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June 15, 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR: M - Mr. Harriman
G - Mr. Johnson
AF - Mr. Williams
EUR - Mr. Tyler
S/P - Mr. Rostow

Through S/S

Mennen Williams memorandum to me of June 12 on U.S. policy toward South Africa raises again some far-reaching issues which ought to be considered within a broader framework of policy than that relating to the attitudes of the independent states of Africa.

At the heart of the issue is how we relate ourselves to those countries whose internal arrangements and practices are not only foreign to our own way of thinking but, in many cases, repugnant to us. Let us accept the general notion that the United States should use its influence steadily and persistently in the direction of the principles inscribed in the United Nations Charter as well as in our own basic commitments to constitutional processes, human rights, etc. It is another question, it seems to me, to extend such influence into the field of sanctions and into actions which, if consistently and conscientiously applied, would interrupt our relations with perhaps half of the existing community of states. Also involved is the position in which we would be if other states undertook to apply sanctions against us because of practices of our own to which they take the strongest exception.

It is true that we have the strongest objections to apartheid in the Union of South Africa; we have said so repeatedly and have asserted our view to the point where our relations with the Union of South Africa are in a continuing state of tension. But I believe it is worth reminding ourselves that there are other states where obnoxious practices of one sort or another exist -- and in some of them in the most exaggerated form. I have in mind Bulgaria, Burma, China, Czechoslovakia, Ghana, Haiti, Hungary, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, USSR, the UAR, Viet-Nam, and Yugoslavia. I have not listed some of the smaller African states whose

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internal practices reflect varying degrees of totalitarianism nor all of the Arab states whose attitudes in religious minorities or constitutional principles leave much to be desired. The question, it seems to me, is whether we ourselves precipitate sharp crises in our relations with other states over such issues or whether we try to maintain the structure of international relations in order to be able to work doggedly and persistently toward the decent world community which is our main objective. I will admit that apartheid presents a case of unusual difficulty but I would not put it ahead of the violations of human rights within the communist bloc or in certain countries governed on an authoritarian basis with which we have correct and sometimes even friendly relations.

I would draw a sharp distinction between our deep concern with respect to racial discrimination in the United States and the way in which we crusade on that very issue outside the United States. The United States is our responsibility; our failures are our failures; we live under a constitutional system in which we can do something about it. But no one has elected us to undertake such responsibilities in other countries. The President has reminded us that we are not interested in a Pax Americana. It seems to me, a fortiori, that we are not the self-elected gendarmes for the political and social problems of other states.

It would be hard to find a single state with which we have relations where it is not necessary for us to try to develop good relations despite important differences in points of view or in action. Specifically with regard to the Union of South Africa, I have felt that we cannot compromise our own attitudes toward apartheid, that we must use our influence wherever possible to modify their position on that matter, but that we must then also try to sustain good relations in other respects despite the severity of our differences on that particular issue. It has seemed to me, therefore, logical that we should not assist the Union of South Africa with means of enforcing its apartheid policy but that we should assist them in playing the kind of role which they have already played in two World Wars and which now is a part of a total confrontation affecting the life and death of our own nation.

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A proposal for us to embark upon sanctions against the Union of South Africa must, it seems to me, be a part of a package of proposals for sanctions against other states in other situations where different but obnoxious situations obtain. And such proposals should include some concept of priorities -- that is, what are the situations which cause us the deepest concern?

I have no objection to the most intensive study of apartheid or other situations causing us concern. But I do think that we must give careful thought to the broader questions of 1) how we relate ourselves to the other 94% of the world's peoples whom we can influence but cannot control, and 2) where the interests of the American people lie with regard to actions designed to require someone else to act as we would like to have them act.

Dean Rusk

Attachment:

Memorandum of June 12.

S:DRusk:jmr