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TELNO 45  
OF 041630Z MARCH 86  
INFO ROUTINE UKDEL IMF/IBRD WASHINGTON  
INFO SAVING LAGOS, ACCRA, DAR ES SALAAM, NAIROBI, LUSAKA, BANJUL

VISIT OF PRESIDENT MOMOH: CALL BY SECRETARY OF STATE

SUMMARY

1. MOMOH CONFIRMS HE HOPES TO ANNOUNCE ECONOMIC MEASURES SOUGHT BY IMF SOON AFTER HE RETURNS. PREDICTABLE CONTINUED INTEREST IN 'SILVER SEA' AFFAIR. COMPLAINTS THAT UK 'STANDING ALOOF' FROM AFRICA, IN CONTRAST TO FRANCE, FRG AND US. LOW-KEY COMMENTS ON SOUTH AFRICA.

DETAIL

2. I CALLED ON MOMOH FOR FORTY MINUTES AT HIS HOTEL YESTERDAY EVENING. HE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT HAD MADE GOOD PROGRESS WITH THE IMF AND CONFIRMED HE WOULD TAKE THE ECONOMIC DECISIONS MUSTAPHA HAD REPORTED TO JOHNSON (MY TELNO 44 NOT TO ALL) ADDING THAT SUBSIDIES ON ALL COMMODITIES EXCEPT RICE, WHICH WAS TOO SENSITIVE, WOULD BE WITHDRAWN. TO COMPENSATE SOMEWHAT FOR THE INEVITABLE HARDSHIP SALARY INCREASES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE WOULD BE NEEDED. THE PUBLIC WOULD ALSO REQUIRE EDUCATION ABOUT THESE TOUGH, LONG HAUL ECONOMIC MEASURES: HE HAD MADE A START BY TALKING TO THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, LABOUR UNIONS AND TEACHERS. HE HOPED TO ANNOUNCE THE DECISIONS, (CLASSIC REMEDIES,

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THOUGH DIFFICULT, I TOLD HIM) SHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN.

3. MOMOH THEN DISCOURSED AT LENGTH ON THE 'SILVER SEA' AFFAIR. THE NAMES BANDIED ABOUT - BANKS, KAMARA, GORVEY - WERE FAMILIAR (FULLER DETAILS TO FREETOWN BY BAG). AS HIS ADMINISTRATION WAS SO NEW THIS TIMING OF AN ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW IT WAS ODD BUT HE HAD TO TAKE THE STORY SERIOUSLY. HE URGED US TO SPARE NO PAINS TO INVESTIGATE. I SAID WE WOULD KEEP HIM INFORMED, BUT COULD NOT VOUCH FOR THE TRUTH OF WHAT WE MIGHT PASS ON AS THOSE INVOLVED WERE NOTORIOUS LIARS. THERE WERE MANY DISSIDENTS FROM MANY COUNTRIES IN THE UK, SOME OF WHOM EMBARRASSED US: WE WATCHED FOR BREACHES OF UK LAW. MOMOH SAID HE FULLY ACCEPTED THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH, BUT HOPED ANY PLOTTERS WOULD BE WARNED BY US TO DESIST.

4. HE THEN CHIDED US, 'SPEAKING AS A FRIEND OF LONG STANDING' FOR INSUFFICIENT INTEREST IN OUR FORMER AFRICAN COLONIES, A VIEW HE CLAIMED WAS SHARED BY THE LEADERS OF THE GAMBIA, NIGERIA, KENYA, ZAMBIA AND TANZANIA. THEY DID NOT WANT PAMPERING, BUT WE WERE STANDING ALOOF, A POSTURE WHICH COMPARED UNFAVOURABLY WITH THAT OF FRANCE, THE FRG, AND THE US (WHO WERE EVEN STANDING BY DOE (EXCLAMATION)). I TOLD HIM I APPRECIATED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF OUR FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS: BUT NEVERTHELESS WE HAD A LARGE AID PROGRAMME, AND WERE ANXIOUS TO HELP IN OTHER WAYS, FOR EXAMPLE WITH THE IMF. ATTEMPTS AT INTERFERENCE BY US AS THE FORMER COLONIAL POWER MIGHT WELL BE RESENTED, BUT IT WAS NOT TRUE THAT WE WERE NOT INTERESTED IN AFRICA - WITNESS MOST RECENTLY OUR HELP FOR UGANDA, FIRST THROUGH MOI, AND THEN DIRECTLY WITH MUSEVENI. THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER EXAMPLES ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, ESPECIALLY IN SUPPORT OF THE IMF: THE GAMBIA, GHANA AND - VERY DISCREETLY - NIGERIA. HOWEVER WE AND OUR FRIENDS LIKE SIERRA LEONE - WHO HAD HELPED US OVER THE FALKLANDS - SHOULD NOT TAKE EACHOTHER FOR GRANTED.

5. ON SOUTH AFRICA MOMOH'S COMMENTS WERE MODERATE. HE FEARED A HOLOCAUST IF APARTHEID REMAINED, AND WANTED NOT CONFRONTATION BUT NEGOTIATION TO END IT. BUT BOTHA WAS NOW DIGGING HIS HEELS IN. I SAID WE AGREED, TOLD HIM OF MY USEFUL MEETINGS IN LUSAKA AND OF THE WORK OF COMGEP. WE WERE NOT STARRY-EYED, BUT

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED THEIR VISIT. CONSTANT PRESSURE WAS NEEDED ON PRETORIA, WHOSE PACE OF REFORM WAS TOO SLOW.

COMMENT

6. ENCOURAGING ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, IF HE IS AS GOOD AS HIS WORD: PREDICTABLE ON THE 'SILVER SEA', AND SENSIBLE ON SOUTH AFRICA .

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MCNETARY  
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PS/MRS CHALKER  
PS/PUS  
MR JOHNSON  
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