SECRET

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ACTION: AF 18

INFO: OCT 01, EUR 17, UCF 05, UPW 01, SCS 04, SCA 01, SR 01, ORM 03, CTA 00,

DOD 00, JPM 04, H 02, INR 07, L 03, NSAE 00, NSC 10, P 04, RSC 01, SP 02,

SS 20, USIA 12, E 15, RSR 01, 132'W

R: 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


A-1811  A-188

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
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.


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.
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 LARGELY 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.

GP-1

MATTHEWS