

*President*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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DOS Review Completed.

CABINET MEETING

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday - September 28, 1976  
9:46 - 11:13 a.m.

PLACE: Cabinet Room

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS  
APPLY

President: The last meeting we focused on politics. We are switching the format and I thought it would be appropriate for Secretary Kissinger to bring you up to date on our African initiative.

As I said earlier, when we have to take actions in foreign policy, we will do it regardless of political benefit or detriment. On this issue it was our judgment that time was of the essence, and that there would be worse chaos and bloodshed if we didn't move. It was a high risk option, but it was the thing to do.

George, will you give us the intelligence background against which we made our decision.

Bush: [Described the estimate of events if no action had been taken.]

Kissinger: This intelligence assessment shows why we couldn't delay and why we started in April, which some considered ill-timed. After the rainy season started, the war would escalate, with raids into Mozambique and risk of foreign intervention.

Further, the future of Africa is involved. If the movement is toward radicalism supported by outside intervention, the future of Africa is bleak. Conversely, if we can demonstrate that moderation works, that there is a peaceful route, that has profound implications for Africa.

Even if you want the white community to continue living there, this is the way to go -- otherwise they would inevitably be driven out. We had to move before November 1, the rainy season.

[Compares these negotiations with the Middle East.]

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The problem in dealing with the blacks is the gap between what they say publicly and what they say privately. The rejection you read on Sunday was not a rejection. They told us to get the Conference going, that they had no preconditions, and that they were ready to move.

We put together a plan with the British and presented it to the blacks to put forward. They bought it but said Smith would never agree. So we turned it around and went to Smith first. We first had to convince him to accept what all the intelligence estimates -- including his own -- said. He then wanted to put forward just a general concept. We rejected that because we thought things would then get bogged down. We thought we had to nail him down, so the plan he put forward was ours, not his, and largely -- not in every detail -- accepted by the blacks.

The radicals are interested in a protracted negotiation, because the guerrilla war would continue and the takeover would be by the men with the guns rather than the civilians.

We won on that point. The Constitutional Conference will follow the setting up of a transitional government, thus getting the government in place rather than having things dragged out forever in a Constitutional Conference.

The key now is to get the British to call a conference. They are moving in a stately, bureaucratic fashion, but we have to get them moving.

Another issue is Namibia, where the situation is the same as Rhodesia but two years removed. Last summer the Africans asked us for conditions, on Namibia. We have in fact produced 150% of their conditions, but those in the meantime have escalated. There is a split among the African leaders now. We think it is not too good to have the two issues boiling simultaneously, so we are marking time for a month or so to get Rhodesia moving.

What is at stake is for the moderate governments all over Africa to see whether the U.S. can have an impact through its moderate approach. If not, there will be a sweeping trend toward radicalism, with a profound effect, at least since Africa has so many states.

It is too bad it comes during an election year because we need a united people to put this through.

President: We had a leadership meeting and I was very encouraged by the lack of opposition by the Democrats. A few questions of information, but no objections or reservations.

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Kissinger: I met with the news editors, including from the south, and there were no objections.

President: I found the same in my trip south.

Kissinger: Bill Coleman suggested I meet with the Black Caucus, which I am doing today.

Coleman: This is very important. [redacted] but there is also an element more important. We have had a lot of liberal Secretaries of State but Henry is the only one with the guts to step up and take this one on. I think it is admirable.

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Kleppe: Can't we do it without the British?

Kissinger: One thing I forgot was the Soviets. They are frantically opposing us in every way.

Scranton: In the UN they are scared to death by our initiative and they're doing everything possible to kill it.

Kissinger: So if we played a role in the conference, the Soviets would demand one. Besides, Britain has the Constitutional role to play here.

The way I would do it is to call both sides in, listen to them for a couple of days and then say this is our understanding of what you all said (whether it is or not) and put out a paper. Then the blacks can accept a British plan rather than one from Smith.

The British don't work that way, and it may be that we will have to get back in before the conference gets sorted out.

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