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(Draft)

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.4

NND 969042

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~By JS Date 2 June '58

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PA/HO Department of State

E.O. 12958, as amended

April 21, 2005

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: August 17, 1970

SUBJECT: Meeting Between the Nigerian Ambassador and the Director of AF/AFR-N

PARTICIPANTS: His Excellency Joe Iyalla, Ambassador of Nigeria
Mr. Efiong N. Eyo, Second Secretary, Nigerian Embassy
Mr. C. William Kontos, Director, AF/AFR-N
Mr. John W. Foley, Jr., Deputy Director, AF/AFR-N

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Ambassador Iyalla called Monday, August 17 to report on his recent trip to Lagos, where he was summoned back on July 24 for consultations and to attend a conference of senior chiefs of mission. He returned to Washington last Thursday, August 14. In a wide-ranging discussion, a number of subjects were covered as follows:

INTERNAL NIGERIA

On the home front, Ambassador Iyalla said that things are "really moving." The FMG leadership is earnestly grappling with the major question of how to proceed now for an eventual return to civilian rule. The intention is to move promptly but firmly to establish definite guidelines for an orderly turnover. Some of the problems which have to be resolved before the country is handed back to the civilian politicians are the relative powers within the Federal-state structure, the pattern of the economy, particularly with respect to revenue allocation and public debt, and the Four-Year Development Plan. The latter has been before the Executive Council and this week is to come up for approval by the Supreme Military Council.

On the assumption that the plan will be acted upon by the Council before the end of this month, the Ambassador confirmed Mr. Kontos' understanding that an economic team led by A.A. Ayida, Permanent

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3-61POL 17 NIGERIA-US
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Secretary for the Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction, will come to Washington the third week in September for deliberations with the World Bank. While here, the team will also meet with AID officials in connection with the review of AID's future assistance and development policies for Nigeria.

U.S.-NIGERIAN RELATIONS

Improved Feeling Toward United States

Ambassador Iyalla found among top Government officials and advisers a positive and marked upswing of a cordial attitude toward the United States. The proposed AID reconstruction loan has been enthusiastically received with the expectation of considerably simplified procedures particularly appreciated. The Ambassador claimed that even officials who had been cool toward the United States were characterizing the loan and its procedures as a realistic and positive step in response to Nigerian requirements. The FMG therefore hoped the implementation would not bog down and conclusion of the loan negotiations would be rapid. The Ambassador remarked that there was a noticeable appreciation in many Government quarters over the "falling off" of a U.S. tendency to insist on winning every point in talks and negotiations with Nigerian officials. In general the United States Embassy in Lagos was handling well its relationships with the Government.

Activities of Relief Foundations

A discordant note in relations with the United States according to the Ambassador is the strong feeling in Lagos that the authorities in Washington are not doing as much as they could regarding the residual activities in the United States of pro-Biafran elements. The FMG thinks that laws could have been enforced more stringently to stop the fund-raising efforts of organizations such as the Biafran International Foundation and the Nigerian War Victims Relief Foundation. In Nigerian eyes, the money is being raised for the personal gain of individuals who are committing fraud in claiming contributions are for relief purposes and tax exempt.

On this subject, Mr. Kontos responded by emphasizing that the U.S. Government is mindful of the necessity to review the activities of these organizations. He pointed out that the Internal Revenue Service at the instigation of the Department is currently reviewing the bona fides of both organizations. A report on this review is expected shortly from the IRS.

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

In reply to an inquiry by Mr. Kontos, the Ambassador told of the FMG's present plans for the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Nigeria's independence. All African heads of state are to be invited except those from the four countries--Ivory Coast, Gabon, Tanzania, and Zambia--with whom the FMG does not have relations. No decision has yet been taken on representation from non-African countries. If invitations are extended, it will be at a level lower than head of state. However, it may be decided to have states outside of Africa simply represented by their Ambassadors in Lagos. Plans for the celebrations are expected to become final by the end of this week and he would let us know the decision right away.

If high-ranking delegations from non-African states are not to be a part of the anniversary format, the Ambassador said he had proposed specifically for the United States that some time after the October 1 celebrations five or six distinguished U.S. personalities who are special friends of Nigeria be invited to visit in a group as guests of the FMG. They would be given the opportunity to meet with top officials and to make an extensive tour of Nigeria.

U.S. VISITORS TO NIGERIA

According to the Ambassador, he made special arrangements to have General Gowon receive Carl Rowan during the latter's visit in Lagos August 16-19. Appointments for meetings with a number of other high officials and with business and university people have also been set up for him. Ambassador Iyalla indicated that the visit to Nigeria by Governor Brimmer of the Federal Reserve had gone very well and that he had made a favorable impression on all who saw him including General Gowon. The visits of the various study groups have also been profitable and have not caused problems. The Ambassador was pleased that there had been so many Black Americans included in the groups.

During the discussion on visitors, Mr. Kontos took the occasion to bring up the problem of the prolonged delay in obtaining Nigerian visas for two contract personnel involved in AID-financed projects whose applications have been pending since last May. Although the Department has had indirect word from Lagos that the Nigerian immigration service had cabled the Embassy here authorizing the issuance of these visas, Ambassador Iyalla denied this was true. He agreed however to look into the case and let Mr. Kontos know the status of the applications in the near future.

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DECREE TO RETIRE BIAFRAN SUPPORTERS

Ambassador Iyalla explained that the decree had been promulgated to enable the Federal and State Governments to retire with pension benefits a very small number of former public employees who were unqualified or whose places had been filled during the war and for whom alternative employment in Government service cannot be found. The decree would also be applied to an even smaller group known to have been actively identified with the planning and execution of the rebellion whom it would not be possible to employ in Government positions. Ambassador Iyalla assured that the decree would in no way affect the thousands already reinstated in their jobs with the Federal and State Governments and that no intention prevails to dismiss all Government employees who happened to be on the rebel side during the war.

TREATMENT OF DIPLOMATS AT DULLES AIRPORT

Ambassador Iyalla concluded his call by complaining about the treatment he had received at Dulles Airport. Upon arrival on two occasions, his staff was not permitted to enter the restricted area to help him with immigration and customs formalities, he had to wait in line along with the other passengers, he was unable to get porter service to assist with his luggage, and in general the authorities would not accord the preferential treatment which the Ambassador thought his status deserved. The Ambassador plans to inform his Government of the difficulties he has had at Dulles, but before filing his report hopes to be able to indicate the steps which will be taken by the Department to remedy the situation. Mr. Kontos promised to raise the question immediately with the Deputy Chief of Protocol and hoped to have an answer for the Ambassador in a few days.

Clearance: AF/AFR-N - Mr. Kontos

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