

WASHINGTON NOTES ON AFRICA

JANUARY, 1969

1. Biafra Policy

It is quite clear that there is going to be a Nixon policy on the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. The public response to the Biafran relief problems, as well as their own Republican propensities for humanitarian relief efforts, self-determination and wariness of Great Power arms races have contributed to a White House insistence that something be done about the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. At this writing, the State Department task force is still meeting to develop an appropriate policy involving, not political interference, but diplomatic initiatives. Conflict of sorts exists in the Africa Bureau between some of the old guard who are still infatuated with the allusion of a dynamic Nigeria which perforce must be a tightly integrated Nigeria and some younger members who believe that there are a number of creative diplomatic options available which could, perhaps, engender a cease-fire, a truce and the beginning of reconciliation. However, the inability to write a plausible scenario in which the results of every effort can be completely predicted has weakened the arguments of the latter group. But it is likely that the political urgency, created by the response to the genocidal consequences of the Nigerian conflict, will predominate and lead to the appointment of a Special Representative.

The office of Senator Kennedy, in their on-going studies of refugee problems, has recommended, in response to the Nigerian conflict, the creation of a United Nations Emergency Relief Force. Such a force, consisting of international relief experts, would be provided with funds and emergency supplies which could be moved anywhere in the world when the need arose.

There is a need to continually monitor the various activities and recommendations of those Congressmen and Senators and others who have become committed to action on the Biafran situation. A lot of ill-thought-out proposals have emerged, the assumptions of which need to be examined. The State Department, on the other hand, has been surprisingly slow to initiate any active diplomacy. Diplomacy-as-usual, or diplomacy-by-telegram is not enough in this case. It is maintained that more active initiatives will either be ignored or resented by African leaders. If this is true, it is a sorry commentary on our relationships with Africa in the last 10 years.

2. Washington People

Congressman Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D-Michigan) has begun his Chairmanship of the House Subcommittee by initiating a number of studies on the importance of American policy in South Africa. He is taking advantage of the February recess to travel to Nigeria and Biafra. Before his departure, Congressman Diggs, after listening to any number of advocates, was still possessed of an open mind toward what needed to be done to resolve the conflict.

Senator Gale McGee (D-Wyoming) has been appointed Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Africa. Senator McGee claims to be anti-South Africa but also anti-do-anything-about-it. His connection with mining interests will obviously limit what he is likely to do with respect to American policy in South Africa. He is more likely to be concerned about economic developments in the rest of Africa.

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His other Committee members include Senators Carl Mundt (R-South Dakota) and Tom Dodd (D-Connecticut).

Senator Stuart Symington has been appointed to head a special Subcommittee to investigate the effect of our military operations and interests upon our foreign policy. He should be encouraged to look into our relationships with Portugal and the effect which they have upon our declared support for anti-colonialism in Africa.

3. African Aid Policy

The retired Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Barratt O' Hara has submitted a report of his special study mission to Africa. He visited six countries: Somalia, Tanzania, Malagasy Republic, South Africa, Senegal and Guinea. Among his conclusions is the belief that the Korry Report, which proposes a plan of assistance for African based on regional and multi-lateral programs, has very basic shortcomings. He advocates that bi-lateral assistance, especially technical assistance, be continued and expanded to a number of countries. His recommendations might be an opening wedge in establishing a review of our meager and inadequate assistance program to African states.

4. Book Notes

The Seeds of Disaster by John Laurence (Taplinger Publishing Company New York, 1968) is an analysis of the realities of race policies and world-wide propaganda campaigns of the Republic of South Africa. It is a good updated analysis of the inequities of the apartheid system and how South Africa wages its foreign policy in such a fashion as to cover up its running sores from international exposure. It is especially relevant now that the new landing rights for South African Airways heralds the beginning of yet another South African propaganda offensive.

The Best of Both Worlds by Guy Hunter (Oxford University Press, New York, 1967) presents an analysis of the many developing African economies and societies with relationship to their responses to external influences. It is a short but detailed analysis by an observer whose astuteness has long been recognized.

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