States, this new virus was at work, not that of Moscow but of Mao. Here a dangerous philosophy is involved, much more dangerous and effective than the rather crude efforts of the Soviets through their Comintern. While there seemed to be at times a certain idealism in the Soviet actions, the Maoists seemed to be bent on destruction for the sake of destruction, and their dangerous influence extends even to the United States. Even though the United States has made certain moves with regard to Peking it continues to bear in mind the fact that Peking intends to intervene in the internal affairs of countries in Asia, particularly Southeast Asia as well as in Latin America and that of course is a matter of concern to the United States. That being the situation it is heartening for the United States to have this contact with such an enlightened and understanding leader in Africa. The President said this was particularly so because there are some leaders in Latin America, Africa and Asia who are quite naive regarding the true essence of the conflict and who continue to consider the United States and other Western powers as imperialists, which had some truth at one time, but is no longer relevant.

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Today, while the United States, France and the United Kingdom may be no angels, still colonialism is gone and the best hope for the less developed countries is to establish close ties of trade and investment with the so-called capitalists. In Africa there are different views from country to country regarding the extent of state control and of free enterprise, but it is important that in working for its development that Africa look to the North and to the West rather than to the East. He understood that President Senghor and his country must try to get along with many different countries but he was sure that President Senghor realized where there was the greatest measure of hope. Senegal is a country endowed with substantial material and human resources which can best be developed through private investment rather than through an impossible form of Communist state. The President said that the handling by the United States of its relations with its own black population is a very important factor in the overall pattern of relations with African countries, because if the blacks are deprived of adequate opportunities in the United States this will influence African countries who then may look elsewhere for leadership. He referred to the progress that has been made in the United States in racial matters. Then he concluded that part of his remarks by saying that each new country in Africa had to choose its own way. He referred to Senegal as a significant example of a constructive association with a former colonial power.

President Senghor then talked about economic matters. He made specific reference to the vital need for dams which are particularly important in a country where there is little rain. He referred to the assistance provided by certain specialized agencies of the United Nations and also the World Bank, with a specific reference to Mr. McNamara whom he considered a friend and with whom he was going to sign three agreements that afternoon. The other matter was that of the fishing industry which needed to be developed and in that connection he cited the issue of fishing waters as separated from territorial waters and mentioned the fact that Senegal had denounced the 1958 agreements regarding those waters. He had already been in touch with State Department Legal Adviser Stevenson and mentioned that an American special mission would be coming to Senegal to discuss territorial and fishing waters issues. Speaking of the territorial waters proper his country did not intend to push for a 200 mile limit such as that advocated by several Latin American countries. He understood the strategic implications of territorial waters for the United States and had also discussed that matter with the French. But as for fishing waters, he described that issue as one of life or death for his country, particularly since the Russians and the Chinese were more and more active in indiscriminate fishing off the coast of Senegal. He also mentioned that there are potential oil and iron resources in Senegal and that American companies had been granted prospecting licenses.

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President Nixon indicated that it was the desire of the United States to cooperate with Senegal in its economic development. President Senghor concluded by saying that Senegal provided a favorable climate for investment and that he was sure that the United States would have a reasonable attitude regarding Senegalese plans about developing its fishing resources.

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