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The developing international relations of Nigeria

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2015-01-27
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Ememe asked why Nigeria had not denounced openly US atrocities in Vietnam since the US intervention in the internal affairs of the Vietnamese people violated the UN Charter.(1) Sir Abubakar, in his capacity as Minister of External Affairs, gave a brief reply favourable to the United States:

> "The Government is not aware that the United States is involved in the internal affairs of the people of Vietnam. As far as our information goes, the United States provides civil and military assistance to the Government of South Vietnam at the request and in accordance with a formal agreement with the Government of South Vietnam." (2)

The line of thinking adopted by other senior leaders is not known but there were semi-official anti-United States leaks on two occasions. Radio Lagos on 28th October, 1966 stated that the communiqué issued after the Manila Conference meant that the war in Vietnam would be continued with increasing intensity; more disconcerting was the fact that the communiqué re-echoed 'the same boast of might and show of strength which have always underlain all White House hand-outs on Vietnam'; nevertheless, it described the Conference as a 'worthwhile gesture' to which Hanoi should respond.(3) The other occasion was in the UN First Committee in December, 1965 when Russia, with a view to having Vietnam debated, proposed that the agenda include an item dealing with inadmissable intervention in the domestic affairs of states and the protection of their independence and sovereignty. Mr Kano, Nigeria's representative, without referring to the US or Vietnam by name, censured the US role there:

> "There was no justification for unilateral military intervention by States in other States, even to safeguard the former's vital interests ... The threat or use of force was even more deplorable when it was applied by one State to compel the people of another State to reject or maintain any belief or ideology or to thwart the latter's free exercise of its inalienable rights to self-determination; and the forcible establishment or maintenance by certain States of puppet régimes without any popular support in other States was equally reprehensible." (4)

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1. Ibid., Vol. 19, October, 1965, p. 285.
2. Ibid.
3. Africa Research Bulletin, No. 10, 1966, p. 644a.
4. UN General Assembly, First Committee, Meeting 1405, 9.12.65, para. 47.

In general, Sir Abubakar declined to comment on the subject and his only public statement appears to have been one explaining his reasons for agreeing to serve on the proposed Commonwealth Peace Mission to Vietnam. Arguing that the war was 'a challenge to the good sense of the world', he continued, 'either we are prepared to see the war in Vietnam engulf the world or we must be prepared and willing to do everything likely to contribute towards a solution. Expressions of goodwill and pious hopes are not enough'.(1)

Nigeria supported Malaysia in the confrontation with Indonesia and Sir Abubakar shared in the assurance given to the Prime Minister of Malaysia by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in July, 1964, 'of their sympathy and support in his efforts to preserve the sovereign independence and integrity of his country and to promote a peaceful and honourable settlement of current differences between Malaysia and neighbouring countries'.(2)

Nigeria sided with India in its border conflict with China. In reply to a letter from Prime Minister Nehru, Sir Abubakar wrote that the 'intransigence which China had constantly displayed leads me to think that all friends of India should now speak out in defence of what is right and in the cause of world peace and concord... [The Chinese] theory of 'might is right' cannot be tenable and any country that embraces it should stand condemned'.(3)

In the Kashmir conflict between Pakistan and India, the Nigerian Government was confronted with two fellow Commonwealth nations at war with each other; and its handling of the issue was consistent with its general methods; following a policy of non-partisanship, it carried on friendly relations with both, accepted aid from both and offered to help in negotiating peace should they wish it to do so. When the dispute took a turn for the worse in 1965 Sir Abubakar wrote to both Ayub Khan and Shastri expressing his distress and appealing to them to agree to 'an immediate ceasefire so as to avoid further bloodshed'.(4) And, typically, too, when the UN requested personnel

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 6, 1965, p. 322a.
2. Commonwealth Survey, No. 15, 21.7.64, p. 718.
3. West Africa, 3.11.62, p. 1229.
4. News from Nigeria, No. 15, 28.8.65, p. 2.

to help supervise the ceasefire a group of ten military observers were despatched from Nigerian army headquarters.

There is no clear criterion by which to determine the success or failure of a foreign policy. Is it the impact made upon the world? Is it the contribution towards a solution of the world's problems? Is it the respect which is acquired by the country or its leaders? Is it the amount of support which it obtains at home? Is it the clarity and consistency with which the policy is pursued? Is it the financial aid which it succeeds in gleaning? Or is it the degree to which it serves to solve internal problems? Certainly all these facets would be included in an overall judgement; but a foreign policy which gains the approval abroad of both Eastern and Western countries, and of both African and non-African countries, and at home of both radicals and conservatives, is indeed an unusual phenomenon.

Despite the difficulty of establishing universally accepted criteria, it can be concluded that the foreign policy followed by Sir Abubakar was successful. Faced, for an African leader, by a relatively broad spectrum of diverse pressures and in particular by the conflicting views within his coalition Government, Sir Abubakar managed to tread a middle course, submitting sometimes to one approach, sometimes to another, and frequently setting the trend and tone himself. He was obliged to find a path that would satisfy both a conservative overlord and radical backbenchers; both northern Moslems and southern Christians and animists; both a vocal progressive minority demanding a dynamic policy and a majority ignorant of, and seeing little need for, a foreign policy at all; the needs of economic assistance and the call to exert the country's new-found sovereignty; and both the inherent caution of the north and the radicalism of the south. If he did not always satisfy everyone he did manage adroitly to prevent foreign policy issues from aggravating the most serious of Nigeria's problems - religious and tribal division. The one question which can be asked is whether he could have utilised his foreign policy more effectively as an instrument of forging internal unity, for this was Nigeria's most urgent need.

> "... It is no credit to be too reasonable; it is no credit to be too sophisticated. Nationalism does not thrive on deep thinking alone. It must have a little bit of emotional interest." (1)
>
> "... If this country does not pursue ... a dynamic policy in foreign affairs, we shall not be helping our people to raise up their heads and to have the spirit of independence." (2)
>
> "Not only has this Government, in regard to foreign policy, no target, no objective, but to my mind there is even no point of departure... The foreign policy of this Government gives us nothing to work for, nothing inspiring." (3)

could a policy, militant, messianic and inspiring, however unrealistic and abhorrent to Sir Abubakar personally, have given Nigeria a greater sense of purpose and of national identity; could it have made Nigerians feel that theirs was a nation whose impact on the world was revolutionary and powerful; and could this have saved the country from degeneration into civil war? The answer must be in the negative. Firstly, Nigeria's problems were too great, the differences and quarrels over international affairs were at most the tip of the iceberg, and any influence Nigeria's performance on the international stage might have had on its domestic affairs could have been but minimal; secondly, a revolutionary, militant policy would have been rejected completely and immediately by the Sardauna, the NPC and the North - that is, by the most powerful leader, the strongest party and the largest region in the country.

The success of the policy followed by Sir Abubakar's Government was based on a willingness to learn and measured progress from the known to the unknown; on refraining from making decisions on issues not considered by it to be essential to Nigeria's sphere of interest; and on substituting for the striking of attitudes on each and every international dispute, offers to assist with the achievement of peaceful solutions. The measure of its success was that in the process of its implementation the

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1. Chief O.B. Akin-Olugbade, HRD, 20 July - 4 September, 1961, p. 350.
2. Chief Ayo Rosiji, HRD, 20 July - 4 September, 1961, p. 367.
3. Chief Anthony Enahoro, HRD, 20 July - 4 September, 1961, p. 345.

Nigerian Prime Minister came to be regarded with great respect, and that, whatever criticism there was, Nigeria's influence on a troubled world was in the direction of peace and on an unstable continent towards stability.

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chapter 5 : the world and secession

the siege of the ibo heartland

the issues confronting the world

britain

the soviet union

france

the united states of america

europe and the question of relief

other non-african countries

africa

- the oau and the consultative committee
- the recognisers
- the rest of africa

conclusion

CHAPTER V : THE WORLD AND SECESSION.

"Suddenly there broke through the air the song of the ngwele kwonwu. This strange bird got its name from what it seems to say: ngwele kwonwu - kwonwu - kwonwu - kwonwu (lizard there is death - death - death)." (1)

A. The Siege of the Ibo Heartland.

In June, 1967 there was probably only one country in the world not paying close attention to the six-day Arab-Israeli war: Nigeria. For it was in the throes of final preparation for its own war; one which was to unleash the convulsive and ruinous forces of uncontrolled racial hatred which, when augmented by modern weaponry, were to engulf a part of the country in bloodshed, starvation and havoc on a scale unprecedented on the African continent. For what was, in General Gowon's words, to have been 'a short, surgical police action',(2) to crush the Biafran rebellion stretched into a prolonged and painful strangulation of the Ibo people which in July, 1969, entered its third year.

At the commencement Biafra received little sympathy and no support from the rest of the world, and the few who cared to spare the conflict any thought gave the secessionists but scant chance of holding out for more than a few months. On the other hand Britain and Europe, both West and East, provided the Federal Army with automatic rifles and ample ammunition, heavy artillery, mortars, rockets, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft guns, Czech Delfin jets, Russian Mig fighters and Ilyushin IL-28 bombers, as well as advisers, trainers and pilots. Except for a briefly successful excursion into the Mid-West which established the short-lived Republic of Benin, the secessionists, outgunned and outnumbered, were inexorably driven into a landlocked circle by the Federals who laboriously, but surely, laid siege to the Ibo heartland and proceeded, step by step, to tighten the noose on what Ojukwu himself called 'the steadily diminishing dot'.(3) Three months after the first shots had been fired the

1. Nwankwo, Nkem, Danda, Panther Books, 1966, p. 145.
2. Time, 14.7.67, p. 19.
3. Ibid., 7.3.69, p. 28.

Nigerian army had wrested one-third of Biafra's territory from the secessionists, twelve months later two-thirds, eighteen months later four-fifths and on the second anniversary of the war the Biafrans were estimated to be in control of only about 3,000 square miles of the original 29,000 which they had demarcated for their Republic.

The pattern of advance was invariably the same. Continuously harassed by Biafran raids the Federal troops would set about the arduous task of dragging their mortars and heavy artillery into a position within the precincts of a city or town from which they could pulverise it into submission. Within the city anti-panic squads urged the people to remain calm and not to flee. But the fear of massacre having been deeply inculcated, these pleas would go unheeded and people would scoop up their children and whatever possessions they could carry and on foot, by bicycle or in ancient motor cars or mammy wagons swarm into the main road leading away from the fighting, and so join the hundreds of thousands of refugees in search of temporary safety and sustenance. The Federal troops would then sweep into the city, killing any Ibos they discovered and overwhelming the Biafran soldiers who would maintain a running fight until the city was lost, then retreat into a position from which they could halt a further advance and make night raids on the city. So in September, 1967 Nsukka fell, in October Enugu, in December Calabar, in April, 1968 Onitsha, in May Port Harcourt, in August Aba and in the last major Federal drive of 1968, Colonel Benjamin Adekunle's Third Marine Commando Division took Owerri on 17th September.

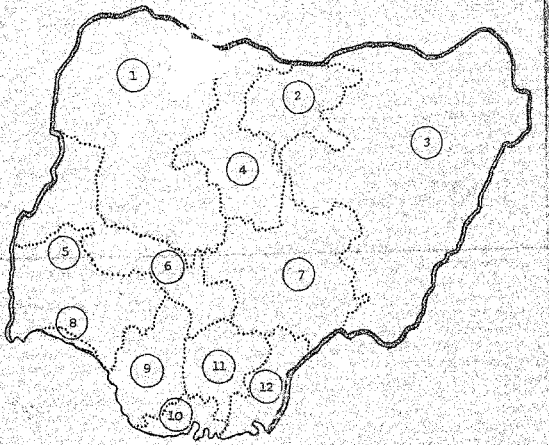
Their spirits bolstered by increasing world sympathy and support, their military effectiveness strengthened by weapons flown in at night from Sao Tome, Libreville and Abidjan and landed at Uli-ihiala airstrip (code-named 'Airfield Annabelle') and half-a-dozen subsidiary secret bush airstrips by men such as Henry Arthur Warton (a veteran of Guadalcanal and of flights to UN troops in the Congo), Lucien Picket (also a veteran of World War II and the Congo) and Colonel Otto Skorzeny (a Nazi hero); reinforced by a small corps of mercenaries led at one stage by Colonel Rolf Steiner, a former Foreign Legion sergeant, and by adventurers like Count Carl Gustav von Rosen, who with six Swe-

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THE TWELVE STATES OF NIGERIA DEMARCATED BY THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

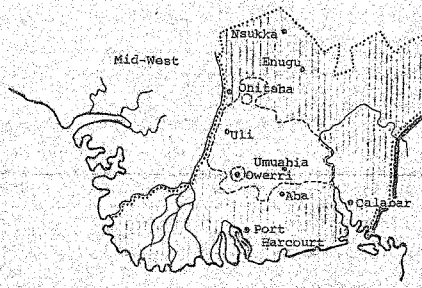


1. North-West
2. Kano
3. North-East
4. North Central
5. West
6. West Central
7. Benue Plateau
8. Lagos
9. Mid-West
10. Rivers
11. East Central
12. South-East

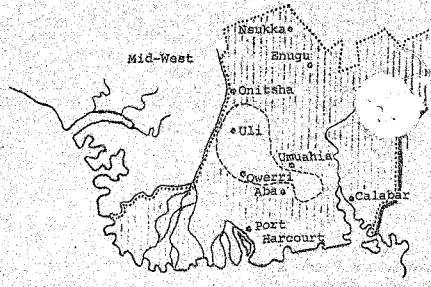
APPROXIMATE AREAS HELD BY BIAFRA IN MARCH 19...

Eastern Region / Republic of Biafra

Territory still controlled by Biafra



... AND IN JULY 1969.



dish single-engined aircraft known as MFI-9B trainers, equipped to hold twelve rockets under their wings, attacked the airports at Port Harcourt, Benin and Enugu; and, above all, driven on by their belief that defeat would mean extinction, the Biafrans have continued to fight heroically and with tenacity. When they have had weapons they have effectively used guerilla tactics behind the overextended Federal lines to inflict damage and kill large numbers of enemy soldiers (called 'vandals'); and when they have had none they have used stolen enemy weapons and improvised with projectiles such as beer bottles filled with sand and exploding soda water bottles.(1) When in April, 1969 the Federals took Umuahia, the Biafran capital since the fall of Enugu eighteen months previously, the Biafrans rallied to recapture Owerri and to launch raids southwards towards the oilfields and Port Harcourt; and, almost a year after Gowon's announcement of the final offensive, were still managing to maintain their struggle from their shrivelling territory. Although at present it appears that the Ibo heartland must ultimately be crushed, if only through steady constriction, a final victory is unlikely to signify an immediate end to the fighting. The Biafrans 'are totally immersed, emotionally and physically, in a struggle which they believe is for their survival',(2) and Ojukwu has vowed to continue the fight:

> "...I've pledged my word to my people that if the Federals win I shall take to guerilla warfare for generations to come... They may conquer, but they c not survive against our determination.
> My people - yes, the women too - will fight with ancient muskets, with knives. My army will throw away its uniforms and melt into the bush where they will be sheltered by Ibos. They'll slaughter the vandals and make their lives hell on earth."(3)

Yet it appears that only a military solution will end the war, for peace efforts by the Commonwealth's Secretary, the OAU Consultative Committee and the Pope have all failed miserably and the parties have used their meetings in London, Kampala, Niamey, Addis Ababa and Monrovia for polemics and propaganda rather than

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1. Newsweek, 21.7.69, p. 33.
2. McDermid, Angus, Ojukwu's Conscience, The Listener, 26.12.68, p. 847.
3. The Star, Johannesburg, 23.9.68, p. 7.

negotiation of peace.

B. The Issues Confronting the World.

> "In attempting to discover the possible elements of reconciliation, the essential starting point is to abandon the unhelpful view that this is a war between Right and Wrong. It is intrinsically a conflict over two Rights. The right of the majority of Nigerians to pursue their desire for unity, and the right of the Ibos to guarantee their security and freedom for natural growth and development." (1)

The aim of the Federal Government was to end the Ibo rebellion and restore to the country its former unity but on a reorganised twelve-state basis. It wanted no advice on what to do, how to do it, or how to treat the rebels; all it asked was that the world refrain from intervening in what was strictly a domestic affair and that it supply the arms and ammunition necessary for the successful prosecution of the war. Its appeal was based on the right of every state to maintain its territorial integrity and to secure order and stability within its borders; it was founded in the traditional concepts of international and constitutional law and was directed at and effectively put to other Governments throughout the world; and it was acknowledged almost universally, and most significantly by the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the United States, the Organisation of African Unity and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

The aim of Biafra was to establish itself in the eyes of the world as an independent Republic and an entity distinct from Nigeria. As it was soon manifest that the whole of the former Eastern Region could not be held and that for legal reasons recognition by most Governments was extremely unlikely, the Biafran Government reshaped its strategy in such a way as to direct its appeal, now essentially emotional and humanitarian, not only at governments but also at the man in the street. With the use of a telex machine to despatch daily press releases, photographs and captions, and served by an experienced American public relations firm, Markpress, based in Geneva, they conveyed with powerful impact the horror and misery wrought by weapons supplied to the Federal Government, and pleaded for Biafra's right

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1. Legum, Colin, New Hope for Nigeria, Round Table, April, 1968, p. 127.

to self-determination and to separation from a country which had countenanced the murder of many thousands of its peoples and was bent on annihilating them totally.

The first question then, which governments were called upon to consider was that of recognition, a question based not only on the merits of the two parties to the war, but on legalities. The case against recognition was founded in the following arguments: first, if Biafra were to obtain recognition of its sovereignty, the old Western Region dominated by the Yoruba, would be likely to follow suit and Nigeria would disintegrate; second, almost every African state has a potential secession problem and Biafra's breakaway, if successful, would set a disruptive and harmful precedent; third, about 40% of the inhabitants of Biafra (as demarcated in 1967 by the secessionists) are not Ibos and should have as much right to self-determination as the Ibos claim for themselves, and the vast majority of oil deposits are incidentally in those non-Ibo areas; fourth, that a united Nigeria represents the best prospect for the rapid economic development of the whole country; fifth, that to recognise Biafra would only stiffen the Ibos' suicidal resolve and so prolong the suffering and delay reconstruction; sixth, that Biafra, which has steadily shrunk to about one-ninth of its original size, far from being viable is now small, landlocked, isolated, overcrowded, economically poor and in danger of imminent and total military defeat; and finally, that on balance, according to the accepted criteria for recognition Biafra does not qualify - for though it can be considered to have a normal governmental institution and a population professing allegiance to it, it has not demonstrated its independence from external control and certainly does not have a defined territory with recognisable frontiers.

The arguments in favour of recognition are, first, that the basic clash had very deep cultural and historical roots in that Britain's attempt to combine three very different nations - Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo - in the confines of one country was impractical, and that British administrators, far from forging a national consciousness, had contributed to the perpetuation of these national differences; second, that within post-independence Nigeria unity had been a myth since each region was

based on a different tribe, each retained a great deal of autonomy, each remained a separate economic entity, each had its own political party, and the loyalty of its peoples was firstly to the tribe and secondly, if at all, to Nigeria; third, that both Biafra, as originally demarcated, and Nigeria, without Biafra, would have had a greater chance of viability than most African states; fourth, that the chain of succession had been broken with the assassination of Sir Abubakar and the first military coup, and that there could be no going back to the old structure, much less so after the second military coup and the slaughter that accompanied it; fifth, that the pogroms of 1966 in which 30,000 Ibos were murdered, and the Government's inability to check the massacres proved that the Ibos could never live securely in a united Nigeria, and further that the hatred demonstrated in and exacerbated by the civil war only emphasised this; and finally, that even were the Ibos to be persuaded that genocide was not the aim of the Federal Government, they could be given no guarantee that they would be treated for many years as anything better than second or third class citizens. The appeal for recognition received the support of numerous journalists and students of African and Nigerian affairs, such as Dame Margery Perham (who, however, later changed her view), Stanley Diamond,[1] Kenneth W.J. Post,[2] and most recently in May, 1969, Conor Cruise O'Brien, the former Irish diplomat and one of the UN officers in the Congo, who wrote:

> "The future lies with nations, not tribes, it is claimed. But is Nigeria a nation? And are the Biafrans a tribe? Are even the Ibo-speaking peoples - all 9-million of them - to be tagged as a tribe, politically fit only for amalgamation in a nationhood which they must be deemed to share with those who have massacred them? By what standards are strips of territory, like Dahomey and Togo ... to be considered nations worthy of rejecting the concept of nationhood for which Biafrans have fought for nearly two years?
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> The answer, of course, is that colonisation, plus decolonisation, has resulted in certain political entities and not others...
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> But what happens when the attempt to build a

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1. Diamond, Stanley, The Biafran Possibility, Africa Report, February, 1968, p. 16.
2. Post, K.W.J., Is There a Case for Biafra?, International Affairs, January, 1968, p. 26.

nation within the old colonial frontiers visibly and tragically breaks down, as it did in Nigeria? What happens when a numerous, spirited and gifted people, finding by grim experience that its members cannot live in security throughout the territory of which it is supposed to be a part, takes its destiny into its own hands?

Must we say that, because the aspirations of this people are not reconcilable with the nineteenth century territorial system sanctioned by the colonial powers, this people must be defined as a tribe and crushed in the name of nationhood?

Biafra could almost certainly survive were it not for the relatively massive military support given by Britain and the Soviet Union to Lagos as compared with the thin trickle of arms Biafra has managed to secure from elsewhere. Thus, the subjugation of Biafra, if it does occur, will be yet another achievement of external technology and firepower on African soil and not in any way a vindication of the internal coherence of an African State." (1)

The second issue to confront governments of the outside world was Biafra's accusation that the Ibos were being subjected to a systematic process of genocide, a contention emphatically denied by the Federal Government. Not only did the warring parties produce evidence to contradict each other, but different international observers, parliamentary delegations and newspaper columnists came to opposite conclusions. The Biafran accusation was supported by journalists such as William Norris who wrote in the London Sunday Times:

> "I have seen things this week which no man should have to see. Sights to scorch the mind and sicken the conscience. I have seen children roasted alive, young girls torn in two by shrapnel, pregnant women eviscerated, and old men blown to fragments. I have seen these things and I have seen their cause: high flying Russian Ilyushin jets operated by Federal Nigeria, dropping their bombs on civilian centres throughout Biafra." (2)

Frederick Forsyth, who spent eight weeks in the bush with Biafran troops, concluded in the same newspaper a month later that Lagos' denial of genocide was either a lie or showed that it had lost control of its own troops. In his view Gowon had built up an army which he could 'now neither influence, nor halt,

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1. O'Brien, Conor Cruise, Can Guns Erase Biafra?, Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, 14.5.69, p. 13.
2. Norris, William, Nightmare in Biafra, Sunday Times, London, 28.4.68.

nor dismantle'. In forays behind the Nigerian lines Ibos would emerge from hiding to relate to the Biafran soldiers what had happened when 'the Hausa man come':

> "... The descriptions tally so closely that they are almost standardised - the menfolk lined against the wall of the biggest building and machine-gunned, the women raped to the accompaniment of the all-too-ritualistic mutilations, the children spitted on machete-knives...
>
> Genocide is an ugly word, and an even uglier reality. I do not use it lightly, but my judgment that it really could be the extermination of an entire race does not go unsupported.
>
> The two Papal delegates who visited both sides in the conflic submitted a report to the Pope which caused the latter to condemn the war for its 'strong genocidal overtones.' The World Council of Churches agreed with this verdict, as did the Anglican Church mission, half a dozen British correspondents and several African heads of state. Whatever the original motivation of the Federal Army, hatred of the Ibos seems now to be the prime stimulus." (1)

Conor Cruise O'Brien reported in 1969 that from what he had seen some of the Federal Commanders did engage in systematic genocide, while others refrained; and that Biafrans believed that the relative restraint being practised in mid-1969 was due only to the high level of international concern and that once the Federals triumphed, this protective factor would disappear and they would again be liable to mass murder. (2)

Contradicting these arguments was, for example, Dame Margery Perham, originally a staunch protagonist of the view that Biafrans should be sustained in their bid for independence. Following a visit to the Federal side, she became convinced that the Ibos did not face the danger of genocide and broadcast an appeal to Biafrans to abandon the war in favour of negotiation. In September, 1968 she wrote:

> "I found to my surprise that many thousands of Ibos were living safely at various levels in Lagos; some, though not many, holding senior posts in the Government...
>
> In a three-hour talk with General Gowon I was impressed by the sincerity of this very Christian soldier, especially in his decision to win back the Ibos by moderation following victory." (3)

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1. Forsyth, Frederick, Gutted Hamlets, Rotting Corpses - This is Genocide, Sunday Times, London, 12.5.68, p. 9.
2. O'Brien, Conor Cruise, op. cit.
3. The Star, Johannesburg, 23.9.68, p. 18.

In the same month a team of international observers under UN auspices, consisting of General Milroy of Canada, General Alexander of Britain and General Raab of Sweden, reported that they had neither seen nor heard 'any evidence that the troops had committed acts with intent to destroy wholly or in part the Ibo people ... They did see considerable evidence that the troops in the areas were assisting the local population in particular by feeding them until the civil administration and the Red Cross could take over the responsibility' and they 'considered it significant that in the villages visited, the inhabitants displayed no fear of Federal soldiers, even when these soldiers arrived suddenly in their midst'.(1) This statement was reinforced by a declaration, in August, 19 by Poland's neutral observer, Alfons Olkiewicz, who had joined the team of observers and spent a year in Nigeria:

> "I speak not only for myself but also for all the observers when I tell you we have been unable to find one single trace of mass killings of Ibos...
> I have been allowed to go where I want to; nobody has tried to hinder my search. We have visited places where rumour says massacres have occurred, arriving sometimes only a couple of days after the crime was supposed to have taken place. We just could not find evidence of it." (2)

If the world was not ready to accept that genocide was the premeditated purpose of the Federal Government - General Gowon's personal sincerity was an important factor contributing to the refusal to accept the Biafran accusations - it certainly was alarmed at the reports of atrocities committed by the Federal troops and at the immense suffering of the Ibo people. 'Eye-witness accounts of civilian bombings have been ten-a-penny',(3) as also those of mass murders by the advancing army. Frederick Forsyth described a Federal onslaught as starting with an infantry attack by Yoruba, followed by 'the more fanatical Hausa, with orders to shoot anyone who turns and runs', and then 'the Gwodo-Gwodo, giant black mercenaries from Chad ... of very animaline intelligence [who] will shoot anyone to order'.(4) 'Time' magazine gave an account of so-called 'mop-up' operations in the Mid-West where thousands of Ibos were marched into the bush for slaughter,(5) of five air raids in one week on bush villages,

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1. Nigeria: Biafran Accusations of 'Genocide' Exposed, Newsletter from Britain, No. 121, 26.10.68, pp. 6 and 7.
2. The Star, Johannesburg, 23.7.69, p. 9.
3. Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, 11.3.69, p. 11.
4. Forsyth, Frederick, op. cit. 5. Time, 8.12.67, p. 30.

and of an Ilyushin bomber roaring over the market centre of Ozuobam and 'plastering' its post office, hospital, church and welfare centre with fragmentation and phosphorus bombs, killing about 500 people.(1) In London, in July, 1969, Dr Herman Middelkoop, a Dutch missionary who had worked in Biafra throughout the civil war alleged that Nigerian bombing policy, as interpreted by the pilots, amounted to bombing anywhere there was likely to be a concentration of civilians, including markets and hospitals. On 21st December, 1968 an intensive bombing raid on Umuahia, which killed large numbers of civilians and was denied by Lagos, was filmed by British television cameramen.(2) Finally, the vivid accounts given by Winston S. Churchill, in the London Times and over the BBC, of his gruesome findings on arrival at the scenes of bombing raids made a powerful impact.

In addition three to four thousand Ibos were starving to death every week,(3) and the world was faced with the frightful prospect that one of Africa's major tribes would succumb to starvation and that vast numbers of those that managed to survive would be mentally debilitated by kwashiorkor. Photographs taken in refugee camps were widely circulated and the image of Biafra's agony began to permeate the world:

> "The children at Umnaka [a camp near Port Harcourt] are sad, misshapen creatures, their legs dangling like loose strings, their bellies bloated by malnutrition, their skin bleached by sores, their eyes wide and pleading. Some are too weak to walk and have to be dragged along by friends."(4)

General Gowon declared repeatedly that his commanders and pilots had strict instructions not to kill civilians and not to bomb civilian institutions, and that those who contravened these regulations would be severely punished. He maintained that the refugee problem was an unfortunate but direct result of a war which he had not chosen to initiate but which the Biafrans

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1. Ibid., 7.3.69, p. 28.
2. Africa Confidential, No. 1, 3.1.69, p. 3.
3. Lord Hunt, in July, 1968, gave the figure of 200 - 300 deaths a day, The Star, Johannesburg, 23.7.68, p. 7; Colin Legum in October, 1968 spoke of 8,000 a day, Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, 21.10.68, p. 13; and Time mentioned 1,000 a day (23.8.68, p. 22) and between 1,500 and 40,000 a week (2.8.68, p. 19).
4. Time, 2.8.68, p. 19.

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had made inevitable by their decision to secede. His case, however, was not assisted by public statements by senior men such as Awolowo, who said that 'all is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons of war'; and Brigadier Hassan Katsina who asserted, 'I will not feed somebody I am fighting';[1] by Colonel Adekunle's threat to flog the Swedish observer, General Arthur Raab, for declining a travel plan drawn up by him; and by the expulsion from Nigeria of a senior Red Cross official and the shooting down of a Red Cross plane. By comparison Ojukwu was able to exploit the plight of his people extremely skilfully to turn Western sympathy against the Federal Government and to exert pressure on Western governments to suspend arms supplies to it. Realising that starvation was being utilised as a powerful propaganda weapon, Gowon offered a land corridor and daylight flights to allow food and medicine into Biafra. He opposed night flights because he was convinced, with good reason, that not only relief but military supplies would be so ferried (as well as enabling the Biafrans to maintain the all-important personal contact with the outside world) and he opposed unsupervised flights for the same reason. He wanted too to obviate the morale-boosting effects of an airlift which could be portrayed as a visible symbol of the world assisting the besieged nation. Despite the conditions imposed the Federal Government must be given some credit for not impeding the passage of fairly considerable quantities of supplies to Biafra. 'Indeed there can be few precedents for a government in the position of General Gowon's allowing food to go on this scale into what it must regard, for the time being, as enemy territory'.[2] Ojukwu insisted on

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1. The Star, Johannesburg, 27.6.69, p. 9. On 29th June, 1969 Conor Cruise O'Brien raised as a point of issue the statement of Awolowo in a television discussion with Dame Margery Perham on the Nigerian civil war, broadcast over Telefis Bireann. "I must say that Chief Awolowo's statement the other day about starvation being a legitimate weapon of war - though Clausewitz might have approved of it - struck a very chilling note." "I agree," said Miss Perham, "but I suppose all through history siege has meant starvation as the main weapon, hasn't it?" "But if we remember that this is supposed to be an attempt to unite Nigeria, how can you unite a people by starving the section which you want to unite it with?" The Listener, 17.7.69, p. 79.
2. West Africa, 15.2.69, p. 170.

night flights on the grounds that daytime flights would expose the positions of his airstrips, and rejected the land corridor as it would extend Federal authority and because the Federals would poison the food. This last reason has been widely accepted as representing an honest fear founded in African tradition and Ibo lore in which there are abundant examples of poisoning as a method of killing an enemy. It is unlikely that the reasoning is valid, or that Ojukwu was not aware of its invalidity. It is more likely that he was ready to use even so fatuous an excuse if it enabled him to perpetuate a situation he believed would eventually result in outside intervention. Ojukwu's continued refusal to accept supplies on any but his own terms, began to alienate sympathisers who took note of the Nigerian contention that he was 'playing politics with the suffering of his people'.(1) This reaction in turn led Ojukwu to give way, in theory at least, by offering international relief organisations an area in which to build an airport for daylight landings, and by agreeing to a proposal made by Professor C.C. Ferguson, President Nixon's representative, that supplies should be brought up the Cross River from Calabar.

From the morass of contradiction and propaganda, accusation and counter-accusation, the governments of the world have had to try to discern the real questions at issue and to decide: firstly, whether the Nigerians had the right to maintain their unity or the Ibos the right to self-determination; whatever their original standpoint, whether the massacres leading up to the war, the atrocities committed during the war and the fear of the Ibos that the Federal Government plans to annihilate them have changed the situation; thirdly, whether the Ibos, by their two-year long struggle, have demonstrated their right to independence; fourthly, whether there was any action they might take, such as the refusal to provide arms, or the initiation of peace moves, which could curtail the war or limit its dimensions and so reduce the killing and the suffering; fifthly, what methods could be utilised to bring medical and food supplies to those so desperately in need; and finally, whether there was any need to take any decision about Nigeria at all.

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1. Africa Confidential, No. 1, 3.1.69, p. 3.

c. Britain.

> "It was clearly understood when Nigeria moved to independence that she relied on us for some of her supply of arms ... and that meant Britain was probably the only country in the world which could not in honour be neutral." - British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, July, 1969. (1)

In the beginning Whitehall appeared to reject the possibility of an outbreak of civil war. The fighting having commenced, however, the British Cabinet found itself somewhat unprepared to face the economic dilemma arising from the fact of substantial UK investment in both the Federal and the secessionist territories; and, particularly in view of the possibilities of greatly increased oil production, wavered at the start in the hope that a commitment would prove unnecessary. At a Cabinet meeting, in July, 1967, no decision was reached on a request from the Federal Government for permission to buy British arms on a commercial basis, and Mr George Thompson, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, on a visit to Lagos, handed a written note to General Gowon expressing the British Government's view that international law was entirely opposed to the blockade which he had imposed on the oil companies. Once it was clear that the British Government would have to insert itself into the orbit of decision-making, it chose a trajectory which committed it to the Federal cause. Its justification was that there was a special obligation to Nigeria since the Federation was a British concept and bequest; that Gowon's Government had been internationally recognised and therefore assistance previously given Nigeria should continue in the normal course; that there were long-standing arms supply agreements with Nigeria, from which it would be bad faith to recant at the moment of direst need, whether for defence from outside aggression or for the suppression of an internal revolt; that cancellation of arms would, rather than hasten the end of the war, probably serve to prolong it, and would result in loss of all influence with Gowon's régime, and would result in loss of all influence with Gowon's regime, a risk increased by the growing evidence of Soviet activity; that there were sixteen thousand Britons in Nigeria whose welfare had to be considered; and, finally, that there was substantial

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1. New Statesman, 4.7.69, p. 3.

investment in and valuable trade with that country which the UK was not prepared to forfeit. On 27th August, 1968 Mr Thompson made a full statement to the House of Commons on British policy towards the civil war, and specifically on the continuation of arms supplies, the most relevant paragraphs of which were:

> "I recall that in the July debate the right hon. Member for Kinross and West Perthshire (Sir Alec Douglas-Home) agreed with me that the wise sequence of priorities would be, first the organisation of relief of the starving on both sides of the fighting line; secondly, a ceasefire; and, thirdly, a political settlement...
>
> ... It would be by far the best outcome if this tragic African civil war could be brought to an end by Africa's own regional organisation of unity.
>
> ... The Federal Government have put forward a set of proposals for ending the war. They emphasised that these are negotiable. Taken by and large, and given the very strong military position which the Federal side now hold, these proposals seems to us not unreasonable. On Colonel Ojukwu, however, I am afraid that they have so far made no impact. His demands appear to be as rigid as ever in that they amount to a claim for independence, or at least the attributes of sovereignty.
>
> ... Colonel Ojukwu's line would be understandable if he were winning the military conflict, but the reverse is the truth.
>
> ... I ask those who are worried [about arms supplies] to recognise that, like so many issues in the political and moral field, and where political and moral issues greatly overlap, this situation is too complex to be solved by Britain's turning her back on Federal Nigeria as the traditional supplier of the means of national defence.
>
> The real question - and I ask the House to think about this - the question that becomes more difficult each day as Colonel Ojukwu refuses to recognise the political and military cul-de-sac into which he has led his people - is what policies will minimise and shorten the sufferings of all Nigerians - Ibos and non-Ibos alike?..
>
> ... It is wrong to see this issue in just black and white religious terms. General Gowon is himself of the Christian religion, and has certainly, in my experience, done his utmost to exercise humane restraint in an increasingly difficult situation. Indeed, more than half the members of the present Federal Government of Nigeria are of the Christian faith... The overriding preoccupation of all of us in this House is how to shorten the suffering and, that being so, it seems to me that the immediate effort should be concentrated on urging Colonel Ojukwu to recognise the realities - the fact that he has been militarily defeated and that his duty is to save his people from suffering by seeking an honourable settlement that

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guarantees the safety of his people.

Her Majesty's Government have never made any secret of the fact that they hope that the people of Nigeria will be able to agree on a settlement which allows for the unity of their country... But, equally, our view has always been that within that basic unity there must be room for flexibility. There are many degrees of federation or confederation and it must be possible to find from among them a form of society which would enable all Nigerians to prosper together. But perhaps even more important is that the House should remind itself that it must be for the Nigerians themselves to decide upon what form their State should take...

Whatever the hopes and fears of the Ibos, we cannot believe that they would not now do better to see what conditions they could negotiate for themselves within the framework of a united Nigeria, however this was expressed...

... I hope that the House will excuse me if ... I begin by looking at how Her Majesty's Government came to be supplying arms to Nigeria in the first place.

The Nigerian forces, like the forces of many Commonwealth countries, were trained and equipped on British lines long before independence. Under successive British Governments, they have naturally looked largely to us for re-supply. When the time came that they most needed supplies, they counted on our willingness to allow them to purchase from the United Kingdom.

Neutrality was not a possible option for Her Majesty's Government at that time. We might have been able to declare ourselves neutral if one independent country was fighting another, but this was not a possible attitude when a Commonwealth country, with which we had long and close ties, was faced with an internal revolt. What would other Commonwealth countries have thought? After all, some other Commonwealth countries face dissident minorities who may be tempted to break up their countries to achieve secession. What effect would our action have had on the rest of Africa, struggling to create modern nation states in the face of traditional tribal rivalries and fears?

Our policy since the war began has been to continue authorising the export of carefully controlled quantities of arms and ammunitions, and I confirm that there has been no change in that policy. Broadly speaking, they are the same kind of arms as we supplied before the war. We have not supplied any military aircraft or bombs. Our supplies have amounted to about 15 per cent. by value of Nigeria's total arms purchases, and even in the categories of infantry arms and ammunitions, our share has been well under half... In other words, our supplies have been more important in political than in practical terms.

I come to the question of whether, if we were to cut off our supply of defence equipment unilaterally, a peace agreement would be made more likely. We would,

I believe, lose our capacity to influence the Federal Government if we were to take such a step. I suggest that the record shows that General Gowon and his colleagues have all along been prepared to listen to our views and meet us when they felt that they could. I do not wish to overestimate the degree of influence we have been able to exercise. However, we have exercised the influence we have, and I believe that we would lose that influence, if we were to follow a course of unilateral suspension...

... I believe that the suspending of arms supplies would make the Ibos less, rather than more, willing to come to a settlement... There may be a difference of view about this, but I can only report the fact that the recent, and, I believe, ill-timed French announcement of support for Biafra - just before the Addis Ababa Conference started - has certainly had the effect of making Colonel Ojukwu and his colleagues less willing to come to an honourable settlement.

... I have heard it put as an argument ... that it is disgraceful that we should be in the company of the Soviet Union in supplying arms when that country had adopted an oppressive attitude towards smaller nations, as illustrated over Czechoslovakia... The Russians have already secured a political foothold in Nigeria by supplying military aircraft and bombs, which we refused to supply. If we cut off our arms supplies, Russia would be only too willing to fill the gap and gain the influence which we would lose...

It goes without saying that commercial returns from arms sales have not been a factor in our policy in this matter. However, in considering the consequences of a change in our arms policy, we have had to bear in mind the livelihood and safety of many thousands of British nationals working in Federal Nigeria...

Lord Hunt's recent mission to Nigeria found that an attitude of vindictiveness towards the Ibos among the people they met was noticeably absent... Lord Hunt and his colleagues found that the Federal troops were in many cases helping to feed Ibo refugees.

It should be remembered that there are at least 100,000 Ibos living peacefully in Lagos and elsewhere in the Federation at the moment and that Ibos continue to hold responsible and senior jobs in the rest of the Federation. These factors clearly show that genocide is by no means the Federal intention, though I am afraid that I gloomily have the feeling that suicide for their people sometimes seems to be the intention of the Ibo leaders."(1)

Britain's supply of arms to bolster the cause of one Nigeria came in for criticism by a vocal minority both in the

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1. Official Reports, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 1967 - 68, Vol. 769, 27.8.68, Cols. 1440 - 1450.

the House of Lords and in the House of Commons. In the former Lord Brockway and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, called on the Government to reconsider its policy which, in the view of the Archbishop, was hindering the delivery of food and medical aid to the starving victims of the civil war. In the Commons Mr Hugh Fraser asserted that the Ibos had shown 'their right to self-determination more clearly, perhaps, than any other people in the world';(1) Mr Frank Allaun warned that their might occur in Nigeria 'what Hitler called the final solution of the Jewish question, and this may be the attempted final solution of the Biafran question', and though he realised that trading interests were involved, he argued that it was 'not intelligent to believe one can do business in a cemetery';(2) Mr James Davidson said he could not believe that 'Britain has any right - and she certainly has no duty - to become involved in a civil war in the territory of an independent State';(3) Jeremy Thorpe, Liberal Party leader, appealed, while in Holland, to all liberal parties of the world to press their governments to raise at the UN the question of Britain's 'shameless sale of arms to Nigeria' and said that while he accepted that Nigeria's political system was its own affair, nevertheless 'mass starvation was the affair of all mankind'.(4) In general, the most consistent theme was that it was morally wrong for Britain, in co-operation with the Soviet Union, to contribute to the murder of over a million civilians. These arguments generated far less enthusiasm in Parliament than in the press, mustering only 62 votes in March, 1969 and 44 in July. Auberon Waugh, who attended the July debate, commented in the 'Spectator' that the Government's large majority was based on the apathy of most MPs, witnessed by their absence from the debate and their dutiful appearance only at the sound of the division bell. Admitting that there were a few who showed real concern, he continued:

> "But what are any of us to make of the others of the 164 who recorded their belief in the justice of the Nigerian cause, in the truth of the Nigerian protestations about relief, in the efficacy of our arms supply to promote justice and moderation and

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1. Ibid., Col. 1456.
2. Ibid., Cols. 1468 and 1472.
3. Ibid., Col. 1484.
4. West Africa, 28.9.68, p. 1154.

> keep the Russians out? What of the grisly alphabetic line of tramping feet from Anderson, Donald to three Williamses and Wilson who solemnly made their decision on a matter affecting the death, by one of the most horrible means of execution known to man, of some million children? They had not attended the debate or shown the tiniest interest in the subject under discussion. And yet they voted.
>
> No doubt it all boils down to a question of loyalty."(1)

Understandably British policy was reviled in Biafra. Ojukwu's attitude towards Whitehall progressed from one of regret that it had chosen 'to reject the role of impartial mediator, to one of great anger at what he regards as a betrayal of all the tenets for which a Christian and democratic country is supposed to stand'.(2) He challenged the explanation that Britain had been the traditional supplier of arms, pointing out that, with the exception of armoured cars and ceremonial uniforms, Britain had ceased the supply of military equipment in 1964; and he refuted the British claim that it was obliged to support Gowon on the grounds that his was the legal Government by alluding to the fact that Britain did not always feel obliged to arm military régimes particularly where the weapons might be put to dubious use. He alleged that British military support included incendiary and other bombs, rockets, mortar shells, Ferret and Saladin armoured cars, aircraft and warships; he declared, with conviction, that Britain had instigated the war against his people, had made its continuance possible, and had obstructed attempts to reach a negotiated settlement; and he maintained that the key to the problem lay thus with Britain. 'The day the British High Commissioner in Lagos says 'Down boy', Gowon will stop ...'(3) Thus Biafra shunned British food and medical assistance on the ground that such aid would merely fatten up the same people the British were helping to kill. To coincide with the 1969 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, the Biafrans produced a five-page statement in which they called Mr Wilson 'a cynical and opportunistic manipulator of principles, men and institutions in order to maintain himself in power at all costs', who had 'demonstrated the moral bankrupt-

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1. Waugh, Auberon, A Question of Loyalty, Spectator, 19.7.69, p. 68.
2. Forsyth, Frederick, op. cit.
3. The Times, London, 24.4.68, p. 5.

cy of his Government's actions and his blatant disregard for cherished Commonwealth principles and conventions'.(1)

These attacks, reinforced by Biafran propaganda illustrating the horrors of the war, and the gruesome reports of influential press correspondents, which left Englishmen with the uneasy feeling that thousands were dying in a war fuelled by British arms, produced a groundswell of pro-Biafran opinion, which served to prevent Mr Wilson from presenting General Gowon with a virtual blank cheque. On 12th June, 1968 the Foreign Secretary, Mr Stewart, declared in the House of Commons:

> "If we make the supposition that it were the intention of the Federal Government not merely to preserve the unity of Nigeria but to proceed without mercy either with the slaughter or the starvation of the Ibo people ... we would have to reconsider, and more than reconsider, the action we have so far taken." (2)

In furtherance of this Lord Shepherd, while in Lagos in the same month, openly stated that unnecessary deaths resulting from military operations might put irresistible pressure on Britain to alter its policy. In addition Britain refused a Nigerian request for military aircraft and bombs though continued to supply broadly the same type of arms and ammunition as before the war.

These two indications of hesitation together with the continuous onslaught on the Federal Government by British newspapers, led to a certain degree of strain between Lagos and London. Chief Enahoro criticised Britain's decision to supply only limited amounts and categories of arms. 'What Britain is saying in effect is that 'We'll give you anti-aircraft guns to shoot down Ojukwu's planes when they come to Lagos. But not planes for you to knock out his before they take off'.(3) Radio Lagos (5.6.68) commented that Britain should be fully aware that in the event of an arms suspension, Nigeria could 'call on other sources' and warned that 'in such an eventuality, it is British economic interests in Nigeria which will suffer from the subsequent deterioration in post-war Anglo-Nigerian relations'.(4) A few hours before Lord Shepherd's arrival in Nigeria, in December,

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1. The Star, Johannesburg, 8.1.69, p. 3.
2. Official Reports, Fifth Series, Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 1967 - 68, Vol. 766, 12.6.68, Col. 293.
3. West Africa, 2.9.67, p. 1157.
4. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 6, 1968, p. 1095c.

1968, Nigeria despatched a formal note of protest against continued debates in the British Parliament concerning the war. 'Any further discussion of the Nigerian situation would only give false hope to the rebels and result in a prolongation of the civil war.' Nigeria suggested that British parliamentarians could better use their debating time in discussing pressing British domestic problems and the rebellion in Rhodesia.(1) Representative of intellectual criticism in Nigeria was an article by D.B. Ekpebu in 'Nigerian Opinion', in which he compared Britain's 'double-faced role' in Biafra with its role in Katanga: in both cases, despite protestations in favour of unity, Britain had secretly encouraged the secessionists in order to safeguard investments in their territories; in both cases, conditions resulting from alleged internal pressures, were imposed on the supply of arms to the forces fighting to reunite the country; and in both, it had only demanded a ceasefire when the rebels had clearly been defeated. 'In both the Congo and Nigeria the British aim has been to ensure the emergence of small weak African States in which her economic interests could flourish.'(2)

In spite of all this, the strain failed to reach anything like snapping point, and 1969 saw a comprehensive improvement in relations between Britain and Nigeria, based on mutual understanding of the respective problems and policies of their Governments. This was evident in Awolowo's tribute to Mr Wilson at the Commonwealth Conference for his 'understanding approach' and his 'steadfastness';(3) and in Wilson's visit to Nigeria during the course of which he declared that he now knew at first hand that the Ibos could live in peace under the Federal Government and on his return to Britain expressed to the House of Commons his full support for the Federal cause.

D. The Soviet Union.

"We will take advantage of mistakes the British make: it's only human." - Modern Russian 'Proverb'.(4)

Nigeria presented a classic case of historically-deter-

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1. West Africa, 14.12.68, p. 1493.
2. Ekpebu, D.B., From Katanga to Biafra: The Politics of Neo-Colonialism, Nigerian Opinion, Vol. 4, Nos. 4 - 6, April - June, 1968, p. 310.
3. West Africa, 18.1.69, p. 81.
4. A Russian diplomat, West Africa, 22.2.69, p. 203.

mined dialectic tribalism. The contradictory forces were founded not so much in Hegel's world spirit or in Marx's materialism, but rather in Nigeria's own indigenous tribal hatreds. The Federal Government's determination to preserve Nigerian unity constituted the thesis, Biafra's resolve to fight for the right to self-determination the antithesis, and the Kremlin perceived that, by intervening on the side of the former, it might be able to contribute to determining the character of the synthesis. Soviet involvement, however, should be interpreted not in terms of Marxism or Leninism, but rather in terms of the realism and flexibility of the post-Khrushchev approach to Africa in which the ideology of the ruling régime and the welfare of local Communists are regarded as matters of lesser import than cultivation of cordial relations with and increased influence over African governments. Sir Abubakar had been described by Soviet commentators as unprogressive and subservient to Britain, and as one who, with British backing, had maintained the ascendancy of the feudal and reactionary North over the more progressive south; with his fall Russian leaders took a fresh look at the possibilities of a staged descent into Nigerian affairs. This process was given impetus by the fall of Nkrumah soon after, and with his replacement by a pro-Western military régime, the Russians unexpectedly found themselves in a hostile environment which necessitated some mid-course corrections in Soviet assumptions on West Africa.

In the months preceding secession the USSR and Nigeria negotiated agreements on air services, student exchange and cultural affairs and also discussed trade and development credits; Nigeria announced that it was willing to accept financial aid from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; and Russia responded by sending a nine-man delegation to investigate the prospects of developing an iron and steel industry in Nigeria. The Soviet Government trod warily, however, for it aimed to keep open as many options as possible and for as long as possible. While it endorsed the principle of a unified Nigeria, it sympathised with Ibo grievances; visiting delegations made a point of calling in at all four regions; and in a gesture towards the Ibos, promised to launch two major projects in the East - a 600-bed hospital in Enugu and expansion of the University of Nsukka. 'One ear was

attuned to developments in Lagos while the other picked up secessionist rumblings from the Ibos in Enugu.[1] In June, 1967 Edwin Ogbu, Permanent Secretary in the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs, led a four-man mission to Moscow, which probably discussed aid; and in late July both Ogbu and Enahoro arrived there again. Enahoro met the First Deputy Prime Minister, Kiril Mazurov, and on 2nd August signed a cultural agreement covering education, health services, arts, sports and radio and television programmes; and, as events of a fortnight later conclusively proved, discussed Russian arms deliveries. Despite this, the image of Soviet non-partisanship exemplified by the objective reporting of its radio commentaries on Nigeria was apparently still accepted by Biafra, which was itself still courting the Russians. In a broadcast over Radio Enugu (30.7.67) perhaps in a final attempt to avert a Russian commitment to Gowon, the Biafran spokesman called on the Federal Government not 'to tarnish the image of the Soviet Union in Africa by dragging it into a foreign war':

> "... There is no basis for meaningful association between the progressive socialist government of the Soviet Union and the reactionary clique of renegades in power in Lagos. Gowon only wants to make a mockery of the progressive foreign policy of Moscow by dragging the Soviet Government into a scandalous marriage of convenience with Nigeria... Nigeria is a sinking ship, and Gowon must not be allowed to drag the high reputation of the Soviet Union with it to the bottom of the ocean ... These people [Gowon and his associates] would have made a more compatible friendship with the dead Czar of Russia than with the modern leaders of the modern progressive Soviet Union." (2)

The flattery was to no avail; the Soviet Government had already decided to throw its weight behind General Gowon and was merely awaiting world and African reactions to the secession before taking the final step in abandoning its posture of non-involvement. Soviet reasoning was not difficult to understand. Arms deliveries represented no great commitment and there was no public opinion to which the Russian leaders were answerable. There seemed to be nothing to lose by supporting Gowon and a great deal to be gained. In the unlikely eventuality that Ojuk-

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1. Klinghoffer, Arthur J., Why the Soviets Chose Sides, Africa Report, February, 1968, p. 48.
2. Ibid.

wu might triumph, a government would hardly cease to exist in the rest of Nigeria, and Russia's leaders would be assured of a net gain in influence. On the other hand, a Federal victory sustained by the unimpeded and unconditional supply of Soviet weapons could win a good return in gratitude and increased influence at the expense of Britain and the United States and the entrée into investment in Nigeria and particularly oil production. Possibly, too, the Russians saw in the Biafran venture a reminder of similar movements in Lithuania, Georgia and Soviet Central Asia. Finally, world reaction could not have been more favourable. No world power declared in favour of Biafra and no African state recognised the secessionist régime: there was thus little possibility of a collision with the West or of a fracas with Africa, and the early successes of Gowon's forces seemed to demonstrate that the right horse had been backed.

In answer to those who accused the USSR of opportunism the Russian reply was that as soon as the possibility of the Eastern Region seceding became apparent, support for a unified Nigeria had been declared, in fact as early as 24th August, 1966. It stressed further that it had not intervened, but that Nigeria, having first sought to purchase military aircraft from Britain and the United States, had then approached Russia; and that to have refused such a request would have amounted to an unfriendly act towards a recognised government in the process of suppressing an internal revolt.

Thus in mid-August Antonov transport planes began landing at Kano airport, carrying MiGs and Czech Delfin jet fighters; and accompanying them were between 150 and 200 Soviet military personnel, mostly technicians, who were to assemble the aircraft and ancillary equipment. All but 45 of them returned on completion of assembly and testing. In October Premier Kosygin sent General Gowon a personal letter stating that 'Russia treats with complete understanding the aspirations of the Federal Military Government to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria... Any attempts, therefore, to break down the Federation of Nigeria contradicts the interests of Nigeria'.(1) In No-

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 10, 1967, p. 894a.

vember three Soviet-made gunboats arrived on board the Russian freighter, Ussurisjka, for delivery to the Federal Nigerian Navy. It was therefore hardly unexpected that the tone of Radio Biafra should alter: in an attack timed to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution Biafra proclaimed a pro-Chinese line and directed an onslaught at the 'Russian revisionists' led by 'the renegad.', Kosygin and Brezhnev, who, it declared, in collusion with Britain to support Gowon, had finally proved their betrayal of the aims of the revolution. In pursuance of their policy of collaborating with the British imperialists 'to ensure their respective domination of the world', the Russians had attacked China which they regarded as an insurmountable barrier to their intrigues. As an immediate objective 'they try to instigate and inspire the anti-socialist and reactionary forces to act on a broad front against the revolution and socialism'. This was in conformity with Soviet tradition since the death of Stalin:

> "... Since the irreparable loss of that great man, Russia has made a betrayal of revolutionary principles an article of faith... There is yet another reason why Russian revisionists are in Nigeria. Russia and Nigeria have an identity of interests. Russia is much in the same position as Nigeria, which wants to dominate and rule Biafra as the Russians rule the Baltic states of Estonia and Lithuania. The people of these unfortunate states have for years been organising a just struggle for self-determination but are being brutally suppressed by the Russians. Yet these same Russians have the effrontery to denounce imperialism... Biafrans were not wanted in Nigeria. They were abused, humiliated, massacred and finally kicked out of that defunct federation. They were in fact, the Jews of Nigeria. The treatment to which Biafrans were subjected in Nigeria can be linked to that being meted out to the 3,000,000 Jews in the Soviet Union today." (1)

Russian military aid continued through 1968 and 1969, much of it flown in from Anaba in Algeria: more MiGs, SU-7 jet night fighters, radar installations and cross-country jeeps; and at the same time the Russians continued to expand the range of their contacts with Nigeria: scholarships were increased and much at-

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1. Matchet's Diary, West Africa, 25.11.67, p. 1507.

tention was given to young Yoruba and pro-Federal Ibo, particularly those in press, radio and television work; on 21st November, 1968 an economic and technical agreement was signed, covering the exchange of experts and scientists, the extension of credits to finance surveys and development projects, the delivery of Russian equipment and materials, and the exchange of students and of technicians. In December a second mission from the USSR Academy of Science arrived; on 6th March, 1969 the first official visit by Soviet warships took place which, according to the Squadron Commander, was intended to demonstrate Russian support for one Nigeria; and in June, 1969 the Russians won the contract for the construction and running of one of Nigeria's key industries, the iron and steel complex, at an estimated cost of £100 million.

By mid-1969 it had become fairly common for columnists and analysts of the Nigerian war to conclude that despite their massive military and diplomatic support, things had not gone entirely the Russians' way and that they were, in fact, somewhat disillusioned with their efforts in Nigeria. Writers such as Hugh Hanning had asserted from the outset that Communism had little chance of gaining ground under a conservative military régime:

> "In the case of Nigeria one feels confident that communism will not get any grip on the country as long as the military are in power. It is an almost universal phenomenon that military governments are the most resistant to communism of any kind." (1)

This view, some argue, has been confirmed by the continuing reluctance of the Nigerian establishment to espouse Communist ideas. 'The tendency seems to be to regard the spread of Soviet propaganda as a necessary evil which must be suffered as a price for more arms'; (2) that is, Nigeria's leaders have no illusions about Soviet aims and methods, and, once the war is over and they have no urgent need for Russian assistance, they will undercut the temporary gains made by Communism. This, it is argued, has further been demonstrated in the efforts made by Gowon's Government

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1. Hanning, Hugh, Lessons from the Arms Race, Africa Report, February, 1968, p. 45.
2. Africa Confidential, No. 15, 25.7.69, p. 5.

to prevent such ideas from permeating sensitive areas such as the younger intellectual groups and labour, exemplified on two occasions in 1969: a Nigerian Trade Union Council delegation about to embark for the Moscow-sponsored Afro-Asian solidarity Conference in Khartoum were deprived of their passports at the Lagos airport; and in June Dr Tunji Otegbeye and Mr S.O. Martins (an official of the Nigeria-Soviet Friendship Association) were arrested on their return from the USSR. Otegbeye's arrest appeared to be the result of his attendance, against official advice, at the Moscow Conference of Communist Parties as a representative of Nigerian Marxists and Leninists. Otegbeye had received VIP treatment in Moscow, and, although there was no official complaint from the Soviet Embassy, the arrest must have been considered an unfriendly act. This view admits that the Russians have managed to penetrate the NTUC wing of the labour movement but points out that the NTUC has long been an affiliate of the World Federation of Trade Unions and that Nigeria's chronically divided labour movement cannot be considered a serious force. Furthermore, except on one occasion, when Nigeria exchanged 7,000 tons of cocoa for goods already received from Russia, Nigeria has been careful not to negotiate barter-type agreements (which proved disastrous in Ghana) which would have allowed large quantities of Soviet-manufactured goods into Nigeria for which there might well have been no demand. To cap it all, the Russian image in Africa, far from having brightened, has been tarnished; and Soviet leaders are conscious of this fact, particularly in countries where their unpopularity is of advantage to the Chinese, such as Tanzania and Zambia.

This argument may be founded on a misconstruction of Russian objectives. If the Nigerian establishment is said to have no illusions about Russia it is just as true that the Soviet Government has no illusions about Africa: the Soviet Union no longer demands or expects that in return for aid a régime should transform itself overnight into a revolutionary and pro-Communist one. Further, the fact that the Russians have made less headway than they might have wished does not gainsay another fact: that they have made a far greater impact on the Nigerian scene than they could possibly have hoped for a few years back. They set out to construct harmonious relations with the Nigerian

Government and in this they have succeeded: Nigeria's Commissioner for External Affairs, Okoi Arikpo, paid a cordial visit to Moscow in July,1968, and Brigadier Adebayo, Western Military Governor, told the Russian Ambassador, Dr Romanov, that the USSR's stand in the Nigerian crisis had been exemplary. They have aimed at creating a debt of gratitude for assistance in time of need, on which they could draw later: official notes of thanks, numerous broadcasts and newspaper editorials have expressed gratitude and a Radio Nigeria broadcast (10.3.69) on Nigeria's 'real friends' pledged that the role played by every foreign country during the war would determine its economic relations with Nigeria afterwards.(1) The Russians hoped to expand their influence and increase their prestige at the expense of the West, and specifically of Britain and the United States, and this they have also achieved: British prestige slumped when the Russians stepped in to sell jets and bombers, and it was realised that the sale of Russian weapons meant that supply from Britain was no longer vital to Nigeria; no threatened suspension of such supplies could, therefore, be utilised later by Britain to influence either the course of the war, or the attitude of the Federal Government. In addition, the Government-controlled mass news-media, and numerous Nigerian officials became increasingly anti-Western and particularly anti-British. Radio Lagos claimed that at the start of the war 'the design of the NATO powers was to break up Nigeria by starving her government of the weapons without which the rebellion could not be crushed. Now that this policy has failed it is possible that the British Government is trying to implement a variation of it'.(2) The Russians planned to improve economic relations, and here again they have made headway: Nigeria's most recent trade statistics show a 35% increase in imports (excluding arms) from Russia;(3) and the economic and technical agreement and the undertaking to build and manage an iron and steel industry both indicate expanding Russian activity in the Nigerian economy. Although there is only one known case of the Federal Military Government agreeing to barter arrangements it remains a moot point whether the decision

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 3, 1969, p. 1354a.
2. Africa Confidential, No. 25, 20.12.68, p. 2.
3. Ibid., No. 15, 25.7.69, p. 5.

to purchase 150 Moscovich saloon cars for Government service was based purely on their alleged technical superiority over all others. The Russians have also sought to reach the ordinary Nigerian citizen, and have achieved some success, though mainly with low-salaried urban workers. Soviet-Nigeria Friendship Associations sprang up in a number of cities; the establishment of a Soviet propaganda bookshop has been permitted; and a new periodical 'New World' was founded in October, 1968, dedicated to promoting economic, educational and cultural co-operation between Nigeria and Russia, edited by Mr P.A. Curtis-Joseph (who had previously won the Lenin Peace Prize). After the war the Federal Government's plans to Nigerianise the air force will depend on Russian trainers and technicians; spare parts will have to be purchased from Russia and almost certainly any new aircraft will be ordered from the USSR which will in this way have taken over West Germany's role in the Nigerian Air Force. Russian ships are frequently seen off the Nigerian coast, most of them 'trawlers' equipped with monitoring devices. By insisting that only Soviet-trained pilots take control of the Russian planes supplied, the USSR has been able to train Egyptian pilots and aircrews and give them some wartime experience in skies far safer than those of the Middle East. Most indicative of Russian success was the Nigerian reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, 1968. The Trade Union Council commented that 'progressive mankind would remember with gratitude the swiftness and promptness with which the loyal members of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation have smashed the imperialist intrigue in Czechoslovakia'; the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee of Nigeria congratulated the leaders of Czechoslovakia on their 'wise request for aid from the Warsaw Pact allies at this crucial hour ... The immediate response of the allies to the request ... is also very reassuring of socialist internationalism'.(1) The President of the United Labour Congress, Mr H. Adebola, commented that 'the Soviet Union helped us with military equipment when other world powers were dithering. Why should we attack the Soviet Union now?'(2) Nigerian national newspapers like the West African Pi-

1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 8, 1968, p. 1160b.
2. West Africa, 31.8.68, p. 1029.

lot ignored the invasion. Chief Enahoro was quoted in a British newspaper as saying that the invasion was 'embarassing', but beyond this there was no official comment - something unlikely to have occurred under Sir Abubakar.

None of these developments imply that the Nigerian Government is now Russian-controlled or indeed that it has any leanings towards Communism. The Soviet Union has, however, made some substantial gains in Nigeria. Whereas before the war the Federal authorities accepted only scholarships, and these warily, it now accepts more scholarships and expects Russian financial aid; whereas before the war the Nigerians were loath to take a strong stand against the West, they will now be reluctant to condemn the Soviet Union, and a little less concerned about American and British susceptibilities. If the USSR does not try to force the pace of progress there is no reason why its influence should not continue to increase gradually. Russia is no longer a distant stranger; and any analysis based on the Nigerian habit of moving from the known to the unknown must take account of this fact.

B. France.

In September, 1968 the civil war entered its fifteenth month: Biafra, reduced to one-third of its original size, was on the verge of total defeat; its economy was in ruins; and its restoration as a viable entity appeared inconceivable. Yet on the 9th of that month General de Gaulle in one of his rare press conferences, expressed to France and the world his conviction that Nigeria's history, both ancient and modern, together with Biafra's present struggle, bore witness to the French belief in the right of peoples to self-determination:

> "It is not sure that the conception of federation which replaces in certain places the conception of colonization is always a very good one or very practical, especially in Africa - but not only in Africa. For in a word, it consists in putting together arbitrarily different peoples, who therefore are not keen on it at all.
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> One can see this in Canada (laughter), one sees it in Rhodesia, in Malaysia, in Cyprus and one sees it in Nigeria. And, indeed, why should the Ibos, who are Christians in general, who live in the south after a certain fashion, and have a language of their own, why should the Ibos depend on another ethnic group of the federation, for this is what one obtains when the coloniser has withdrawn his authority, in an

artificial federation?

What one has then is an ethnic element imposing its authority on the others. Then, even before the present tragedy of Biafra took place, one could ask oneself how Nigeria might live in view of the upheavals it was going through. And now there is this atrocious tragedy, this enormous tragedy, and that Biafra has proclaimed its independence, and that the Federation, to reduce it, employs war, blockade, extermination, famine - can one imagine that the peoples of the Federation, Ibos included, will take up a common life again? France, in this affair, has assisted, is assisting Biafra, to the extent of her possibilities.

She has not taken this step which for her would be decisive, the step of recognition of the Biafran Republic, because she thinks that the gestation of Africa is above all a matter of the Africans. Already there are some African states of the west and of the east which have recognised Biafra. Others will also perhaps recognise it. This means that for France the decision which has not been taken cannot be excluded in the future.

Moreover, one can imagine that the federation itself, noting the impossibility of remaining at the point it has reached regarding its organization, transforms itself into some sort of union or confederation which could reconcile the right of Biafra to dispose of itself and the links which would remain between it and the whole of Nigeria." (1)

Despite the fact that the Quai d'Orsay had repeatedly reaffirmed its recognition of the Federal Government, this statement - the strongest expression of support for Biafra from a major power - came as little surprise; it had long been clear where the sympathy of the majority of French political and business circles lay; suspicions had heightened that not only French commercial firms but also the Government were supplying arms to Ojukwu and that a group of about a hundred French mercenaries, allegedly led by men like Major Faulques, Major Denard and Colonel Steiner, had been permitted to join the secessionist forces; Biafra had for some time had an active embryo embassy in Paris, known as the Biafra Historical Research Association; and Brigadier Ogundipe, the Federal Ambassador in London, claimed to have irrefutable evidence that Biafra had sold to the Rothschild Bank a concession for the exploitation of all its mineral resources

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1. Le Figaro, Paris, 10.9.68, translated by the Nigerian Embassy, Paris, Letter, op. cit.

and therefore that France's interest in strengthening Biafra had become more urgent. In fact de Gaulle's statement was a more comprehensive and authoritative repetition of the declaration by the Secretary for Information, Joel le Theule, on 31st July, that the 'bloodshed and suffering, endured since more than a year by the Biafran population, demonstrated their wish to be one people' and 'consequently that the present conflict should be terminated on the basis of the right of the people to self-determination ...'(1)

Officially, France's justification was humanitarian. Although there may be some truth in this, the real reasoning remains a mystery which may only be elucidated if de Gaulle (who again has some time on his hands) chooses to bring his memoirs up to date. The rationale, it has been suggested, was oil. SAFRAP (Nigeria) Limited, a subsidiary of the French state-owned oil group, ERAP, whose chairman, M. Pierre Guillaumat, was a former Gaullist Minister, had six exploration permits covering 24,178 kilometres, and was producing 37,000 barrels a day when the war broke out. The oil discovered at Obagi and Ubeta (where gas was also found) was not only much heavier than Algerian oil, but also comparatively sulphur-free. It was also reported that SAFRAP had struck oil much further inland, in the northern part of Biafra and within the boundaries of what Lagos had demarcated the East Central State. By securing the gratitude of a victorious Biafra, de Gaulle could not only expect that SAFRAP would be allowed to expand but that it might oust the Anglo-American oil companies and obtain a virtual monopoly of oil production and of the exploitation of all Biafra's other potential mineral wealth. Even were Biafra forced to negotiate de Gaulle may have hoped to prolong the war and strengthen Ojukwu's hand sufficiently to compel the Federal Government to agree, as a condition of peace, to honour undertakings allegedly made by Biafra to France.

A second theory is that de Gaulle relished any opportunity to weaken, annoy and embarass the Anglo-American alliance and that his support for Biafra was yet another manifestation of his antipathy towards the alliance. According to one view he

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1. Ibid., 1.8.68, translated by the Nigerian Embassy, Paris, Letter, op. cit.

was merely 'following an old gambit':

> "Why did Napoleon III throw his lot in with the Mexicans? Because he did not like to see the whole of North America under Anglo-Saxon domination, and believed that a powerful Latin kingdom in Mexico would constitute a useful counterweight. Similarly General de Gaulle will not be sorry to see a break up of Nigeria, which is under British influence and which, if viable, could by its vast demographic power dominate his own French-speaking client States in Africa." (1)

The Paris-Moscow détente in the rest of the world does not extend to Africa - for example to Guinea or Mali - because French interests are not compatible with growing Soviet influence in West Africa; de Gaulle may therefore have hoped to balance any Russian gains in Nigeria by French gains in Biafra.

A third possibility is that de Gaulle was encouraged to bolster the Biafran cause not so much because he believed in the merits of the Ibo case, but because of a long-standing aversion towards the Federation of Nigeria. He showed little friendship towards anglophone African countries in general, and Nigeria, in particular, was an exceptionally large political unit which tended to discredit the French theory that local loyalties left no place for large federal systems in Africa (or indeed elsewhere, as de Gaulle demonstrated in his Quebec policy), and which not only exercised an unfortunate pull upon the smaller states but also tended to overshadow its francophone neighbours. If French encouragement of the Ibos did not ultimately result in a smaller Nigeria, it would, at least, have helped to exhaust the Federation economically and so reduce the risk of Nigeria dominating West Africa for some time to come. His dislike of Nigeria had been aggravated by the unceremonious ejection of the French Ambassador from Nigeria after the bomb tests; and relations had remained cold up to the outbreak of the war.

Fourthly, he must have been aware of the wave of pro-Biafran sympathy sweeping through France - according to public opinion polls the plight of the Biafrans aroused more emotion in France than that of the Czechs or the Vietnamese. The months of May, June and July, when his decision appeared to have been

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1. Ginay, Ercl, The Genocide Game, Israel Magazine, Vol. 1, No. 7, 1968, p. 7.

made, had seen Gaullist popularity plummet and this may well have led him to express France's support of Biafra at that particular time. Whatever his reasons, France had little to lose: 'the Nigerians could grumble and even rage, but they would still need France's goodwill in selling their products to Europe'.(1)

French policy was not without its contradictions: while admitting the right of the Ibos to self-determination and encouraging other states to recognise the secessionist régime, France continued to recognise the Federal Government; while actively assisting Biafra and its refugees, it continued to grant scholarships to Federal Nigeria; and the French embargo on arms sales to Nigeria included Biafra, even though this was so in theory rather than in practice. There is overwhelming evidence that France continued to supply arms to Biafra: the New York Times correspondent, Lloyd, wrote on 19th August, 1968 that

> "Each night an Air Gabon DC-3 runs the anti-aircraft blockade to Biafra from Libreville... The pilots are French and their cargoes are a mixture of arms, ammunition and food for the Biafran army."(2)

'Newsweek' correspondent, John Barnes, reported that

> "Just a few days ago a giant French military landing craft dropped anchor in Libreville bay, and in its cavernous hold, I learned from a French paratroop sergeant, were 900,000 rounds of ammunition for Biafra."(3)

'Time' correspondent, James Wilde, wrote that

> "Everybody in this shabby capital knows about it, but few will talk. The unmarked planes, however, are there for all to see: four DC-4's, three DC-3's and a single Constellation, parked on a palm-lined seaside tarmac... Each afternoon, three or four planes taxi to the nearby military airfield for loading, then take off for Biafra at 6p.m. sharp. They return around midnight, after the 900-mile round trip."(4)

Similar reports emanated from Abidjan, and Biafra's resurgence in September, 1968 proved that a new source of weapons had been found. M. Pierre Messmer, de Gaulle's Minister for the Armed

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1. Delius, Anthony, Why Did De Gaulle Nudge States to Back Biafra?, Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, 17.10.68, p. 13.
2. Africa Report, October, 1968, p. 54.
3. West Africa, 16.11.68, p. 1361.
4. Time, 6.12.68, p. 29.

Forces, appears to have admitted as much when he conceded that Biafrans were fighting with French arms, but denied that they came directly from France: he said, however, that Gabon and the Ivory Coast, which received considerable military aid from France, had every right to pass on their weapons to Biafra if they wished.

It would be accurate to assert that France followed two policies toward Nigeria, evolving from two sources: the African section of the Quai d'Orsay and the Secretary-General for African Affairs in the Elysée, Jacques Foccart. Foccart ranked as one of de Gaulle's three closest advisers and appears to have combined with his interest in African affairs the control of the Gaullist 'Barbouzes', a 'thuggish lot of secret police and informers'.(1) He is credited with the decision to support Biafra and to supply Ojukwu secretly with arms; a decision in which the Foreign Ministry had little say. After de Gaulle's fall, Alain Poher, the interim President for 35 days, dismissed Foccart, but made no declaration of policy on Biafra. President Georges Pompidou similarly made no mention of the subject in his first full-scale press conference in July, 1969, so probably indicating a reduction of French interest in the Ibo cause, a trend noted even before de Gaulle's exit.

F. The United States of America.

President Johnson had so much trouble in Vietnam that he had no wish for more. The US was not a traditional supplier of arms to Nigeria and he had the option simply to choose not to become one. He urged the Russian Government, which was in a similar position, to follow suit, and all nations not to exploit the situation for political ends. Certainly there were American investments in Nigeria, but there was no guarantee that involvement would do much to safeguard them. However Prime Minister Wilson had backed him passively on Vietnam, so the least he could do was to give Wilson diplomatic support on Nigeria. Thus he continued to recognise the Federal Government, but did nothing tangible to support the cause of one Nigeria. Of the big four, then, the US alone decided to sit this war out. In February, 1968 the State Department spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey, issued

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1. Ibid., 9.5.69, P. 23.

a formal statement denying clandestine support for Biafra and reiterating the US position:

> "We have been concerned with a number of insinuations recently alleging US support for the Biafra regime. I wish to make it very clear that the US continues to recognise the Federal Military Government as the only legal government in Nigeria. We do not recognise Biafra, nor so far as we know, does any other government in the world. We have from the outset of the Nigerian crisis regarded it as an internal conflict which, in the last analysis, only the Nigerians themselves can resolve. At the same time we have hoped that the conflict would yield a peaceful solution which would spare all Nigerians from further tragic loss of life... The US Government has in no way encouraged, supported or otherwise been involved in this rebellion." (1)

Besides charitable and religious organisations there were some influential voices pressing for greater US participation, if not actually to assist Biafra, at least to secure the steady supply of food and medicine to the starving. Senator Eugene McCarthy requested the President to urge the UN to institute a mandatory airlift of food to Biafra, and to persuade the UK to suspend arms shipments to Nigeria, and eventually called for recognition of Biafra, asserting that US policy amounted to accepting the death of a million people as the price for preserving a nation that had never existed. Senator Edward Kennedy called for a ceasefire, and urged that the problem of starvation in Biafra be placed on the agenda of the UN, arguing that the view that it was an internal matter could no longer hold under such dire circumstances; he lobbied actively in the State Department for increased relief supplies, prompting Radio Kaduna to declare that the 'last of the Kennedys has let us down'. (2) Nine Congressmen introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives urging the United States to 'take immediate action to seek a halt to the present internal conflict in Nigeria ... in order to stop what threatens to become a genocidal pattern of extermination'. (3) And most hopefully for the Biafrans, Richard Nixon, during his election campaign, accused the Nigerian Government of thwarting relief efforts in its de-

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1. West Africa, 10.2.68, p. 173.
2. Ibid., 15.2.69, p. 197.
3. Africa Report, January, 1968, p. 46.

sire 'to pursue total and unconditional victory'. He claimed that genocide was taking place and he urged the Johnson administration not to be too careful of 'diplomatic niceties'.(1) He went further and with the Mayor of New York, John Lindsay, and the Catholic Archbishop of the city raised money for Biafran relief.

Except for ordering a comprehensive review of US aid to war victims, Mr Nixon, however, after his election as President has followed the path of his predecessor: non-involvement in the war combined with a resolve to get aid through to the starving in Biafra, even by methods not approved by the Nigerian Government. President Johnson had put at the disposal of the Red Cross and other relief organisations eight four-engined planes, to be based in Fernando Po and Sao Tomé, despite an angry Nigerian protest that this would simply encourage the rebels to continue their resistance. Mr Nixon despatched Professor C.C. Ferguson as his special co-ordinator on relief to civilian victims of the war, with the object of administering a substantial American contribution which by mid-1969 totalled about $30 million, and in an attempt to obtain agreement on new supply routes. The Secretary of State, Mr William Rogers, in his first official interview, urged Equatorial Guinea's Foreign Minister to request his Government to lift a ban recently imposed on relief flights to Biafra from Fernando Po. And when General Gowon expelled the Red Cross, the US immediately attempted to persuade him of the urgent need for the resumption of mercy flights.

G. Europe and the Question of Relief.

Although France was the only European country to go so far as to admit the Biafrans' right to self-determination, there was much popular support in Western Europe for their cause and immense sympathy for their plight. Some saw a small, heroic David fighting for survival against a cruel, clumsy Goliath, an image effectivaly conveyed by Ojukwu's press agent in Geneva; many saw the war as a religious conflict between the Moslem North and the Christian Biafra in which their duty lay in giving succour to the latter; and a number of European countries saw in

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1. Africa Confidential, No. 3, 31.1.69, p. 6.

the Ibo struggle analogies with some heroic or tragic moments in their own history. Bombing of civilians and starving children were used by opposition parties and press to attack governments for inaction; and the Ibos as the losers were seen to be suffering the more severely.

Organisations and action committees, some purely humanitarian, others with pro-Biafran leanings, raised funds, some to aid Nigerians without distinction, others the Ibos. Substantial sums were channelled through the World Council of Churches, the Vatican and Caritas International, Nordchurchaid and the International Committee of the Red Cross into the purchase of supplies for distribution to those in need. And it was when Europeans discovered that the urgently required food and medicines which they were making available were not reaching the starving, that they tended to become involved in the Nigerian conflict. Both Ojukwu and Gowon had good reason to disagree on relief routes, times and methods, but since Gowon's army had encircled Biafra, the final word rested with him. He declared that flights not inspected by the Federal authorities and made in daylight were unacceptable, amounted to an interference in Nigerian affairs, and their safety would not therefore be guaranteed. This brought Gowon into direct conflict with the welfare and religious organisations to which Western Europe was giving support.

Caritas, the World Council of Churches and Nordchurchaid ran the Federal blockade nightly from Sao Tomé, Fernando Po and Libreville, and only the Red Cross made serious and continuing efforts to secure Federal authorisation; when this was not forthcoming it, too, flew in relief supplies without permission. In September and October, 1968 Nordchurchaid made 500 flights into Biafra, ferrying some 4,800 tons of supplies, and in the same period the Red Cross flew in 2,960 tons in 309 flights. The estimated cost per ton was £500 or $1,200. In 1969 the various church organisations combined to form the Joint Church Aid and in March this group achieved a record delivery of 263 tons in one night, and announced the completion of its 1,500th flight; by June they had completed 2,500 and had ferried a total of 25,000 tons of supplies. On 15th March, 1969 the Red Cross announced that since the formation of Inalwa (International Airlift in West Africa) in September, 1968, it has flown 9,711 tons of supplies to Biafra. At this stage the Red Cross was bringing

assistance to over a million people throughout Nigeria.

The disagreement between these world bodies and the Nigerian Government was exacerbated by the not infrequent statements made by some of the former on the war and by their appeals for a ceasefire and negotiations. The Vatican newspaper, Osservatore Romano, wrote that the war was verging on genocide with 'massacres affecting the civilian population', and described Biafra's secession as a 'step forward for the new nations of Africa towards total independence and self-determination'.[1] The Pope, besides publicly admitting that Caritas planes were making unauthorised flights into Biafra, on numerous occasions urged a ceasefire, and despatched Monsignor Dominic Conway, an Irish priest, and Monsignor Georges Rochau, a French priest, to attempt to arrange one. They not only met Gowon but in spite of Nigerian protests also entered Biafran-held territory to discuss the question with Ojukwu. In an unprecedented joint appeal on 23rd March, 1968 the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church called for an immediate halt to the war and for negotiations, urging all governments and international agencies to suspend arms supplies to Nigeria. Both warring parties were requested not to interfere with their relief work. The Ecumenical Council of Churches, too, meeting in Geneva in February of that year, had called on all governments to halt arms supplies; and the Red Cross had protested to the Federal Government against the bombing of civilians and Red Cross hospitals. Irritated by what Nigerians regarded as continuous carping and flagrant disregard for the authority of the Federal Government, suspicions burgeoned in Nigeria that these bodies were surreptitiously aiding the rebels and that the object of the declarations made by the various Christian churches was to drive a wedge between Christians and Moslems in non-Ibo Nigeria. The discord culminated unhappily on 5th June, 1969 when a Federal Air Force plane shot down a Red Cross relief aircraft carrying 11 tons of rice to Biafra, and no apology was made.

> "... this disaster has long been prophesied by the Federal Military Government to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has repeatedly been approached to discontinue night mercy flights in favour of daylight flights.

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1. West Africa, 25.5.68, p. 622.

so that their identity could at no time be mistaken for Ojukwu's arms planes, many of which are of the same type." (1)

The West African Co-ordinator of the ICRC, Dr August Lindt of Switzerland, was, on 14th June, declared persona non grata in Nigeria and the Nigerian National Rehabilitation Commission announced its assumption of the role of the Red Cross in Nigeria. Giving reasons for the expulsion, the Commissioner of External Affairs, Okoi Arikpo, said that Dr Lindt had involved himself deeply in the politics of Nigeria in violation of the conventions of the Red Cross; that he had lied in order to have his way, invariably to the advantage of the rebels, for example, in informing the Dahomey Government that he had Federal permission to use Cotonou as a base for relief flights, when he had not in fact been granted such permission; that at a news conference in Brussels, on 24th April, 1969, he had spoken of the determination of the rebels to continue resisting and of his intention that the Red Cross should break the Federal blockade; and that he had spent most of his time in rebel territory helping to prolong the war. The Red Cross in Geneva denied these charges as being 'levelled against a man who has never spared either his health, or his efforts or his strength and who has accomplished a magnificent task'.(2) Despite attempts by numerous countries

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - , No. 6, 1969, p. 1442b and c.
2. International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Press Release No. 984b, 14.6.69. On 19th June, 1969 Dr Lindt wrote the following letter to Mr Marcel A. Naville, ICRC President:

"Dear Mr. President,

When, on 19 July 1968, I replied to the ICRC request to assume the general executive command of the relief operations for the benefit of victims of the Nigeria/Biafra conflict, I had to build up from very little and time was short. Thanks to the co-operation of governments and institutions, we managed to organize a large-scale programme on both sides of the front in relatively little time.

From the beginning I was aware of the difficulties to be overcome in order to maintain a relationship of confidence with each of the parties in conflict, exacerbated by the bitterness present in all civil wars. I have always endeavoured to draw public attention - directed too much, in my opinion, towards Biafra - to the suffering among the population on the Nigerian side of the front. It was not assistance to governments which was required, but to victims wherever they were and whatever their ethnic origin.

My determination to remain objective was not always ap-

to heal the breach, no agreement to recommence relief flights has to the present been reached. Joint Church Aid, the French

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preciated in this conflict where propaganda and psychological warfare play an important part. Our work was therefore the butt of attack sometimes from one party, sometimes from the other, and even from both simultaneously. Nevertheless, co-operation with the civilian and military authorities was always possible ...

When Count Von Rosen intervened, his exploits considerably changed the situation. First a campaign was launched against me in the Nigerian press; then an ICRC aircraft was shot down without any notification to anybody by the Nigerian government of a change of policy. These events resulted in the Nigerian Federal Government's decision to declare me persona non grata. I shall not dwell on the Nigerian Federal Government's accusations by which it tries to explain its decision. The work achieved is sufficient in itself to exculpate me.

I would however reply to one reproach. In private as in public I have said that the conflict should be resolved by peaceful means. I cannot consider this as a political attitude; it is merely common sense. I have learned sufficiently to appreciate the negotiating genius of independent Africa to reach the belief that it is able to show the world an example of a pacific and humanitarian settlement of a conflict.

It is not given to me to retreat easily when confronted with obstacles, but the desire I have most at heart is that the relief operations continue. Otherwise, international assistance so far given will only have served to prolong for a few months the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. The cessation of operations would for them mean an inevitable return to famine. As the Nigerian attacks are concentrated on me in person, I consider that I can no longer act as a neutral intermediary in keeping with the ICRC's character, and that were I to remain in office, the continuation of operations would be even more difficult.

If, therefore, after thorough reflexion - for it is not easy to withdraw from an operation to which one has devoted all ones strength and energy - I request you, Mr. President, to consider my mandate as ICRC Commissioner General for West Africa as terminated, it is in the hope that my decision, which is irrevocable, will facilitate the continuation of this so essential ICRC programme. I am certain that the living forces of the International Committee of the Red Cross will overcome the difficulties which, as in the past, will arisa in the future."

International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Press Release No. 987b, 19.6.69.

On 20th June Mr Naville addressed a message of gratitude to Dr Lindt: "The work of the ICRC during conflict is often misunderstood but, as you know, we have long been accustomed to unpopularity and groundless censure. Your noble personality remained unperturbed, and our confidence in you was thereby strengthened."

ICRC Press Release No. 989b, 20.6.69.

Red Cross and the Dublin-based 'Africa Concern' continued to fly in supplies to Biafra.

The Republic of Ireland provides a good example of a small European country taking a great interest in the war: before the outbreak of hostilities there had been about 2,500 Irish citizens in Nigeria (about one-third of them in the Eastern Region) mostly in the service of the Church, and Eire had missionary links with Nigeria going back nearly a century. Catholicism linked the Irish with the Biafrans, as did the fact that both nations had experienced the horrors of famine. They saw a parallel in Ojukwu's uphill struggle against the powerful enemy with that of Michael Collins' Irish Republican Army against the Protestant English. The Irish press contained more articles on the war than did the press of most countries, the Cumann Croise Dierge na hEireann (Irish Red Cross) collected voluntary donations, the Irish Catholic Church was active in providing relief in Biafra, and the Dail Eireann resolved to donate £100,000 from public funds to the Irish Red Cross to purchase food and drugs for despatch to Nigeria, particularly to the distressed districts in the Eastern areas - a resolution moved by the Minister of Defence, Mr Hilliard, whose own family had worked as missionaries in Eastern Nigeria until the fighting started. Typical of numerous speeches in the Dail were the following remarks of Mr Cosgrove, a former Prime Minister:

> "... In the context that the Irish people are conscious of the contribution which Irish missionaries ... and other people have made in those areas we are anxious to show, as a country who in our past history have suffered acutely from famine and want at a time when we had few friends, when we have now independence and the means to provide assistance for people in other lands similarly affected as we were a little over a hundred years ago, that we want to help those people." (1)

Another Opposition Deputy, Mr Ryan, condemned the British Government for its arms supply to Nigeria and General Gowon's attitude to relief supplies:

> "We must condemn the political whited sepulchres of Britain, the British Government, who day in and day out have given military and other as-

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1. Dáil Éireann, Committee on Finance, Vote 43 - Defence, 9.7.68, p. 3.

> sistance to the Nigerian Federal Government to inflict cruelties upon the unfortunate people of Biafra. Whatever doubts the world may have had about the conflict in that sorry land must have been dispelled when within the last few days the Federal Government threatened to shoot down any plane on a mercy mission to Biafra. That pronouncement by the Federal Government must be condemned without qualification... to say clearly, without qualification and without apology to anybody, that they would shoot down any plane on a mercy mission condemns them before the tribunal of mankind now and forever after." (1)

The points most frequently raised were that the Irish Government should offer to mediate, should raise the issue at the UN and make use of Caritas rather than the Red Cross which appeared less effective, and that the approach of the UN in not intervening was too legalistic. Sir Anthony Esmonde, who pointed to the example set by Tanzania, was the only speaker to call for recognition of Biafra.(2) The Irish Government, however, remained consistent with its original position, as stated by the Foreign Minister, Mr. Frank Aiken, in February, 1968:

> "The Government recognise the Federal Republic of Nigeria and maintain diplomatic relations with the Federal Government. Recognition has not been extended to the Eastern Region of Nigeria as an independent State by Ireland ..." (3)

In Austria, on the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Herr Kurt Waldheim, an Action Committee was founded, charged with raising funds and sending to Biafra several medical teams and supplies; an important part of the campaign was financed by the Austrian Caritas Board. Austria also sent Ambassador Arthur Breycha-Vauthier to emphasise to General Gowon the urgency of relief supplies reaching the people of Biafra and then to London to encourage a British move towards the cessation of hostilities.

In reply to a query concerning recognition, the Belgian Embassy in Pretoria stated:

> "It is the official Belgian policy to recognise the legal Government of Sovereign Countries." (4)

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1. Ibid., p. 11.
2. Ibid., Parliamentary Questions dealing with the war in Nigeria, 24.4.68, p. 8.
3. Ibid., 22.2.68, p. 3.
4. Belgian Embassy, Pretoria, Letter, op. cit.

Following the example of other European countries, however, M. Pierre Harmel announced in mid-1968 that no more arms would be sold to Nigeria until the war ended.

At the commencement of hostilities West Germany had withdrawn the Luftwaffe advisers who had been assisting in the training of the Nigerian Air Force: by this one move Bonn assured its non-implication in the bombing of civilian Biafrans, and made way for the Soviet Union and East Germany to fill the vacuum. West Germany went on to urge EEC action to make certain that aid reached Biafra and after Nigeria's rejection of the Red Cross plea for an airlift, the Nigerian Ambassador in Bonn was called to the Foreign Ministry for what 'Africa Confidential' described as a 'very unpleasant interview'.(1)

Italy recognised only the Federal Government, but refused to sell arms to either side. Later, through Ojukwu's manoeuvrings, Prime Minister Nenni's Government was forced to give Biafra at least temporary de facto recognition, which caused the Nigerian Government some annoyance. It came about as the result of an attack on the Federal-held oil fields at Okpai, during which the Biafrans captured 18 men - 14 Italians, 3 West Germans and a Lebanese - working for AGIP, a subsidiary of the Italian oil company, ENI. A five-man tribunal sentenced them to death for helping Nigeria wage war on Biafra. After appeals by, among others, the Vatican, Portugal, Gabon and the Ivory Coast in addition to Italy itself, Ojukwu indicated that he was prepared to discuss the matter, but not with ENI, and only directly with the Italian Government. He got his way when the Under-Secretary for foreign affairs, Mario Pedini, flew into Owerri to consult with him. Having granted a reprieve, Ojukwu then took the opportunity over Radio Biafra to drive home yet another point:

> "For 18 white men, Europe is aroused. What have they said about our millions? Eighteen white men assisting in the crime of genocide. What do they say about our murdered innocents? How many black dead make one missing white? Mathematicians, please answer me. Is it infinity?" (2)

Pro-Biafran feelings were strong in the Netherlands, where the press continually recalled the Dutch struggle against

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1. Africa Confidential, No. 17, 23.8.68, p. 2.
2. Time, 13.6.69, p. 38.

the Hapsburgs and later against Hitler's Greater Germany concept. On 12th July, 1967 the Foreign Minister, Dr Joseph Luns, declared however in Parliament that:

> "The Netherlands Government recognises the Federal Government in Lagos. Nevertheless there are many reasons for the Netherlands Government to watch the developments in Nigeria and consequently also in the Eastern part with particular interest as well as concern." (1)

Despite some popular pressure for recognition of Biafra, Dr Luns on 12th June, 1968, repeated his Government's view:

> "The Netherlands Government recognises without restriction the authority of the Nigerian Government in Lagos over the whole territory, maintaining as before normal diplomatic relations with the Federal Government." (2)

In the first year of the war the Netherlands Government granted licences for the export to Nigeria of 600 76-mm shells, 5,000 105-mm Howitzer shells, 16 million rifle cartridges and 5,080 grenades. On 6th June, however, Dr Luns went on to announce that 'in the light of the reaction on the suffering of the civilian population', Holland would suspend arms sales to Nigeria and would urge fellow governments to follow suit. The Nigerian Government responded that the Netherlands having indicated that it was 'no longer interested in the business activities which Dutch interests can carry on in a United Nigeria', it would 'accordingly take steps to review the commercial activities of Dutch concerns' operating in Nigeria. (3)

From the commencement of the war Portugal was suspected by Nigeria of being Biafra's principal source of weapons and most ardent supporter. By prolonging a war in Africa's potentially most powerful nation and one which had given aid to the rebels in the Portuguese African territories, the Portuguese Government could weaken the African pressure on its territories and dilute the support for its own rebels; and Catholicism again provided a link with Biafra. Relief supplies were ferried into Biafra from the Portuguese island of Sao Tomé, much of Ojukwu's arms followed the Lisbon-Sao Tomé-Uli route, the Biafran head-

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1. Netherlands Embassy, Pretoria, Letter, *op. cit.*
2. Ibid.
3. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 6, 1968, p. 1099a.

quarters for negotiations in Europe were in Lisbon, and General Gowon and most Governments elsewhere took it for granted that Portugal was supplying arms and ammunition, and probably mercenaries as well to Ojukwu. The Portuguese Government admitted that its airports were being used as bases for relief supplies and that other countries might be using them for carrying arms to Biafra, but denied giving any military aid to Biafra whatsoever:

> "... Although the position of the Portuguese Government regarding the war between Nigeria and Biafra is one of neutrality, Portugal considers that war as an internal problem of Nigeria and thus refuses to interfere in any way in this conflict. Portugal is giving Biafra no aid, no financial assistance, no weapons, no supplies of any military nature or for warlike purposes. No Portuguese is allowed to enrol in the Biafran forces. Although the aid to Biafra comes from somewhere else, the Portuguese Government allows - this is a long standing policy applicable everywhere - a completely free transit through the Portuguese airports to the planes to Biafra, providing they have the necessary documents. These planes, however, never carried mercenaries to Biafra, as far the Portuguese authorities are aware. The planes usually carried food and medical aid to the suffering people of Biafra.
>
> The Portuguese Government, although it never interferes in this conflict, cannot ignore the humanitarian side of this war in Nigeria and, moved by this reason, is following the fate of the Biafran people with great concern." (1)

Spain, although Catholic, had to tread a more delicate path: the majority of the population of the Spanish island of Fernando Po was Nigerian or of Nigerian origin, and most of these were from the former Eastern Region. The most advantageous policy for Spain was to avoid offending either side, and Santa Isabel, on Fernando Po, was allowed to be used as a staging post for relief supplies to Biafra, while normal diplomatic relations were maintained with Lagos and Spanish weapons were sold to the Federal army.

In Switzerland sympathy for Biafra was very strong; a British 'shopping week' scheduled to commence on 20th September, 1968 was cancelled because of local agitation against British arms sales to Nigeria; and the Swiss organisation Terres des Hommes administered the airlift of Biafran children to Gabon and

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1. Portuguese Embassy, Pretoria, Letter, op. cit.

sometimes to Europe, when homes were available. Consistently with its declared policy the Swiss Government remained neutral:

> "The Swiss Government has followed closely the present conflict between the Federal Government in Lagos and the Province of Biafra. It is, however, guided by the principle of international law which denies foreign States the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another State. Switzerland is all the more determined to observe this principle as it is a neutral country and because in the case of the conflict in Nigeria it is a Civil War. The attitude of reserve adopted by the Swiss Government is also motivated by its desire not to compromise the humanitarian task that it has undertaken and that it seeks presently to co-ordinate in Nigeria.
>
> Switzerland, being the seat of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the depositary of the Geneva Conventions, has always shown great interest for the activities of the ICRC. It follows closely the work now accomplished by the ICRC in Nigeria. Complying spontaneously with the request presented to it, the Swiss Federal Council placed Ambassador Lindt at the service of the ICRC which named him its General Commissioner for West Africa.
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> Besides, the Swiss Federal Council stated on several occasions that it was prepared to offer its good offices for eventual negotiations between the two parties. It encouraged in particular the attempts made at direct negotiations between the belligerents and sent messages to this effect to the president of the ad hoc committee of the Organization for African Unity, Emperor Haile Selassie, and to General Gowon." (1)

In Scandinavia, too, feeling ran high: citizens of these five countries, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland raised substantial sums for relief, brought direct assistance to Biafra through Nordchurchaid, and manned most of the relief depots within Biafra. At the UN, in a joint press conference, the five Governments called for a ceasefire and were repeatedly reported to be considering taking the matter to the Security Council. On 14th August, 1968 the three Nordic Governments - Norway, Denmark and Sweden - issued a statement noting with compassion the suffering of civilian victims, expressing the urgent hope that proposals for transportation of relief would be given the highest priority by the warring parties, and

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1. Swiss Embassy, Pretoria, Letter, op. cit.

calling on both sides to make every effort to find ways for supplies to reach those in need. The Nigerian Government having declared that it would not take responsibility for the safety of unauthorised flights into Biafra, the same Governments, on 31st August, made a more urgent appeal.

> "The Governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden wish to state that the aeroplanes in question are being operated by the International Red Cross Committee, are duly marked with red cross colours and signs, and are not under the control of the governments.
>
> In the hope that the parties involved in the conflict in Nigeria would reach an agreement upon ways to bring in immediate relief necessary to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians - especially women and children - governments, humanitarian organizations and individuals in many countries have brought forward urgently needed supplies. On August 14th the Nordic governments in a common declaration urged both sides in the conflict to do their utmost for supplies intended for those in need to reach them without further delay.
>
> The Governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden urgently appeal to the federal military government of Nigeria not to undertake any action to prevent the supplies from being brought to the people in need, but to grant the aeroplanes under the control of the International Red Cross free and unhindered passage." (1)

On 2nd September, 1968 the Norwegian Prime Minister addressed a letter directly to General Gowon, which read:

> "Excellency,
>
> On a purely humanitarian basis, the governments of the Nordic countries on different occasions have appealed to the Federal Military Government of Nigeria to do their utmost to find ways to bring relief supplies to the civilian population in the areas affected by the conflict in Nigeria. Reference is made to statements by the Nordic governments of 14th and 31st August.
>
> The International Committee of the Red Cross has informed my Government about its intention to start increased regular flights with five civilian aeroplanes under the exclusive control of the ICRC.
>
> Fully convinced that the mentioned planes will carry only emergency supplies for strictly humanitarian purposes, open for inspection by representatives of Your Government, I urgently appeal to Your Excellency to allow the aeroplanes to fulfil their desig-

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1. Norwegian Consulate General, Cape Town, Letter, op. cit., Enclosure.

nated task of bringing relief to starving children victims of the hostilities. I feel obliged to bring to Your Excellency's attention that measures on the side of Your Government to hinder the flights are apt to cause strong reactions in the Norwegian public opinion.

Please, accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Per Borten
Prime Minister of Norway." (1)

The Norwegian Prime Minister stated publicly that, while he understood the Nigerian Government's fear of further secessions, he could not accept the methods it was using to reassert its authority; and the Norwegian Government continued to keep a watchful eye on the progress of the relief organisations. Per Borten's contention that Nigerian intransigence was thwarting relief supplies reaching Biafra was considered in Norway to have been finally confirmed by the shooting down of the Red Cross plane. This led Norway to call a meeting of Scandinavian Foreign Ministers to discuss the question. Some commentators expect the Norwegian Government to warn General Gowon that if relief flights to Biafra are not permitted, it will recognise Biafra.

In Eastern Europe the Communist bloc went along with the Russian policy of solid support for General Gowon; for example, the Hungarian Ambassador in Nigeria told the Western Military Governor, Brigadier Adebayo, that Hungary was solidly behind the Federal Military Government in its task of keeping Nigeria united, and that it was prepared to help Nigeria in any way possible; and members of the East German Air Force served as ground technicians, radar controllers and pilots in the Nigerian Air Force. Both Biafrans and mercy plane pilots reported an immediate increase in precision in flying st and bombing attacks when the attacker was an East German instead of the usual Egyptian, Algerian or Nigerian. At the start of the war Czechoslovakia supplied Nigeria with Delfin jets, but under the more liberal régime of Alexander Dubcek, which replaced that of Antonin Novotny, all arms deliveries were suspended. The Czech Government explained that the agreement to supply aircraft had been negotiated at a time when all African states supported Nigeria's war effort and the war was expected to end quickly, but that the

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1. Ibid.

situation had changed. Both Radio Nigeria and Radio Biafra reported that the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, which was being given a freer reign, had exerted pressure on Dubcek to desist from supplying arms. 'Africa Confidential' reported that for some time after the Soviet invasion, the Czechs had managed to get arms through France to Libreville and then to Uli in order to bolster Biafra's fight, not so much against the Federal Government, as against its ally, Russia.(1)

Yugoslavia, though recognising the Federal Government remained neutral, and a number of Yugoslavians assisted the Red Cross in Nigeria.

> "... Concerning the Civil War itself, Yugoslav Government holds that it is internal affairs of Nigeria, but from its own experience thinks that the problem cannot be solved only by military means. Yugoslavia would like to see the peace in Nigeria and insists that an African solution be found. Yugoslavia is against foreign interference in Nigerian affairs, regardless from which side or country it might come." (2)

H. Other Non-African Countries.

No government outside Africa, but one, has recognised Biafra. Commonwealth countries concurred in their fellow-members right to quell an internal revolution and in Nigeria's view, as put before them by Chief Awolowo at the 1969 Prime Ministers' Conference, that while a mild discussion on the war was permissible Nigeria could not possibly accept a full-scale debate on the issue. General Gowon described the Conference as yet another vote of confidence in Nigeria's handling of the rebellion and as a victory for sanity and maturity. The Australian Department of External Affairs replied to a question on its official stand on the Nigerian conflict:

> "The Australian Government established a High Commission in Lagos when the Federation of Nigeria became independent on 1st October, 1960, and has maintained diplomatic relations with the successor governments in Lagos, inoluding the present Federal Military Government of Nigeria." (3)

In Canada popular sympathy and Government policy conformed to

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1. Africa Confidential, No. 25, 20.12.68, p. 1.
2. Yugoslav Embassy, Lagos, Letter, op. cit.
3. Australian Department of External Affairs, Canberra, Letter op. cit.

* A letter from the Czech Embassy in Lagos stated that official regulations did not permit information to be furnished about relations with Nigeria.

those of the Scandinavian countries. From voluntary donations and public money Canada raised substantial sums for relief and the Government provided three aircraft to be used by the Red Cross. The Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, refused to supply any arms to the warring parties and recommended this as a policy for all governments to follow; his External Affairs Minister, Michell Sharp, urged the Nigerian Government to allow relief flights into secessionist territory, and the Biafrans to agree to a land corridor; and he wrote to U Thant that the public in Canada and in many other countries could not understand how the UN could fail to concern itself with the prevention of starvation in Nigeria.

Linked by religion with the North of Nigeria, no Moslem country gave any inkling of support for Biafra, but in general non-African Moslem states were not vocal about the conflict. The Turkish Ambassador in Lagos has explained that:

> "Since the guidelines of Turkish Foreign Policy is that not to interfere to the internal affairs of the countries and civil war is regarded an internal affair, Turkish Government has never been directly involved in the war. The hope of the Turkish Government is the return of an early peace to Nigeria and a happy survival of the United and Independent Federation." (1)

In Israel there was much sympathy for Biafra, partly aroused by a comparison, frequently made in the Israeli press, between the plight of the Ibos today with that of the Jews in Germany a quarter of a century ago: how, it was asked, could Jews, who had castigated the world for standing by while six million of their people were being murdered, remain idle while another people, the Ibos, were being subjected to a process of mass starvation? 'It also brought home again the realization that if the Israelis had fared badly in the June 1967 war and had been massacred by the Arabs, the world would surely have behaved as it did in the Biafran tragedy: it would have uttered passive sounds of sympathy for the victims while extending active aid to the killers.'(2) Nation-wide collections were made and Israeli top-flight entertainers, under the patronage of the De-

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1. Turkish Embassy, Lagos, Letter, 8.11.68.
2. Ginay, Erel, op. cit., p. 5.

puty Prime Minister, Yigal Allon, gave a benefit concert for Biafra. Abie Nathan (known jocularly as Israel's 'peace pilot' because of his occasional flights to Cairo in vain attempts to make peace with Nasser himself) became something of a national hero, when, with the blessings of the Israeli Government, he flew some of the first aircraft ferrying relief supplies to the Ibos. Inside the Knesset (Parliament) the Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, was severely criticised for inactivity in this regard, and an all-party 'Israeli Aid to Biafra Committee' called on him to discover what part Israel was playing in alleviating the suffering of the Biafrans. He informed them that Israel had been among the first countries to suggest joint international aid and that, for its size, Israel's contribution had been impressive. Whether under any circumstances Israel might have recognised the secessionist state is doubtful; it appears, however, that the Biafrans themselves informed Israel that overt amity on the part of Israel might provoke intensified hostility towards Biafra from Moslem African states and from the USSR.

Once it became apparent that the Soviet Union had decided to bolster the Federation with arms and aircraft, Biafra began to deride Moscow and to woo Peking, both over Radio Biafra and by personal emissary, and did so in terminology the Red Chinese could understand. China was slow to react, no doubt waiting to see what international and African patterns of support would develop before allowing itself a splashdown in unknown waters. Encouraged by world sympathy for Biafra, by de Gaulle's declared support for the secessionists and by the attitude of friendly African states like Tanzania and Zambia, the Chinese Government finally decided that it stood to gain by proclaiming its own support for Ojukwu's people. In a region in which the Chinese had made no significant contact they stood to lose nothing by this step; on the contrary they might gain the gratitude of a people desperately in need of friends, and a state of semi-guerilla warfare and mass starvation invariably provide fertile ground for the sowing of Mao's thoughts. A prolongation of the war could prove an embarassment to the Kremlin in Africa, particularly in Dar-es-Salaam and Lusaka, where China could see advantage in any discord between Nyerere and Kaunda on the one hand, and the Russian leaders on the other. On 22nd September,

1968 the New China News Agency therefore condemned 'the crime of US and British imperialism and Soviet revisionism in supporting the Federal Nigerian Military Government's massacre of the Biafran people'.

> "The tragedy brought about in Nigeria and Biafra by the US and British imperialists and Soviet revisionists in their collusion to redivide the sphere of influence in Africa has provided a further lesson to the people and the rest of the world who will strengthen their solidarity and resolutely resist the intervention by US and British imperialism and Soviet revisionism.
>
> So long as the Biafran people persevere in their struggle against imperialism and revisionism, they will undoubtedly win victory." (1)

Ojukwu wrote to Chairman Mao to inform him that the Biafran people were 'deeply touched' by the despatch, 'as well as other manifestations of your growing appreciation of the real issues involved in the conflict'. Recalling that the UK and the USSR were arming Nigeria, he assured Mao that his people were continuing to resist, and added that his people were consoled by the knowledge 'of the shining example of the Chinese Peoples' struggle under your able leadership against American imperialism and later against Soviet revisionism'.(2) Although a Biafran mission, led by Dr Chike Obi (former President of the Dynamic Party), received a promise of military assistance from Peking, and there were a few reports of a trickle of Chinese arms coming through Dar-es-Salaam to Biafra, there has been no evidence of substantial Chinese aid to Ojukwu.

Not surprisingly, the Latin American countries did not wish to involve themselves in the Nigerian conflict, and apart from statements of formal recognition of the Federal Government played little part in it. Venezuela established an Embassy in Lagos some time after the war started, so demonstrating support for Gowon's Government;(3) the Argentinian Embassy in Pretoria has explained that 'both before and during the Civil War, the Argentine government recognised only the Federal Government, before which their Ambassador is accredited';(4) and the Brazilian

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1. Africa Confidential, No. 20, 11.10.68, p. 5.
2. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 9, 1968, p. 1190c.
3. Venezuelan Embassy, Lagos, Letter, dd. 13.11.68.
4. Argentinian Embassy, Pretoria, Letter, op. cit.

Legation has stated briefly that 'Brazil does not recognise Biafra'.(1)

In March, 1969, out of the blue Caribbean, President Duvalier of Haiti granted Biafra its solitary non-African recognition. The Haitian newspaper, Panorama, quoted Duvalier as saying that the recognition was in accordance with his 'policy of participating in the defence of states and of oppressed countries. Over and above the humanitarian aspects, it aims at a return to a just and lasting peace between Nigeria and Biafra'.(2) Over Radio Port-au-Prince he gave his reasons for the recognition:

> "I must express my fervent wishes that this act of the first free and independent negro republic in the world serve as a symbol and example, and source of inspiration for the governments and countries of Africa. It constitutes a contribution based on our unique experiences as a negro nation and aims at the resumption of a formal dialogue between Nigeria and Biafra." (3)

The journal 'West Africa' remarked that Duvalier's act was 'more likely to be a retaliation against the British for Mr. Graham Greene's novel The Comedians, and the film based on it, than a serious international exercise',(4) and certainly it is difficult to discern the reasoning behind Papa Doc's unexpected incursion onto the scene; except to suggest either that he saw his recognition as a rebuff to the United States, which backed the Federal Government; or that, without an intimate knowledge of the details of the conflict, he was convinced of the merits of the Ibo case by a Biafran delegation which reportedly visited Haiti a short time before the announcement of recognition, and with nothing to gain or to lose he made what he judged the correct decision.

J. Africa.

I. The OAU and the Consultative Committee.

On the African continent the diplomatic odds were stacked heavily against Biafra. Enshrined in the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (with the strong backing of the late Prime Minister of Nigeria) was the principle of respect

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1. Brazilian Legation, Pretoria, Letter, op. cit.
2. West Africa, 29.3.69, p. 369.
3. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 3, 1969, p. 1357a.
4. West Africa, 5.4.69, p. 373.

for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states; and Africa's leaders saw good reasons for upholding that principle. Tribalism has given almost every African state a potential secession problem, and not only would the success of the Biafran breakaway encourage their own discontented tribes, but their leaders could not, with consistency, oppose the right of secession at home while conceding it in a fellow African state. Thus, although many African leaders came to sympathise with the humanist approach of Presidents Nyerere and Kaunda and to share their concern that the Nigerian war was damaging the African cause, the fear of setting off the most incendiary evil of all, anarchy, remained uppermost in their minds. Further, Sir Abubakar's good neighbour policy in Africa had left no member of the OAU with an axe to grind with the Federation. OAU Secretary-General, Diallo Telli, not only implemented Africa's pro-Nigerian declaration, but as a Moslem and a militant himself, did so willingly. Radio Biafra commented caustically that 'as a Moslem his sympathies go without question to his Moslem brothers in Nigeria'.

> "To him the present war is another jehad in which the Allah of Africa must co-operate by flogging Biafrans for failing to accept the Moslem faith." (1)

The host leader to an OAU Conference automatically attains the Presidency of the Organisation for the following year and provides the incumbent with a powerful weapon with which to execute his beliefs. At all three conferences since the commencement of the civil war - in Kinshasa from 11-14 September, 1967, in Algiers from 13-16 September, 1968 and in Addis Ababa, which has just concluded its final plenary session - the hosts have strongly sustained the Federal doctrine. President Mobutu of the Congo (Kinshasa), presiding over the 1967 Conference made it abundantly clear from the outset that he intended championing the Federal cause. As could be expected, he based his conviction on the Congo's experience with Katanga with which he compared the Biafran secession, asserting that both were encouraged and financed by European neo-colonialists who still hoped to dominate African countries by dividing them. Speaking

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1. West Africa, 9.12.67, p. 1594.

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in Accra the following year, he said that the Nigerian crisis was not a moral question 'but a matter of principle, and we in the Congo have, for too long, suffered from secessionist attempts, and we just cannot come round to accept the idea of secession'.(1) At Kinshasa a resolution reaffirming adherence to the principle of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reiterating condemnation of secession and recognising the situation to be an internal affair of Nigeria was passed unanimously. The Conference also resolved to despatch a consultative mission of six heads of state to General Gowon to assure him of the OAU's backing.

Biafra's success was limited to the fact that, despite Nigeria's initial objections, the civil war had reached the debating table and that the African states had felt it necessary to take some action other than merely bolstering Lagos' cause, for undoubtedly the purpose of the commission was to bring about, if possible, an end to the fighting, but beyond this, there was little to be optimistic about: the commission's terms of reference were confined to negotiations based on a unified Nigeria and the six members selected to serve (Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, General Ankrah of Ghana, and Presidents Diori of Niger, Mobutu of the Congo, Ahidjo of Cameroun and Tubman of Liberia) were all unlikely to support the secessionists. The Emperor of Ethiopia has been one of Africa's most consistent proponents of the principles of non-intervention and support for established governments, and is himself faced with two possibilities of secession, of the Eritreans and of the Somalis of the Ogaden. General Ankrah was probably the only one of the six who knew Ojukwu personally, but he, too, had serious tribal divisions with which to contend, and both his and his successor's National Liberation Council have been so concerned with legalism that they have found it difficult to condone any unconstitutional activity. President Diori's Niger Republic is very closely linked with Northern Nigeria and economically dependent on the goodwill of the Nigerian Government. One of the two major tribes in his country is the Hausa, the same people as those of Northern Nigeria (Diori speaks

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968, p. 1044b.

Hausa), who feel a natural attachment to the Northern Nigerians with their common religion and ancestry. And without the use of Nigerian railways and harbours the economic life of Diori's land-locked state would be stifled within a few short months. President Mobutu's emphatic opposition to the Ibos' right to self-determination has been mentioned. President Ahidjo, who must fear that Western Cameroun may attempt to secede at some stage, is sufficiently well acquainted with the problems of federalism to sympathise with Nigeria, and he is himself a Fulani with close links with the peoples of Northern Nigeria. There has, however, been considerable pro-Ibo sympathy in Western Cameroun (which was previously part of Eastern Nigeria), and in the press, notably in La Semaine Camerounaise and the Catholic weekly, L'Effort Camerounaise; and Ahidjo was accused of allowing the blockade on Biafra to be breached. In denying this he expressed his support for the Federal Government. President Tubman has been as ardent a supporter of established governments as Haile Selassie. Although tensions between the Americo-Liberians of the coast and the peoples of the interior do not threaten to split his country, he has long propounded the view that it is essential for independent Africa to accept the colonial boundaries lest worse follow.

The Biafrans prejudged, and accurately so, that a committee in which all six members were in accord with the OAU resolution backing the Federal Government and instructing the committee to follow suit, would be biased. As a commission it achieved little except to reaffirm Africa's support for Nigeria and to urge the rebels to surrender, leading Sir Louis Mbanefo, the chief Biafran negotiator, to conclude that the commission and the OAU were far more concerned with maintaining Gowon's Government than with securing peace. The commission met in Lagos in November, 1967, in Niamey in July, 1968, in Addis Ababa in August and September, 1968 and in Monrovia in April, 1969, and succeeded in bringing the two sides to the negotiating table; two of the members, the Emperor Haile Selassie and, to a lesser extent, M. Hammani Diori, made strenuous efforts to find a solution. But, as in Kampala in May, 1968, no headway was made. The Biafrans refused to consider political questions regarding their future association with Nigeria until the end of hostilities was negotiated; and the Nigerians insisted that the Biafrans should

renounce secession either before, or within the framework of, peace talks.

In September, 1968 the OAU met in Algeria. Since the commencement of the civil war, President Houari Boumedienne had upheld the Federal contention that Nigeria must remain one country. This policy derived from his natural partiality for the Moslems of Northern Nigeria, his comprehensive accord with Soviet foreign policy and from the fact that he had to keep a vigilant eye on his own dissident area in the Kabylie. As the Conference approached he determined to declare his unmitigated support of a unified Nigeria and to utilise his position to force a shotgun marriage between the Arab cause and the Nigerian cause, to bargain Africa's support for the former for Arab support for the latter, and so generate sufficient thrust to obtain the OAU's overwhelming endorsement of both. His opening speech engendered unprecedented discord by demanding Africa's solid commitment in favour of Federal Nigeria and the Arabs in the Middle East. On Nigeria he proclaimed that everybody and every organisation which succoured the secessionists, including the humanitarian organisations, were agents of imperialism. President Kaunda, the only one of the four heads of state to recognise Biafra present, found the implication distasteful and his immediate reaction was to refuse nomination as a Vice President of the Conference:

> "Having listened to certain speeches, including that from His Excellency the host leader, Zambia seems to have been lumped together with the imperialists because of our stand on the Nigeria-Biafra issue. I feel the whole issue has been prejudged and therefore I am unable to accept this honour on behalf of Zambia." (1)

The tone set by Boumedienne, the improved diplomacy of Chief Awolowo and the convincing military position of the Federal troops on the one hand, and the absence from the later debates on Nigeria of any head of state who had recognised Biafra on the other (Kaunda had by this time left for Paris), resulted in another Nigerian diplomatic triumph. A resolution appealing to the secessionists to co-operate with the Federal authorities in order to restore peace and unity in Nigeria, and inviting the Consultative Committee to continue its efforts with a view to implementing the resolutions of Kinshasa, was passed by 33 votes to 4 (the

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 9, 1968, p. 1174a.

four which had recognised Biafra), with two abstentions (Rwanda and Botswana).

The ... ber, 1969 Conference (of which details are not yet availab... ld in Addis Ababa under the Presidency of the Emperor of ...niopia, also resolved to continue its support of Federal policy, and with some notable exceptions, followed a similar course to the previous Conference . The first difference was that for the first time General Gowon led the Nigerian delegation. He told the summit meeting that unless the war was ended on the basis of the OAU's Kinshasa and Algiers resolutions, his Government would carry on military operations to their logical conclusion. The second was the presence of President Nyerere (who had established himself as the champion of Biafra's cause), and his dramatic appeal to the OAU to halt the slaughter in Biafra. In a booklet labelled 'For Limited Circulation Only', and entitled 'The Nigeria-Biafra Crisis', Nyerere urged the Organisation to speak out against injustice perpetrated by African nations.

> "If we do not learn to criticize injustice within our own continent we will soon be tolerating Fascism in Africa so long as it is practised by African governments against African peoples...
>
> Consider what our reaction would have been if the 30,000 Ibos had been massacred by the Whites in Rhodesia or South Africa. One can imagine the outcry in Africa.
>
> Yet these people are still dead. The colour of those who killed them is irrelevant... justice is indivisible. Africa and the OAU must act accordingly." (1)

Despite Nyerere's efforts, and his personal meeting with Gowon, members of the OAU remained consistent with their earlier policy decisions on Nigeria, thus granting the Federal Government yet another year's grace in order to bring the war to 'its logical conclusion'.

II. The Recognisers.

On 13th April, 1968 Mr Chediel Mgonja, Tanzania's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, announced to a hastily called press conference that his country had decided to recognise Biafra as an independent sovereign entity and a member of

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1. The Star, Johannesburg, 8.9.69, p. 3.

of the community of nations. He said that with 30,000 of their number murdered in massacres which the Federal Government had not prevented the fears of the Easterners were genuine and deep-seated; and the only way of allaying those fears was by the Federal Government's agreement to discuss their future as equals; for when a whole people was rejected by the majority of the state in which it lived it had the right to live under a different political arrangement. He concluded that only by recognising Biafra could Tanzania remain true to its conviction 'that the purpose of society and the world political organisation is service to man'.(1) On 28th April President Nyerere, in The Observer (London), in an article entitled 'Why I Recognised Biafra' evinced the humanitarian motives underlying the recognition, and provided one of the most significant statements on the war.

> "Leaders of Tanzania have probably talked more about the need for African unity than those of any other country. Giving formal recognition to even greater disunity in Africa was therefore a very difficult decision to make. Our reluctance to do so was compounded by our understanding of the problems of unity - of which we have some experience - and of the problems of Nigeria. For we have had very good relations with the Federation of Nigeria, even to the extent that when we needed help from Africa we asked it of the Federation.
>
> But unity can only be based on the general consent of the people involved. The people must feel that this State, or this Union, is theirs; and they must be willing to have their quarrels in that context. Once a large number of the people of any such political unit stop believing that the State is theirs, and that the Government is their instrument, then the unit is no longer viable. It will no longer be able to receive the loyalty of its citizens.
>
> For the citizen's duty to serve, [illegible] necessary to die for, his country stems from the fact that it is his and that its Government is the instrument of himself and his fellow-citizens. The duty stems, in other words, from the common denominator of accepted statehood, and from the State Government's responsibility to protect all the citizens and serve them all. For States, and Governments, exist for men and for the service of man. They exist for the citizens' protection, their welfare, and the future well-being of their children. There is no other justification for States and Governments except man.
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> In Nigeria this consciousness of a common citi-

1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968, p. 1040b.

zenship was destroyed by the events of 1966, and in particular by the pogroms in which 30,000 Eastern Nigerians were murdered, many more injured, and about two million forced to flee from the North of their country. It is these pogroms, and the apparent inability or unwillingness of the authorities to protect the victims, which underlies the Easterners' conviction that they have been rejected by other Nigerians and abandoned by the Federal Government.

Whether the Easterners are correct in their belief that they have been rejected is a matter for argument. But they do have this belief. And if they are wrong they have to be convinced that they are wrong. They will not be convinced by being shot. Nor will their acceptance as part of the Federation be demonstrated by the use of Federal power to bomb schools and hospitals in the areas to which people fled from persecution.

In Britain, in 1950, the Stone of Scone was stolen from Westminster Abbey by the Scottish Nationalists while I was still a student at Edinburgh. The act did not represent a wish by the majority of the Scottish people to govern themselves. But if, for some peculiar reason, the vast majority of Scottish people decided that Scotland should secede from the United Kingdom, would the Government in London order the bombing of Edinburgh, and in pursuing the Scots into the Highlands, kill the civilians they overtook? Certainly the Union Government would not do this, it would argue with the Scots, and try to reach some compromise.

As President of Tanzania it is my duty to safeguard the integrity of the United Republic. But if the mass of the people of Zanzibar should, without external manipulation, and for some reason of their own, decide that the Union was prejudicial to their existence, I could not advocate bombing them into submission. To do so would not be to defend the Union. The Union would have ceased to exist when the consent of its constituent members was withdrawn. I would certainly be one of those working hard to prevent secession, or to reduce its disintegrating effects. But I could not support a war on the people whom I have sworn to serve - especially not if the secession is preceded by a rejection of Zanzibaris by Tanganyikans.

Similarly, if we had succeeded in the 1963 attempt to form an East African Federation, or if we should do so in the future, Tanzania would be overjoyed. But if at some time thereafter the vast majority of the people of any one of the countries should decide - and persist in a decision - to withdraw from the Federation, the other two countries could not wage war against the people who wished to secede. Such a decision would mark a failure by the Federation. That would be tragic; but it would not justify mass killings.

The Biafrans now feel that they cannot live under conditions of personal security in the present Nigerian Federation. As they were unable to achieve an agree-

ment on a new form of association, they have therefore claimed the right to govern themselves. The Biafrans are not claiming the right to govern anyone else. They have not said that they must govern the Federation as the only way of protecting themselves. They have simply withdrawn their consent to the system under which they used to be governed.

Biafra is not now operating under the control of a democratic Government, any more than Nigeria is. But the mass support for the establishment and defence of Biafra is obvious. This is not a case of a few leaders declaring secession for their own private glory. Indeed by the Aburi Agreement the leaders of Biafra showed a greater reluctance to give up hope of some form of unity with Nigeria than the masses possessed. But the agreement was not implemented.

Tanzania would still like to see some form of co-operation or unity between all the peoples of Nigeria and Biafra. But whether this happens, to what extent, and in what fields, can only be decided by agreement among all the peoples involved. It is not for Tanzania to say.

We in this country believe that unity is vital for the future of Africa. But it must be a unity which serves the people, and which is freely determined upon by the people.

For 10 months we have accepted the Federal Government's legal right to our support in a 'police action to defend the integrity of the State.' On that basis we have watched a civil war result in the death of about 100,000 people, and the employment of mercenaries by both sides. We watched the Federal Government reject the advice of Africa to talk instead of demanding surrender before talks could begin. Everything combined gradually to force us to the conclusion that Nigerian unity did not exist.

Tanzania deeply regrets that the will for unity in Nigeria has been destroyed over the past two years. But we are convinced that Nigerian unity cannot be maintained by force any more than the unity in East Africa could be created by one State conquering another.

It seemed to us that by refusing to recognise the existence of Biafra we were tacitly supporting a war against the people of Eastern Nigeria - and a war conducted in the name of unity. We could not continue doing this any longer." (1)

In Paris, President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast issued a personal statement describing Nyerere's step as an 'act of great political courage'(2) and great human significance; and

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1. The Observer, London, 28.4.68, p. 10.
2. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968, p. 1044c.

ex-President Azikiwe in a message of gratitude stated that Nyerere had proved his 'mettle as a morally responsible human being whose word is his bond. It takes moral courage of an unprecedented nature to do what you have done for the fourteen million Biafrans'.(1) Nigeria's Commissioner for External Affairs, Okoi Arikpo, stated that in the eyes of the Federal Government the Tanzanian decision was a 'declaration of war amounting to a complete severance of relations'(2) and the Nigerian High Commissioner in Dar-es-Salaam, Sonji Williams, was withdrawn. In an official statement on 13th April the Federal Military Government said that Tanzania's announcement had not come as a surprise:

> "For some time now the activities of Tanzanian Government in acquiring arms and training guerilla fighters for the rebels have been known to the Federal Government. The action of the Tanzanian Government is contrary to the Charter of the OAU to respect the territorial integrity of member countries of the Organisation and the unanimous resolution of the meeting of the Heads of State at Kinshasa in September 1967, condemning secession in any African country and affirming their support for the territorial integrity of Nigeria.
>
> The Nigerian Government regards this as a hostile act by a country it has sincerely treated as a friend. In Tanzania's hour of need in 1964 when the Tanzanian army mutinied against the Nyerere régime, Nigeria readily responded to President Nyerere's desperate appeal for Nigerian troops to save him, restored law and order and preserved the territorial integrity of Tanzania.
>
> It will be recalled that the troops of the Nigerian Army went to Tanzania on the order of the late Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, who was murdered on January 15th, 1966, by those who subsequently carried out the rebellion which President Nyerere now seeks to recognise." (3)

On 8th May, 1968 Gabon recognised Biafra:

> "When one thinks that hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians - women, old men and children - are condemned, in an absolutely illegal struggle, to pay with their lives for the right to existence recognised to every human being, the Gabon people and Government could not without hypocrisy take refuge behind the principle of so-called non-interfe-

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968, p. 1041a. Azikiwe has since disclaimed responsibility for all statements made in support of Biafra since he alleges that they were made under duress.
2. West Africa, 20.4.68, p. 473.
3. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968, p. 1040b.

ference in the internal affairs of another state..." (1)

On 14th May, 1968 the Ivory Coast recognised Biafra:

> "Do people realise that more people have died in ten months in Biafra than in three years in Vietnam? The problem between the Federation of Nigeria and Biafra must be brought back to its only true aspect, the human aspect and a human solution must be found. We must therefore sacrifice everything for peace." (2)

On 20th May, 1968 Zambia recognised Biafra:

> "War in our opinion will not induce surrender. It will, as has already been seen, continue to widen the gap between the two combatants and increase fear among those who are the victims of the war. The indiscriminate massacre of the innocent civilian population has filled us with horror. For unity to be meaningful and beneficial it must be based on the consent of all parties concerned, offering security and justice to all. The Government is convinced that the heritage of bitterness stemming from this horrifying war will make it impossible to create any basis for political unity of Biafra and Nigeria." (3)

Thus four African states, in disregard of one of the most cardinal principles of the OAU Charter, took the unprecedented step of recognising the legal existence of the seceded sector of a member state: four states - one in East Africa, one in Central Africa, one in West Africa and one in Southern Africa - which lay at opposite poles not only of Africa's geographical map but also of Africa's political map. The Ivory Coast and Gabon are conservative and moderate in economic and political policies, both internal and external, and are French-speaking members of the OCAM. Tanzania and Zambia are English-speaking countries regarded as leading protagonists of radicalism and socialism on the continent. Attributes common to all four can be listed only negatively: none of them has a Moslem majority or an influential Moslem community; none has a military government; none has suffered a successful coup (although both Gabon and Tanzania have had to appeal for external aid to overcome internal rebellion); none shares a border with Nigeria, nor is in any way

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1. Statement by Cabinet of Gabon, West Africa, 18.5.68, p. 593.
2. President Houphouet-Boigny, Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 5, 1968, p. 1073a.
3. Zambian Foreign Minister, Reuben Kamanga, Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 5, 1968, p. 1073b.

dependent on the Nigerian Government's goodwill; and none of their leaders was in 1968 in imminent danger of having his country's unity destroyed by secessionist attempts. It is difficult to discern any other pattern in the composition of these countries or in the personalities of Nyerere, Bongo, Houphouet-Boigny or Kaunda.

Nyerere's decision appears to have been a morally provoked one, evolved independently of any external pressure, and based, firstly, on the conviction that the tragic recent history of Nigeria including the war - which he judged a genocidal process - precluded the possibility of the Ibos ever finding security in a united Nigeria; secondly, on the belief that the war was inhibiting the struggle against racialism in Southern Africa, for which his country is the principal base; and thirdly, in the hope that recognition of Biafra would persuade General Gowon to negotiate with Ojukwu without insisting on rigid terms. Kaunda's approach was also humanitarian and his decision derived from similar reasoning to that of Nyerere, whose example he chose to follow. Both leaders may have derived some satisfaction from opposing and embarassing Britain in return for the latter's equivocal performance in Rhodesia.

Recognition by the Ivory Coast and Gabon can best be understood in terms of French policy for Biafra. The de Gaulle-Foccart decision to declare support for the secessionists might have appeared a quixotic adventure and would not have brought de Gaulle credit or advantage in Biafra or in the world, were his new allies to suffer immediate military defeat. Thus he determined to bolster Ojukwu's war effort, for which purpose bases in Africa were required, whence supplies and weapons could be ferried to Biafra; and which, with careful security, could be utilised to camouflage the provision of French arms under cover of indirect military aid from a source unknown. Gabon and the Ivory Coast were deemed to fit the bill: while both Libreville and Abidjan were geographically close enough to Nigeria to act as bases, neither country was a neighbour of or dependent upon Nigeria; both were sufficiently secure economically to overcome any African sanctions which might result from their backing secession; both had been instrumental in disbanding the two French colonial federations, had consistently criticised the concept of

federalism in Africa, and thus felt a certain camaraderie with the Ibos, whose struggle for self-determination they understood; neither was linked through religion, culture or tradition with Nigeria; and both maintained close and cordial relations with France. Above all both would be willing to assist in the implementation of the French stratagem. Houphouet-Boigny had by April-May, 1968 become convinced not only of the merit of the Biafran argument for a state separate from Nigeria, but also of the fact - in which belief he was encouraged by President Senghor of Senegal - that there was a strong tide of African opinion in favour of the secessionists. While the view that Gabon 'exercises no independent foreign policy and was told to act as she did'(1) may be too broad, there can be little doubt that President Albert Bongo would hardly have thought of recognising Biafra without a nudge from Paris. Most francophone states have regularly endorsed the major planks of de Gaulle's foreign policy; Gabon went further and acquiesced in what might be termed the General's international adventures: thus Gabon was one of the few French-speaking African states (excluding radicals and North Africa) which in June, 1967 concurred in France's sudden switch of policy in the Middle East. In deference to the French President's antagonism towards the United States it expelled the Peace Corps; and in support of de Gaulle's Quebec policy, Gabon bypassed Canada and invited Quebec to send delegates to a meeting of the African and Francophone Education Ministers' Conference. On Bongo's arrival in Paris he hinted at criticism of Tanzania's recognition by saying that the war was purely a Nigerian affair: three weeks later, having discussed the question with de Gaulle and Houphouet-Boigny - who was in Paris at the same time - Bongo left France in a changed frame of mind.

III. The Rest of Africa.

Although only four states recognised Biafra there were a number of others which at various times questioned Federal methods, expressed scepticism about Federal aims and uncertainty about the war in general, or which made public statements or acted in ways which Gowon's Government considered at best non-com-

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1. Cohen, Robin, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, Letter, dd. 9.1.69.

mittal and at worst as unfriendly intervention, potentially morale-boosting for the rebels. There is little doubt, for instance, that President Senghor's sympathy lay with the secessionists: a communiqué, issued after a meeting in March, 1968 between him and Nyerere, stated that the two leaders had noted with concern the deteriorating situation in certain parts of Africa and considered that genocide and the oppression of minorities were impeding progress towards African unity. Soon after the meeting Nyerere decided to grant recognition to Biafra. Apparently, too, Senghor urged Houphouet-Boigny to follow Nyerere's example on the understanding that Senegal was about to do the same. However while he might personally have desired to promote the Ibo cause, his ninety per cent Moslem population did not, and after the four countries had made their announcements of recognition, he switched his support back to the Federal Government. Although President Zinsou of Dahomey recognised only the Federal Government and visited Lagos to reassure Gowon of his support, he entertained serious doubts, which he expressed publicly, stating that while he was above all against secession, he was also against war as a solution to the problem:

> "This might sound a Norman statement (Norman, in French, means 'equivocal') but the situation is very difficult. If one admits the principle of secession, no one can say where it will stop, and a thousand reasons will be produced for areas to secede... can one say, however, that the boundaries of colonisation were so well made as to be irreversible, and in respect for them, should thousands die? If four million Rhodesians can make a state, why not eight million or so Ibos of the same race and culture?" (1)

In 1969 Zinsou negotiated an agreement with August Lindt for Red Cross supplies to be flown from Cotonou to Biafra, an agreement about which Chief Enahoro said the Nigerian Government had not been consulted, and of which it disapproved. Radio Kaduna criticised Dahomey for 'taking over the dirty work of providing the International Red Cross with a base to resume its illegal flights' and protested that such a step could not be reconciled with Dahomey's declared support for Nigeria. (2) Zinsou replied that he backed neither Nigeria nor Biafra but it was his duty to attempt to alleviate human suffering. He might have gone further had the

1. West Africa, 5.10.68, p. 1163.
2. Ibid., 8.2.69, p. 165.

Yoruba people of his own country not reminded him of their sympathy for the Federal Government in demonstrations in Porto Novo accusing him of collaborating with the rebels.

André Hombessa, Information Minister of the Congo (Brazzaville) urged General Gowon to understand that he had nothing to gain from continuing a war which the Congo Government considered the shame of Africa; and asserted that the Nigerian war had 'become a human problem, and it is that aspect which concerns the Congo Government'.(1) In Tunisia there was considerable press sympathy for Biafra, and President Bourguiba, who maintained close contact with Houphouet-Boigny, declared that 'under the pretext of unity, everything was being done to destroy an ethnic group of 10 m. Ibos - one cannot stand idly by before such a massacre'.(2) Chief Awolowo described the speech of the Tunisian representative to the OAU Conference in Algiers as non-committal, and at the preparatory Foreign Ministers' Conference, Tunisia suggested inviting Biafra to the summit and amending the summit agenda to broaden discussion on the Consultative Committee's report.

Awo disapproved, too, of Gambia's speech. This was hardly surprising for Gambia had been one of the first countries to suggest that some form of international mediation was required and to raise the issue at the UN. The Foreign Minister, Alhaji A.B. N'Jie, commented to the General Assembly:

> "As regards Nigeria, although the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federation must be respected and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other States recognised, my Government feels that the situation has reached a stage where the possibility of some form of international mediation should be explored."(3)

The Nigerian Government was also piqued at the role which Sierra Leone chose to play. Although the Foreign Minister, L.A.M. Brewah, visited Nigeria to express support for General Gowon, he also spoke of the Nigerian conflict in his speech at the UN. Saying that the Nigeria-Biafra struggle had surpassed Rhodesia in importance for his Government, he urged the Assembly to give the matter its full attention; and he called for a

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968. p. 1044b.
2. Africa Confidential, No. 13, 28.6.68, p. 2.
3. West Africa, 7.10.67, p. 1317.

ceasefire to be supervised by neutral observers. During the 1969 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference Sierra Leone's Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens, pressed for the establishment of a peace committee whose purpose would be to seek an immediate ceasefire. This was thought to have prompted Nigeria belatedly to promote the candidature of Togo, in opposition to Sierra Leone, for the West African seat in the Security Council, to be decided later this year.

In the opening address to the third East and Central African Summit, held in Kampala, on 15th December, 1967 President Obote of Uganda explained the African quandary:

> "It is clear from the OAU resolution on Nigeria that between unity and separation, the OAU voted for unity. There is, however, no doubt that in the Nigerian tragedy the OAU is in a dilemma. On the one hand it must support the unity of Nigeria. On the other hand, however, due to the continuation of the conflict, the OAU resolution may appear to be disregarding and tolerating the tragic loss of many African lives." (1)

President Obote was thought to be on the point of recognising Biafra in the early part of 1968, but once it became apparent that he might be able to act as host to the first round of peace talks, he desisted. In opening the negotiations he urged the warring parties not to spend their time debating whether the war was just or unjust, and to remember that the overriding need was to bring it to an end. The Kenyan Government, as in many other international confrontations, managed to pursue a quiet role of neutrality, although the Leader of the Opposition, Oginga Odinga, urged the recognition of Biafra. Burundi's Foreign Minister, Atawu-Rishira, announced in April, 1968 in Dar-es-Salaam that having had discussions with Nyerere he was able to appreciate the reasoning behind the Tanzanian decision and that, if the prevailing situation in the civil war remained unaltered, many countries would have to recognise Biafra.

For the rest, Africa has supported the Federal Government in its prosecution of the war and in its aim of re-establishing a unified Nigeria. Except for Tunisia (although Morocco is also reported to have shown certain hesitation in supporting Ni-

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 12, 1967, p. 923b.

geria at the OAU Foreign Ministers' Meetings) Africa's Arab and Moslem states have given General Gowon their unequivocal endorsement. The United Arab Republic and Algeria not only gave diplomatic backing, but both, particularly the UAR, supplied the Nigerian Air Force with pilots, and Algeria permitted its airports to be used as bases for transporting Soviet weapons to Nigeria. Mauritania informed Gowon that as a supporter of African unity it backed the Federal effort to crush the rebellion, as did the President of the Sudanese Supreme Council, El Azhari, (the Provisional Government of Southern Sudan was obviously partial to the secessionists and its Foreign Minister, Gordon Mayem, had congratulated Nyerere on his recognition of Biafra, and requested him to intervene in the Sudanese war.) Prime Minister Egal of Somalia said, on a visit to Tanzania, that, although his government deplored the killings in Nigeria, he did not think recognition of Biafra would be expedient. President Keita of Mali told a press conference that to encourage Biafran secession 'would be to encourage the disintegration of Africa and support the formation of tribal States'.(1) The Guinean President, Sekou Touré, in a message transmitted by the Nigerian Trade Commissioner, Ali Monguno, reaffirmed his solid backing for the Federal Government, saying that he would find it difficult to reconcile secession with the policy of African unity. President Lamizana of Upper Volta repeated on a number of occasions his support for Lagos.

Togo's President Eyadema, having come to an agreement with Gowon on the compensation payable by Nigeria to Togo in return for Nigerian currency which the Togolese authorities had discovered aboard an aircraft, and which they had impounded and returned to Nigeria, acknowledged the merit of the Federal case. When in October, 1968 Spain amalgamated Rio Muni and the island of Fernando Po into the independent state of Equatorial Guinea, Nigerians feared that the new state, with the majority of the Fernando Po population being of Eastern Nigerian origin, might yield to internal pressures and advocate Biafran independence. It appears, however, that after an unsuccessful plot to bring to power the defeated presidential candidate, Bonifacio Ondo Edu,

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1. Ibid., No. 4, 1968, p. 1044c.

(in which a number of Ibos were implicated) President Macias took up an increasingly anti-Biafran position, and agreed to establish diplomatic relations with the Federal Government. This was followed by a deterioration in relations between Macias and the Red Cross and in January, 1969 Macias (probably with some encouragement from Lagos) suspended the Red Cross flights for five weeks, and then permitted them to resume under stringent conditions. For this Radio Nigeria praised him as a man of courage and added that Nigeria was in a unique position to assist his country.(1)

In Southern Africa, no state, except Zambia, was prepared to support the Ibos' right to self-determination. President Tsiranana of Madagascar condemned Tanzania's recognition and declared that he opposed Biafra's secession and secession in general. President Nyerere's announcement, he felt, not only encouraged disruptive forces in other countries but showed 'dishonesty' towards another member of the OAU. Pointing out that there was oil in Biafra, he warned other countries against falling into similar 'traps laid by the imperialists'.(2) Malawi's President Banda has consistently argued that it was wrong to recognise Biafra and that it was up to the Nigerians to solve their own problems. An official Malawian statement reads:

> "The attitude of the Government of Malawi has always been one of warm friendship towards and co-operation with the Government of Nigeria, both before and since the outbreak of civil war in Nigeria. The Government of Malawi does not recognize the breakaway regime in Biafra and continues to recognize the Federal Government of Nigeria as the lawfully established Government of the whole country." (3)

The Lesotho Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the following information:

> "The Lesotho Government is very much concerned about the restoration of peace to a unified Nigeria and has accordingly supported all efforts to end the civil war on the basis of a unified Nigeria." (4)

The Swaziland Department of Foreign Affairs has made the following statement:

> "The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland

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1. West Africa, 26.4.69, p. 486.
2. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1968, p. 1044c.
3. Malawi Legation, Pretoria, Letter, dd. 13.12.68, No. SAF 7/3/2.
4. Lesotho Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maseru, Letter, dd. 2.12.68, Ref. FRGN/ENQ/1.

supports the Organisation of African Unity in its efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Nigerian problem, and the maintenance of the territorial and sovereign integrity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria." (1)

And the Office of the President of Botswana has declared that

"The position of Botswana in controversial world situations such as the Civil War in Nigeria is that of peaceful negotiation.

Botswana has hitherto refused to recognise Biafra as a sovereign independent state until such time as the now very fluid situation will have crystallised one way or the other." (2)

(This infers that Botswana might recognise Biafra, if the secessionists establish themselves more firmly; an inference strengthened by Botswana's abstention on the Nigerian resolution in Algiers in 1968.)

The South African Department of Foreign Affairs has stated that

"South Africa while deeply concerned about the civil war in Nigeria, refrains from intervening in what is essentially a domestic matter of Nigeria." (3)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Hilgard Muller, announced in September, 1968 that the Government had decided to supply Biafra with protein food and medical supplies to an amount of N£12,500 (R25,000). Both warring sides accused the other of using South Africanand Rhodesian mercenaries and numerous newspapers, both Nigerian and foreign, reported that South Africa was supplying arms to Biafra. The most recent report was in the London Telegraph in which it was claimed that the South African Air Force was ferrying arms from Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal to a point 200 miles west of Gaborone in Botswana and from there via Sao Tomé or Libreville to Biafra. Botswana denied this and the South African Minister of Defence, Mr P.W. Botha, described the report as a 'story of fantasy'. (4)

K. Conclusion.

"...many have mistaken the force of arms for the consent of the people, and reckon conquest as one of

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1. Swaziland Department of Foreign Affairs, Mbabane, Letter, dd. 23.10.68, Ref. DFA.215.
2. Botswana, Office of the President, Gaborone, Letter, dd. 11.12.68, Ref. CP 8/5.
3. South African Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, Letter, dd. 4.11.68, Ref. 36/3 1/129/3.
4. Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, 11.8.69, P. 4.

> the originals of government. But conquest is as far from setting up any new government as demolishing a house is from building a new one in the place. Indeed, it often makes way for a frame of a commonwealth by destroying the former; but, without the consent of the people, can never erect a new one." - John Locke, 17th Century. (1)

> "It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things." - Niccolò Machiavelli, 15th Century. (2)

Many years after the above comments had been written of the pitfalls involved in the conquest of a people and the construction of a new society, and many miles from where they had been written, similar thoughts must have been in the minds of the leaders of Africa's most populous and troubled nation; for their war is not yet concluded, nor is the end in sight. For 27 months their country has been racked by a vicious and complex civil war, which has cost about two million lives, mainly civilians and children. Although the Federal forces have retaken as much as nine-tenths of the rebel-held territory, and for the last eighteen months commentators have been predicting the final and imminent collapse of Biafra, yet the war goes on; and the secessionist army has demonstrated its resolve to struggle on indefinitely. Although, without the outbreak of serious disorder in other parts of Nigeria, the Biafrans have little hope of staging a dramatic and sustained recovery of the land they proclaimed as theirs in 1967, it is well nigh impossible to determine not only when the war will end, but also how it may end and what the end will involve. Possibly the war will grind on to a gradual and painful conclusion, during which time the dividing line between orthodox warfare and guerilla warfare may become indistinguishable; possibly, as in the Sudan, the fighting will become a permanent part of the Nigerian scene, and if the Federal Government can effectively isolate Biafra from the world, it may be transformed from Africa's most notorious war into one of those 'forgotten wars', of which political journals remind their readers once a year or so; or possibly the Federal army will triumph and a Biafran Provisional Government

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1. Locke, John, Two Treatises of Civil Government, London, 1924, p. 207.
2. Machiavelli, Niccolò, The Prince and the Discourses, New York, 1950, p. 21.

will be established in Zambia or Tanzania, from where no more than propaganda attacks can be launched.

If one accepts, for the sake of discussion, that war will end in six months - that Ojukwu and his senior supporters will flee the country, and that the Federal troops take effective control of all the heavily populated areas of the East Central State - what form of political structure will evolve in Nigeria? General Gowon has managed to rule the country for over three years under considerable difficulties, confronted with problems, tensions and pressures, both internal and external, which might have culminated in the collapse of more experienced leaders. The economy of Nigeria - aided principally by the restoration of oil production which by the end of 1969 is expected to reach 800,000 barrels a day compared with 500,000 before the war - has demonstrated a remarkable resilience in the face of a costly war. The conclusion of hostilities however, rather than bring any national peace to the country and personal credit to Gowon may well unleash disruptive and destructive forces which may throw the country back into a turmoil of regional, tribal and personal squabbles. In the northern states dissatisfaction with the leadership of the mild, youthful Gowon, who is a Christian and a member of a minor tribe, has already been demonstrated. How long will the Hausa-Fulani people be prepared to tolerate a distant military government, before attempting to reassert their hegemony over a country they believe is theirs to dominate? Many northerners fighting in the war do so with the aim, not of reunifying Nigeria, but of blasting forever any hopes the Ibos might have of attempting to play an influential role in the country's future. The Federal army is less a Nigerian army than an anti-Ibo army. Should such men, on returning from the war, be persuaded that control of the nation's affairs ought to revert to the north, they will not hesitate to use force to bring this about.

The Yorubas of the Western State have shown little enthusiasm for the twelve-state system and varying interest in the successful prosecution of the war; and, to add to the difficulty of dealing with the Yorubas, the pre-war division between the followers of Awolowo and of the late Akintola have again come to the surface in sporadic rioting, officially referred to as tax riots. Awolowo, himself, who is Gowon's deputy, in a recent-

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ly published book, entitled 'The People's Republic', declared it was his 'confident prediction' that with the exception of Kano, Lagos and the Western and East Central states, each of the twelve states would 'pass through a period of internal disharmony, instability and turmoil, until they finally disintegrate and completely disappear in the forms in which we know them. New constituent states with new boundaries will then emerge'.(1)

In such circumstances it is highly unlikely that General Gowon will be willing for some time to abandon the uncertain future of Nigeria to politicians who failed so miserably on foundations far more secure than at present. But it is questionable whether it will be up to Gowon to decide. The man with whom he so often identifies, Abraham Lincoln, was assassinated soon after he had succeeded in restoring peace and unity to his country; one bullet can change a government, and should the Biafran Ibos be permitted freedom of movement, Nigeria will not lack for potential assassins. Aside from the possibility of assassination and tribal tensions, how will the Federal Government cope with the jealousies and ambitions of senior officers and with 100,000 men returning from the war and adding drastically to that perennial problem of underdeveloped countries - unemployment? How will it handle the Ibo secessionists? Will it continue to punish them? Or will it attempt to forget past differences and assimilate them into the nation? Both paths are fraught with hazards. Will a fresh and mutual trust permit the country to progress, or will the old suspicions and hates ferment further convulsions?

Since the answer to the question 'Whither Nigeria?' is, to say the least, problematic, so too is the answer to the question 'Whither Nigeria's international relations?' In contemplating the paths which Nigeria might pursue in world affairs and the methods of approach it might use in dealing with other countries, there are certain constant factors and certain known factors which warrant mention. Firstly, with the return of the East Central State to the fold, the fundamental demography of the country would revert to pre-war proportions; Nigeria will resume its position as Africa's most populous and diverse nation, containing over 200 small tribes, and a small number of large and

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1. Africa Confidential, No. 21, 25.10.68, p. 2.

powerful tribes. In the conduct of foreign affairs, even a military government will have to take account of the convictions and sensibilities of the northern and southern states, of the Moslems and the Christians, of the large tribes and the small, of the progressives and the conservatives and of the realists and idealists. For it remains a prime responsibility of any Nigerian Government, if it cannot utilise foreign policy to heal internal ruptures, at least to make certain that the issues involved in external relations do not exacerbate the tensions involved in internal affairs. Thus the underlying approach, founded in compromise, will not be altered radically. Secondly, Nigeria will continue to be an underdeveloped country requiring the economic support of the developed world. The United States, the United Kingdom and Western Europe remain the countries most obviously in a position to give substantial aid; and, no doubt, the West will make strenuous efforts to assist in the reconstruction of the country in an attempt to thwart the Soviet efforts to make increasingly rapid headway. Thirdly, Nigeria's official language is still English, making study in English-speaking countries more feasible and scholarships to them more popular, and creating a greater demand for English-speaking experts, advisers, lecturers and teachers. The close contact with the US and particularly the UK should therefore survive. Fourthly, the guidelines determined by Sir Abubakar have not lost their poignancy or their applicability; in fact many of his beliefs have been reinforced by recent experience. Basic to his policies toward Africa was the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for the territorial integrity of fellow African states; and these principles have been constantly reiterated in Nigeria's appeals to the rest of Africa not to meddle in the country's domestic affairs. If Sir Abubakar was too conscious of the intricate problems of holding one state together to contemplate an African continental state, the Military Government, after two years of war, is all the more aware of it; and a Government which has fought for so long to preserve territorial integrity against internal rebellion, will be all the more determined to defend it against any external pressures. One might expect that Sir Abubakar's measured and cautious approach, his conviction that Nigeria must move from the known to the unknown, and his refusal to become involved in foreign issues not

affecting his country will be emulated. Finally, his policies on racialism and colonialism should continue unchanged, except that antagonism towards Portugal has been intensified by the Portuguese support of Biafra.

The training which some of Nigeria's military leaders have had is not irrelevant.(1) General Gowon received military training at Eaton Hall, Cheshire, before entering the RMAS Anzio Company, Sandhurst, and then undergoing an Officers' course at Hythe and Warminster. Having served in the Congo he returned to the Staff College at Camberley in Surrey. Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Usman Katsina, son of the Emir of Katsina, and Military Governor of Northern Nigeria, was trained in Ghana, attended the Cadet School, Aldershot, the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, the Small Arms School in Kent, the School of Infantry, Warminster and in 1962 did further training in infantry manoeuvres in the United States. Colonel Robert Adeyinka Adebayo, Military Governor of the West, attended the School of Infantry, Ghana, from which he went for further training to Camberley, the Imperial Defence College, London, and Eaton Hall. Brigadier B.O. Ogundipe, at present Nigeria's High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, served in India and Burma in World War II and has completed military courses at Chester, Warminster, Camberley and the Imperial Defence College. Kam Selem, Inspector General of the Nigeria Police, attended a course at Ryton-on-Dunsmore, and Commodore J.E.A. Wey, head of the Nigerian Navy, trained at the London County School for Marine Engineers. All in all this is a most unlikely group to allow their country to fall under Communist domination, or to pursue a radical or adventurous foreign policy; and their training is typical of the senior echelons of Nigeria's military establishment.

It is difficult to discern the extent of the current influence of men such as Chief Awolowo, Chief Enahoro, Joseph Tarka and Aminu Kano(2) and in what direction they may exert it. Awo, Enahoro and Tarka swung from pre-independence conservatism to radicalism in the first Parliament after independence, largely

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1. Information extracted from The New Africans (Reuters Guide), A Guide to the Contemporary History of Emergent Africa and its Leaders, London, 1967.
2. See discussion in Chapter II.

to fulfil the role they saw for the opposition; but it is doubtful whether, at the moment, they judge radicalism to be in their own or in Nigeria's best interest. Aminu Kano is known to be in favour of closer relations with the Soviet Union. Other civilians in positions of note also strengthen the belief that Nigeria's foreign policy will not diverge radically from Sir Abubakar's: for example Kashim Ibrahim, who became adviser to the Military Governor of Northern Nigeria, is a highly respected Moslem who was formerly Governor of Northern Nigeria; Dr T.O. Elias, a respected international lawyer, who continues as Nigeria's Attorney-General, was educated at the University College, London, Trinity College, Cambridge, and the University of London, and lectured in Manchester and Delhi; and Okoi Arikpo, Nigeria's Commissioner of External Affairs, read anthropology and law at London University, served before independence as a Minister of Lands, Survey and Local Development and in 1962 was appointed by Prime Minister Balewa as Secretary of the National Universities Commission.

Yet the civil war, and the reaction to it of the world and Africa, will undoubtedly have some effect on Nigeria's future international relations. What impact these changes may have, how trenchant their influence might be and for what length of time they will persist are all open to conjecture. The question most frequently raised concerns any redirection of foreign policy consequent upon the Soviet Union's consistent and solid backing of the Federal Government. Russia has made gains in obtaining the gratitude of the Federal Military Government and an increment in political influence, in cultural and personal contact and in trade, which, while not significant, have nevertheless been noticeable.[1] A sound foundation has been fabricated on which Soviet-Nigerian accord can be further constructed; but the Soviet Government must be prepared not only to exercise patience and discretion but also to make some accommodation in normal Soviet trade policies. If the Soviet Union attempts to force the pace, or to interfere in Nigeria's domestic politics, or becomes too active in trade union and youth movements or implicated in some attempt to overthrow the Nigerian Government, it might see all

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1. See discussion above, pp. 297 - 301.

hope of expanding the scope and depth of Soviet influence shattered in one fell swoop. (The recent report of Soviet attempts to topple Nasser and Nasser's purge of a number of his Soviet sympathisers might well make Gowon and his colleagues even more wary of Russian intentions). Secondly, if the USSR desires a marked increase in trading relations, Soviet economists will have to take account of the fact that Nigeria will not permit a substantial trade deficit. The Soviet Union will thus have to do what it has not been prepared to do before and that is to find a market for Nigerian exports - cocoa, rubber, palm oil, palm kernels, mineral oil, etc. - and accept the necessity of purchasing products regarded as unessential. Nevertheless the fact that Nigeria found it necessary to look elsewhere than to traditional suppliers of arms from the West, brought the country's leaders closer to implementing a policy of non-alignment than at any other time; and the Soviet Government's willing response should serve to both discourage Nigeria from denouncing Soviet policies (as demonstrated in the case of Czechoslovakia) and to be less reluctant to remonstrate with the West. In the Moscow-Peking feud, Nigeria will probably continue to express strong support for the USSR, as this will provide an issue in which gratitude for Soviet assistance and antipathy towards Chinese support of Biafra can be simultaneously and clearly demonstrated.

De Gaulle's proclamation of support for Biafra and his aid to the secessionists is unlikely to have a marked effect on Franco-Nigerian relations which have never been good. Nigeria has taken no drastic action, such as severing diplomatic relations (as it did in 1960), has allowed Nigerian students to take up French scholarships and has formally accepted French denials of military aid to Biafra: this indicates that the Federal Government is aware that a breach with France can only harm exports to the extremely important European market. De Gaulle's resignation was, however, received with great joy. Radio Kaduna (28.4.68) broadcast a talk entitled 'The Mighty Fallen. Good Riddance' in which it declared that the people 'should celebrate the fall of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, enemy of Nigeria'. (1)

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1. Africa Research Bulletin - Political, No. 4, 1969, p. 1384b.

Although the consequences for established foreign policy are as yet vague it appears more than likely that the influence of Christianity will suffer a setback in Nigeria. The Joint Church Aid, Nordchurchaid and Caritas have persisted in flying supplies to Biafra without the authority and against the wishes of the Federal Government, and the Catholic Church, in particular, has made statements about the war which General Gowon's Government has found objectionable. In Jos, in August, 1968, a crowd of 10,000 young workers demonstrated against de Gaulle and the Pope, bearing placards such as 'Away with Pope Paul' and 'All Catholic Priests in Nigeria Must Go', and calling for the formation of a Catholic Church of Nigeria, independent of the Vatican; and Radio Lagos frequently accused the world-wide organisations of the Catholic Church not only of supporting the rebellion but of using money collected to purchase arms for the Biafran army. In addition the Ibos, with a greater percentage of Christians (and Catholics) than any of the other major tribes, are unlikely to be in a position to counteract any anti-Christian sympathies.

Moslem support, by comparison, has been strongly in favour of the Federal Government and the assistance given by Algeria and the UAR in particular should result in Nigeria being more responsive to their appeals to vote with the Arabs in the UN and against Israel, which has expressed sympathy for the plight of the Ibos. The reduction of Ibo influence in Nigeria, which in the old Eastern and Mid-Western Regions had been toward friendly relations with Israel, should reinforce overall pro-Arab sentiment.

Nigeria's relations with Africa, as with the rest of the world, will revolve around the Government's determination to deny diplomatic recognition and any form of assistance to the secessionists; and until the war ceases all other policies will be subject to this one end. The Federal Government will continue to implement its own form of Hallstein Doctrine in accordance with which it severs diplomatic relations with any state recognising Biafra and strives to consolidate African support for the Federal cause in an attempt to create an uncomfortable atmosphere for the recognisers of Biafra. This has not been a simple task, for much of Africa regards the Nigerian war as something of an embarassment: once again foreign powers are making use of

an African conflict for their own ends; once again expatriate mercenaries have been introduced into an African war; once again an African conflagration has diverted attention from and weakened pressure on Rhodesia, South Africa, the Portuguese territories; and once again the OAU has proved itself incapable of finding a solution. In addition, until the secession is crushed Nigeria will find it difficult to assume a role of leadership in Africa and is unlikely to be selected to executive positions and peace commissions, for not only must Nigeria be considered to be on unfriendly terms with three very prominent African leaders in Nyerere, Kaunda and Houphouet-Boigny, but also Nigeria's delegates, far from being open-minded on African issues, will be making judgements in accordance with the attitudes which disputants have registered to the civil war. If Nigeria comes out of the war economically exhausted, it will be some years before it can resume the significant role it played before January, 1966. On the other hand, if the Federal Government can maintain the buoyancy of the economy, learn from the bitter experience of the past, overcome the problems of reconstruction, and handle post-war tribal tensions, then Nigeria might emerge a far more powerful, efficient and determined state than in the time of Sir Abubakar, and regain its significant influence in Africa's struggle for economic development and peaceful progress.

To attempt to say more in the middle of September of 1969 would be injudicious.

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Name of thesis The Developing International Relations Of Nigeria. 1969

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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