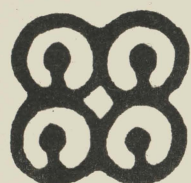


price 50¢

# The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War



africa research group





## A NECESSARY INTRODUCTION

*The end of Nigeria's civil war will mark for many an end of consciousness about the tensions in Africa's most populous country.*

*For three years, westerners have grown accustomed to glancing at the latest body count, or staring, unbelievably, at the week's best atrocity photo.*

*On the left, the issue was largely avoided.*

*Few radicals could trust the slick adverts which sold Biafra's plight; on the other hand the Nigerian's talk of "unity" seemed empty.*

*Where there was debate, slogans frequently were substituted for analysis.*

*The conspiracy theorists blamed it on the C.I.A .*

*Black nationalists upheld the principle of unity at all costs while a strange collection of genuine radicals, many more McCarthy liberals, and a frightening number of right wing zealots jumped to Biafra's defense.*

*Very few critics took a hard look at Nigeria itself, its class structure and economic dependency.*

*Seldom was the war located either in the country's historical development or its place in the world economy.*

*There have been few serious attempts at radical analysis.*

*In the pages that follow, we will attempt one.*

*Originally, we set out to write a book.*

*The task proved, frankly, too difficult for us to complete at this stage of the Africa Research Group's development.*

*So we've condensed our findings and summarized our conclusions.*

*As you will see, in the two sections which follow, many of our formulations are still tentative.*

*There is more research to be done.*

*We do not expect this to be the final word, or our last contribution on the subject.*

*We have decided to publish it now in hopes of provoking a different type of discussion about Nigeria and imperialism itself; one which pinpoints the nature of underdevelopment and the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism.*

*We hope it will stimulate more thoughts as to the methods of effective action which can challenge and change those institutions and systems which oppress so many of the world's peoples.*

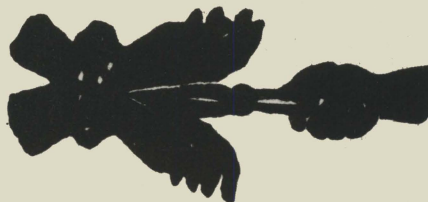
☐ April 1970



**africa research group**

p.o. box 213

cambridge, mass. 02138



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*"Another thing which bothers us is that, in the Eastern Hemisphere, American attention seems to be directed solely toward Asia. In this connection, I think that it is very important to realize that Nigeria, like Liberia, is led by Americans as well as by Africans; that although we have suffered under the British in the past, we have not yet had any Communists; and that the type of democratic government which we are evolving promises to be a relatively stable one; we hope that we are going to be able to achieve our goal within five or ten years by peaceful means. In other words, foreign investment will be safe with us, because we are not fanatics."*

S.J. Ojo  
Harvard Business Review  
July-August 1952

# The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War

A CLASS BASED PROBE INTO THE WAR'S ORIGINS AND IMPLICATIONS

The war in Nigeria is over. What was it all about? Many people have preferred not to ask themselves this question because the dynamics of the war were so elusive and its meaning so unclear. There were many, too many, who took positions instead of offering explanations. They did so opportunely in the face of growing pressure from rival political groups or simply out of frustration with their own inability to counter the advertisements selling one side or the other.

The death imagery of Biafra's struggle triggered--as it was intended to--intense emotional reactions. The *definition* of genocide became the issue, rather than the meaning of the war or its causes. Television presented the war as a spectacle of tribalism. Too often those who opposed the simplicity of the networks saw the war in equally crude terms as a battle for oil.

None of this answered the question of what the war was all about. What has yet to be dealt with is the class nature of the conflict and its relation to American capitalism. The first step is to reject the notion that there were only two sides to the war. In every sense, the real issues were not the ones presented to us by either the rulers of Nigeria or Biafra, or their great power allies. People have got to avoid falling into the trap--as they are conditioned daily to do--of choosing from alternatives framed in reactionary terms.

Reconciliation after the war has given new life to the middle class modernizing elites from both

sides through massive relief operations and a *long-planned* program of reconstruction. When one saw the *class* reunion of military elites and their civil servants, the meaning of reconstruction, and perhaps the destruction as well, revealed itself as an obscene calculation. Reconstruction plans were being nurtured by the World Bank and the Ford Foundation to whom the war represented an *opportunity* to accelerate modernization and expand American penetration of Nigeria's economy. One year before the war ended, the *New York Times* reported from Lagos: "Experts who believe that the civil war provides a rare opportunity to rebuild the country estimate that Nigeria will need nearly \$240 million for any effective reconstruction of roads and bridges."

The confusions generated by the war continued in its aftermath. After vowing to never surrender his "Biafran revolution" Ojukwu fled only to proclaim from exile that Biafra would live as long as he did. Meanwhile, his loyal cronies surprised all observers by the ease with which they sued for peace. More surprising still was the fact that the long expected and honestly feared "final solution" to the "Ibo problem" never materialized. No sooner had peace broken out than did the U.S. Secretary of State pay a friendly visit. As Nigeria patches itself up with a little help from its friends, neocolonialism seems there to stay. Only a class based analysis can penetrate and explain the war's origins and larger meaning for Africa--and us.



## A Class Framework

There are some thirteen major nationalities in Nigeria. This mosaic of ethnic groups is interwoven with the class forces making Nigeria's history. The problem of a class-based analysis is made doubly difficult by the economic specialization of the ethnic groups and the regional framework in which they are situated. Before independence in 1960 there were three regions, each dominated by a major ethnic group and based on the production of separate cash crops: a massive North, the most populous and least developed region, ruled by the Hausa-Fulani people producing mainly cotton and ground-nuts; a cocoa-rich and volatile West, run by the Yorubas; and the Ibo heartland, producer of palm oil and rubber, which held sway over the East. In addition, each region had its own tensions between the dominant ethnic groups and the minority groups like the Tiv in the North and the Ijaw, Efik and Ibibio in the East. With the exception of the Midwest Region, the rubber producing area which was carved out of the West in 1963, the three regions remained intact until shortly before the civil war when they were divided into twelve states by the Federal government.

The regions had developed unevenly over the years so that the wealth was concentrated mainly in the Southern two regions—the East and the West—particularly since the mushrooming oil industry had sprung up in the Eastern and Midwestern Regions. Lagos, the capitol city located on the coast, had its own special status as the center of colonial government and the place where British trading companies drained wealth from the regions.

Nigeria had passed through several stages of under-development since its first contacts with Europe—from slave trading to oil. Each phase saw the formation of different class forces within the regions and in Lagos to mediate the foreign exploitation of the country's resources. By 1960 three class forces were dominant: the traditional elites, the mercantile bourgeoisie and the middle class.

1. The *traditional elites* were mostly Emirs or Chiefs who ruled African society before the Europeans came and whose collaboration with the British enabled the latter to maintain control over the rural areas producing the main cash crops—ground-nuts, cocoa, palm fruit and rubber—which were the major source of wealth during the colonial period.
2. The *mercantile bourgeoisie* were African traders whose economic power originally developed from their organization of the slave trade but whose function was restricted to petty trading during the early colonial period—only to re-emerge as a nascent capitalist class during the postwar period.
3. The *middle class* consisted mainly of 'white collar' state employees who only developed as a class after World War II when the American led transition to neocolonial status began.

A permanent wish for identification with the bourgeois representatives of the mother country is to be found among the native intellectuals and merchants.—

Frantz Fanon

These class forces developed unevenly in two respects: they emerged at different moments in history and they tended to dominate specific geographic areas within Nigeria's economy. The Northern Emirs exercised their influence over the central government from a feudal base in the North; the mercantile bourgeoisie consolidated its power around the regional centers in the East and West; the influence of the middle class was concentrated in Lagos. Each of these dominant class forces felt its own position being undermined by the general crisis experienced by Nigeria during the post independence period. They were threatened by the growing insecurity and the sporadic revolt of the under classes—the farmers, migrant workers and urban proletariat—who were suffering economic stagnation and social repression at the hands of the ruling groups at all levels.

Most people have been led to believe that the war was principally a fight between the Northerners and the Ibos. This perspective was stamped indelibly in people's minds by the 1966 massacres of Ibos in the North. Actually this north-south axis had been viewed for years as the burning issue in Nigeria's politics. The war's significance, however, was precisely that it broke the old political mold based on regional power and asserted the dominance of Lagos. The war was not fought between two regional powers, nor two tribes—the Northerners and the Ibos. It was fought between Lagos and Biafra—between the urban middle class and the regional hinterland. The war weakened all regional power—whether it was that of the feudal Emirs or the nascent capitalist classes—and strengthened the city.

Those who continue to view the Northerners as the dominant power in Lagos under Gowon fail to realize that the transition to neocolonialism is changing the nature of Nigeria's dependency and, therefore, its class base. The pogroms organized by the traditional elites in the North, whose leader the Sarduna of Sokoto was assassinated during the first coup which led to General Aguiyi-Ironsi's rise to power in January 1966, were *not*—as some have claimed—plotted by the CIA or supported by American businessmen. That is one reason why American officials in Lagos backed the moderate Yakubu Gowon instead of the Northern secessionists when the second coup occurred in July 1966.

There were segments of British officialdom who apparently believed in Northern reaction but they, like the Emirs, were no longer the modern representatives of capitalist power. Every evidence suggests that the neocolonial solution was being arranged, through a series of military coups in 1966, by the newly emerging middle class in Lagos. In fact, the civil war may be seen partly as the result of a *withdrawal* of support for the Emirs, who were allied with the nascent capitalist class in the regions, and the transfer of backing—by international capital—to the Lagos middle class.



The Ibo-led middle class in Lagos, however, failed during Ironsi's rule to unite with its own class interests in the West and North. This set the stage for a split within the middle class itself. The second coup led by Gowon led many of the Ibo elites to choose secession rather than give up their dominant position in Lagos. Despite the massacres, the Northerners were not the real threat to the Ibo. The radical middle class among the minorities—represented by Gowon—whose allies in the East controlled the Delta areas where the oil was located posed a *double* threat: erosion of Ibo influence in Lagos and loss of control over the oil. The third coup which ended Ojukwu's rule in Biafra—along with the war itself—brought a reconciliation among the elites in Lagos, only now the minorities and the Yoruba were on top.

The Nigerian civil war was an outgrowth of the contradictions generated within the capitalist system by the transition from colonialism to the new modes of domination required by postwar capitalism. We call it a conflict among elites or an intra-class struggle because it stemmed from antagonisms among the three dominant classes: the traditional elites, the mercantile bourgeoisie and the middle class. Looked at from a global perspective, the war was the consequence of capitalism's attempt to organize the market as a colony and to establish the clear hegemony of the middle class.

**Neocolonialism is basically a product of the American corporations and the transformation they (collectively) have wrought upon the world economy in the postwar period.**

Neocolonialism is not simply more of the same—that is more colonialism. Nor is it merely a survival of old power relations. Neocolonialism is basically the product of the American corporations and the transformation they (collectively) have wrought upon the world economy in the postwar period. The essence of this new form of domination lies in the organization of urban mass markets (i.e. consumption) on a worldwide basis by the corporations. We are passing from the age of raw materials exploitation to what the managerial elites call "human resource development."

Colonial administration has disappeared only to be replaced by the organization of the market as a colony. This entails the introduction of all the instruments of coercion available to the omnipotent administrators of the marketplace: the mass produced consumer goods, the media networks, the supermarkets, market research and advertising. Corporate strategy views the *development* of these mass markets as the key to managing social change and preventing any revolutionary alternative to dependency. This does not mean that raw materials have become any less important. On the contrary, they are needed in larger quantities than ever. Only now the contemporary strategy for obtaining them aims at killing two birds with one stone: secure the raw materials and expand the market in which they find their end uses.



Gen. Gowon greeting Sir Louis Mbanefo (right) in Lagos. Col. Philip Effiong is in the centre.

### **TOGETHER AGAIN: The Nigerian and Biafran Elites who started the war end it with an embrace.**

This process has only just begun in Nigeria, yet it has been underway long enough to contribute significantly to the breakdown which led to civil war. Prior to the war, when Nigeria was being touted as an American "showcase," personnel and businessmen from the headquarters of corporate power were deeply involved in making decisions which helped to determine the tragic course of events in this country. All Nigeria's troubles cannot be heaped on the doormat of British colonialism or the American corporations. This popular demonology must be qualified. But, there is a tribe of interventionists and like the capitalism Bertold Brecht protested, it has a name and its own directory of street addresses. The development experts, foundation financed mechanics and the information gathering scholars wear different hats; but they are all disciples of a pseudo-technocratic expertise which is bound together by the common assumptions and managerial values of corporate imperialism. Their specialty since 1945 has been the rebuilding of war torn economies so that they could be more easily penetrated by American companies. While the State Department brandished its official neutrality throughout the Nigerian conflict, they continued to intervene daily in Nigerian affairs, all in the spirit of "reconstruction" and "relief."

#### **SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE**

**"Prosperous civil servants can still eat chicken—if only infrequently. Lesser men with money enough to buy food do not starve to death; it is the poor who die."**

Eric Pace, *New York Times*  
from Biafra, Sept. 13, 1969.



The break-up of the old colonial system and its replacement by the organization of the market as a colony required the shaping of a new class force on the Nigerian scene. The two class forces identified with the old order—the traditional elites and the mercantile bourgeoisie—were joined by the class power introduced by the corporations to oversee the new order: the middle class.

### The Old Order



**Meet:** His Excellency Sir James Robertson, K.C.M.G., K.B.E., is the Governor-General of the Federation of Nigeria, and as such is Queen Elizabeth's representative. Sir James, who was born in 1899, has had a long and distinguished career in government service, spending most of his life in Africa. He worked for over thirty years in the Sudan Political Service, helping to guide a country through all the stages of constitutional evolution to almost complete self-government. Sir James has also served in British Guiana. In June 1955 he was appointed Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Federation of Nigeria.

The old colonial order in Nigeria was largely a British affair which sought primarily to obtain certain primary products—like palm oil, cocoa, rubber and ground-nuts—while developing a *limited* market for rather low-grade British manufactured goods. To develop those commodities for export the British colonial administration relied heavily upon the traditional authorities who controlled the rural areas where the crops were grown. The farming population which produced the country's principal cash crops consisted mainly of small-holders whose dispersion in village economies and subordination to the rural elites tended to weaken their formation as rural capitalists or a conscious peasant class.

The most notable of the quasi-feudal traditional elites were the Emirs in Northern Nigeria. Their social status was inherited from the influence they one wielded over trade relations in the ancient Hausa city states. They eventually proved quite resourceful in controlling the expansion of farming estates worked by Hausa peasants, although they were hardly more than orna-

mental in their entrepreneurial roles. They were especially powerful because their influence over the colonial state permitted them to dominate the disposition of internal surplus from the ground-nut and cotton trade and block the growth—at least in the North—of a mercantile class capable of threatening their power.

Yoruba chiefs in the Western region were more directly involved in the organization of cocoa production because their powers over land relations remained relatively intact and enabled them to exercise some control over cultivation. "Nigeria stands out in rather sharp contrast to Ghana where many owners of cocoa farms are *individual* absentee landlords belonging to the educated classes living in the coastal towns. This striking difference between the two territories is mainly the result of the early policy of the Nigerian government in preserving the indigenous system of land tenure."<sup>1</sup> But since the Western Region's nascent capitalist class grew out of cocoa farming into trading, there were linkages between the agricultural economy and the emergent mercantile capital. Traditional authorities seem to have mediated between the producers and the cocoa buyers without really developing themselves into an economically strong *rural* class.

Chiefs or rural elites played a less influential role in the Eastern region which was composed of many segmented societies without strong hierarchies or extensive territorial organization. Producers of the main cash crop, palm fruit, did not really cultivate the crop so much as collect it from forest plots where it grew wild. The producers were also scattered in outlying areas due to poor transportation and communications. Chiefly powers in Eastern politics were asserted with greater force in *urban* areas in disputes between original inhabitants and strangers or immigrants. Since the latter were often traders the East's emerging class relations were marked, therefore, by a certain antagonism between the Chiefs and the nascent capitalist class.

Britain's colonial administrators and big trading companies used the traditional elites to offset the strength of Nigeria's relatively well developed mercantile classes. Attempts were made throughout the colonial period to confine these once powerful traders to auxiliary functions such as produce buying, transport or petty trading. The mercantile classes, particularly the Ibo traders and Delta merchants, had a long history dating from the surplus they had accumulated from their internal organization of the slave trade. Many had made the transition to palm oil trade or "legitimate" commerce in the 19th century rather successfully. They were the principal obstacle to British penetration of the Niger Delta and they resisted tenaciously for over half a century Britain's efforts to pacify them. These so-called "middlemen" were also the ones who sought to purchase machinery for sugar manufacture and cotton culture from British merchants in 1842 and were refused. "In New Calabar," observed one British Consul, "the King and Chiefs walk on the deck of any ship with an air of independence, similar to that assumed by a wealthy capitalist on the stock exchange."<sup>2</sup>

1. James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, p. 68.
2. K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*, 1956, p. 126.





Despite Britain's attempts to restrict their function, Nigeria's traders capitalized on the withdrawal of expatriate companies from produce buying and retailing upcountry after 1945 to establish themselves as the nucleus of a nascent capitalist class which was among the strongest in West Africa. What further distinguished them from their West African counterparts, like those in neighboring Ghana, was their seizure of state power at the regional level—in the Western and Eastern Regions—during the process of decolonization.

The constitutional settlement in the early 1950's permitted them to consolidate their power around the regional institutions managing the surplus from the commodity trade. From 1955 onwards, the Marketing Boards, Development Corporations and indigenous banks in Southern Nigeria were dominated by the resurgent Nigerian mercantile bourgeoisie. This was the basis for their eventual clash with the middle class and international capital.

### The New Order

The neocolonial system is developing its own network of intermediaries and class interests against the backdrop of the disparate social groups formed during the colonial period. The international managers call the new social force the "modernizing elites." They are being widely celebrated by the professional Africanists and the behavioral scientists as the key agents of change in an externally controlled process of "modernization." One must look carefully at the class reality concealed by this imprecise, bourgeois jargon.

### The elites are the vanguard of the middle class

The elites are the vanguard of the middle class. The middle class itself is the most solidly structured class in Nigeria today and the primary vector of neo-colonial influence. Yet its function remains invisible to many critics of imperialism. Nearly 40% of Nigeria's wage-earners—who themselves represent only 5% of the total working population—consist of fairly typical white collar workers. They constitute a highly abnormal social grouping for a country with hardly any industrial development to speak of. The majority of Nigeria's middle class work for the government or its auxiliary institutions like the schools, universities and parastatal organizations. Numerically they have grown rapidly since the late 1950's when the influence of American ideas about mass education was first felt. Because of the armature of state power which supports them, they are the most politically coherent and self-conscious of Nigeria's social classes. Normally, the state is viewed separately from the class structure. What is novel about the development of Nigeria's middle class is the degree to which the state is being absorbed into—or is directly a part of—the country's class structure.

The historic mission of this middle class is to mediate between its own people's needs and the marketing system of the corporate economy. This marketing system does not exclude the organization of production, but rather incorporates it within the social organization of consumption. The middle class



is the social wedge driven into the country's agricultural economy to prevent it from any autonomous development or real industrialization—whether it be capitalist or otherwise.

The middle class occupies an extremely precarious position *vis a vis* the under classes, or majority of Nigeria's farmers and workers, whose surplus they must also manage and consume on behalf of foreign capital. Their reward for these services is status without power. The underlying economic force that creates their new "roles" or "status" is the structure of the mass market and within it the organization of consumption. No single aspect of their class identity—be it income, education or job function—should be viewed in isolation from this dimension of the neo-colonial economy.

With the integrating concept of the mass market, it is now possible to anchor the notion of the middle class more concretely in the *social* organization of labor within the neocolonial economy.<sup>1</sup> The middle class can be identified as that part of the proletariat (i.e. workers) whose productive relations are determined mainly by the social organization of consumption. Whether they be teachers or bureaucrats their lives are being systematically organized and proletarianized through the marketing system of the corporations. The middle class is not *necessarily* productive labor in the classic sense of producing goods. But neither can their function be viewed as unproductive since they are an integral part of the *reproduction* of capital. The corporations have extended the *social* organization of the factory into areas which formerly were considered individualized and "unproductive."

In the eyes of international management the elites of the middle class are conceived and organized as part of a *mass* class, despite the tiny percentage of the total population which they represent. These civil servants and their counterparts in the private sector (clerks, salesmen, etc.) clearly do not belong to the bourgeoisie. They are organized *nationally* as a ruling elite; but on the international level, they should be considered part of the growing international middle class. There the elites rank with middle management, which is nothing more than the management of the middle class.

1. The concept of the mass is used here with a precise meaning. Most people think of the mass in terms of numbers but it is *structure* which actually determines its character. The mass is an aggregation of individuals who are separate, detached and anonymous. They are usually urban workers organized on a national, rather than social, basis. There are some important differences between the concepts of mass and class. A class is conscious of its social existence because it is organized by the corporations in order to prevent it from organizing itself. The social existence of the mass is individualized (i.e. *self-conscious*). Its rules and rituals, the structuring of its status roles and its leadership, are all organized primarily through the marketing system of the corporations. The organization of the market as a colony means the organization of the class as a mass.

## Grooming the Middle Class

A survey of all the imperialist agencies operating in Nigeria—from the Ford Foundation to the A.I.D. program—shows that they are concentrating their major resources on building and staffing an educational system to train the middle class. Simultaneously, they are erecting the institutions to employ them and to manage their lives. Francis X. Sutton, now Deputy Vice President of Ford's international division, explains the goals of capitalist internationalism this way:

"If one may venture to use the term stirring unpleasant connotations, it may be said that the Foundations have an important role in linking the modernizing elites of the world. Collaborative efforts in development assistance and higher learning foster a network of professionals and personal contacts throughout the world."

Since 1959 the Ford Foundation alone has pumped over \$20 million into its Nigerian projects, mainly into schools of administration, universities and economic planning agencies. A.I.D. committed some \$189.9 million in economic assistance to Nigeria from 1946 to 1967, practically all since 1961. The foundations and government agencies have coordinated their efforts in this campaign. While Ford provided a team of experts to write Nigeria's first 6-year development plan, A.I.D. promised over \$200 million for its financing. As of 1967 the plan was in shambles and only about \$110 million of this amount had actually been spent.

This exercise is referred to in the social science jargon as "institution building," which itself comes under the heading of "nation building." The Carnegie Corporation provided \$700,000 to finance the famous Ashby Commission Report in 1959, the first major study of Nigeria's so-called manpower needs. Sir Eric Ashby himself highlighted the consumption motif implicit in the education strategy: "The West has sold the Nigerians television sets and automobiles, it is now up to the West to persuade Nigerians that they must themselves produce the technicians and craftsmen necessary to make and maintain these and other artifacts of the age of technology."

Education plays a crucial role in the organization of the market as a colony. It can no longer be thought of simply as a process of acculturation or ideological training; it now operates within a specific context where it serves a manifold *technical* function. Without mass education the market system of the corporations cannot function effectively either in terms of the jobs it creates or the consumption patterns it establishes. The process begins at an early age and has a long range effect:

"Virtually all schoolchildren—in urban areas at least—are dressed in shirts and shorts or dresses. These children comprise an immediate market for children's and teenage clothing, and for European clothing of all sizes in the future."<sup>1</sup>

1. *Market for U.S. Products in Nigeria*, supplement to *International Commerce*, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, October, 1964, p. 14.



# Planning without Facts

LESSONS IN RESOURCE ALLOCATION  
FROM NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

By

Wolfgang F. Stolper

*With an Input-Output Analysis  
of the Nigerian Economy, 1959-60*

By Nicholas G. Carter

Harvard University Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
1966

The MAN had a plan. It didn't work.

FACT:

*"Neither the planning process nor the resultant plan shows evidence of any serious attempt to make the economic targets and policies represent national goals in more than the vaguest sense. For all practical purposes the federal plan was drawn up by a limited number of expatriate economists, working virtually in a vacuum so far as detailed direction of consultation with political leaders went, and with only peripheral advisory contact with Nigerian civil servants and planners. The social and political preferences of the plan, as was inevitable given this method of preparation, represent what the planners preferred or felt Nigerians ought to prefer, rather than any expressed Nigerian preferences."*

R.H. Green, "Four African Development Plans,"  
from *Readings in the Applied Economics of Africa*,  
ed. Edith Whetham and Jean I. Currie, 1967.

*"As a matter of historical interest, both the World Bank in Washington and the United States Agency for International Development through an appraisal mission led by the late Arnold Rivkin, were given the facilities and the confidential information which enabled them to finalize their assessment of the new National Plan before the data were made available to the public in Nigeria."*

Speech by A.A. Ayida,  
Conference on National Reconstruction  
and Development, Ibadan, March 24-29, 1969

The new techniques being introduced in Nigeria are based upon market organizations which make use of information gathered and analyzed about all facets of people's lives. In Nigeria this research ranges from studies of class identification among elite *children* to the "motivational tuning" of adult behavior. Systematic studies of behavior at all levels of Nigerian society are presently being carried out with impunity under the false pretext of academic scholarship.

Among the most insidious studies are those directed by Dr. R.A. Levine of the University of Chicago under a National Institute of Mental Health grant and supported by funds from the Ford Foundation's Fund for Research in Psychiatry. These included surveys of the dreams of Nigerian schoolboys to determine the attitudes toward status mobility, achievement motivation and obedience-social-compliance values according to their respective ethnic groups. These terms are nothing more than codewords for the impotent role playing associated with the new pyramid of authority being organized through the mass market. The type of behavioral science research which Levine conducts thrives by feeding data on the cultural life and motives of its "subjects" into the research apparatuses of corporations and government agencies; there it is translated into the language of consumption or counter-insurgency, or both, and used to formulate marketing or military strategies aimed at "mobilizing" the population in one way or another.

## Corporate management is far more conscious

Corporate management is far more conscious of the objective function of behavioral science research being carried out in Nigeria than the people who actually practice it. Joseph W. Newman's observations in an article on motivational research published by the *Harvard Business Review* in 1957 are typical of management's view:

"Social anthropologists make use of the concept of social class, which refers to social status and broad patterns of values, attitudes, roles, and behavior within a culture. It implies a homogeneity of consumer wants and attitudes toward products and well-known brands. Knowledge of values and attitudes is basic to an understanding of resistance to change."

"Because of the behavioral science influence, there has been a growing number of intensive investigations aimed at discerning motivational patterns. In this connection, psychological needs and cultural and interpersonal influences are receiving systematic study as determinants of buying behavior along with the economic, material, and situational factors. The existence of unconscious mental functioning has been recognized, and marketing research now is going beyond what people say they think and feel. Increasing use is being made of behavioral science methods which are especially suited to the study of motivation."

J. Joseph W. Newman, "New Insight, New Progress, for Marketing," *Harvard Business Review*, Nov-Dec. 1957.





*Broad Street, Lagos, Nigeria—near Bank of America's Lagos Branch*

**Man-on-the-spot...in Lagos.** He's a foreign exchange specialist, an economist, a diplomat, a political scientist, a business consultant, a banker. He is, in short, an imperialist agent; a good man to know to give him the punishment he deserves. —**BANK OF AMERICA** can provide you with expert assistance where it counts: on-the-spot. If this person-to-person service could be of help to you, see **Bank of America—first-in-banking.**

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## The American Presence

Britain's colonial office retarded the growth of the educated elites in Nigeria until after World War II when the neocolonial penetration of Britain itself began. The major postwar commitment to training up employees for the civil service marked the emergence of the colonial state as the dominant institution shaping the growth and structure of the middle class. The new British strategy was prompted by a power shift among the capitalist nations whose implication are spelled out by the late Arnold Rivkin, a Marshall Plan veteran and later chief Africa man for the World Bank:

"The African political factor, which for the West historically operated in bilateral channels stretching north and south between African and Europe, has become triangular, reaching from Africa to the United States and Canada as well as Europe, with a resulting marked shift in the balance of political power *within* the West."<sup>1</sup>

George D. Woods, President of the World Bank in the early sixties, admitted openly to a British audience in 1965 that the Bank was taking up where they had left off: "A great deal of the routine of the World Bank Group is simply carrying on—with you and others—some of the great works of construction which you started in the exciting days of empire."<sup>2</sup>

*Business Week* in a special issue devoted to Africa in 1961 set the tone for the "showcase" period in Nigeria: "For businessmen of dozens of nations—from Japan to Argentina—Africa is open game." Why did the same magazine call Nigeria the "safest bet" for American investors? And why did the businessmen themselves flock to Lagos in droves after independence?

Calling Nigeria the key to Africa, Clarence B. Randall warned in *Dun's Review* that Americans were in danger of "losing out by default" to the Germans, the Italians, the Czechs and the Yugoslavs in the new markets opening up in Africa. "When the day comes when it shall need these markets badly, as it surely will, the U.S. will find that they have already been pre-empted by others, unless it increases its resourcefulness and vigor." American pressure on Britain to relax licensing restrictions on dollar origin goods in 1959 had already opened up new trade possibilities at the same time that development expenditures by the Nigerian government were rising sharply.

The American companies saw a specific type of market in Nigeria: a mass market. Saba Habachy, a consultant for the Arabian American Oil Co., noted this in his contribution to a volume entitled *Management Looks at Africa*: "Nigeria provides the largest mass market in Africa where limited-scale mass production can be economically escalated as the needs of its inhabitants rise."<sup>3</sup>

1. Arnold Rivkin, *The African Presence in World Affairs*, p. 227.
2. Speech by George D. Woods, President of the World Bank, entitled "The Importance of the Old British Habit," delivered to the Pilgrims Nov. 27, 1965.
3. Saba Habachy, "Economic and Legal Problems of Investment in Sub-Sahara Africa," *Management Looks at Africa*, ed. Jerome W. Blood, 1966, p.24.

The World Bank sent its first mission out to Nigeria in 1954 to study the problems which the new age of American-led neocolonialism would involve. By the mid-1950's Nigeria's leading politicians—Premier Nnadi Azikiwe from the East and Obafemi Awolowo from the West—had already made trips to New York where they were introduced to the business community. Following up these contacts the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) quietly opened a Lagos office in 1957 to prepare feasibility studies for American investors. In 1959, American companies had only an estimated \$16 million invested in Nigeria; some \$10 million of that being accounted for by distribution facilities of the Mobil Oil Co., a well-known Rockefeller interest. RBF was among the first non-profit organizations to do business in Nigeria. The groundwork laid by RBF helped the Chase International Investment Company, a subsidiary of the Rockefeller-run Chase Manhattan Bank, to become the dominant American financial institution on the Nigerian scene. When RBF's office was closed in 1962, the fortunes of American corporate investors were placed in the ready hands of the Cambridge based consulting firm of Arthur D. Little, Inc., which had obtained a \$5 million five year A.I.D. contract to advise the Nigerian government on investment policy.

British investment strategy—at least among the big corporations—paralleled the American views though it involved companies with far greater stakes in Nigeria's economy. For nearly a decade, the giant British-Dutch corporation Unilever, whose subsidiary United Africa Company (UAC) had long dominated the Nigerian economy, had been shifting out of its traditional business in the commodity trade and concentrating on the building of supermarkets and department stores to serve the urban (mass) markets. In conjunction with this reorganization of its commercial activities, the company was investing in light industries producing or assembling consumer goods, some of which were formerly imported and retailed through rural outlets. Like the movement of American capital toward the same



Well-stocked supermarket shelves illustrate Nigeria's strong economic base, even in wartime. Resources are a key to rebuilding.



# WHEN CUBA TAKES YOUR TOBACCO FIELDS AWAY, YOU MAY END UP IN NIGERIA

## Prepared for The Rockefeller Brothers Fund Lagos, Nigeria

### REPORT ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR CIGAR LEAF AND CIGAR PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

"This report, undertaken at the invitation of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, is based upon a survey of the soils of Nigeria and of the present cigar leaf and cigar production in the country. The specific reason for the survey is Nigeria's interest in enlarging its export trade and adding another cash crop to its economy. In support of these purposes, Robert I. Flemming, Director of the West Africa Program, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, proposed an examination of the leaf now being grown and the cigars now manufactured in Nigeria to determine whether a basis exists for producing leaf and cigars of exportable quality.

Upon acceptance of the study proposal by the Fund, a three-man team consisting of Mr. Wood, as director of the project, Jose Melendi, American manufacturer of clear-Havana cigars and cigar leaf expert, and Miguel Saludis, former proprietor of cigar leaf properties in the choice Vuelta Abajo tobacco region of Cuba, conducted a survey in Nigeria from September 10 to October 1, 1960."

R.C. Wood Imported Cigars, Inc.  
New York

sector, Unilever's rechanneling of investment into "manufacturing" corresponded to the current corporate strategy of import-substitution which reflected the primacy of marketing factors in investment decisions. Arthur Smith, Chairman of the United Africa Company, explained his company's new orientation: "Marketing is perhaps the major field to which we shall be turning our attention in years to come. Africa is extremely fertile ground for the dissemination of the most modern methods of market research, test marketing and advertising..."<sup>1</sup>

Kathleen Langley, wife of Arthur D. Little's Nigeria chief, has compiled figures bearing out these shifts in investor interest. "Foreign investment in the 1960's has differed in nature, in direction of interest and in impact upon the economy from earlier investments. Table 1 shows the change in type of activity of private foreign investment between the early fifties and 1961-66. Investments in petroleum exploration, while not insignificant in the fifties became predominant in the sixties and manufacturing industry took the place formerly held by trading services."<sup>2</sup>

At the outbreak of the civil war in June 1967, Nigeria was one of the ten largest producers of oil in the world. Of the nine companies which then held concessions, three were already in production—Shell-BP, Gulf and SAFRAP. Their wells were flowing at the rate of 600,000 barrels a day or 30 million tons a year. Four other companies were ready to begin production—Mobil, Amoseas, Tenneco and Phillips-AGIP. The Federal government was receiving royalties and tax payments equal to some 20% of its total revenue, while the Eastern Region government, whose territory then included most of the producing wells, was receiving some \$40 million. "Overall receipts from the oil sector at this time (in 1966) were comparable in importance, from the balance of payments viewpoint, with the earnings from any one of the four main agricultural crops."<sup>3</sup>

Nigeria's Central Bank estimated the total investments of British companies in 1965 at \$568.1 million or about 53% of all foreign investments in Nigeria. Unilever claimed in 1961 that its subsidiary UAC had some \$135.8 million invested in Nigeria. American investments in 1965 were estimated at \$161 million or 15% of all foreign investments. But as the table below (2) shows, American companies were increasing their share of total foreign investments in Nigeria. Their share had almost doubled in four years.

1. *West Africa*, July 24, 1965, p. 817.
2. Kathleen Langley, "The External Resource Factor in Nigerian Economic Development," *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, July 1968, p. 162.
3. *Op. cit.*, Langley, p. 162.

"The civil war represented a rare opportunity to rebuild the country."

#### 1 Foreign Business Investment in Nigeria by Type of Activity

	1950-51 to 1954-55		1961-66	
		%		%
Mining	13.8	(34.7)	139.5	(53.2)
Manufacturing & processing	3.4	( 8.5)	63.0	(24.0)
Transport & Communication	4.7	(11.8)	2.7	( 1.0)
Trading & Services	12.2	(30.6)	21.6	( 8.2)
Building & Construction	2.2	( 5.6)	12.2	( 4.7)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	3.5	( 8.8)	0.5	( 0.2)
	39.8	(100.0)	262.3	(100.0)

Millions of pounds; one pound=\$2.80

#### 2 Showcase Investments By Foreign Countries in Nigeria

Country	1962	1963	1964	1965	% of total
United Kingdom	135.6	154.1	181.4	202.9	(53.8)
United States	19.4	24.0	39.0	57.7	(15.3)
Netherlands	23.4	26.5	37.9	39.3	(10.4)
France	7.8	14.5	9.5	17.1	( 4.5)
Italy	4.1	7.5	9.1	9.4	( 2.5)
W. Germany	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.7	( 0.7)
Lebanese			6.7 <sup>1</sup>		
Total	220.9	258.8	321.2	377.1	

Millions of pounds; one pound=\$2.80

1. Industrial investments only.



## The Beginning of the Breakdown

These internal contradictions tended to aggravate the already existing exploitative conditions of capitalist domination. The episodes of violence leading up to the two *coup d'etats* in 1966 signalled the growing discontent among the rather inarticulate but profoundly antagonized under classes of Nigeria. Shortly before the coups it was evident that there was an awakening in the countryside to the exploitative relations maintained by the traditional elites with the assistance of the urban politicians. Yoruba farmers joined with migrant workers during the 1965 tax riots to attack the "kulak Chiefs" and cocoa buyers. By the same token, the 1964 Tiv revolts sounded the death knell of the Emirate hegemony over the minority peoples in the North. Like the other symptoms of Nigeria's breakdown it was essentially these rising contradictions within the regional systems and ethnic groups which sharpened the tensions between the three dominant classes. They undermined the fragile coalitions these groups had established at the national level in order to maintain rule over the regions.

Perhaps the single most important event leading up to the collapse of parliamentary rule was the general strike in 1964. Hundreds of thousands of workers defied the authorities with an unprecedented nationwide stoppage which paralyzed the country's economy for 13 days. Since nearly half of the strikers were government employees with white collar jobs, the protest in many respects signaled the demand of the middle class for military intervention; they had little chance of electoral redress of their grievances given the effective alliance of the politician-businessmen with the rural elites. However, one should not ignore the sizable participation of the urban proletariat in the strike and the socialist militancy of segments of the strike leadership.

Like the awakening in the countryside, the strike action could not be cast in terms of tribal conflicts by the ruling elites or the Western press. Richard Sklar has noted the unique position of the labor unions *vis a vis* Nigeria's political parties: "The only socio-economic interest of major significance that is not assimilated into the effective structure of the party system is organized labor."<sup>1</sup> Labor was organized on a broad multi-ethnic basis. Political parties were the agencies which made ethnic or regional identities important and they were largely subordinated to the regional powers—the Northern Emirs and mercantile bourgeoisies in the South.

The last days of the first Republic were charged with opportunism and reaction on every side of this intra-class struggle. The politician-businessmen of the Western region led by Chief Akintola moved into an alliance with the Emirs, leaving the Ibo dominated East isolated from power for the first time since independence. By 1966 the management in Lagos, both foreign and local, realized that the growth of Nigerian capitalism along with the decadence of the feudal North represented a serious obstacle to the implantation of a neo-colonial system.

1. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, p. 495.

## 1964 Strike: Those Who Went Out

<i>Dockers &amp; Sailors</i> .....	100,000
<i>Teachers</i> .....	97,000
<i>Officials</i> .....	70,000
<i>Agricultural workers</i> .....	35,000
<i>Railwaymen</i> .....	32,000
<i>Trade employees</i> .....	30,000
<i>Post Office employees</i> ....	15,000
<i>Public Works</i> .....	12,000
<i>Electricians</i> .....	10,000
<i>Printing workers</i> .....	5,000
<i>Hotel employees</i> .....	2,000
<i>Bus workers</i> .....	1,000

## GOING

LAGOS, November 2, 1965: "In Abeokuta, the region's second biggest city, mobs of opposition party members burned two court houses, drove a nail into the neck of a judge and severely beat a court clerk. On election day Government appointed electoral officials were caught with thousands of illegal ballot papers. Ballot boxes were found filled before the balloting began."

## GOING

LAGOS, November 8, 1965: "...So far the violence appears to be little organized. Mobs of Action Group followers seem to suddenly crop up and swiftly set upon any symbol of government—official cars and trucks, the homes of government supporters and even courts, police stations and libraries. Minutes later a government supporter is found killed by machetes or a car overturned and destroyed by fire. The crowd melts away as fast as it forms..."

## GONE

LAGOS, November 8, 1965: "Heavily reinforced police and army units have so far appeared powerless to halt the spread of murder, arson and looting. Property damage has been estimated at \$560,000. Dusk to dawn curfews and a ban on firearms have been declared in six major southern districts of the region. But over the week-end at least 22 persons were killed and six policemen wounded in an exchange of gunfire in the district of Ondo alone."

*New York Times.*

"The study mission inadvertently became involved in this crisis in Lagos while en route to the airport. A small mob of hooligans, while staging a riot and attacking all oncoming vehicles with stones and machetes, assailed an embassy car carrying some members of the mission. It was a frightening experience, but damage was not great and no physical injuries were suffered. The incident made it apparent that the situation was far more serious than perhaps the Prime Minister himself or members of the U.S. mission and local foreign sector realized."

Report of the Special Study Mission to Africa  
Hon. Charles C. Diggs, Jr., Chairman, 1965



## The Coups

The middle class eventually responded with the only political force it could effectively rely upon under the circumstances: the military. Due to their elitist education and recruitment from middle class families, the younger officers shared a class outlook very similar to their counterparts in the civil service. Each of the coups which took place in 1966 were double-barreled actions. Those who initiated them failed to end up on top. In both cases the Lagos-based middle class, with the open assistance of their Anglo-American backers, managed to intercept the coup's original direction and consolidate its own power within the context of fairly fluid situations.

nors had all rehearsed their roles with the Nigerian troops which had helped the United Nations forces pacify the Congo. Francis Nwokedi, the controversial Ibo chosen by Ironsi to head a commission reorganizing the civil service, had assisted Dr. Ralph Bunch in his administrative work in the Congo. He had also been a member of the famous "Congo Club" advising Dag Hammerskold on Congo policy. "Under Ironsi," wrote Charles M. Thomas in an Air Force document prepared for the Aero-Space Institute, "hope returned." There seemed to be a chance of finding a moderate middle of the road solution for problems of political administration in Nigeria."

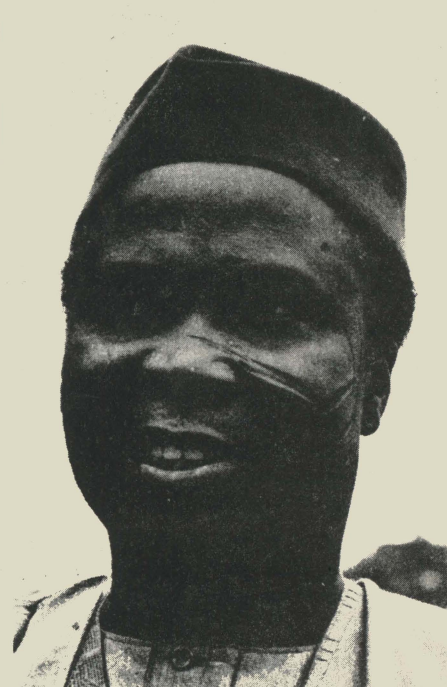
Nzeogwu's coup was made by a group of radical middle class officers from the regions moving to consolidate their power in the North and West. They had intended apparently to call upon Obafemi Awolowo,



Premier of the Northern Region, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto



Prime Minister Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa



Premier of the Western Region, Chief Samuel Akintola

The first coup made by the young Ibo Major Nzeogwu came with a populist fury in January 1966 and led to the assassination of three major political figures—including the Prime Minister Balewa. While the coup was received jubilantly by the people in the streets, it sent tremors through the establishment and posed something of a threat to the Ibo-led middle class in Lagos. Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Ibo who had commanded the United Nations troops in the Congo until 1964, was able to establish the clear hegemony of the Ibo middle class in Lagos because of the tactical support he received from Western diplomats and the careful grooming of the elites who stepped into the breach created by Nzeogwu. The "moderate" military officers including Odemegwu Ojukwu—whom Ironsi appointed as regional gover-

the jailed Yoruba leader of the Action Group, to head up a civilian government. Ironsi succeeded in blocking Nzeogwu's bid by seizing power in Lagos and the East. Ojukwu himself was commanding the 5th Battalion at Kano in the North and he sided with Ironsi by "remaining neutral."

The counter-coup against Nzeogwu's radicals prefigured the split within the middle class which would eventually lead many Ibo elites to rebound toward secession. Ironsi's subsequent refusal to release Awolowo from prison and his jailing of Nzeogwu himself were combined with accommodations with Northern conservatives. Even after the first wave of massacres in May 1966 Ironsi gave assurances to the Northern Emirates that no constitutional changes would be made without a referendum. This series of moves amounted



to a rejection of his own class interests in the North and West. The failure to unite with them was made all the more ironic since both Ironsi and Nzeogwu were Ibos.

The second coup in July which brought Col. Yakubu Gowon to power was even more complicated in its unfolding than the January action. This time the minority groups led by the Tiv who formed some 80% of the Army's rifle power shortcircuited the coup originally made by Northern officers bent on secession. The Tiv hated both the feudal Emirs and the Ibo immigrants who formed part of the Northern middle class. Strong pressure from Western diplomats operating through top civil servants in Lagos was instrumental in deflecting the coup away from Northern secession and preserving the dominance of the middle class. But this time the "radical" middle class from the North and West had the upper hand. Ruth First tells of the

### The Ambassadors of Intervention

"When General Gowon came to power in Lagos, his first major speech was to have announced the formal dismemberment of the Federation. On August 1, 1966, he said over Nigerian radio: 'Putting all considerations to test, political, economic as well as social, the basis for unity is not there.'"

"This was all that remained of a much longer passage announcing the end of the Federation. He was persuaded to cut it out, and substi-

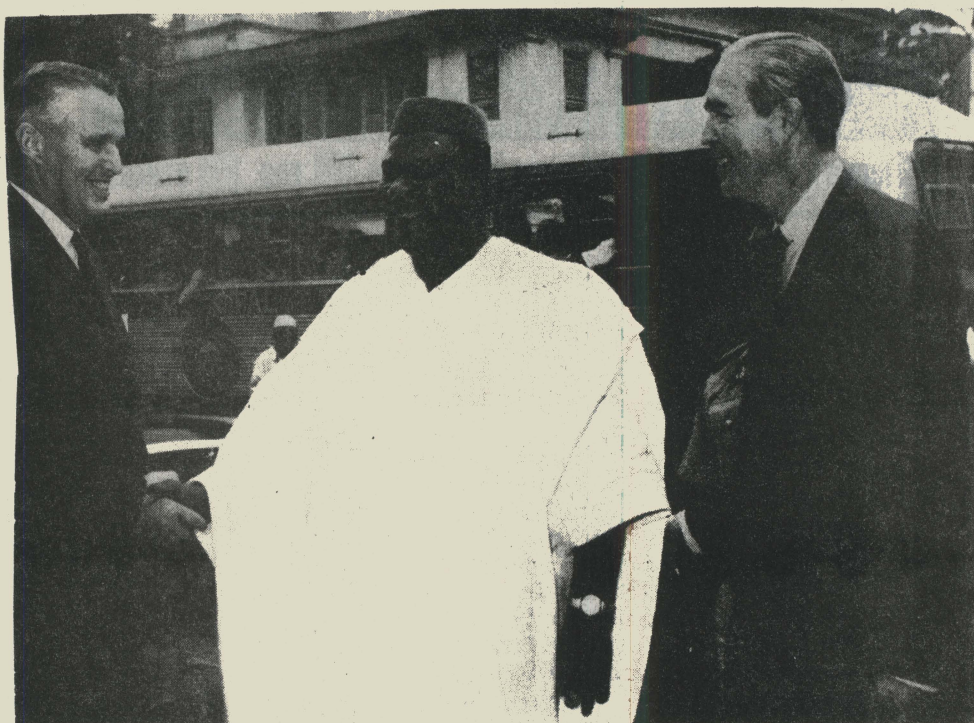
tute instead proposals for a constitutional conference to discuss future arrangements, by the direct personal intervention of Sir Francis Cumming-Bruce, the then British High Commissioner, and Mr. Elbert G. Matthews, the American Ambassador to Nigeria. The authority for this fact, which many would now like to forget, is Sir Francis Cumming-Bruce himself.

Auberon Waugh  
*Scanlan's Monthly*, March 1970

"The people were jubilant..."

People cheered when the Army officers killed four symbols of Nigeria's corruption and colonial dependency.

The coup backfired because of betrayals and Western intervention.



U.S. Ambassador Joseph Palmer (left) meets with Nigeria's Finance Minister Chief Festus Okobie-Eboh and Chase Manhattan Senior Vice-Pres. John Watts.

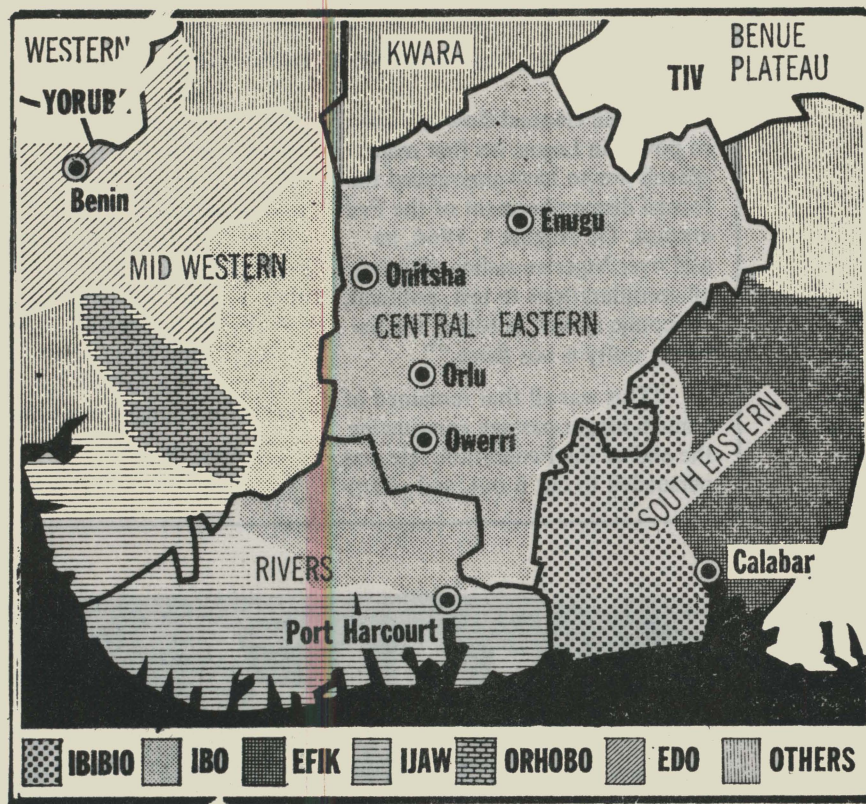
decisive moment in the second coup: "A group of permanent secretaries in Lagos set to work, even going into the Ikeja barracks of the Second Battalion where the crisis was being played out, to try to get a reversal of the Northern secessionist demands. Some of the Northern civil servants felt the same way. It was at this point that British and United States pressure was applied, if not directly on the Army men, then very definitely on the civil servants."<sup>1</sup>

These coups brought the intra-class struggle out into the open. Ironsi's rule was probably the purest moment of middle class power Nigeria has seen. But because the

Ibos were predominant within the inner circle of Ironsi's regime, the issue of tribalism was invoked by many to explain the deterioration which eventually led to civil war. But it should be clear from the remarks above that the real conflict ran along two other axes: 1) one pitting the Lagos-based middle class against the regions and 2) the other involving the split within the middle class itself. The issue of the unitary decree, on which Ironsi's regime is said to have foundered, was no more a "constitutional" question than the pogroms against the Ibos were a "tribal" reaction. These events, like the civil war, were part of an exceedingly complex intra-class struggle, carried on at many different levels of Nigerian society by the three dominant classes.

1. From the manuscript of Ruth First's forthcoming book on *coup d'etats* in Africa.





### Oil & the Minorities

The sequence of events leading up to the war is a subject in itself which we do not intend to deal with here. Our intent is to redefine the basic context of the war to permit an intelligent analysis of both its origins and outcome. A number of incidents associated with the coups or their aftermath have commonly been cited as the causes of the war. They range from the pogroms against the Ibos to the abortive Aburi Conference in early 1967. In reality, these developments merely triggered the contradictions which had developed steadily during the transitional period since the late 1950's. The pogroms were used to frame the war falsely in terms of a tribal conflict between the Hausa-Fulani and the Ibo. The coups themselves were misrepresented by nearly everybody to suit their own purposes. Some people have taken the dubious flirtation of the oil companies with Biafra in early 1967 to argue that the secession was another Katanga. This analogy makes for dangerous half truths unless the oil question is situated accurately within the class dynamics propelling Nigeria toward civil war.

Those who believed that international business or its agents were behind the Northern reaction frequently maintained that the same forces were supporting Biafra's secession. These critics compared Biafra's case to that of Katanga as support for their argument. There were many good reasons for suggesting that the same forces which supported Tshombe in Katanga were also helping to keep the Biafran cause alive—namely the role of Portugal, the Catholic Church, the renegade CIA pilots, the European weapons dealers and the dabbling of the French government. But there is less evidence that any

of these forces themselves represented the corporate powers seeking to organize the neocolonial solution. One forgets all too easily that American officials sought through various maneuvers to neutralize the Katanga secession and that eventually the executives of Union Miniere who had originally supported Tshombe rejected him.

Nigeria's oil was hypnotic to those who wanted an uncomplicated explanation for the civil war. Though the attitude of certain oil companies toward the secession was ambiguous in the early days of the war, they never went so far as to really support, even temporarily, the Biafran secession. The famous token payment of \$700,000 offered by Shell-BP shortly after the secession was cancelled when Ojukwu delayed making a decision on the deal. There is no question but that international oil companies like Shell-BP, Gulf and others had invested heavily in Nigeria's newly discovered oil fields; even more remarkable is the fact that they *continued* to increase their investments *despite* the secession. Shell-BP spent some \$50 million alone building one of its major pipelines around the war-torn Biafran nation. Gulf, the only company to be completely *unaffected* by the war, increased its production from 2.7 million tons in 1967 to 11.5 million tons in 1969. This response was only possible because the oil did *not* lie in Ibo territory but rather in the Niger Delta region inhabited by minorities like the Ibibio, Efik and Ijaw. These areas are now administered by the Federal government as separate states.

The oil did have varying importance to each Western nation from the viewpoint of its policy toward Biafra. Shell-BP's delaying tactics at the beginning of the war reflected the fact that the 85% of Nigeria's oil which it was pumping represented some 9.5% of all Britain's crude imports in 1967. With the unrest in the Middle East it had rising strategic value. Nigerian oil appealed to the British because payments for it would not be a drain on Sterling balances.

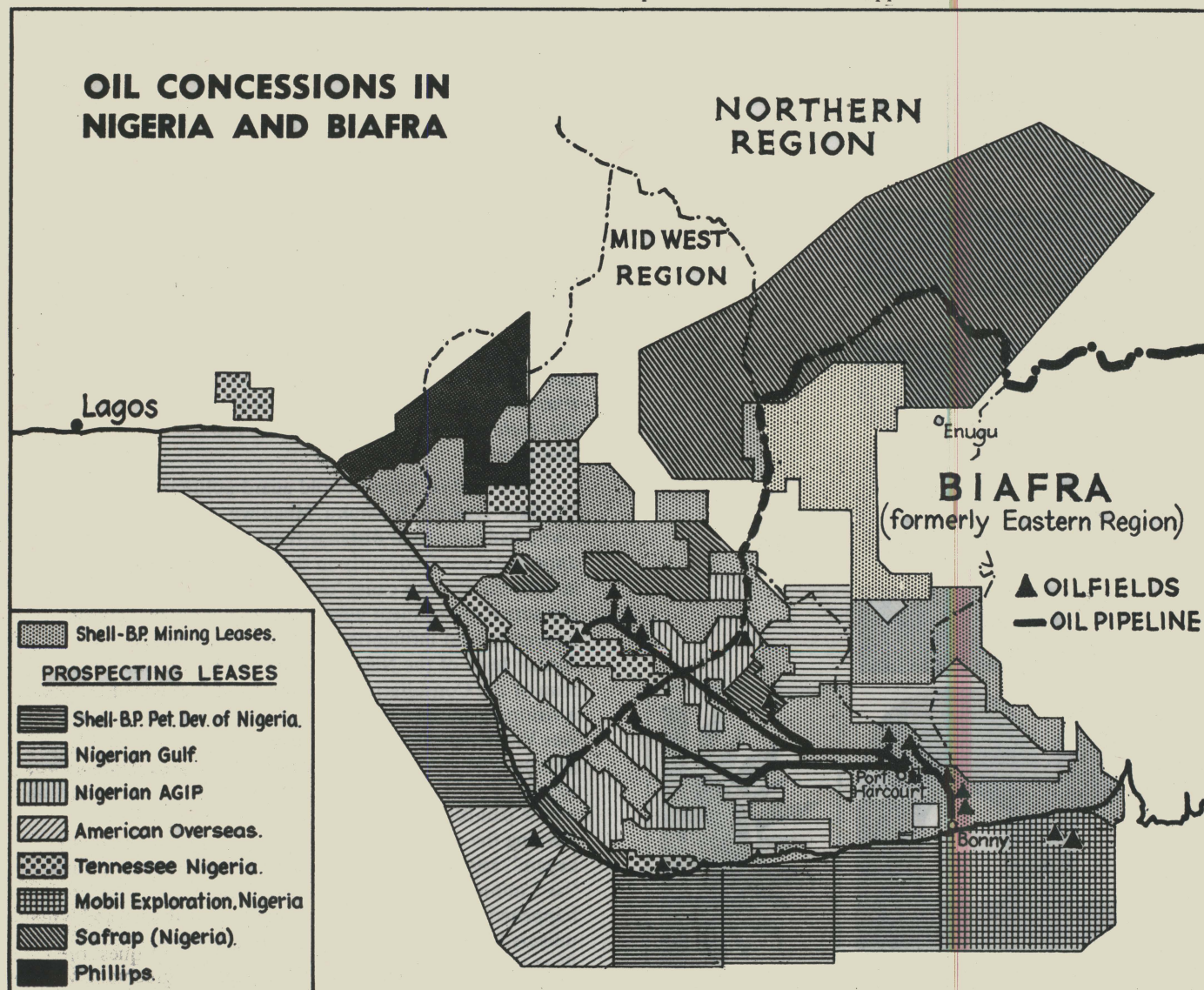
France was buying 3% of its total oil purchases from Nigeria in 1966 and large segments of the major French company's concessions (SAFRAP) were located upcountry in the Ibo heartland. Speculation about the reported deal with Ojukwu made by the Rothschild interests was highly dubious and it obscured the real basis of De Gaulle's policy, and the oil policy itself for that matter. French support for Biafra was not based on oil concessions—SAFRAP's concessions in the Midwest Region were roughly double those in the East. French policy was rooted in De Gaulle's fear of the role Nigeria might play within the Common Market and *vis a vis* the French-speaking West African countries. There are two ways of looking at the policy: first, support for Biafra was consistent with De Gaulle's policy of balkanization in French-speaking West Africa which had forced the break-up of the old French West African Federation in 1958. With 50 million people and a relatively well-balanced economy, Nigeria would certainly be likely to dominate the myriad of weak French-speaking states surrounding it. Secondly, France was facing strong pressure from its Common Market partners—particularly the Dutch and Germans—on the question of Nigeria's associate status. Though an agreement was drawn up



in 1966, France refused to ratify it owing to its sharp differences with Nigeria's sponsors on trade policy. At issue were the tariff preferences which gave France's former colonies special status within the Common Market. These are the roots of De Gaulle's enigmatic Biafran policy which many had attributed exclusively to oil.

American companies had sizable investments in the former Eastern Region though like the oil these were located mainly in the Delta region, not Iboland. The real vested interest of American capital in the East were the Ibo elites, who like the middle class everywhere, were an integral part of the American strategy of penetration throughout Nigeria. The relief made available to Biafra by the United States was aimed at fortifying the position of this class within Biafra and insuring their continued confidence in dependency rather than *real* national independence. Experts and businessmen alike wished to see the "modernizing elites" or middle class *on both sides* emerge from the war as the dominant social force in Nigerian society, and Biafra had its secession somehow have managed to succeed. Their problem was how to resolve the conflict without upsetting the precarious position of the middle class *vis a vis* other class forces. Had there been no relief the Biafran middle class very likely would have been driven into closer alliance with strongly nationalistic forces among the Ibo bourgeoisie.

While oil doesn't tell us much about the dynamics of foreign intervention, it does help to explain why the Ibo's seceded. To make the politics of oil intelligible they must be linked to the minorities question. Because the oil deposits lay in regions inhabited by minorities, the Ibos, both middle class and bourgeois, had a great deal to lose from Gowon's plans to form new states based on minority groupings. The rising radical middle class elements symbolized by Gowon's alliance with Awolowo had long supported such a policy. The Ibos could expect little sympathy on this issue from Awolowo whose jailing in 1962 they had backed while in alliance with the Northern Emirs. This antagonism within the middle class based upon the minorities question was of far greater import than the massacres in the North. The large share of oil revenues hinged upon the maintenance of Ibo hegemony in the East and this apparently could only be assured at the price of secession. Ojukwu's *moderate* policy toward Lagos at first was aimed at forcing Gowon out and regaining influence for the Ibos in Lagos. The trend of past Ibo policy suggests that he would even have preferred stronger Northern presence so long as it blocked the minorities and Yoruba radicals. When this strategy failed Ojukwu had no choice but to secede. The pattern of development had already committed the Ibo bourgeoisie to regional power no matter what happened in Lagos.







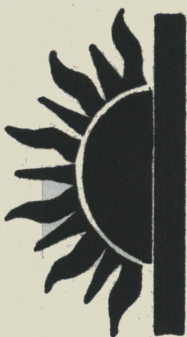
## Who Ruled Biafra?

The war ended with a coup in Biafra. Those who made peace were reconciled with their class mates in Lagos whom they had rejected four years earlier at the time of Ironsi's coup. They represented the cream of Biafra's elites--headed by the former Chief Justice Sir Louis Mbanefo around whom the opposition to Ojukwu had grouped. The Biafran elites were no less responsible for the secession or the defeat, yet they were offered asylum by the Lagos middle class. One of Gowan's first acts was to reinstate all civil servants and give them one month's salary in advance with a month's leave.

Those who made war left the country. Ojukwu's departure could hardly have been more ignominious--Nigeria radio reported that he was carried to his plane on a stretcher disguised as a priest and flown out aboard a Super Constellation along with his Mercedes Benz. Some reports claimed at the CIA's expense. Among the Biafrans with him who could not make peace were Dr. Michael Okpara, a veteran politician and former Premier of the Eastern Region, and N.U. Akpan, the Head of Biafra's Civil Service who had been appointed by Ojukwu to the same post in the Eastern Region before secession.

The parting of company among the Biafrans raises a knotty question which few critics of the war have answered satisfactorily: who were the ruling groups in Biafra? Ojukwu's closest advisors seem to have been paragons of elitest culture--aristocrats of the middle class like Sir Francis Ibiam and Sir Louis Mbanefo, both of whom had been knighted by the Queen of England. The dominant voice in economic affairs until his death was Ojukwu's father Sir L.P. Ojukwu, the millionaire transport magnate who had always been the chief spokesman for the Ibo bourgeoisie. Okpara and Akpan had good reasons for leaving, too, since they were figures identified with the old *regional* power structure of the Ibo bourgeoisie.

The familiar names of old guard politicians in the East--Azikwe, Wachuku, Mbadiwe, and so on, --who had kept their distance from the Biafran episode appeared most frequently in the ranks of those supporting Biafra's cause 'overseas.' Many members of the actual government were relatively unknown. Several educators held influential positions: Dr. Alvin Ikoku, former head of the Nigerian Teacher's Union was Chairman of the Consultative Assembly, and Professor Eni Njoku, a visiting professor at Michigan State University in 1966, was Vice Chancellor of the University. The famous science group whose ingenuity in developing local manufactures was so widely publicized included many of the Ibo intelligentsia whose pan-Ibo sentiments were partly responsible for framing the civil war in tribal terms. "Secession certainly began," says Walter Schwarz, a scholar of Nigerian affairs, "as a minority movement conceived and planned before it happened by Ibo lecturers and students at Ibadan and Nsukka universities." Some of Biafra's staunchest supporters in the West ironically put their hopes in these elites who, in the end, comprised the group which sued for peace.







*En route to Biafra, pilot-of-fortune Ron Archer, a San Franciscan, awaits take-off instructions at Libson. His plane an aging Super Connie. His cargo: armaments—mostly rifle ammunition for the Biafran army.*

Within Biafra there were some fresh political currents born by younger intellectuals. Chinua Achebe, the well known novelist, helped organize the Committee for National Guidance, a small group of teachers, doctors, and scientists, who tried to give the amorphous Ojukwu ideology—called “broadly socialist” by some—more concrete expression. “We feel we must develop our own values and create a real black African state,” Achebe told a British reporter during the war. Somehow the elites never really rose to the occasion. They continued to quote Plato in the same breath as they spoke of the Biafran revolution. Their attitude was reflected by the remark of a young civil servant whose daughter was studying in England at the exclusive Sevenoaks school in Kent: “Funnily enough in the old days I used to feel sympathy for the Hausas. I admired their grace, their feudal traditions, the simplicity of it all. But I can’t help despising the Yorubas. All they want is to be on the winning side. The joke is they are not.”

For all its socialist overtones, the social reality of Biafra remained elitest to the end. Popular support for Ojukwu was coalesced more by vigorous techniques of psychological mobilization than by any appeal to a progressive program. There is no doubt that, at the beginning of the war, The Ibo people were mesmerized by the fear of genocide. That in turn inspired a determination to fight --and suffer-- which was impressive as it was in the end self-defeating. The test of Biafra’s revolutionary potential was not that its people were suffering but that this struggling community represented some real alternative to the neo-colonial system. That was a claim which Biafra’s leaders never made convincingly.

The spectacle of Biafran judges sitting at court in wigs and robes was paralleled by the reports of local businessman profiting from the resale of relief

supplies. Promoters of relief who flaunted pictures of starving children before the eyes of fund raising audiences never explained why the refrigerators of Owerri were still full when the town fell to Federal troops. The hunger in Biafra was partly due to the social structure which relief shipments helped to maintain. The *Observer* (London) offered this insight: “The Biafran authorities have so far made no attempt --despite famine conditions-- to introduce an equitable scheme for rationing, or for a central food distribution system. This means that the better-off Biafrans can get what is available while the poorest--especially the refugees from outlying parts of Ibo territory--have to rely on the charity of the relief organizations. This enables the Biafran regime to convert relief funds into hard currency to finance purchases abroad.” Without relief, there may well have been a Biafran revolution.

One should reject the simple argument that the existence of Biafra would have triggered further “balkanization” throughout Africa. There is nothing sacrosanct about colonial borders. Unity is the fundamental principle upon which African freedom will be built. But it must be based upon the right of people to a national identity that is an expression of Africa’s own history and the culture of the people, not some middle class facsimile taught school-children in a foreign language. Ultimately, the dependency of the Biafran elites undermined the *national* unity forged during the secession. While the Biafran struggle raised a profoundly important issue concerning national identity, the efforts to internationalize the struggle prevented a truly radical concept of Biafran nationhood from emerging. The atmosphere among these elites at the war’s end was uniformly that England had betrayed them. This is a measure of how far short they fell of really defining themselves as Africans, much less revolutionaries.

## **ONLY THE WAR LORDS CAN WIN**

Perhaps Wole Soyinka was right: the blood cloud which hung over the country had to burst, something had to be tested. But there can be no victory for anyone—except perhaps the army. It is a short step from highway robber to War Lord.

The army has shown itself no better able than any other leadership to escape divisions, mediate in the competition for scarce resources, or set unifying goals. A war to externalise the conflict blows up the enemy, but after the battle the problems persist. Will Nigerian unity not remain in grave jeopardy after the war, with or without Biafra?●

Ruth First



## WHO RULES LAGOS?

The Nigerian Airways posters call Lagos "mini-Manhattan" now. At the war's end the city returned to the "sweet life" which the blackout and the bans on luxury imports had curtailed. The decadent rhythms of the mass market resumed almost immediately with the first pulsating sounds from a new 24-hour discotheque called the Matinee A-Go-Go whose manager exclaimed: "Dance all night, all day, peace now." Lagos, the overdeveloped capital of an underdeveloped country, is a wicked town so the saying goes.

The slogans and organizing postures on the Federal side defending Nigerian "unity" were equally weak in ideological content. While the radio and television blared "To keep Nigeria One is the task to be done," neo-colonialism remained deeply embedded in the country. The prospects of increased Soviet influence seems unlikely to bring any radical changes, either, since the Russians appear to share the assumptions about development strategies which now characterize the west. Reconciliation of the elites together with plans for reconstruction suggest that Nigeria's unity may have been preserved at the expense of the country's sovereignty.

Politics in Lagos acquired many nuances during the war since Gowan gave considerable prominence to radical middle class figures--like Awolowo--whose appeal to populist feeling aroused the expectations of many ordinary people. The Biafran contention that Gowon's rise to power represented the resurrection of Northern feudal elites would seem to be contradicted by the realignment of power in the north after the emergence of the Tiv majority from the middle belt. To his credit, Gowon did release the political prisoners that Ironsi had kept in jail: Awolowo, Enahoro, Samuel Ikoku and others. The presence of numerous opponents to the corrupt *ancien regime* of the first republic in the civilian ranks supporting Gowon's military council--men like Joseph Tarka, Aminu Kano, Awolowo and Enahoro--represent serious concessions to the radical middle class

"If we can prove equal to the challenge, if we are willing to assist in the development of African solutions to African problems, solutions that may not resemble our own model of democratic capitalism, we may yet see Africa's veritable revolution of the last decade remain in the hands of a growing middle class, independent yet moderate, and solidly in the mainstream of man's search for fulfillment."

*Nigeria: Shattered Showcase*  
Lt. Col. John C. Faith  
The National War College,  
Washington, D.C., 1967

in the former Western and Northern regions. By contrast both Ironsi and Ojukwu wither kept these same figures under lock and key or ignored them politically. The departure of the Ibo intelligentsia from the Western region after Gowon's coup was a reaction to the re-emergence of the populist opposition which they had always considered as arch rivals in Lagos.

What remains to be seen is whether the populist tendencies in Lagos represent anything more than a facade for the reinforcement and expansion of middle class influence in the Northern and Western regions where previously their influence had been restricted to the Emirs and the politician-businessmen. Awolowo and his followers may reflect, as one Nigerian radical pointed out before the war, the attempt by the petty bourgeois classes to make liberal democracy a reality. "The contradictions and equivocations evident in the Action Group program," he wrote, "only show, first, that the petty bourgeoisie always talk of socialism with a thousand conservative reservations." Under Gowon's cautious rule these reservations have prevailed so far as to eliminate even the "talk of socialism" in Lagos.

"Going to the Soviet Union, I assure you, was just a way of dealing with Ojukwu's threat. After all, Ojukwu started the air war. Even Abraham Lincoln went to Russia for help to win his own Civil War."

Major General Yakubu Gowon  
Time, July 4, 1969

These political tactics in Lagos are blended with a bonapartist reliance upon state power which is reminiscent of Joseph Mobutu's maneuvers in the Congo. His appeal to neo-Lumumbaist sentiments has served as a useful cover for lower-keyed neo-colonial penetration. Behind the frontline politicians in Gowon's ranks the real power would seem to lie with the managerial elites controlling the State apparatus. The Supreme Military Council, the top organ of authority, rarely meets, while the day to day government is done by the Federal Executive Council, composed of civilian commissioners, which meets weekly. "Decisions that really matter," says a British journalist, "are taken much more informally by a small ad hoc group of Gowon's closest associates and advisors--civil service chiefs and some key permanent secretaries from the ministries. The composition of such meetings is not fixed, and they are held frequently and secretly."

The decentralization effected through the creation of 12 states is based on a multiplication of middle class jobs for the minorities and a strengthening of key federal powers in areas such as the judiciary, police and economic policy. Despite the curtailing of the Emir's power, the conservative Northerners appear to have preserved at least a measure of influence with Gowon. One of the key people on Gowon's team is Brigadier Hassan Katsina, Chief of Army Staff, son of the present Emir of Katsina. Like Ironsi, who failed to punish the Northerners responsible for the Ibo massacres during the May riots in 1966, Gowon has not made any effort to challenge the local authority of those Northern officers who committed outright atrocities against the Ibo officers and NCO's during and after the July coup.





Yakubu Gowon

The conflict between elites took place in the face of the growing impatience of the vast majority of Nigerians living outside the borders of the consumer economy. To them both the war and the neo-colonial pattern of development accompanying it are intolerable extravagances which condemn them to a slow death. Although they have not yet forged a common political strategy, the choice facing the unemployed, the farmers, and the workers in the cities is between the development of *their* productive forces or waiting in line for access to the pyramid of consumption. This entry can be achieved only on an individual basis, not collectively, through the slow, and for many illusory, initiation into the cultural life and technical training of the middle class. There the struggle of the wage earning classes for identity and status conforms to the productive capacity of foreign capital. False needs are created while the real ones are left unsatisfied.

No one knows exactly what kind of effects the war will have on these weakly formed but explosive under classes. Beneath the surface of the war there were signs of dissatisfaction which cannot be alleviated without radical changes in the people's daily lives. The tax riots in the Western Region continued and a commission of inquiry there reported that many rural groups did not even know there was a civil war going on, much less why they were expected to make a 'sacrifice' on its behalf.

The danger for the ruling elites lies in the unpredictable forces unleashed by the war. The situation itself may be transcending its own terms. In many places the people are armed and have demonstrated their unwillingness to accept any return to "normalcy." As Eskor Toyo, an articulate Nigerian Socialist noted: "The old fear of an armed solution is gone because it is already here." Armed struggle raises the spectre of a different type of Nigeria where an angry people can no longer be fooled by elites who have proven to be so destructive and insecure themselves. There is good reason for the ruling circles to fear the end of the war and demobilization. As political struggles begin to surface once again, radicals from all regions of the country may resume a common struggle to revolutionize their society. Lord Lugard, of all people, may have foreshadowed the war's effects when he wrote his wife about the experience of the Nigerian soldier in World War I:

"He also knows how to kill the white man, around whom he has been taught to weave a sanctity of life. He also knows how to handle bombs and Lewis guns and Maxims--and he has seen the white men budge when he stood fast. And altogether he has acquired much knowledge which he might put to uncomfortable use some day."





## II. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROGRAM

ADL provided 77.12 man-years of service during the operational period of the contract. These services were rendered by 215 members of the ADL staff and consultant corps. Of those serving on the Nigerian assignment, 184 were regular employees of the permanent ADL staff, 11 were employees recruited specially for field service in Nigeria at various times over the four-and-a-half-year contract period, and 20 were consultants brought into the project on special short-term assignments. Of the 11 recruited specially for field service, since returning from the field, have been added to the regular staff. Others remain on field service in Nigeria under the supervision of the Government of Nigeria. Of the 215 personnel involved in the contract program, 48 saw service in the field. Appendix 2 details the manning of the project as the statistics presented in the report are based on the field support of the field project's offices in Lagos, which comprised of 47



Arthur D. Little, Inc.



## RECONSTRUCTION AND THE IMPERIALIST FUTURE

The post-war reconstruction plans for Nigeria were mapped out in the backrooms of the American foundations, corporations, and consulting firms. Early last year (1969) the Ford Foundation sponsored yet another of its proverbial conferences at the Ford-financed Ibadan University Conference Center; earlier round-ups included a 1959 conference on public administration, a 1963 CIA funded congregation looking into the question of 'elites,' and, appropriately, a 1966 meeting discussing the role of social psychology in developing countries. The latest Ibadan conference was on Reconstruction and Development, and, like the others, one of its purposes was to bolster the morale of those Nigerian elites who were beginning to have doubts about the reliability of their neo-colonial partners.

While hundreds of Nigerian delegates and experts from all over the world went through the motions of discussing economic policy, agencies like the World Bank and Arthur D. Little, Inc., which had already made far-reaching decisions on reconstruction policy, hardly even bothered to send delegates. Until recently, Arthur D. Little (ADL) was advising the federal government on investment promotion and industrial policy for over seven years by virtue of successive multi-million dollar A.I.D. contracts.

ADL's 1968 progress report to A.I.D. revealed that the firm's technical advisory group had been giving special consideration to reconstruction planning since November 1967--that is less than six months after the war had begun. Their eagerness

to get on with reconstruction was the result of the *opportunities* and new possibilities they felt the war provided them. Their own progress report indicates that an ADL paper entitled "Nigeria's New Industrial Policy," prepared for a two day meeting of government officials in March 1968, "indicated the urgent short term problems of economic reconstruction but stated that *reconstruction economic policies can often result in considerable improvement over previous situations.*"<sup>1</sup> (Italics added) Reportedly, the recommendations and conclusions in this same paper were being adopted as the basis for the country's economic policies. These included a "New Estate Policy" for agriculture aimed at promoting plantation based agro-industries. This plantation strategy would erode the strength of Nigeria's small-holders and create an agricultural proletariat dependent on foreign capital. The Ministry of Agriculture was using ADL reports as the basis for agricultural planning and development for the next ten years. Meanwhile, a Consortium for the Study of Nigerian Rural Development, composed of four major universities and governmental agencies based, naturally, at Michigan State, has produced an A.I.D. financed study entitled "Strategies and Recommendations for Nigerian Rural Development, 1969/1985."

Nigeria's disintegration did not come as a surprise to the U.S. corporate planners. They have been predicting the decline of the nation state for years. In its research report on the world market in 1985, *Business International*, a private intelligence and consulting arm of the major multi-national corporations, looks forward to the withering away of the nation state while blithely forecasting "More Darkness for Africa"

1. Arthur D. Little Inc. Op.Cit.

### III. RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION

#### ADL Task

##### Reconstruction and Rehabilitation

Since November 1967, the ADL technical advisory group has given special consideration to reconstruction planning. This includes developing measures to rehabilitate existing industrial enterprises as well as measures to promote agricultural growth by means of plantation based industries. ADL completed a reconnaissance survey on Government-owned industries in which ADL examined refinancing, reconstruction, and material problems. Specific examples of work in reconstruction and rehabilitation are given below. Specific examples of work in Government-owned industries is given in the Section on Federally guaranteed industrial projects.

##### Industrial Opportunity Review for Benue-Plateau

ADL requested by Ministry of Industries to meet with officials of Benue-Plateau state in connection with an industrial survey the state government asked the Federal Government to undertake, and to prepare a preliminary report of the results of the meeting.

#### Conclusions, Recommendations, and Results

ADL's conclusions and recommendations are presented mainly in the subsectoral reports. ADL is undertaking a special crash program to bring certain basic industries back into production. For example, it is now determining the feasibility and prospects of providing a floating power plant to bring the Calabar Cement Plant into production, since the ECN is unable to provide power in less than a year.

In a preliminary report submitted through the Federal Ministry of Industries to the Governor of the Benue-Plateau State, ADL furnished a tentative analysis of opportunities in: the dairy industry; local food processing; fruit and vegetable canning; mining (especially zinc); cement manufacturing in Yandev; the manufacture of agricultural implements; utilization of horns and hoofs; and meat preservation.

#### GON Action

1. A joint commission for the refinancing of Government-owned and constructed plants has been established. The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Industries is the key man in this committee and the ADL group is his technical and advisory arm.
2. Summaries of all ADL studies, as well as studies themselves, are being sent to all 12 states in order to develop a common policy.
3. A new policy for agriculture, the "new estate policy," has been endorsed by GON and the individual states are being informed. The policy will be implemented by GON during the reconstruction period, although Nigeria's traditional pattern of agricultural development through small landowners will continue to some extent.

With the creation of the new states, there is continuing pressure from the states to get some assistance in developing their own industrial and agro-industrial programs. GON has responded as best it can to the states' requests, in this case as in others.

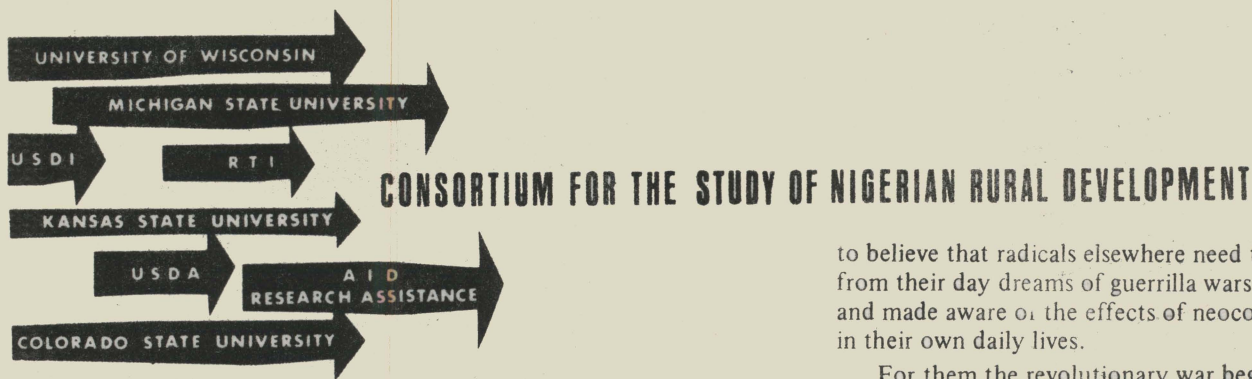
#### ADL Influence

This is described under GON Action. All requests from states are being channeled through the Federal Government and policies are being evolved by the Federal Government. As of July 1968, many of the ADL reports are being used as a basis for reconstruction policy.

In keeping with the lines of unification, GON is insisting that the technical help on industrial development which the states are requesting be channeled through the Federal Ministry of Industries. The Federal Ministry of Industries is increasingly using the ADL technical advisory group in responding to these requests from the individual states.

**NEOCOLONIALISM WORKS THIS WAY:** Here is a page from an ADL report which digests the consulting firm's recommendations, the actions taken by the Nigerian Government (GON), and finally ADL's (read America's) continuing influence.





over the next 25 years. The nature of American corporate involvement *requires* some degree of national-integration in Nigeria's case. The argument favoring corporate integration was put forward at the closed conference on "Problems of Integration and Disintegration in Nigeria" held at Northwestern University in early 1967. Several scholars there concluded that the large expatriate corporations have provided an integrative force in Nigeria while the local capitalists have been *disintegrative*. The implication is clear: American corporations desire to strengthen federal powers in Nigeria to counterbalance the (competitive) dynamics of regional capitalism. Corporate integration simply means the organization of the national (mass) market within the cities through a nation-wide marketing system. This type of integration produces a branch plant economy whose *disintegrative* effects will tend to undermine the national economy owing to the oligopolistic structure of the market. Kari Levitt has shown convincingly how this process of fragmentation has operated in Canada where direct foreign investment has created an advanced stage of dependency.<sup>1</sup> In short, the economic plans in store for Nigeria in the future promise only more dependency and underdevelopment.

### The Appropriate Response

As Arthur D. Little Inc. suggests, the civil war has enabled American companies and imperialist institutions to expand their influence in Nigeria. Dr. R.A. Levine was back in the Northern territories under a new contract, along with other foundation agents opening up that area to "Westernization". Like pacification in Vietnam, the war has speeded the destruction of traditional culture which the experts view as the main obstacle to "modernization." The atmosphere in Lagos smacks of a boom mentality typified by the remark made to *U.S. News and World Report* by an American banker: "Business is terrific." Another newspaper reported it more bluntly: "Banks are bulging with money to lend. Investors are waiting with more of it. Foreign governments and organizations are rushing to get in."

One does not have to advise the Nigerian left on these neocolonial activities; they are fully aware of what's happening because it is happening to them. They will take care of themselves without having their punches called or the "correctness" of their strategies judged by leftwing theoreticians in the West. At the same time, there is some reason

to believe that radicals elsewhere need to be roused from their day dreams of guerrilla wars in Africa and made aware of the effects of neocolonialism in their own daily lives.

For them the revolutionary war begins at home, not in some imaginary village in the Nigerian rain-forest pictured in *LIFE* magazine. The neocolonial institutions we have identified in Nigeria are familiar enough to everyone; too familiar perhaps. While there were endless debates about which side to support in the civil war or on the applicability of Lenin's theory of self-determination to the Biafran situation, no one protested, much less attempted to impede or halt, the Ford Foundation's massive penetration of Nigeria's school system, or Arthur D. Little's freebooting in the wake of the war.

We are hardly even aware of what these institutions are doing to us, not to mention the Nigerians. We have not yet realized or taken full stock of the observation made several years ago by Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the revolutionary people in "Portuguese" Guinea. Even though his people are fighting the most retrograde form of colonial domination, Cabral has penetrated to the heart of the matter by grasping the implications of neocolonialism for people in the capitalist world:

"As we see it, neocolonialism (which we may call rationalized imperialism) is more a defeat for the international working class than for the colonized peoples. Neocolonialism is at work on two fronts—in Europe as well as in the underdeveloped countries. Its current framework in the underdeveloped countries is the policy of aid and one of the essential aims of this policy is to create a false bourgeoisie to act as a brake on the revolution and to enlarge the possibilities of the petty-bourgeoisie as a neutralizer of the revolution, at the same time it invests in France, Italy, England and so on."

The defeat referred to by Cabral is confirmed by our passivity in the face of the neocolonial activities taking place with impunity right under our noses and for which there are remedies to be found. The strategy of consumption brings home the concrete reality of something which, until now, had existed only as a slogan: neocolonialism. Knowing this strategy opens up new avenues of revolutionary combat; ones which the suffering wrought by the Nigerian civil war demands with some urgency. There is no need for further "debate" on the war. The task is plain enough even though carrying it out may be complex: we must find the pressure points and press them.

Nigeria's predicament reveals the weakness of a one dimensional anti-imperialism; one should not be mesmerized by military imperialism, but rather take account of the daily practice of neocolonialism and deal with it appropriately. That is the only way to see the civil war and the transformation of capitalism within it.

That is the other side of Nigeria's civil war.

1. Kari Levitt, "Canada: Economic Dependence and Political Disintegration," *New World Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 2 1968





# The Politics of Relief

The Politics of Relief originally appeared in the February 1970 issue of *Motive Magazine*.

In meeting halls and church basements throughout America and Europe, the charitable affluent have long conducted their crusades on behalf of the world's poor and deprived. These crusades have embodied what has been portrayed as the highest expression of Western Judeo-Christian ethics, namely, humanitarianism. Its moral imperative has been expressed in countless organizations formed to answer the call to aid the distressed.

In 1968 Biafra became such a cause. As photographs of starving Biafran children began to appear in the Western press, Europe and America discovered the Nigerian Civil War. The imagery of death provoked a direct response from the public; relief forces were mobilized in the capitals and cities of every major Western nation. While relief was seen as only humanitarian, it was, from the beginning, profoundly political in ways that many have still not come to appreciate.

The relief shipped thousands of miles to Nigeria goes through millions of miles of political difficulty. Internationally, the relief agencies are political instruments deeply enmeshed in a network of voluntary organizations prepared to serve United States' international purposes. Many of the agencies engaged in feeding the hungry on both sides of the war are committed to the extension and rationalization of American power. For them and for the government they serve, relief is one of the many political instruments through which American influence can be maintained and increased. This paper will seek to bring out the evidence for this thesis.

Relief also functions as a political ideology. By providing the images through which the Civil War is seen—tribalism, genocide, etc.—it shapes the way people understand the conflict. These images function to distort the problem and obscure the origins of the war. While they

awaken humanitarian impulses, they deaden political understanding.

To assess clearly the role of relief agencies, and the "humanitarianism" they cultivate and exploit, it is necessary to examine and demystify the popular images promoted by the ideology of relief as explanations for the war.

For most Westerners, especially Americans, the image of Biafra is starvation accompanied by its political expression, genocide. Cultivated by Biafran press agencies, particularly by Markpress (a professional, semi-official agency based in Geneva and operated by an American), the two images of starvation and genocide were communicated forcefully to millions through the power of the mass media. The images are not completely incorrect. While verifying data is made difficult by the nature of the war and the use of figures for propaganda by both sides, it is certainly true that starvation occurred in Biafra on a massive scale. At its height during the fall of 1968, estimates of deaths due to starvation ranged from 10,000 (Joint Church Aid) to 5,000 (Red Cross) to a few hundred (U.S. and Nigeria governments) people per day. And starvation has continued on a lesser scale to the present time. Forgotten in many accounts were the thousands also starving within federally held territory.

While starvation has occurred, additional evidence is needed to substantiate the claim of genocide. Biafra argues that Nigeria is carrying out a deliberate policy of systematic massacre against the Biafran people, claiming as evidence the 50,000 Ibos killed in the 1966 pogroms in the North, the two million Biafrans dead of starvation because of Nigeria's blockade of relief supplies, and the 100,000 Biafran civilians killed by advancing Nigerian troops and bombings of civilian targets. (These figures come from Colonel Ojukwu's press conference, July 18, 1968.) Nigeria, for its part, stoutly



denies any such policy, basing its claim on the thousands of Ibos who continue to live unmolested within Nigeria, the many Ibos who hold high civil service and political positions in the government, the rehabilitation effort organized by the government to help Ibos re-establish their lives and livelihoods in the North, and the care given to Ibos in "liberated" areas.

More important than the debate over genocide is its function as a political weapon. At the beginning of the war, the Ibo people were mesmerized by the fear of genocide. An atmosphere of collective paranoia existed with what appeared to be a plausible and frightening basis in reality. Through the specter of genocide, the Ibo people were organized to support Ojukwu's secession—more by mass psychological mobilization than by any appeal to a progressive program. This image of genocide catalyzed a people into a fighting machine, converting Ibos and other ethnic groups into Biafrans. It consolidated the population behind Ojukwu's leadership, creating and preserving solidarity and determination, while retarding any significant political dissent or ethnic division within Biafra. Psychologically and politically the fear of genocide became Biafra's glue. Externally, the image of genocide has galvanized sympathy from around the world into physical and political support for Biafra. Saving Biafrans was difficult to distinguish from saving Biafra. The image of genocide became one of the most important weapons in Biafra's arsenal, and the catalytic impulse for the Biafran relief movement. Saving Biafrans was associated with saving Biafra.

While the relief effort for Biafra has been global, the U.S. government and citizenry have played a major role. Similarly, the U.S. has recently been a major influence in Nigeria, helping to structure a neo-colonial system to facilitate American exploitation of Nigerian markets and raw materials. As the "showcase" of American sponsored development in Africa, every major U.S. overseas arm was used to penetrate the country with the purpose of grooming a pro-Western middle-class. It is only in this context that one can understand why Nigeria became a major recipient of U.S. AID funds, grants from the Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie Foundations, and the intervention of the World Bank and other U.S. controlled multinational instruments.

But then, the showcase window cracked. Intra-class conflicts within the ruling elite

developed as the inevitable competition for political control and its closely linked economic benefits increased. Ethnic tensions were manipulated as each faction attempted to strengthen its position. A "model" parliamentary government was swept aside by a series of coups, leaving the country's unsolved economic and political problems in the hands of ill prepared military men and civil servants. Ethnic animosities, inflamed by sharp class tensions, erupted into unabated violence against minority tribes in every region, especially against the Ibos in the North. As violence and fear spread, the breakdown of Nigeria into civil war became irreversible.

As political conflict degenerated into civil war, the U.S. faced a difficult problem. Its neo-colonial strategy had previously been to promote unity in Nigeria as a foundation for establishing access for economic penetration. With the dissolution of that precarious unity, American strategists sought a middle-ground which would allow continued support for Nigerian unity while not completely alienating the Ibo elite which ruled Biafra. Under domestic pressure from a respectable pro-Biafra lobby composed of both conservatives, like Senator Dodd, and McCarthy liberals, the U.S. opted for a low profile approach. By declaring an arms embargo and political support for the Federal side, the U.S. could profess support for Nigerian unity; by providing relief supplies the U.S. could still provide concrete help to Biafra's cause. In this way the U.S. hoped to weather the storm of the civil war and emerge in the post-war peace with the continuing support of the middle-class on both sides upon which America's penetration strategy depends. In this strategy the relief agencies performed a pivotal role by providing the "neutral" instruments needed to keep the channels of influence open.

On both sides of the fighting line, badly needed food supplies have been rationed out through carefully selected and well-connected agencies. Nothing testifies to the political nature of relief so much as a careful look at the relief agencies themselves. In general they share an interface of purpose, and often of personnel, with other more official instruments of U.S. influence. While tensions and conflicts certainly exist between these agencies and various agencies of government and business, they basically share a common approach to development problems and political solutions. (In the case of the Nigerian Civil War, the U.S. government now represents the largest



source of financial support for Biafra relief, paying over 50% of the total relief bill.)

There are two separate but related questions concerning the relief agencies involved in the Nigerian Civil War: (1) Whose interests do they serve and (2) Why have they been unable to meet the needs of the hungry and distressed on both sides of the war? We wish to look at three agencies which have played the most important role—the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Church World Service (CWS), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Edward Swanstrom is the Catholic's Bishop for relief. He has directed CRS since it was founded in 1947 to aid refugees favored by the U.S. government. (Swanstrom also heads the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Services, a para-government co-ordinating body and clearing house that helps give political direction to all U.S. relief agencies.) Swanstrom's attraction to Biafra springs in part from a legitimate concern for the largest Catholic population in Africa, a continent where Catholicism in general is declining. Working closely with the Vatican's international relief agency, Caritas, Swanstrom has arranged for U.S. surplus food for Biafra and surplus planes to get it there. Through the ecumenical coalition, Joint Church Aid, Swanstrom has been the prime mover in organizing pressure on the U.S. government to increase its support for the relief effort. His political position was strengthened because CRS had helped the government before, particularly in Vietnam.

In 1954 CRS, with the help of the CIA and the Seventh Fleet, organized a massive relief effort for the 700,000 Catholic refugees who "fled" from North Vietnam into the South. Justified as a humanitarian gesture, this relief was actually an integral part of a well-conceived strategy of building political support for a reactionary Saigon government in order to avert the widely predicted victory of Ho Chi Minh in the promised elections of 1956. From this beginning the CRS has remained in South Vietnam. In 1965, for example, it sponsored a large-scale food distribution program for the families of men who "joined" the so-called Popular Front. In the Fall of 1967, Michael

Novak, a lay Catholic theologian, reported in the *National Catholic Reporter* after a tour of South Vietnam that "the largest single program of CRS in Vietnam is distribution of food rations as part of the salary of South Vietnam's armed forces." CRS in Vietnam has thus played an essential role in helping the U.S. build an army for the unpopular Saigon government. For this work CRS has earned the reputation among other relief agencies in South Vietnam, according to Novak, as "the most hawkish of the relief agencies" and the one "most willing to co-operate with the U.S. military."

While CRS support for Biafra is politically different from its work in South Vietnam, the \$5 million CRS is reported to spend in Biafra needs to be seen as part of the network of American international power.

**C**hurch World Service is the overseas relief arm of American Protestants. Although the Protestants spend less abroad than the Catholics, this agency is also given its tone by a staff with a background in para-government work. CWS Director James McCracken came to this post after a three-year stint (1954-1957) as Chief of Operations for the Tolstoy Foundation, a CIA-funded Cold War instrument. He is also a director of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service.

In recent years, CWS has been divided internally by debates about how closely it should work with the government. In 1962 CWS withdrew from relief work in Taiwan because of its disgust at helping the corrupt regime of Chiang Kai Shek. At the time, church officials admitted that the "U.S. was using the churches as a front for its foreign policy" and wanted out of such a role. In 1967, after staff members circulated private memos alleging CIA use of missionary and relief workers, the Division of Overseas Ministries, CWS' governing body, adopted a weak policy prohibiting further cooperation with the CIA but leaving the door open to other forms of government service.

In the Nigerian Civil War CWS has provided financial support to both sides of the war. In Biafra it has followed the lead of the Catholics,

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Daily Publication  
Price: Fr.S. 0.20



chipping in close to \$4 million towards the airlift, but also seeking American governmental support in the form of shipping payments and surplus food.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is a Swiss-based relief agency with an international reputation for neutrality. A closer look at its position in the network of Western power indicates that its neutrality is conditioned by the political interests of the governments it serves, particularly the United States. The personnel most closely associated with its work in Nigeria-Biafra, for example, have close connections with the United States: Auguste Lindt, the first ICRC representative in Nigeria-Biafra, is a former Swiss Ambassador to the U.S.; Robert Naville, the new president of ICRC is strategically linked to American financial circles as a director of a leading Swiss bank. Of all the contributors to the Biafra relief effort of the ICRC, the U.S. as of June, 1968, has given more than \$20 million; the next highest is West Germany with almost \$3 million.

When American policy supported the Nigerian strategy of a quick military victory, it was felt that ICRC services would be needed after the victory to assist refugee work. Thus, fewer than 60 ICRC-sponsored flights into Biafra were made until the middle of September, 1968. Early optimism of a quick victory faded, however, so American policy had to adjust to the prospect of a prolonged war, with numerous casualties from starvation. The ICRC then began to make regular flights which were supported by the U.S. By the end of 1968, ICRC had made over 650 flights. But the ICRC relief effort was finally undermined by the inherent contradictions of the American policy it served. In June, 1969, Nigeria forced the ICRC out of the country because of its political dealings.

**D**espite the impact of relief on starvation within Biafra, not enough relief reached the suffering to end their misery. Church officials reported in early December, 1968, that the level of starvation had been reduced from approximately 10,000 to 200 per day due in part to relief food. Even so, starvation continued to exist on a large scale. In November, 1969, an NBC televised news report indicated that starvation, if continued at its present level, might mean the deaths of up to 2 million people in addition to the thousands who have already starved to death. While these figures, given the situation within Biafra, are only an approximation, they clearly indicate that the

relief effort has not been successful in feeding all the starving. Why is this so?

Nigeria is a product of imperialism and continues to be shackled by imperialist bonds, which must partially be held responsible for both the war and the inability of relief agencies to alleviate war-caused suffering. Relief agencies, as part of the power structure of imperialism, cannot, even if they desire to do so, act contrary to the interests of the countries which support them. America, the newcomer to imperialism in Africa, was reluctant from the beginning to provide support for relief efforts because its interest solidly fell in line with the Nigeria of its creation. Consequently, relief efforts for Biafra were hampered both by lack of the resources which the U.S. Government could have provided and by stubborn political opposition to any form of support for Biafra. Only when it became strategically important (after "a quick victory" did not materialize) did any substantial change occur in favor of supporting relief efforts. Even then the support given was too little and too late. The U.S. government is not interested in Nigeria or Biafra for humanitarian reasons. Instead its interests lie in the economic, political and military advantages which Nigeria offers. Imperialism placed the relief effort low on the totem pole of penetration.

Internal obstacles are also partially responsible for the inability of relief agencies to alleviate suffering. Both sides continue to find fault in any particular relief proposal, claiming that some political or military advantage would exist for the other side if such and such plan were adopted. Thus land routes into Biafra have been ruled out as have daytime flights and river routes. Only the illegal nighttime airlift has functioned, though it is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of hungry people. Even these flights have been threatened and sometimes barred by the Nigerian government. Both sides have seen relief in political terms





from the beginning. Both ruling elites seem willing to let their people die before jeopardizing their political positions.

So there it is: an unfootnoted and, no doubt, unpopular argument which suggests both the need for a more profound analysis of the origins and implications of the war, as well as an action program which might begin to transform this international system which subordinates all third-world countries, including Nigeria and Biafra, to underdevelopment and dependency. If the problems of Nigeria are political, and the relief agencies themselves are political instruments, then the response of a morally outraged citizenry must reflect a new political consciousness.

The ideology of relief needs to be transcended. Not only has it reduced explanations of the war to the level of imagery but it obscures the ultimate source of oppression. In the hands of corrupt elites, relief became a type of patronage to solidify political support. For imperialist powers, the "good works" of the relief agencies are translated into propaganda justifying foreign intervention as basically humanitarian and benign. As an ideology, relief thus focuses attention on the symptoms of the problem rather than illuminating its causes.

A new political analysis is needed. We must by-pass the simplistic explanations which on the more popular extreme focus exclusively on tribalism and genocide, or take refuge in a conspiratorial theory which pictures foreign agents fighting to divide up the oil wells. It must focus on examining the contradictions in Nigerian society and their relationship to the international economy. It has to look at political conflicts in Nigeria in class terms and examine the ways international capital has shaped and manipulated these classes for its own profit.

Such an analysis leads necessarily to the urgent task of building a movement which is explicitly anti-imperialist in character. In the report of his second visit to Biafra, Conor Cruse O'Brien, an early partisan of its cause, points out in passing: "We saw the reddish hair and other signs of kwashiorkor (caused by protein deficiency) rather more often, but not startlingly more often, than one sees of such cases in West Africa in peace-time." The problem of West Africa and indeed the problem of all oppressed nations is not necessarily most acute in times of war. There is always the more urgent and less visible challenge of the brutal peace—the deformation and stagnation of the economy, the exploitation of human and mineral resources, and the low life expectancies with thousands dying of curable disease.

It is in this context that the generosity of the West, its charity and its relief is symbolic of the deeper crime. The affluence which permits liberal humanitarianism is based on the very poverty toward which it is directed.

This is not to say that the West has no obligations to fulfill to the peoples of Africa. Quite the contrary. As Fanon has written, the people of Africa demand that the help offered to it by Europe, and by extension America, should be the ratification of a double realization: the realization by colonized peoples that *it is their due*, and the realization by the capitalist powers that in fact they *must pay*. Thus, the relief of the West must become the reparations of imperialism. But for that to happen, if the experience of Vietnam, the Congo and Bolivia is any guide, revolutionary movements will have to challenge and defeat the self-interested forces ranged against them. The experience of three years of fighting in Nigeria is beginning to affect the ways Nigerians and Biafrans relate to the conflict. In the western states of Nigeria, radicals committed to the pan-African stance are not prepared to see a return to the status quo so desperately desired by the British. At the same time tax-riots in the same states are expressions of popular discontent with unrepresentative elites, and echo the need for more radical social change. In the East, perhaps because of its increasing isolation, Colonel Ojukwu speaks vaguely of a "Biafran Revolution"—his words contain the seeds of a more radical vision.

The duty of mother country radicals, then, is to avoid encapsulation in emotionally driven liberal crusades and to seek to generate active support for anti-imperialist struggles. Our job is to enlarge understanding of the war and to seek to transform those structures which promise only more dependency and despair for the peoples of the world. That task begins at home—in the glass offices of the Ford Foundation, the posh parlors of the Chase Manhattan Bank (which banks in Nigeria through its South African colleagues at the Standard Bank) and outside that ever so White House. It begins with us. ■





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