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POL 2 NIGERIA

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TELEGRAM

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 03911 051805Z

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ACTION: AF: 18

INFO: OCT 01, EUR 17, UCF 05, UPW 01, SCS 04, SCA 01, SRI 01, ORM 03, CTAE 00,
DODE 00, JPM 04, H 02, INR 07, LI 03, NSAEC 00, NSCI 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02,
SS 20, USIA 12, E 15, RSR 01A/132 WH

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RI 051600Z MAY 69
FM: AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO: SECSTATE WASHDC 6361
INFO: AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA
CINCSTRIKE
DIA

~~SECRET~~ LAGOS 3911

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: A PROGNOSIS
REF: A-1511 A-1571 A-1681 A-1711 A-1791
A-1811 A-1881

1. IN PREPARING THE SERIES OF REPORTS REFERENCED ABOVE WE WERE IN EFFECT ADDRESSING OURSELVES TO ONE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION: CAN NIGERIA STILL FULFILL THE PROMISE SHE ONCE SHOWED? OUR OVERALL ANSWER TO THIS HAS BEEN AFFIRMATIVE, ALTHOUGH THIS ANSWER IS PREDICATED UPON CERTAIN BASIC ASSUMPTIONS.

2. THE FIRST ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (FMG) WILL WIN THE WAR. OUR REASONING ON THIS POINT IS SET FORTH IN LAGOS 2775 OF MARCH 28, 1969. SINCE THAT TIME THE FMG HAS TAKEN UMUAHIA AND LOST OWERRI, BUT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE SCALES ARE SO WEIGHTED IN FAVOR OF THE FMG THAT AN FMG VICTORY IS INEVITABLE. WE ALSO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT ANYTHING BUT AN FMG VICTORY, MILITARY OR NEGOTIATED, PROMISES TO FRAGMENT NIGERIA, PROLONG STRIFE, AND PROBABLY HAVE

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 03911 051805Z

REPERCUSSIONS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES (LAGOS A-171, APRIL 17, 1969).

3. THE SECOND ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE PRESENT MULTI-STATE STRUCTURE OF NIGERIA HAS GIVEN A NEW STABILITY TO THE COUNTRY WHICH AFFORDS HER THE MEANS TO RIDE OUT THE WAR AND THEREAFTER TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEMS OF REINTEGRATION OF THE IBOS, REHABILITATION, AND DEMOBILIZATION. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, BE A MISTAKE TO UNDERESTIMATE THE DIFFICULTIES AND THE DANGERS OF THE IMMEDIATE POSTWAR PERIOD.

4. A THIRD ASSUMPTION IS THAT NIGERIA WILL NOT FALL INTO A PATTERN OF RECURRING COUPS WHICH COULD SPLIT THE COUNTRY WIDELY OPEN (LAGOS A-151, APRIL 5, 1969). WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT IN GENERAL GOWON, A MINORITIES MAN FROM THE MIDDLE BELT AND AN IDEALISTIC PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, THE COUNTRY HAS COME UP WITH THE CLOSEST THING TO THE REQUISITE COMPROMISE LEADER. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AND WELCOMED AND CONSTITUTES A MAJOR SAFEGUARD TO THE STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY. COUPS CAN, OF COURSE, COME OUT OF NOWHERE. AS OF THIS WRITING COL. BENJAMIN ADEKUNLE, COMMANDER OF THE 3RD MARINE COMMANDO DIVISION, IS POSING A PROBLEM (LAGOS 3878). IF GOWON FEELS OBLIGED TO RELIEVE HIM THERE COULD BE REPERCUSSIONS, BUT THERE IS AT LEAST A PRECEDENT IN THE FORMAL REMOVAL OF COL. MURTAZA MOHAMED IN MAY, 1968, FROM COMMAND OF THE 2ND DIVISION.

5. IF THE FOREGOING ASSUMPTIONS PROVE VALID, THE PROMISE ONCE SHOWN BY NIGERIA HAS THE MEANS OF REALIZATION: THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY. AS POINTED OUT IN LAGOS A-171, THE ECONOMY HAS BEEN RELATIVELY WELL MANAGED AND HAS WITHSTOOD THE STRAINS OF WAR WITHOUT FALTERING. OIL PRODUCTION HAS PASSED THE PRE-WAR LEVEL AND IS EXPECTED BY 1973 TO PROVIDE POUNDS NIGERIA 240 MILLION IN GOVERNMENT REVENUES AND SOME POUNDS NIGERIAN 290 MILLION IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

6. WE BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY REGIME WILL FEEL OBLIGED TO REMAIN IN POWER FOR SOME TIME, POSSIBLY SEVERAL YEARS, AFTER THE END OF HOSTILITIES. THE COUNTRY IS NOW RUN BY A KITCHEN CABINET RATHER THAN THROUGH ITS ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS, THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL AND THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. WHILE THE KITCHEN CABINET IS PREPONDERANTLY MILITARY,

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PAGE 03: LAGOS 03911 051805Z

IT INCLUDES SOME OF THE MORE CAPABLE SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS. IT RULES BY CONSENSUS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF GOWON AND IS INFLUENCED IN ITS DECISION BY THE NECESSITY FOR COMPROMISE AND FOR TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SENSITIVITIES OF THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION.

7. WOULD-BE POLITICAL LEADERS ARE ALREADY JOCKEYING FOR POSITION, BUT SPECULATION ON THE RETURN OF CIVILIAN RULE IS AT PRESENT ALMOST ACADEMIC. THE TRANSITION, WHEN IT COMES, WILL SEVERELY TEST THE STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY, AND WE SUSPECT THAT THE MILITARY WILL STAY CLOSE AT HAND IN THE TURKISH MANNER.

8. IN SUM, THE EMBASSY HAS EMERGED FROM ITS STUDY OF THE INSTITUTIONS, LEADERSHIP, AND ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE FMG ON BALANCE WITH A FAVORABLE PROGNOSIS. THERE ARE UNQUESTIONABLY DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD, BUT THE CHANCES ARE THAT NIGERIA CAN RESUME THE ROLE SHE SEEMED DESTINED TO PLAY WHEN SHE BECAME INDEPENDENT.

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