

them. What we are doing is supplementary, since we cannot do it all the time.

EIR: As far as equipment is concerned for these hospitals, do you have to import it, or is there Nigerian-manufactured equipment? Is it difficult with the low naira [national currency] to buy equipment?

Bako: Especially because we are going to import oil, we decided to solicit assistance, so this is social services to the people. We wrote to the oil companies—like Mobil, Shell—to help us and donate some of this equipment. And another group in the United States decided to send a dialysis unit to us. Most of the equipment for the specialist hospital, since we cannot fund it alone, and since oil will be imported, we tend to solicit for assistance from organizations and corporate bodies.

EIR: Is that sufficient for your needs?

Bako: We want to get whatever we can get; then we will look at how to supplement this. To equip this specialist hospital is going to be very expensive; we may not be able to carry it out alone.

EIR: Do you have cases where doctors are coming back from overseas after their training; or is most of the training of the doctors done in Nigeria, and then they remain here?

Bako: Yes, we have doctors whom we send overseas for specialist training, and who come back. This is a big reason why we should have this specialist hospital. Because right now most of the hospitals we have are general hospitals. When we train the specialist doctors, they don't have the means to practice in full what they trained for overseas.

...

EIR: Earlier you mentioned an ExIm Bank loan to the government of Akwa Ibom. We are a bit critical about foreign loans—their terms, their repayment, conditionalities, and so forth. I believe that loan was taken before you became the military administrator. Firstly, I'd like you to give your own view, based on a review of those terms of such extended loans, and implications to the future of the Akwa Ibom treasury or purse. Secondly, when you came into office, did you review those terms, with a cost-benefit analysis? What would you advise other state governments to be careful with, or what to be aware of, or what are the benefits, and so on?

Bako: My personal view about loans, if I have my way, from my experience, is that you don't take foreign loans. If I had my way, I wouldn't. With respect to this ExIm Bank loan, we are reviewing the terms from the cost analysis standpoint. When the report is submitted, we will determine if we will go on with stage two of the loan. But from my own view, definitely, I cannot encourage any foreign loan, because if you find out the technicalities, half of that loan

goes on salaries, so you are not benefitting from the loan; this is my personal experience.

EIR: Half of the loan goes for salaries for whom?

Bako: When you sign the loan, you have to pay the technical partner that will come to execute that project in foreign currency, and they have to come from abroad. We have so many financed projects in Akwa Ibom state. Half of the money so far released, has gone for salaries alone.

Interview: Gregory Agbonemi

In a nutshell, our problem is economic

Group Captain Gregory Agbonemi is the military administrator of Nigeria's Cross River state. He was interviewed by Uwe Friesecke and Lawrence Freeman during a visit to Nigeria in October 1994.

The National Constitutional Conference to which Captain Agbonemi refers, as EIR reported in our June 16, 1995 issue, has now concluded and has presented its report to the government of head of state Gen. Sani Abacha.

EIR: Since becoming the military administrator of Cross River state, can you tell us something about the situation that you found here, and the programs you've initiated?

Agbonemi: Since my arrival here, the first thing that drew my attention was the sanitation in the urban area. I must admit that I was not too impressed. I went around and discovered that the inhabitants were actually doing their best, toiling, hiring beggars here and there to clean up the town, cleaning gutters, involving children, women. I discovered that they were trying to do everything on their own; there was no outside assistance. Compared with some of the other states that I've seen, the kind of assistance that comes from World Bank development, the idea of infrastructural development that is normally given by the World Bank to assist states, had not been understood or assimilated by this state. I was surprised to see that people had to gather their meager resources to contribute to the hiring of payloaders to clear their fields, and so on.

So it is my intention, first of all, to attempt to get World Bank support for the capital city, and then later for other towns within the state. In that regard, I would like them to assist in terms of equipment, payloaders, special dust bins, to

enable us to maintain the cleanliness that the town deserves.

EIR: You brought up the question of sanitation. Following up on that theme: What other major infrastructure improvements would you like to see in the Cross River state? We're talking about roads, electricity, clean water. Could you tell us some of your plans and how you see that development occurring?

Agbonemi: Cross River state is a somewhat old state; you've heard of the city of Calabar. It's a city that was important historically, but now much of its glory is gone. It is my intention to revive the glory of the entire state. The inhabitants are very eager to regain the lost glory of the state. Everyone has realized that the best way to do that is through economic viability.

In terms of attitude of the people, it is quite good. However, we need to assist the people to develop themselves.

There are other areas of economic concern within the state. There is a cement factory here. The production there is not the best. Again, that needs resuscitation; we are trying to put plans in place to get some assistance and get the cement factory going the way it should go. It has been a very creative business in Nigeria, the cement business.

There are other economic ventures in Cross River state, such as a plant where we produce and export rubber. And then we have the palm oil estates. My intention is to try and raise the level of production in those areas, and thereby raise the standard of living of every person within the state. In a nutshell, the main problem is economic. And I keep coming back to this, to raise the economic viability of the state, and consequently thereby raise the standard of living of each person within Cross River state.

EIR: You are a military administrator of this state; are you looking forward to returning the state to civilian rule and moving on with your military career at some point?

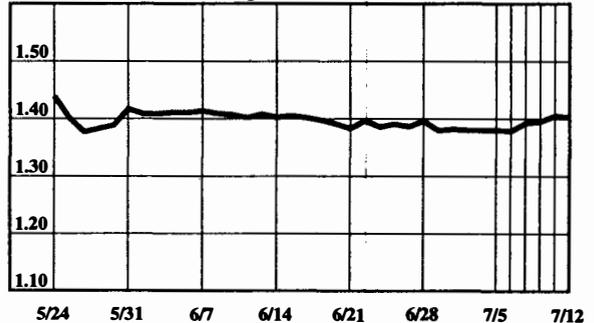
Agbonemi: I would say "yes." I'm prepared, even right now, to move on to my military assignment. All we are waiting for is for the Constitutional Conference to conclude; tell us the conclusions about that, and we will implement them immediately and return to barracks. We moved in to prevent the disintegration of the nation. Not because we wanted to rule; no, that is not our interest.

I'm saying that because there are some people who say: "Oh, the head of state wants to head Nigeria." But they have forgotten that, if General Abacha had wanted to head this nation, he could have done it a long time ago. He had several opportunities to do it. But he didn't. He was head of the Army. He controlled everything; he didn't take over. He was minister for defense; he had every opportunity to take over, but he didn't. He moved in because people were begging. It is no secret; this is documented. People were virtually begging the military to come in and save the situation.

Currency Rates

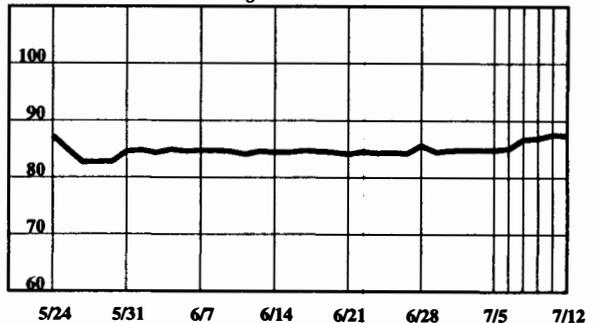
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



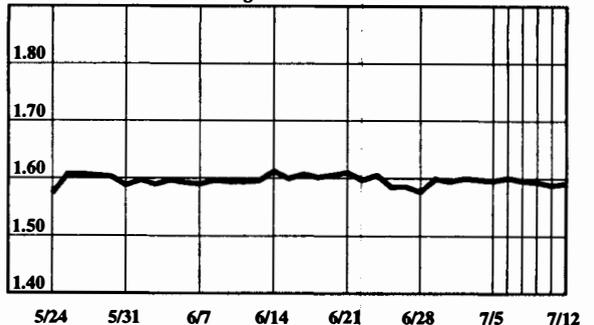
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

