

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The making and effectiveness of propaganda as a strategy in war is a subject of scholarly interest not only because of its critical importance and role in the execution of war but because it represents the effort of human will to dominate the roaring flux of forces that are aroused by war.¹ On 1st October, 1960, Nigeria gained her independence from the British colonial rule.² On 6th July, 1967 the country was engulfed in a civil war which was fought between the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, led by Major-General Yakubu Gowon and the defunct Republic of Biafra, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Chukwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu.³ The main feature of the war was the use of propaganda by both sides of the conflict. While, the Nigerian government's propaganda campaign slogan was to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done, Biafra's propaganda saw the civil war as a war of survival from which Biafrans must be free.⁴ The origin of Biafra's propaganda could be traced to 1966 when the country was thrown into the era of coup and counter-coup *d'état*. These events culminated into heavy waves of massacres, which swept some parts of the country especially in the North. Those mostly affected by those tragic incidents were Southern Nigerians and particularly the Igbos. Following the historic mass exodus to their homeland for safety there emerged the perception that the security of the Igbos in the Nigerian State was not guaranteed an argument that later formed the basis for the widespread Biafra's propaganda during the Nigerian Civil War.⁵

At the peak of the civil war, Biafra's propaganda became a force to reckon with when the Biafran government embarked on a serious reorganisation of the war effort while soliciting for

¹ Greenfield, K. R. 1963. *American Strategy in World War II: A Reconsideration*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins Press, p.1.

² Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969. *The Making of a Nation: Biafra*. London: C. Hurst and Company, p.3.

³ Warren, G.B. 2000. Petroleum and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. *The Fletcher Forum*. Vol.3 No.2, p.66.

⁴ Ngoa, S. N. 2011. A Review and Analytical Narrative of Propaganda Activities: A Nigerian perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Volume.1, No.16, p.241.

⁵ Nwankwo, A.A. 1972. *Nigeria: the Challenge of Biafra*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers Ltd, p.16.

global sympathy and support.⁶ As rightly noted by the Director of Biafra's Directorate of Military Intelligence, Bernard Chukwuemeka Odogwu, "the Nigerian Civil War captured the sympathies and interests of the whole world for thirty months from July 1967 to January, 1970. The secessionist enclave Biafra drew attention to itself by the manipulation and evocative propaganda made more effective by the fact that the beleaguered people fought to sustain the doomed republic with incredible tenacity."⁷ Also, Michael Gould was of the view that the most single important factor which determined the length of the civil war was the Biafra's creative use of propaganda.⁸

To achieve an effective propaganda exercise, the Biafran government established a propaganda office, known, as the Directorate of Propaganda. The Directorate was fundamentally saddled with the responsibility of strengthening the will of the people in their continued support of the war efforts.⁹ The establishment of Radio Biafra added more impetus towards the spread of Biafra's propaganda messages mostly targeting the local and international audiences.¹⁰ The Overseas Division of the Directorate of Propaganda sought the services of an international public relations agency, known as the Markpress News Feature Services (MNFS), which served as the international link of Biafra's propaganda across Europe and North America.¹¹

Bernard Preston, the Markpress Chief Executive Officer in charge of Biafran news reports, noted that, Great Britain was the most strategic international target of Biafran propaganda. It received approximately twenty two percent of the propaganda mailings.¹² These were circulated among the various facets of the British society, such as, the news media, Parliamentarians; Church organisations; human rights activists; humanitarian organisations and other opinion makers in Britain.¹³ As a result, the British Parliamentarians, both in the House of Commons and House of Lords, including Lord Spiritual, could not resist the pressures mounted

⁶ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977. *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p.110.

⁷ Odogwu, C.B. 1985. *No Place to Hide: Crises and Conflicts Inside Biafra*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension, p. 110.

⁸ Gould, M. 2013. *The Struggle for Modern Nigeria: The Biafran War, 1967-1970*. London: I.B. Tauris &Co, p.196.

⁹ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.112.

¹⁰ Doron, R.S. 2011. Forging a Nation While Losing a Country: Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda in the Nigerian Civil War, 1968-1970. PhD Thesis, Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Texas, Austin. pp. 138-139.

¹¹ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*.p.115.

¹² Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-19*, p.116.

¹³ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*,p.116.

by various interest groups in Britain who was heavily influenced by Biafra's propaganda.¹⁴ Certainly, the spread of Biafra's propaganda in Britain triggered serious political reactions, which resulted in the attempt of the British government under the leadership of Harold Wilson and Labour Party to re-examine her stance on the Nigerian Civil War.¹⁵ The British government was faced with a broad and dynamic international coalition of activists who protested its policy concerning Biafra and the civil war in general.¹⁶

According to Frederick Forsyth, "there were meetings, committees, protests, demonstrations, riots, lobbies, sit-ins, fasts, vigils, collections, banners, public meetings, and marches. Letters were sent to everybody in public life, capable of influencing public opinion, sermons, lectures, films and donations."¹⁷ Non-governmental organisations which emerged in the wake of Biafra's propaganda campaign thought that Great Britain was aiding an authoritarian regime that was trying to stop a rebellion. These organisations attacked Britain's international prestige and honour, both at home and abroad. The height of these events were arguments produced by pro-Biafran sympathisers such as; "What did Great Britain stand for? And what kind of nation was it?" etc.¹⁸ According to Joe Garba:

Nigeria's relations with the United Kingdom remained cordial until 1967. The Nigerian Government expected Britain's support as a matter of right. It was totally unprepared for the sustained propaganda mounted against it both in the British Parliament, and the British society at large. Even more painful was the initial refusal of the British Government to sell arms to the Federal Government, who, apart from buying the German MIGs machine gun in preference to the British general purpose machine gun in 1963, had armed its forces with exclusively British weapons. Even though the Wilson's government would later relent and sell to Nigeria some military hardware, including arms, the harm had been done.¹⁹

¹⁴ Tamuno, T. N. 1989. *Men and Measures in the Nigerian Crisis, 1966-1970*. T.N. Tekena and C.U. Samson Eds, *Nigeria since Independence the First Twenty Five Years: The Civil War Years*. Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project, Volume VI. Ibadan: Heinemann Books Limited, pp12-13.

¹⁵ Stremmler, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.180.

¹⁶ McNeil, B.E. 2004. *Frontier of Need: Humanitarianism, Imperialism and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. Retrieved Feb, 8 2015 from https://www.gwu.edu/~assets/docs/McNeil_cwcp.com, p.8.

¹⁷ Forsyth, F. 1969. *The Making of an African Legend: The Biafra Story*. England: Harmondsworth Middlesex-Penguin Books Ltd, p.186.

¹⁸ McNeil, B.E. 2004. *Frontier of Need: Humanitarianism, Imperialism and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.8.

¹⁹ Garba, J. 1987. *Diplomatic Soldiering: The Nigerian Foreign Policy, 1975-1979*, p.167.

The effectiveness of Biafra's propaganda in Britain raised the concern of the British officialdom. For instance, when Lord Shepherd, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, visited Nigeria on 21st June, 1968 he told Major-General Yakubu Gowon, to recognise the fact that there had been increased public pressures in Britain against the Labour Government's policy in that civil war. Moreover, the Biafra's Press and publicity in London had been efficiently managed; while the Federal government's media effort had not been very effective.²⁰ In discussing the effect of Biafra's propaganda in Britain and elsewhere Harold Wilson noted:

Whether inspired by European financial interests, or directly controlled by Colonel Ojukwu himself, the public relations campaign, carried out on behalf of Biafra was one of the outstanding features of the war. If Biafra's military prowess had been one-tenth as efficient, the war would have ended in weeks. The purveyors of Biafran propaganda flooded the Western press and Western legislatures with literature, and secured a degree of moral control over Western broadcasting systems, with a success unparalleled in the history of communication in modern democratic societies.²¹

Harold Wilson further noted that "Nigeria had replaced Vietnam as our overseas preoccupation. It took up far more of my time and that of my Ministerial colleagues and far more moral wear and tear than any other issue".²² As rightly pointed out by Gray Blank, "nowhere in the Western world was the debate about the Nigerian Civil War fiercer than in Britain."²³ Therefore, part of the landmark events in the civil war was the reactions in Britain generated through the instrumentality of Biafra's propaganda and the methods utilised by the British government to counter it.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Propaganda has been identified as a strong strategic technique of warfare. The efforts of states to justify their actions and to build international support in war had resulted in some of the most powerful propaganda ever produced. Over the years, nations devoted massive resources and huge amount of efforts to producing propaganda designed to shape opinions and reactions in war

²⁰ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.177.

²¹ Wilson, H. 1971. *The Labour Government 1964-1970*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, p.557.

²² Wilson, H. 1971, *the Labour Government 1964-1970*, p.557.

²³ Blank, G. 2013. *Britain, Biafra and the Balance of Payments: the Formation of London's One Nigerian Policy*. Retrieved Feb.8, 2014 from <http://www.cercles.com/rfcb/rfcb18...../blank.com>, p.65.

situations.²⁴ In recent times, the study of Biafra's propaganda has been subsumed with the general history of the Nigerian Civil War. However, in spite of all that has been written the reactions in Britain arising from Biafra's propaganda campaign in the wake of the civil war in Nigeria has remained understudied. No doubt, Biafra's propaganda was very effective in boosting the morale and support of the people towards sustaining the Biafran leadership and war efforts. It equally developed frontier of international reactions during the civil war. Hence, not much is known and properly documented about how the British society and government reacted to the propaganda, and what has been the impact of their reactions both in Britain and other parts of the world. This wide gap makes this study worth researching as there are limited works on the British reactions to Biafra's propaganda.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This research study addresses the following objectives.

To discuss the key issues that led to the formation of Biafra's propaganda;

To examine the nature of Biafra's propaganda machinery;

To investigate British reaction to Biafra's propaganda; and

To examine other dimensions of Biafra's propaganda;

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study of Biafra's propaganda is very important, because, it reveals how the defunct Biafra Republic made use of propaganda during the Nigerian Civil War. The study will throw more light on the personalities that contributed towards the success of Biafra's propaganda machinery. It also identifies various strategies and mechanisms adopted by the British government in countering the propaganda. The study has the potential to break new frontiers, on how the propaganda spread, and became a force that shaped the global politics of the Nigerian Civil War thus, contributes to the existing literature on Biafra's propaganda studies and the Nigerian Civil War historiography. The study serves as a major contribution to the history of propaganda as a weapon of war.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is between 1967 and 1970 when Biafra's propaganda existed. The study is an aspect of the account of the international reaction to the Nigerian Civil War. The

²⁴ Ian, C. 2013. *Propaganda as a Weapon? Influencing International Opinion*. Retrieved August 25th from <http://www.britishlibrary.html>, p.1.

outbreak of civil war in Nigeria in 1967, served as the major turning point in the development of Biafra's propaganda. The defunct Republic of Biafra was demarcated to the West by the lower reaches of the River Niger and its Delta, to the East by the Obudu plateau and the highlands of Oban and Ikom, to the south by the Bight of Biafra and to the North by an administrative boundary following, approximately, 7° N. latitude. Thus Biafra, when compared with Gambia and Sierra Leone put together, was bigger than Togo or Rwanda and Burundi combined and was four times the size of the Republic of Israel. The territory was well-watered throughout the year lying to a large extent in the Basins of River Niger, the Cross River, the Kwa River and the Imo River. Three quarters of these river basins were lowland less than 400 feet above sea-level. The well-known Niger Delta which extends through two of the twenty provinces of Biafra occupies about fifth of the lowland. North of the lowland the country rises gradually through open flat land to the Oban hills and Obudu plateau in the east and the Nsukka and Udi hills in the west. The Obudu plateau rises to over 6,300 feet and was one of the coolest and most delightful parts of the West Africa. There were also beautiful uplands in the provinces of Okigwi, Orlu and Nsukka. Biafra is wholly located within the tropics, being only a few degrees north of the equator. But the climate, although humid at some periods of the year, is on the whole not too hot. Monthly average temperatures range 70° F and 90° F, and average rainfall from about 60 inches in the north to about 140 inches in the Niger Delta.²⁵

“Republic of Biafra” was estimated to be, 29, 848 square miles, 77,310 km² of lands, with terrestrial borders shared, with Nigeria to the North and with Cameroon to the East. Its coast was on the Gulf of Guinea in the South. Republic of Biafra as from 30th May, 1967 had its capital at Enugu. (See figure 1.1), Enugu is a metropolis of over one million people at the time of the civil war. It was also known as the coal city, a reference point to the nearby Onyeama Coal Mines and other coal deposits that once served as the fuel that drove a large part of the Nigerian economy. As the war progressed, the Biafra's Capital was moved to Umuahia, the current capital territory of Abia State, Nigeria. The population of the Republic of Biafra in June 1967 was about 15 million people. It was a home to a large number of ethnic groups, in addition to the *Igbos*, who made up of about 65 percent of the population.²⁶ The other major ethnic groups were the *Efik*, *Ibibio*, *Ijaw*, and *Ikwerre*²⁷.

²⁵ Government of Republic of Biafra, 1967. *Introducing the Republic of Biafra*. Port Harcourt: Span Ltd, p.10.

²⁶ Achebe, C. 2012. *There was a country: a personal history of Biafra*. London: Penguin Book,p.149.

²⁷ Achebe, C. 2012, *There was a country: a personal history of Biafra*,p.150.

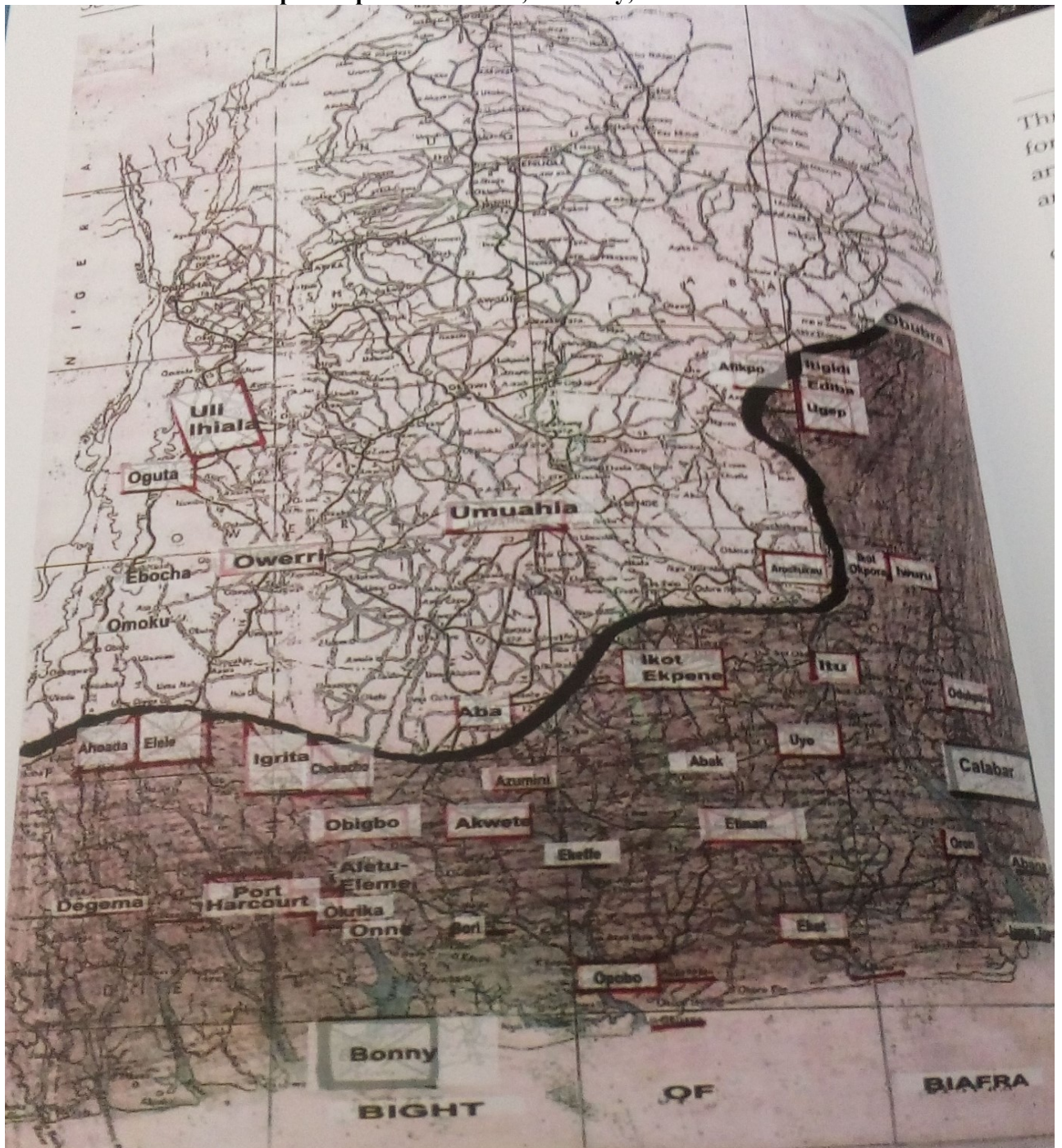
Britain was the major country hit by Biafra's propaganda. The propaganda spread across Britain and elsewhere through various channels such as radio, television, newspapers, and music and recorded widespread reactions from different segments of the British society such as the government, news media, church and religious organisations and non-governmental organisations. The effects and reactions that Biafra's propaganda generated was the one that had a worldwide reach. However, the focus of this study is to discuss the effect of Biafra's propaganda and the British reaction to it.

Fig 1.1
Map of Republic of Biafra 30th May, 1967



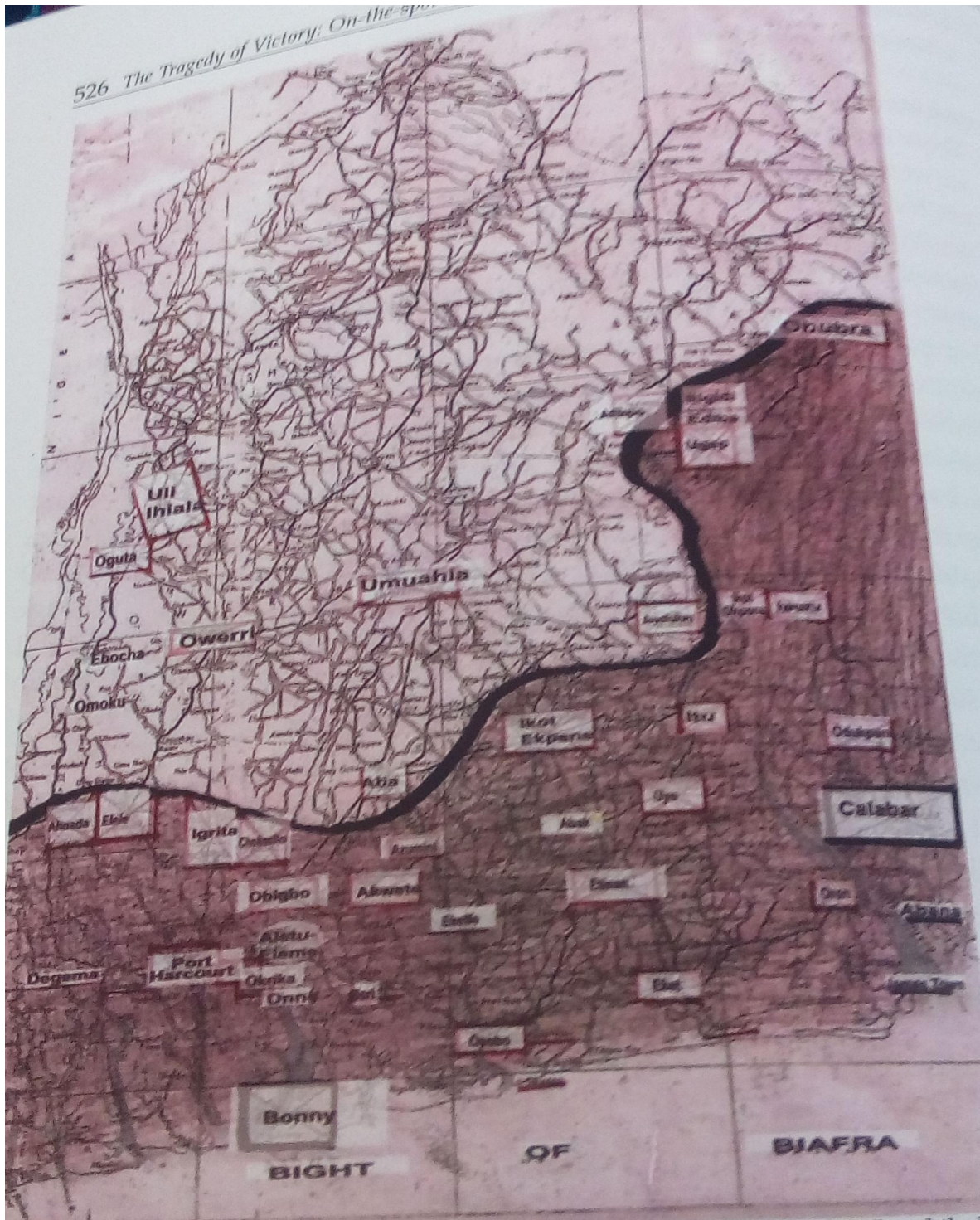
Source: Adapted from Peter, C. Biafra. 27th December, 1968. *The Spectator*, p.1. Redrawn by Cartographer and GIS, J. M. Olumoyegun Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Fig 1.2
Map of Republic of Biafra, 30th May, 1968



Source: Adapted from Alabi-Isama, G. 2013. *The Tragedy of Victory: on-the-Spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic theatre*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, p.330.

Fig 1.3
Map of Republic of Biafra, July, 1968



Source: Alabi-Isama, G. *The Tragedy of Victory: on-the-Spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic theatre*, p.526.

Fig 1.4
Map of Republic of Biafra, May, 1969



Source: Alabi-Isama, G. 2013. *The Tragedy of Victory: on-the-Spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic theatre*, p. 530.

1.6 Sources and Methodology

This study relies on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include oral interview, archival materials such as memoirs, minutes, intelligence reports, government publications, annual records, administrative correspondence, personal papers, parliamentary debates records, official despatches, newspaper reports and editorials. The archival materials were obtained from the National Archives, Ibadan and the British National Archives, Kew London. The secondary sources include, books, journal articles, internet sources, theses, and long essays on both the Nigerian Civil War and the British foreign policy from 1967-1970. The study utilised narrative and analytical historical approaches in interrogating the British reaction to Biafra's propaganda.

1.7 Conceptual clarifications

Propaganda is a strategic instrument of warfare. It makes use of information technology to spread messages which can be real or imagined. It is also a form of messages designed to shape public opinion and reaction. It is equally a tool of enforcement over existing trends and beliefs.²⁸ In war, propaganda serves as a way of weakening the military power and growing influence of an opposition. It aims at achieving territorial and national objectives such as, reasons for going to war reactions to the advances of real or imagined potential aggressor, and generating sympathy and support over a particular cause. It therefore, makes use of various forms of communication, such as, symbols, slogans, radio, television, war memorials, films, newspapers, cartoons, posters, photography, music, etc. In the context of this study, Biafra's propaganda is being defined as an idea and information strategy invented by Biafrans as a means of arguing and presenting their case to the outside world, using various emotional propaganda themes such as genocide, hunger, starvation, pogrom, arms supply etc. Its effectiveness depended on employing certain persuasive skills and instruments such as radio and television.

1.8 Literature Review

There exist many literature on the subject matter of propaganda and Nigerian Civil War. Some scholars have looked at the nature of propaganda and its origin while others have also studied various wars that propaganda was used as a tool of strong persuasion and elements of war policy.

²⁸Welch, D. 1983. *Nazi Propaganda: Power and Limitations*. London & New York: Routledge Taylor& Francis Group, p.2.

1.8.1. Propaganda

Adolf Hitler in his book titled *Mein Kampf* argued that the proper use of propaganda is a true art and one practically unknown to the privileged-class parties.²⁹ Benito Mussolini viewed propaganda in his book *Doctrine of Fascism* as a phenomenon that dehumanises the enemy while glorifying the State.³⁰ A. Goldfarb Marquis examines “words” as a strategic instrument of propaganda that Britain and Germany used during the First World War. He was of the view that whether propaganda actually changed the course of the First World War remains problematical. But the fact is that it was widely perceived as having had a major effect on the war and during the post-war years.³¹ D. Welch examines the roles of propaganda and public opinion as an important weapon in sustaining the *Third Reich* during the Nazi regime in Germany. He analyses the interaction between state-controlled propaganda and the reactions of the public opinion in a “closed” society in the wider context of the Nazi regime’s problems of mobilisation and control.³² M. Philip Taylor explores the conduct of propaganda from the ancient world to the present day. The centre point of his work is that, propaganda is a much misunderstood word. The phenomenon is not necessarily the “bad thing” as most people think that it is. As a process of persuasion it is value neutral. Rather, it is the intention behind the propaganda which demands scrutiny and it is that intention which begs value judgments not the propaganda itself.³³

Michael Stenton examines British propaganda from 1935 to 1945. He discusses the nature and reasons behind the British establishment of propaganda machinery during the Second World War and the contributions of the various personalities and agencies of the British government towards ensuring the success of their propaganda activities during the war. He described the British propaganda as anti-German in nature, aimed at targeting and weakening the German war efforts.³⁴ M. A. John Tugwell examines propaganda as a weapon in violent revolutionary situations. He discusses the meaning and nature of propaganda and goes on to relate the six case studies of propaganda campaigns such as, the Assassins in the

²⁹ Adolf H. 2009. *Mein Kampf*. English Language Ford Translation Edition. Michael Ford & Elite Minds Inc, p.

³⁰ Mussolini, B. 1935. *Doctrine of Fascism*. Florence: Vallecchi Editore, p. 35.

³¹ Alice, G.M. 1978. Words as Weapons: Propaganda in Britain and Germany during the First World War. *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 13, No. 3, p.499.

³² Welch, D. 2007. *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda*. London: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group, p.2.

³³ Philip, M.T. 2003. *Munitions of the Mind: the History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present*. United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, pp.2-16.

³⁴ Michael, S. 1983. British Propaganda and Raison d’Etat, 1935-1945. *European Studies Review*, Vol.13, pp.47-70.

Medieval Persia; the Easter Rising in Dublin 1916; Zionist ambitions in Palestine after the Second World War; the Algerian struggle for national independence 1954- 62; the Provisional IRA's campaign, 1971-1972 and the Dhofar Rebellion that ended in 1976 to the historical development of conflict propaganda.³⁵

Thomas Row provides an introduction to the Italian propaganda in First World War. He examined, the underlying wartime state-society relations, some basic elements concerning the production and consumption of propaganda, and the empirical examination of selected propaganda images from the Wolfsonian-Florida International University and the Mitchell Wolfson Jr. Collection in Genoa, Italy. A unique strength of these collections is their capacity to support research in broad cultural and aesthetic contexts. One could for example, study a subject across media, looking at posters, postcards, and calendars. By taking advantage of these rich resources, this essay provided a stimulating and impressionistic framework for viewing Italian propaganda during First World War.³⁶ M. Taylor Philip examines the evolution of British propaganda practice during the course of the twentieth century. His work covers the period from the First World War, including the recent developments in information warfare. It includes analyses of film, radio, television and the press, and places the British experience within the wider international context. Drawing together elements of his previous works he demonstrates how Britain has established a model for democratic propaganda worldwide.³⁷ Similarly, B. Tim analyses the important issue of British propaganda to France during the Second World War and the value of the propaganda campaign to the British war effort. British propaganda to France is a unique contribution to the field of propaganda, not only in its examination of one of the least well-studied areas of British activity during the Second World War, but also, in the breadth of its approach. It surveys the organisation operation and nature of the British propaganda effort towards the French people including white propaganda and black propaganda. It examines the contemporary British understanding of the French and German reception of and reaction to this propaganda material, to whether the campaign was an effective and well-directed use of resources.³⁸

³⁵ Tugwell, M.A. J. 1979. *Revolutionary propaganda and possible counter-measures*. PhD Thesis, Dept. of War Studies, Kings College, University of London, p.1.

³⁶ Thomas, R. 2002. Mobilising the Nation: Italian Propaganda in the Great War. *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Vol. 24, p.4.

³⁷ Taylor, P.M. 1999. *British Propaganda in the 20th Century: Selling Democracy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.3.

³⁸ Brooks, T. 2007. *British Propaganda to France, 1940-1944: Machinery, Methods and Message*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.2.

E. Briant in his work gives the account of British and United States government's attempts to adapt their propaganda strategies to global terrorist threats in a post-9/11 media environment. It discusses Anglo-American coordination and domestic struggles that brought in far-reaching changes to propaganda. These changes had implications on the structures of legitimacy, yet, occurred largely in isolation from public debate and raise questions regarding their governance. She argued that, independent and public re-examination of continuing propaganda strategy is essential for government accountability and the formation of systems and policies that both respect citizens and build constructive foreign relations.³⁹ M. Stenton examines British attempts to wage political warfare in the countries occupied by Germany in World War II. He describes the construction of political warfare machinery in London showing how it was hampered by two difficulties, such as Whitehall politics and deep doubts, about the war's purpose. Stenton equally looks at how political warfare operated as a semi-detached adjunct of diplomacy and how it engaged with the development of armed or otherwise active resistance in France, Denmark, Poland and Yugoslavia. Stenton's work is also a study of British political imagination in a period when Britain perceived itself as a largely independent world power. The experience of near-defeat however, left the decision-makers with dilemmas about rhetoric and ideology as well as strategy.⁴⁰ M. J. Stout examines Nazi propaganda's overall effectiveness during Adolf Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s through the end of World War II in 1945. He argues that propaganda was indeed influential throughout the duration of the *Third Reich*. Three primary elements were effective in boosting the propaganda namely indoctrination anti-Soviet propaganda and the intense media deification of Hitler that came to be known as the Hitler myth.⁴¹ K. Payne discusses the key elements in the Al Qaeda propaganda narrative and the means through which it was disseminated. He assesses the United States and United Kingdom governments' response focusing particularly on the British effort to define and propagate a narrative centered on British values. He posits that propaganda is at the heart of the struggle between Al Qaeda's strain of militant Islamism and the governments of the United States and United Kingdom. In an ideological struggle propaganda is critical in shaping outcomes. Both Al Qaeda and the

³⁹ Briant, E. 2014. *Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for Global Change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.4.

⁴⁰ Stenton, M. 2000. *Radio London and Resistance in Occupied Europe: British Political Warfare, 1939-1945*. London: Oxford University Press, p.6.

⁴¹ Stout, M. J. 2011. *The Effectiveness of Nazi Propaganda during World War II*. Published Master of Arts Dissertation, Dept. of History and Philosophy Eastern Michigan University, Retrieved 11th November, 2015 from <http://commons.emich.edu/theses>, p.iii.

US and UK governments recognised this and had to devise major propaganda strategies to construct and disseminate messages for key audiences.⁴²

K. Osgood investigates the United State's psychological warfare programmes in the early Cold War era. He explored the history of US psychological warfare in its broader context, such as the changing nature of international relations as a result of the communication revolution, and the age of mass politics and total war. He also examined the various ways in which the imperative of shaping, influencing and manipulating popular sentiment infused a wide range of policies with psychological significance. He discussed past decisions of policy makers in Washington towards the implementation of psychological warfare directives by American officials in the field of propaganda by analysing the strategies, tactics, and themes developed by psychological strategists.⁴³ B. Ibhawoh examines the imperial war propaganda in British West Africa during the Second World War. He was of the view that imperial propaganda during the Second World War is often construed as a discourse, produced in the metropolises of Europe and extended to the colonies, to shore up local support for the war. He equally suggested that the propaganda war in the colonies was simply an extension or replication of the propaganda war in Europe, to which colonised peoples made minimal input and over which they had no control. He further argues that West Africans were not just receivers and replicators of colonial war propaganda, but, they were also sites for the production of imperial war propaganda and Africans were central to colonial propaganda machinery.⁴⁴

B. Edward analyses the term psychological warfare, in the context of its origins during the World War II as he contends had many different names depending on the time and place. It had its growing pains as any other new organisation is expected to have. Psychological warfare dealt with combat propaganda. He argues that, during World War II the Germans were well aware of the objective of propaganda, being achieved, through psychological warfare and took advantage of the situation. They certainly were expert in this field. The Germans had the Allies out bested in every way when it came to propaganda, but then, they were as many years before World War II got under way.⁴⁵ J.B. White writes from personal experience and knowledge since he was responsible for inventing rumours preparing leaflets and broadcasts intended for the enemy forces. He noted that, in enemy countries

⁴² Payne, K. 2009. *Winning the Battle of Ideas: Propaganda, Ideology, and Terror. Studies in Conflict and Journalism*, No. 32, London: Routledge Francis & Taylor Group, pp.109.

⁴³ Osgood, K. 2006. *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*. Lawrence Kansas: University of Kansas Press, pp.3-5.

⁴⁴ Bonny, I. 2007. *Second World War Propaganda, Imperial Idealism and Anti-Colonial Nationalism in British West Africa. Nordic Journal of African Studies Volume. 16, No.2, p.221.*

⁴⁵ Edward, B. 1989. *Behind Enemy Lines: WWII Allied/Axis Propaganda*. London: Wellfleet Press, p.1.

many of the rumours about war which gained the most credence were not the result of idle speculation. They were ideas deliberately thought out and planned in London disseminated among the enemy population by the British agents. Their objective was to undermine morale to stiffen resistance movements in occupied territories and to win over wavering neutrals.⁴⁶

R. Lee investigates among other things the open propaganda of the British government produced during the Second World War like the foreign language radio broadcasts of the BBC and the aerial propaganda leaflets dropped by the Royal Air Force over occupied Europe; a secret underground propaganda battle was also fought. R. Lee documents the history of British clandestine psychological warfare conducted against the Nazis *Third Reich*. This black propaganda was the work of several secret intelligence organisations including the political Warfare Executive and Special Operations Executive.⁴⁷ L. Paul et al examines how the British Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD) waged a vigorous covert propaganda campaign against Communism, across the world using journalists, politicians, academics and trade unionists. Set up under the British Labour Government in 1948 and clandestinely financed from the Secret Intelligence Service budget, IRD was a large organisation with close links to MI6 with which it shared many personnel. Parliament, had it known of the true purpose of IRD's existence may well have rejected an anti-Communist propaganda offensive, but it was simply not informed.⁴⁸

D. Andrew argues that, in the Cold War battle for hearts and minds Britain was the first country to formulate a coordinated global response to communist propaganda. In January, 1948 the British government launched a new propaganda policy designed to oppose the inroads of communism by taking the offensive against it. A small section in the Foreign Office the innocuously titled Information Research Department, was established to collate information on communist policy, tactics and propaganda, and coordinate the discreet dissemination of counter-propaganda to opinion formers at home and aboard.⁴⁹ J. Jenks work is a study of the British state's generation suppression and manipulation of news to further foreign policy goals during the early Cold War. Bribing editors, blackballing unreliable journalists, creating instant media experts, through the provision of carefully edited inside information. And exploiting the global media system to plant propaganda, disguised as news around the world, were all methods used by the British to try to convince the international

⁴⁶ White, J.B. 1955. *The Big Lie*. London: Evans Brothers Ltd, p.1.

⁴⁷ Lee, R. 2010. *Black Art, the British Clandestine Psychological Warfare Against the Third Reich*. www.psywar.org, p.1.

⁴⁸ Paul, L. and James, O. 1998. *Britain's Secret Propaganda War, 1948-1977*. England: Sutton Publishing. P.1.

⁴⁹ Andrew, D. 2004. *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945-1953: The Information Research Department*. London: Routledge Groups. P.1.

public, of Soviet deceit and criminality. Thus, gain support for anti-Soviet policies at home and abroad.⁵⁰ K. Greg and T. Christopher looks at how the British government employed various forms of pressure and persuasions to achieve its goals across the twentieth century in order to provide a better understanding of the multifaceted and shifting nature of influence. By focusing on Britain, a global actor with great power objectives but declining physical means, he provides a wide range of case studies to assess how influence was brought to bear on a wide array of non-Western cultures and societies. It further allows for an assessment of just how effective or ineffective British efforts were at influencing non-Western targets over a hundred years of operations.⁵¹

E.N. Mordi discusses extensively about the British war propaganda during the Second World War in colonial Nigeria. He noted that, contrary to the fact that war propaganda in Africa profoundly affected the elite who appropriated the British propaganda as a weapon to undermine the colonial state; the effect of war propaganda was practically zero in eroding confidence in local role models, newspapers and other sources of propaganda which reflected local realities and concerns. In short, at the end of the war the colonial regime abandoned this failed propaganda strategy in search of a robust no-bones-about-it abrasive propaganda approach.⁵² Similarly, E.N. Mordi looks at the Nigerian press' co-operation and collaboration with imperial Britain for Allied victory over Nazi Germany during the Second World War. He asserted that against the background of the conventional wisdom that, Nigerians were too far removed from the war theater to feel the impact of the world conflagration, the issue was that Nigerians made substantial sacrifices which contributed to Allied victory over Nazism. The point is illustrated with the Nigeria Win-the-War-Fund a scheme for the purchase of war equipment initiated and sustained by the press with active government support contrary to the prevailing notion of frosty government-press relations during the period.⁵³

1.8.2. Nigerian Civil War

A. Adefuye examines the effect of culture on foreign policy formulation and implementation since Nigeria's independence. He analysed the extent to which Nigeria's cultural heterogeneity affected her attitude to events and how far her identity with fellow

⁵⁰ Jenks, J. 2006. *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p.1.

⁵¹ Greg, K. and Christopher, T. 2014. *British Propaganda and Wars of Empire: Influencing Friends and Foe, 1900-2010*. London: Ashgate, p.1.

⁵² Mordi, E. N. 2009. Wartime Propaganda, Devious Officialdom, and the Challenge of Nationalism during the Second World War in Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies Volume 18, No.3, 235-257*.

⁵³ ————Fighting with the Pen: Nigerian Press' Collaboration in the Promotion and Success of British Win-the-War Efforts in Nigeria during the Second World War. *Journal of Research on Humanities and Social Sciences. Volume.5, No.10, p.90*.

blacks all over the world dictated foreign policy postures. Of particular relevance to his work is the importance role that propaganda played during the Nigerian Civil War. He emphasised the effect of propaganda in arguing ones case in the international community, and that, the extent to which the effectiveness of propaganda was a factor in the outcome of the civil war is difficult to ascertain. But, what is important was the effect of the cultural content of the propaganda, of both sides on the attitude of the international community to the war.⁵⁴ Roy Doron analyses Biafran print and radio propaganda. He discussed the production, evaluation and monitoring of Biafra's propaganda campaign, and how the secessionist message were constructed, delivered, refined and adopted. Biafra's propaganda played a pivotal role in the political and diplomatic conduct of the Nigerian Civil War. Their propaganda campaign portrayed the war as a genocidal campaign against them. Despite, the fact that Biafra's message remained largely focused on the genocide theme the Biafra's propaganda was remarkably agile in its ability to adapt to the war changing circumstances. Biafra's propaganda was designed to create a coherent message, and intended to elicit sympathy from world public opinion and to instill a survival ethos in its population at home, despite very limited communication resources. It was precisely this relationship that allowed the message to be so effective, both during the war, and in the collective memory of the Igbo political nationalism.⁵⁵

J. A. Gluck analyses the secessionist propaganda generated by the Eastern region of Nigeria and its leaders in an attempt to create a Biafran nation.⁵⁶ J. Williams examines how the secessionist government constructed a Biafran identity in its campaign to gain international support for Biafra's permanent separation from Nigeria. He argued that the Biafran government description of Biafra was based upon describing the dichotomy between tradition and modernity and projecting to the world the contrast between traditionalists Northern Nigerians and the modernised people of Biafra. A group's modernisation, according to Biafra's leaders, was measured by the extent to which an indigenous group accepted and adapted to the Western influence, ideas, beliefs and practices, such as Christianity, and Western-oriented ideas that had been introduced by the European traders and missionaries prior to the colonial era, and the spread of British colonial education and missionaries during the colonial rule. Thus, in several ways, Biafra's leaders equated modernisation with

⁵⁴Adefuye, A. 1992. *Culture and Foreign Policy: The Nigerian Experience*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs Press Division, pp.viii-57.

⁵⁵ Doron, R.S. 2014. Marketing Genocide: Biafran Propaganda Strategies during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. *Journal of Genocide Research*. Volume.16, No.2-3,227-246, p. 243.

⁵⁶ Gluck, J.A. 2007. *Building Biafrans: The Role of Propaganda in Creating the Biafran Nation*. PhD Thesis. Dept. of History. Vanderbilt University. Retrieved 12th April, 2014 from <http://www.discoverarchives.vanderbilt.edu.uxmlu> .p.1.

westernisation.⁵⁷ P. Ediom Davies looks at the effect of propaganda in the civil war. He asserted that, Biafra employed propaganda admirably and effectively sustaining the war for three years against all odds. What Patrick did in his work was that he studied the concept of psychological warfare, origins of propaganda modern methods and concepts of propaganda, domestic and external factors that shaped Biafran propaganda but not the reactions arising from the Biafra's propaganda campaign.⁵⁸

G. Blank investigates how the British Government preferred to maintain the status quo of a united and moderate Nigeria against the prospects of a multitude of potentially radical nationalist successor states during the Nigerian Civil War. This was the status quo that the British officials labouredly moulded in concert with the Nigerian elites in the period of late colonialism through to Major-General Yakubu Gowon coup. When the status quo became untenable often because of the conflicting political ambitions of the same elites, London's politicians and civil servants were forced to identify the most pertinent British interests in Nigeria and devise strategy for their defence.⁵⁹ In his memoir Harold Wilson examines the state of affairs of the British Government under his watch and the event of the Nigerian Civil War as a major part of the preoccupation of his administration from 1967.⁶⁰ Kunle Amuwo explored the various causes of the Nigerian Civil War. He was of the view that the war is traceable to the constitutional factors, north-south divide, ethnic conflicts, the politics of state creation, and other events of the 1960s.⁶¹ Kunle asserts that the war was the product of temptations on the part of the Easterners to appropriate the huge wealth that would be accrued from the oil reserves in the region and the personal ambition of Colonel Ojukwu, the leader of the secession attempt.⁶² Similarly, K. Amuwo in another work examines the civil war within the context of political economy. He opines that the Nigerian Civil War, which represented the extreme patterns of the social disengagement from the state, is located in the intricacies of the state-society linkage in the post-colonial Nigeria. These linkages are, however, complex and multifaceted.⁶³

⁵⁷ Williams, J. 2011. *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. PhD Thesis, Dept. of History, University of Ottawa Retrieved 12th April, 2014 from <http://www.lid.unitexas.edu>, p.83.

⁵⁸ Ediom, P.D. 1995. *The Use of Propaganda in Civil War: the Biafran Experience*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Dept. of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science University of London, p.2.

⁵⁹ Blank, G. 2013. *Britain, Biafra and the Balance of Payments: the Formation of London's One Nigerian Policy*. Retrieved Feb.8, 2014 from <http://www.cercles.com/rfcb/rfcb18...../blank.com>, p.83.

⁶⁰ Wilson, H. 1971, *The Labour Government 1964-1970*, p.557.

⁶¹ Amuwo, K. 1992. Historical Roots of the Nigerian Civil War: An Explanation. *Perspectives on the Nigerian Civil War*. Oyeweso, S. Ed. Lagos: Campus Press Limited, p.1.

⁶² Amuwo, K. *Historical Roots of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.13.

⁶³ Amuwo, K. 1992. A Political Economy of the Nigerian Civil War an Explanation. *Perspectives on the Nigerian Civil War*. Oyeweso, S. Ed. Lagos: Campus Press Limited, p-120.

Writing from the economic perspective of the civil war Chibuiké Uché, examines the extent and the role oil played in the decision of the British government to insist on “One Nigeria” solution in the Nigeria-Biafra Conflict. The discovery of oil in the Eastern Nigeria was a turning point in the history of Nigeria and marked the beginning of dilution of powers of the regions to the benefit of the national government. This discovery of oil coincided with the need to review the existing revenue allocation scheme. Hence, this later led to an increase in the struggle for the control of national revenue rather than encourage the regions to take advantage of their social and economic circumstances and designs appropriate for revenues generation schemes. Indeed, the discovery of oil became the bases for power tussle among the various regions in Nigeria for the purpose of controlling the centre. This struggle culminated into the emergence of party politics along ethnic and tribal lines. Thus, the need to protect its investments especially the properties and facilities of Shell-BP in Nigeria became the hallmark of British policy in that civil war.⁶⁴

Godfrey B. Warren investigates the degree to which Nigeria’s considerable oil reserves contributed to the civil war. He was of the view that, though Nigeria’s vast potential resources petroleum wealth could not be officially recognised as the most influential factor prompting the Biafran secession, and shaping the outbreak of the civil war, its pervasive role as a dominant component in important political, economic, and strategic calculations of the war cannot be underestimated.⁶⁵ Consequently, Alex Chima noted that, subject to the political pattern of old Nigerian federation, the present Biafra was bound to emerge from the creation of a certain political environment which typifies divide and rule, reminiscent of post-independence rule, violence, corruption, and graft in high places, favouritism, opportunism, nepotism, ethnic allegiance, or class mentality, bureaucratic abuse of power, crass ignorance, narrow mindedness, intellectual mystification, economic personal advancement, religious bigotry and a host of other ant-social habits which hinder progress hence, the emergence of leadership by default in many African states.⁶⁶

Toyin Falola and Mathew M. Heaton were of the views that, the civil war in Nigeria did leave a significant legacy to Nigeria, despite the rapid reintegration of the country and concerted efforts on the part of Nigerians to put the past behind them, the national question would continue to plague Nigerian political rhetoric. On the political level however, these tensions were overshadowed by the fact that the military remained in power after the war. Committed to unity and order the military government was by no means democratic. In fact,

⁶⁴ Chibuiké, U. 2008. Oil, British Interests and the Nigerian Civil War. *Journal of African History*. Volume 49. No.1, pp.114-115.

⁶⁵ Warren, G.B. 2000, *Petroleum and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.80.

⁶⁶ Chima, A. 1968. *A Concept of Socio-Economic Reconstruction in Nigeria*. London: Citadel Press, p.4.

the military learned that it could ignore the public almost completely in the years after the civil war, becoming a bit corrupt, bloated bureaucracy which the First Republic had been. The military government was not as fragile as the First Republic however despite its increasing corruption and ineffectiveness. If anything the military emerged from the civil war more powerful and dominant than it had been previously.⁶⁷

E. Ezeani, in his scholarly work examines the *coup d'état* of 15th January 1966, the Nigeria-Biafra War and the role of the British Government and the involvement of the Yoruba in the civil war. He also discussed the relationship between the Igbo, and the minority groups in the Republic of Biafra and the propelling dynamics underlying General Yakubu Gowon's determination to take the extreme measure of war against Biafra in 1967 and General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu determination to resist with no standing or organised army and with only 128 rifles in the whole of the Eastern Region. The work concluded with the comparative analysis of the State of Biafra and that of the present day Nigeria and the enormous impact which the demise of Biafra had on the continent of Africa the Afro race, and human race in general.⁶⁸

A.H.M Kirk-Green, notes that the study of the political development of Nigeria from 1966-1970 can be expressed in terms of proven disenchantment which also explicitly can be explained in terms of established accomplishment and potential success.⁶⁹ His work no doubt is a history of Nigeria's months of crisis and conflict between January 15th, 1966 and 1970. The termination date of 15th January has more than an attractive symmetry. Ben Gublie gave a factual, first-hand, and inside account of the coup d'état of the 15th January 1966, which led to the demise of the First Republic, thereby leading to the Nigerian Civil War. In the book he essentially dealt with the reason why the coup had to take place how the operation was planned and executed what goals and corrective measures the key planners set out to achieve and why it ended in failure. He was of the view that the January *coup d'état* was a coup of the progressive elements of the Nigerian Armed Forces an intervention clearly necessitated by the breakdown of law and order in the country. It was thereafter neither an "Igbo affair" nor for that matter the affair of any other ethnic group connected with it. It was essentially a symbiotic operation conducted in spite of its apparent shortcomings, in the best interest of the nation. The numerical strength of the Igbo officers involved in it was purely accidental considering that all along the Igbos had constituted more than half of the strength of the

⁶⁷ Falola, T. And Heaton, M.M. 2008. *A History of Nigeria*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, p.180.

⁶⁸ Ezeani, E. 2013. *In Biafra Africa Died: The Diplomatic Plot*. London: Veritas Lumen Publishers, p.220.

⁶⁹ Kirk-Green, A. H. M. 1971. *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source Book, 1966-1969, Volume One*. London: Oxford University Press, p.vii.

officer's corps of the Nigerian Army. They had dominated General Aguiyi Ironsi's counter-insurgency operations that ultimately halted that coup.⁷⁰

A. A. Nwankwo and S. U. Ifejika, submits that the Biafran secession was a stage in the conflict between the contradictions which existed in the social, cultural and political patterns of the old Nigerian Federation the British role in embedding and intensifying these contradictions is obvious from the history of the Federation. For the first few weeks after the outbreak of the Nigerian-Biafran War, Britain claimed neutrality in the conflict. Following mounting evidence against it, the British government could no longer sustain its denials of the backing of the Nigerian government in the war.⁷¹ No doubt, the book was part of the war-time publications from self-identified Biafran sympathisers commonly presented one-sided analyses that mirrored the arguments presented in the publication released by Biafra government. Indeed, it is a book that concerned the social, economic, and political factors which culminated in Biafra's independence. The book received a public endorsement from the Biafran government as a book that outlined the Biafran philosophy.⁷² In another development, A. Madiebo asserted that, the Biafran struggle for separate existence was a rebellion by one man, General Ojukwu. He was of the view that, Biafrans fought in the civil war with believe that it was the only way to protect themselves from possible extermination and that Biafrans were fighting for their own survival and that it is true that Biafra lost, but they fought well enough, and with sufficient determination to bring their grievances successfully to the notice of the entire world.⁷³ G. Onuaguluchi's work was an account of the Biafran tragedy caused by the most intense intercommunal distrust, as well as jealousies. A tragedy which a number of people would rather not mention at all because of the holocaust associated with it. While, estimated in their hundreds of thousands, the loss of lives was likely very much higher. A good number of the dead were children, only few years old perished not from bullets, shells, mortars, or bombs, but from the effects of malnutrition, starvation and disease occasioned by the war. Many of the survivors had suffered severely. Biafra was certainly, one of the greatest human tragedies since Hitler and his Second World War.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Gbulie, B. 1981. *Nigeria's Five Majors: Coup d' état of 15th January 1966 First Inside Account*. Onitsha: Africana Educational Publishers Nigeria Limited, p.152.

⁷¹ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969. *The Making of a Nation: Biafra*. London: C.Hurst&Company, p.283.

⁷² Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *The Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.1.

⁷³ Madiebo, A. 1980. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co .Ltd, p.387.

⁷⁴ Onuaguluchi, G. 1990. *The Giant in Turbulent Storms: The Story of Nigeria*. New York: Vantage Press Inc, p.vii.

A. A. Nwankwo examines the mechanism of colonialism, through which the African man is enslaved and his mentality warped. Arthur opined that, the glamour of African independence has been superseded by the cold realism of unfulfilled dreams, shattered hopes and political unrest throughout the African continent. The empty slogans of the independence era have become obsolete and irrelevant in this period of high expectations. The African masses now demand progress from their governments, and integrity from their leadership. For the most part, their crises have gone unheard and the political turmoil now sweeping across Africa is an indication of the frustration of the African masses.⁷⁵

M.S. Auduosuala and S. Uzoma interrogate the international dimensions to the Nigerian Civil War. To them the civil war in Nigeria was the offshoot of the myriads of problems which had confronted the nation in the early 1960s. These ranges from census crises, ethnic politics, and electoral manipulations to economic and political sleaze the war resulted in the intervention from the outside.⁷⁶ Okwudiba Nnoli examines how the strictly internal character of inter-African conflicts are been controlled by the external interventions to protect what he called the “linkage groups” in the conflict area. Nnoli noted that in terms of the nature of the conflict resolutions as well as the consequences for the African society, the crucial intervention is that facilitated by linkage groups. Without British intervention in the Biafran War the conflict would not have lasted as long as it did in spite of the other interventions. In other words, any attempt by Africans to control the externalisation of their conflicts must grapple with the problem of the intervention of their former colonial powers, and, this intervention is facilitated by the numerous linkage groups they maintained in Africa. These constituted the critical variables in understanding external intervention in inter-African conflict.⁷⁷

J.J. Stremalu’s work represents another important contribution to the discussion on the international opinions of the Nigerian Civil War. John was of the view that, Nigeria’s pre-war diplomatic and nonaligned stance allowed the state to develop friendly relations with states regardless of their ideologies. As a result Nigeria was able to effectively maintain existing relations with other states and their membership in international organisations during the war. John Stremalu opined that since the Second World War millions of lives have been lost in the pursuit of essentially domestic political objectives. Indeed, these conflicts have

⁷⁵ Nwankwo, A. A. 1969. *Biafra and the Liberation of Africa: towards the Last stage of the Liberation of Blackman*. New York: Praeger Publishers, p.6.

⁷⁶ Auduosuala, M.S. and Uzoma, S.etal. 2013. *Contextualizing the International dimensions of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*. Volume 4, No.4.3 Quarter III, p.1.

⁷⁷ Nnoli, O. 1972. *The Nigerian-Biafra Conflict: a Political Analysis*. Nigeria: Dilemma of Nationhood. Okpaku, J. Ed. New York: The Third Press, p.143.

frequently imperilled international peace. In Africa alone there have been no fewer than twelve civil wars 1960-1976. Among the most severe and internationally significant of these wars was the 1967-1970 war between the Nigeria government and Biafra.⁷⁸

Fredrick Forsyth notes that Nigeria's instability during the colonial rule was a direct result of the British rule. Forsyth further posited that the scale and the outlook of the Nigerian-Biafran War aroused the disquietness not only of the humanitarian groups but the world governments who belatedly saw the dangerous perspective ahead. They realised that the situation contained elements of peril not only for Biafra, but also for Nigeria and the rest of West Africa. He states that none of the policies hitherto adopted by the governments of the Western world were successful in promoting peace. Most of the governments appeared preferred to accept British requests for "handoff" attitude, reminders that the Commonwealth habitually Britain's sphere of influence and assurances that it will soon be over.⁷⁹

A. Waugh and S. Cronje provide anti-British views on the civil war in Nigeria supporting Biafra through a veil against the formal colonial ruler's failure to guide Nigeria's peace and stability. They were of the opinion that, the British case for supporting the Nigerian cause rested strongly upon its legality. Nobody bothered to point out that the Major-General Yakubu Gowon regime, derived its existence from a military coup that the Nigerian people had never at any stage cast a vote in its favour, and that, the Nigerian people, had never been consulted on any single item of its policy. Nor were the apologists for Nigerian action ever able to explain what law it is, which gives a government however implacable its claims to legality the right to execute a million and half of those whom it believes to be its citizens in order to force them into an association which they manifestly wish to leave.⁸⁰

H.G. Hansbury provides a lucid exposition of the events leading to the civil war in Nigeria. He was equally vocal, in attacking, the British government in laying the structural legacies that plunged Nigeria into the grip of chaos that threw it into civil war. He began by studying the events before 15th January 1966. On the civil war; he was of the view that the federal government in a desperate search for a means of self justification has made much play with the rights of the minority tribes in Biafra. And they remained enthusiastically loyal to Ojukwu. This is hardly surprising in that the Northerners were by no means selective in their lust for slaughter in May and July 1966 but massacred every Easterner they could encounter.⁸¹ In the opening page of his memoir Chinua Achebe *There was a Country* argues

⁷⁸ Strelau, J.J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.19.

⁷⁹ Forsyth, F. 1969, *The Biafra Story: The Making of an African Legend*, p.228.

⁸⁰ Waugh, A. And Cronje, S. 1969. *Biafra: The British Shame*. London: Michael Joseph Limited, p.15.

⁸¹ Hansbury, H.G. 1968. *Biafra: A challenge to the conscience of Britain*. London: British-Biafran Association, p.18.

that the genocidal ambitions of leading Nigerians, such as the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba, who allegedly could not tolerate the presence of Igbos in the upper echelons of the society served as the breeding ground for the outbreak of the war. Achebe also charges the members of the mostly Hausa and Muslim North with systematically killing the Igbos in their midst after a tit-for-tat series of coups in 1966.⁸²

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu offers the most developed formulation of Biafran nationalism to emerge from the writing of the civil war. Ojukwu articulates the Biafran project precisely in terms of a refusal of the neo-colonial condition, he terms Nigerianism and a rejection of Nigeria itself as a ramshackle creation that has no justification either in history or the freely expressed wishes of the people. Far from being driven by petty regionalism he insists that secession from Nigeria arose from a conflict between two diametrically opposed conceptions of the end and the purpose of the modern African State. Biafra is a refusal of the neo-colonial tendency to regard the black man as culturally, morally, spiritually, intellectually, physically inferior, embodying instead, a positive commitment to build a healthy, dynamic, and progressive state, which would be the pride of the black men the world over.⁸³ Olajide Oloyede engages the issue of the Nigerian Civil War from the point of view of nation-building and trauma. He focuses, specifically on Biafra, a recurring issue in the political and economic discussions in Nigeria. According to Olajide, the civil war was traumatic it inflicted fear and sufferings. With the use of cultural trauma as a tool of analysis and the notion of the loss of assumptive world, the loss of the war by the Biafrans was more traumatic, because of the shattering of the cognitive representation of Biafra an entity which was to bring a sense of belonging and connection that would cohere the Igbo being. The work suggests that the current recollection of the Biafra War by the Ibos serves as illustration of the collective trauma of its loss.⁸⁴

Nabo Graham-Douglas' work centres on the background of a general prejudice in favour of the rebel regime or Biafra and against the far-reaching products of its well organised propaganda system with the complicity of some section of the world press. He was of the view that, it is regrettable that many of the dispatches on the Nigerian situation by pressmen who have been sent to Biafra as guests of the Biafran Government have contained very little to recommend them as releases by persons who at any rate owe it as a duty not to mislead the world. To, anyone who can speak from the position of eye-witnesses, many of the

⁸²Achebe, C. 2012, *There was a Country: a Personal History of Biafra*, p.228.

⁸³ Ojukwu, O.C. 1969, *Ahiara Declaration: The Principles of Biafran Revolution. Biafra: Republic of Biafra*, pp.12-31.

⁸⁴Oloyede, O. 2009. Biafra in the present: trauma of a loss. *African Sociological Review*, Volume 13, Issue. 1, p.2.

releases is inhibited distortions.⁸⁵ S. Elizabeth and Froser Ottaneli examines the massacre that took place in Asaba on early October 1967 of the civil war. They were of the view that on early October 1967 four months into the Nigerian Civil War, federal troops massacred hundreds of people in Asaba a town in the South Eastern Nigeria on the West bank of the river Niger in Nigeria. While ethnically Igbo Asaba was not part of the Igbo-dominated Biafra. They suggested that the Asaba massacre speak larger issues of the potential reconciliation that extend beyond Asaba and Nigeria and that the scholarly study on the issue is part of the effort to fill the significant gap in the historical record and contributes to the discussion on the local impact of traumatic memory at the local and national levels.⁸⁶

N. H. Goetz looks at the Nigerian Civil War from the humanitarian and relief perspective revisited the events that led to the declaration of Biafra and through debates in the humanitarian and academic communities, reconsidered the lessons learn. For him, from the stand point of the international humanitarian sector Biafra served as one of the first conflicts where issues of more contemporary complex humanitarian emergencies began to develop. Biafra taught the international community how to better provide and co-ordinate and render assistance to those affected by a complex humanitarian emergency, from these lessons emerged, the framework for several issues such as dealing with the internally displaced persons, negotiating humanitarian access and repatriation of unaccompanied children. However, in spite of Biafra's importance, the world seems to have little collections of the conflict and the lessons learned.⁸⁷ A. B. Akinyemi wrote extensively on the role of foreign media especially the British press in the Nigerian Civil War. Akinyemi dealt with the "seven heavies" of the British press that participated in the civil war, such as *the Times and the Sunday Times, the Guardian, the Observer, the Daily Telegraph and the Sunday Telegraph, and the Financial Times*. His book sought answers such as, what positions did the British press took on the Nigerian Civil War, and what role did the press played in the crisis, that of providing information or propaganda? The author went on to decry the manner in which the British press covered the civil war. He cited an instance where a British correspondent predicted in his newspaper that "the Northerners may have already begun to take their

⁸⁵ Graham-Douglas, N.B. 1969. *Ojukwu's Rebellion and the World Opinion* .Lagos: Nigerian National Press Limited, p.1.

⁸⁶ Elizabeth, S. and Ottaneli, F. 2011. *The History and Legacy of the Asaba, Nigeria, Massacres*. *African Studies Review*, volume 54, No.3, p.20.

⁸⁷ Goetz, N.A. 2001. Humanitarian Issue in Biafran Conflict. *New Issue in Refugee Research*. Working Paper No.36. School of Public Policy Pepperdine University California, p.1.

revenge for the death of their leader, the Sarduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, on the large numbers of Igbo in the North”, while the said prediction had obviously not taken place.⁸⁸

In her most expository book on the Nigerian Civil War, Suzanne Cronje examines the British attitude in the civil war. She was of the view that, in the circumstances surrounding the civil war, the people of the Eastern Nigeria were the injured party and they had a good case, an equally good case was not made for the Federal side in the war. Besides it had become clear that the Federation was heading nowhere. Its size and complexities combined with its colonial heritage had condemned it to political impotence for a long time to come. Regional and tribal politics frustrated every attempt at creating a sense of national purpose and Nigerian unity, and the second coup d'état of 1966 showed that, these problems were too deep-seated to be over-come by mere constitutional reforms. According to Suzanne Biafra by contrast pointed the way to a possible alternative in exciting people's imagination and engaging popular support at all levels, what started as a struggle for survival looked like becoming a successful experiment in nation-building.⁸⁹ Patrick Anwunah chronicles his personal life involvement in the civil war. He made a lucid recollections and reminiscences of the events and circumstances that surrounded the war and his own personal engagements in the conflict. He said that the Nigerian-Biafran War was a genocide, which commenced earlier, with a well-planned pogrom in 1966. The fact of secession or rebellion or to keep Nigeria one was mere political excuses and camouflage to transform from pogrom into genocide. After all the whole of Igbo race did not plan or execute any collective crime against Northern and Western Nigerians. The declaration of independence for Biafra was a survival strategy not understood or accepted by Nigerians.⁹⁰

From the foregoing, available literature on propaganda appeared to have discussed only the nature of propaganda and its origins, while those on the Nigerian Civil War had dealt with the causes and consequences of the war thus, had neglected the British reaction to Biafran propaganda during the civil war. As a result, the current state of knowledge about Biafran propaganda is still unclear. This study intends to fill this gap by investigating further the various ways Biafran propaganda spread and how the British government and its society reacted to it.

⁸⁸ Akinyemi, A. B. 1972. The British Press and the Nigerian Civil War: The Godfather Complex. *Journal of African Affairs*. Volume.71, No.285, p.408.

⁸⁹ Cronje, S. 1972, *The World and Nigeria: the Diplomatic History of the Nigerian Civil War 1967-197*, p.x.

⁹⁰ Anwunah, P.A. 1970. *The Nigeria-Biafran War, 1967-1970: My Memoirs*. Ibadan: Spectrum Book Limited, p.203

CHAPTER TWO

BRITAIN AND THE OUTBREAK OF THE NIGERIAN CIVILWAR, 1960-1970

The aim of this chapter is to discuss those central factors that shaped the tempo of post-independence politics in Nigeria and the consequent outbreak of civil war such as the Action Group Crisis of 1962, the Census Crisis of 1963, the Federal Election debacle of 1964, the Western Nigeria electoral impasse of 1965 and the *Coup d'état* of 1966 followed by the events of leadership crises of the military regime of Major General Aguiyi Ironsi. This chapter further discusses the British diplomatic attempt to settle the grievances between the Federal Military Government of Nigeria and Eastern Nigeria on the eve of the Nigerian Civil War. It equally analyse the British military, economic and diplomatic involvements in the Nigerian Civil War.

2.1 Background to the Nigerian Civil War, 1960-1966

The most important historical factors that influenced the major political development of Nigeria up to the period of the Nigerian Civil War were the two major principles of colonisation and decolonisation. The two concepts formed the nucleus upon which Nigeria's political process emerged.⁹¹ The crystallisation and implementation of the colonial policies in Nigeria by the British Colonial government especially with the inclusion of the educated elites into the colonial political process and administration, and the eventual transmission of power to Nigerians in 1960 gave rise to the series of unresolved issues which became major catalysts that were consequential towards the outbreak of civil war in Nigeria.⁹² These contentious issues included the constitutional making process, North and South divide, the structure of the government etc.⁹³ According to Sarah Berry, "one fundamental problem which had plagued the Nigerian State since the colonial period was the attempt to develop a political structure that was responsive to the needs of an ethnically diverse population without being subservient to the interests of any one cultural or linguistic group".⁹⁴ Nigeria's independence which occurred on October 1st 1960 marked a new beginning in the political history of the nation. Various nationalist leaders in the country had joined hands to ensure the end of colonial rule. Having succeeded in doing so it was assumed that the enthusiasm with which the country was launched into nationhood would sustain the Federation and help her

⁹¹ Lawal, O. A. 1991. *Britain and Decolaaonization in Nigeria 1945-1960*. PhD Thesis Dept. of History. University of Ibadan. p. 1.

⁹² Lawal, O. A. 1991. *Britain and Decolaaonization in Nigeria 1945-1960*, p. 250

⁹³ Amuwo, K. 1992, *Historical Roots of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.I.

⁹⁴ Berry, S.S. Elbert, G.A. and Uphoff, N.T. 1970. An exchange on Biafra. The New York review. Retrieved Jan. 14, 2015, from <http://www.nybooks.com/newsletter/magazine.com>, p.1.

people develop a sense of common destiny.⁹⁵ On the contrary, Nigeria in the period between 1961 and 1966 was thrown into series of political crises which brought the country to the brink of disintegration. As a result, the hopes that Nigeria would play an effective leadership role in Africa were frustrated.⁹⁶

The question of leadership was a major challenge experienced in the early independence years of the Nigerian Federation. Considering quality character alone, majority of people in Southern Nigeria, felt that, Nnamdi Azikiwe who was indisputably the father of Nigerian nationalism should become the leader of the country.⁹⁷ Sincere and objective thinkers in Northern Nigeria were of the same opinion. However, as political parties were regional based Northern People's Congress, a dominant political party in the North won the 1959 general election. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Vice-President of the NPC was appointed Nigeria's Prime Minister by Sir James Robertson, the then Governor-General of Nigeria. His appointment as Prime Minister was greeted with suspicion and apprehension especially from the Southern part of the nation. Balewa had earlier in 1947 declared that, "Nigerian unity is only a British intention. If the British quit Nigeria now at this stage Northern people would continue their uninterrupted conquest to the sea."⁹⁸

Some Southern Nigerian politicians reacted immediately to this prospect of domination, in perpetuity by the conservative Muslim North. One of such politicians was Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the Action Group, the principal Party in Western Nigeria.⁹⁹ Chief Awolowo had contested the General Elections alongside with others. His Party won 73 out of the total 313 seats. The NPC won 142 seats. While the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe won 190 seats. Immediately, the results were known, Chief Awolowo and his party declared their desire to form a coalition government with the NCNC, in which leadership would be conceded to Azikiwe. Chief Awolowo emphatically expressed the view that, he would rather have Azikiwe lead the country than Balewa. However, Awolowo's plans did not materialise. The NCNC did not accept his proposals. For it suspected Awolowo of duplicity. It was generally believed in the inner caucus of the Party that while Chief Awolowo was pleading with NCNC at Onitsha, his emissaries were at the same time making overtures to NPC in Kaduna for the same purpose of forming a coalition government. The move by the Action Group leader was therefore

⁹⁵ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *The making of a nation: Biafra*, p.34.

⁹⁶ Kirk Greene, A.H. M. 1971. *Crisis and conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source Book, Volume I 1966-1969*. London: Oxford University Press, p.15.

⁹⁷ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *The making of a nation: Biafra*, p.36-37.

⁹⁸ Federal Government of Nigeria. 1947. *Legislative Council Debates*. Lagos: Government Printer, p.212.

⁹⁹ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *The making of a nation: Biafra*, p.37.

emptied of all altruism. Ultimately, the NPC and NCNC, the two parties with diametrically opposed ideologies formed a coalition at the centre. The coalition government was characterised as a political marriage. Yet, the greatest surprise was that these two parties different as they were ideologically and temperamentally; were remarkably successful in holding together their precarious coalition.¹⁰⁰

After six months of jubilations over the Nigerian independence the country encountered its first post-independence crisis the background of which was when the Northern People's Congress in the Northern Regional election of May 1961 won the 94 percent of the seats and eliminated Northern Elements Progressive Union and Action Group. Unacceptable by the Nigeria standards of political patronage and power base the result of the election confirmed the Southern Nigeria's fear that under the independence Constitution there was now little to prevent the North from winning a working majority during the next Federal election. Some heard the door slam as early as 1961, on any non-violent solution to the perpetuated situation of political imbalance in the absence of change of heart by the NPC. Exactly a year after the entrenchment of the Northern establishment at the polls in May 1962 pressure groups from the ruling parties at the centre informed the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, that the outbreak of violent at the House Parliament building at Ibadan and the proclamation of two rival Premiers was sufficient enough to declare a state of emergency in the Western Nigeria.¹⁰¹

According to Nwankwo and Ifejika, the Action Group's internal crisis started in a small way. But little did those who launched it realised the damage it would cause for the country. After the Action Group lost the Federal election of 1959, Chief Obafemi Awolowo became the leader of the opposition party in the Federal Legislature, while Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola became the Premier of Western Nigeria.¹⁰² According to Nelson Ottah, this was a fatal step for Chief Awolowo, for he lost the base of his political security. He found out that, without being the head of any of the governments in the federation, he was like a man that had gone from the twilight into darkness.¹⁰³ On September 1960, the Action Group leader with some young intellectuals in the party formulated and launched the ideology of democratic socialism. It was adopted as the ideology of the Action group. This ideology did not seem to have favoured Akintola and his clique supporters. In fact, he did everything to distort this ideology, by working in collaboration with the party's extreme right wing. On the other hand, Akintola started to collaborate with the NPC. He also began to take a number of

¹⁰⁰ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *The making of a nation: Biafra*, pp.37-38.

¹⁰¹ Kirk Greene, A.H. M. 1971, *Crisis and conflict in Nigeria*, p.18.

¹⁰² Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *The making of a nation: Biafra*, p.40.

¹⁰³ Ottah, N. 1963. The Rise and Fall of Awolowo. *The Drum*. November, p.25.

important steps and decisions about cocoa prices, taxes and school fees without consulting his party chiefs. When, on May 20th 1962, the Action Group annual congress met in Jos, Akintola was charged with planning to displace Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the leader of the Action Group without due consultation. Akintola himself replied that, “the insistence that he should consult party officials before taking any major decisions hampered his administration”.¹⁰⁴

At the end of the congress the Action Group decided to remove Akintola as the Premier of the Western Nigeria. The knotty question was how to do this. Chief Akintola, not feeling surefooted, refused to advise the summoning of the Western House of Assembly to test his popularity through a vote of confidence. Eventually, Chief Awolowo got the majority of the members of the Western House of Assembly to sign an affidavit. They declared that they have lost confidence in Chief Akintola as the Premier. On the strength of this affidavit former, Governor of Western Nigeria, Sir Adesoji Aderemi, was asked to exercise his powers under the Constitution of Western Nigeria to remove Akintola as the Premier and have him replaced with Alhaji Dauda S. Adegbenro. But Akintola refused to accept that he had been validly removed. He also refused to relinquish his office. He maintained that his dismissal must be as a result of a vote obtained on the floor of the Western House of Assembly. He later filled a case at the Ibadan High Court challenging his dismissal by the Governor. Certainly, a chaotic situation arose in which there were two claimants to the office of the Premier. Each angled for support from Lagos from the Western Legislators.¹⁰⁵ When, the Western House of Assembly met on May 25th, 1962 to debate a motion on the vote of confidence imposed on Chief Akintola, a serious fight broke out in the House between the two factions. The police had to use tear gas to disperse the rioting Legislators. The Federal Government declared a state of emergency in the region. Consequently, the Governor, The Premier, Ministers, The President of the House of Chiefs, the Speaker of the House of Assembly among others was removed. Dr. Moses Koye Majekodunmi, the former Federal Minister of Health was appointed as the Administrator with wide-ranging powers. After the clash in the Western House Akintola was formally dismissed from the Action Group but, him there upon, formed the United People’s Party (UPP) many leading members of the Action Group resigned and joined the UPP. To stop further political activities in the region, the new Administrator placed under detention or restriction many of the regions politicians.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.41.

¹⁰⁵ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.41.

¹⁰⁶ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.42.

With the breakdown of law and order in Western Nigeria, the Federal Government was eager to pull a political string against the Action Group. It was clear that, Chief Akintola had the sympathy, if not the support of the NPC that saw in the Action Group crises the opportunity of destroying the party completely, and render its leaders incapacitated. The Action Group was seen within the NPC as a threat to Northern domination. For during the Federal elections of 1959, the Action Group dared to contest and won some seats in the North. Without the support of NCNC no state of emergency could have been declared in Western Nigeria. If the NCNC cabinet members had objected and resigned, there would not have been a serious crisis. Balewa and the NPC could not have carried out their plan. The NCNC appeared to have conspired with the NPC and maintained a conspiracy of silence. The NCNC was also thinking in terms of a political advantage it would gain.¹⁰⁷ As the opposition party in the Western House it felt that the destruction of the Action Group would give it the opportunity to assume full control of the politics in Western Nigeria. While the state of emergency was still on, apparently to put the Action Group in utter disarray a three man Commission of Enquiry was set up by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Justice G. B. A. Coker to inquire into the workings and financial administration of six Statutory Corporations in Western Nigeria most especially the National Bank and the National Investment and Property Company. The aim was to discredit the Action Group and its leadership. After sitting for about three months, the Commission discovered that Chief Awolowo's conduct while he was the Minister of the Crown in Western Nigeria fell short of the standard expected.¹⁰⁸

The Commission of course, absolved Chief Akintola from any blame. Although, the domestic opinion contended that Chief Akintola was the leading figure in the Action Group when all the irregularities that the Coker Commission turned up occurred. The reputation of the Action Group and its leaders were severally tarnished by the report of the Commission. The Action Group funds were, later frozen by a court order. At the same period, the Action Group leader, Chief Awolowo and twenty-four others, including the leader of the Dynamic Party, Dr. Chike Obi, two well known journalists, Bisi Onabanjo and Lateef Jakande, were charged with treasonable felony and conspiracy to overthrow the Federal Government. As a result of this charge, General Secretary of the Action Group, S.G. Ikoku, Chief Anthony Enahoro, the Second Deputy National President and two other leading Action Groupers namely Ayo Adebajo and James Aluko, who had earlier fled the country, became wanted persons by the police. At the close of the case for the Crown, four of the accused persons,

¹⁰⁷ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, pp.42-43.

¹⁰⁸ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.43.

Chief Alfred Rewene who was Chief Awolowo's Personal Secretary, Chike Obi, Tunde Amuwo and Meri Badmus were discharged, and acquitted. After months of the trial, on September 11, 1963, Chief Awolowo was sentenced by Justice George Sodeinde Sowemimo to ten years imprisonment for treasonable felony, five years for conspiracy and two years for unlawful importation of arms. The sentences were to run concurrently. The above scenario showed how the Federal Government came to take tribal sectional or self interest approach in running the affairs of the country, thereby, deepened rather than prevent Nigeria's divisions.¹⁰⁹

The Census of 1963 was another portent crisis that created the platform of anger and hatred within the Nigerian polity thereby contributing to the Nigeria Civil War. Census, traditionally, had been a contentious issue in the country, because it determines the representation at the centre and the share of national resources among the component units. Nigeria in 1952 had her first population census since independence. The fact that it turned out to be a big fiasco showed how hard it was to establish the simplest facts when the result might have major political consequences. According to Ifejika and Nwankwo, Nigerians had last been counted under the British colonial rule, and that was from 1952 to 1953.¹¹⁰ According to the results, Northern Region had a population of 17, 573, 000, the Eastern Region 7, 497, 000, the Western Region 6, 408, 000, while Federal Territory, Lagos had 272, 000. The total population of Nigeria therefore, was given as 31, 750,000. The political significance of the 1952-1953 censuses was that, it ensured the dominance of the North in the Federal Government. Since seats in the Federal House of Parliament were allocated on a population basis. So out of the 312 seats in the Federal House of Assembly; the North received 174 seats thus placed it in an absolute majority. Since political parties were regionally based population census that gave the North such a majority which meant handing over the Federal Government to the NPC. In 1962, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa announced his intention to conduct another population census. Among the reasons given was the need to obtain all essential data for the nation's development plans in all fields. Mr. J. Warren, an expatriate civil servant, was appointed, to facilitate the conduct of the census under the general Ministerial responsibility of the Honourable Minister of Economic Development, Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim.¹¹¹

The Census was held on May 13th, 1962 Warren recruited enumerators and supervisors and had devised a plot scheme to facilitate the exercise. By July, 1962 the Census

¹⁰⁹ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.45.

¹¹⁰ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.46.

¹¹¹ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.46.

office headquartered in Lagos had received all the figures for the Northern and Eastern Regions. Because of the political unrest in the Western Region, the results from there came after those of the other regions. When, all the results were examined, the North showed an average increase of 30 percent in ten years, bringing its total population to 22.5 million. Both the East and the West showed a rise of more than 70 percent. When he made the report of the preliminary census figures ready Warren declared that “the Northern results were reasonable while the figure for the Eastern region appear to him grossly inflated”. Under Warren’s advice the Federal government decided to verify and checked the results in the selected areas of the country.¹¹²

The second census was conducted from November 5th-8th, 1963. In the words of the Prime Minister, “it was organised to last for only four days in order to ensure an accurate count of the people at places where they live”. Over 186,000 enumerators and supervisors were recruited, as against 45,700 in 1962. As in the previous census, enumerators went from house to house asking every individual his name, age, ethnic, group or nationality, religion and occupation. On all the travelling points and regional boundaries, there were enumerators. Anyone they counted at these points, they stained with a special indelible ink-mark on them to prevent double counting at the destination. Travellers were ready to suffer these inconveniences and co-operated with the census officials.¹¹³ At the end of the returns, there was a delay of about two months. For it was said that the figures were undergoing “exhaustive test”. On 23rd November, 1963 the preliminary figures of the census were expected to be made available at any time.¹¹⁴ A *Reuter* report of January 1964 said that, the census figures were 15 million for Northern Nigeria, 10 million for Western Nigeria and 13 million for Eastern Nigeria. These figures were officially denied. But somewhat uneasy speculation continued.¹¹⁵ The figures for the 1963 Census were later forwarded to the Prime Minister, seven days before the Parliament met on 8th January, 1964. The results caused uneasiness to the Prime Minister and some NPC Federal Ministers, who knew about them. The Prime Minister mailed back the figures to the Secretary of the Census Board and ordered a re-check. The figures which were given to the Prime Minister were as followed, Northern Nigeria 14.5 million, East 13 million, West 10 million, Mid-West 2.2 million, Lagos 1.1 million and the overall population figure was given as 40.8 million. Following the re-check order, sweeping changes were introduced in the Census Office. For instance, a United Nations Special Adviser, Luke, assumed a new position in the office. A senior official of

¹¹² Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, pp.46-47.

¹¹³ Abubakar, T.B. 1964, *The Prime Minister*, p.184.

¹¹⁴ Nigeria Fortnightly Summary No. 205. *The Census*, 23rd November, 1963, p.2.

¹¹⁵ Nigeria Fortnightly Summary No.2.64, *The Census*, 5th -8th January, 1964, p.1.

Southern origin in the Census Office was persuaded to go on compulsory leave. Luke's first circular since he assumed office ordered that, the flowing of trace of cards should be halted. He explained that, the order should stand "until the census figures were accepted". Books used for the 1962 census were sorted out. One difficulty, which confronted the census officers, was the problem of sorting out duplicated census cards from Northern Nigeria. These cards had no enumeration area and no census districts. A Cabinet Office statement denied press speculations concerning the population figures. Yet, it was recalled that similar speculations surrounded the discarded figures for the 1962 census. The Federal government also issued similar statements of denial. The 1962 census cost the Federal government, £2.5 million, and the sum of £2 million was set aside for the 1963 census.¹¹⁶

The Census Board released preliminary figures of the 1963 National Population Census on February 24th, 1964. It was observed that whereas the figures for the Northern Nigeria rose to 29, 777, 986, as against her 22.5million in 1963, those of the East was 12, 388, 646, which were the same as the original total on which the Eastern Premier, Dr. Michael Okpara had taken his stand the previous year. The case was the same of the West, whose figure was 10, 278,500 now separated into two regions with a population increase in one decade of almost 100 percent. The overall increase of the total Nigerian population in one decade was about 74 percent. The Mid-West had a total of about 2, 533, and 337. While, Lagos had 675, 352, and the figure for Nigeria as a whole is 55, 653, and 821. It was suggested that on the basis of those figure the Federal government and the regional governments, could now review their plans for economic and social development. The United Nations demographers regarded a 2 percent population increase per annum as normal in Africa. In ten years, if one relied on the opinions of these experts there would be an increase of 20 percent. In Nigeria, granting that there was some undercounting in 1952-1953 due to evasions and allowed about 5 to 10 percent for this undercount, and thus, brought the total increase of the Nigerian population to 25 or 30 percent in a decade, it would appear, therefore, that the census of 1963 was grossly inflated.¹¹⁷

After the release of the 1963 census figures, massive reactions erupted across the Federation, particularly in Southern Nigeria. This was tantamount to the rejection of the census figures. For instance, the newly appointed Premier of the Mid-West, Chief Dennis Osadebe, described the census as, "the biggest joke of the year". On 25th February, 1964 large demonstration was organised by the students of the Universities of Ibadan and Ife. This was immediately after the release of provisional census figures showing a substantial overall

¹¹⁶ *West Africa*, 10 January, 1964.

¹¹⁷ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.49.

increase in population of Northern Nigeria. The management of the Student's Union at the University of Ibadan was moderate, compared with its predecessors. For once this might have been a partly spontaneous reaction. But buses were made available at suspiciously short notice to take about 150 of the students to Lagos. On getting to Lagos the students clashed with the Police near Maryland College, Ikeja, and while on their way to protest against the preposterous figures of the population count. The scene at the campus was near riot as unbelieving undergraduates yelled; "Impossible! Impossible! We must hold a third count! Later on, they decided to lodge a protest in person to the Prime Minister. Arriving at Ikeja in busloads, they found a solid wall of riot policemen blocking their way. The undergraduates insisted on the right of passage. In the next minute the Police were on them, and dragged them out of the buses. Teargas and baton charges were used to disperse the undergraduates and sallied forth. They were stopped again many of them bruised and battered in the encounter. The driver of one of the buses went into comatose. The badly hurt included two women student leaders, and the General-Secretary of the Students Union, Tunde Oshodi. A dozen students were dumped into Police vans and carted away.¹¹⁸

Police barricades were stationed along Ikorodu road up to Maryland College. The marchers had to slip singly or in pairs, through the police cordon to continue their march to Lagos. But, they could not reassemble in force. The students distributed hundreds of handbills, and criticised the results of the census. A population rise of 70 percent within 12 years in our Nigeria is impossible". Another said, "These incredible and preposterous figures expose us to ridicule and contempt...Down with the Census Board... We want the Correct Census figures". Asked if the proposed student's demonstration was tantamount to disorder and a breach of peace, a police officer told the *West African Pilot* that, it was their instruction not to allow any demonstration, processional or otherwise into the federal capital. "Remember the ban on public meetings in Lagos". When pressed further, he snapped no comment. The students also held a press conference and demanded a fresh count by an independent body. At the press conference, the Student Union called on the Nigerian press to pursue vigorously, its struggle for the stability of the country. Addressing the conference, the President of the Union, S.O. Oyedeji said that, the press should come out and save the country from collapse. In answer to a question, Oyedeji said that, his Union would take positive action after Nigerian leaders had commented on the results. The National Union of Students sent a telegram to the Prime Minister and Regional leaders. The telegram challenged the veracity of the figures released. But, NPC students based in Ibadan were all thankful in

¹¹⁸ *West African Pilot*, 26th February, 1964.

their telegram to the federal government. They congratulated the federal government for a successful and truthful count. The Igbo Youth League also condemned the census figures as fictitious. At Enugu, a bellman went round the township shouting, "reject the Census figures."¹¹⁹

The Eastern Nigeria Premier, backed by the Mid-Western Premier, completely rejected the preliminary census figure that was published. The Honourable Premier of the East, therefore, on 28th February, 1964 called a press conference to acquaint the public with his reasons for rejecting, uncompromisingly the census figures. He reminded the public that, after the 1962 Census fiasco, the federal government of Nigeria agreed to conduct another census. Each government signed undertaking to use its good offices to obtain an honest and accurate count. Demographic tests were proposed for immediate use to check all results. It was also agreed that, the Census districts which failed would have to be recounted. It was being assumed that, with the undertaking given by the governments, the figures would be reasonably accurate. But the preliminary figure was released and published by the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, without consultation with the regional Premiers. Since the preliminary results was received and, having checked the figures and if accurate would accept them, but if inflated would reject them. He regretted that the inflations disclosed were of such astronomical proportions that the figures obtained taken as a whole were worse than useless. Dr. Okpara then went on to detail the reasons why he rejected the preliminary figure. He explained that the main check against inflation was the sampling count about 1/10 to 1/12 of a Census district was counted by a team of two Census Inspectors comprising one from the home Region and one from outside. The area to be sampled was not to be disclosed until just before the count so that, the element of surprise would lead to a correct and uninflected sample. From the sample a fairly good idea of the population of the census district would be obtained. The areas to be sampled were disclosed to the North long before the Census took place. The Census Board itself had regretted this important lapsed and wrote inter alia:

We wish also to point out that it was the feeling of one or two members that, the timing of the release of information regarding the identity of enumeration areas to be sampled were unfortunate. In the sense that, it could have afforded a great deal of opportunity for unfair practice to anyone who might be so inclined. We must add, however, that so far, the Board had had no conclusive evidence in the direction,

¹¹⁹ *West African Pilot*, 26th February, 1964.

even though one or two members have expressed serious misgivings.¹²⁰

With this admission alone, Okpara argued that the main check against inflation at the Census Board was sabotaged even before the count. Other irregularities were spotted by Inspectors from Eastern Nigeria who were sent to the North. These irregularities were counting of Eastern Inspectors against the decision of the Board; double counting; counting of travellers and passers-by without staining their thumbs, which was in contravention of the Board's decision; posting of Inspector after the commencement of the count. Thereby, permitting incredible counts of 900 to 2, 559 persons per a day; counting in the Market places against the Board's decisions and among others.¹²¹

On 16th March, 1964 the Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stated in the Federal House of Parliament that the Census Board comprised of the duly-appointed representatives of the Government in the Republic had completed its job. They had given him the preliminary figures of the 1963 National Population Census. He stated that he would hold a meeting with the Regional Premiers to discuss other matters in connection with the census. This ambiguous statement deepened, rather than closed the controversy.¹²² The possibility of a political crisis could not be ruled out entirely. But it was difficult for any one section of the country disproved that the census figures were inflated for two reasons; all the four regions and the Federal Capital Territory were represented at the National Board of Census which carried out the operations. A mixed team of inspectors from the four regions and the federal territory undertook checks during the counting in different parts of the country. And counting was done by sight only. The political significance of the figures was that the Northern People's Congress which was the senior partner in the federal coalition government of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was now in a very strong position and could if so desired rule Nigeria all alone. Meanwhile, following the outcome of the census result there emerged a serious development that, the minority element in the South such as the Mid-west Democratic Front in the Midwest the Niger Delta Congress in the Eastern region would pay their allegiance to NPC an action that appeared to have given the NPC an overwhelming majority in the Federal House of Parliament. The preliminary figures published equally proved that, the North was larger both in size and in population than the rest of the Federation put together. The cry for the break-up of the North into more states was envisaged to be larger than ever before. For it would be argued that, the size and population of the Region

¹²⁰ Okpara, M.I. 1964. *Press Statement on the Census*. Eastern Nigerian Ministry of Information, pp.1-3

¹²¹ Press Statement on Census, p.3.

¹²² Nwankwo, A.A. and S.U. Ifejika, 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.52.

constituted a threat to the continued unity of Nigeria. And that, if appointments in the civil service corporations and the armed forces were to be based on a quota system and not on merit, it would not be long before the North could dominate all arms of the government.¹²³

Now that the position of the regional governments and political parties on the 1963 census were known, the view was whether it was possible for any census figures to be generally acceptable to all groups. The problem was that the census was heavily overshadowed by its political implications. Everyone agreed that, there was an urgent need for adequate statistical information. But no one knew how it could be achieved without offending the susceptibilities of various political and ethnic groups.¹²⁴ Then, on 2nd March, 1964, J.O. Udoji, Chief Secretary to the Premiere of Eastern Nigeria, approached both the British Deputy High Commissioner in Enugu and United States Consul about the possibility of bloodshed and disorder over the census exercise. He suggested that, Britain and United States should use their influence to arrange some compromise.¹²⁵

Michael Okpara's refusal to accept the census results and his accusations of irregularities and inflated figures, led to an immediate heightening of the tension between the North and the East, and had put the future of the whole federation in jeopardy. The general feeling in Kaduna was that, since independence, the North had shown great tolerance and patience, often under provocation, in an effort to make the federation work. Thus, Michael Okpara's accusations were just the last straw to break the camel back. Therefore the policy of the Northern government was to stand firm on the results, for they have been accepted by the Census Board. All claims concerning the irregularities of the result should be addressed to the Board. They regarded the suggested Prime Minister's Conference with regional Premiers as unnecessary since there was nothing further to discuss. The North was united as never before behind the Sarduna of Sokoto on this issue. Even the opposition have pledge their wholehearted support. This unity especially when contrasted with the divisions in the south, gave the North a feeling of greatly superiority and strength. There was no question of the North withdrawing from the federation. The prospect that the East might secede was regarded with complete equanimity. What the North would stand to lose if the federation broke up was not mentioned publicly in the thousands of words which have been spoken and written about the Census. Basically, the Northern reaction had been emotional and tribal. As Northerners saw it the issue was not between the North and South as such, nor even between the NPC and the NCNC but between Northerners and the Igbos. There had been talk in the House of

¹²³ *Financial Times*, 28th February, 1964.

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 2nd March, 1964.

¹²⁵ The British National Archives, Dominion Office, 195/344, File No. 2-WA 12/399/1, Minute on the Nigerian Census, from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 3rd March, 1964.

Assembly of the ejection of all Igbos from the North, including those in the Northern Public Service.¹²⁶

On 21st March, 1964, the leaders of the Igbo Union expressed concern about the issues raised by the 1963 Census count. They noted the unwarranted attacks made against the Igbos in certain parts of the country the acts of intimation and discrimination with which the Igbos were subjected to. These attacks and pronouncements against the Igbos made it clear beyond all doubt that, there was a well laid plan and organised conspiracy to isolate, crush and totally annihilate or reduce all Igbos to the status of slaves in Nigeria. The Igbo Union called on all Igbos everywhere to stop for a moment, think and reflect. The Igbo Union emphasised that the Igbos were very peaceful, law-abiding and hardworking citizens of Nigeria. They wanted to live in peace and amity with other ethnic groups in any part of Nigeria. They welcomed people from other ethnic group in Nigeria, to live among them in Eastern Nigeria, as full Nigerian citizens, enjoying full and equal rights with one another. It was regrettable that, the Census controversy which later became a burning political issue among the various political parties should be used by certain people who have no regard for the unity of Nigeria, as a pretext for launching unwarranted and provocative attacks on the Igbos as a tribe. The leaders of the Igbo Union therefore appealed to all Igbos, all over Nigeria and overseas, in spite of all provocations to continue to pursue their various callings peacefully, take full cognisance of all that was happening, but above, all remain calm and vigilant.¹²⁷

On 29th April, 1964 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Francis Cumming-Bruce, informed the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Colonies that, the cohesion of the Nigerian federation had been more severely strained by the results of the census of 1963 than any issue since independence tribal feelings reached a high pitch and bloodshed was narrowly avoided. Had blood flowed there might be a chain reaction of reprisals with measures against the Igbos in the North and retaliation against the Hausa in the south. The political implication to the federation might have been far-reaching. But the country came to its senses just in time. The crisis points passed, and the patient, though suffering from the effects of nervous tension, was later recovered. Some think that, the Federation might be positively strengthened by having survived such a strain. In most countries, census was not normally expected to be other than an unexciting, if important, technical exercise. In Nigeria, however, two factors combined make census a vital political issue. The first was the provision in Section 51(3) of the 1963 Constitution that the census

¹²⁶ Kaunda Summary No.5, Census. 9th March, 1964.

¹²⁷ *West African Pilot*, 21st March, 1964.

may be used by the Electoral Commission as a basis for reviewing and altering the federal constituencies. This would perhaps not matter so much if Nigeria possessed genuinely national political parties drawing their support more or less indiscriminately from all areas of the country. However, the various political parties that existed during this period were formed on a broadly regional and tribal basis; thus, Northern Nigeria was overwhelmingly the preserve of the Northern People's Congress, while the Igbos in the East and the Mid-West were broadly NCNC, and the Yoruba Western Nigeria, although, the pattern was more complicated, was probably to a large extent Action Group. If, the census were to disclose any disproportionate increase of population in any of the regions, this could well come to be reflected in the relative parliamentary strengths of the three main parties at the centre.¹²⁸

Consequently, in a minute addressed to V.C. Martin of West Africa Department of Commonwealth Relations Office, on 20th May, 1964, J.O. Moreton said that, the Eastern Nigerian government filed a writ in the Supreme Court of Nigeria to restrain the federal government from accepting or acting on the 1963 census figures.¹²⁹ On 15th June, 1964 the Federal Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, T.O. Elias challenged the competence of the Nigerian Supreme Court to entertain the census suit instituted against the Federal government by the government of Eastern Nigeria. The Supreme Court had no jurisdiction to hear the suit and he urged that the suit should be dismissed. The Attorney-General raised a preliminary objection in a support of a motion he filled urging the court in which the Eastern government questioned the legality of the 1963 national population census. Elias made a three-hour submission with a short break of twenty minutes in support of his motion and made the following points; that the acceptance of the 1963 national census figures by the federal government was in accordance with provisions of the Statistics Act of the Federation and Lagos. The purported rejection of the same by the Eastern government was an irrelevant comment since the latter's acceptance or consent was not required by law. That the Eastern government's two statements to disclose a cause of action cognisable by the Supreme Court within the limit of a section of the Constitution of the Federation because there was no justifiable dispute between the federal government and the Eastern government; that is a dispute involving the existence or extent of the legal right of the Eastern government. In short, the Supreme Court did not entertain disputes involving political controversies; that the people of the Eastern Nigeria were as much Nigerians as their compatriots in the rest of the federation; the Eastern Nigeria government was not competent to bring these suits as their

¹²⁸ DO, 195/344, Francis Cumming-Bruce to Duncan Sandys, 29th April, 1964.

¹²⁹ DO, 195/344, J.O. Moreton to V.C. Martins, 20th May, 1964.

parents partial against the federal government in respect of the administration of federal laws etc.¹³⁰

Solicitor-General, O.O. Omololu and Yaya Jinadu, State Counsel appeared with T. Elias for the Federal government. In a brief, before he was interrupted by time, Dan Ibekwe, Solicitor-General of the Eastern Nigeria submitted that, the Federal government's motion was premature. He also submitted that the defendant was not competent to bring the motion at this stage. Ibekwe disagreed with the argument of Elias as regarded a dispute between the Eastern government and the Federal government. He submitted that there exists a dispute between the two governments. The action before the court confirmed this. He argued that Section 114 of the Federal Constitution relied on by Elias could not prohibit the Supreme Court from hearing the motion. It only restricted the jurisdiction of the court. The Solicitor-General argued that, the very fact that, census was on concurrent list of the Nigerian Constitution showed that the Eastern government have a right to bring an action to challenge the executive act of the federal government on the census, especially if the interest of the Eastern government would be adversely affected. Ibekwe also referred the court to the section 114 of the Federal Constitution and submitted that population of the country stood at 50 million. In the original motion, the Eastern government wanted the court to declare the census figures null and void because it was not conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Statistics Act. Ibekwe was the leading Messenger of G.B. Somiari, Principal Counsel, Berkley Pepple, State Counsel and R.O. Okagbua legal draughtsman for the Eastern Nigerian government. The Supreme Court later dismissed the suit which sought to nullify the figures of the 1963 census, awarded 20 guinea coins against the Eastern government. The court submitted that, the Eastern government could not challenge the Federal government's handling of the census. It upheld the Federal government's motion which prayed the court to dismiss the original suit and rule that it had no jurisdiction to entertain the census action. While conceding that, the Eastern law suit was not frivolous and vexatious as contended by the federal government; the court nevertheless held that in the present circumstances, the Eastern government had failed to show that, its legal right would be adversely affected by the census figures. But the court did not give a clear ruling on the legal right of a region. The court further disagreed with the Federal government on its argument that the original action disclosed no cause of action. Instead, it held that the suit filed by the Eastern region disclosed the precise nature of its claims.¹³¹

¹³⁰ *West African Pilot*, 16th June, 1964.

¹³¹ *West African Pilot*, 16th June, 1964.

The grounds of rejection of the Eastern case against the federal government was based on the notion that under Section 114 (1) of the federal constitution, court had jurisdiction in a dispute between the federation and a region only if it involved the existence or extent of a legal right; and that Eastern government had failed to show that any legal right vested in Eastern Nigeria would be affected, even if census was inaccurate.¹³² On 21st July, 1964 the Eastern Nigerian Premier said that, if his party wins the Federal Election of 1964, it would vindicate its stand on the 1963 census figures. His party would not relax its efforts until justice prevailed. The Premier made this known while speaking to newsmen at Onitsha on his way to Benin to preside over the meeting of the Central Working and National Executive Committees of the NCNC in Benin.¹³³ The Western Nigerian electoral crisis of 1965 was another salient issue that created the atmosphere of political instability in Nigeria in the 1960s, and also serves as a catalyst for the outbreak of civil war. The manoeuvrings of the Western Nigeria election of 1965 by the ruling Nigerian National Democratic Party led by Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola was a direct consequence of the total abortiveness of Zik-Balewa compromise. After emerging from the nightmare of the Federal Elections crisis, the country looked forward to the Western Nigeria election which was due for October 1965. The people of Western Nigeria hoped that, this was their opportunity to claim their right to a peaceful and unmolested life by throwing off, once and for all, the man whose introduction of intrigue, hatred and suspicion into their region in 1962 brought them nothing but anarchy and disorder. But, Chief Akintola had a completely different plan and strategy. It would be recalled that in the mood of Chief Akintola's reckless and inordinate ambition, the Northern leaders found a useful tool. The Northern People's Congress could not retain their dominant position in the centre while remaining a strictly regional party rather they sought to compromise the two desires by implanting Akintola's puppet regime in Western Nigeria.¹³⁴

As soon as Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa government was formed, Akintola got busy telling the Yorubas that, it's time for them to share in the "national cake", to which they had hitherto been outdone by other tribes. This sort of propaganda did the Yorubas more harm than good. It followed the replacement of Dr. Eni Njoku by Dr. Saburi Biobaku as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos. Consequently, on 11th October, 1965 regional election was held in Western Nigeria. The fraud of the 1964 Federal Election was repeated without the least dissemination and on the grandest scale in the history of rigged election in Nigeria. On the Election Day over 500, 000 ballot papers were recovered from both the

¹³² DO, 195/344, Lagos to Commonwealth Relations Office, 2nd July, 1964.

¹³³ *West African Pilot*, 21st July, 1964.

¹³⁴ Kirk Greene, A.H. M. 1971, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria*, p.24.

NNDP leaders and the NNDP electoral officers when they tried to dump them into the ballot boxes. Some, pregnant NNDP women were caught with ballot papers bulbously wrapped over their stomachs while NNDP men were arrested with bundles of ballot papers conveniently hidden in the spacious depths of their *Agbadas*, (Yoruba native dress). Ballot boxes already filled with ballot papers were recovered before the polling exercise began. The police also recovered lists of election results which the NNDP had prepared long before the polling day. The NNDP had announced that, sixteen of their candidates were returned unopposed. The electoral officers in the constituencies of these candidates were conveniently kidnapped and sent into hiding in Northern Nigeria to be sure that, they did not receive nomination papers from the UPGA candidates. Some, electoral officers who received nomination form, and issued certificates of validity to members of the UPGA were summarily dismissed and replaced with new electoral officers, who refused to recognise the certificates of validity issued by the dismissed officers.¹³⁵

In spite of the facts that fictitious lists of successful NNDP candidates were recovered by the police this did not in any way upset Chief Akintola's strategy. NNDP candidates were declared elected, undermining that they had not polled majorities of the votes. The returning officers, refused to announce the results at the polling stations, but forward false results to the broadcasting stations for radio announcement. Unfortunately, the NBC and the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service faithfully relayed these falsified results to the public. Soon after the election, the NNDP announced that, it had won 82 seats to UPGA's 11. The results were transmitted to the Governor of Western Nigeria, Sir Oduleye Fadahunsi, by the Secretary to the Western Nigeria Electoral Commission. On the strength of these results, the Western Nigeria Governor, then appointed Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Premier. He asked him to form a new government. Earlier, the UPGA had published the detailed results of the election in which the UPGA won 68 seats to NNDP's 26 including the 16 unopposed seats. On the strength of this, the UPGA declared that, they had formed an interim government in Western Nigerian. And that, Alhaji Adegbenro, the acting leader of the Action Group, should be the Premier. Alhaji Adegbenro and his nine Ministers were promptly arrested and charged with illegal assumption of office. Thus, it dawned on the people of the region that, Chief Akintola, had got away with his rape of the people's will. In such a situation, there was little left to the people than a mass uprising. Chaos erupted in Western Nigeria, heads rolled and multiple bloods shed. The riot spread in so many cities and towns, uch as *Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Igbare-*

¹³⁵ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U.1969, *the Making of the Nation: Biafra*, p.92.

*Ode, Mushin, Akure, Ado-Ekiti, etc.*¹³⁶ All over the region, frustration of the people was expressed in arson, looting and murder. These events, no doubt, impacted negatively on the Nigeria's political system. This heightened the tempo of political instability in the country and forces of disintegration were set in motion.

By January 1966, many Nigerians had become highly dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the country. The Nigerian Constitution then, in operation provided for a rigid federal system which had intensified tribal allegiance and strengthened regional loyalty. Excessive regionalism tended to frustrate effective policies. It was at its worst during election times. Under the existing arrangement, the North had a constitutional stronghold on the other three regions. Although, women were not allowed to vote in the North, the region had a built-in 50 percent representation at the centre and was assured of permanent control of the Federal Government. Worst of it all, the abolition of Judicial Service Commission and the Bench, the last hope of the aggrieved citizen, had been rendered vulnerable to political pressure.¹³⁷ Consequently, following the abolition of the Judicial Service Commission, the ruling party filled the Bench with their political sympathisers. Indeed, the Western Nigeria Parliamentary elections, was a major scenes of political wrangling that led to the involvement of the army in the politics of Nigeria. The Commanding Officer of the 4th Battalion at Ibadan was alleged to have arranged for a training cadre on how to use military automatic weapons for Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, the Premier of the Western Nigeria and his Ministers.¹³⁸ The malpractices that were alleged during the Regional elections were possible only because the Army had encouraged the dumping of ballot papers into the boxes in the polling booths by supporters of Akintola while they intimidated the opposition, the Action Group. According to Alexandra A. Madiebo, "I paid a one-day visit to Abeokuta during this election and discovered that the Army was far from being important in its role of ensuring fair play. It had become clear that Nigeria was long overdue, for a change".¹³⁹

Due to the defects of the Constitution the civilian regime worsened by the inadequacies and failures of the politicians.¹⁴⁰ There was resentment in the Army, particularly, among the educated middle rank officers, about the obvious inability of the civilian rulers to hold the country together. This feeling of resentment was further intensified by the use of soldiers in settling political problems.¹⁴¹ While, the importation of Northern

¹³⁶ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *The Making of the Nation: Biafra*, p.93.

¹³⁷ Eastern Nigeria Ministry of Information. 1966. *January 15 before and after*. Nigerian Crisis 1966. Volume 7. Enugu: the Government Printer, p.4.

¹³⁸ Madiebo, A.A. 1980, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*, p.14.

¹³⁹ Madiebo, A.A. 1980, *the Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran war*, p.14.

¹⁴⁰ *January 15 before and after*, 1966, p.5.

¹⁴¹ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p127.

soldiers into the Western Region of Nigeria raises the whole question of the introduction of the Army into the Nigerian politics¹⁴², the heighten of political manoeuvring among the military came when the Commander of the First Nigeria Brigade, Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun, from the Western Region, closely identified himself with the Northern People's Congress on 1964, hoping by this active move could achieve his ambition of becoming the first indigenous General Officer to command the Nigerian Army on the departure of the last British General. As part of his eagerness to demonstrate his loyalty to the party, he consented to the request of the Northern Nigeria Premier, the Sarduna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, for troops to be sent to the Tiv division to quell political riots there without clearance from the Army Headquarters in Lagos.¹⁴³

These events did not go unobserved by other military personnel including Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, and his colleagues, who were now thoroughly apprehensive of the ugly situation in the country. They rightly surmised that, with the police impotent and the judiciary corrupt, an introduction of the Army into active partisan politics would end the already tenuous links that glued the country together. It was under these circumstances that they decided to act immediately. In the early hours of 14th January, 1966 Nzeogwu, taking the advantage of his position as a small arms instructor at the Nigerian Military Technical College, Kaduna, took a group of soldiers for an extraordinary military exercise around the Ministers' quarters. As day break, Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun received several calls from Ministers complaining bitterly of the disturbing noise of mock battle during Major Nzeogwu exercises. That evening, all the Northern military officers were in Lagos, ostensibly to attend Brigadier Zakari Maimalari's regimental reception. In Lagos too, were Majors Ifeajuna, Obienu, Okafor, and Ademoyega. Ifeajuna was in charge of signals, which had its Headquarters in Lagos, Okafor headed the Federal Guard. Obienu and Ademoyega were both from the Abeokuta Garrison.¹⁴⁴ According to Siyan Oyeweso, the coup makers were not happy soldiers. They were men who had diagnosed the ills of the nation and thought, rightly or wrongly, that, the ultimate salvation lays in the military takeover. Kaduna was the operational base of the plotters and the inner caucus that planned it consisted of Ifeajuna, Nzeogwu, and Ademoyega.¹⁴⁵ Although, B.J Dudley posited that, the planning for the coup started around August 1965, available evidence reveals that, the plot had been perfected by

¹⁴² *January 15 before and after*, 1966, p.11.

¹⁴³ Madiebo, A.A. 1980, *the Nigerian revolution and the Biafran war*, pp.11-12.

¹⁴⁴ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *the making of a nation: Biafra*, p.29.

¹⁴⁵ Oyeweso, S. 1992. *Kaduna Nzeogwu: the coup and prelude to the civil war. Perspective on the Nigerian Civil War*. Oyeweso, S.ed. Lagos: Campus Press Limited, p.30.

late 1964 and what was only remaining thereafter was the timing.¹⁴⁶ One issue which the plotters addressed in their minds was that of recruitment of sympathisers. This exercise was largely carried out by Ifeajuna and Nzeogwu. The search for possible recruits was not without criteria. They sought the co-operation of those officers they could trust and those that were occupying strategic positions in the army positions which they would turn to their advantage. Another novel feature of the planning is that, its details were limited to officers in the rank of the Majors. All the seven ring leaders were Majors and all but, one were Igbo speaking.¹⁴⁷

The fate of those Senior Officers who occupied strategic positions in the Army and, which could be employed against the success of the coup operations also engaged the minds of the plotters. In this category were, Major General J.T.U Aguiyi-Ironsi, the GOC of the Army, Colonel R.A Sodeinde, Commandant of the Nigerian Defence Academy, Colonel Kur, Mohammed, Army Chief of Staff, Brigadier Maimalari, the GOC Second Brigade, Brigadier Ademulegun, the GOC First Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Pam, the Adjutant General and Lieutenant Colonel Unegbu, the Quarter-Master General. These high ranking officers were, considered as stumbling blocks in the path of the operations and were billed for elimination. Similarly, the plotters also compiled the list of the politicians who were to be eliminated in the course of their operations. These were, the Premiers of the four Regions such as, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Ahmadu Bello, Michael Okpara and Dennis Osadebey. The list, also included, the Senate President, Nwafor Orizu, the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the President Nnamdi Azikiwe, and the Federal Minister of Finance, Festus Okotie Eboh, and the Deputy Premier of the Western Nigeria, Fani Kayode. Moreover, the coup makers also considered the release of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and his other Lieutenants, who had been clamped into prison following the outcome of the treasonable felony trial. On the successful completion of the coup, Chief Awolowo was to be made the “Executive President” to be assisted by some other honest Nigerians”. They also considered taking over of such strategic points in Lagos such as, Telephone Exchange, Nigeria Police Headquarters, the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, the Nigerian External Telecommunications etc. On the whole, the ultimate objective was the seizure of power at the Federal level.¹⁴⁸

In the early hours of 15th January, 1966, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu took his men to Sir Ahmadu Bello’s well fortified castle on the first phase of the Northern operations. Fortunately for the revolutionaries, because his meeting with Akintola had ended at a late

¹⁴⁶ Dudley, B.J.1973. *Instability and political order*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p.102.

¹⁴⁷ Oyeweso, S.1992, *Kaduna Nzeogwu: the coup and prelude to the civil war*, p.30.

¹⁴⁸ Oyeweso, S. 1992, *Kaduna Nzeogwu: the coup and prelude to the civil war*, p.31.

hour, Sir Ahmadu Bello was sleeping in his lodge a thing he had rarely done since the crisis. Not expectedly, the guards opened fire on them. The exchange which followed lasted long enough to make Nzeogwu fear that time was running out, and the success of the coup was in jeopardy. With him were Sergeants Maman Manga who were both Northerners and each armed with an 84-Milimeter Carl Gustaf and Sergeant Yakubu Adebisi a Mid- Westerner who loaded the guns for them. After battering the Saruana castle walls they gained entrance into the castle and engaged the defending guards in all close battle. Nzeogwu, tossed grenades as he changed from one room to the other searching for the formidable Saruana of Sokoto Eventually, the Saruana, who could not be arrested within the shortest possible time, was killed amidst his many wives and concubines, who in a bid to protect him had heaped themselves on him.¹⁴⁹

Before 5:30am, all phases of the Northern operations were completed. The Radio station was surrounded, so were all the government buildings, the Power Stations, and important installations. Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun was shot so was his wife. Kano airport, was also seized by soldiers, and closed all flights in innocent obedience to an instruction signalled from Lagos by Ifeajuna. The first indication for civilians, and top army officers that something was amiss was, the smoke from the dead Premiers smouldering lodge. Those, who had heard the sounds of the battle in the lodge assumed that as on the previous evening, the soldiers were practicing again. It was said that Colonel Shodeinde woken up by the noise phoned an enquiry to Brigadier Varman Commandant of the Nigerian Defence Academy who dismissed his fears by informing him that it was a mere practice. In Lagos and Ibadan operations had started almost simultaneously with the Kaduna operations. A group of soldiers led by Major Ademoyega had swooped from Abeokuta on the Premiers Lodge at Ibadan. Chief Akintola, who only few hours earlier, had returned from his meeting with the Northern Premier, put up a grim flight with his body-guards, a group of well-trained armed men who, since the crisis, had accompanied the Premier where ever he went. After about two hours of exchange of fire the revolutionaries smashed the resistance killing Chief Akintola in the process while Chief Fani Kayode his deputy, was arrested. The Radio Station was seized by the soldiers obeying the instructions signalled by Ifeajuna. By this time it was nearly day light and Ademoyega and his men made straight for Abeokuta where to their chagrin were arrested by men loyal to Aguiyi Ironsi.¹⁵⁰

The operation only succeeded in the Northern Region. Major Nzeogwu, who led the Northern operation, was tricked into capitulation by General Aguiyi Ironsi, who had assumed

¹⁴⁹ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.129.

¹⁵⁰ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S. U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.130.

political power from the politicians who allegedly handed over power to him. Whatever, national appeal that coup had was quickly negated by the events of sequent months. First, Ironsi refused to heed to calls to put the coup plotters to trials. This made those averse to the coup to see him as little more than an accomplice of the dissident Majors. Secondly, Ironsi surrounded himself with Igbo officials. The, impression was created in other ethnic groups particularly, the Northerners that, the Igbos was bent on dominating the other ethnic groups. This impression was reinforced by the promotion of 18 Igbo military officers to the ranks of Lieutenant Colonels out of the total 21 promoted. More important was the abolition of federalism and subsequent introduction of unitary policy, with the promulgation of the Unification Decree of 24th May, 1966 which unified all the civil services in the country, among other provisions. The Decree was greeted with riots in the Northern region where the Igbos were the main targets of the revolt. This was because, as Dudley explained, “the name Igbo had become more or less synonymous with exploitation and humiliations”.¹⁵¹

It would recalled that, just after the January *coup d'état*, a British official, J. Chadwick dispatched a note to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. He said that, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was warned by Lord Mountbatten and others, against the danger of appointing General Aguiyi Ironsi as the first General Officer Commander of the Nigerian Army. He was known to be lazy, a poor soldier, corrupt and politically ambitious but with no Communist sympathies. He noted that, Ironsi was incapable of running the country as a military leader. Contrary to the first reports, Ironsi later seemed to have been quite unprepared for the coup, to have had no sympathy with it, and tried to restore order within the Army. Concerning the structure of the Nigeria's military, He told the Prime Minister that the strength of the Nigerian Army was roughly Five Infantry battalion with ancillary unit amounting to 460 Officers and about 8,000 ranks. The Navy and Air Force remained uncommitted while the Police were restricted to maintaining law and order. There were eleven Officers and fifty-five other Ranks seconded to the Nigerian Army from Britain and eighteen British Officers and forty other ranks seconded to the Nigerian Navy none of these men held executive positions. On the other hand, a British Officer who was on contract commanded the key battalion guarding the approaches to Lagos from the West. His men were said to be loyal to Abubakar. There were other four to five other British contract officers in command positions.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Amuwo, K. 1992. *Historical roots of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.12.

¹⁵² TNA, Prime Minister and Cabinet Office, 13/1040, British Assessments on Political Situation and Coup in Nigeria, 15th January, 1966.

To calm frayed nerves General Ironsi embarked on a national tour to explain the need for the decree. The tour was, still on course when he was abducted and killed along with Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi, the Governor of the Western Region, in the latter region. It was the second military coup carried out on 29th July, 1966. The coup was essentially a Northern revenge of what was considered to be an Igbo coup in January 1966. Several Igbo officers and those of other ranks were brutally murdered by the Northern soldiers while the Igbos in the North was objected to attacks by the Northerners. It should be noted that, the resentment the Easterners had for the events in the country were reinforced by the leadership crisis that followed the July counter-coup. To the extent that army discipline had broken down regionalism and ethnicity had seemingly become predominant. For instance, after the counter-coup Brigadier Babafemi Ogundipe could not assert his authority in the Army particularly over the Northerners who were bent on having one of their own as the new Head of State.¹⁵³ The Eastern Nigerian government was unhappy over the development and rejected the position of the Federal Government which included the non-recognition of Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as the Supreme leaders of the country. This was based on the argument that it was Brigadier Ogundipe, rather than Gowon was the next senior officer due to the throne.

2.2 British Diplomatic Moves on the Eve of the Nigerian Civil War, 1966-1967

The military *coup d'état* and other events that occurred in 1966 and its aftermath, was a serious political situation that placed the British government in a state of dilemma. It had often been argued that the political instability that bedevilled the nation was a domestic affair. But, available evidence showed that Nigeria would have disintegrated as early as possible, if not for the timely diplomatic intervention of the British High Commission in Nigeria and the American Embassy. For instance, when Major-General Yakubu Gowon emerged as the Military Head of State, after the death of General Aguiyi Ironsi, the American Ambassador to Nigeria, Elbert Matthew and the British High Commissioner, Sir Francis Cumming-Bruce, visited Gowon at the Dodan Barracks, Ikeja. They pleaded with him not to step down. Rather, he should try and pull the country together. Gowon later recalled that, “they told me that, not another dime in foreign aid and assistance would come to Nigeria if the regions were allowed to separate”.¹⁵⁴ When he was about to deliver his first speech, after the assumption of office the British High Commissioner and his American counterpart, Elbert Matthew, again persuaded Gowon at the last minute, to delete the vital clause of his speech, citing the

¹⁵³ Amuwo, K. 1992, *Historical roots of the Nigerian Civil War: An explanation*, pp.12-13

¹⁵⁴ Stremmlau, J. J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.35-36

disintegration of Nigeria. Within hours of Gowon's first broadcast Ojukwu reacted over the Eastern Nigerian Broadcasting Service. He stressed the need for the Eastern Nigeria to decide for itself any further relationship with Lagos. The only fundamental point in Gowon's speech was the restoration of peace in the country. While immediate negotiations should resume, with the view to allow the people of each region to determine the form of association they wanted.¹⁵⁵

Ojukwu, having rejected Gowon as the new Head of State, Nigeria's political situation became more complicated and demanded further diplomatic solution more than ever before. On 1st October, 1966 the British High Commissioner, Sir Francis Cumming-Bruce was summoned by Gowon. Gowon urged him to use his good office to deter the East from precipitate course of secession. The High Commissioner was also informed by the Head of State that, a similar approach was made to the American Ambassador, Elbert Matthew. No doubt, from the beginning of the political crises both the High Commissioner and US Ambassador worked very closely as a team to resolve the crisis. Two days after the receipt of Gowon's request the High Commissioner concluded his plans to pay a one day visit to Port Harcourt. This followed another two-day visit to Enugu and a week holiday at Obudu on the hills of the East. These visitations were purposely arranged by the British Deputy High Commissioner in Eastern Region, John Parker. Moreover, this act of visitation it was hoped would provide an avenue for a diplomatic contact with Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu and other Igbo leaders of thought. The public perception in Eastern Nigeria since January 1966 was that Britain had been backing Northern Nigeria in the political crisis. This followed the approval of the alleged anti-Igbo machinations of the British officers and dons in the May uprising leading up to the massacres and pogrom.¹⁵⁶

While at Enugu, the High Commissioner held series of discussions with Ojukwu in his office, accompanied by the British Deputy High Commissioner. After Ojukwu's lengthy exposition of the Eastern Nigeria's position over the political impasse that had bedevilled the federation, the High Commissioner made a statement which was later published. He said that, he fully accepted Ojukwu's denial of any intention to secede without provocation. After the High Commissioner's talks with Louis Mbanefo who was very close to Ojukwu the latter asked the High Commissioner to stay on after the meeting; these gestures blew most of the confusion away and the High Commissioner felt that the suspicions that the Easterners entertained against the British government, of adopting a partisan attitude in favour of the

¹⁵⁵ Stremalu, J.J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.37-38.

¹⁵⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/1041/File No. 7175895/4S/1848/27G, Minutes on Nigerian Internal Situation, 1966-1967, by F. Cumming-Bruce to M. James, 1st October, 1966.

Northern Nigeria, had been dislodged. The High Commissioner was very satisfied that there was no question of Ojukwu announcing Unilateral Declaration of Independent. Unless this seemed to be the only means of avoiding the Federal government action to divide the East and deprived the Igbos of their lion's share in the oil revenues.¹⁵⁷

On getting to Lagos after his meeting with Ojukwu the High Commissioner reviewed the situations of things concerning his visit to Eastern Region with the United States Ambassador. He later arranged to see Gowon the following morning. It would appear that, this was the first time the High Commissioner had a private meeting with Gowon since he took over as the Head of State. He wanted to avoid creating any further perceptions among the Igbos that the British officialdom had a very close relationship with Northern Nigeria. The High Commissioner told Gowon that, his fears of unprovoked Eastern secession were unfounded. But, any political scheme to split the East by force would lead to civil war, thereby, result into eventual partition of Nigeria. Gowon refused to be drawn into any denial of intention to use force. By referring to his previous statement that, the military government would not stand aside in the event of the refusal to grant the Cross/Ogoja/River minorities the status they desired. He dropped a broad hint that, some form of coercion of the East was under contemplation. The British High Commissioner squeezed out of Gowon an assurance that, he was opposed to any further step which would lead to bloodshed. After the discussion of Gowon's position, again, with the American Ambassador, the High Commissioner spell out in a note, and the main points of what to do if civil war broke out from the attempt to coerce the East into constitutional changes. The High Commissioner used the language which could justifiably be represented as an unwarranted intrusion into Nigeria's domestic affairs, while making and sending his notes to the British government in London.¹⁵⁸

After his discussions with Gowon the British High Commissioner travelled to Enugu to see Ojukwu again. The High Commissioner told Ojukwu that, he needed not to fear any Northern invasion of the East in the foregoing circumstances. In spite of the talk that took place on 1st October, 1966 he was quite sure that, there was nothing in the wind that would justify any desperate step being taken by the East. The High Commissioner professed a strong attachment to the cause of the Nigerian unity. In this context, he thought that Ojukwu was genuine. But had a considerable sympathy for his view that, when circumstances was created in which the Igbos feared for their lives in Lagos. It was unrealistic to contemplate early resumption of the kind of federal institutions that postulated the Igbos working in large

¹⁵⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/1041, F. Cumming-Bruce to M. James, 1st October, 1966.

¹⁵⁸ TNA, PREM, 13/1041, F. Cumming-Bruce to M. James, 1st October, 1966.

numbers side by side with Northerners and others in the capital. As long as murder and molestation persisted, the Igbos was bound to be reluctant to commit themselves to any close-knit form the federation. Nevertheless, the Igbos was very resilient people. Just a short period of the restoration of law and order throughout the country would change the atmosphere radically. Later in the evening, the High Commissioner held a long talk with the former Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Sir Francis Ibiam. The High Commissioner had another talk with Louis Mbanefo. He suggested that, Her Majesty's Government was ever ready to help in resolving the Nigerian crisis by sending some kind of goodwill team to Lagos. He also noted that a visit of some British Parliamentarians would help to calm down the intense situation in Nigeria. Their presence would help to get a calmer approach to the Nigerian domestic problems and enable a lot of steam to be let off in the talks up and down the country. After his return from Enugu, the High Commissioner reviewed the whole situation with his American counterpart. Among which was the serious intensification of the problem created by the widespread cold-blooded massacre in the North. The Northerners certainly made it as difficult as possible for the East to refrain from secession. The disastrous consequences of the Northern economy were brushed aside by even more sophisticated Northerners as secondary. So as to make it impossible for the Igbos, ever again aspire to play any decisive role in the country. This was based on the perception that, the Ironsi regime intended to establish an Igbo stranglehold across the country. Thus, this was not a rational reaction that could not be countered by logical argument; rather it was derived from hatred, fear and a sense of inferiority in the modern competitive race.¹⁵⁹

After meeting with Gowon, for the second time, the British High Commissioner, described Gowon as a man not simply up to his own responsibilities. Although, absolutely straightforward and decent, with a deep attachment to Christian principles, he had allowed himself to remained very isolated from the realities of the situation in Nigeria. Gowon refused to brace up to the stark facts of the scale of brutalities in the North, and the extent of the Army's responsibilities in those events. The High Commissioner told Gowon, again, that most of the murders and assaults were not recorded in any official reports. As the Army, and the Police stood aside and seemed for the most part too, had acquiesced without lifting a finger. He warned that, if the conditions continued to deteriorate, the British government would have to seriously consider the position of the expatriates. Conditions of life might become untenable for them, with the breakdown of essential services, such as water and electricity supply and other amenities. If discipline was not restored in the Army, serious

¹⁵⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/1041, F. Cumming-Bruce to M. James, 1st October, 1966.

consequence would develop when there would be no longer any Igbo left to be looted, the soldiers would turn elsewhere for spoils. Gowon expressed firm conviction that the steps he had taken to prevent hooliganism would produce a radical transformation. The High Commissioner indicated that, he remained to be convinced, that much more relentless radical steps were required to deal with the Army indiscipline. Surely, soldiers who had committed the kind of offences that the expatriate's community on their own part knew perfectly well should be disarmed and disbanded. Gowon indicated that, he had confidence in the Army. The High Commissioner later feared that, Gowon was virtually impotent to take the required steps; for he knew that, the men would fire on their young officers if the latter dared. They would not dare to try to assert their authority. Gowon went on to raise the subject of addressing the British official for a request for military assistance.¹⁶⁰

When the British High Commissioner met Gowon on his return to Lagos from Enugu, he registered the British Prime Minister's concern over the alleged foreign encouragement of the Eastern Nigeria to secede. Having denied knowledge of which government was involved, he asked Gowon to let him know his position regarding the Prime Minister's reaction. Gowon told him that, there was no knowledge of actual foreign intervention in Nigeria. But, the Nigeria government was convinced that, foreign mischief-makers would like to take advantage of the Eastern secession bid to exploit Nigerian differences and aggravate the dangers. He agreed that, Russia had shown no sign of intervening, apart from propaganda. He added that, the Israeli Ambassador had twice, categorically denied his country's support of Eastern Nigeria's secession bid. The High Commissioner expressed his profound concern about the aggravation of killings and molestations of the Igbos in so many Northern towns. Gowon, thereafter, said that the situation had been grossly exaggerated by the Eastern authorities. The High Commissioner refused to accept this fact. He emphasised that, the East would not agree to engage in a reasonable peace settlement, while atrocities had continued. Gowon referred to the steps taken in Kaduna, including orders to shoot anyone breaking curfews. He expressed conviction that these would result to drastic transformation. The High Commissioner expressed scepticism. He referred to the reports of virtual disintegration of army units in the North into separate irresponsible bands of marauders.¹⁶¹

On 4th October, 1966, the British High Commissioner delivered to the Head of State a personal letter which included his impressions about the attitude of the Eastern Nigerian authorities in the whole political imbroglio. He noted that, he was quite convinced that, Ojukwu had no intention of seeking secession. Unless, he felt that his hands were

¹⁶⁰ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, F. Cumming-Bruce to M. James, 1st October, 1966.

¹⁶¹ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, F. Cumming-Bruce to M. James, 1st October, 1966.

forced. Eastern secession seemed to him, to be a distinct possibility, if the East was split up without agreement on the procedures. There was, in the High Commissioner's view, no slightest prospect of agreement with Eastern Nigeria, on the application of any set of constitutional principles, however acceptable to other regions, until conditions were restored. These actions would also guarantee the ability of the region to live and working safely in other regions. This was what he predicted as being fundamental to the Eastern government's official thinking. Although, the High Commissioner realised that, murder and molestations of the Igbos were exaggerated by rumour. He frankly stated that, the scale of the incident continued gravely to imperil the reputation of Nigeria. However, the behaviour of bad elements in the army deeply disturbed all the British officials in Nigeria, especially from the angle of the economic effects of the exodus of Easterners to their various home from the North. The despatch of troops into the East would result in a civil war, according to the British High Commissioner.¹⁶²

During his discussions with Ojukwu on 25th September, 1966 the British High Commissioner was informed by Ojukwu that he had been having some difficulties in restraining some young army officers from the East, incensed by the murder of their brother officers and soldiers on 29th July, 1966. Some of the young officers said that, they were ready to lead suicide squads outside the East to take revenge. The continuous killing of the Igbos would have further inflamed the feelings. The British government have no firm information about the numbers or composition of these groups, or whether they were in fact being established as suicide squads. There were several Igbo Majors and Captains who took part in the 15th January, 1966 revolutions, who were targeted on 29th July, 1966 but whose whereabouts were unknown. These included Major Nzeogwu, the leader of the 15th January, 1966 coup, Major Ifeajuna, and Captain Oji, leaders of the coup in Lagos. Nzeogwu, particularly, was seen to be a suitable candidate for the suicide squad role. He was aggressive, intelligent, a born leader, a known murder that killed the Premier of North Nigeria and others personally. It was the official thinking of the British officials that, if these groups exist, and were being trained for an offensive role outside the Eastern region, one of their tasks would no doubt, be the elimination of prominent Northerners, especially Gowon. But the story was largely speculated.¹⁶³ Also, the British High Commissioner raised the concern that the continuous pogrom and mutiny of the Nigerian troops in the North had changed the nature of the Nigerian crisis. Issues of secession, creation of new regions, future Constitution etc, were pushed under the carpet. Rather, the main issues that took the centre stage were the threat of

¹⁶² TNA, PREM, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 4th October, 1966.

¹⁶³ TNA, PREM, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 6th October, 1966.

the breakdown of law and order; imminent risk of widespread mass movement of the Igbos from Lagos and Western Nigeria; dislocation of essential supplies and services in the North, and restoration of army discipline.¹⁶⁴

Worried about the situation in Nigeria, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, in October 1966 said that, judging from the events in Nigeria; a terrible situation could break out again at any moment. Moreover, the mass exodus of the Igbos from the North and the general trend for all Nigerians to return to their respective regions had raised serious consequences, such that to denude the North and the Nigerian Army of most of its technicians and skilled workers other than expatriates; to increase the strength of the centrifugal forces which had always made the Nigerian federation a dubious long term bet. The Prime Minister later raised the question of how good was the British intelligence on the internal situation in Nigeria. For instance, were the High Commission and its outstations in other parts of the country, especially in Kaduna, able to give the British officialdom in London, full and accurate picture of what was going on? What was the real situation, political, military and internal security of Nigeria? Does Gowon exercise any real authority, whether over the civil machinery of the government or over the armed forces? To what extent had these retained any cohesion or discipline? How much does it matter to Britain if Nigeria disintegrated? What would be the consequences for the British interests, political and economic in the event of Nigeria's disintegration?¹⁶⁵

On 12th October, 1966 the British Prime Minister held a meeting concerning the political situation in Nigeria, with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith and the British Defence Secretary, Dennis Healey. Others present at the meeting were the Paymaster-General, Sir Burke Trend, Halls and A.M. Palliser. The Commonwealth Secretary said that, a state of uneasy calm had continued to prevail in Nigeria. Three battalions of the army had rebelled, most of the officers and Non-Commissioned Officers being the Igbos and other ranks of Hausas soldiers. The other ranks were in a state of undisciplined, though many of them seemed to have drifted back to their quarters in Northern Nigeria. The police had shown steadfastness but were unwilling to have anything to do with the army. Public services in the North were maintained with great difficulty. The airfields of Kano and Kaduna were open again but the general situation was uneasy. He further stated that, the intelligence availed to them was probably the best that anyone could get. But, the British High Commissioner in Nigeria, Francis Cumming-Bruce, had continued to face great difficulties.

¹⁶⁴ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 6th October, 1966.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, Prime Minister's Personal Minute on Nigeria/ No. M5A/66 to Commonwealth Secretary, October, 1966.

He had strengthened his staff at Kaduna. He asked also for a personal aircraft, to enable him travel independently around the country. The Commonwealth Secretary explained that, he was in close contact with the officials of the United States government and General Gowon over the crisis. At that point, Gowon did not ask for any British troops to be sent to Nigeria. He expressed his deep concern over the press reports that, Gowon had asked for the British help at the early stage of the crisis. For him, it would be a mistake at this period of the crisis to visit Nigeria. It was difficult to assess the economic effects of the disturbances in Nigeria, particularly as it concerned the British investments and interests.¹⁶⁶

Thereafter, on 13th October, 1966 Colonel Ojukwu said that he would like the Commonwealth troops to be stationed in Lagos. This would enable him and other regional representatives to move freely, in and out, and to protect Gowon. He approached Colonel Gowon on the matter. But did not receive any reply. Ojukwu further said that, the massacre in the North were deliberately planned and organised. Colonel Gowon was the Head of Government in “name only”. There were constant provocations, designed to push the East into secession. If Nigeria was to continue as an entity, there must be a drawing a part of the regions for some time. The Colonel said that, Northern troops stationed on the Eastern Nigeria border had made constant incursions.¹⁶⁷ Contrary to Ojukwu’s statement on secession, *The Times* of 12th October, 1966 reported Ojukwu’s remarks that, “he did not want the East to secede. But he did not know for how long he would be able to hold the region in restraint”.¹⁶⁸

On 19th October, 1966 the British High Commissioner said that it was extremely unlikely that, the Military government would initiate any request for external assistance in solving Nigeria’s problems. Gowon and others around him believed that, Eastern region would not dare to break away. If the East attempted to secede, it could be prevented by force. Under strains of secession, East would disintegrate politically, the problems of maintaining economy in the North could be solved without serious difficulty and situation could drift on without exploding.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the British High Commissioner, Francis Cumming-Bruce, held a meeting with the Military Governor of Western region, Colonel Adebayo, on 24th October, 1966. Adebayo argued that Eastern regional government was obstructing the attempt by the rest of the country to restore reasonable conditions for peaceful settlement. Thus, they must be brought to their senses and be made to cooperate. Earlier, the United States

¹⁶⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, Record of Meeting between Prime Minister and Commonwealth Secretary-General, 12th October, 1966.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 13th October, 1966.

¹⁶⁸ *The Times*, 12th October, 1966.

¹⁶⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 19th October, 1966.

Ambassador held discussions with both Adebayo and Obafemi Awolowo. The later showed no understanding of Ojukwu's difficulties or sympathy with the Igbos who were the victims of Northern pogrom. The Ambassador said that, the Northern pogrom had had far-reaching change of relations between the regions. So Ojukwu had no option than to modify the previous position of the East at the constitutional conference. He warned that the secessionist forces in the East might become irresistible, unless negotiations be held on a new basis and formula.¹⁷⁰

On 26th October, 1966 Anglo-American diplomatic meeting on the Nigeria political crisis was held in London. The United States was represented by W.C. Trimble and W. Coote, while the British government was represented by E. G. Norris, M. MacDonald, J.D. Massingnam, G. d'Arnaud Taylor, for Commonwealth Office, M. Brown for Foreign Office, F. J. Burlace for Ministry of Defence, and S. J. Moore for Ministry of Overseas Development. Trimble opening the discussions emphasised the United States' acute anxiety about the continued crisis in Nigeria, particularly the possible secession of the Eastern region.¹⁷¹ The United States and United Kingdom's representatives agreed on the need to encourage a meeting between Gowon and Ojukwu. Scarcely less urgent was the encouragement of the continued discussion among the Regions on the new constitutional arrangements. Both delegations recognised the closed relationship between the British High Commissioner and the American Ambassador in Lagos in dealing with the instability in Nigeria as well as the strategic link both in London and in Washington. They agreed that, this closed cooperation was of great values and should be in no way diminished.¹⁷²

On 3rd October, 1966 the United States was identified as the foreign power alleged to be supporting the idea of secession by the Eastern Nigeria. But, in a minute addressed to A.M. Palliser on 2nd November, 1966 the Private Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, O. G. Forster said that, the British officialdom did not attach any significance to the allegation. He identified the source that peddled the allegation as a Senior Northern government official. Whilst, his account of the Nigerian affairs was generally discerning the British confidence in it was shaken by his suggestion that, Gowon's authority was such that, even Ojukwu would obey, if ordered to relinquish his status as a Military Governor. But, there were much more positive grounds for dismissing the allegation. The British officialdom were satisfied that, there was no divergence whatsoever between the US policy towards Nigeria and that of Britain. This had long been apparent from the concord of

¹⁷⁰ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 24th October, 1966.

¹⁷¹ TNA, PREM, 13/1014, Note of Record of Anglo-American Discussion on Nigeria, 26th October, 1966.

¹⁷² TNA, PREM, 13/1014, Note of Record of Anglo-American Discussions on Nigeria, 26th October, 1966.

views and closed liaison maintained between the British High Commissioner in Lagos and American Ambassador. This was fortified by the talks which were concluded with the US officials in London in which, Trimble, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary, African Affairs was present at the meeting. Like the British government, and for the same political reasons, the United States government wished to see a united Nigeria.¹⁷³

On 6th November, 1966 a British official in Lagos, Larmour, informed the Foreign Office about the possible invasion of the Eastern region by the FMG. He said that, Gowon was, no doubt, under considerable pressure from the Northern extremists who might wish to settle the Igbo issue by force. Gowon was certainly not in complete control. Thus, the possibility of military incursion into Eastern Nigeria, preceded by the removal of Gowon could not therefore be ruled out. However, there were no signs of Gowon's position on the extremists though not strong, had significantly weakened in recent times. The British High Commissioner clearly indicated in the interview he granted to Gowon on 2nd November, 1966 about the dangers of resort to force and consequent civil war. Gowon, who maintained that, he was in full control of the army, was definite in his conversation with the High Commissioner that, he did not intend to use force, though he might have to protect the minorities in the Eastern region.¹⁷⁴

On 26th November, 1966 Malcolm MacDonald met Gowon. Gowon told him that, a very significant development had taken place following his talks with him and Ojukwu. But, they did not then, reached a point where, he could tell him confidentially of an improved prospect, or decide whether further action might be taken. Gowon's discussions with the group of advisers to the Military Governors were very friendly, wide ranging and constructive. But better still his telephone dialogue with Ojukwu recorded a more cordial spirit. Indeed, Ojukwu took the initiative in calling Gowon on Christmas Eve. They had an amicable talk on Christmas day. Gowon apologised to Malcolm MacDonald for being so sceptical about Ojukwu's sincerity during their last talk. But, it had only been his tentative reaction to parts of the report of Malcolm conversation with Ojukwu that on further careful consideration he had felt more reassured and that now he felt strongly encouraged. Nevertheless, Ojukwu proved unreliable before and it was possible that he would prove so again.¹⁷⁵

Unlike Gowon, Malcolm MacDonald held another separate meeting with Colonel Ojukwu on 27th December, 1966. This was equally aimed at finding a lasting solution to the

¹⁷³ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, O.G. Foster to A.M. Palliser, 2nd November, 1966.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 6th November, 1966.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 27th December, 1966.

lingering political crisis in Nigeria. In the course of a long discussion with Ojukwu on many aspects of the Nigerian situation, Malcolm MacDonald observed that, Ojukwu was in favour of an early meeting between Gowon and the Military Governors including himself. He accepted that, it should be held outside Nigeria. They should all leave Nigeria one morning and return the same evening. He was ready to agree that, the meeting should be held in Accra. He was averse to the purpose of the meeting being a mere publicity, accompanied by group photographs, with a view to create a good psychological effect on public opinion. Instead, those attending must have serious discussions to make progress in the job that needed to be done. Ojukwu agreed that, this meeting should be the first of a series. He hoped that, the later ones could be more prolonged and held somewhere inside Nigeria.¹⁷⁶ After his discussion with Ojukwu Malcolm MacDonald made his impressions about Ojukwu and said that he is a sincere man. He wanted an early meeting between him and Ojukwu with the ultimate desire to maintain a united Nigeria. He warned that Ojukwu would be tough in negotiations. Thus, he would stand firmly by his view, of either a loosed association of the federation or a breakup of Nigeria. Ojukwu would nevertheless be ready to listen to other points of view. To discuss problems in a more or less practical and pragmatic way and to make certain concessions in return for other concessions offered to him. Ojukwu was probably sincere that, after several years of loose association or federation, a return to a stronger federation could take place. Although, Ojukwu did not recognise Gowon as the Supreme Commander and Head of the FMG he did recognise that Gowon was a good and wise though inexperienced man. He wished to preserve Gowon's important influence and to work in friendly cooperation with him.¹⁷⁷

On 28th December, 1966 Malcolm MacDonald held another meeting with Colonel Gowon. He gave Gowon full account of his discussions with Ojukwu regarding both short term questions as reported and longer term problems. Malcolm told Gowon about Ojukwu's sincere desire for a solution to the political crisis. He however, intended to maintain a united Nigeria. Gowon expressed great pleasure at the report. He agreed that 4th January, 1967 should be the proposed date for a meeting in Accra. He and Ojukwu should endeavour to reach preliminary understanding on the various points raised. Gowon told Malcolm that, his ideas on some of those matters. He urged him to spell them out to Ojukwu before the meeting. In view of the following discussions between him and Gowon, Malcolm noted that, there appeared to be considerable agreement between Gowon and Ojukwu plus other military governors who Gowon assured him would accept his decisions about the prospective meeting

¹⁷⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 28th December, 1966.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 28th December, 1966.

on many points regarding short term policy. Though there was still a wide difference of opinion on certain long-term constitutional and financial problems. However, Gowon agreed with Ojukwu's view that these could take many months to work out and settle in friendly discussions. There appear to be a good chance of the work being initiated in a brief helpful meeting in Accra on 4th January.¹⁷⁸

On 5th January, 1967 the Supreme Military Council of Nigeria resumed its meeting in Ghana. After the meeting, the council reached agreement on all the items. On power and functions of the FMG the Council re-affirmed its belief in the workability of the existing instructions subject to necessary safeguards. Other matters on which agreement were reached included the reorganisation of the army, appointments and promotion to the senior ranks in the armed forces, police, diplomatic and consular services as well as appointment to super scale posts in the federal civil service and the equivalent posts in the federal statutory corporations. On the question of displaced persons the Supreme Military Council agreed to set up a commission to look into the problems of rehabilitation and recovery of property. In this connection, the military governor of the Eastern Nigeria assured the Council that the order that non-Easterners should leave the Eastern region would be reviewed with a view to its being lifted as soon as practicable. Agreement was also reached that the staff, and employees of government and statutory corporations who had had to leave their posts as a result of the 1966 disturbances in the country should continue to be paid their full salaries up to the end of March 1967.¹⁷⁹

After the Aburi meeting, on 9th January, 1967 Colonel Gowon requested for a talk with Malcolm MacDonald. For he, Gowon, had been very unwell in bed ever since his return from Accra, and had been able to see no-one, and to do no work. He was a bit better as from 9th January, but appeared to continue out of action. During their discussions Gowon was very satisfied with the results of the meeting at Aburi. In his opinion, the agreements reached on numerous points were a good practical beginning to the important work which must be achieved in coming months. General Ankrah was present throughout the discussions, but after his opening speech of welcome he was not in the chair. The Military governors accepted Gowon's proposal that he and they should be joint chairman; but after that, he himself became in effect the Chairman, introducing every subject on the agenda in turn. Ankrah sat a little away from the table, but chipped in now and then in talks. Gowon and all the military governors agreed that, the chairman of the supreme military council should also be Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Head of Government. They all accepted that,

¹⁷⁸ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 29th December, 1966.

¹⁷⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 5th January, 1967.

he would fill these posts. They agreed that the formal announcement of all this should be postponed for a few days, until he also announced that General Aguiyi Ironsi is dead, which would take some time before the anniversary of 15th January 1967. From then onwards, Ojukwu would recognise him as the Commander in Chief and Head of the Government. Sometimes the discussions were difficult, and especially at the beginning, Ojukwu was very tough. But he was also constructive. Gowon and he increased their mutual understanding, and generally got on well. Gowon told Malcolm that, he was at pains to give Ojukwu a very frank explanation of the events of 15th January-29th July and onwards, etc which had greatly reassured Ojukwu about Gowon's personal part in those successive crises. Gowon felt more confidence in Ojukwu's sincerity and readiness to cooperate constructively, but still had some mental reservation about them. He said that, his only doubt about the great value of the Accra discussions was whether all the military governors would fully carry out all the agreements reached. On the whole he was optimistic, but he did not feel absolutely confident.¹⁸⁰

On 26th January, 1967 Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon held a press conference. The purpose of the conference was to enlighten the public on the last Accra meeting of the military leaders and to tell the nation the next action to take. Gowon was of the view that, the main concern at the Aburi meeting was how to keep the country together and restore normalcy. Having reviewed the situation in the Nigerian Army, the Military Governors agreed that, there should be one Nigerian Army under a unified command. They recognised that, within the context of the events of 1966, the most practical way of achieving this was to organise the army in area commands. The preponderance of the army personnel in each command would be drawn from the indigenes of that area. Each area command would be under an area commander who would take operational instructions from the military headquarters, which would be directly under Gowon as the Supreme Commander of the armed forces. Under the proposal, Military Governors could use the area command for internal security purposes. But this would normally be done with the express permission of the Head of the Federal Military Government. At that meeting, they definitely kicked against regional armies. They also agreed that, matters of the policy in the armed forces and police should be vested in the Supreme Military Council. The Army, Air Force and Police Councils and Navy Boards would continue to function. Because of rumours of illegal recruitment and importation of arms, the Accra meeting agreed to establish a military committee to collect statistics of arms and the strength of the armed forces everywhere in the federation. All the

¹⁸⁰ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 10th January, 1967.

regions participated in the exercise. There were some speculations about the effect of their decision on the senior appointments and promotions in the federal public services.¹⁸¹

Owing to Ojukwu's observations over the attempted renege of the Aburi meeting and agreement, the British High Commissioner on 30th January, 1967 met Gowon. He gave him full account of Ojukwu's discussion with him on 26th January, 1967 and reported the latter's request for urgent return of MacDonald. Gowon at the outset said that, his own mind had been turning in the same direction. Gowon showed the same degree of bitterness about Ojukwu and suspicion of latter's good faith as Ojukwu had displayed about himself. He expressed the view that, Ojukwu was determined to attain his personal objective of maximum power regardless of understandings reached at Aburi, and without any intention to make concessions. Discussions at Accra had been, in general terms, on matters of principle, without any detailed agreements on specific issues.¹⁸²

On 1st February, 1967, Sir Cumming-Bruce held a meeting with his American counter-part, Elbert Mathew. Both agreed that, unless some outside help was sought, the political situation in Nigeria could deteriorate again. This was as a result of wrangles over the interpretation of Aburi discussions, recrimination over alleged breaches and pressure of the extremists to sabotage the measure of agreement reached.¹⁸³ On 20th February, 1967 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria gave detailed information about the outcome of the meeting of the Nigerian leaders in Benin. He noted that, an agreement was reached on the draft decree restoring the pre-15th January, 1966 constitutional position. A number of conditions were put forward, such as immediate payment by the FMG of £5 million for rehabilitation of Eastern refugees; the temporary removal from Benin, of five named Lieutenant Colonels whom Ojukwu did not trust; immediate publication of the Aburi decisions and all appointments of Heads of Mission abroad as agreed at Aburi be referred to SMC etc.¹⁸⁴

The United States assessment of the situation in Nigerian broadly coincided with the views of the British government. They shared the High Commission's reservations. But there was no fundamental divergence between United States and Britain over the urgency or seriousness of the situation. The British officialdom agreed that, it might be desirable to try and promote messages from Kenyatta and other African leaders expressing concern at the deteriorating situation in Nigeria.¹⁸⁵ In his reaction to the call by the British government to

¹⁸¹ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26th January, 1967.

¹⁸² TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 30th January, 1967.

¹⁸³ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1st February, 1967.

¹⁸⁴ TNA, PREM, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 20th February, 1967.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 21st February, 1967.

involved General Ankrah into more diplomatic settlement of the Nigerian crisis, Malcolm MacDonald in his message to the Commonwealth Office on 23rd February, 1967 stated that, if help for Gowon and Ojukwu was needed from the outside General Ankrah was the best man to handle it. He was present at their meetings in Ghana, when the Aburi agreements were reached, and so he was in the most effective position to influence both parties to stand by those agreements. Moreover, Malcolm knew from his talks with Ojukwu that, he felt considerable respect for Ankrah. He could be considerably influential, though not necessarily decisively, by Ankrah guidance. He noted that, if General Ankrah was unwilling to intervene, Malcolm thought he might be able to help on the same personal basis as before.¹⁸⁶ On 10th March, 1967 a full page advertisement appeared in *the New York Times* entitled, “Nigeria’s Last Hope”. It was issued by the Eastern Nigeria’s liaison office in New York. It listed various promises made at the Aburi meetings and subsequently reneged by the federal government of Nigeria. It reported that, “30,000” Eastern Nigerians were killed in the Northern region and a further two million maimed, orphaned, widowed or driven from their homes. It stated:

The Eastern Nigerians believe in one country, Nigeria and one economic unit and Nigeria’s last hope of remaining one country lies in a peaceful negotiation, and in the strict observance and speedy implementation of agreements reached through negotiation. Any attempt to impose a solution by force or to introduce measures affecting Eastern Nigeria without the concurrence of her accredited representatives in the highest organ of the land the Supreme Military Council, will be regarded as a provocative act, aimed at forcing Eastern Nigeria out of the Nigerian federation. Once this happens, the brink will have been crossed. Nigeria, as it was known to the Eastern Nigeria will cease to exist. And the burden of responsibility shall have to be borne by those who place thirsty for power above love of country.¹⁸⁷

On 16th March, 1967 Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu sent a letter to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. He expressed his concern about the political situation in Nigeria.¹⁸⁸ On 18th March, 1967 the newly appointed British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, told the Foreign Office that, the nature of the dispute between the FMG and the Eastern region on the interpretation of the Aburi decisions became clearer with the publication of the Constitutional Decree of 1st March, 1967. The decree passed by the

¹⁸⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, Pumphrey to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 23rd February, 1967.

¹⁸⁷ *The New York Times*, 10th March, 1967.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, a Text of Letter sent by Ojukwu to Harold Wilson, 16th March, 1967.

SMC except Ojukwu, was immediately rejected by the Military government of the Eastern region. The dispute appeared to border on the interpretation of the Aburi decision that all the decree passed since 15th January, 1966 which detracted from the previous powers of the regional governments should be repealed. The provisions of the federal Constitution which gave the FMG power to intervene in the regions as being repugnant to the military concept of government then envisaged. The SMC, with the exception of Ojukwu seemed to have regarded the reinstatement of these provisions as implicit in the decision to return to the status quo ante of 15th January 1966. This seemed a reasonable and natural interpretation. The Eastern government, however, took the line that these provisions, having been repealed should not be reinstated as they militate against the regional autonomy.¹⁸⁹

The British High Commissioner on 23rd March, 1967 embarked on a regional tour of both the Mid-Western and Eastern Regions. He spent about three days in each region. On his way to the Eastern region, the High Commissioner was stopped by demonstrators returning from a funeral of the Head of the FMG. After close interrogation he was stopped on his way with cries of “bury Gowon”. These demonstrations were perhaps, ordered by the Eastern Nigerian government, as it was normal with political demonstrations in Africa.¹⁹⁰ As the political situation in Nigeria echoed, four leaders of the American Negroes Leadership Conference on Africa, namely Roy Wilkins of NAACP, Martin Luther King of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Whitney Young of the National Urban League on 24th March, 1967 sent a letter to the Nigeria’s Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon and the four Regional Governors in Nigeria. They offered their assistance, if desired, in the resolution of the Nigerian conflict. This initiative did not attract much attention in the American press although the State Department spokesman was asked about it at a briefing. His reply stressed that, this was a private initiative. It was up to the Nigerians to decide whether they wished to take advantage of the offer or not. He added however, that the State Department were glad to see this interest on the part of the Negro leaders. It was obvious that, the State Department, privately, did not regard this move as having any significance in the Nigerian context although it was worthy of a small note in the context of American Negroes interests in Africa. The State Departments’

¹⁸⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 18th March, 1967.

¹⁹⁰ TNA, FCO, FCO, 25/232, File No. JM 1/19/6C/1049, Commonwealth Africa: Nigeria Political and Internal Affairs and Secession of Eastern Region, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. D. Hunt to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, 29th March, 1967.

main concern was to avoid anything that would offend either the Nigerians or the Negro leaders.¹⁹¹

On 4th April, 1967 in a minute addressed to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, Sir David Hunt noted that, the personalities of the Military Governors of both the Mid-Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria were of importance for the future survival of the Federation. Lieutenant Colonel Ejoor in Benin was a competent soldier and good administrator. He would likely to contribute towards finding a lasting solution to the nation's problems. Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu in Enugu was a more questionable figure about whose sanity there could be some doubts. He appeared to be intransigently set on a course ending in secession, but he might be able to pull back from the brink.¹⁹² Similarly, on 11th April, 1967 Sir David Hunt held a meeting with Colonel Gowon. Others present at the meeting are E.O. Ogbu, the Permanent Secretary, Extern Affairs Ministry and Daggash, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport. Gowon told the High Commissioner that, Ojukwu had already seceded "in all, but name" and was daring the FMG to do something to him which would enable him to secede de jure with, the hope of gaining much international sympathy. FMG was tired of making continual concessions to Ojukwu which did not matched by anything.¹⁹³

On 11th April, 1967 the United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Elbert Mathew held a discussion with Ojukwu. After the meeting, the Ambassador in his assessment of Ojukwu said that, the Eastern Nigerian Military Governor was determined to obtain early de facto independence for the Eastern region. He was probably willing to remain in a free trade area or limited common services organisation. He would not however permit this association to inhibit establishment of his own foreign relations and sooner, rather than later, would seek de jure sovereignty and United Nations membership. Ojukwu expected that, Nigeria would break into four or more countries. Ojukwu seemed to believe that, the East could emerge relatively unscathed and potentially, the most dynamic country in West Africa. He believed that, he was the right man to lead the Eastern Nigeria to its place in the sun and could be considered "incipient Nkrumah". He did not however, have Nkrumah's ideological leanings, but would be completely opportunistic in foreign relations. The United States Ambassador said that, Ojukwu would not achieve his objectives, if other military leaders stood against him. And avoid the temptation to subdue the East by invasion and also if other countries continue to accept the federal government as the legal government of Nigeria. The other

¹⁹¹ TNA, FCO, 38/236, R.J.R. Owen to C.J.M. Peters, 29th March, 1967.

¹⁹² TNA, FCO, 25/232, D. Hunt to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, 4th April, 1967.

¹⁹³ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 11th April, 1967.

military leaders would stand together as long as there was foreign support. All wanted Nigeria preserved as one nation. None of the other military leaders with the possible exception of Adebayo had political ambitions and Adebayo was inhibited by other Yoruba officers. The FMG had shown remarkable restraint in the face of Ojukwu's provocations and was likely to resist temptation to invade the East.¹⁹⁴

On 15th April, 1967 the British High Commissioner to United States, Patrick Dean, told the Foreign Office that the US State government gave them a similar account of their Ambassador's assessment of Ojukwu. They made it clear, however, that there were one or two respects in which they were rather more pessimistic than the Ambassador himself. They were more doubtful whether the three conditions for the frustration of Ojukwu's objectives would be met. They were not confident that, an economic blockade even if effective would bring about the collapse of Eastern Nigeria's resistance within six months. The State Department mentioned that, they had lately a rowing impression that Ojukwu genuinely believed that the United States government were only going through the motions of opposing Eastern secession. And that true American sympathies were with the East. In the event of secession it would not be long the US would grant recognition to the Eastern Nigeria government. Thus, one of the main purposes of Elbert Mathew's visit to Enugu was to try to dispel this impression. This, the Ambassador did in a forceful terms. The British High Commission in the US learnt from the US State department that, when Elbert Mathew questioned Gowon about what he meant by letting the Igbos establish their own little Switzerland, Gowon made it clear that, he meant the Igbos only. And that the FMG would try to carve out the minority tribes from the East. Then, the US Ambassador pointed out that, such a radical step could lead to an immediate confrontation and probable bloodshed. The High Commission also learnt that, Gowon equally informed the US Ambassador that, he expected another SMC meeting to take place in the near future, with Ojukwu present, but that he doubted whether, it would be productive given Ojukwu intransigent attitude.¹⁹⁵

In reaction to the US Ambassador's assessment of Ojukwu, the British High Commissioner, Sir David Hunt, said on 15th April, 1967 that his impressions about the assessment reinforced his personal views that, Ojukwu had decided to secede. And he was probably paranoid. He recognised the remote possibility that, Ojukwu might want to preserve Nigeria unity, in the hope of one day rule the whole country, instead of just the Eastern region. The High Commissioner said that, the Deputy High Commissioner at Enugu, John Parker, was hesitant to believe that, Ojukwu had a definite intention to secede. But he

¹⁹⁴ TNA, FCO, 25/232, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 14th April, 1967.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, FCO, 25/232, P. Dean to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 15th April, 1967.

concluded that, he was going perilously near to accepting it as the inevitable conclusion of the crisis. The High Commissioner believed that, Ojukwu had deliberately acted with this intention. He was felt increasingly frustrated by the refusal of the rest of the country to respond to his repeated provocations. He made the whole of the Eastern region goose-stepping in violent demonstrations; his press and radio station could only be compared to those of Nazi Germany. For their deliberate pursuit of policy of propaganda, their poisonous incitement to racial hatred and the violence of their personal abuse of, in particular, Gowon and Hassan Katsina. Ojukwu had by his Revenue Collection Edict taken a step which was described as secession. This was seen as illegal and unconstitutional, both by the Constitution, and by his own interpretation of the Aburi Agreement. Although it was a step which affected the country as a whole, and on a fundamental issue, he had taken it unilaterally. He equally issued another ultimatum, and threatened proper secession by the end of April, 1967. The High Commissioner expressed how tiresome and unnecessary it was, to go into all the evidence for Ojukwu's paranoia. He thought that, what was important was what Ojukwu intended to do and not the psychological faults which impelled him to do it. Indeed this was of interest however that Donald Hawley produced evidence from the speeches of Zik which suggested that, paranoia had always be an Igbo characteristic. The High Commissioner also concurred strongly in the Elbert Mathew's recommendation about the desirability of not getting involved in the Nigeria's crisis.¹⁹⁶

It would be recalled that Ojukwu told the United States Ambassador at his meeting with him on 11th April, 1967 that the Eastern Nigerian government and its populace were now motivated by "Eastern nationalism". They wanted to build up an Eastern nation. Hawley said that, Eastern nationalism had begun to take the form of other nationalism based on authoritarian regimes. It might be useful to consider how far the East had already gone in this direction. All minorities in the Eastern region flew from the State House where the Military Governor ran a regime with all the trappings, reminiscent of an active Colonial Governor, than that of his colleagues in other regions. Ojukwu himself was built up by the press and information media as a powerful messianic leader. He conducted affairs dramatically with a developed sense of timing. Although, Ojukwu had a considerable popular followership and appeared to hold the East in the palms of his hands much of the hysterical sentiment that prevailed had been deliberately worked up by the information media and the press notably

¹⁹⁶ TNA, FCO, 25/232, D. Hunt to E.G. Norris, 15th April, 1967.

“*The Nigerian Outlook*”. A siege atmosphere was created, which owed its origins partly to the genuine fear and partly to deliberate policy.¹⁹⁷

On 26th April, 1967 the Private Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Office in a minute addressed to A.M. Palliser said that, the chances of a blockade being imposed on the East seemed very real. If they decided on a blockade, the FMG’s course of action would probably, be to issue an order or decree declaring the Eastern ports, principally Port Harcourt and Calabar, closed to ship as customs ports. To enforce this order so far as they could by means of the Nigerian Navy frigate and two other available naval craft; to appeal to foreign governments to instruct shipping companies to comply. Ojukwu’s response would doubtless be to carry out his publicly declared threat of secession, if attacked or blockaded. Indeed, the British government was certain in these circumstances, if he would be prepared to countenance the FMG’s one likely exemption to their blockade, which was the continued movement of oil tankers. There was no reason why the British warships should be involved in a blockade. The onus of enforcement in this case would be entirely on the FMG.¹⁹⁸ From the foregoing, on 8th May, 1967 a memorandum was released by the British officialdom which outlined the British interest in the Nigerian affair. It stated that, the Eastern region of Nigeria was on the brink of seceding from the federation. In an effort to prevent this, the FMG might impose a blockade of the Eastern region. If they declare secession, a federal blockade might follow. Blockade would almost certainly, be accompanied by a federal request to other governments to comply with it, while secession would, no doubt, be accompanied with a bid by the Eastern government for international recognition as a separate state. Either way, the British government would face difficult decisions.¹⁹⁹

According to the memorandum, the British interests in Nigeria were bound to suffer in the event of a breakup of the country. About 19,000 United Kingdom nationals are living in Nigeria, of whom 3, 500 are in the Eastern region. The British investments were estimated at over £220 million. Over £130 million of this was in oil, mostly in the East. The East also accounted for 20-25 percent of the British general trade with Nigeria. The United Kingdom exports to Nigeria ran at nearly £70 million a year, and imports from Nigeria at over £100 million, including £40 million oil, shipped wholly from the East. Political collapse and division would not only have an immediate impact on the business confidence, but would also put an end to the economic advantages of a single large market. Moreover, it was the

¹⁹⁷ TNA, FCO, 25/232, D.P. Hawley to F.S. Miles, 15th April, 1967.

¹⁹⁸ TNA, FCO, 25/ 232, D.P.R. Mackilligin to A.M. Palliser, 26th April, 1967.

¹⁹⁹ TNA, FCO, 25/232, Cabinet: Defence and Overseas Policy Committee. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs on Nigeria: Possible Blockade and Secession of Eastern Region, 8th May, 1967.

official thinking of the British government that, if the Eastern region succeeded in their secession bid, the United Kingdom nationals and businesses interests in the East, including the bulk of their oil interests might be threatened. Whereas, many suspicion of the British support for the Eastern secession might have a strong effect on their general interests elsewhere in Nigeria. The memorandum noted that, the British interests were best served by the existence of a united Nigeria. In which the regions remained willing members. Later, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was advised to support the memorandum and its conclusions.²⁰⁰

On 22nd May, 1967 the British High Commissioner said that whether Ojukwu had always intended to secede or was following a policy of secession was still uncertain. However, if he had convened the Eastern Consultative Committee on 26th May, 1967 with the object of either seeking a final mandate to secede or in order to take the next step in the process of severing his links with the Nigerian federation, Gowon's statement of 20th May, 1967 would have given food for thought. Gowon's initiative, which might be unpalatable to some members of FMG, was courageous one. He hoped it would not be seen internationally, as there was evidence of FMG's desire to conciliate the East and to bring them back to the fold. The High Commissioner reported the atmosphere in Eastern Nigerian as highly charged, for it was unlikely that, Ojukwu would see Gowon's offer as anything other than a deep laid plot to get the East to return the two Nigerian Airways planes; the rolling stock which was so badly needed by the FMG to accelerate the evaluation of Northern produce. And to revoke the editors which the East argued were only introduced in retaliation for unfriendly and coercive British action. Ojukwu might therefore, decide to pull back, a stage further than Gowon. To demand the payment of about £12 million which he claimed was owed to the East by the FMG before he agreed to cooperate. However, it was in Ojukwu's interests to keep the support of Western Nigeria. He might therefore, agree to take the action called for, on his part by the NCC's recommendation and attend a further meeting. In this respect there was some evidence that, Ojukwu and the militants had gotten cold feet to the thought of taking the final step of secession.²⁰¹

Meanwhile, at the dawn of that momentous Tuesday, May 30, 1967, the firm, slow and articulate voice of Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, after summoning the United Kingdom and United States *Charged de'Affaires* at 3' o'clock, in the morning to inform them of his intention, Ojukwu broadcasted a dawn message. He declared

²⁰⁰ TNA, FCO, 25/232, Memorandum on Possible Blockade of Eastern Region, 8th May, 1967.

²⁰¹ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 22nd May, 1967.

that, Eastern Nigeria was now a Sovereign Independent State. He thereby, proclaimed²⁰² the birth of the new nation, Republic of Biafra. In the broadcast, Ojukwu declared:

...Now therefore, I Lieutenant-Colonel Chukuwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, by virtue of the authority and pursuant to the principles recited above, do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria, together with her continental shift and territorial create its, shall henceforth be an Independent sovereign State of the name and title of The Republic of Biafra.²⁰³

After the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, Colonel Chukuwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu sent a letter to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson on 30th May, 1967. He told the Prime Minister that, all efforts to resolve the Nigerian crisis had failed. And that they had reached the parting ways. Ojukwu said that, he needed not to recount the many different ways, including three national peace conference and great restraints on the Eastern Nigerians side, in which they tried to find a solution to the problems that beset the country. On every occasion, the uncompromising attitude of the authorities in Lagos under the direction of Northern Nigeria and their refusal to implement agreements reached at these conferences have stood between them and peace. This outright refusal to resort to negotiated settlement has even been applied to the fraternal offers of mediation so kindly made by several distinguished African Heads of States. The authorities in Lagos and Kaduna had also rejected the decision of the Western and Mid-western leaders advocating for a loose form of association between the component parts of Nigeria. This attitude of Northern leaders who also control Lagos had clearly demonstrated their determination against any form of negotiated settlement of the Nigerian crisis and their total rejection of any consideration for the viewpoints, expressed by other parts of the federation. In spite of this, Lieutenant Colonel Gowon, had continued to give the impression that, his actions were supported by the other military rulers in the SMC, whereas, in fact, because of their oppositions to his policies, the other had with the exception of the Northern military governor, ceased to attend the meetings. Having abrogated all agreements reached in the past, and rejected all offers of mediations; he slammed every door to a realistic settlement of the Nigeria problem, except on their terms, the authorities in control of Lagos had resorted to a programme of complete political, diplomatic, economic, and military blockade of Eastern Nigeria. Politically, and militarily they have decided to dismember the Eastern region by force. Diplomatically, they solicited external assistance to subjugate Eastern Nigeria, apart from their resolve to bar diplomats

²⁰² TNA, PREM, 13/1661, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 30th May, 1967

²⁰³ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 30th May, 1967.

accredited to Nigeria from visiting the East. In the meantime, the Nigerian missions abroad were used to denigrate Eastern Nigeria. And the diplomatic passports of people of Eastern Nigeria, or origin were cancelled. Economically, the authorities in Lagos ostracised the Eastern region from the rest of the country by denying them such facilities as foreign exchange, postal and sera-communications and shipping lines. Even when Lieutenant Colonel Gowon made the world believe in his public announcement that he had lifted the ban. Convinced that, the longer the crisis the greater the damage and danger to Nigerians and dismay of their friends, the Joint session of the Eastern Nigeria's Chiefs and Elders Advisory Council and Consultative Assembly mandated him, Ojukwu by a unanimous resolution, to declare at the earliest practicable date Eastern Nigeria as a free, sovereign and independent State by the name and title of the Republic of Biafra. While he was still considering this request, the news of Lieutenant Colonel Gowon's one-man coup of 27th May, assuming powers, left him with no other choice but to act in accordance with this historic mandate which represented the unanimous decision of the people of the Eastern region.²⁰⁴

In reaction to the Eastern Nigeria's declaration of the Republic of Biafra, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon equally sent a letter to the British Prime Minister. He reminded the Prime Minister of his previous communication to him on the efforts of his government to achieve a peaceful solution of the Nigerian problem, which erupted since 1966. Unfortunately, these efforts did not yield any result. All the concessions he made were rebuffed by Ojukwu. And the final efforts was that of the Conciliation Committee composed of eminent Nigerians from all parts of the country which submitted recommendations after consulting the military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, and himself. He had no hesitation in accepting the Committee's recommendations and putting them into effect in the expectation that the Eastern Governor would reciprocate in the interest of the nation. Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu's intransigence culminated in his declaration of the so-called Independent Republic of Biafra. Under the Nigerian Constitution, such declaration was illegal and unconstitutional. It was of no effect and could only be regard as an act of rebellion. Gowon assured the Prime Minister of his Government's action to contain the rebellion. He also appealed to the Prime Minister to refrain from doing anything that would impair the corporate existence, sovereignty and integrity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He also added that, any attempt at recognition of the so-called Republic of Biafra as a Sovereign State would amount to interference in the internal affairs of Nigeria and would be regarded as unfriendly act. He

²⁰⁴ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, Text of Letter from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu to Harold Wilson, 30th May, 1967.

therefore, beckoned that, in furtherance of the very good relations between Britain and Nigeria, he could rely on Her Majesty's continued cooperation and sympathy to Nigeria.²⁰⁵

Similarly, Major-General Yakubu Gowon sent text of a message to all Heads of States and Governments both within the Commonwealth and other parts of the world. He appealed to the Heads of States to refrain from doing anything that would impair the co-operate existence, sovereignty and integrity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He added that, any attempt of recognising and assisting the Republic of Biafra would amount to interference in the internal affairs of Nigeria. This would be regarded as an unfriendly act. He trusted that, in furtherance of the very good relations between Nigeria and other countries of the world, he could rely on their continued cooperation and sympathy.²⁰⁶ After Gowon's message was sent to the Heads of Governments, the Nigeria's Ministry of External Affairs in Lagos, presented a complimentary cards to all Diplomatic Missions accredited to Nigeria. Had the honour to forward herewith, for information, the text of message by the Head of FMG and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces to all Heads of States and Government. The Ministry equally availed itself of the opportunity of renewing to all Diplomatic Missions in Lagos the assurances of its highest consideration.²⁰⁷ As the civil war broke out, the above appeal by General Yakubu Gowon, appeared not to had been effective in halting, for instance, the international clamour and diplomatic attempt to table the issue of the Nigerian Civil War as an official item on the agenda of both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council rather, a new frontier of international reactions to the Biafran issue was created.

On 7th July, 1967 the British High Commissioner, Sir David Hunt, assessed the various reasons and some likely consequences of the Eastern Nigeria's political moves in a dispatch sent to the British Secretary of States for Commonwealth Affairs, Michael Stewart. He mentioned the psychological factors as being the first reasons for the Eastern declaration of Republic of Biafra. Knowing themselves to be the most intelligent and industrious tribe in the Nigerian federation, and having since independence, until the middle of 1966, filled nearly all the chief places in government, administration and businesses, they saw their dominance slipping and were at the same time, grievously shocked by the massacre of many of their fellow tribesmen in the North. A more material factor was the assured prospect of revenue from oil production. Another factor which deserved mention was the Igbo propaganda machine. Indeed, the radio and press, once set in motion by Colonel Ojukwu,

²⁰⁵ TNA, PREM, 13/1661, Text of a Letter from General Yakubu Gowon to Harold Wilson, 30th May, 1967.

²⁰⁶ Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1967. Text of a Message Sent to all Heads of States and Government. Lagos: Ministry of Information.

²⁰⁷ Text of Letter from the Nigeria's Ministry of External Affairs to Heads of Missions, 30th May, 1967.

developed a momentum of their own, which towards the end was according to him made Ojukwu to be like a Frankstein.²⁰⁸ Sir David Hunt suggested that, it must be clearly a principal object of the British policy to avoid doing anything which could seriously antagonise the State of Biafra in case it was successful in vindicating its independence. The British interests, particularly in oil, were so great that, they must override any lingering regret they might feel for the disintegration of the British-made Nigeria.²⁰⁹

On August 25th, 1967, just four months after the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Elbert Mathew, held an interview with Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Awolowo told the Ambassador that, he was wholeheartedly on the side of the Federal government of Nigeria. He considered it very vital, that, the FMG should raise enough troops to defeat the secession, because, nothing counted other than that. He went on to give a long account of his past approach to nation-building with a view to show that he had always been consistent. He said that, for example, when he declared that, “if the East secede, the West should do so also” this was specifically meant against certain elements in Northern Nigeria for, Gowon himself had appeared to have sympathised, with those who were prepared to let the Igbos go. Awolowo, who had always stood for One Nigeria, wished to prevent this by threatening that the Yorubas would go as well. The Ambassador then said that this might perhaps be the rationalisation after the event. But, it was the view of the British High Commission in Nigeria that, Awolowo was in fact a “One-Nigeria-man”. What he said about Northern intentions corresponded with the information at their disposal at the time. Chief Awolowo said that, Gowon was persuaded to setup an Inner Council of civilians to who would be saddled with the responsibility of giving advice on all matters both civil and military. The members of this Council consisted of himself, Anthony Enahoro, Tarka and Ejueyitchie. Awolowo noted that, one of the first results of the activities of this Council was that, he discovered to his amazement, how badly co-ordinated military affairs were. The British High Commissioner then assumed that, this was the reason for the appointment of Colonel Ekpo as the Chief of Staff of all the three Services, namely Army, Air force and Police. US Ambassador equally shared the High Commissioner’s view.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ TNA, FCO, 25/232, Memoir on Nigeria: the Secession of Eastern Nigeria, by British High Commissioner in Nigeria to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, 7th July, 1967.

²⁰⁹ TNA, FCO, 25/232, British High Commissioner to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, 7th July, 1967.

²¹⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/285, File. No, TX 10/16/PB/6C/1066/ Nigeria Defence : Military Operation Against Biafra, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1968, Note of Record on the Meeting Between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and United States Ambassador, 26th August, 1967.

2.3 British Involvement in the Nigerian Civil War:

2.3.1. Military Involvement

Since 1966, when the political crisis in Nigeria started the idea of equipping the Federal military with heavy equipments and stationing of soldiers at various splash points of the Federation, should in case of any break down of law and order or possible secession was arrived at by the British officialdom. For instance, as at the time of Aburi Conference of January 1967, there was heavy presence of soldiers in Lagos and Western region as a whole. This action was heavily criticised by the Governor of Eastern Region, Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu who remembered what happened in Western region in 1962 refused to recognise the Federal decree, which was supposed to embody the Aburi decision, that contained the provisions for the declaration of a state of emergency in any region, with the consent of Lagos and the three other regions. Ojukwu maintained that, the presence of Federal troops in Western region constituted a great threat to the lives of the Easterners. The earlier the soldiers were removed the better. Ojukwu was supported by Colonel Adeyinka Adebayo and Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who complained that, the presence and occupation of Lagos and other parts of Western Region by Nigerian army had virtually turned these areas into a “protectorate”. Gowon ignored the demands for the removal of the soldiers as suggested by the Eastern and Western Regional leaders instead he approached the British government that offered to send British troops to guarantee the safety of the proposed meeting for the Nigeria’s military leaders in the Mid-West, or the use of a British frigate or aircraft carrier for the purpose. While recalling this military offer a year later, the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, said unhappily, that, the idea came to nothing because it was vetoed by Ojukwu and rejected by Colonel Adebayo.²¹¹

The Foreign Office, on 2nd January, 1967 said in a letter addressed to the British High Commission in Lagos that, they had much sympathy with Ojukwu’s refusal of allowing military presence in Lagos and other parts of the country. They thought that, the supply of arms to any government in Nigeria, including the Federal government, would better be postponed until the situation in the country stabilised. They were, however, inclined to treat with some reservation, Ojukwu’s claim to be beyond reproach. Nevertheless, it was difficult to see how they could press other friendly governments to take action in stopping legitimate ordering of arms by the federal government of Nigeria, being a government which they recognised.²¹² On 5th January, 1967 the British High Commissioner, Sir F. Cumming-Bruce

²¹¹ Cronje, S. 1972, *The World and Nigerian Civil War: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War*, pp.18-19.

²¹² TNA, FCO, 38/265/ File No. Tx10/1/PA/6C/1066, Nigeria: Arms: Legal Importation and General Policy, 1967-1968, by Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 3rd January, 1967.

issued a replied to the Foreign Office's letter. He said that, the Commission entirely agreed with the view expressed by Ojukwu over the supply of arms to the federal government should there be any outbreak of war. Though, it would be desirable to stop all shipments of arms to Nigeria but this could lead to the purchaser shopping for arms elsewhere where no doubt arms could be purchased without difficulty and probably without the British government's knowledge.²¹³ Having embarked on military incursions against Biafra, the decision to boost her military strength through the acquisition of military equipments, intelligence gathering became the fundamental strategic war policy of the FMG. This policy came on the hills of the growing capabilities and early resistance of Biafran soldiers, in their military confrontations with the Federal army. With the knowledge that Biafra, under the leadership of Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, had purchased various military equipments such as B-25 and B-26 aircraft bombers from the United States. Both planes were used in the early months of the war, together with few civilian helicopters, left behind by the executives of the oil companies and other foreign interests. In addition to these military equipments, Biafrans equally possessed home-made bombs which they used with great and surprising accuracy on the military targets of the Federal army.²¹⁴

Major-General Yakubu Gowon's official letter, of 1st July, 1967, addressed to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, marked the beginning of the British official military involvement in the Nigerian Civil War. Gowon appreciated the great concerns expressed by the British government and the British Parliament about the political crisis in Nigeria. He told the Prime Minister that, the series of political turmoil in Nigeria had reached a critical stage, following the military build-up by the newly created Republic of Biafra as exemplified by their action in acquiring offensive military aircrafts. Gowon noted that the possession by the Biafran regime, of one B26 bomber airplane had been confirmed and that, Biafrans had already possessed military helicopters. These developments, coupled with the declaration by Ojukwu, of total war against the FMG, constituted a great threat to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. To achieve the goal of winning the war, Gowon said that, it was imperative that, military measures be adopted to put an end to Ojukwu's secession. For him, the FMG had on previous occasions, sought through the High Commissioner in Lagos, the assistance of Her Majesty's Government to procure the necessary military equipments which was commendable. Therefore, the FMG, faced with this challenge, such as the introduction of bomber aircraft and other offensive weapons acquired by the Biafran regime, thereby,

²¹³ TNA, FCO, 38/265, F. Cumming-Bruce to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 5th January, 1967.

²¹⁴ Stremlau, J.J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.79-80.

appealed to the British government to permit the sale from the British sources of the following military equipments to the armed forces of the federal Republic of Nigeria. These are 12 jet fighter bomber aircraft; 6 fast seaward defence boats, capable of at least 30 knots per hour and fully equipped; and 24 anti-aircraft guns. Gowon expressed hope that, Her Majesty's Government would accede to these requests. In view of the extreme urgency of the matter, the aircraft and anti-aircraft guns should be made available to them within forty-eight hours, latest on Monday 3rd July, 1967. The naval boat should also be made available for acceptance, in an English port within the same period. He also requested for training personnel, at the time of delivery of these equipments. Indeed, this request became expedient, because of the history of relations between Britain and Nigeria, the long tradition of friendship and association, and the great promise of continuing profitable cooperation in the future. Gowon hoped earnestly that, the British government, under Harold Wilson would accede to his request at the time of national emergency in Nigeria. He told the British Prime Minister that, his first mandate was to protect the territorial integrity of Nigeria. If for any reason, the British government refused to help, he would seek the necessary military equipments from any source that could help. For, Nigeria desired those equipments strictly on commercial terms. He said that, his government in this regard, should not be misconstrued as obstructing in any way, the Nigeria's non-alignment stance, in the issues that divided the military and ideological camps of the world.²¹⁵

On 2nd July, 1967 while reacting to Gowon's letter to the British Prime Minister on arms supply, the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, stated that, it was true that, Ojukwu had acquired two former United States B26 bombers. It was thought to be demilitarised versions. But, there was every possibility that, they could be rehabilitated, to perform offensive role. If so, they could be used to prevent the seaward watch of the Nigerian Navy on the prohibited zone in the Eastern waters. They could be used also in striking role elsewhere in the Federation. He however, was not convinced that, Biafrans had the necessary bombs to perform such action. Hunt noted that if, Ojukwu had acquired offensive bombers potential, and it would be harsh to reject outrightly, the FMG's request for legitimate and defensive materials of such nature now sought after. Although, they shopped around Europe for fighter aircrafts, they did not at this stage, asked the British government to provide aircraft or AA weapons or as many as six SDBS. Request of this nature was obviously impossible to

²¹⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Text of a Letter by the Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, by D. Hunt to the British Prime Minister, 1st July, 1967.

meet.²¹⁶ The Foreign Office later replied Sir David Hunt's comments on Gowon's request for arms. They generally agreed on the High Commissioner's assessment of the request, and the motive behind it. The B26 aircraft that the Biafrans purchased was in fact, civilian in nature. Not sure whether Biafrans might have bombs to facilitate its usage. If so, they should clearly not utter anything which might encourage Gowon to press his request to the British government or to obtain military aircraft elsewhere.²¹⁷

On 6th July, 1967, Sir David Hunt held series of discussions with the British Defence Adviser in Lagos concerning Gowon's arms request. He suggested that, the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomson, should be authorised to offer immediately, less offensive weapons such as 40mm Bofors, AA guns, together with first line spares and a quantity of ammunition to the FMG. He asserted that Britain must expect a demand for aircraft which was the FMG's greatest need. The Minister must be fully briefed to deal with the development. If agreed Hunt suggested that, some form of light trainer equipments which had offensive capability and certainly not jets should be provided. This should be a commercial deal that would not require Britain supplying training teams.²¹⁸

In spite of the reluctant to grant General Gowon request for arms in the Nigerian Civil War, the move to embark on arms supplies to the FMG came after a careful diplomatic deliberations by the British officialdom. The decision to supply arms was taken on 14th July, 1967 during the visit of Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomas to Lagos. He informed Gowon that, the British government had agreed to sale anti-air craft guns to the FMG, but not the other items, such as jet aircraft and fast boats. At a meeting with Gowon, George Thomas explained that, the question of arms supply would be further considered in London, in view of the fact that, the war was still at its early stage, as at the time, the request was made. The British government relied on the July 1967 recommendations of G.G. Forster, the Private Under-Secretary to A.M. Palliser, which stated that, neither jet aircraft nor fast patrol boats should be supplied to the FMG. But, the whole question of Nigerian arms purchases from Britain needed to be reviewed. At the same time, a decision should be taken whether to provide the anti-aircraft guns or not. Thus, in reviewing the British arms supply policy the followings were categorised and strategically mapped out for consideration. Firstly, the 24 anti-aircraft guns requested by Gowon in his message to the

²¹⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/265, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2nd July, 1967.

²¹⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to D. Hunt, 2nd July, 1967.

²¹⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Record of a Meeting between Sir David Hunt and British Defence Advisers, 6th July, 1967.

British Prime Minister; secondly, two small second-hand seaward defence boats (SDBs), and thirdly, other items which the FMG had placed with the crown agents and British firms.²¹⁹

It was not until 16th July, 1967, that the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, replied Gowon's letter of request for arms supplies. The Prime Minister explained that, he and his colleagues had considered most carefully, Gowon's request for the sale of jet aircraft, fast patrol boats and anti-aircraft guns. He started with warmest regard and recognition of Gowon's government and his devotion to the cause of national unity of Nigeria. He had indeed, followed with sympathy and understanding, all his efforts to uphold Nigeria's honoured name in Africa and among nations of the world, and hoped that, these efforts would be crowned with peace and success.²²⁰ The arrival of British arms to Nigeria was confirmed on 21st July, 1967 by the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, who conferred with Obeya, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence in Nigeria. Obeya told Sir David Hunt, that, the federal government was pleased to accept the offer of 24 L70 AA guns from Britain. Particularly because, they had sufficient reasons to believe that, Biafrans were getting aircraft from elsewhere, other than the B26. Obeya asked that, the AA guns be packaged at once, including the six guns and be flown out by freighter to Nigeria, accompanied with high quantities of ammunition. He asked that the remaining guns, together with spares and balance of ammunition, up to 1,000 rounds per gun, be sent by sea. The naval base had the capacity to train gun crews for first six guns which was provided. No requirement for radar for the guns was made. They only carried with them, simple method of operation. These arms delivery was followed by a crash course organised at Lark-hill, for about twelve officers and Non-Commissioned Officers of British representatives at Enugu.²²¹ Meanwhile, the British Deputy High Commissioner at Enugu, John Parker, on 22nd July, 1967 told the Foreign Office that, before the promises made in the Prime Minister's letter to Gowon would be implemented, there was the need for further restraint of such move, so as to allow for the downgrading of speculation over the British military aid to the FMG. Thus, allow for the clarification of military situation in the conflict, with the aim of easing the tension. He noted that, the haste with which the British government was being pushed into arms supply to the FMG seemed to him, as dangerous as it was unnecessary. In short, it was ironic that, the order for military equipments should be for anti-aircraft weapons when the Biafra's claim that they would acquire military aircraft, was dismissed earlier with such scorn by the FMG.

²¹⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 16th July, 1967.

²²⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Text of a Letter by the British Prime Minister to the Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 16th July, 1967.

²²¹ TNA, FCO, 38/265, D. Hunt to Foreign Office, 21st July, 1967.

This helped mould foreign and commercial opinion into anticipating a quick FMG victory in that civil war.²²²

In an effort to maintain her arms supply policy in the war, the British government was concerned about the state of public opinion and media reports in Britain. On 24th July, 1967 Foreign Office told the British High Commission in Lagos that, they had seriously considered the approach to take in answering the press enquiries about the report of continuing arms supplies to Nigeria. It was later, agreed that, the true position of Britain to such enquiries would be that, the United Kingdom had been a traditional supplier of a reasonable amount of arms to Nigeria on a commercial basis. Each order was carefully considered before an export license was granted. A sudden increase in requests for supplies or for sale of heavy offensive weapons would be very carefully scrutinised in the circumstance.²²³ The above concern was equally noted on 26th July, 1967 when the West African Department observed that, there had already been considerable press speculations about the sale of British arms to the FMG, for use against Biafra. The FMG was duly notified about this concern through the Nigerian High Commissioner to London, Brigadier Ogundipe. The WAD told Ogundipe that it was his duty to understand that, Britain had taken a political risk, and had agreed to continue arms supply to the FMG, notably, AA guns and the two reconditioned SDBs. The more fuss the press make of the issue, the more difficult it would be for Britain to agree on future orders. They therefore, urged the Nigerian government to be very careful in their dealings with the press on the arms supply issue in their own interest.²²⁴

In spite of the above concern on 13th August, 1967 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt notified the Foreign Office that the following arms were needed for immediate approval and supply to the FMG. These were, Air-drop rockets against military installations 55mm, quantity 7,500 rounds; Bomb FAB mm, quantity 7,500 rounds; Anti-aircraft weapons, quantity 80; FN rifles such as modified SLR, quantity 600; 81mm Tampella mortar, quantity 80; Rounds of Tampella mortar heat, quantity 10,000; Point 76mm for Saladin, quantity 10,000 rounds; 36 hand grenade, quantity 15, 000; Detonators, quantity 15,000.²²⁵ It would appear that, the reason why the High Commissioner made the demand for the supply of the above weapons, was because of the intelligence report which suggested that, during the early days of the war, the FMG had encountered the difficulties of sending, waves after waves of troops to the battle fronts, before finally taken well prepared

²²² TNA, FCO, 38/266, File No. TX 10/1/PB/6C/1066, Nigeria: Arms, Legal Importation and General Policy, 1967-1968, by British Deputy High Commissioner in Enugu to Foreign Office, 22nd July, 1967.

²²³ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Foreign Office to Lagos, 24th July, 1967.

²²⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/266, West and Central African Department to Foreign Office, 26th July, 1966.

²²⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 13th August, 1967.

Biafran defensive positions, having suffered heavy casualties thereafter, and there seemed to be plenty of new recruits. Nevertheless, the British government saw themselves in a very difficult position of granting these requests. David Hunt even later warned that, an outright refusal to help the FMG in any way could lead to sharp deterioration of the British relationship with Nigeria.²²⁶

On 8th November, 1967 George Thomas, sent a memo to the British Prime Minister on arms supply to the FMG. The Minister told the Prime Minister that, he had been thinking whether Britain ought to modify her attitude towards the Nigerian Civil War, following the Midwest invasion. For him, it was certain that, they had supplied the federal government with reasonable quantities of ammunition and small quantities of arms. The objectives of considering a change of policy in arms supply which the Minister proposed was to reduce loss of life, to protect British nationals, and businesses interests in the Eastern Nigeria. Most British nationals had left the Eastern region. Even before the British Deputy High Commissioner John Parker left, it was clear that his relations with Ojukwu's regime was so strain that, he could do little good by staying. The British government intercepted a secret report, that, Ojukwu instructed his team to meet the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, with the aim of having diplomatic talks, outside the United Kingdom, because Biafrans were at war with Britain. The British government also knew from a secret source that, Ojukwu had acquired large quantities of arms from Europe through Portugal. His emissaries were also in touch with the French officials. And, he tried to raise a force of mercenaries, an action that propelled him to keep in touch with both Colonel Denard and Hoare.²²⁷

The Minister pointed out that the city of Port Harcourt remained a very strategic town in the civil war. If the federal forces could capture Port Harcourt with its airfield, Ojukwu would be denied the last important link; he had with the outside world, and the last airfield, capable of taking major supplies. The Minister noted that, it seemed that, the British interest would now be served by a quick victory of the FMG. The FMG were much better disposed to Britain. So a quick victory would probably ensure that they remain in power. Port Harcourt was not only the key to the war, but its capture in reasonable order, would be an important step towards the restoration of oil supplies. It would not be easy, for the resumption of supplies, but it was the only gateway to the oilfields. Moreover, a quick victory would be the best way of ensuring the minimum civilian casualties, which had been one of the objectives

²²⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 13th August, 1967.

²²⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/268, File No. TX 10/1/PD/ 6C/1066, Nigeria: Arms, Legal Importation and General Policy, 1968. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs on Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: Arms Supplies to the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, 8th November, 1967.

of the British policy on arms supply. Given the British interest in a quick federal victory, and the fact that, Ojukwu was apparently implacably hostile to her, the Minister of State, suggested that, the British government should be justified in relaxing her policy on arms supply. To allow the FMG to buy from them military items, which would enable them achieve a quick victory, particularly the quick capture of Port Harcourt. The Minister did not recommend that, Britain should change her policy line on aircraft or weapons of mass destruction, but her line of thought would be based on such items as 3-inch mortars and infantry weapons generally. He suggested that, Britain ought to agree to supply reasonably quantities of weapons of this kind.²²⁸

Following the proposal by the Minister of State for the relaxation of British arms supplies to the FMG, on 23rd November, 1967 the Foreign Secretary confirmed that, the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee had considered the British government's policy on the supply of arms. Having observed that, the FMG was winning the war and that, negotiations had so far failed to lead to a peaceful settlement; the British interests in the war would now, be served by a quick FMG victory, particularly the capture of Port Harcourt. The Committee, therefore, agreed that the British policy on arms should be relaxed, so that they would be able to supply to the FMG such items as mortars and Stifling Sub-machines guns. Although no question of allowing the export of aircraft and weapons of mass destruction was considered.²²⁹ The confirmation for the relaxation of the British arms policy on the Nigerian Civil War was made in a minute addressed to the British High Commissioner in Lagos by the Foreign Office, on 27th November, 1967. Ministers decided that, the situation in Nigeria justified a slight relaxation on the British policy, restricting the exportation of arms from Britain to Nigeria. That license would be approved for a wide range of infantry weapons such as machine guns and mortars, and for the larger quantities of ammunition, required and for those previously supplied weapons. It was also stated that, there was no change in the British refusal to supply military aircraft or offensive weapons of mass destruction such as bombs and rockets. Licenses for light civilian aircraft should be granted.²³⁰ After the British move to change her policy on arms supplies to the FMG, the Nigeria's Permanent Secretary, the Ministry of Finance, Abdul Atta during his visit to London on 2nd December, 1967, presented to the British officialdom, list of arms to be supplied to the FMG. In doing so, he made it clear that, the FMG had realised the mistakes of their previous arms procurement policy, which in effect had consisted of buying up arms around Europe, regardless of the price and

²²⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/268, The Secretary of State for Commonwealth to the British Prime Minister, 8th November, 1967.

²²⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/268, Extract From Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 23rd November, 1967.

²³⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/268, Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 27th November, 1967.

quantity. The FMG at this point, wished, if possible, to get all her requirements from a single source, such as Britain. Atta's visit to London was followed by a meeting with the British officials on 2nd December, 1967.²³¹

Meanwhile, on 23rd December, 1967 the Head of State, Major-General Yakubu Gowon paid a special tribute to the Nigerian Armed Forces, in a Christmas message to the nation. He declared that, the main objectives of military operations against Biafra were; firstly, to preserve the territorial integrity of Nigeria for peace and prosperity. Secondly, to ensure the equality of each and every ethnic group, and equal status and opportunity for all citizens; thirdly, to establish and strengthen the new administrative structures, so that, no state could dominate the country; fourthly, to create the internal conditions of stability and freedom of movement of persons and goods, necessary for the rapid economic and social development of Nigeria. The Head of State also, opined that, the objective of the war was to win the respect of the outside world for Nigerians and Africans. He declared that, "we had not even committed one-tenth of the Nigeria's resources to the struggle. Hence, the government was determined to spend as much as necessary to prosecute the war to the end. No cost was too great in keeping Nigeria one".²³²

Consequently, the supply and granting of export licenses for the British arms supply, in the Nigerian Civil War, was evidenced when on 26th February, 1968 Colonel Rotimi, the Quartermaster-General of Nigeria, visited Nissen, the Deputy Director of Arms Sales, of the British Ministry of Defence in London. He asked if, the Defence Ministry could supply up to 50,000 rounds of 81 MM H.E. Mortar Bombs and 5 million rounds of 7.62 MM small arms and ammunition. The Ministry of Defence later agreed, but, subjected the request for Ministerial approval.²³³ On 26th April, 1968 the Foreign Office, approved an export license application for supply of 20,000 rounds of 105mm pack Howitzer ammunition 5,000 to the Federals. These rounds of ammunition were exported by air and the rest by sea.²³⁴ On 15th May, 1968 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Michael Stewart, authorised the granting of an export license for 500,000 7.62 cartridges and 400,000 30 cartridges. He decided to defer judgment on a second application for 300,000 30 cartridges and 10 million 7.62 MM cartridges. The argument in favour of granting the license for arms export to

²³¹ TNA, FCO, 38/269, File No. TX 10/1/PE/ 6C/1066, Nigeria: Defence, Arms, Legal Importation and General Policy, 1968. A Record of Meeting between Nigerian Permanent Secretary for Finance and British Officials, 2nd December, 1967.

²³² TNA, FCO, 38/285, General Gowon Re-States Objective of War against Rebellion. Press Release from Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 23rd December, 1967.

²³³ TNA, FCO, 38/270, File No. TX 10/1/PF/6C/1066, Nigeria: Defence, Arms, Legal Importation and UK General Arms Policy, Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 7th March, 1968.

²³⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/271, File No. TX 10/1/PE/6C/1066, Nigeria: Defence, Arms, Legal Importation, and UK General Arms Policy, O.W. Everett to P.D. McEntee and P.H. Moberly, 5th July, 1968.

Nigeria was based on the fact that, during the Parliamentary Debate of 12th May, 1968, Her Majesty Government maintained the existing arms policy towards the war. This decision was made based on the good behaviour of the FMG.²³⁵

During Lord Shepherd's visit to Nigeria, the Commander of 3rd Division of the Nigerian Army, Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, complained about the shortage of arms, particularly ammunition, which slowed down his advance against Biafran soldiers. He said that, he was in short of 105mm and 7.62mm ammunition, 40-70 anti-aircraft ammunition and rifles.²³⁶ John Wilson, Head of West African Department, noted that, Colonel Adekunle had reasons for exaggerating his difficulties, but, his division was fully stretched. With strong evidence of quantities of rifles and ammunitions coming into Biafra through French intervention, the federal armed forces faced a very tough fighting. He therefore, called for the thorough examination of arms request by the FMG. He asked whether the British Ministers would allow more arms to be supplied as soon as possible.²³⁷ Meanwhile, Yusuf Gobir, the Permanent Secretary of the Nigerian Ministry of Defence and A.E.D Katsina, the Chief of Army Staff, confirmed the acute shortage of 7.62mm ammunition during a conversation with the British Defence Adviser in Lagos, on 17th October, 1967. Later, the Nigerian High Commissioner to London was instructed to approach the British Ministry of Defence for further discussion. Colonel Rotimi also admitted that, the FMG reserve for ammunition was critical. Adekunle also informed General Alexander that, he had insufficient reserve ammunition to make any further advance, and that his peculiar needs were 7.62mm, 105(HE), 3inch and 81mm mortar ammunition and FN automatic rifles. The British High Commissioner, Sir David Hunt, while reporting to the Foreign Office on Colonel Adekunle's demands, noted that, " it was so much in the British interests that the war should be brought to a reasonably and speedy conclusion" .²³⁸

When these demands by Adekunle were submitted to the British government, by General Alexander, he thought it might be a good idea to lend the federal government, a Squadron of Hunter Jets, to knock out the remaining Biafran airstrips, thereby hastening the end of the war. He argued that, this would be more humane than allowing the war to drag on.²³⁹ Also, in his minute addressed to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 12th

²³⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/271, D.C. Tebbit to E.G. Norris, 10th July, 1968.

²³⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/273, File No. TX 10/1/PI/6C/1066, Nigeria: Defence, Arms, Legal Importation and General UK Arms Policy, by D. C. Tebbit to J. Wilson, 2nd October, 1968.

²³⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/273, D. C. Tebbit to J. Wilson, 2nd October, 1968.

²³⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/330, File No. JWN 10/1/PA/5A/368, Nigeria: Defence policy and Supplies, 1968, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 17th October, 1968.

²³⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Brief for the Secretary of State on the Nigerian Arms Supplies by West African Department, 23rd October, 1968.

October, 1968, Sir David Hunt reported the statement made by Anthony Enahoro that, in view of the increased French arms supplies to the Biafrans, General Gowon would like Her Majesty's Government to provide further aircraft for which the Nigerians themselves could supply pilots. Similarly, Yusuf Gobir informed the British Defence Adviser to Nigeria, about the acute shortage of 7.62mm ammunition. The federal prodigality in expending ammunition, no doubt, contributed to their shortages of arms; couple with the increased Biafran fire power which resulted in the growing airlift of arms. It was so much in the British interest that, the war should be brought to a reasonably speedy end as was suggested by Sir David Hunt on the bases of which Gobir requests was considered sympathetically²⁴⁰.

From the foregoing, on 22nd October, 1968 an official memo was released by the British government on arms supply to the FMG. The memo stated that, the FMG had asked for more ammunition in furtherance of its war against Biafra. General Gowon had also asked the British government to provide fighter aircraft, to be used by the Nigerian Air Force against Biafran airlift of arms. If they did not get help quickly, the war might drag on for long. On the other hand, the supply of more war materials, subjected Britain to fierce criticisms in Parliament and elsewhere. Following this request, the British government agreed to meet the Federal government demands for ammunition, so far as military stocks in Britain allow it, but the request for fighter aircraft was rejected accordingly. The British decision to intensify arms supply to the Federal government was due to the continuous arms deliveries to the Biafran government by other countries most especially France.²⁴¹

Arms supply and provisions to the Biafran government came through the Gabon and Ivory Coast, supplies which were clearly planned and organised by the French.²⁴² Although, the French government had on a number of occasion denied that it was supplying arms to the Biafran government, but there was a good deal of evidence that it was doing so by clandestine means through Abidjan and Libreville.²⁴³ Until about mid-August 1968 deliveries of arms to Biafra government were running at about 30-35 tons per week. From mid-August to mid-September 1968 the total increased to about 80 tons per week, the increase being almost entirely due to increased deliveries from Abidjan and Libreville. Deliveries from the Ivory Coast and Gabon accounted for rather more than half the total. These arms have been purchased and delivered by an organisation of Frenchmen who have made occasional use of some French Red Cross Aircraft. This included *Rierre Laureys* who

²⁴⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Lagos to Foreign Office, 17th October, 1968.

²⁴¹ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Memorandum on Nigeria's Arm Supply by J. Wilson to Lord Shepherd and Sir Leslie Monson, 22nd October, 1968.

²⁴² TNA, FCO, 65/347, from D.C. Tebbit to Sir David Hunt, November 5, 1968.

²⁴³ TNA, FCO, 65/347, from the British Foreign Secretary to Lagos, October 23, 1968.

submitted in a television interview in 1967 that he supplied arms to the Biafran government and French agents in Abidjan and Libreville.²⁴⁴

Consignments of weapons and ammunitions were trans-shipped through the airports at Abidjan and Libreville, usually at night and under conditions of exceptional secrecy in parts of the airfield restricted to locals and their French advisers, sometimes under the direction of officials of French nationality.²⁴⁵ The increased flow of French arms to Biafra coincided with the French diplomatic support for the Biafran government since General de Gaulle's statement of July 31, 1968.²⁴⁶ Zambia was also involved in some form of arms delivery to Republic of Biafra and particularly military aircrafts. On September 9, 1968 the United States Embassy in Lagos showed the British High Commission a telegram to the effect that Zambia made available two DC3s aircrafts to the Biafran government for immediate use, namely, DC3/439B and DC3 9/JRIG which was later renumbered as 704/B. According to report from Libreville both aircrafts made series of night flights into Republic of Biafra.²⁴⁷ The *Financial Times* report of December 4, 1968 indicated that a fleet of some eight aircrafts was involved in the airlift of arms from Gabon to Biafran government, according to observers who have been in Libreville, the Gabonese Capital. The fleet was made up of four DC4s, three DC3s and one Constellation.²⁴⁸ The aircrafts were unmarked, but were said to have varied registrations, namely, French, German, Zambian, Gabonese, and Belgian.²⁴⁹

On 25 August 1967 a meeting was held between the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomas and Opposition Member of Parliament, and Spokesman on Commonwealth Affairs, Reginald Maudling. The Minister noted that both sides of the conflict had obtained arms from other countries besides Britain. Maudling asked whether there had been pressure on the governments concerned to adopt a similar position to the British and prevent excessive arms supplies going to Nigeria. The Minister replied that

²⁴⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/347, Confidential: Minute on French Arms Supplies to Biafra from Foreign Office to Lagos.

²⁴⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/347, from Foreign Office to Lagos, October 23, 1968.

²⁴⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/347, Confidential: Minute on French Arms to Biafra from British Foreign Secretary to Lagos, 18 November, 1968.

²⁴⁷ FCO, 38/250, File No. TX 3/28/ Part B/6C/1060 Nigeria: Political Affairs, External Bilateral, Eastern Secession: Recognition by Countries Other than United Kingdom, TNA. Confidential: Minute on Gabon-Biafran Airlift of Arms from Lagos to Foreign Office, 9th September, 1968.

²⁴⁸ Bridget, Bloom. Biafran Arms Airlift from Gabon. *Financial Times*, 4 December 1968, p.19.

²⁴⁹ TNA, FCO, 48/255, Confidential: Minute on Biafran Airlift from United States Embassy Libreville to Foreign Office, September, 1968. The followings are Aircrafts employed in Libreville for airlift of arms in Biafra. Namely, DC3 Gabonese Registry TR-LML; DC3 Registry 704B former Zambian Registry 9J-RIG; DC3 439-B former Zambian Registry 9J-RIF; Constellation French Registry F-BRAD; DC4 German Registry D-ADAR; DC4 French Registry F-RBDQ; D3 French Registry F-BRAM with Number 48994 on Tail and Order of Malta Insignia on Fuselage; DC4 Gabonese TR-LNV.

Britain could hardly represent other governments such as Czechoslovakia and Russia that they should stop supplying arms whilst the British government was still doing so. The Minister noted that Biafra had stockpiled arms even before the war broke out by a series of black market arrangements unknown to them.²⁵⁰

Indeed, the large increase in the French supplies of arms and ammunition Biafra stiffened their resistance in that civil war. The federal advance appeared stranded on both the 3rd Division front in the South, the 1st and 2nd Division fronts in the North, with no early prospect of capturing the vital airstrip at Uli, Ihiala, and Umuahia. There were reports of other airstrips being prepared by Biafrans. The British Ministers had last approved an arms order for the FMG on 29th August, 1968. At that time, they agreed to provide most of what the federal government had asked for. This included quantities of all types of ammunition which had been described as having run short. With 105mm ammunition the British government could have supplied more than what was asked for. But it was decided only to authorise the release of 10,000 out of the 15,000 rounds of ammunition requested because this was particularly badly and devastating ammunition. Moreover, against an order of 20 million rounds of 7.62mm small arms ammunition, the British Ministry of Defence were able to release from their stocks at the rate of one million a month. Thus, the British government considered the possibility of releasing further stocks of arms and ammunition on the Colonel Adekunle's list of demands.²⁵¹

Following the recommendation for arms supply as requested by Colonel Adekunle the British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Michael Stewart, dispatched a note on 23rd October, 1968 to the British High Commissioner in Lagos. He informed him that, in view of the arms requested by the FMG, through Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, no fighter jets was available for immediate delivery. But, they fully understood the FMG's concern about increased arms supplies to Biafran soldiers. They were very anxious to do what they could to help them. The British government had therefore, looked at the outstanding arms orders which was also mentioned to Lord Shepherd, and came up with the following provisions to be exported to Nigeria. There are 7.62mm balls of 5 million rounds, 105mm, 82mm mortar bombs, and 3inch mortar bombs. Michael Stewart noted that, it was strange that, during the period, when Adekunle complained of widespread shortages of arms, Britain had only received one bid for ammunition. He suggested that, the Defence Adviser could help Nigeria to coordinate their organisation in Lagos more effectively. The only application, the British

²⁵⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Confidential: Record of A Meeting between the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs and Reginald Maudling, MP and Opposition Spokesman on Commonwealth Affairs, 25th August, 1967.

²⁵¹ TNA, FCO, 65/330 J. Wilson to Lord Shepherd and Sir Leslie Monson, 22nd October, 1968.

government received was the supply of 12x12mm Oerlikon guns for the Nigerian Navy and 200,000 rounds of ammunition for the federal police both of which were issued export licenses.²⁵²

In addition to the arms the British government approved to the FMG on 23rd October, 1968 the following items were also included, 1 million rounds of 9mm ammunition, 30 more second-hand Saracen armoured Personnel Carriers, 180 Mine Detectors and up to 6 Saladin Armoured Cars, together with a further release of ammunition for the FMG. The Minister of State, Lord Shepherd, later issued special instructions that, great care should be taken in ensuring that the Saladin were shipped quietly and without attracting publicity. Further confirmation of the approval of these military equipments was made on 5th November, 1968 in which the British Ministers agreed that, the items should be offered to the FMG. In view of the urgent need of these weapons, the Ministers deemed it important, if they would be delivered as soon as possible. The Ministers also directed that, care should be taken to load the Saladin at the sea ports where they were likely to attract publicity, which the British government was anxious to avoid.²⁵³ On 5th November, 1968 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt informed the Foreign Office about the meeting he had with General Yakubu Gowon and his colleagues. Gowon told him that, the Nigerian Armed Forces required a much larger reserve of ammunition, particularly small arms, than they had previously calculated. He presented a list of items to him, such as 20 million rounds of 7.62mm ammunition. Hunt told Gowon that, the British policy on arms supply remained unchanged, but he thought that, such a large order would have to come from the operational stocks which might present much difficulty. Gowon then, gave him a copy of a letter he signed and addressed to the British Prime Minister, to be delivered by Anthony Enahoro during his visit to London.²⁵⁴

General Gowon's request for fighter aircraft was the second items received by the British government since the war began. He wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister within a few weeks of the commencement of the civil war, demanding among other items, twelve attack aircraft. This was carefully considered. Although, the British government agreed to make certain war materials available, the Prime Minister informed Gowon that, aircraft could not be provided. This British view had been stuck ever since, with the result that, the FMG had been forced to turn to the Russians, Czechs and Egyptians for military

²⁵² TNA, FCO, 65/330, British Secretary of States for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Lagos, 23rd October, 1968.

²⁵³ TNA, FCO, 65/330, D.C. Tebbit to Sir L. Monson, 5th November, 1968.

²⁵⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Note of Record of Conversation between the British High Commissioner to Nigeria and Nigeria's Head of State, 5th November, 1968.

aircraft. Be that as it may, this British position of not supplying aircraft to the FMG remained unchanged.²⁵⁵ This was because, the British government found it politically impossible to supply the Nigerian government, military aircraft even if, it was immediately available. There was the possibility of an overwhelming outcry and criticisms if a Nigerian or Egyptian pilot in a British aircraft shot down a relief aircraft. Furthermore, supplying British aircraft would not in the British view, enhance the FMG's chances of putting the remaining Biafran airstrips out of action. The FMG had already, acquired a number of sophisticated Russian bombers and fighter's jets, which failed to function effectively and had had a negligible effect on the war. Nevertheless, the British government argued with General Alexander view that the Biafran resupplied airstrips was the key to Ojukwu's ability to continue the war. The FMG never relented in pushing ahead with their plans to take the Uli- Ihiala airstrips form across the Nigeria; this seemed to Britain the only way of neutralising the Biafrans advantage in securing new sources of supplies of arms.²⁵⁶

When Brigadier Ogundipe met Lord Shepherd on 31st October, 1968 for a general discussion on Nigeria's arms needs, he asked if the British government could supply the spares for Dial Sights and 105mm Howitzer guns. These Sights are, PT-No. V/5/1240-15-020-1146 Sights Dial Mil MK.2, quantity 12 and PT No.M3/1240-99-960-3950 Carrier Dial Sight No.34 MK.1, quantity 12. Brigadier Ogundipe stressed that, these items were needed to get 12 guns back to action in the FMG's military offensive against Biafra. As stated earlier, 105mm Howitzers were Italian-made weapons. Owing to the Italian embargo on arms sales to Nigeria, the FMG could not obtain them directly. To this end, Dennis Healey, the British Defence Secretary, informed the Foreign Office that they could not supply these arms from the British Army stocks. But a proposal to investigate the possibility of the MOD supplying those items from the British Army stock against obtaining from Italy was made on 4th November 1968. After the investigation, on 20th November 1968, the West African Department recommended that, the MOD should supply nine of the twelve Dial Sights asked by the FMG, which should enable the majority of the guns supplied to them to be brought into action.²⁵⁷ Certainly, it was the intention of both the Ministers of the British House of Parliament to approve the export of these items had they been available.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/330, J. Wilson to Lord Shepherd and Sir Leslie Monson, 22nd October, 1968.

²⁵⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/330, British Secretary of States for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Lagos, 23rd October, 1968.

²⁵⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/331, File No. JWN 10/1/PB/5A/368, Nigeria: Defence Policy and Supplies, John Wilson to D.D. Tebbit, 20th November, 1968.

²⁵⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/331, D.C. Tebbit to J. Wilson, 22nd November, 1968.

. On 22nd November, 1968 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria informed the Foreign Office that, the British Defence Adviser to Nigeria, Commander E.O Kentebe, had asked whether the British government could supply the FMG with one hundred Air-Droppable Flares for use by the Nigerian Air Force. The reason for the demand of these equipments was because of the absence of moon during the military operations, between the federal soldiers and Biafran army. It was the Nigerian pilots intercepting flights from Uli/Ihiala airstrip that had requested for them. The weapons were meant to be used, either free fall from the open door of a DC.3 aircraft or fitted into the racks on the MIGs-17, the former being the most likely. The type of flare required was 4.5 inch calibre and should be as long as possible. Sir David Hunt noted that, he supported the request for the supply of these Air-Droppable Flares. If available from the British Air Ministry stocks, they should be flown out as early as possible by arrangement.²⁵⁹ Also in his reply to Commander E.O. Kentebe, the British Deputy Director of Arms Sales, J.T.E. Nissen stated that, the British officialdom had all along been looking into the possibility of meeting the requirements of the FMG's requests for 12 Sights Dial Mil MK2 and Carriers No. 34, MK1, for 105mm Packhow equipments. He confirmed that the British Army only had the ability to release 9 Sights and Carriers to them and that was the much they could, following the exhaustion of arms from their stocks.²⁶⁰ On 25th November, 1968 P.D. McEntee confirmed in his minute to T.E. Nissen that there was no objections in informing Commander Kentebe that, the British government could supply 9 Sights Dial together with Carriers.²⁶¹

On 27th November, 1968 the WAD released a memorandum on the reasons why the air equipment should be granted to the FMG. Arms supplies to the Biafrans had been greatly stepped up, with the support of the French government. Arms were flown to Uli airstrip from Libreville, Sao Tomé and Abidjan. These increased supplies, had greatly strengthened Biafra's ability to resist and had blocked the possibility of achieving quick victory. The FMG, in trying to neutralise the Uli airstrip, by attacking it at night was inhibited from taking a direct action against arms carrying aircraft, because of the difficulties in recognising and detecting the airplanes. In spite of the fact that, they had forbidden relief flights at night, the FMG had continued to tolerate their operations. Recognition was very vital in the FMG's ability to take offensive action against armed aircraft. Thus, it was in the British interest that, the FMG should quicken the war. Arms flights to Biafra were the main obstacle towards achieving this goal. Thus, the use of flares would make the task of the Nigerian Air Force

²⁵⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/331, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 22nd November, 1968.

²⁶⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/331, J.T.E Nissen to the Defence Adviser Nigerian High Commission, 22nd November, 1968.

²⁶¹ TNA, FCO, 65/331, Minute on Nigeria and Requirements for Sights Dial Mil and Carriers by P.D. McEntee to Deputy Director of Army Sales in the Ministry of Defence, 25th November, 1968.

much easier and might, to some extent, frighten off the mercenary pilots who flew arms plane on behalf of Biafra. The use of flares would at least show the FMG's critics that, they have the ability to identify Red Cross and other relief flights, so as to avoid taking offensive action against them. Flares were not in themselves offensive weapons.²⁶²

On 27th November, 1968 the recommendation for the supply of Air-Droppable Flares was received by the British Royal Air force. The RAF did not approve the recommendation as submitted by the Foreign Office. Rather, they noted that, the 4.5 flares or similar was a practically good solution to the requirement, since their use would impose a number of tactical limitations, as well as being a relatively expensive way of performing a single task. To identify an intruder aircraft by means of one of these flares which was primarily intended for surface illumination, the release aircraft would need to be at a height above 3,000 ft; to be tighter than the target aircraft, preferably at least 1,000 ft; to manoeuvre after release, to a position where the crew could observe their target without dazzling themselves by their own flare. The RAF said that, their stocks of 4.5 flares that were in guaranteed serviceable condition were low and could be released without severe detriment to RN service requirements. This was partly to the changeover to production for the RAF of their new "5" reconnaissance flares deliveries, of which were due to begin by 1969. The optimum solution recommended by the RAF, was the use of cartridges illuminating No. 1.75 No. MK.2/12D/1299. These according to RAF, required a discharger No. 1 MK.1/2B/1402 to be fitted to the aircraft.²⁶³ On 6th December, 1968 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, confirmed that, only flare in one million candle-power range, such as the 4.5 and 5 inch reconnaissance flares referred to W.A. Perry's letter to the British Defence Adviser on 27th November, 1968 were available. A maximum number of 50 4.5 inch flares were later provided for onward delivery to Nigeria. While further supplies of 4.5 inch flares would be supplied as the civil war continued.²⁶⁴ Similarly, the approval of the supply of air droppable flares to the FMG for use in intercepting night flights carrying arms to Biafra was later confirmed by the Foreign Office.²⁶⁵

During a Parliamentary debate, on 12th June, 1968 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, while delivering his speech in the House of Commons, justified the British government's policy on arms supply to the Nigerian government. He said:

²⁶² TNA, FCO, 65/331, Memorandum on Flares for the Nigerian Air Force by J. Wilson to D.C. Tebbit, 27th November, 1968.

²⁶³ TNA, FCO, 65/331, Memo on the Supply of Airborne Pyrotechnics, by W.A. Perry to R.E. Scott, 27th November, 1968.

²⁶⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/331, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Lagos, 6th December, 1968.

²⁶⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/331, A. N. R. Millington to W.A. Perry, 6th December, 1968.

... in view of that, I must maintain, though here, I am at variance with some, but by no means all, Honourable Members, that it would at any rate have been wrong at the outset of Biafra's secession for us to have cut off arms supplies completely from the federal government. That would have been to say to a government, in effect, we have put you in a position where you are very heavily dependent on us for the instruments of power. Now, when you are faced by a challenge to your authority, we will put you at a very serious disadvantage. At that time supplies from this country accounted for 75 percent of Nigeria's supplies of arms from all sources. The proportion of current supplies which we provided was, of course, very much less than that. I do not think that one can avoid the conclusion that if we had taken that action it would have been, and would have been interpreted as been, giving in practice approval, and substantial practical help to the movement for secession...²⁶⁶

On 25 August 1967 a meeting was held between the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomas and Opposition Member of Parliament, and spokesman on Commonwealth Affairs, Reginald Maudling. The Opposition MP asked the Minister for an update on the Nigerian situation. The Minister noted that the British government was being pressed hard on the arms question. Another MP, John Cordle had earlier pressed the government to supply aircraft and bombs to the Nigerian government. Maudling interjected to depreciate Cordle's attitude on that question. The Minister said that Her Majesty Government's view was that while they remained unyielding to supply the heavy and sophisticated weapons which would entail large-scale destruction, they were the traditional supplies of rifles and ammunition to the Federal government. As such, they were continuing to supply only those arms, on the ground that a complete cut-off would be represented as a shift in favour of Biafra. In view of the fact that the British government had refused to recognise Biafra, no arms were being allowed to go there. Maudling asked whether a ban was exercised on arms from private suppliers. The Minister said that export licenses were required for the export of all arms.²⁶⁷

The fear of genocide and extermination of Biafrans occasioned by massive air raids and military onslaught of the federal troops, and arms acquisition from Britain, resulted in the call for an international arms embargo. The demand for the cessation of arms supplies to Nigeria was first made in the House of Lords in February 1968, by Lord Brockway,

²⁶⁶ TNA, FCO, 38 /272, Annexure: Extracts from Foreign Secretary's Speech to the House of Commons, 12th June, 1968. Hansard: Vol.766, No.132, Columns, 243-300.

²⁶⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Confidential: Record of A Meeting between the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs and Reginald Maudling, MP and Opposition Spokesman on Commonwealth Affairs, 25 August 1967.

following press reports that the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, was mediating in the war. Later, the Parliamentary indictment of the Labour government developed into charges of complicity in genocide and of failure to exercise the necessary influence on the Federal Nigerian government to allow relief supplies to Biafra. All these charges were ultimately transformed and merged into a specific demand that the Labour government should, on moral ground, suspend further arms supplies to Lagos.²⁶⁸ When the Cabinet debated the British policy on Nigerian Civil War on 10th December, 1968 the views was that, in certain circumstances, Britain might work for an international embargo on the arms supplies to the combatants in Nigeria. The circumstances envisaged were that a ceasefire was being negotiated after the British officialdom have been in touch with Ojukwu and had also been in touch with Gowon.²⁶⁹ On 17th December, 1968 the Research Department of Foreign Office was directed to prepare a Cabinet Paper on the possibility and implications of levying a total embargo on the supply of arms from both public and private sources to the combatants in the civil war.²⁷⁰

Owing to the massive criticisms regarding the British arms supply, a strategic global enquiry was conducted by the British officialdom to ascertain the number of countries engaged in arms deliveries to either the Nigerian government or Biafran authorities. For instance, on 18th July, 1968 the Foreign Office informed the British Embassy in Paris, France, that, they were anxious to know which countries were still supplying arms, ammunition or military equipments, to the FMG. For they knew that, all the countries concerned had one time or the other, supplied military items. But Netherlands and Belgium had earlier announced that, they had cut off arms supplies to the federal government. Thus, the British officialdom, later asked them, whether, in spite of these countries' position they had continued or not, to permit the export of arms, to meet the FMG request either directly or through a third party.²⁷¹

It would be recalled that, on 17th July, 1968 the Belgian Parliament passed a law that authorised the government to suspend or withdraw all export licenses for arms shipment to Nigeria. This action followed the crash of a Belgian Sabena Boeing Aircraft near Lagos on 13th July, 1968. This aircraft carried about 34 tons of arms for the FMG. It was revealed that there was an additional 60 tons of weapons and ammunition at Brussels Airport awaiting

²⁶⁸ . TNA, FCO, 352, File No. TX 10/1/16/5A/368, Nigeria: Defence and Arms Embargo, 1st January, 1968-31st January, 1969.

²⁶⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/331, Memorandum on Considerations Affecting an International Arms Embargo by West African Department, January, 1969.

²⁷⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/331, A.N.R. Millington to J.F. Ford, 17th December, 1968.

²⁷¹ TNA, FCO, 38/272, Minute on Arms to Nigeria from Foreign Office to Paris, 18th July, 1968.

dispatch to Nigeria. On 11th July, 1968 the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated in the Senate that, for several weeks, the Belgian government had refused to grant new licenses for the arms export to Nigeria. He added that, any licenses for the arms export which had been granted before the decision was taken only involved insignificant quantities of arms. M. Harmel was, therefore, greatly embarrassed by the revelations, following the crash of the Sabena Aircraft. He, in effect, made a public apology to the Senate on 16th July, 1968. He admitted that, his statement on 11th July, 1968 about the quantities of arms covered by export licenses already granted was incorrect. There was little disposition to blame M. Harmel personally for this gaffe, since his integrity was unquestioned, but there was considerable press criticisms of the Foreign Ministry officials who briefed him inaccurately. The decision to suspend all arms exports to Nigeria was in general, warmly welcomed by the Belgian Press. For, there were correspondingly, heavy criticisms of the Belgian government's decision to continue arms shipment to the Nigerian government. This suggested that, the quantities of arms involved were small or that the suspension of their shipment would have left the fields clear for the Russians, but dismissed as invalid argument. In view of the very strong public feelings on the subject of arms supply and the unfortunate way in which it was handled in the Belgian Parliament, the Belgian government did not authorised any further shipments of arms to Nigeria until the political situation in that country improved radically.²⁷²

Then, on 19th July, 1968 Baron, Director of the African Division, Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs, informed the British Embassy in Tel Aviv that, Israel was not supplying arms, ammunition or military equipments to the FMG, and had not done so for quite some time. For, they would not do so either for the FMG or Biafra, directly or indirectly, while the civil war lasted. The Israeli government was forced into a debate in the Knesset concerning the civil war by the pro-Biafran lobby groups. A very strong political and press pressure was also mounted on the Israeli government to accord some assistance to Biafra. According to Baron, the Israeli government therefore, resisted this pressure, but only increased the amount of relief supplies from Israel to Nigeria, through suitable channels. Because of local difficulties, if not for other reasons, the Israeli government maintained the above declared position to the latter.²⁷³ Similarly, the British Embassy in Moscow said that, the fact that, the Soviet Union had supplied arms to Nigeria was never mentioned in the public. And that, the Soviet press had neither reported nor commented on arms supplies to the FMG from other countries. Nevertheless, in view of the Soviet political commitment to the FMG, it was not

²⁷² TNA, FCO, 38/272, Brussels to Foreign Office, 19th July, 1968.

²⁷³ TNA, FCO, 38/272, Tel Aviv to Foreign Office, 19th July, 1968.

surprising that, their arms supplies continued.²⁷⁴ Even though, France supplied arms to Biafra it was later learnt that the French government declared the policy of applying total arms embargo on deliveries of military supplies to either side of the conflict. This embargo was decided at a meeting of the French Cabinet on 12th June, 1968. This covered all official contracts even those concluded before the outbreak of the war. This equally applied to ammunitions as well as weapons. They had intended to implement this embargo strictly. Indeed, the British government had in the past suspected that, the French might be playing a double game in its arms policy. Some degree of military support might have been forthcoming to Biafra through clandestine channels, possibly without Quai D'Orsay approval or even knowledge. While they were sure of this French action, they considered it likely that such support, if it ever existed, would have ceased.²⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the policy of the Netherlands government regarding arms supplies to Nigeria were, no exports of any arms to Biafra at any time; all deliveries of arms to Nigeria, including orders in the pipeline were suspended indefinitely. No evidence of any export of arms continued under cover.²⁷⁶ The Swiss government had earlier banned sale of arms to both Nigeria and Biafra. This ban was considered to be very effective by the British Embassy in Berne. Since arms could not physically leave Switzerland without a government license.²⁷⁷

On 25th July, 1968 Counsellor Jacoangeli, the Head of Department in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dealing with the export licensing of arms supplies, assured the British Embassy in Italy that, it was the Italian government policy to supply no arms to Nigeria or Biafra in the civil war. And that, no license was granted since the opening of the hostilities. Although, the Italian government did not issue a public statement to this effect, but Jacoangeli noted that, there was no reason to do so. The public feelings about Biafra were so high in Italy. The Pope had earlier spoken in public about the need to bring the hostilities to an end and provide aid for Biafra. The Italian government, it was reasoned, would face very serious public criticisms; if it was made known that, they had been involved in the supply of arms whether directly or indirectly, to the FMG.²⁷⁸

The British government, as part of their involvement in the Nigerian Civil War, gave the FMG series of technical advice. One was on the need to effectively annihilate Uli airstrip. The Uli airstrip was very strategic. It was majorly used for arms deliveries and relief landing. In fact, by 1968, Uli was said to be the second busiest Airport in the world, especially in the

²⁷⁴TNA, FCO, 38/272, Moscow to Foreign Office, 19th July, 1968.

²⁷⁵TNA, FCO, 38/273, Paris to Foreign Office, 19th July, 1968.

²⁷⁶TNA, FCO, 38/272, Hague to Foreign Office, 19th July, 1968.

²⁷⁷TNA, FCO, 38/272, Berne to Foreign Office, 19th July, 1968.

²⁷⁸TNA, FCO, 38/272, Rome to Foreign Office, 25th July, 1968.

night, after Chicago O'Hare.²⁷⁹ During a brief diplomatic discussions about the military situations in the Nigerian Civil War, the British Prime Minister, told Gowon that, from what he heard, it would appear that, the airstrip at Uli was of crucial importance and strategic to the Biafran government. It should, presumably, be a major objective of the FMG to render the airstrip unusable. The Prime Minister spoke during his official visit to Nigeria, on 30th March, 1969. In reply, General Gowon informed the Prime Minister that, the bombs at currently in use by the Nigeria Air Force were of the wrong type for the kind of damage that would be required to put Uli out of use. He therefore, asked the Prime Minister, if it would be possible for the British government to supply Nigeria with more appropriate bombs. The Prime Minister said that, this possibility must be completely ruled out.²⁸⁰ He later agreed with General Gowon on the need not discuss further, any arms questions. Rather, he should like the matter to be dealt with through the normal diplomatic channels and naturally, without any publicity. Thereafter, he approved the export licenses of large quantities of arms sent to him by the Nigerian military.²⁸¹

Similarly, during a private discussion with the British Prime Minister, on 23rd April, 1969 the Nigeria's Commissioner for External Affairs, Okio Arikpo was asked by the Prime Minister about the military situation in the Nigerian Civil War. The Commissioner said that, the military situation was going on very satisfactorily. The Federal armed forces were in full control of Umuahia. But, their most serious concern was how to put Uli airstrip out of action. This was because, there had been a renewed increase in French arms supplies, after the military reverses suffered by the Biafrans. He noted that, the Nigerian Intelligence Cell had earlier indicated that, French Air Force aircrafts had flown arms supplies into Uli from Libreville, Gabon. The Prime Minister asked Arikpo whether the FMG had protested against this French infringement on the Nigerian's territory. He suggested that, without giving the source of their intelligence, the FMG could pass the information to other OAU members who would be very angry at such a breach of African airspace and infringement of Nigerian territorial rights. For he knew that, the French were susceptible to general African pressures.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ A. Okpe, 2009. *The Last Flight: A Pilot Remembers the Air Force and the Biafran Air Attacks*. Lagos: Aeromax International Ltd, p.399.

²⁸⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/333, File No. JWN 10/1/1/PD/5A/368/ Nigeria: Defence Supplies and Policy, 1st January, 1969-11th July, 1969. Record of Conversation between the British Prime Minister and Head of State of Nigeria, 30th March, 1969.

²⁸¹ TNA, FCO, 65/333, Sir T. Bromley to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1st April, 1969.

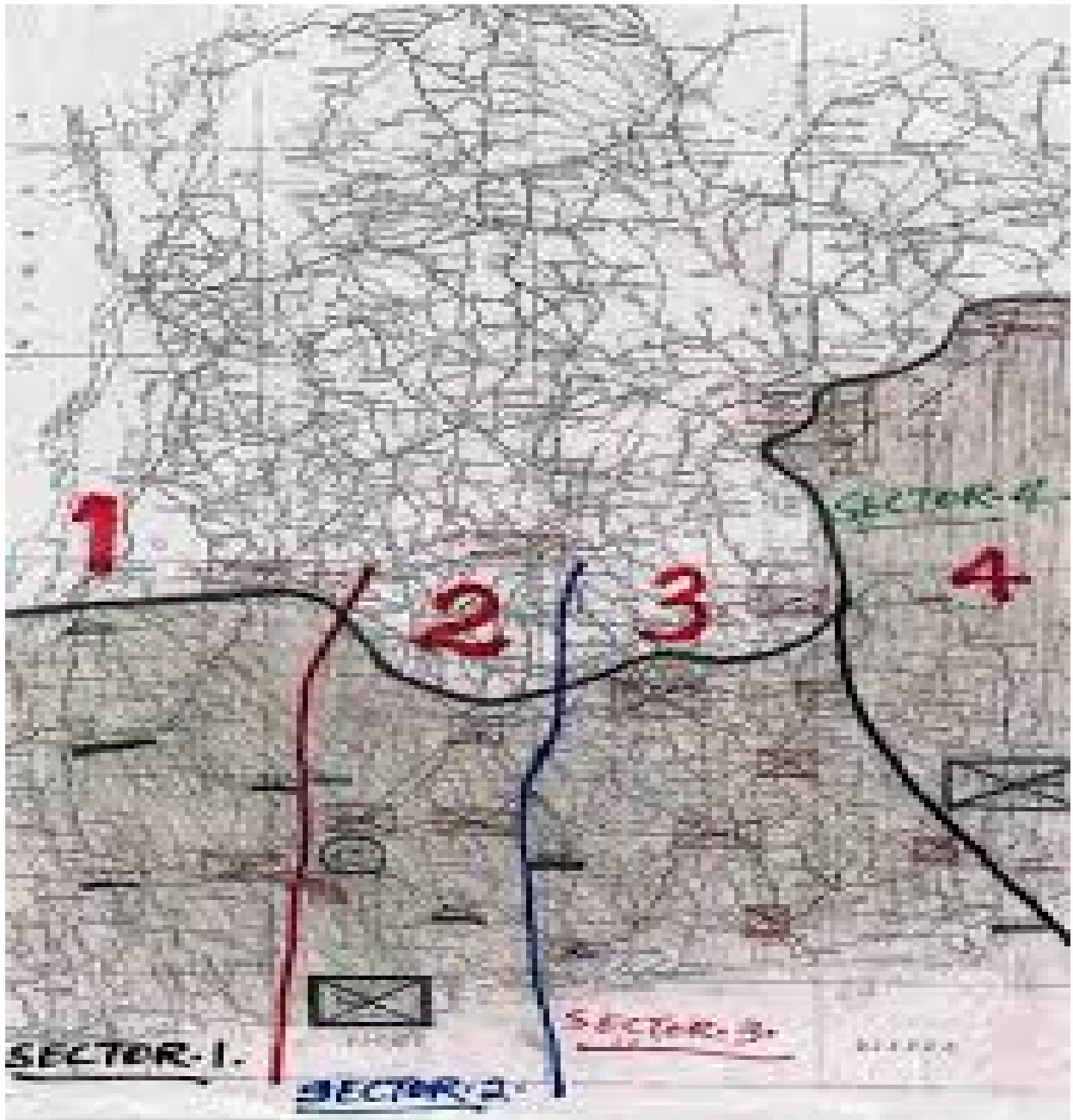
²⁸² TNA, FCO, 65/333, Record of Conversation between the British Prime Minister and Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs, 23rd April, 1969.

On 24th April, 1969 a meeting was held between the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Maurice Foley and other British officials. Okio Arikpo informed the audience that the Federal government had sought several ways to neutralise Uli airstrip. This was in view of the continued arms flights in that airstrip. A British official, P.D. McEntee, then said that, the FMG had little chance of neutralising Uli since they had no artillery of sufficient long range. To do anything effective, they need to advance within about ten miles. Even then, sophisticated aerial ranging would be necessary, if the fire was to be effective. A commando raid was unlikely able to put the airstrip out of action permanently. The best possibility would be to make more use of the DC3' aircraft with flares and MIGs, but this method could not be used effectively during rainy season. Arikpo said that, the planes were needed for immediate tactical support, while some were in need of servicing. D.C. Tebbit raised the possibility of using naval guns to fire on Uli from across the River Nigeria. But on the examination that the range of the guns available in Nigeria would in fact be too short. McEntee suggested that, the FMG should make use of every ruse they could to make the Biafrans expend ammunition without using it themselves. Maurice Foley rounded up the meeting. He expressed the hope that, the FMG would give further thought on how they could eliminate the fear of genocide, being instilled by Ojukwu through Biafra's propaganda by adopting the strategy of dropping propaganda leaflets especially in the liberated areas.²⁸³

²⁸³ TNA, FCO, 65/333, Record of Meeting between Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs and British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, 24th April, 1969.

Fig 1.5

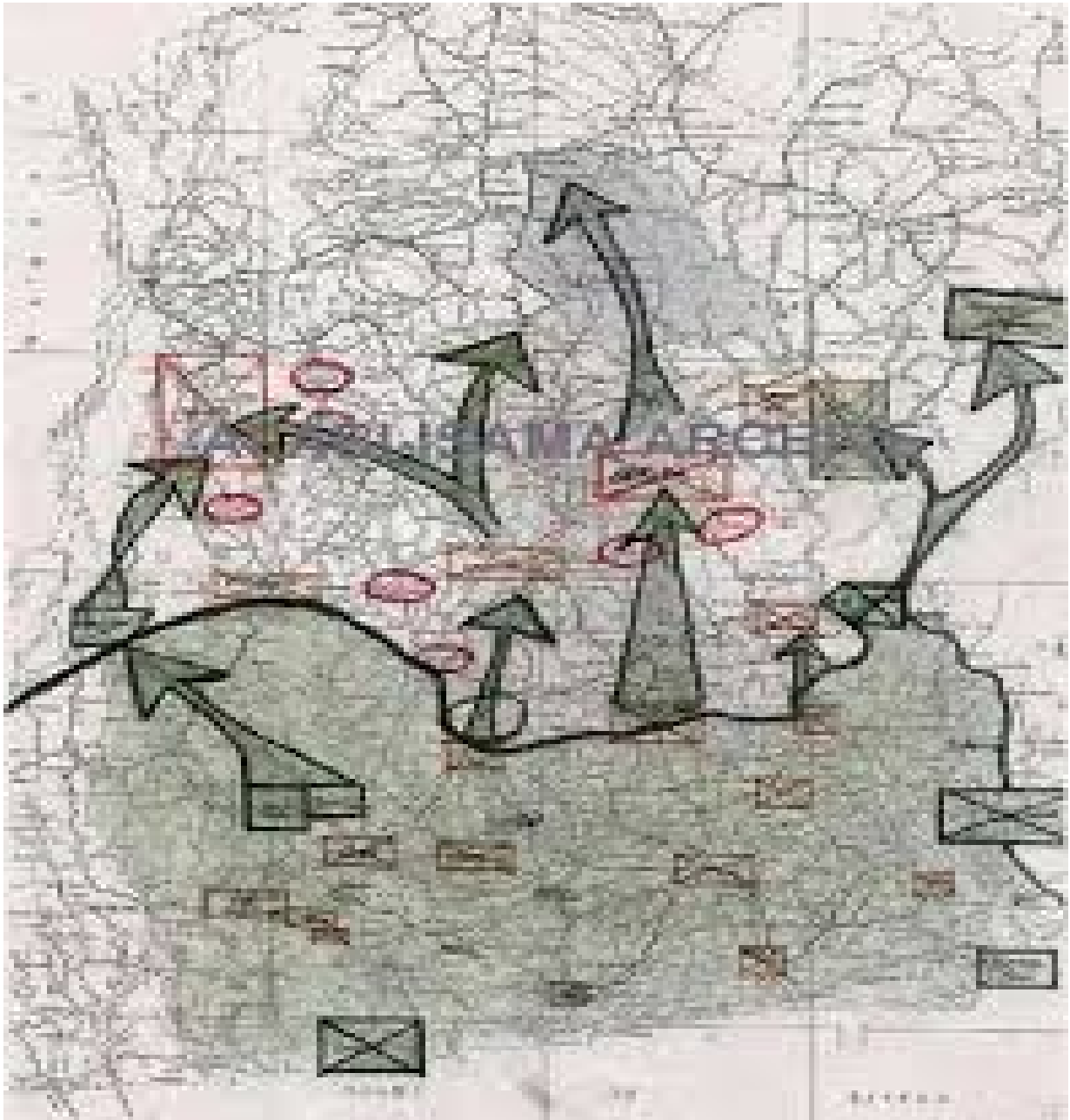
Map 1 Showing the Military Operation of the Nigerian Civil War



Source: Alabi-Isama, G. *The Tragedy of Victory: on-the-spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic theatre*, p. 349.

Fig 1.6

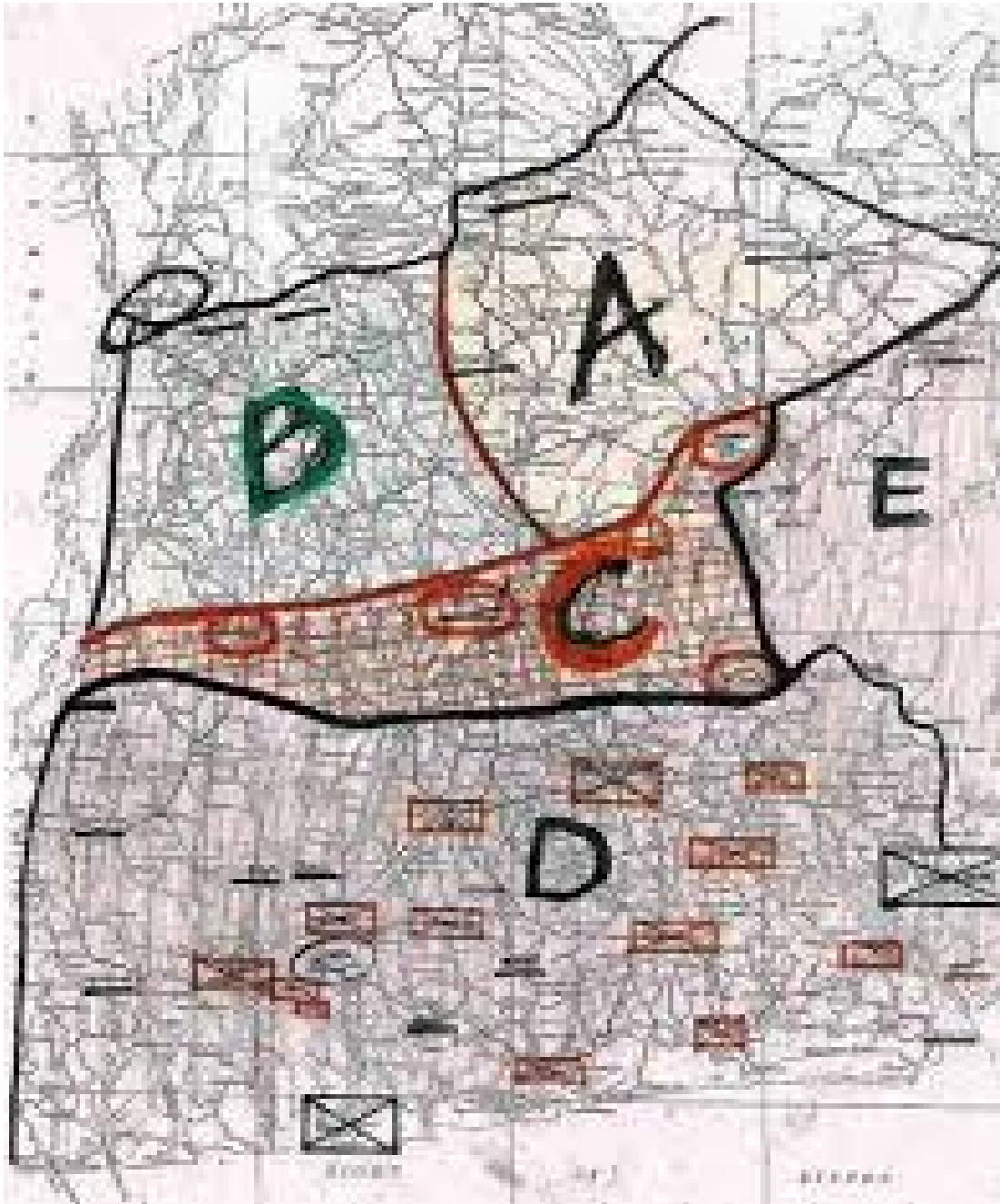
Map 1 Showing the Military Operation of the Nigerian Civil War



Source: Alabi-Isama, G. *The Tragedy of Victory: on-the-spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic theatre*, p.379.

Fig 1.7

Map 1 Showing the Military Operation of the Nigerian Civil War



Source: Alabi-Isama, G. 2013. *The Tragedy of Victory: on-the-spot Account of the Nigeria-Biafra War in the Atlantic theatre*, p. 375.

2.3.2. Diplomatic Involvement

As the military incursion was at its peak in the Nigerian Civil War, so did the high level of diplomatic activities. Evidence of this appeared, when; the British government began to flex her diplomatic muscle towards ending the civil war. At the height of Biafra's military success, which crystallised with the August 1967 occupation of the Midwest Region, Ojukwu dispatched his Chief Justice, Louis Mbanefo, to London. The aim was to lobby for a cease-fire and negotiations. Mbanefo, a renowned international jurist, with innumerable contacts among Britain's ruling circles, failed to make any headway. The 21st August, 1967 broadcast by Radio Biafra, that, Ojukwu was willing to enter into peace talks, only on the condition that, Biafra's sovereignty was recognised, apparently caused the Foreign Office in London to wait for further developments before taking any decision. Eight days after Ojukwu's call for recognition and negotiated settlement, the Federal government announced that, the Biafran invasion of the Midwest had been decisively halted at Ore, a town 135 miles from the Eastern part of Lagos. Shortly after, Gowon went on a national-wide broadcast to declare that, military operations would cease immediately if, Ojukwu renounced secession and accept the twelve-state structure. This change in military fortunes prompted the Foreign Office to inquire from Sir Louis Mbanefo whether he could declare publicly that, Biafran sovereignty was not a pre-condition for negotiations. After telegraphing Ojukwu for verification Sir Louis Mbanefo gave an exclusive interview with the London *Financial Times*, which appeared in September 1967. The front-page article headlined "Recognition of Biafra Not a Ceasefire Condition", attributed the following remarks to the Chief Justice; "the recognition of Biafra's sovereignty by Lagos was not as had been reported, a precondition for ceasefire or negotiation. Biafra was not prepared to give up her sovereignty, but did not insist on having this position accepted, before the beginning of talks provided Lagos made no conditions". Mbanefo's interview generated considerable attention in the international press. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, seized the platform for the British-backed diplomatic moves intended to bring the two sides together around the conference table. Thus, the early attempt made by the British government in bringing the parties together, for peace talks, was the use of the good office of the Commonwealth Secretary-General.²⁸⁴

When the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson saw the Commonwealth Secretary-General on February 5th 1968, the Secretary-General raised the issue of the Nigerian Civil War with him. Arnold Smith told the Prime Minister that, he had obtained Biafra agreement to negotiate. Biafran agreement was based on the principle that, there should be no Federal

²⁸⁴ Stremalu, J.J 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.145

occupation of their territory. Adequate arrangements should be made to preserve their internal security. This would require some form of Commonwealth observers for a temporary period of time. Smith said that, the main difficulty to this proposal of observer force was how to get the conditions accepted in Lagos, where some feeling against Biafra was stronger than it had been previously. The Prime Minister said that, it had been a considerable achievement on Arnold Smith's part to get the statement for M. Okpara on behalf of Ojukwu accepting the principle of Nigerian unity. The Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary said that they fully appreciated the importance of this move and that the British diplomatic support would certainly be forthcoming.²⁸⁵

On 2nd May, 1968 the Biafran Head of State, Ojukwu said that Biafra was willing to listen to any peace proposal guaranteeing the security of the Biafran people in any form less than full sovereignty. Ojukwu's statement was reported by *West Africa Pilot* on May 3rd, 1968.²⁸⁶ This was the first time he had departed publicly from his often proclaimed stance that, Biafran sovereignty was not negotiable. He honestly did not believe that outside sovereignty, and guarantee of security could be found. Ojukwu told foreign correspondents including *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) that:

I do not think that paper guarantee could satisfy the genuine fear of Biafrans. We believe that only in sovereignty can we find the protection we need. We have not been able to find another formula. But my inability to see it does not mean that it does not exist. That is why we wait to see their proposals. We have been talking less of political sovereignty of late, in order to show that we are willing to listen. We approach things with open minds here and we accept that there might be another formula"...²⁸⁷

Similarly, the Federal Government declared on May 2nd 1968, its readiness to hold peace talks in any Commonwealth or African country, except Tanzania, under the auspices of the Organisation of African Unity or Commonwealth Secretariat. In a message to all the Commonwealth and African Heads of Governments, except Tanzania, Major-General Yakubu Gowon said that, if the talks were to be held in Africa then, they could be held under the aegis of the OAU which has long been involved in trying to help resolve the crisis. Consequently Addis Ababa should be chosen as the venue.²⁸⁸ Consequently, General Yakubu Gowon sent a letter to the British Prime Minister on 3rd May, 1968. He told the Prime

²⁸⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/221/File No. TX 1/85/Part I, Record of Peace Talks between Nigeria and Biafra, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1968.

²⁸⁶ *West African Pilot*, 3rd May, 1968.

²⁸⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Ojukwu's Press Statement on Biafra's Peace Talks with Nigeria, 2nd May, 1968.

²⁸⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Federal Military Government's Press Release on Peace Talks, 2nd May, 1968.

Minister that, the Biafran leadership had had contact with the Commonwealth Secretary-General to arrange for peace talks in London. In October 1967, when such approach was firstly made, Arnold Smith contacted him, and he urgently sent high power delegations of the Federal Government to London. Based on this first act of the Federal government, Biafrans changed their mind. Thus, did not send their representatives to London as agreed. This happened again in November 1967.²⁸⁹

Be that as it may, on 6th May, 1968 Arnold Smith invited the Federal and Biafran representatives to London for a preliminary discussion regarding the venue for peace negotiations. At the meeting, Sir Louis Mbanefo, one of the Biafran delegates, attempted to get the Federals to accept or refuse Dakar as the site for negotiations, before he would even agree to meet Anthony Enahoro. Eventually, Biafrans withdrew their insistence on Dakar. This became the first diplomatic meeting with the British connection between the two sides of the conflict, with the Commonwealth Secretary-General present.²⁹⁰ The next meeting was held on 7th May 1968, the meeting started sticky, but the atmosphere improved towards the end. Provisional agreement reached was that Kampala should be the site for substantive negotiations and that the Commonwealth Secretariat should provide administrative cover. These two points were regarded as part of a package which also included the question of Chairmanship. Biafrans wished Milton Obote to be the presiding Chairman while the Federal government suggested Arnold Smith. And possibility of having no Chairman at all was also considered.²⁹¹

It would be worth mentioning that, the diplomatic initiative of Arnold Smith, the Secretary-General of Commonwealth led to development of Kampala peace negotiations between the FMG and Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War. This was evidently shown when on 15th May 1968 the Commonwealth Secretariat released a press statement that the two sides, represented by Chief Anthony Enahoro and Sir Louis Mbanefo, had a substantive preliminary talks with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith in London. After the preliminary talks, it was agreed that peace talks would take place at Kampala, Uganda. The agenda for the peace talks were the question of chairmanship; the question of observers; conditions for ending the hostilities and arrangements for a permanent settlement. The peace talks would begin in the morning of Thursday 23rd May, 1968 and the President of Uganda,

²⁸⁹TNA, FCO, 38/221, Text of Letter by Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces to British Prime Minister, 3rd May, 1968.

²⁹⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Record of Meeting between Commonwealth Secretary-General, Nigeria and Biafra Representatives, 6th May, 1968.

²⁹¹ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Record of Meeting between Commonwealth Secretary-General, Nigeria and Biafra Representatives, 7th May, 1968.

A. Milton Obote would be invited to address the opening session of the peace talks.²⁹² The news that peace settlement between the FMG and Biafra would be held in Kampala on 23th May, 1968 was welcomed by the British government; this was followed by the impromptu reply to the May 3rd letter of Major-General Yakubu Gowon by the British Prime Minister, on May 21st 1968. Wilson told Gowon that, he and his colleagues had waited with keen interest, the outcome of the discussions which the Federal government representatives had with the Biafrans in London under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith. Wilson stated that, he was much encouraged by the news that, agreement had been reached on holding peace talks in Kampala, Uganda. This was a valuable step forward, and was very sure that, Gowon was right to have worked towards the success of the preliminary talks. He believed that, the patient and constructive approach shown by the Federal government representatives in the preliminary talks was very rewarding. He was glad to know, how closely, the Commonwealth had continued to be associated in the “search for peace”, both through the choice of a Commonwealth capital, Kampala, and through the services of the Commonwealth Secretariat.²⁹³

On 23rd May, 1968 when the Kampala peace talks began, the Uganda President, Milton Obote said that, the Uganda’s view of the tragic situation in Nigeria, such as the armed conflict, demanded highest priority in this talk. Whether the war was just or unjust that no longer the question. The principal and overriding demand was to bring it to an end.²⁹⁴ In his minute to Foreign Office on 25th May, 1968 the British High Commissioner to Uganda, Scott said that, he was summoned by the Uganda Foreign Minister, Odaka. The Minister informed him that, both Nigeria and Biafran representatives at the meeting had nominated President Milton Obote as observer. Odaka said that, the Uganda government, in consultation with Arnold Smith, had decided that, their first aim must be to achieve a cease-fire, which would necessitate a gesture by the Federal government, particularly in view of their military successes.²⁹⁵ On 26th May, 1968 the Commonwealth Secretary-General hinted the British officialdom about the progress of the Kampala peace talks. Smith said that, the Biafrans had put themselves at a real disadvantage, by having failed to include in their delegation any major political figure of the negotiating ability like Anthony Enahoro. Mbanefo was gravely handicapped by the fact that, he was an Attorney and Judge. He relied far too much on trying

²⁹² TNA, FCO, 38/221, Commonwealth Secretariat Press Release on the Resumption of Peace Talks between Nigeria and Biafra, 15th May, 1968.

²⁹³ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Text of Letter by British Prime Minister to Nigeria’s Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 23rd May, 1968.

²⁹⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Uganda to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 23rd May, 1968.

²⁹⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Uganda to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 25th May, 1968.

to score legal debating points or making ex-cathedra pronouncements which cut no political ice at all.²⁹⁶

Meanwhile, the Kampala peace talks reached a point of crisis when the Biafran side threatened to break off the talks and return home. On Saturday, 26th May, 1968 the Biafrans made their opening statement which culminated in a proposal for an immediate cessation of hostilities. To Mbanefo's annoyance, Enahoro asked for an adjournment until Sunday afternoon. At 3:pm, however, Enahoro informed the Commonwealth Secretary-General that, a confidential Federal clerk, Johnson Banjo, had disappeared from the Federal delegation offices on Thursday morning. He had received instructions from Lagos to defer negotiation until he had been found. Enahoro appealed to Obote personally for assistance by the Uganda authorities. He recommended to Lagos that he should be authorised to resume negotiations. At a meeting with Enahoro in Arnold Smith's office, Mbanefo was brought to accept the position with bad grace, but later send Smith a written statement listing examples of Enahoro's delaying tactics and pressed for an answer to his proposal for a cessation of hostilities.²⁹⁷

The continuation of Kampala meeting on 28th May, 1968 started with reference to Gowon's public accusation that the Biafrans had kidnapped Banjo. Major-General Yakubu Gowon was reported to have made the statement while speaking to reporters on 27th May, 1968 on his return from Lomé. He said that, "it was part of the rebels plan to abduct Banjo and make use of the documents in his possession for their own end. His disappearance was the handiwork of the rebels". But, official press release issued, on 27th May, 1968 made no mention of alleged Biafran involvement. Mbanefo had already told Obote that, he was prepared to withdraw from the talks, unless Gowon's statement was repudiated. But, Enahoro tactfully anticipated Mbanefo's protest, when he said that, he had no confirmation of Gowon's remarks, and wished to make it clear that, neither he nor his delegation made such accusation.²⁹⁸ Having heard the news about the breakdown of Kampala peace talks, Major-General Yakubu Gowon, on 1st June, 1968 sent a letter to the British Prime Minister. He informed the Prime Minister about the latest development in the Nigerian situation, particularly as it concerns peace negotiations. Gowon told him that, he was no doubt, being kept informed of the developments at the peace talks in Kampala. He was happy that, Biafrans came at least to the conference table. Unfortunately, the hopes placed by everyone in

²⁹⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Commonwealth Secretary-General to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26th May, 1968.

²⁹⁷ TNA, FCO, Uganda to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 26th May, 1968.

²⁹⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Uganda to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 28th May, 1968.

the talks had been dashed by the Biafrans' intransigence. This was, intensified by Ojukwu's broadcast on May 30th 1968 in which he reduced his delegation's terms of reference to merely seeking an unconditional ceasefire.²⁹⁹ The British officialdom, in their reaction to the breakdown of Kampala peace talks, noted that, the Biafran delegation's walk-out from the Kampala talks had made it clear that, as the Federal government suspected, they had no brief to engage in genuine negotiations. Earlier, the Biafran hints about their willingness to make concessions over secession and their calls for peace talks were seen to have been a propaganda manoeuvre, designed to put the Federal government in the wrong and expose them to international pressure. At the same time, they hoped that, increased international pressure stimulated, by their own diplomatic and propaganda activities, further diplomatic recognitions, and mounting international humanitarian concern, would hamper the Federal government and force them to concede some form of independence.³⁰⁰

Another peace initiative of the British government towards ending the Nigerian Civil War was the official visit of Lord Shepherd to Nigeria. On 14th June, 1968 the Prime Minister had suggested to Anthony Enahoro that, a British representative might visit Nigeria. To examine the Nigerian situation on the spot and the person would be someone not in the government. It was the view of the British officials that, the idea of appointing Lord Inchyra or another personality was in line with the Prime Minister thinking.³⁰¹ On 15th June 1968, George Thomson notified the Prime Minister, of a drafted letter which would be sent in reply to the Major-General Yakubu Gowon's letter to the Prime Minister, on 1st June 1968. G. Thomas wondered how such a letter should be delivered to Gowon. He suggested to the Prime Minister that, there should be much advantage in a Minister taking the replied letter personally to Gowon, coupled with the idea of reinforcing the point made in the conversation. He noted that, the advantage of a Minister handing over the letter to Gowon was that, it would ensure that, the various points made by the Prime Minister were driven home, with the same force that, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary gave to them in his talks with Enahoro. This was because, there was the apprehension that, Enahoro would not be able to give accurate report of the diplomatic talks between him and the Prime Minister to Gowon or even describe the mood of the public in Britain concerning the civil war in Nigeria. As a result, G. Thomas told the Prime Minister that, the emphasis would be far greater if a Minister

²⁹⁹TNA, FCO, 38/221, Text of Letter by Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 1st June, 1968.

³⁰⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/221, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Lagos, 1st June, 1968.

³⁰¹ TNA, FCO, 65/216/File No. JWN 1/27/ Part A, Minutes on Her Majesty's Government's Initiative to Bring about an End to the Nigerian Civil War and Lord Shepherd's Visit to Nigeria and Reports, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1968, by L. Monson to British Private Under-Secretary, 14th June, 1968.

should speak to Gowon with the direct knowledge of the political climate in Britain. The impact of a Ministerial mission to Lagos for this purpose was very helpful in holding the British position in Nigeria. This was even as there was a rumour about the Arnold Smith's intention to visit Biafra also at the same period. If he was successful, there would be further advantage in Britain, having a British Minister visiting Lagos also at the same time. Thomas suggested that, if this idea of a Ministerial Mission was approved, Lord Shepherd should be the Minister to embark on the journey to Nigeria and would leave on Wednesday 19th June, 1968. Also during this visit, Lord Shepherd was expected to have the advantage of being fresh in his talks with Enahoro and Sir Louis Mbanefo in London.³⁰²

In his reply to Gowon's June 1st letter, delivered by Anthony Enahoro on June 12th 1968, the British Prime Minister, told Gowon that, in as much as he had informed him in his previous letters about the dangers of Britain changing or abandoning her policy of supplying arms to the Federal Military Government, Gowon should equally be reminded that, there has been much criticisms in Britain, particularly during the House of Common debates on June 12th, 1967 concerning their policies in that civil war. It emerged very clearly that, the FMG'S case was not well understood, particularly in the Parliament and the Press. Gowon had expressed surprise and disappointment in his letter, in that; this should not have been so. The Prime Minister told Gowon that, only it was one organisation that could put across the FMG's case and that was the FMG itself. Initially, the Prime Minister had urged Enahoro on the need for the FMG to ensure that their views about the war did not go by default. Gowon was told by the Prime Minister that, even though he might have won the war on the battle field, he had to bear in mind that, Biafrans were fighting, with success and vigour, the psychological aspect of the war. He called on Gown calls to be magnanimous in action and in words. And, to be magnanimous, the British officialdom was faced in the House of Common debates with the suggestion that, two things in particular were considered desirable and that was peaceful settlement and relief operations.³⁰³

On 19th June 1968, Lord Shepherd embarked on his journey to Lagos, taking with him, the letter from the Prime Minister. While on his journey to Nigeria, a memo was dispatched to all the British High Commissions across Africa and Europe. They were informed that Lord Shepherd's visit to Lagos should be presented not as a dramatic new peace move, but as a continuation of the efforts made by Her Majesty's' Government, since the breakdown of the Kampala peace talks. It was aimed to smooth the path back to the conference table. It would

³⁰² TNA, FCO, 65/216, George Thomson to British Prime Minister, 15th June, 1968.

³⁰³ TNA, FCO, 65/216, Text of Letter by British Prime Minister to Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 15th June, 1968.

be recalled that, on the eve of his departure to Lagos, Lord Shepherd held a series of meeting in London with Enahoro and Sir Louis Mbanefo. As the British Foreign Secretary said in the House of Common on 12th June 1968 that, “our role is not that of an arbiter or mediator, but, to try and secure a resumption of direct talks between the parties. “We are concentrating on the practical problems of ceasefire; ways in which the Igbos fears for their safety can be allayed; and relief supplies for the civilians”. The British officialdom made it clear that, there was no question of supplanting Sir Arnold Smith, the Commonwealth- Secretary-General, who had been closely associated with all the British activities in settling the conflict. It was categorically stated that, the Ministerial contacts with the Biafran representatives implied neither recognition of Biafra nor any change in the British policy towards the Nigerian government.³⁰⁴

Lord Shepherd’s first meeting with General Gowon started on 21st June, 1968. During the meeting, the FMG filled a strong team of Military personnel, Commissioners and Civil Servants which included Okoi Arikpo, Obafemi Awolowo, Hassan Katsina, Eliab, A.A. Ayida, Philip Asiodu, and Edward Enahoro. Anthony Enahoro failed to get a flight from London to join them at the meeting. Lord shepherd was photographed at the meeting while handing over the Prime Minister’s letter to Gowon. Thereafter, the Press withdrew from the meeting. It was agreed that, the contents of the talks would remain confidential, pending when agreement was reached on publicity at the end. Lord Shepherd outlined the British government attitude on the main questions at hand. These included informal resumption of talks; ceasefire; Commonwealth observer’s forces; relief proposals and visit by Arnold Smith to Biafra. He strongly urged the FMG to respond imaginatively to the collective interest of both countries. Gowon promised to consider carefully, the British suggestions, including those in the Prime Minister’s letter and to give a considered reply. Meanwhile, Gowon made personal comments on the war situation as he saw it. Predictably, he emphasised the concessions already made by the FMG and their readiness at all times, to negotiate, whenever. In the past, the FMG had held back to peace talks, the Biafrans had always take advantage of it. He doubted whether, Ojukwu was really ready to negotiate seriously. If progress was to be made, pressure must be brought to bear on the Biafrans to make concessions on sovereignty. Once this happened, everything else would fall into place and no one would have a moral right to continue the war. It should not only be the FMG which were

³⁰⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/216, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 19th June, 1968.

pressed to make concessions. Gowon reaffirmed his concern to alleviate sufferings of the people, but emphasised the FMG's determination to keep Nigeria one whatever the cost.³⁰⁵

On 22nd June, 1968 Lord Shepherd held diplomatic discussions with the Nigeria's Head of State. Gowon opened the discussions. He assured Lord Shepherd that, the Federal government was ever ready to resume informal talks, as suggested, in London. If these private talks showed progress, full negotiations could be resumed in Kampala. The HMG's support for a united Nigeria was welcomed. The FMG would place no obstacles in the way to peace talks. The FMG doubt whether Arnold Smith could pressure Ojukwu to accept one Nigeria. They feared that, the latter would exploit his visit to Biafra as de facto recognition by the Commonwealth. The Federal Government could not guarantee his personal safety. Since they had previously felt unable to agree to OAU Mission visit to Biafra, they must consult the OAU before expressing a definite opinion on the suggested visit. The Federal government welcomed the prospect of the British relief supplies and the idea of dispatching them to Enugu, Calabar, etc. Gowon noted that, Arnold Smith could visit Biafra in his capacity as the Red Cross Chairman. But it would create a problem in the context of recognition, if he were described as Prime Minister's personal representative. The FMG would not be able to guarantee his personal safety outside the territory they control.³⁰⁶

Lord Shepherd, after his diplomatic discussions with General Yakubu Gowon, on 23rd June, 1968, visited some parts of Eastern Nigeria, mostly affected by the civil war. An invitation was extended to him by the Nigerian Head of State, who placed his "HS 125" executive jet at the disposal of the entourage, which included Sir Leslie Monson, Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Office, and Sir David Hunt, Britain's High Commissioner to Nigeria. In the cause of the visit, Lord Shepherd was particularly concerned with the problems of providing relief supplies such as food and medicines to the war victims. He also used the opportunity to look at the British commercial interests in the liberated areas of Eastern Nigeria, the problems of rehabilitation of the Eastern Nigeria, and other places in Nigeria. At the end of his visit to Lagos, a joint communiqué was issued on 24th June, 1968 which reaffirmed the British government's policy of support to the Federal government. The communiqué emphasised the necessity of achieving a negotiated end to the hostilities before the conflict reached a scale likely to cause greater suffering and loss of life. From the foregoing, the British government diplomatic efforts were concentrated on both sides

³⁰⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/216, Record of Meeting between Lord Shepherd and Federal Government Officials, 21st June, 1968.

³⁰⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/216, Record of Meeting between Lord Shepherd and Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 22nd June, 1968.

resuming the talks suspended in Kampala. To this end, it WAS anticipated that, the return to London by the Federal and Biafran negotiators, would enable direct informal discussions between the two parties. If successful, these talks could lead to a resumption of Kampala conference.³⁰⁷ On 26th June, 1968 *New Nigerian*, in its editorial, lamented that, the joint communiqué issued at the end of Lord Shepherd's visit to Lagos did not show much in common between the views of the Federal Military Government, and those of Her Majesty's Government. The only thing about the communiqué was that, both governments agreed to set down their positions on the same piece of paper. There was nothing new about the communiqué.³⁰⁸ On 26th September, 1968 Lord Shepherd also visited Lagos for the second time. He held a crucial meeting with Gowon and also handed over to him the Prime Minister's letter.³⁰⁹

The most famous British diplomatic effort in the Nigerian Civil War was the official visit of the British Prime Minister, to Nigeria from 27th-30th March, 1969. Following the British officialdom's perceptions that, a change in policy of support for the Nigerian Government could have dire consequences for the British investments of about £ 300 million and the British lives of about 16,000 in Nigeria, including their arms policy, and since maintaining such policies would give them a useful, but not conclusive bargaining counter with both sides of the civil war, their official thinking rapidly became, how they could exploit this situation in order to secure progress toward peaceful settlement of the conflict, in a manner compatible with the British interests and Parliamentary requirements. With this development, a proposal was developed. That the Prime Minister should fly to Lagos, preferably through Addis Ababa for discussions with General Yakubu Gowon. The objective of the visit was to persuade General Gowon to acquiesce in a meeting between the Prime Minister and Colonel Ojukwu. If possible, the proposal reads, the Prime Minister would also bring General Gowon and Colonel Ojukwu together in an attempt to establish terms for a ceasefire and a basis for commencing definitive peaceful negotiation under the OAU auspices.³¹⁰ As early as 13th March, 1969 the rumour about the Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria began to spread across Britain. This prompted the British officialdom to arrange for the immediate announcement of the proposed visit. Meanwhile, in the debate at the British House of Commons, the leader of the opposition Heath asked the Prime Minister whether the

³⁰⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/216, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 23rd June, 1968.

³⁰⁸ *New Nigerian*, 26th June, 1968.

³⁰⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/189/File No. JWN 1/10/ Part B, Minutes on British Initiative, Lord Shepherd Visit to Lagos, Maurice Foley's Visit to Addis Ababa and Pope's Christmas Truce, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1968.

³¹⁰ TNA, Cabinet Office, 164/409, File No. 6/13, Africa: Harold Wilson's Visit to Nigeria 1969, 17th March, 1969-5th May, 1969.

reports in the British press that, he would be visiting Nigeria shortly were true. The Prime Minister declined to answer. Heath went on to suggest that, the Prime Minister intended that, his visit should be announced in the course of the debate in order to influence his outcome. Thus, a message was sent to the FMG by the Foreign Office that, the British government hoped to announce dates for the visit of the Prime Minister to Nigeria. They requested the Federal government's approval for an announcement that, the Prime Minister would leave London on 26th March, 1969 and held talks with General Gowon on 27th and 28th March, 1969.³¹¹ A Federal Ministry of Information press release emerged on 13th March, 1969, on the Nigerian Radio Lagos, that Harold Wilson; the Prime Minister of Great Britain was to pay an official visit to Nigeria. The visit followed the diplomatic exchange of message between the Head of the Federal Military Government, Major-General Yakubu Gowon and the British Prime Minister, through Sir Denis Greenhill, Head of the British Diplomatic Service who visited Lagos on 11th March, 1968.³¹²

As the news concerning the Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria began to gather momentum, the Nigerian press of 14th March 1969 gave heavy news coverage about the visit. The *Morning Post* newspaper described the visit as "the biggest news of the year as far as the Nigerian crisis was concerned" and after some reservations", urged Nigerians to welcome Mr. Wilson with open arms and minds". It said that, the visit coincided with great pressure on the British government from "a systematically misinformed British Parliament". The FMG could hardly afford to toy with the very real dangers to which precipitate and ill-conceived action could expose the substantial British interest in Nigeria. The paper stated the reasons, why Nigerians should welcome Harold visit to Nigeria. First, Britain had been a traditional friend, supplier and customer, and Nigeria cherished its British connections and friendship, and had meant to keep them "if the British people will let us". Second, Harold Wilson government had been one of the most consistent in resisting Biafran groups. Third, the Prime Minister's visit presented an opportunity for the Nigerian authorities to impress forcefully on the visitor that, "this country will brook no blackmail, and spoon feeding or subversion however disguised from any quarter".³¹³ The *Nigerian Observer* editorial coupled a friendly welcome with a warning that, Nigeria would explore other markets, if the British government decided to stop arms supplies. The paper said that, "Britain and all those countries who

³¹¹ TNA, CAB, 164/409, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 13th March, 1969.

³¹² TNA, CAB, 164/409, Federal Press Release on the Official Visit of British Prime Minister to Nigeria, 13th March, 1969.

³¹³ *Morning Post*, 14th March, 1969.

professed to be friends of Nigeria must know that, at this stage, when so much had been done already, it would be hypocritical to start now, talking about humanitarianism”.³¹⁴

At a Press Conference on 20th March, 1969 Ojukwu’s Special Representative, Kenneth Dike, expressed hope that, Harold Wilson would carry out his reported intention to meet Ojukwu during his official visit. For, this would contribute to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. He feared, however, that this might simply turn out to be one of those spectacular moves, with which the British Prime Minister was accustomed to, try and extract his government for the consequences of the civil war. According to another account of these remarks, Dike said that, he did not reject the idea of a meeting between Wilson and Ojukwu in a neutral country. After his attack on the British policy in the civil war, Dike referred to Ojukwu’s readiness to negotiate without conditions. This was the position he maintained during his communication to the European Economic Commission countries. Biafra had never opposed the establishment of a special links with Nigeria. It could not, however, entrust its destiny to those who had wished to destroy it. That was why the best formula would be one, which would allow Biafra to ensure its own security, without prejudice to a privileged association with Nigeria, on the lines of membership of a Commonwealth.³¹⁵ On 25th March 1969, the *Nigerian Observer*, in the second instalment of the editorial entitled, “Harold Wilson”, said that, Britain understood the plight of the Nigerian people. At least, Harold Wilson did, and for this, the entire country was grateful. After more praise for the Prime Minister, the paper said that, his was why Nigeria today waited for Mr. Wilson, satisfied that, as a man, he had served history and would continue to see the justness of a people and a nation seeking for survival.³¹⁶

The Prime Minister arrive Nigeria on 27th March 1969. He was received by the Nigerian Head of State, Major-General Yakubu Gowon and members of his cabinets. In his welcome address speech, General Yakubu Gowon expressed great pleasure for the Prime Minister’s visit to Nigeria. He reminded him of the equally warm welcome Nigeria accorded him in January 1966. Nigeria was in the throes of an internal rebellion similar in nature to that, in Rhodesia which he understood the British government was equally determined to crush. He told the Prime Minister that, the purpose of his visit was very clear. He expected no dramatic peace initiative on his own part. Gowon noted that the Prime Minister did not come to Nigeria to mediate in the civil war. Nevertheless, he assured the Prime Minister, the FMG wiliness to resume peace talks, provided these would bring about a lasting solution to the

³¹⁴*Nigerian Observer*, 14th March, 1969.

³¹⁵TNA, CAB, 164/409, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 20th March, 1969.

³¹⁶*New Nigerian*, 25th March, 1969.

civil conflict.³¹⁷ Meanwhile, the first meeting between Gowon and Prime Minister was held on 27th March 1969. The first crucial meeting between the Prime Minister and Nigerian Government officialdom was held at Dodan Barracks, Lagos, on Sunday, 28th March, 1969.³¹⁸ On 30th March, 1969 the Prime Minister and the Federal government officials held another meeting. General Gowon recalled that, at the end of their previous meeting on Friday, 28th March 1969, a good number of outstanding points had not been discussed. He thought, however, that, it would be useful to recapitulate briefly, the four points, which had been discussed and agreed upon at that meeting. In particular, there were the points raised by Sir Denis Greenhill when he visited Nigeria, the proposed statement that, the Federal Government was prepared to negotiate upon anything not involving the dismemberment of Nigeria. He did not care for the word “anything”; but, Gowon confirmed his government’s willingness to enter into negotiations at any time, without preconditions. Provided any negotiations must lead to the preservation of Nigerian unity.³¹⁹

2.4 British Officialdom and the OAU Consultative Committee Peace Mission to Nigeria, 1967-1968

The danger that the Nigerian Civil War posed to the entire African Continent and the peace, and stability of the West African sub-region was something that was taken seriously by the Organisation of African Unity. The OAU was very conscious of the implications of secessionist movements in Africa which might develop into the involvement of external forces.³²⁰ Indeed, the entry of Britain and Russia on the Federal side and France and Portugal on the Biafran side confirmed the OAU suspicion about the external intervention in the civil war. Even when it was yet to convey a meeting to discuss or even mention the Nigerian Civil War the British officialdom in a paper prepared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 1st September, 1967 titled “ British Policy towards Nigeria” hinted that there was the possibility that the organization would issue some kind of call for peace during its forthcoming meeting in Congo Kinshasa scheduled to hold 4th -14th September, 1967 but that the Head of the Military Government of Nigeria General Yakubu Gowon had strongly lobbied other Heads of States in numerous African countries and objected the need for the Nigerian situation to be on top of the agenda of the OAU meetings. Having realised that

³¹⁷ TNA, CAB, 164/409, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 27th March, 1969.

³¹⁸ TNA, CAB, 164/409, Record of Meeting between British Prime Minister and Federal Government Officials, 27th March, 1969.

³¹⁹ TNA, CAB, 164/409, Record of Meeting between British Prime Minister and Federal Government Officials, 30th March, 1969.

³²⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/284, File No. TX 10/16/6C/1066/Part A/ West African Dept. / Nigeria: Defence, Military Operations against Biafra, 6th July, 1967-31st December, 1968. Confidential: Minute on the Military Operations of the Nigerian Civil War, from Lagos to Commonwealth Office Telegram No. 1412, 7th July, 1967.

OAU objectives in the war were common to her own policy the British government maintained that it would be a good thing if the OAU were at any rate to make a call for a negotiated settlement of the war although, even if made, such an appeal would not likely to be immediately effective.³²¹ In fact, the British High Commissioner in Lagos, Sir David Hunt, had on one occasion told General Yakubu Gowon that it bodes well to state that the attitude of the OAU conforming so closely to the British attitude in the war was a very great help to Her Majesty's Government in resisting domestic criticisms.³²²

When the news that the OAU had intended to hold its Fourth Ordinary Session in Congo Kinshasa from 4th and 14th September, 1967 to discuss issues of importance on the Continent including the Nigerian civil war, there were heavy waves of reactions across Nigeria, in fact, at a Press Conference on 12th August, 1967 a spokesman of the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs made the following points: discussing the civil war would be incompatible with the OAU Charter; Nigeria's situation was purely an internal affair and the Federal Government does not wish to internationalise it; the Federal government was in position to contain it and therefore need no external intervention; any move for intervention would regarded as encroachment in Nigerian domestic affairs and Nigeria would make a statement at the OAU Summit meeting on the conflict on which the Committee would comment. If any resolutions were taken they would not be binding on Nigeria.³²³ This reluctant attitude of the Nigerian government had earlier been reported by the British High Commissioner in Lagos, Sir David Hunt who informed the Foreign Office on 5th July, 1967 that the Federal government stood firmly against any OAU intervention in the war and had resented suggestions for involvement of African Heads of States.³²⁴ Rather than issue a statement in support of the OAU's intended quick intervention the position of the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs appeared to be a clear deviation from the organization's eagerness to resolve one of the most tragic conflict which had impeded OAU's vision and developmental trajectory of the African Continent. On the other hand, since the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, the Biafran government had always made a case for international mediation in the war which included the OAU.

³²¹ TNA, FCO, 38/267, File No. TX 10/1/6C/1066/Part E/ West African Dept. / Nigeria: Arms Importation and General Policy, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1968. Confidential: Note of Record on Military Situation and British Policy towards Nigeria from D.C. Tebbit to E.G. Norris, 1st September, 1967.

³²² TNA, FCO, 65/330, Confidential: Note for the Record on the Conversation between General Yakubu Gowon and the British High Commissioner in Lagos, 5th November, 1968.

³²³ TNA, FCO, 38/232, File No. TX 2/4/Part A/ 6C/1066/ West and General African Dept./ Nigeria: Political Affairs, External-Multilateral. Nigerian Civil War and OAU, 25th July, 1967-31st December, 1968. Confidential: Minute on Nigeria and OAU from British High Commission in Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 13th August, 1967.

³²⁴ Minute on Oil Revenues from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 5th July, 1967.

The major episode witnessed during the civil war was the Anglo-American interference in the activities of the OAU. For instance on 14th September, 1967 while the meeting of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government was yet to commence in Kinshasa the United States Ambassador to Nigeria Albert Mathews received a message from the United States Ambassador in Kinshasa asking him to transmit urgently to General Gowon for latter's comments on the text of draft resolution on Nigerian situation which was handed to the US Ambassador in Kinshasa by President Mobutu and Congo Foreign Minister Bomboko in hope that the resolution could be passed by OAU as it kick off its meeting. Mathew was also asked to inform Gowon that the draft resolution had been introduced by the following countries namely, Congo; Ghana; Niger; Cameroun; Uganda; Ethiopia; Liberia and Zambia. Sponsors of the resolution felt that adoption of resolution would represent diplomatic triumph for Nigeria since it did not interfere in Nigerian internal affairs whilst guaranteeing that no OAU State would give any aid to Republic of Biafra. Mathew passed messages to Gowon who agreed in principle and accepted the draft resolution subject to amending paragraph (4) of preamble to read "concerned at the tragic and serious effect of attempted secession in Nigeria" and reserving right to choose composition of Mission. It would be recalled that the Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of External Affairs Adegoroye left for Kinshasa on the same day. Gowon had informed Obafemi Awolowo a member of the Federal government delegate at the OAU meeting that resolution should not be presented or discussed in the Assembly meeting until Adegoroye arrives and consult with him.³²⁵

But the US Ambassador in Lagos commented that it was significant that Gowon rose from the bed at 3 a: m, took decision straight away without reference to anyone. He did not even bother to wait and see what Awolowo thought. Though he asked him to make sure Awolowo was informed. This contradicted views held by some people in Lagos that Gowon was falling into the hands of clique of advisers. It showed that his powers of quick decision might have been underrated. On the whole, it was strange that the Congolese did not go to Awolowo, the leader of Nigeria's delegation. This created the suspicion particularly from the British High Commission in Lagos that in fact they did consult Awolowo who declined to decide on his own initiative, wished not to be involved and asked Congolese to arrange for message to be sent to Gowon. This theory it was believed suited Awolowo's character.³²⁶ In what appeared to be angry reaction, a Senior official of the Nigerian Ministry of External

³²⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 14th September, 1967.

³²⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 14th September, 1967.

Affairs Edward Enahoro had privately deplored the Federal government's acceptance of the OAU's peace initiative on grounds that it eroded the Nigeria's stance that internal affairs could not be discussed within the OAU and that no Nigerian item was inscribed on the agenda. Enahoro deplored the fact that sponsors of the resolution appeared to have by-passed Awolowo and Okoi Arikpo, the Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs and Nigerian Ambassador in Kinshasa with whom proper initiative should first have been discussed.³²⁷ Enahoro had also expressed to the member of staff of the British High Commission in Lagos grave suspicion of American role in OAU initiative. He found it very hard to believe Americans had done no more than provide communication facilities and suggested that this was further indication that the State Department and perhaps Central Intelligence Agency were working for the recognition of the Republic of Biafra. Above might be purely personal reaction. There was little doubt however that there remains considerable suspicion of US government, encouraged no doubt by the Russians.³²⁸ It was later that the US Ambassador was informed by the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs that as a result of discussions with Awolowo on latter's return from Kinshasa the M.E.A. no longer have any doubts over US role in OAU initiative. It seemed that Nigerian delegation at Kinshasa including Awolowo was all privy to discussions about possible OAU peace initiative. But Mobutu did not mention channels by which he had consulted Gowon.³²⁹

The circumstances under which the US Embassy in Lagos serving as a channel for the exchange of messages between President Mobutu and General Gowon about the OAU resolution on the Nigerian Civil War was revealed in a US Embassy memorandum sent to the State Department in Washington DC. A US official who served as the bearer of the meeting between the Heads of Government of Nigeria and Congo in the early morning of 14th September, 1967 and US Deputy Chief of Mission in Nigeria, Clinton Olson, met about 0200 GMT to review OAU Kinshasa's meeting and decided that they must see General Gowon as soon as possible. Olson telephoned Lagos State Governor Lieutenant Colonel Mobolaji Johnson and asked him to arrange the appointment. Colonel Johnson did so and said that he would come to the Embassy to take them to the General Gowon's residence Dodan Barracks as unaccompanied foreigners approaching a military area in the middle of the night might have difficulty with the troops on guard. Colonel Johnson picked them up in a car with two

³²⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 15th September, 1967.

³²⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 15th September, 1967.

³²⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 18th September, 1967.

armed soldiers. The approach to Dodan Barracks was well guarded but Colonel Johnson got them through without incident.³³⁰

While General Gowon and his advisers Colonel Johnson, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs V.A. Adegboroye and Principal Secretary to the Head of the Federal Military Government H. Ahmadu did not welcome the OAU initiative, they did not seem surprised that their African brothers at Kinshasa had sought to play a role in the Nigerian situation. Moreover, some of them suggested during the discussion that the OAU initiative should be rejected outright. They addressed themselves later to the ways of improving the proposed OAU resolution which they recognized was by no means unfavourable to the FMG in its realistic form. While Adegboroye was drafting comments on the proposed OAU resolution, General Gowon and Colonel Johnson reminisced about the meeting of the Nigerian Supreme Military Council held at Aburi, Ghana in the early hours of January 1967. Olson and the US official gained a strong impression that this talk revealed uneasiness at the prospect opened by the OAU initiative of again having to deal directly or through the OAU intermediaries with Ojukwu who was a more effective negotiator than anyone in the FMG. Since civilians were brought into the FMG Executive Council and particularly since the recent establishment of the small “War Cabinet”, there have been recurrent rumours that General Gowon’s power have been reduced and that he could not act without the concurrence of some of his junior civilian and military colleagues. He had not remembered any of his civilian Commissioners, and Colonel Johnson was present because he had escorted Olson and the US official. General Gowon regretted that he was not inhibited by the fact that he did not have the view of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and other Commissioners in Kinshasa. General Gowon and other Nigerian present obviously considered that the decision to the FMG response to the OAU initiative rested with him, and he should not hesitate in making the decision. Olson and the US official volunteered no advice as to the FMG response to the OAU initiative. Both agreed with the Nigerians that the proposed resolution was favourable to the FMG.³³¹

The Heads of State and of Governments who met at Kinshasa showed commendable initiative in trying to put one of Africa’s own houses in order by offering the services of their elder statesmen to help to resolve the Nigerian crisis. A resolution was passed. Its text was agreed in advance with General Gowon which called for the dispatch of a Consultative

³³⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: United States Embassy Memorandum on OAU and Nigeria to the State Department from the British High Commission in Lagos to West African Department Commonwealth Office, 19th September, 1967.

³³¹ TNA, FCO, 38/332, from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 19th September, 1967.

Mission of six Heads of State to the Head of Federal Military Government of Nigeria to assure him of the Assembly's desire for the territorial integrity, unity and peace of Nigeria. The members of the team chosen were Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia Chairman; President Tubman of Liberia Vice Chairman; Lieutenant-General Ankrah Chairman of the National Liberation Council of Ghana; President Joseph Mobutu of Congo (Kinshasa); Presidents Ahmadu Ahidjo of Cameroons, and President Hamani Diori of Niger Republic.³³² At the insistence of the Federal Government the resolution was carefully phrased to avoid any suggestion that the Mission was to deal with two equal participants or in any sense to mediate in the dispute. Indeed, their insistence that neither the Mission nor anyone else should mediate became for a period an issue of such gravity that it led the Nigerian government to remonstrate with the Government of Ghana and the Gambia whom their delegates at the United Nations General Assembly made passing and innocuous references to the need for international help in settling Nigeria's troubles. It was also less directly the case of a misunderstanding with President Tubman. But it seemed certain that the sponsors of the Mission to begin with at least intended it to have some kind of a mediatory role. The elder statesmen would otherwise scarcely have decided to risk their reputations by taking part in a mission so unlikely to produce results. Their attitude was well expressed by President Diori who said after the meeting that "without being mediators we hope to achieve the same results as mediators". On 16th September, 1967 the Permanent Secretary, National Liberation Council and Ghanaian Representative at the OAU Ministerial Meeting in Kinshasa Nathan Anang Quao told the British High Commissioner in Lagos, Sir David Hunt, at the Airport on his return with General Ankrah that six Heads of State would travel to Lagos on 21st September, 1967. They might converge in Accra on 20th September to discuss plan of action. He said Ghana Delegation to Kinshasa had travelled with Nigerian Delegation. At that time they were strongly opposed to any discussion at the OAU meeting. But when they realised strength of feeling that remaining repute of OAU would be greatly damaged if it were to appear to ignore the Nigerian situation they became more accommodating. In the event resolution which was first agreed privately in restricted session was somewhat amended to meet Nigerian wishes. The High Commissioner understood that the reference to secession was a general phenomenon and not just linked to Nigeria. Quao said Gowon should be well pleased with resolution in its present form. Equally Ojukwu very much dislike it. However, Ojukwu could not shrug off unanimous and explicit condemnation of secession by the Heads

³³² TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Original Text of Draft Resolution of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government Meeting in its Fourth Ordinary Session in Kinshasa from 10th to 14th September, 1967 from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 14th September, 1967

of State. He did not know what would happen when Heads of State reached Lagos. But at least a start was made in getting the concern of African States registered in Lagos. He hoped that willingness of elderly leaders like Tubman and Haile Selassie to travel long distance would reinforce the impact. To make it easier for Gowon to receive delegation operative paragraph had been deliberately phrased to indicate that what Heads of States were going to discuss was not mediation but the possibility of mediation.³³³ It was revealed the fundamental role the Emperor of Ethiopia played in the discussion on the Nigerian situation. According to a source who was in Kinshasa, the Emperor took the lead in proposing a Mediation Commission composed of countries surrounding Nigeria. These countries however, asked him as the African elder statesman to chair the Commission. He agreed to do so, and came down strongly on the side of the Nigerian Government. The Emperor declared his totally opposition to secessionist movements and, according to the source, said he would fight to the death to prevent Eritrea seceding from Ethiopia. Although the British officials in Addis Ababa were not able to confirm the story, but it tied in with the Emperor's known views on African problems in general. His sympathies were certainly more with Gowon than Ojukwu, and his influence in the Commission should be in favour of the central government. What needed in Nigeria was strong central government.³³⁴ On 19th September, 1967 General Ankrah told the Canadian High Commissioner that the plans now was for the Heads of State to assemble in Accra on 26th September and go to Lagos on 27th September.³³⁵ After the OAU resolution was passed and the news of the OAU Peace Mission to Nigeria was announced the British High Commissioner in Lagos Sir David Hunt sent a letter to the Foreign Office on 16th September, 1967. He said that he believed that everybody in London was pleased with the OAU resolution. At least, there appeared to be signs of something being done and it was not they who had to stick their neck out. He welcomed the resolution as letting them off. The language of the resolution also gave them an excellent clue for when pressed for a statement of British attitude in the war. It went further much than anything he thought it safe to say, particularly in the condemnation of secession. It talked about the OAU's desire for the territorial integrity and unity of Nigeria as opposed to his rather optimistic faith. He suggested the need for the British officialdom to adopt the language of the OAU and state that this was the position they have maintained all along. He said that when the OAU mission

³³³ TNA, FCO, 65/232, Confidential: Minute on OAU and Nigerian Civil War from British High Commission in Accra to Commonwealth Office, 16th September, 1967.

³³⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/232, Confidential: Minute on Emperor and Nigeria from British Embassy in Addis Ababa to Lagos No. 221/67, 26th September, 1967.

³³⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Accra to Commonwealth Office, 19th September, 1967.

arrive Nigeria, it will only talk only to the Federal government. But on the face of it therefore, it looked as though it could not achieve much. But he believed that this was the best possible method of working towards a peaceful solution, and a genuinely African method. Both sides of the conflict can give way to such greater elder statesmen as Haile Sellassie without feeling they were losing face. The High Commissioner revealed that there were some people in the Nigerian Ministry of External Affairs who for this very reason regret that the OAU ever passed a resolution on Nigeria but he thought good sense would prevail and that the Commonwealth Secretary-General Arnold Smith's office would naturally paused until they could see how the OAU mission gets on.³³⁶

In reaction to the British High Commissioner's letter a British official at the Foreign Office said that the High Commissioner was absolutely right to assume that everybody in London was pleased with the OAU peace initiative. As the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs stated on his BBC interview on 15th September, 1967 that they applauded the initiative and wished its every success. He said that they had already discussed the OAU initiative with the United States officials and agreed with them that they should both be careful to avoid jumping too enthusiastically behind the OAU initiative, in case they gave those who might not be enthusiastic about it any excuse to suggest that it owed something to American and British pressure. He warned that if they become too closely associated with the OAU initiative, they might also become associated in the minds of Nigerians and other with its failure, if that unfortunately were the result if this happen, it would clearly prejudice their chances of playing a part in any further effort. Regarding the terms of the OAU resolution, he said that they were extremely doubtful of the wisdom of using it as a guide to their attitude in the war. The resolution was surely a piece of tactical drafting designed to make the OAU initiative acceptable to the Nigerian government, and no doubt the condemnation of secession was, in the minds of some of the parties to the resolution, drafted just as much with an eye to their own domestic politics. It did not seemed to them that any of the governments concerned in the mission, or any of those who voted for the resolution, would necessarily subscribe whole heartedly to the terms of the resolution as a definitive statement of their own particular attitude. And there seemed no reason why they should adopt as a statement of the British government's attitude, a document drafted in these circumstances. They certainly do not want to get into a position where they might appear to have given approval in advance to any steps the Federal government might take, and there seemed no need to go beyond statements of

³³⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Text of A Letter from the British High Commissioner Lagos to Commonwealth Office, No. 1/POL 10/201/7, 16th September, 1967.

British policy already made by British Ministers. All this, of course, did not mean that they might not have to consider, depending on how things go, weighing in more openly and unreservedly behind the OAU operation at some stage, but they thought they could well afford to wait and see how the activities of the organization develop.³³⁷ The High Commissioner later told the Foreign Office that for the sake of their relations with Africa in general, they should avoid giving any impression that they disapprove of wording of resolution or idea of the OAU Mission.³³⁸

On 21st September, 1967 the Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs, Okoi Arikpo informed the British High Commissioner that the Federal government had agreed, reluctantly, to receive the six Heads of State for a preliminary meetings, arriving 27th September and departing 28th September. This was to suit General Ankrah's convenience; they would much have preferred a date in October.³³⁹ On 22nd September, 1967 the Nigerian High Commissioner in London Brigadier Ogundipe in company of team of visiting Federal government officials visited the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Michael Stewart. The Foreign Secretary expressed hope that the Federal government might be able to avail themselves of the good offices of the OAU Mission to seek for a settlement while in strong military position but before invading and forcibly occupying the Biafraland.³⁴⁰

On 30th September, 1967 in his conversation with the British Secretary of State General Ankrah said that the OAU Peace Mission was a Consultative Mission aimed at finding out whether a real possibility of bringing about reconciliation existed. If, when the Mission visit Lagos, the Federal Government show real signs of being prepared to talk with Ojukwu the Mission might go to see Ojukwu and try to persuade him to come to the Conference Table without preconditions.³⁴¹ On 25th September, 1967 the British High Commissioner in Ghana Sir H. Smedley had a conversation in Ankrah's waiting room with the Ghanaian High Commissioner in Lagos who had been called back for consultations. The Ghanaian Commissioner was pessimistic about the chances of the OAU Mission coming off and about what it would achieve if it did. His particular worry seemed to be that while

³³⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Minute on Reaction to British High Commissioner's Letter from the Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 21st September, 1967.

³³⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 22nd September, 1967.

³³⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Nigeria and OAU from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 21st September, 1967.

³⁴⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/65, Confidential: minute on Conversation between the Nigerian High Commissioner in London and British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on Nigeria and OAU from Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 22nd September, 1967.

³⁴¹ TNA, FCO, 232, Extract: Conversation between General Ankarh and British Foreign Secretary, 30th September, 1967.

Gowon might be susceptible to OAU pressure his Northern service colleagues were not; and the result might be to divide Gowon from them with damaging results. He mentioned that Kastina Hassan had told him of his unwillingness to reach any agreement with Ojukwu.³⁴² Many factors affected the Ghanaian attitude towards Nigeria among which was that the some Ghanaian officials were particularly upset by Gowon's approach to the Soviet Union. General Ankrah shared this feeling but was more inclined to accept that Gowon had no alternative and therefore to blame the British officialdom for not having pre-empted them.³⁴³ From the moment the OAU initiative was announced the British officialdom have taken care whilst giving it general support and wising it well, not to let it appear that they were in any way responsible for promoting it or are trying to influence its operation. Hitherto they have been refrained from lobby general Ankrah about it, with whom they have otherwise kept in close touch over Nigeria since long before the crisis began. They doubted if any prompting from them either in Lagos or elsewhere was likely to make much difference to the Missions' chances of pulling something out of fire. They thought that they could contribute more by bringing such influence as they had to bear in other ways. Having welcomed the OAU move to send a Consultative Mission to Lagos, their great need in Nigeria was for peace and recompilation.³⁴⁴

Even before the OAU Consultative Committee arrive Nigeria the Principal Secretary of the Ghanaian Ministry of External Affairs told the British High Commissioner in Ghana, Sir Smedley hinted that he did not expect anything to come out of the mission. He pinned his faith on other intermediaries. The Mission might well return the same day since they would not see Ojukwu.³⁴⁵ After much date fixing and cancellation, on 22nd November, 1967 the OAU Mission which comprised of Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie; the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon Ahmadu Ahidjo; His Excellency Lieutenant General Ankrah, the Chairman of the National Liberation Council of Ghana and the President of the Republic of Niger Monsieur Hamani Diori arrived Lagos. Having heard of their arrival the British High Commissioner commented that the Mission seemed unlikely to be able to perform any useful function or serve any practical purpose, but Nigerian were making every effort to

³⁴² TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Note of Conversation between the British High Commissioner in Ghana and Ghanaian High Commissioner in Lagos, No. 2-GHA 10/12/1, 30th September, 1967.

³⁴³ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Note of Conversation between the British High Commissioner in Ghana and Ghanaian High Commissioner in Lagos, 30th September 1967.

³⁴⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Minute on OAU Mission to Nigeria from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 13th October, 1967.

³⁴⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Minute on OAU Mission to Nigeria from Accra to Commonwealth Office, 3rd November, 1967.

cooperate.³⁴⁶ When the Mission arrive Lagos they held consultations with General Gowon in pursuant to the resolution of the Nigerian situation adopted at the Fourth Session of the OAU Summit Conference in Kinshasa on 11th-14th September, 1967.³⁴⁷ The meeting took place in the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. At the formal opening session, on 23rd November, 1967 to which Heads Of diplomatic mission were invited, General Gowon and Emperor Haile Selassie spoke. Gowon's line of argument was uncompromising. Gowon said he believed most useful contribution the Mission could make was to call on the Biafran leadership to abandon secession. And the Mission was not in Nigeria to mediate. He spoke of the general acceptance in Nigeria of the concept of the twelve states and outlined his conditions for the cessation of hostilities after the renunciation of secession by Biafrans. The Emperor's reply was on the general theme that secession in African states cannot be tolerated, a theme which naturally commended itself to the FMG. The Federal government was very happy with the result which it saw and represented as a public vindication of its stand and justification of its policies.³⁴⁸ The communiqué issued at the end of the first meeting of the OAU Consultative Mission with the Federal Government of Nigeria reaffirmed the decision of the OAU summit embodied in its resolution condemning all secessionist attempts in Africa. The Mission also reaffirmed that any solution of the Nigerian crisis must be in the context of preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria. The OAU Consultative Mission agreed that as a basis for return to peace and normal conditions in Nigeria the secessionists should renounce secession and accept the existing administrative structure of the Federation of Nigeria, as laid down by the Federal Military Government in decree No. 14 of 1967. Lieutenant General Ankrah of Ghana was mandated by the Mission to convey the text of the OAU Kinshasa Summit resolution as well as discussions and conclusions of the First Meeting of the Mission in Lagos to the Biafran leaders and report back to the Mission urgently the reactions of Biafrans.³⁴⁹

On 8th December, 1967 the British High Commissioner in Lagos Sir David Hunt, sent a "Despatch No. 14" to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomson which contained the report and assessment by the High Commission of the OAU Mission to Nigeria. For him, the Heads of States had conveyed in Lagos in order to offer the services to

³⁴⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Minute on OAU Mission to Nigeria from Lagos to Commonwealth Office Telegram No. 2809, 22nd November, 1967.

³⁴⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Minute on OAU Mission to Nigeria from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 22nd November, 1967.

³⁴⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/232, from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 23rd November, 1967.

³⁴⁹ TNA, 38/232, confidential: Minute on OAU Peace Mission and Text of Communiqué issued Evening of 23rd November Meeting of the Delegates with General Yakubu Gowon from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, Telegram No. 2820, 24th November, 1967.

help resolve the Nigeria crisis. At the insistence of the Federal Government the resolution that was passed was carefully phrased to avoid any suggestion that the Mission was to deal with two equal participants or in any sense to mediate in the dispute. Indeed, their insistence that neither the Mission nor anyone else should mediate became for a period an issue of such gravity to such an extent that it prompted the Nigeria government to remonstrate with the Governments of Ghana and the Gambia when their delegates at the United Nations General Assembly made passing and innocuous references on the need for international diplomatic assistance in settling Nigeria's troubles. It also led to the cause of a misunderstanding with the President of Liberia, Tubman. But it seemed certain that the sponsors of the Mission to begin with at least intended it to have some kind of mediatory role. The elder statesman would have decided to risk their reputations by taking part in a mission so unlikely to produce results. Their attitude was well expressed by President Hamani Diori who said after the meeting that "without being mediators we hope to achieve the same results as mediators". The British government noted-worthy reaction regarding the communiqué of the OAU Missions was General Gowon's insistence to some extent against the wishes of the OAU delegation that they had not come to Lagos to mediate. With the adoption of this official position, it became clear that any outside diplomatic initiative to get the peace talks commence would unlikely to succeed and not be acceptable to the Federal government. However, the OAU resolution condemning secession in any Member state of the African continent was envisaged to inhibit the delegation from achieving any success in their efforts to find solution to the tragic war.³⁵⁰ According to the British High Commissioner in Lagos, the meeting seemed to have gone much as expected, though the Mission's explicitly acceptance of twelve states structure as essential element in the peace settlement was perhaps surprising and that there was reason to believe that General Ankrah was not entirely happy with its outcome, especially the Mission's failure to achieve a more genuinely mediatory role.³⁵¹

The public reaction from Biafra concerning the OAU mission was irate and immediate. An official statement broadcast on the Biafran Radio on 25th November 1967 criticized the Mission for talking to only one side. And rubberstamping the Federal government's policy at a stage managed conference. A later reaction from the Biafran

³⁵⁰TNA, FCO, 38/233, File No. TX 2/4/6C/1066/West and General African Depart/ Nigeria: Political Affairs, External, Multilateral, Nigerian Civil War and the OAU, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1969. Confidential: Minute on Reactions towards the OAU Mission to Nigeria, from P.D. McEntee to P.H. Moberly, 13th December, 1967.

³⁵¹ TNA, FCO, 38/232, Confidential: Minute on OAU Mission to Nigeria from Lagos to Commonwealth Office Telegram No. 2827, 24th November, 1967.

Commissioner for Information, Ifeagwu Eke on 27th November, 1967 was moderate. Although, he continued to be critical of the decision to talk only with one side, Eke said the Biafra would still like a peace settlement. There was never much real chance of the Mission making a significant contribution to a peace settlement of the war. It was presumed that time would come when a peaceful settlement would have increasing attractions for both sides, but so long as both believes they could attain their military objectives in full, the prospects for either mediation or negotiations were slim indeed. Until the time for negotiation did arrive no other would-be mediator could come forward, at least in public without being accused of cutting across the OAU's efforts; he feared that even when they are in a mood to treat neither side was really likely to be in favour of any more active involvement by the OAU than what was shown in Lagos.³⁵² In reply to the Despatch No. 14 on the OAU Mission to Nigeria, the Foreign Office described the fundamental difference in thinking between the officials in Lagos and those in Whitehall as divergence. They both studied the Nigerian crisis from the point of view of what was right for Britain. But Lagos was convinced of its ability to subjugate "Biafra" by force of arms which would eventually usher in a new Igbo leadership with whom they could negotiate with. Working on this premise, Lagos feared that negotiations on anything but Gowon's terms, particularly if there were a peacekeeping force protecting the Igbo areas at the time, would result in Igbo demands that would preclude an agreement being reached and probably result in a resumption of fighting. This would delay the reopening of the flow of Nigeria's steering oil and conditions in which the British commercial interests could be revived. The British officials in Whitehall expressed grave doubts about the Nigerian government's ability to fight their way thorough into the Igbo heartland and suspect that even if they could the situation would probably degenerate into guerrilla warfare which could be very long drawn out. They thought that the quickest means of getting a return to peaceful conditions would be through negotiations leading to an agreed settlement which the OAU must play a part. This divergence of views described above was perhaps an oversimplification of their respective positions which was the basic reasons why in "Despatch No. 14" the British High Commissioner tended to have supported the Nigerian government view that the OAU Mission have a mediatory role to play in the civil war.³⁵³

³⁵²T NA, FCO, 38/233, Confidential: Minute on Reply of Despatch No.14 of OAU Mission to Nigeria from P.D. McEntee to P.H. Moberly and D.C. Tebbit Reference No. 90, 12th January, 1968

³⁵³TNA, FCO, 38/233, Confidential: Minute on Reply of Despatch No.14 of OAU Mission to Nigeria from P.D. McEntee to P.H. Moberly and D.C. Tebbit Reference No. 90, 12th January, 1968.

2.5 Economic Interest: the Bases of British Involvement in the Nigerian Civil War

One thing is fundamental. There were many reasons for the British involvement in the Nigerian Civil War. These reasons ran contrary to the Biafra's quest for self-determination. The British government's traditional link with Nigeria, a fellow member of the Commonwealth, majorly prompted their decision to join the war.³⁵⁴ The British officialdom made it clear that, their aim of entering the civil war was to do everything possible to restore peace and stability in Nigeria. This must be actualised in a way which kept them on a good relationship with the federal government of Nigeria and their leaders. They emphasised that, the civil war was a Nigerian and African problem, first and foremost.³⁵⁵ Moreover, the immediate British interests in the Nigerian Civil War were driven by economic motive. Before the secession of Eastern Nigeria there were nearly 20,000 United Kingdom's nationals living in Nigeria. As a result of the outbreak of war, this figure reduced to 18,000, of who only few hundred remained in Eastern and Western Nigeria. The British government equally had a great deal at stake in Nigeria. Firstly, a British company with large investments in Nigeria, and British people living in Eastern Nigeria, were under direct threat. Secondly, British shipping investments were being interfered with. Thirdly, Shell/BP had only one interest, and that was to be allowed peacefully to explore, extract and ship oil in and out of Nigeria. This was because; they had an agreement with the federal government, which entailed substantial payments they had to make. They expected the federal government to honour their own side of the agreement. It was the perception of the British government that, the FMG were unable to protect the personnel or property of Shell/BP against the threats of Ojukwu.³⁵⁶ Shell/BP's cumulative investment in these two regions was the sum of £200 million. Other British investments in Nigeria were estimated at about £90 million. UK exports to Nigeria ran at an annual rate of nearly £70 million and imports from Nigeria were over £100 million, of which, £40 million was in oil. They expected that, by participating in the civil war, the Nigerian economy should be brought back to a condition in which their substantial trade and investments could further developed so they could regain access to important oil installations. Their only direct interest in associating with Nigeria was that, it had developed as an economic unit. Thus, any disruption of this interest would have adverse effect on British trade and development. Provided economic unity could be preserved, the

³⁵⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/178, File. No, JWN 1/6/PA/5A/368/ Nigeria: Internal, Civil War Briefings, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Talking Points and Briefs on Nigeria Ahead of Anglo/German Information Talks in Bonn, Germany, 18th -19th November, 1968.

³⁵⁵ TNA, Dominion Office, 186/9, File No. 3/1/Annex/6C/136, British Policy on Nigeria and UK/Nigeria Relations, Speaking Note on Why We Support the Federal Government, 7th December, 1968.

³⁵⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Minute on Negotiations with Nigeria, 1968.

British officialdom has no political interest in Nigeria. The most important British interest in the civil war was to ensure the end of the war, as quickly as possible, before it would inflict further damage to the Nigerian economy to ensure that, a political settlement was achieved, which would enable the Nigerian economy to move forward and that, the British relations with whatever regime or regimes which emerge should be good enough to allow the continued development of the British commercial interests in Nigeria. But, they did not expect economic co-operation between the component parts of Nigeria, particularly between the East and the West would to be at par, as they would have done in a unified Nigeria. Nor did they had counted on the Shell/BP oil concessions being regained on the same terms as in the past, if the East and the Mid-West assume full control of their economies.³⁵⁷

Economically, Biafra's secession and subsequent civil war in Nigeria had revolved round the issue of oil. Biafra's secession made the oil companies indistinguishable in the conflict. In the mid-1967, roughly 60% of the oil was produced in Biafra. The most important export harbour linked with a pipeline system was Bonny Island. While, the only oil refinery was sited near Port Harcourt. Both the export harbour and the refinery were thus in Biafra hands. The refinery was before 50% in the possession of Shell/BP and the other half being the property of the Federal government. Moreover, the oil companies contributed up to 295 million guilders to the Nigerian income, while the budget remained roughly round 1200 million guilders. The oil companies thus, contributed approximately 25% to the Nigerian budget. The payment of this money was of great importance to both sides of the war.³⁵⁸ On 2nd April 1967, Ojukwu declared that a considerable part of the oil income ought to belong to Biafra. He declared two weeks after secession, on 21st June, 1967, that all oil money from oil companies working in Biafra should be paid, to the benefit of the Biafra. The companies had the opportunity of paying them until 28th June, 1967. It was a matter, provisionally, of 70 million guilders to be obtained from Shell/BP and Safrap. The FMG later responded that, these payments ought to be distributed by the federal government.³⁵⁹ General Yakubu Gowon tried to fight the Biafra's secession by adopting economic measures. He blockaded the harbour of Port Harcourt with a small navy. On 5th July, 1967 the oil companies showed the readiness to pay the money to the Biafra government. On the same day General Gowon broadened the blockade to include oil transport.³⁶⁰ On 7th July, 1967 the British Minister for Commonwealth Affairs, Michael Stewart, flew to Lagos to try and stop the blockade.

³⁵⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Note of Record on British Policy Towards Nigeria, August, 1967.

³⁵⁸ TNA, 38/321, File No. TXE 15/1/6C/1066, Nigeria: Fuel and Power: Nigerian Oil and General Situation, 18th January-16th October, 1968.

³⁵⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Foreign Office to Lagos, 2nd April, 1967.

³⁶⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Foreign Office to Lagos, 5th July, 1967.

Because Great Britain had already suffered restrictions on oil imports, from the Arab world through the Arab-Israeli War. The federal government was one step ahead of Britain, because it began military operations against Biafra on the same day.³⁶¹

Meanwhile, a conflict arose between Biafra and Shell/BP. Radio Biafra in its report on 29th July, 1967 accused the oil companies of double game.³⁶² Also, on 31st July, 1967 Biafran government declared that, they had taken over Shell/BP oil installations. The success of Biafran counter-offensive in August 1967 played a fundamental role in the capturing of the oil installations. Shell/BP offered the Biafran government, under protest, 2.5 million guilders. This sum was never paid, because the British treasury refused to transfer the money into the account of the Biafran representative in Switzerland. It was not until the end of 1967 before Shell/BP paid the money to the Lagos account.³⁶³ After making the payment, Radio Biafra on 13th January, 1968 announced that, every secret shall one day come to light. So it was with the role of the British government and firms in the Nigerian Civil War. It stated that, Shell/BP paid the controversial oil royalties of £7 million to the federal government. Biafra did not mind but, insisted that, Shell/BP must pay to Biafra government all the royalties due to them. The failure to do this was obvious evidence of bad faith on its side, which came to light in Shell/BP's collusion with Gowon, when its vessels and personnel piloted Nigerian soldiers to Bonny Island. Biafra had to take over temporary operation of Shell/BP for two well-known reasons. First, the failure of Shell/BP to honour its pledge to pay royalties to the Biafran government, oil royalties to which the Biafran government had a legitimate claim and natural right; and second, the Shell/BP collusion with the Gowon government, which resulted in the entry of the vandals into Bonny Island. This was the greatest act of ingratitude and abuse of confidence, an obvious act of bad faith.³⁶⁴

On 15th March, 1968 Stanley Gray, Shell/BP Manager in Nigeria received a letter from the Biafran authorities addressed via his office. They demanded payment of £3.5 million in royalties in the interest of the Company. He also received through a priest formerly resident in Port Harcourt a warning from Ojukwu, which he believed to be authentic, that, unless Shell/BP pay up, he will be obliged to take irrevocable steps.³⁶⁵ In the letter written by T.C. M Eneli, Permanent Secretary to the Biafra's Ministry of Finance, the Biafran leader noted that he considered it necessary again to draw the attention to the outstanding liabilities

³⁶¹ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 7th July, 1967.

³⁶² TNA, FCO, 38/321, Foreign Office to Lagos, 29th July, 1967.

³⁶³ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Foreign Office to Lagos, 31st July, 1967.

³⁶⁴ Broadcasting Corporation of Biafra, Biafran Comment on Shell-BP, ME/2671/B/3, 13th January, 1967.

³⁶⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 19th March, 1968.

of Shell/BP Company to the government of the Republic of Biafra, arising from royalties, rents, premiums and other charges in respects of their operations in Biafra. He reminded the Company that, the matter was subject of protracted correspondence and discussions between officials of the Biafran government and the representatives of Shell/BP Company beginning in June, 1967 and terminated in his letter to the Company on 21st October, 1967. Ojukwu made reference to his letter of 20th July, 1967 where he advised the Shell/BP Company to pay royalties of £3.5 million. A provisional figure in respect of Shell/BP's operations for the first half of 1967 was due to be paid from July 21st, 1967 to the Biafran government. The magnitude of this interim payment was based on a rough calculation by R.L. Hamilton, the Finance Manager of Shell/BP. When pressed further for the immediate payment in the Ojukwu's letter of 29th July, 1967, Shell/BP wrote a letter to the Biafran leader on 19th August, 1967 summarising relevant sections of decrees issued by Ojukwu, notably, the declaration of Biafra on 30th May, 1967, Clause 2, the Republic of Biafra Constitution Interim Provisions of 30th May, 1967, Section 9(1) and (2) and the Revenue Collection (No.2) decree of 21st June, 1967 Section 3 and 4 to support their argument that payment were not due by July, 1967. The kernel of the argument was cryptically rendered in the Shell/BP's letter quoting Clause 15 of the Standard Form of Shell/BP Oil Mining Lease that; "the lessees shall pay the Accountant-General of the Federation on behalf of the Minister within two months after the end of each year of the terms hereby granted, royalties hereunder specified ..." the burden of Shell/BP's argument was therefore that, the royalties for their operations in 1967 was not due until February, 1968.³⁶⁶

Shell/BP maintained their position in spite of the agreement signed on 30th September, 1961 whose section 38 stated that, royalties due on oil prospecting on the Continental Shelf should be paid not later than two months after the last day of June and December in each year in respect of the half year ending on such last day. This condition also applied to Oil Mining Leases on the Continental Shelf. Ojukwu reminded the Shell/BP that, all along they had recognised at least the sovereignty of the Biafran government in commercial matters, having offered to make a token payment of £2 and half million to the Biafran government. This position was re-emphasised by Hamilton at a meeting he had with P.N.C Okigbo, the Economic Adviser to the Biafran government and S. Oti, the then Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, on 3rd July, 1967³⁶⁷. Indeed, the last communication from Shell/BP to the Biafran government dated 19th August, 1967 dwelt entirely on the timing of payment and

³⁶⁶ . TNA, FCO, 38/321, Text of a Letter by Permanent Secretary Biafra's Ministry of Finance to the Managing Director of Shell/BP Petroleum Development Co. Ltd, 5th March, 1968.

³⁶⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Record of a Meeting between Biafra's Economic Officials and Hamilton, 3rd July, 1967.

not, in the propriety of payment which was agreed on by both sides. Ojukwu complained in the letter that, February had come and gone and yet Biafra did not receive a mite from Shell/BP. This delinquency in payment also applied to dues from rents and premiums and other charges due from their concessions in Biafra. He therefore, requested Shell/BP in their owned interest and continued relationship with the Biafran government and her people to pay the money not later than 15th March, 1968. This payment was to be made through their London branch of African Continental Bank Limited, 80 Cheapside, London, E.C. 2 including all revenues due to it from royalties, rents, premiums and other charges from their operations and concessions in Biafra.³⁶⁸

In spite of the threat that followed the letter, the Shell/BP Manager did not take any action and did not reply the letter. Instead, he proceeded to inform the federal government of Nigeria about the letter. However, he was concerned that the threats could be followed by scorched earth action against Shell interest in the Eastern-held territory. And after the most careful consideration of the position in International Law and on the advice from Eli Lauterpacht, a British official, Shell/BP as a commercial and non-political enterprise, was obliged to adhere strictly to its legal obligations, which it had consistently followed throughout the civil war. Since March 1967, the British officialdom examined the legal problem arising from a possible requirement that, Shell/BP should pay tax to the Biafran government in places than the federal government of Nigeria, and to the proposal that, Shell should enter into a supplementary agreement with the federal government that, they would under no circumstances make payments to the Biafran government. For them, if a de facto authority claim and collect payment of taxes within the area subject to its actual authority and control, then any payment so made by the taxpayer was effective to discharge his obligations to the lawful government. Accordingly, the lawful government was not entitled to claim second payments of tax. This was so whether or not, the lawful government succeeded in suppressing the de facto authority. The principle behind this rule was that, an alien was entitled in matters of tax, to treat the authority in control of the areas where alien coppices on his business as being the lawful government. The alien was not obliged to attempt to pass upon the legality of the regime which, effectively exercis the power of government, calls upon him to pay it amounts by way of tax or customs and comparable dues. Conversely, the

³⁶⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/321, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 19th August, 1967.

lawful government was hardly able to insist upon the payments of taxes to it when it was no longer able to exercise control of the area in question.³⁶⁹

Ever since it began operation in Nigeria from 1937, and up to 1962, Shell/BP had spent more than £10 million on production and exploration. Theirs was the pioneer work. Production in 1962 was 3 and half million tons, but by June 1967, the month before the civil war interfered with oil production and export, Shell/BP was exporting at a rate of over 2 million tons a month. Its expectation as from 1968 was that, production capacity would increase to more than 3 million tons a month. And about 25% of its production was from the Midwest oil field. Drilling the production wells, building the network of pipelines, putting up administrative buildings and housing, constructing a tank farm and a sea terminal especially at Bonny were the major preoccupation of Shell/BP during the civil war period which cost at least another £100 million. Further £30 million was injected for the increased production facilities in the Mid-western region, which included a new export terminal in the Escravous area linked by a new major pipeline to the oilfields in that region. Nigerian oil was considered to be cheaper to produce than Western Hemisphere oil, but was more expensive than Middle East oil. Nigerian oil was of good quality. At the time of Biafran secession, about 30% of oil was shipped to the United Kingdom refineries. Shell/BP have in equal shares a 50% interest in the Port Harcourt oil refinery, the largest in West Africa, and which cost about £12 million to build. It had an output of 1.5 million tons a year, and provided up to the civil war, most of Nigeria's needs for refined oil products. The Nigerian government owned the other 50% of shares. The refinery was managed by the British Petroleum.³⁷⁰

The invasion of Mid-western region and other areas where oil was domiciled by the Biafran troops interfered with the activities of the British oil companies there. As a result, on 10th October, 1967 the British Defence and Overseas Policy Committee discussed the stoppage, of oil export by Shell/BP's from Nigeria. It was decided that, the British Minister of Power and the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomson should consider what could be done to ensure an early resumption of exports of oil from Nigeria. After the examination of the prospect of resumptions of oil exports from Nigeria, they concluded that, there should be no possibility that, Shell/BP would export any oil from Nigeria in 1968 so long as the civil war continued. Even after the end of war, it would likely take three to four months at least, before any oil would start to flow again. It could be up to twelve months before oil exports resumed on a major scale. The oilfields in Nigeria covered

³⁶⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/110/File No. TE15/215/2/Part B, Nigerian Oil Industry, 1st January, 1967 -31st December, 1967.

³⁷⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/110, Foreign Office to Lagos,

an area which extended both into the Eastern Region and the Midwest. The Midwest, from which approximately one fifth of the British produced oil comes, came under the control of federal troops, and also captured the oil terminal at Bonny, which was the only point of export for Shell/BP oil. But, the Biafrans as at February 1968 controlled not only the oilfields which lie in the East, but also the pipeline from the Midwest to Bonny which passes through Port Harcourt. Nigeria's only refinery was also in Biafrans hands at Port Harcourt. There were also off-shore oilfields, but the only company that produced from them was the Gulf Oil Company, which operated off the coast of Midwest. The Federal government intentions during this period appeared to include the capture of Port Harcourt and the surrounding oil area. But this was seen to be a slow and hard struggle. One of the major dangers identified by the British Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Office was that Shell/BP's oil concessions would either be revoked or whittled down as a result of their supposed support of Ojukwu earlier on. Indeed, there was a time when the federal government seemed very suspicious and resentful of Shell/BP. In particular, it was thought that the promise of even a token payment of revenues to Ojukwu had stiffened Ojukwu's determination to maintain secession. In the end no payment whatever of oil revenues was made to him by Shell/BP. The company appears to have rehabilitated themselves to a considerable extent with the FMG, but they might yet be out of the wood. In the unlikely event of Biafra succeeding in obtaining international recognition as an independent state, Shell/BP might well find their concession revoked altogether by the Biafrans and offered to some non-British company instead.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ TNA, FCO, 38/109, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 10th October, 1967.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURE, EXTENT AND DIMENSIONS OF BIAFRA'S PROPAGANDA, 1967-1968

This chapter seeks to identify and discuss the various factors that led to the formation of Biafra's propaganda. It interrogates the issues and features of Biafra's propaganda and its various instruments.

3.1 Nature and Dimensions of Biafra's Propaganda

War has always and inescapably been a defining part of human condition. The human experience encountered boundaries and divisions from creation which leads to struggle for domination. Since the beginning of the existence of man, there has been a clear difference among the various creations that co-habits with man. Such as, the land and water; day and night; male and female; animate and inanimate; humans and animals, these differences gives room for competition, cooperation, coexistence, territorial exclusiveness, and hierarchic dominance.³⁷² As *Carl von Clausewitz*, the Prussian authority on war, note, "A war both arises and derives its nature from ideas, feelings, and political relations which obtain, at the moment when it breaks out".³⁷³ As a matter of fact, war has been part of man's quest to establish or develop various forms of political organisations in the forms of kingdoms, nations, nation-states, countries, empires, emirates or caliphates, for survival and in pursuit of happiness. In whichever formation modern man finds himself he encounters frontier of war. The dynamics of history such as migrations, trade, revolutions, and other forms of inter-group and inter-territorial communications had necessitated the propensity for war in human society.³⁷⁴ As nations goes to war, there must be a justification of embarking on such adventure.³⁷⁵ And propaganda had always been employed by nations as a means of justifying their reasons for going to war, territorial acquisition and to react to the advances of real or imagined aggressor.³⁷⁶

Propaganda in strategic warfare is not a modern invention; societies have used and lived with it from the earliest civilisations. As a means of controlling information flow managing public opinion and generating reactions about war, propaganda is as old as human

³⁷² Ekoko, A.E. 2004. *Boundary and National Security*. Abraka: Delta State University Press, p.2.

³⁷³ Wallace, W.M. 1975. *Appeal for Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution*. New York: Quadrangle & The New York Times Book Co, p.1.

³⁷⁴ Ekoko, A.E. 2004, *Boundary and National Security*, p.2.

³⁷⁵ McMahan, J. 2006. Just Cause of War. *Journal of Ethics and International Affairs*, Volume.19, Issue.3, p. 12.

³⁷⁶ Ngoa, S.N. 2011. A review and analytical narrative of propaganda activities: A Nigerian perspective. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. Volume.1, No.16, p.238.

history. It is a social force which aided national governments in securing national solidarity, patriotism, cooperation and consent behind their war policies.³⁷⁷ Propaganda has been unsheathed as a major weapon of war for over many centuries.³⁷⁸ These are the Thirty Years' War, Protestant Reformation, American War of Independence, French Revolution, Napoleonic War, English Civil War, American Civil War, among others. Thus, propaganda has been a powerful weapon that had shaped the attitude of nations in war, and it has been used to change and advance military strategies since time immemorial.³⁷⁹ Indeed, the outbreak of First World War, 1914-1918 advanced the use of propaganda in war to an unimaginable scale. According to M. Philip Taylor:

If war is essentially an organised communication of violence, propaganda and psychological warfare are essentially organised processes of persuasion. In wartime, they attack a part of the body that other weapons cannot reach, in an attempt to affect the way in which participants perform on the field of battle.³⁸⁰

The First World War saw the mobilisation of propaganda on an unprecedented magnitude.³⁸¹ Dehumanisation of Germany was an early feature of British war propaganda in the war, with numerous atrocities stories reported in the Bryce Report, 1915.³⁸² As a result, the major action carried out by Britain at the start of the war, was in August 1914, when it cut-off the Germany's under-sea communication cables, with the use of a British ship, known as the *Telconia*. This was to ensure that Britain had a monopoly on the fastest means of transmitting news from Europe to press agencies in the United States of America and other parts of the world. Influencing the reporting of the war around the world, with the aim of gaining support and sympathy, was an important objective of British war propaganda. By eliminating Berlin's principal means of contacting the outside world³⁸³, the Consul General of Germany's ally, Austria-Hungary Alfred Rappaport told the *New York Times* that, "The

³⁷⁷ Monama, F. L. 2014. *Wartime Propaganda in the Union of South Africa, 1939 – 1945*, PhD Thesis, Dept of History, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, p. xvii.

³⁷⁸ Obby, L.H. 2003. *A Content Analysis of Viet Cong Leaflets as Propaganda, 1963-68*. MA Dissertation, Dept. of Mass Communication Graduate Faculty University of Technology Texas. Retrieved August 25th 2015 from <http://www.repositories.tdl.org/ttu-ir/bistream/31295017083774.com>, p.3.

³⁷⁹ Obby, L.H. 2003, *A Content Analysis of Viet Cong Leaflets as Propaganda, 1963-68*, p.3.

³⁸⁰ Philip, M.T. 2003. *Munitions of the Mind: the History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present*, p.9.

³⁸¹ Cooke, I. 2014. *Propaganda in World War I: Means, Impacts and Legacies*. Retrieved January 11th 2016 from http://www.fairobserver.com/region/north_america/propaganda-in-world-war-one-means-impact-and-legacies-73296/, p.1.

³⁸² Neander, J. and Marlin, R. 2010. Media and Propaganda: The Northcliffe Press and the Corpse Factory Story of World War I. *Global Media Journal*. Volume 3, Issue 2, pp. 67-82.

³⁸³ Ortel, E. 2010. *Sly Indoctrination: British and American Propaganda in World War I and Its Effects on America's German Element*, Retrieved August 25th 2015 from <http://www.floridahistoryfair.com>, p.4.

cutting of that cable may do us great injury. If only one side of the case is given...prejudice will be created against us here.”³⁸⁴ Indeed, He was not mistaken. Soon after the cable was cut, the British Parliament passed the Defence of the Realm Act, which gave British censors the ability to dissect all information travelling from England to the world, and Britain was thus able to modify news and opinions travelling to the United States.³⁸⁵

The act of neutrality exhibited by the United States during the First World War was another avenue for the manifestation of the British war propaganda. When the major powers of Europe entered World War I in 1914, the United States pledged neutrality, thereby resisting involvement in a distant conflict. However, despite this “neutrality”, there was an extreme growth of pro-Allies and anti-German sentiments in the United States. Much of this shift in American public opinion can be attributed to the British propaganda machine, run by the British War Propaganda Bureau (WPB).³⁸⁶ Established in 1914 by Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George, the WPB was a secret organisation, based at Wellington House in London and placed under the control of Charles Masterman, a successful writer and Liberal Parliament member. The WPB became the major British propaganda distributor, both at home and abroad, especially to the United States. It called on journalists and newspaper editors to write and disseminate articles sympathetic to Britain and to counter the statements made by enemies.³⁸⁷ With an effective propaganda machine, and tight control over news from Europe to the United States, Britain was able to influence American public and governmental opinion, thus nurturing a pro-Allies and anti-German stance in the United States. The British depended heavily on atrocity propaganda to sway American opinion. By popularising and exaggerating German actions, Britain was easily able to arouse anti-German sentiment in Americans. Luckily for the British, Germany gave them many scandalous stories on which to build their propaganda.³⁸⁸

During World War II, propaganda was widely employed by both the Allied and Axis nations. Propaganda during this time started to expand, with the help of the media. Propaganda in the US was used mainly against those on the opposite side of the war like

³⁸⁴ Ross, S. H. 1996. *Propaganda for War: How the United States Was Conditioned to Fight the Great War of 1914-1918*. New York: Jefferson, N.C, pp.27-28.

³⁸⁵ Ortel, E. 2010, *Sly Indoctrination: British and American Propaganda in World War I and Its Effects on America's German Element*, p.21.

³⁸⁶ Robert, A.W. 2004. Mobilising Public Support for War: An Analysis of American Propaganda during World War I, *International Studies Association New Orleans Archives*, August 25th 2015 from <http://www.isanet.org/noarchive/robertwells.html>, p.9.

³⁸⁷ Robert, A.W. 2004, *Mobilising Public Support for War: An Analysis of American Propaganda during World War I*, p.10.

³⁸⁸Ortel, E. 2010, *Sly Indoctrination: British and American Propaganda in World War I and Its Effects on America's German Element*, pp.21-22.

Germany and Japan. The media helped this by showing, and using popular cartoons such as *Popeye*, *Bugs Bunny*, and *Donald Duck*, to talk down upon Germany, Japan, and to advertise war related items. During this time, they showed to the public, images, cartoons, and campaigns, to either support or insult the enemies. Through all this advertising, the main point was to send a message to the American society whether they oppose or support the war. During World War II, propaganda was widely used in various locations all over the world. Considering how it came in many different forms, from posters to animated short films, propaganda expanded almost everywhere. The few countries that used propaganda during World War II were Germany, Britain, and America. In order to get more people involved with the war, these three countries had to find some way to reach audiences of different ages.³⁸⁹

Germany was one of the major countries that used propaganda during the World War II. Adolf Hitler established a *Reich* Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda with Joseph Goebbels at its head. Goebbels promoted the Nazi message through art, music, theatre, films, books, radio, and the press.³⁹⁰ The British used propaganda through the form of radio broadcasts. By 1945, Britain had established more than 40 clandestine pseudo-German radio stations using powerful American transmitters. These radio stations were under the management of the British Political Warfare Executive, which was created by Winston Churchill. There was a lot of pressure put on the British from the Germans during the wartime, so creating these radio stations was a way for them to express their opposition against Germany. In addition to the radio stations, The PWE had also used what is called “black propaganda” to show rebellion against the Germans. It represented their strength in standing up for themselves during the hardships of the World War II.³⁹¹

In America, The Office of War Information was the centre of all propaganda activities of the Americans. Theodor Roosevelt created the OWI in 1942 to boost wartime propaganda production at home and undermine enemy morale in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Propaganda was found through many different forms, posters being one of the simplest versions amongst the rest. Inexpensive, accessible, and ever-present in schools, factories, and store windows, posters helped to mobilise Americans to war. For the reason of posters being low-priced and easy to use, it demonstrated how propaganda could easily be publicised from one location to

³⁸⁹ *World War II Propaganda: What was the message of Propaganda Animations during WWII in America?* Retrieved August 25th 2015 from <http://www.WWIIPropaganda.htm>, p.1.

³⁹⁰ *World War II Propaganda: What was the message of Propaganda Animations during WWII in America?* p.2.

³⁹¹ *World War II Propaganda: What was the message of Propaganda Animations during WWII in America?* p.3.

another, all over the community. Adding to the amount of propaganda posters the Americans used, there were many other ways to inform the rest of America about the war. In order to project only positive messages about the war, there needed to be some form of control over what should be published and released and what should not. The OWI had “created a propaganda machine that controlled all war-related information given to the public. Having this type of control over what was shown and not shown to the public proved that, the propaganda during the war did not completely show what the war was all about. Considering the presence of the media everywhere, it was easy to promote these messages to the public.”³⁹² The OWI created and distributed posters, booklets, photographs, radio shows, and films.

Propaganda was central towards sustaining European colonialism in Africa. Notions of the “civilising mission” and the “white man’s burden” which underscored nineteenth-century European colonialism in Africa were effective tools for influencing and manipulating public opinion both at home and in the colonies. Even as colonial regimes uprooted African political and social orders and suppressed resistance, the argument of extending European civilisation and liberal traditions to Africans remained a powerful rationale for empire. West Africans were exposed to this kind of British propaganda aimed at legitimising empire from the earliest period of colonial rule.³⁹³ During World War II propaganda provided an opportunity for Britain to rally the support of her West African subjects against what was presented as a dreaded common enemy, Germany³⁹⁴. Pre-war British propaganda’s emphasis on Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*’s equation of Africans with apes and their possible enslavement in the event of German victory had spread panic over the thought of such dehumanisation. Wild rumours that Nigeria and indeed other parts of Africa would be ceded to Germany by Britain to meet the demands of the former for the return of her territories in Africa on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities had thus caused considerable anxiety throughout Nigeria. It elicited from Nigerians profuse professions of unalloyed loyalty to Britain and their readiness to pay the supreme price in defence of the British.³⁹⁵

On the general issue of war propaganda in most of the British colonies in Africa, Nigeria in particular, during the Second World War, the public relations report Oyo Province, from January to March 1945 stated:

³⁹² *World War II Propaganda: What was the message of Propaganda Animations during WWII in America?* p.6.

³⁹³ Bonny, I. 2007, *Second World War Propaganda, Imperial Idealism and Anti-Colonial Nationalism in British West Africa*, p.225.

³⁹⁴ Bonny, I. 2007, *Second World War Propaganda, Imperial Idealism and Anti-Colonial Nationalism in British West Africa*, p.226.

³⁹⁵ Mordi, E.N. 2015, *Fighting with the Pen: Nigerian Press’ Collaboration in the Promotion and Success of British Win-the-War Efforts in Nigeria*, pp.91-92.

There is no doubt that propaganda does not spread so easily from the educated classes to the ordinary man. This applies particularly outside the main towns. The most important source of information for ordinary man is from Administrative Officers themselves by direct contact. It is felt that if propaganda is to be effective among the mass of the people there must be more Administrative Officers and more touring. The limit of knowledge among the mass of the people is that there is a war, that they hope the British will win and they are willing to help, when they are shown how. Some have heard of the Germans and some of Hitler.³⁹⁶

In the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970 propaganda featured prominently between the two sides of the conflict. The war was a major conflict in post-colonial Africa where various means of modern communications such as radio, newspapers, television, photography, theatre arts, and music were utilised to spread propaganda. The propaganda that thrived during that civil war had its root in the series of political turbulences that erupted immediately after the nation's independence. The *coup d'état* of 1966 led to the termination of the first democratically elected government in Nigeria, and the enthronement of the first military government, headed by Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi. In May, 1966 widespread disturbances and riots occurred in various parts of Nigeria. In these unrests, properties were destroyed. On 29th July, 1966 there was another *coup d'état*, in which the Military Head of State, Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi, and the Military Governor of Western Nigeria, Lieutenant Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi, were murdered. These circumstances set the process that brought General Yakubu Gowon to power as the new Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.³⁹⁷ In the months of August, September and October 1966, heavy waves of massacres swept across Northern Nigeria. Those mainly affected by these tragic incidents were Southern Nigerians, the majority being the Igbos. The political oblivion witnessed in Nigeria in 1966 and Northern massacre of Eastern Nigerians particularly the Igbo ethnic tribe, lent credence and credibility to the fear for the security of the Igbos in Nigeria, a major logic which later formed the nucleus and basis for the widespread propaganda during the Nigerian Civil War.³⁹⁸

Another factor that engineered the formation of Biafra's propaganda was the event of the Aburi conference. From 4th-6th January, 1967, members of the Supreme Military

³⁹⁶ National Archives, Ibadan (NAI), Oyo Province Public Relations Report, January-March 1945 NAI C227/767 file No.151 Vol. I, p.3.

³⁹⁷ Britain-Biafra Association, 1968. Nigerian/Biafra Conflict: an International Commission of Jurists and Find Prima Facie Evidence of Genocide. London: Grays Inn, p.86.

³⁹⁸ Nwankwo, A.A. 1972, *Nigeria: the Challenge of Biafra*, p.16.

Council of Nigeria convened at Aburi, Ghana, in an attempt to reconcile the feuding Nigerian regions. Among other resolutions reached at the conference, it was agreed that, force should not be used to resolve Nigeria's many problems; each region would be responsible for its own affairs, with the Federal Military Government bearing the responsibilities for issues affecting the entire country. Following the conference, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, and the Federal Military Government reneged on many of the agreements reached at the conference. They claimed that, the agreement was no longer acceptable to them.³⁹⁹ It would appear that, the draft of the decree which would have followed from the Aburi meeting, a draft prepared by the Federal Government officials, including the top legal advisers in Lagos, was clearly out of tune with the Aburi decisions, and the Eastern Nigeria, under Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was justified in not accepting the draft as it stood.⁴⁰⁰

With this action, the rejection of the Aburi agreement by Eastern Nigeria, led to the emergence of public opinion outcry. The Ojukwu's speech after the conference, on 25th February 1967, known famously as "On Aburi We Stand", became a highly sophisticated propaganda slogan. The basic political argument behind the slogan, it would be recalled, held that, at Aburi, there had been unanimous renunciation of force to settle Nigeria's internal differences, and that, there had also been unanimous approval of a decentralisation programme, which should have given each region full control over its internal affairs, and a vote over any policy decisions taken by the central government in Lagos. The Federal Government, not surprisingly, interpreted the Aburi Accord differently.⁴⁰¹ Consequently, the mantra, "On Aburi We Stand" was domesticated leading to the outburst of strong public outrage over the lack of political will of the Federal Military Government to honour the agreement. The high points of the public resentment, particularly, in Eastern region were the solidarity rallies and mass demonstrations of support for the stand of the Eastern Nigeria Military Government over the political crisis rocking the Federation.

On 11th March 1967, there were mammoth demonstrations in major cities in the Eastern region, namely, Onitsha, Aba, Abakiliki, Uyo, Bende, Port Harcourt and other parts of the region. From the villages, indignant Eastern Nigerians poured into the cities. They came from all works of life. One rally followed another.⁴⁰² From street to street they marched, carrying placards and chanting anti-Gowon songs. On 16th, March 1967, the

³⁹⁹ Gluck, J.A. 2007, *Building Biafrans: The Role of Propaganda in Creating the Biafran Nation*, p.20.

⁴⁰⁰ Nwankwo, A. A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*, pp.221-222.

⁴⁰¹ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.47.

⁴⁰² Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *The making of a Nation: Biafra*, p.222.

Nigerian Mirror, a private Newspaper published in Onitsha, reported the massive demonstrations held in Onitsha on 15th, March 1967. The paper reported that:

An unprecedented crowd never before witnessed in Onitsha, yesterday stormed all parts of Onitsha in massive demonstration, call it revolution or uprising, if you like, against the Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon's Government.⁴⁰³

The crowd was estimated, at a hundred thousand. The demonstrators, carried placards, some of which bore the following inscriptions:

Ojukwu, give us Arms! We must take our revenge on the National Day on April 1st 1967. No War! No Peace! East is impregnable, Aburi or UDI⁴⁰⁴.

The placards carried by the demonstrators, who were in a fighting mood, reads:

Ojukwu, we are with you,
Go ahead, in peace or war
On Aburi We Stand!⁴⁰⁵

The *Nigerian Outlook*, reported, another massive demonstration in Port Harcourt which took place on March 11th, 1967, at about the same time as the Aba demonstration.

Some of the placards had the following inscriptions:

No Aburi, No Nigeria
The push is complete
We shall never be slaves to the Hausas
Federation – No, Confederation – Yes, Go on, Ojukwu, we are behind you⁴⁰⁶.

The mass demonstrations increased in tempo, assuming a magnitude comparable to the Chinese Cultural Revolutions⁴⁰⁷. Later, the slogan “On Aburi We Stand” became the diplomatic and propaganda battle cry of Biafran spokesmen throughout the ensuing civil war which struck a responsible chord in the world Press.⁴⁰⁸

The Midwest invasion was another important episode that enhanced the construction of Biafra's propaganda. Indeed, it was a major component and the leading factor that changed the whole operations of the civil war and contributed to the adequate reorganisations of the war efforts by both sides of the conflict. No doubt, the account of the Midwest military operations had been well documented in the plethora of literature on the Nigerian Civil War. For instance, Emma Okocha argued that amid a heavy downpour of rain under the cover of ink-black darkness a Biafran battalion landed on 9th August, 1967 at the John Holt beach on

⁴⁰³ *The Nigerian Mirror*, March 16th 1967.p.2.

⁴⁰⁴ Onuaguluchi, G. 1990, *the Giant in Turbulent Storms: The Story of Nigeria, 1944-1987*, pp.65-66.

⁴⁰⁵ Onuaguluchi, G. 1990, *the Giant in the turbulent storm: the story of Nigeria, 1944-1987*.p.66.

⁴⁰⁶ Onuaguluchi, G. 1990, *the Giant in the turbulent storm: the story of Nigeria, 1944-1987*.p.64.

⁴⁰⁷ Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. 1969, *the Making of a Nation: Biafra*.p.33.

⁴⁰⁸ Stremlau, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.48.

the River Niger, Asaba. In a matter of minutes, the Post Office and the Catering Rest House, standing some few metres up the landed beach were secured. The Army Commander while disconnecting all communication lines suddenly blew whistle. With that signal, the green light for “Operation Torch”, the Biafran invasion of the Midwest began in earnest. By the early hours of the following day, the metal-sealed bridge head at the Asaba end of the River Niger had been smashed through. With a ready understanding and the collaboration of elements of the Midwestern Fourth Area Command, the Biafran main force of the 101 Bridge, in a blitzkrieg fanned into the Midwest. By cockcrow they had overrun Nigeria’s fourth region. Okocha of the invading force awakened one of the commanders of the Midwest Fourth Area Command in Asaba, Major Alabi Isama from sleep at the Catering Rest House. Major Alabi escaped arrest by shooting his way through and headed straight to Agbor where he tendered his report to his commander, Colonel Henry Igbova, who in turn called Benin. Colonel David Ejoor instantly informed Lagos the same night. However, the Biafran forces were unstoppable, and by dusk, Warri, Auchi, Benin and the rest of the region had fallen to the Biafrans.⁴⁰⁹

The military incursion at Midwest spearheaded by the Biafran Army marked a turning point in the development and conceptualisation of Biafra’s propaganda. The outcome of the incident and subsequent events of the war served as a major factor towards a greater use of propaganda as a machinery of warfare in the Nigerian Civil War, particularly on the Biafran side. This was made possible when the Biafran leadership took advantage of the counter-military exercise embarked upon by the federal troops against what they perceived as Biafra’s offensive attack at the Midwest, and their determination to recapture the area. Following the strategic-military mistake and failure to capture Midwest by Biafran troops, the federal troops began their killing spree of Biafra soldiers chasing them back to the East, and along the line killed majority of the civilians in Midwest Region, propaganda stories were created for the Biafrans for immediate use which elicited sympathy and support for their cause particularly in the eye of the international community.⁴¹⁰

The Asaba massacre of 7th October, 1967 was another dominant factor and event that formed the bases of the use of propaganda by Biafrans in the Nigerian Civil War. No doubt, Biafrans took advantage of the event to stiffen their resolve towards greater propaganda usage which later served as the main instrument of diplomatic exercise in the civil war. The

⁴⁰⁹ Okocha, E. 2012. *Blood on the Niger the First Black-on-Black Genocide: the Untold Story of Asaba Massacre During the Nigeria-Biafra War*, New York: Gomslam Books International, pp.23-24.

⁴¹⁰ Elizabeth, S. and Ottaneli, F. 2011. The History and Legacy of the Asaba, Nigeria, Massacres. *African Studies Review*, Volume 54, No.3, pp.

Federal Army during the Midwest operation, seized full advantage of the utter confusion existing within the Biafran Army, and made a move from Warri through Abraka to Umutu where they removed the bridge on the river there. Biafran troops at the bridge were able to hold the enemy for 48 hours bloody battle before they exhausted their supplies and began to pull back. By then, the administrative set up of 101 Division had virtually collapsed. The network of roads in that area, made an attempt at a defensive battle, but was completely a futile exercise because, and the attacking side could easily run small rings round the defender. Biafran troops therefore, continued to move back until the enemy got to Umunede on the main Benin-Asaba road. Biafran troops were stationed at Ogwashiukwu and Otutu. From the North, the enemy had pushed into the town of Isele-ukwu, and eventually, entered Asaba on 7th October, 1967. After six weeks of Biafrans occupation of Midwest, the federal troops regained the initiative, and through the hastily organised 2nd Infantry Division under Colonel Muritala Mohammed, had pushed the Biafrans all the way to Asaba back to the Niger River. On 4th October, 1967 Biafrans made their way to Onitsha across the Niger Bridge, and blown up two spans behind the bridge, cutting Biafra's road link to the Midwest and the rest of Southern Nigeria, and leaving the federal troops angry and frustrated at their inability to pursue their enemy across the Niger.

In his civil war memoir, Wole Soyinka described the Igbo of the Midwest as the "most vulnerable Nigerians in that conflict". Many of their compatriots profoundly distrusted the Igbos. After Biafrans incursion, the Midwest Igbos was considered to be a major security risk. For their part, while Midwestern Igbos had sympathy for the Biafran cause, most of them were either neutral or believed that, their best interests lay in remaining Nigerians. They hoped that, a July 1967 statements issued by a group of their leaders in support of "One Nigeria" and condemning secession would shield them from retaliation from returning federal forces. Some must also have been aware of the "operational code" of conduct for the Nigerian Army signed by Gowon and issued by the federal government in July 1967, which specifically instructed troops to treat civilians and captured enemy soldiers humanely and according to the Geneva Conventions. Nevertheless, by the time federal troops approached Asaba, many had reason to be fearful, especially as reports reached them of what happened during the liberation of Benin city in late September, when the federal troops stood by as local mobs went on a bloody rampage against the city's large Igbo community. What happened in Benin was repeated, as troops advanced east, non-Igbo civilians attacked Igbos who had stayed behind, often those with the fewest resources, and attackers were tacitly and actively supported by troops in one of the few press accounts of the federal advance, Alfred

Friendly Jr. of the *New York Times* 1967 described the situation in Benin, as Igbos were attacked and their homes and businesses looted. Later, he reported that in Warri, four to five hundred Igbos were killed by civilian mobs, with similar number slaughtered in Sapele. Retaliation against civilians was not one-sided. Reports surfaced that Biafran troops, retreating along the Benin-Asaba road, killed scores of non-Igbo speaking Midwesterners in the towns of Abudu and Agbor, Boji-Boji as well as near Asaba, where they were rounded up and taken in two trucks to a rubber plantation on the outskirts of the town, and killed.⁴¹¹

As the time the federal troops advanced Asaba, the town was rife with accounts massive killings in the Northern, Western and Midwestern Regions, and this news fuelled fears that, the war was one of genocide against the Igbo. Many perceived the federal army as composed mostly of the same Northerners who had recently killed so many Igbos, and feared that their arrival would lead to another, even greater pogrom. For some, the fear became so strong that they decided to leave, among them the Asagba of Asaba, Obi Umejei Onyetenu, who fled to the Eastern part of the country.⁴¹² Onianwa George Afamefuna said that, the Asaba massacre that occurred during the Nigerian-Biafran War robbed the town of ablebodied men and women that would have contributed immensely to the future development of the town. He opined that, the event was sorrowful and never wished that it would occur again. Indeed, Asaba was a peaceful town and the incident reduced its population. The memory of the event will continue to linger even among the future generations.⁴¹³ Murhphy Adigwe recalled how people were running from one place to another when the federal troops invaded Asaba. He noted that the incident really affected Asaba people to the extent that the town had found it very difficult to recover from the incident.⁴¹⁴ Uchechukwu Eluaka argued that ever since the Asaba massacre, the town have never remained the same. The incident created shock and inflicted psychological wounds among Asaba people.⁴¹⁵ This compelling history of a town and a people produced the underlying factor that singled Asaba as a major strategic-military and psychological objective of the federal troops, after the fall of Benin.⁴¹⁶ Emeka Nmadu opined that the Nigerian Civil War was a great tragedy. He noted that the war never favoured any side. It brought serious setback to the development of major towns such as *Okpanam; Ogwashiukwu; Iseleukwu;*

⁴¹¹Elizabeth, S. and Ottaneli, F. 2011, *The History and Legacy of the Asaba, Nigeria, Massacres*, pp.5-7.

⁴¹² Elizabeth, S. and Ottaneli, F. 2011, *The History and Legacy of the Asaba, Nigeria, Massacres*, pp.7-19.

⁴¹³ Interview with Chief Onianwa George Afamefuna, 4th November, 2017.

⁴¹⁴ Interview with Murphy Adigwe, Age c. 60, Politician, At No 6 Umuda Village, Asaba, 19th October, 2017.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Uchechukwu Eluaka, Age c. 50, Barrister/Civil Servant, At No 20 Okpanam Road, Asaba, 17th October, 2017.

⁴¹⁶ Okocha, E. 2012, *Blood on the Niger*, p.48.

Onisha-Igb, and *Illah*.⁴¹⁷ John Obi argued that the major effects of the civil war was that many people left their homes and sought for shelter in other towns villages. Such migration had affected the living standard of the people in the rural villages.⁴¹⁸ The impact of these events in the formation of Biafra's propaganda cannot be overemphasised; they acted as the strategic factors which strengthen the wartime propaganda machinery of Biafrans and rekindled their resolve to continue fighting, while seeking for international support.

3.2 Issues and Features of Biafra's Propaganda

At the outset of the war, Biafra's propaganda sought to unify the country and rally the populace around the threat of extermination. Biafra's propaganda used what was described essentially an Igbo tragedy to galvanised support across all the provinces of Biafra.⁴¹⁹ Emmanuel Nwokwu argued that:

Propaganda in every war is a very strategic weapon and is not possible to fight a war without it. It is a weapon of mobilisation. The Biafrans used it to propagate the genuineness of their case and to let the world know that genocide was going on. Biafra's propaganda was not going too far and that was why the message was not been hard at some point. So it was a media game. The federal aim in that war was to wipe out the Igbos, but they were unable to do it. The Igbos did not just wake up and started pushing for self-determination. The Igbos decision to defend themselves is what is called the Nigerian-Biafran War. The name "Biafra" was adopted as an identity because that was the only name that was acceptable to all.⁴²⁰

While, the message that Biafran government sought to instil on its people was essentially the same message that they hoped the rest of the world would accept the goals of each target audience was markedly different. Both at home and abroad, Biafran propaganda was to convince the world that Biafrans were fighting against a genocidal enemy that wanted to kill every Biafran. The Biafrans had to convince the world and themselves that their only salvation lay in the establishment of an independent Biafra because they had no future in Nigeria. Obviously, the reality of a people under siege was much different than the Europeans or Americans sitting in their homes watching the images from Biafra on their televisions and reading about the war in the newspapers. Thus, the methods means and messages of Biafra's

⁴¹⁷ Interview with Emeka Nmadu, Age c. 57, Politician, At No. 4 Jesus Saves Road, Asaba, 10th October, 2017.

⁴¹⁸ Interview with John Obi, Age c. 53, Civil Servant, At No 10 Anwai Road, Asaba, 13th October, 2017.

⁴¹⁹ Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, p.79.

⁴²⁰ Interview with Emmanuel Nwokwu, Age c. 58, Business Man, At Amichi Nnewi South Local Govt. Area, Anambra State, 6th November, 2017.

propaganda were carefully crafted to suit the differing realities and were then more strenuously adapted to suit the needs of keeping the Igbo fighting spirit and suffering in the name of survival.⁴²¹

Biafra's propaganda described the defunct Republic of Biafra as a nation with modern ideas and Western-oriented values. A large number of publications directed at Biafrans, Nigerians and other audiences throughout Africa utilised the concept of modernisation as a means to garner support for the secessionist region. The Biafran government's aim to appeal to Western and non-Western audiences using the vision of modernity served to reveal the extent to which Biafra's leaders believed Western influences had become accepted and even embraced by many educated English-speaking Africans throughout the continent and the rest of the world. They argued that modernisation was very vital to an African state's ability to establish itself in a Western-dominated era. Biafran publications drew on the history of colonial and independent Nigeria in defining the distinct characteristics that the identities of the Biafran and the Northerner enemy "Other" accumulated in their experiences with Western concepts and processes that accompanied British colonial rule.⁴²²

Biafra's propaganda described the Nigerian Civil War as a religious war being waged against Christians by the Northern feudalists. In an attempt to emphasise Northern brutality and to avoid alienating the minority people in the Eastern Region, Biafra's propaganda portrayed the civil war as religious. The main crux of the argument was that, the Igbos primarily suffered the brunt of the massacres in Northern Nigeria, simply because they were the only major Christian minority in the North. Thus, a secure Biafra could safeguard the rights of all the Southern Christians, not just the Igbos.⁴²³ Biafra was seen as a Christian country, with a God-given destiny to be independent. This is clear from the war songs of the time. The lyrics to "We are Biafrans" were:

We are Biafrans Fighting for our nation. In the name of
Jesus We shall conquer. Biafra win! Biafra! We are
Biafrans Fighting for our freedom. In the name of Jesus We
shall conquer Biafra win! Biafra! We are Biafrans

⁴²¹Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, pp.84-85.

⁴²² Gluck, J.A. 2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.85.

⁴²³ Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda in the Nigerian Civil War 1968-1970*, p. 84.

Marching to the war front. In the Name of Jesus We shall
vanquish Biafra win! Biafra!⁴²⁴

Biafra's freedom was part of the will of God, and Ojukwu, "our beloved Moses," would lead the nation, a David," against the "Goliath" of Federal Nigeria. Given this religious commitment, the actions of the British government in assisting to arm the Federal Military Government were incomprehensible to those inside Biafra. "How," they argued, "could one Christian nation like Great Britain, not support the freedom of another Christian nation, Biafra?"⁴²⁵

In comparing Islam and Christianity, Biafran leaders saw Islam as a primitive faith and Christianity was regarded as the religion of a modernised people. Muslims in the North not were modernised because they did not desire to learn the Christian beliefs and Western concepts that were taught in schools run by Christian missionaries and Western-influence teachers during the British colonial rule. Northern did preferred Islamic schools but Biafran propaganda claimed that Northerners favoured such schools because an attitude of subservience was taught to children. In an address to the people of Orlu Province on 30th December, 1967 Ojukwu alluded to the backwardness of Muslim Northerners claiming that Northern Nigeria had a different idea about fellowship theirs according to their religion was that of slave and master, no more".⁴²⁶ Joseph Nwosu argued that, while the Nigerians were calling the Biafrans rebels, the Biafrans also called them vandals. This type of name-calling was part of what defined the use of propaganda in the Nigerian-Biafran War.⁴²⁷

Peter Okafor argued that Biafra's propaganda was very effective particularly among the locals. Many people were willing to enter the Biafran Army at any cost and people from different Provinces of Biafra joined the Army to defend their fatherland.⁴²⁸ Ejiofor also recalled that before the full scale war began young people from different zones in Biafra were recruited as militia to go and comb places like Onitsha having heard the news about the presence of the Nigerian Army. Many people were killed in the process. He noted that

⁴²⁴ Bush, P. 2003. Biafra and Canadian Churches, 1966-1970. *Historical Paper: Canadian Society of Church History*, p.131.

⁴²⁵ Bush, P. 2003. *Biafra and Canadian Churches, 1966-1970*, p.131.

⁴²⁶ Gluck, J.A.2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.90.

⁴²⁷ Interview with Joseph Nwosu, Age c. 70, Ex-Biafran Navy Officer/ Business Man, At OwerriNwkorji, Nwerre Local Government Area Imo State, 12th November, 2017.

⁴²⁸ Interview with Peter Okafor, Age c. 62, Civil Servant, At No 56 Fegge Onitsha Anambra State, 25th October, 2017.

Biafran Soldiers tried in the civil war but lack of military equipment and sabotage were the main challenges that they faced in their bid to defend the Biafran cause.⁴²⁹

The continuous stress of fear of genocide was another feature of Biafra's propaganda. According to the Biafra's Propagandists, genocide proved to be the most powerful and effective theme of the war. As one participant in Biafran propaganda exercise later wrote "the genocide propaganda was designed to confirm and instil in the public minds that "nothing short of a sovereign Biafra could guarantee security of life and property... it terrorised the home public and alarmed and alerted the entire world for it conjured up an image of the Nazi regime and its Jewish victims".⁴³⁰ According to Article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted on 9th December, 1948 genocide means of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. Article III of the convention stipulates that the following acts should be punishable namely; genocide; conspiracy to commit genocide; direct and public incitement to commit genocide; attempt to commit genocide; and complicity in genocide.⁴³¹ In 1968, the British House of Lords debated a Genocide Bill. Reporting how Lord Stoneham, Minister of State, Home Office, moved the second reading of the Bill, *The Times* of London of 13th November, 1968 wrote:

Genocide was modern word for an old crime, the deliberate destruction of any racial, religious or ethnic groups. The history of the world was littered with these bloody episodes generated by evil motives and justified by vicious pretexts. It was the appalling atrocities committed by the Nazi government of Germany which had shocked the world into outlawing this abominable crime.⁴³²

The 1966 killing of "30,000" Igbos in Northern Nigeria in the aftermath of January-July military *coup d'état* served as the very important genocidal story of Biafra's propaganda. At the end of September 1966, just after the Ad-Hoc Constitutional Conference held in Lagos had concluded its first series of meetings, new wave of massacres broke out in the North and other parts of Nigeria, killing about 30, 000 Easterners who lived outside their own region,

⁴²⁹ Interview with Edmund Ejiofor...

⁴³⁰ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.112-113.

⁴³¹ Britain-Biafra Association. 1968, *Nigerian/Biafra Conflict*, pp.3-4.

⁴³² *The Times*, 13th November, 1968.

mainly in the North. The figure, 30,000 was given in the Eastern Region after names of the dead and missing had been listed. Meanwhile, the British government, in 1969, in a publication outlining the federal cause and propaganda gave the figure at 7,000. Biafra, in the subsequent stages of the war, said that, the number killed in 1966 was 50,000.⁴³³ At any rate, the 30,000 figure heavily projected Biafran propaganda message both at the local and international levels. Locally, it made the Biafrans to believe that, their security was no longer guaranteed in the Nigerian state. With the outbreak of the civil war, particularly after the failed Midwest invasion, they were meant to believe that, if care was not taken, what happened in 1966 would be repeated again. Internationally, the figure provided a very strong platform for Biafran supporters to present effectively, the Biafran case across, to their various audiences. The figure equally, reflected very clearly, in all the press statements and conferences of pro-Biafran supporters.⁴³⁴ Also, Biafran propaganda argued that, the 1966 killings of Biafran officers in Nigerian Army and civilians resident in Northern Nigeria, Lagos and Ibadan were condoned by the Gowon Regime with the smug satisfaction that, “Allah in his infinite mercy” had made it possible for another Northerner to be at head of affairs in Nigeria. This attitude was in keeping with the Northern Nigeria’s leaders boast to continue Usman Dan Fodio’s jihad till they conquer the whole of Nigeria down to the sea. The Hausas and Fulanis believe that, once Biafrans were exterminated, everybody will be equal. There will be no educated men, and no progressive people with new ideas.⁴³⁵ Biafran leaders, often connect the Jos attacks of 1945 and the Kano Riots of 1953 to the pogrom of mid-1966 which detailed how the nature and depth of hatred of Easterners had been built up in the North long before independence.⁴³⁶

Biafran publications and information machinery attempted to punctuate with the accusations that the barbaric Northerners were committing genocide against Biafrans during the civil war, and had attempted to exterminate the Biafran people since the beginning of the Eastern Nigeria’s secession. The publications from the Biafran government were greatly aware of the need to incorporate the people of the secessionist region into the debate on genocide.⁴³⁷ Although, the arguments on whether genocide was committed in the Nigeria Civil War has been ongoing since the aftermath of the civil war but within the context of

⁴³³ Cronje, S. 1970, *The World and Nigeria: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War, 1967-1970*, p.18.

⁴³⁴ *Nigerian/Biafra Conflict*, 1968, p. 94.

⁴³⁵ Kirk Greene, A.H.M. 1971, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria*, Vol II, pp.200-201.

⁴³⁶ Gluck, J.A. 2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.95.

⁴³⁷ Gluck, J.A. 2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.94.

Biafra's propaganda, a genocidal scrapbook was produced by the Biafran government showing what appeared to be some of the genocidal acts committed during the civil war. This genocidal acts appeared to have been committed using various methods such as conduct of land warfare, aerial conduct of the war, bombing of market places, food poisoning, starvation, execution in market places, killing of unborn babies, the plucking of eyes out of their sockets and the skinning of live Biafrans. Indeed, these dimensions of genocidal claims formed the nucleus upon which the various accusations of genocide were made during the civil war.⁴³⁸ In referencing past instances of attacks and genocidal attempts against Biafran people, some Biafran publications such as *Biafran Newsletter* went as far back as 1945, when people from Northern Nigeria were accused of massacring Eastern Nigerians in Jos, a city located in the Middle Belt region, where the Northern leaders appeared ready to protect its sphere of influence and regional power among minority groups that were opposed to accepting the rule of the Hausa-Fulani. In many other publications, Biafra's leaders aimed to include references to the Kano Riots of 1953, which similarly contained Northerner's attacks against peoples from the Eastern region.⁴³⁹

On the conduct of land warfare, the Biafran government claimed that, 20,000 civilians were massacred between the *Imo River* and Aba, in the two Biafran villages of *Owazza* and *Ozuaku*. The refugees from these villages had reported that, when the Nigerian troops invaded their lands on Friday 16th August, 1968, they killed more than 2,000 Biafrans. Susan Masid, of *French Press Agency* (APF) while reporting this horrifying incident said that, "Young Igbos with terrifying eyes and trembling lips told journalists in Aba that in their villages the Nigerian troops came from behind and started shooting and firing everywhere, shooting everybody who was running, and firing into the houses."⁴⁴⁰ After the bombing of Aba, on the 25th April, 1968, William Norris wrote in the *Sunday Times*, 26th April, 1968 with the captioned headline "Nightmare in Biafra" and said:

I have seen things in Biafra this week which no man should have to see. Sights to search the heart and sicken the conscience I have seen children roasted alive, young girls torn in two by shrapnel, pregnant women eviscerated, and old men blown to fragments, I have

⁴³⁸ Nigeria/ Biafra Conflict.1968, pp.86-93. See also Ministry of Information, 1968. Genocide Breaks Up Nations. Enugu: Biafran Government Publications. Markpress News Features Service, 1968. Press Actions: Abridged edition Covering period 1st July to 31st December, 1969. Geneva: Biafran Overseas Press Division, 5th July, 1969. Biafra Newsletter, Why We Are Fighting Vol. 1, No. 1, 27th October, 1967. Ministry of Information, 1967. January 15th Before and After: Nigerian Crisis 1966. Enugu: Government Printer.

⁴³⁹ Gluck, J.A. 2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.95.

⁴⁴⁰ *Nigeria/Biafra Conflict*, 1968. pp.26-27.

seen these things and I have seen their cause; high-lying Russian Illysun jets operated by federal Nigeria, dropping their bombs on civilians centres throughout Biafra.⁴⁴¹

At Onitsha, the killing of 300 parishioners, of the Apostolic Church, who decided to stay behind when the Nigerian Army invaded the town while others fled and to pray for their deliverances, was equally another example of Biafrans genocidal story. Colonel Muritala Mohammed's Second Division found them in the church, dragged them out, tied their hands behind their backs and executed them. The Onitsha massacre was also reported by foreign journalists, such as, William Norris in *The Times* on Thursday, 25th April, 1968. Another genocidal story of Biafran propaganda was the *Oji* River killing of Hospital staffs and patients.⁴⁴² *The Times*, on 2nd August, 1968 carried gruesome stories of Nigeria's atrocities in Biafra. In these stories, it indicated that, in a hospital outside Enugu the soldiers shot all fourteen Biafran nurses who stayed behind when the town was invaded and then went down the wards killing the patients as well. And sadly enough according to C.N.C Nnolin, these Biafran civilians, massacred by Nigerian soldiers, were not even buried but, abandoned in the open air to be devoured by vultures and wild beasts.⁴⁴³ In his report, C.N.C. Nnolin, the Divisional Police Officer, for *Nkanu* Division, indicated that, in May 1968 the Nigerian soldiers entered the little village of *Amurri* and removed fourteen people, including a prominent Obe trader, *Ngwuocha* and *Ozella Awkunanaw* in June 1968, the soldiers removed about 500 people, men, women and children. Like the fourteen who were removed from *Amurri*, the report said, nothing was heard of them and some of them the report suggested, shot in the night while others were forcefully conscripted into the enemy army.⁴⁴⁴

The aerial conduct of the civil war by the federalist side formed another dimension of Biafrans genocidal story. From November 19th -24th, 1967, there were massive bombing of the civilian population of Onitsha carried out by the Nigerian Air Force and the targets were non-military targets. Which included; Christ the King College; Dennis Memorial Grammar School; Anglican All Saints Cathedral; Onitsha General Hospital; The Magistrate Court; and scores of residential areas in the town.⁴⁴⁵ Markpress reported on 14th November, 1968 that the Nigerian air-raids on civilian targets in Biafra in over six months killed at least, two thousand people, according to the provisional figures issued by the Biafran government. The exact number of the casualties rose but, the official casualty list was 1,964 dead. Over two thousand

⁴⁴¹ *Sunday Times*, 26th April, 1968.

⁴⁴² *Times*, 25th April, 1968.

⁴⁴³ *The Times*, 2nd August, 1968.

⁴⁴⁴ *Nigerian/Biafran Conflict*, p.30.

⁴⁴⁵ *Nigerian/Biafra Conflict*, p.34.

others were injured in other air attacks. The Biafra government issued a statement that the FMG intensified its attacks on the civilian targets. The number of raids during the first nineteen days of October alone was 20 percent higher than, for the whole month of August 1968, the second highest month during the six month period. The Russian supply of aircraft to the FMG showed conclusively that, Nigeria was out to kill and injure as many Biafrans as possible in this way tried to break the proud spirit and high morale of the nation. Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Adekunle aptly nicknamed the Black Scorpion who commanded Nigeria's 3rd Marine Commando Division, had said that, he wanted all Biafrans killed. "Kill them all"! He was once reported as having told foreign correspondent at the military front. The genocidal tendencies committed by the Nigerian armed forces were thus, exploited on the ground as well as during air attacks. The highest death-rate reported from a single Nigerian air raid was about 510 deaths, with more than 170 others wounded, and this occurred in Otuocha-Aguleri on 13th September 1967. The market was massively raided, the Kwashiorkor clinic and St. Joseph's Church were hit many houses and buildings in the area were totally destroyed.⁴⁴⁶

O. Afamefuna argued that the genocide in Biafra was man's inhumanity to man. It was obvious for the Igbos that their security in the Nigerian State could no longer be assured since the government could not protect them. Thus, the war was actually caused by insecurity because the Igbos has already seen themselves as Nigerians. But the failure of the government to ensure their safety was enough reason to seek for protection in their homeland hence the declaration of the Republic of Biafra.⁴⁴⁷ Orjiugo recalled that during the Nigerian-Biafran War, many people were killed. Bombs were being thrown. Many young people were captured and conscripted into the army. Biafran people died a lot in the war. Many parents left their children, and husbands left their wives and ran for their lives. Many even went missing.⁴⁴⁸ According to Elder Ben N. Miti, the civil war was a dislocator. It caused heightened tension and disrupted many things such as educational growth, loss of businesses and buildings. For him, "I remembered when one day I went to fresh water accompanied by my few friends, we heard the sound of gun shoot and ran for the safety of our lives. In short, the war caused insecurity and fear".⁴⁴⁹ Theresa Mbakwe prayed that there should not be another civil war again, having lost family members and friends. She recalled that during a

⁴⁴⁶ *Nigerian/Biafra Conflict*, p.34.

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with Afamefuna O., Age c. 50, Business Man, At Enugu Ugbawka, 7th October, 2017.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Orjiugo Nwosu, Age c. 60, Businesswoman, At OwerriNwkorji Nwerre Local Govt. Area Imo State, 6th October, 2017.

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Elder Ben N. Miti, Age c. 60, Business Man/Church Leader, At Sango Ibadan, Oyo State, 6th October, 2017.

wedding ceremony in Adazi-Ani while everybody was enjoying and also congratulating the newly wedded couple a big shelling was dropped in the compound where the wedding ceremony was being conducted and killed a good number of people.⁴⁵⁰

On 25th November, 1968 K.H. Jaggi, delegate of the International Committee of Red Cross in Biafra said that, “there are certain overtones of genocide” in the Nigeria’s conduct of her war against Biafra. He referred to the massacre of civilians in Aba and Asaba, and declared that, “this was just more than an execution of a people”.⁴⁵¹ On 28th January, 1968 Markpress reported that, civilians, working in their vegetable gardens were among the Biafrans killed in the Nigerian air raids in Umuahia. A Nigerian fighter bomber made a surprise attack, rocketed and strafed residential areas in the centre of Umuahia and wrecked a number of buildings. A policeman who cultivated his garden during his off-duty hours was slashed into two by the rocket from the plane. A young medical doctor in another part of the town was among the victims injured in the raid. He was admitted to his own hospital.⁴⁵² The bombing of Queen Elizabeth Hospital was equally regarded as another example of genocidal act committed against Biafrans during the civil war. Certainly, it was the position of the Biafran government that the objective of the Nigerian daily air attack mission in Biafra was to destroy all civilian lives. All the towns and villages in Biafra were bombed time without number.⁴⁵³

Bombing of market places was another genocidal acts committed against Biafrans. Indiscriminate bombing of civilian populations in towns and villages in Biafra were witnessed by foreign journalists and nationals that visited Biafra. The publication of these acts appeared in world newspapers which informed the world opinion about the perceived genocide being carried out against Biafrans.⁴⁵⁴ One of the market that was bombed during the war that, killed about 150 people and injured about 100 persons was the *Awgu* market on 17th February, 1968. The Eke Nomeh market was rocketed, on 3rd March, 1968, about 78 people died and 150 wounded. The Nigerian jet bombers bombed *Itu* market and killed 6 people and wounded 23 others. On 14th September, 1968 the Nigerian jet bombers bombed *Aguleri* market while it was in full session, killing 500 and wounded over 1,000 people. *Ihiala* market also received its own share of the federal air force raid on 4th September, 1968. Edmund Ejiofor used the word suffering to describe the experiences of the civil war. He argued that:

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with Theresa Mbakwe, Age c. 80, Business Woman, At Adazi-Ani Anocha Local Govt. Area Anambra State, 4th October, 2017.

⁴⁵¹ TNA, FCO, 95/225/File No.IR 1/ 215/ 16, Markpress News Features Service’s Involvement With Biafra , 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1968.

⁴⁵² *Markpress News Releases*, 28th January, 1968.

⁴⁵³ *Markpress News Releases*, 10th February, 1968.

⁴⁵⁴ *Nigerian/Biafran Conflict*, p.90.

Really there were a lot of sufferings at that time. They stopped everything coming into Biafra. Biafrans was saying that the federals had closed borders and seas. In most of the cities such as Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Aba, and Enugu you can't get anything to buy. The commercial market where you can buy food was not there. The so-called small towns such as *Atani* have their market destroyed. Before morning, people ran away from the market because of air raids and bombers. There was no market that would be open during day time. The bombers always come early in the morning to bomb markets. I was in Class One when the war began so I witnessed it. It was a sympathetic situation.⁴⁵⁵

In August 1967 some group of people were holding a meeting trying to settle a land dispute between two brothers. Bombers came and pass when they found out that people were many the plane flew down and dropped bomb there, but the bomb bypassed where the people were doing meeting and shot another building. In July 1969 the federal bombers went and bomb Atani market in the current Ogbaru Local Government Area Anambra State. They killed a lot of people and many were wounded. Also, a lot of people in Biafra died of malnutrition and lack of food in the war. These were elderly men and women, children and pregnant women because of lack of food. From 1967 to 1970, there use to be sound of machine gun and Biafran Ogunigwe.⁴⁵⁶ Bombing of Hospitals was also cited as example of Biafrans genocidal claims. Without any prick of conscience, the vandals bombed hospitals as military targets. For instance, Nigerian jet fighter bombed the Lutheran Mission Hospital Eket, on 28th December, 1968. On 23rd January, 1968 Mary Slessor Hospital, Itu was razed to the ground by combined bomb, rocket and bullets from the Nigerian jet fighters and bombers.⁴⁵⁷ The *International Herald Tribune* of 1st February, 1968 reported the bombardment of Itu town. Thus, "one of the heaviest damage the foreign press saw at the Mary Slessor Hospital of the Presbyterian Church at Itu on the Cross River, North-West of Calabar. One doctor and one patient were killed in the building by the blast. Three people standing outside the building were wounded and died later".⁴⁵⁸

On 4th June, 1968 foreign correspondents in Lagos were invited by the Catholic Secretariat to hear a story by a young Igbo woman about the atrocities allegedly committed by the federal troops in the area of *Ishiagu*, 15 miles, South of Asaba. Correspondents present were, the BBC, AP, AFP, Voice of America, and Czech News Agency. BBC and VOA

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Edmund Ejiofor, Age c. 70, Business Man, At Eziora Ozublu Ekwusigo Local Govt. Area Anambra State, 8th October, 2017.

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with Edmund Ejiofor...

⁴⁵⁷ *Nigerian/Biafran Conflict, 1968. pp.34-35.*

⁴⁵⁸ *The International Herald Tribune, 1st February, 1968.*

recorded the woman's testimony. The story could be traced in mid-April 1968, when Biafrans raided the areas, from Asaba to Ogwashi-Uku with some assistance from Midwestern Igbo inhabitants of the area. According to the story, federal troops surrounded *Ishiagu*, dug trenches and then shot and buried some 400 men, and moved 450 women and children survivors to Red Cross camps. A similar story was told about the Biafran raids in Ibusa. After the press conference, the correspondents probably angered by what they heard made straight to schedule a meeting with General Gowon on 5th June, 1968 to register their grievances with him. The British High Commission in Lagos perceived the story as something that would arouse public feelings of genocide committed by the FMG, which later got them worried about the intensification of Biafran propaganda.⁴⁵⁹

Another dimension of Biafra's genocidal story was food poisoning. Food poisoning was one of the major methods appeared to have been used to commit genocide in Biafra. The Health Workers and Scientists of Biafra were positive in their testimonies that, food poisoning actually took place in the early part of the civil war. What was discovered to have constituted the poisoning of food was a lethal chemical substance, known as arsenic, which was found, mixed with salt, sugar, milk and tomatoes. The claims appeared to have proved that, this poisoning was carried out by the federal troops. In November, 1967 Biafran health workers and others scientists discovered arsenic acid in bags of salt, sugar and tin milk and tomatoes infiltrated into Biafra through the Midwest by the Nigerian government.⁴⁶⁰ The story was vehemently denied by the federal officials; in fact these allegations were described as ridiculous.⁴⁶¹

As a result of the stringent economic blockade against Biafra, imported foods like tinned milk, tomatoes, sugar, salt, meat, beans etc were virtually non-existence in the market. The food shortages resulted in malnutrition and "Kwashiorkor" diseases. This situation caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. The main victims were old men and women, nursing mothers and children. This terrible situation, coupled with the wanton destruction of farmlands and crops in areas overrun by federal troops led to mass starvation and death. Despite the tremendous efforts made by world-wide relief agencies in sending tons of food to the starving people of Biafra authoritative opinion held that one million or more Biafrans would have died by January 1969 as a result of starvation. Such opinions were

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/287, File No. TX 10/16/6c/1066/PD/Nigeria: Defence and Military Operations against Biafra, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1968, Confidential Report by Sir David Hunt to Foreign Office, 5th June, 1968.

⁴⁶⁰ *Nigerian-Biafra Conflict*, p.36.

⁴⁶¹ *Nigerian-Biafran Conflict*, p.89.

suppressed by the relief workers in and out of Biafra.⁴⁶² The Biafran National Red Cross Society under its National Secretary, M.K. Moses Iloh on 25th April, 1968 wrote a petition to the International Committee of Red Cross Special Delegate and Representative in Biafra. They were convinced that, the main and only aim behind the Nigerian aggression against Biafra was plain and savaged genocide. It was equally clear that, Nigeria have no regards for the Geneva Convention and probably incapable of respecting them.⁴⁶³ Also, on 21st May, 1968 the International Committee of Red Cross wrote an official letter to General Yakubu Gowon. They expressed their deep concern and worry over the continued air raids in the Republic of Biafra. Although, the federal government had on several occasions publicly declared that, the pilots were ordered to stop attacking and bombing civilian targets. The delegates of the ICRC in Biafra reported to the Committee that they witnessed a number of new bombing attacks against civilian population. About which the Biafran National Red Cross filed strong protest with the ICRC. But, the protest letter was rejected by the FMG owing to a submission by the representative of the ICRC in Nigeria, of a letter with two documents purporting to have supported the protest. The Federal government pointed out that the two documents which were written on 25th April, 1968 were signed by M.K. Moses Iloh, who claimed to be the Secretary of the Biafran Red Cross Society and that the documents were also issued from a false address. While there was no branch of the Biafran Red Cross Society in Enugu which was already under federal control as at time the letter was presented to them.⁴⁶⁴

On 11th October, 1968 Markpress report, mentioned the personal fact-finding mission to Biafra by Stephen Lewis, a Canadian MP. He was the third Canadian Parliamentarian to visit Biafra. The two other MPs on a similar mission were Andrew Brewin and David MacDonald. During his visit, Lewis visited the war fronts, inspected relief operations and met old Biafran friends particularly in *Ihiala* where he was a former principal of a secondary school between 1960 and 1961. His first impression about Biafra was the existence of an incredible determination of every Biafran to resist and win the war.⁴⁶⁵ He commented on the Nigeria's International Observer Team investigation report which claimed that there was no evidence of genocide in Biafra. He said, "If you want to see genocide, come to Biafra. Anybody who says there is no evidence of genocide is either in the payroll of Britain or is

⁴⁶² *Nigerian-Biafran Conflict*, p. 20.

⁴⁶³ TNA, FCO, 65/202, File No. JWN 1/12 Part A/ Minutes on Record of Discussion with Notable Members of the Public on the Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. A Text of Petition by Biafran National Red Cross Society to International Committee of Red Cross, 25th April, 1968.

⁴⁶⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/202, A Text of Letter by International Committee of Red Cross to Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 21st May, 1968.

⁴⁶⁵ Markpress News Features Services, Canadian MP in Biafran on Fact-Finding Mission, 11th October, 1968.

being a deliberate fool”.⁴⁶⁶ Stephen Lewis was a member of New Democratic Party of the Ontario Legislature for Scarborough West.⁴⁶⁷ In his famous article titled, “There is Genocide in Biafra, I Saw It” which was published in the *Toronto Daily Star*, Lewis posited:

Genocide is an ugly, impossible word; I don't know precisely how one defines it. But if it means, even in part, the deliberate, indiscriminate killing of a person or tribe, then, there is concrete evidence to be found in the terrible Nigerian-Biafran war. It was possible to ferret out eye-witness accounts, or indeed, visit the scene of unspeakable civilian atrocities. For instance, the little village of Urua Inyang, at the southernmost tip of Biafra, was the scene of a dreadful massacre.⁴⁶⁸

Similarly, just like the Biafrans presented their genocidal story the federalist side at the same time, unleashed their counter-propaganda venom against the Biafrans. For instance, in delivering his speech and making a case for the federal cause at the Addis Ababa Peace Conference, of 12th August, 1968 the Federal Commissioner for Information and Labour, Anthony Enahoro, said that, on 15th July, 1967 General Gowon issued a special appeal to officers and other ranks, the true leaders of the people and the general public in the three Eastern States to disown Ojukwu and his rebel collaborators, in order to prevent loss of life of innocent citizens of these States in the “police action”. He urged the civilians in their own interests not to fight or provoke the federal troops. He advised them to abandon Ojukwu's conscript army and join forces with all well meaning Nigerians to save the country from further suffering. He reassured the Igbos of the East-Central State that, with the new states structure and other reforms under the programme of the Supreme Military Council, they would have full equality of treatment with all other communities anywhere in Nigeria. On 18th July, 1967 Ojukwu's agents replied to the appeal made by Gowon and launched an explosion in Yaba, Lagos. An oil tanker owned by an Igbo man was left in front of a cinema house by an Igbo driver with explosives inside the tank. The explosion caused great damage to the Inland Revenue buildings, the Cinema House, killed many people and wounded several others. Ojukwu cut off the electricity supply to the Mid-West Textile Mills, at Asaba and to Asaba town, which normally came from the Afam Power Station in the Eastern States. Ojukwu bombing raids of defenceless villages and their acts of terrorism in the Mid-West emphasised their determination to involve as many Nigerian people and their properties, as possible in total destruction. Then, the federal government had to restore electricity supply

⁴⁶⁶ *Toronto Daily Star*, 9th October, 1968.

⁴⁶⁷ *Toronto Daily Star*, 9th October, 1968.

⁴⁶⁸ *Toronto Daily Star*, 9th October, 1968.

through other sources on 20th July, 1967. On 23rd July, 1967 police discovered on 23rd 9th August, 1967 Ojukwu planes that bombed innocent and defenceless civilian population in Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, and Lokoja. They raided on a Sunday when people were at Church and several towns in the Northern States. Anthony Enahoro noted that, it was regrettable that the Biafran government had viciously exploited the Nigerian crisis in their propaganda while conveniently ignoring killings of other Nigerians in Igboland. From the event of 1966, all sections of Nigeria have learnt their lessons. There was no reason why the pattern should be repeated, given the will to overcome them. Nigerians must forgive one another, even if, all sections of the country which suffered in one way or another from the event, could not forget.⁴⁶⁹

Furthermore, while delivering his speech, Enahoro quoted B.J. Imkeme from Calabar, a retired Senior Medical Officer in the employment of the former Eastern Nigeria Government, who gave what appeared to be a resume of Biafra's acts of genocide in the South-Eastern State. He said that, when the war began, it was clear that, the minorities wanted to remain within the federation of Nigeria, but with states of their own, in which they would enjoy the right of self-determination. This did not suit the Igbos of the newly declared Republic of Biafra. So, they were determined either to force the five million non-Igbos of Eastern Region into their Republic of Biafra or exterminate them systematically. To this end, Igbos were quickly sent to all non-Igbo areas with instructions to track down the people, detain or even kill all who dared rose a voice in protest against Biafra. Since the beginning of the civil war, the non-Igbos was subjected to torture, detention, all forms of human indignities and even killings. Enahoro later emphasised that, the Nigerian Civil War was not a "war of genocide". If it were a war of genocide against the Igbos people, over fifty thousand Igbos would not be living in Lagos as at the time of the civil war. Instead, they went about their normal businesses as law abiding citizens without molestation.⁴⁷⁰

3.3 The Directorate of Propaganda

In October, 1967 the establishment of the Directorate of Propaganda for the effective management of the Biafra's propaganda both locally and internationally was the most important high point of the activities of the Biafran government in the field of war propaganda.⁴⁷¹ It was Ojukwu's dissatisfaction with the works of the Biafra's Ministry of Information, which he considered inefficient, pedestrian and not sufficiently in tune with the

⁴⁶⁹ Speech Delivered by Anthony Enahoro at the Addis Ababa Peace Conference, 12th August, 1968.

⁴⁷⁰ Kirk Greene, A.H.M., 1971. *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria*, pp.308-309.

⁴⁷¹ Stremmlau, J.J 1977. *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, pp.110-111.

hopes and fears of the Biafra people that led to the establishment of the Directorate of Propaganda. The Propaganda Directorate was established to bypass the rigidities of the Civil Service. The authors of the propaganda directorate offered several remedies to the difficulties facing them. Some of the solutions were squarely practical, such as bringing batteries to the marketplaces so that radios could be set to Biafran radio and played. They also suggested the employment of actors and playwrights to produce plays that could be performed in the rural areas, where people lacked access to radio and television, and where the high percentage of illiteracy limited the impact of printed media.⁴⁷² However, the realities of the war also elicited stern recommendations from the Directorate. As the report stated:

One of the greatest problems the Propaganda Directorate has to contend with is that of general immobility in the country. The immobility arose out of the shortage of vehicles and lately of petrol and diesel oil. ... The problems of blockade and transport cannot be solved by the propaganda machinery. The primary concern of the Directorate is with the mental attitude of the people. The dire situation demanded several responses and the Propaganda Directorate made several recommendations.⁴⁷³

The Directorate was to act as a coordinating unit for all propaganda exercise. Not only was each department of the Directorate were to adhere to the various guidelines while creating propaganda, especially regarding the aim and audience for each piece of propaganda it created, but statements regarding “each propaganda item should be placed with the Director or preferably with the Appraisals Committee. This practice might be different and rigorous, but it was the only way to sharpen the tip point of the propaganda arrow.”⁴⁷⁴ The Directorate was divided into several units, namely, the External Publicity Bureau, Home Press Services, and the Publication and Research Department. Within each bureau were several committees, each assigned to a specific audience. Examples were the Calling Africa East of Biafra Committee, and the Calling Nigeria Committee. There were equally, sub-committees established by the Directorate such as the Political Analysis Committee, and Psychological Warfare Committee among others. Each committee was headed by a Chairman. Among its staff were several script writers and researchers. The duties of the Committees were to keep

⁴⁷² Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, p.90.

⁴⁷³ Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, p.88. Also see Biafran Ministry of Information, 1968. *Guidelines for Effective Propaganda*. Enugu: Research Bureau and Appraisal Committee and Directorate of Propaganda.

⁴⁷⁴ Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, p.90.

an up-to-date library of developments concerning their audience and to provide Radio Biafra with propaganda materials to be beamed to this audience.⁴⁷⁵

On 17th June, 1968 barely a month after the fall of Port Harcourt, the Appraisals Committee of the Directorate for Propaganda unveiled a plan titled “Guide Lines for Effective Propaganda”. The paper served as a guideline both in creating an overarching conceptualisation of how Biafran propaganda should work and how to cope and circumvent certain problems that arose because the war was turning decisively against Biafra.⁴⁷⁶ The key to the success of Biafran domestic propaganda was village-to-village level contact. This work was carried out by the Political Orientation Committee of the Directorate which organised hundreds of University students and Secondary school leaders who would introduce explain and justify government policy to small group of peasants. They were equally mandated to lead the criticisms against the Nigeria’s atrocities as described by Radio Biafra and provide exaggerated praises of Biafran military success in order to raise morale. These so-called “agitators” corps was also responsible for the performance of surveillance roles, inducing conformity and exposing recalcitrant and saboteurs. American trained scientists employed various sampling and survey techniques to enable members of the agitator’s corps to conduct weekly opinion polls so that the Directorate would know when certain atrocity arguments were running thin. The content of Biafran Propaganda was determined by the Psychological Warfare Committee, which normally met every Tuesday to receive and plan the major themes to be introduced each month. The Committee also divided the four variations of the main themes, one of which was presented each week and ran for seven days. The same theme and sub-themes were used for domestic and international audiences. Three elements remained endemic to propaganda during the final two years of the conflict, an emphasis on alleged Nigeria atrocities the impossibility of any compromise with the implacable enemy and the indomitable will of the Biafran people. International considerations frequently influenced the deliberations of the Tuesday meetings of the Psychological Warfare Committee but it was impossible to generalise about their significance. Reports were presented by Biafran emissaries, businessmen, or others who had been abroad. Military developments also effected the deliberations and could lead to a shift in the schedule theme. Quite often Ojukwu could intervene to offer personal suggestions of what would or not work.⁴⁷⁷

Upon its release in June 1969, the Ahiara Declaration was the first publication in which the Biafran government proclaimed the Biafran Revolution. In the document, they

⁴⁷⁵ Nwankwo, A.A. 1972, *Nigeria: the Challenge of Biafra*, pp.26-27.

⁴⁷⁶ Doron, R.S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, p.90.

⁴⁷⁷ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.114-115.

sought out to explicitly outline the purpose and principles of their revolutionary movement. The main purpose of the revolution was for Biafra to become free of neo-colonialist influences and serve as a leading example for Africans and peoples in other developing world. The Biafran Revolution was used as a direct appeal to the peoples of the developing regions throughout the world. The description of the Biafran Revolution in the Ahiara Declaration, however, largely repeated sentiments of the Biafran publications since May 1967. From the beginning of the secession, Biafra's leaders had argued that, Nigerians under the leadership of the Hausa-Fulani feudal aristocracy were willing to remain dependent on foreign influence in administering the Nigerian State. They compared these failures with the notion that Biafra's leaders were driven to achieve liberation from colonial and neo-colonial influences as a truly independent state. The Ahiara Declaration, therefore, was the summation of the Biafran Revolution rather than its beginning.⁴⁷⁸ Within the context of Biafran Revolution as enshrined in the Ahiara Declaration Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu argued that:

Biafran struggle had a far-reaching significance. It was the latest recrudescence in our time of the age-old struggle of the Blackman for his full stature as man. We are the latest victims of the collusion between the three traditional scourges of the Blackman, namely racism, Arab-Muslim expansionism and white economic imperialism. Playing subsidiary role is Bolshevik Russia seeking a place in the African sun. Our struggle was a total and vehement rejection of all those evil which blighted Nigeria, evils which were bound to lead to the disintegration of that ill-fated Federation...⁴⁷⁹

For Ojukwu, the promise and potentialities of Biafra were immense and variegated. They were such that would make the Blackman everywhere move among other racial groups with their heads erect. Biafra has the largest concentration of intellectuals and manpower in Black Africa. Biafran drive and enterprise, which were considered a threat to the white man's industrial and commercial monopoly in Africa, are an inspiration to the Blackman. In the course of the conflict, Biafra had depended more on locally made weapons, some of which had not been known elsewhere before, than on imported arms. In spite of overwhelming odds, Biafra has gained the admiration of men all over the globe because of her military prowess, which, on the other hand, has bewildered the so-called civilized nations. If at war, Biafra has given promises of evolving an advanced agricultural system and shown signs of

⁴⁷⁸ Gluck, J.A. 2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War*, pp.125.

⁴⁷⁹ Markpress News Feature Service, Gen No. 785. *The Cause of the Blackman*. 7th January, 1970.

becoming an industrial nation, in peace time she will surely be a “prairies and granary”, as well as the factory, of Blackman. The Biafrans strived to build a nation, where democracy, equality, rule of law, social justice and fair play will prevail. Hence, they struggled to extricate themselves from the ills that shock the foundations of Nigeria and enthrone these ideals in a new nation of their own making. Being the only nation in Black Africa to fight for her emancipation with the blood of her youth, her success will be the triumph of the Blackman everywhere. Biafra was a gauntlet thrown at the feet of Africa and the Negro world. It therefore, behooves on the blacks all over the world to rally round and support Biafra in her struggle for survival.⁴⁸⁰

3.4 Radio Biafra Phenomenon

Radio, as an instrument of propaganda played a leading role in the Nigerian Civil War. In Biafra, the major effective way of communication was through radio broadcast. Many people in towns and villages would converge around a radio set to listen to the news. An effective and strategic communication was very necessary for the people to truly comprehend the accurate situations of things. During this period the series of speeches delivered by the Biafran leader, through radiobroadcast rekindled the will and determination of the ordinary man in Biafra to remain calm and be vigilant in spite of the tribulations they were meant to undergo.⁴⁸¹

The Broadcasting Corporation of Biafra, which operated two distinct services, was the end product of the two radio stations that existed in the former Eastern Region before the beginning of the civil war. Before the war, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) had an Eastern Region branch, headquartered in Enugu. It transmitted the National Programmes from there on 227m and 73.31m (10kw each) and on 218m from Onitsha, Calabar, and Port Harcourt (250kw each). In addition, there was a separate organisation, the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Services which began operations in 1960, as an associate company of Oversea Rediffusion Limited, in conjunction with the Eastern Nigerian government. It subsequently developed and brought under the control of the regional government. It broadcasted on 314.6m (10kw) and 61.79m (10kw) from Enugu. Therefore, on secession the Biafran government was left with four 10kw transmitters and three ¼kw transmitters for the area to be covered, a much more wattage than the NBC could then assemble. Their total was 73½kw for the whole country, with 35kw in Lagos and 15kw in Ibadan. Though, the Western State’s own Broadcasting Corporation had a capacity of 30kw from Ibadan and nearby cities. After

⁴⁸⁰ *Markpress*, 7th January, 1970.

⁴⁸¹ Williams, J. 2011. *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*. Masters Dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Ottawa, pp.13-14.

secession, the immediate use was made by Biafrans, of the facilities and wavelengths which were in existence before the war. They later changed their name to Broadcasting Corporation of Biafra. The frequencies changed often in the early days, setting at 4.855m/cs and 6.145m/cs. The services were in the early stage, very poor, probably because secession took place in the rainy season. Always a sad time for broadcasting locally, but increased in volume up to what one expect with 10kw available. This increase was in direct proportion to the vigour with which they pursued their invective against Britain, Nigeria and Russians. Targets were picked at a random; one that was close to home was news talk, entirely on the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, “the noble savage”.⁴⁸²

The whole service of the BCB was quite effective. It was an offence for a Nigerian to listen to the station. The service continued steadily for a very long time. Although, there were frequency changes that, took place on 7th December, 1968 with two or three abortive attempts. On 13th December, 1968 the Biafran government established 7.313m/cs frequency which began to broadcast the internal service of the BCB. The External Service, which shifted briefly to 7.313m/cs, at which time there was only one service, was back at 6.145m/cs. For some months, before Umuahia fell, it was known that, the broadcast were being made from a portable transmitter in a field, north of Umuahia, with serials sited some distance away. This portable transmitter then moved to Orlu. Broadcasting ceased from a few days during the move. Its exact location or whereabouts were not known, nor was it in a permanent building. It looked like it was made in a form of a mobile device should in case it had to be removed hurriedly because of military action. During the war, as far as average domestic listener of Radio Biafra in Lagos was concerned, the best service for reception was Voice of Biafra, the External Service on 6.145m/cs. It usually starts its broadcasting in English at 6:30 am, with music on, four days a week. A programme titled, “Nobody Knows” was broadcasted usually on Mondays and Thursdays. In the programmed Biafrans were given the opportunity to testify in the most pathetic voice they could muster, their stories of the pogroms that occurred in Northern Nigeria between January and September, 1966 and their subsequent harrowing experiences as a result of the war. At 7:00 Am, there was a new broadcast in English language, which contained news from Biafra and world news in varying proportions. News form Biafra emanated from all sources especially the BBC. It was

⁴⁸² TNA, FCO, 65/445, File No. JWN 13/3/5A/369/ Information on Nigeria, Press and Biafran Propaganda, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969.

predominantly African news, which always favoured those countries which recognised or had sympathy with Biafra such as Gabon, Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Zambia.⁴⁸³

There appear to be very little sense of balance in the content of Radio Biafra news. Very often, one was regaled with stifling stories of very minor achievements in Zambia or Gabon, when major news world items were missed out completely. An attempt was often made to bend stories in an anti-British manner the circumstances surrounding the Northern Ireland riots being an obvious target. The anti-British invective was well known. There were equally exaggerated claims of genocide from the Biafra's Ministry of Information, when commenting on news of the war. The news was usually followed by commentary a five minute talks on various aspects of the war, either on the rectitude of Biafra's stand or abhorrent behaviour of the Nigerian Army. This was followed by music. At 7:30 am, there began a "Calling Nigerian Programme", devoted either to the incitement of Nigerians in respect of the civil war, or a contribution of the usual invective against Nigeria. At 7:45 am, more music were been relayed on the radio. 8:00am would be the news broadcasting in French language. This appeared to be a direct translation of the 7:00am English language news. The station appeared to go off the air at about 8:30am, but open up again in the evening. The news, which was preceded by Igbo drums, was read by *Victoria Madekife*, or *Inyang Agetue* (female), *Nicholas Nnaje*, *Emmanuel Ekpo*, *Chike Arinze*, and *Chude Onuzong* (male). The standard of news reading of the Biafra's radio was certainly higher than the one that Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation provided.⁴⁸⁴

The domestic service of the BCB which was on 7.314m/cs was much less voice audible, being rather covered by a much closed Voice of America transmission. It broadcasted all day, partly in English, Igbo, and other Eastern Nigeria's dialects. Its news was virtually all of internal subjects, and for most of the day, as far as it was known; records were played with intermittent news broadcasts. It was much more difficult to monitor on an ordinary household set, because of other radio stations interference with it. Radio Biafra often beats Markpress News Features Services by several days with news stories. Though, its allegations were generally even more extreme than the Markpress, its credibility among top Nigerians and expatriates were very low. Though journalists and representatives of other media sources gave for sundry reasons more credence to its claims than they should. Lower class Nigerians were largely thought to believe its stories. In Biafra, however, it seemed that for quite a while few people had been able to listen to the radio partly because of the breakdown of the radio transmission but more importantly due to the shortages of batteries.

⁴⁸³ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Radio Biafra and Biafran Propaganda, 1968-1969.

⁴⁸⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Radio Biafra and Biafran Propaganda, 1968-1969.

Certainly, at one stage news broadcasts from the radio was often circulated widely afterwards, by hand on old scraps of paper.⁴⁸⁵

Radio Biafra carried series of news reports during the Nigerian Civil War especially the news regarding the British involvement in the war. For example, on 8th June, 1967 the radio released a report that, Northern Nigerians were fleeing from various parts of Nigeria. As Western Nigeria Radio reported that they were fleeing because they were being haunted by their own action to non-Northerners committed in 1966. On 22nd June, 1967 it reported the uncovering of a secret plot by the Lagos regime to kill all senior military personnel in Midwestern Nigeria. According to the plan, Hausa soldiers would move into Benin City and with the help of few pro-Gowon soldiers, kill all senior officers from the rank of Captain to Lieutenant Colonel, who were opposed to Gowon regime. The purpose of the plan was to clear the way for Gowon's troops to establish a base in Asaba. It was uncertain, according to the report, whether certain elements of the Midwest army succumbed to Gowon's plan to use the Midwest, as a base to attack Republic of Biafra. On 17th July, 1967 Radio Biafra report was that, in a border town, villagers shot down a Nigerian plane with Dane gun fire. It was a Tiger Moth, registration No. NAA 155 and crude unexploded bombs were found in the wreck. On 19th December, 1967 the radio reported that the Commander of the Calabar sector of the Nigerian Army, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, had been killed. The number of Nigerian soldiers killed with him was described as staggering. On 28th December, 1967 it reported that, the message of congratulations sent by the Nigerians to Lieutenant Colonel Adekunle was a device to pretend that the officer was still alive. On 18th May, 1968 a shipload of black-painted armed and equipped Britain soldiers to join the *attaché* on the Port Harcourt sector arrived at the Port of Victoria according to Radio Biafra and official diplomatic source.⁴⁸⁶

On 20th February, 1968 Radio Biafra reported the statement made by Emmanuel Aguma, Biafra's Administrator for Port Harcourt Province. Aguma assured General Yakubu Gowon and his supporters that, their dream of capturing Port Harcourt would never materialise until there were no more Biafrans alive. Aguma, who was also Biafra's Commissioner for Labour spoke to newsmen in his office on 1st February, 1968. He stressed that; the Biafran government had the responsibility to protect lives and properties of the family of Lieutenant Colonel Diète-Spiff, Gowon's puppet Governor for a non-existent Rivers State. Aguma said that, any government bent on genocide and unwilling to protect

⁴⁸⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Radio Biafra and Biafran Propaganda, 1968-1969.

⁴⁸⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Appendix and Reports of Radio Biafra, June 1967-June 1968.

lives and properties could never stand. The Administrator emphasised that, by intensifying its air raids on Port Harcourt civilian's population while worshipping in churches, Gowon and his supporters had indicated how much they were committed to genocide.⁴⁸⁷ Also, on 19th February, 1968 Radio Biafra denied the enemy's claims that; they had succeeded in capturing Awka and Umunze. But, it was confirmed by one of the Biafra's military spokesman, that, however, there was sporadic fighting around Ugwuoba.⁴⁸⁸ The Radio also reported, on 17th February, 1968 that three British mercenaries fighting for the federal government were murdered in a brief battle near Udi. One of these mercenaries was Captain Clement. Captain Clement had led a group of Nigerian troops in four vehicles to bring supplies to their colleagues trapped in Ukuoga. Also killed in the battle, were twenty five Nigerian soldiers.⁴⁸⁹ The Nigerian Air Force raids on civilians and Cheshire Home on 20th February, 1968 was reported by Radio Biafra. It said that, Nigerians bombed the civilian population of Awgwu, and killed one hundred people in a market. The raid took place when the Papal delegate was addressing a crowd just ten miles away. They heard the thud of the bombs. About one hundred men, women and children were killed and many of the victims were on the danger list. Nigerians had pretended to be making bombing raids on military targets, but the heaviest casualty figure in the Awgwu raid was recorded at Ngunfo market. The market was in session when the enemy dropped eight high explosive bombs. The raid left the gruesome sight of mutilated bodies of children, mothers and fathers littered about the market place. Sustained Biafra's anti-aircraft fire chased off the raiders and prevented them from doing more damage. In January, 1968 the enemy carried out their first raid on Awgwu and killed about fifteen people. They also bombed the civilian population at Abakaliki, and wrecked seventeen houses. Also, the Nigerian Anglo-Soviet operated Air Force planes bombed the Obioma Cheshire Home in Port Harcourt. The Home was built at the cost of £12,000 in 1965 for the handicapped and motherless children. Similar raid also took place in Gowu.⁴⁹⁰

It was officially announced by Radio Biafra, on 16th February, 1968 that, Biafran government took the decision to grant loans to farmers. To enable them increase food production.⁴⁹¹ Later, the Radio reported on 18th February, 1968 that the Biafran government

⁴⁸⁷ Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Protection for Lt.Col. Diète-Spiff's Family. BCB in English/05.30/GMT/20/2/68.

⁴⁸⁸ Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Denial of Capture of Awka. Radio Biafra in English/12.00/GMT/19/2/68.

⁴⁸⁹ Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Killing of Three British Mercenaries Near Udi. Radio Biafra in English/12.00/GMT/17/2/68.

⁴⁹⁰ Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Nigerian Air Force Raids on Civilians and Cheshire Home. Radio Biafra in English/05.30/GMT/20/2/68.

⁴⁹¹ Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Loans to Farmers. Radio Biafra in English/20.00/GMT/16/2/68.

had made available £750,000 for grants and loans to co-operative societies.⁴⁹² On 17th February, 1968 the Radio reported that a bird with the British Museum with identification Ring No. HJ36245 was found at Omohue in Afikpo Division.⁴⁹³ On June 29th, 1968 Radio Biafra report stated that, an aircraft carrying Lieutenant Colonel Diète-Spiff and the British Foreign Secretary, attempting to fly to Port Harcourt was hit by Biafran anti-aircraft fire and forced back to Lagos. Diète-Spiff was killed. The Foreign Secretary died from the wounds he sustained, and his body was flown to London.⁴⁹⁴ Consequently, on 20th June, 1968 Radio Biafra reported the criticism of the Biafran Commissioner for Information, Ifeagwu Eke against the United State's policy in the Nigerian Civil War. According to Eke, the US policy towards Biafra had degenerated from one of fake neutrality, to that of extreme hostility. He observed that, the only reason for the official US attitude towards the war, was its dependent on Britain for policy guidance in areas considered by the imperialist, to be traditionally within the British sphere of influence. The Commissioner warned that, the USA should follow the policy of enlightened countries, like Czechoslovak, Holland, France, and West Germany, and stop sending arms to Nigeria. The USA should learn from other countries like France, Norway, Netherlands, and Germany and send relief direct to Biafra. The USA should not be satisfied with leading the world in science and technology from a morally bankrupt posture. Instead, they should for once rise beyond economic self-interest and the demands for mere diplomatic reciprocity and condemn atrocities against humanity. USA should search its conscience; stop supporting a brutal British policy which had been condemned by the civilised world and the entire British people. Above all, they should recognise the right of 14, 000,000 Biafrans to decide their own future.⁴⁹⁵

On 6th January, 1969 Radio Biafra reported that, the British planes, including Helifaxes complete with pilots were delivered to Nigeria on the advice of a British soldier, General Alexander. General Alexander was reported to have arrived in Lagos to co-ordinate the overall assault planned against Biafra on behalf of Nigeria, by Harold Wilson. This particular report of Radio Biafra generated serious concern in London to the extent that attempt was made to issue a denial of the story, with the main purpose of showing that all

⁴⁹² Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Funds from Co-operative Societies. Radio Biafra in English/15.00/GMT/18/2/68.

⁴⁹³ Nigeria: Biafran Radio Reports in Brief. Finding of Bird With British Museum Ring. Radio Biafra in English/12.00/GMT/17/2/68.

⁴⁹⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Appendix and Reports of Radio Biafra, June 1967-June 1968.

⁴⁹⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/236, File No. Tx3/3/PA/ 6C/1066, Minutes on Nigerian Political Affairs and USA Attitude Towards the Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1970. Radio Biafra Report on Biafra's Information Commissioner's Attack on USA Involvement in the Nigerian Civil War, 20th June, 1968.

news from the Radio was false.⁴⁹⁶ On 7th January, 1969 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, issued a statement that there was no truth in the allegations of Radio Biafra about General Alexander. The General neither went to Geneva on 20 December, 1968 nor had he any plans to visit Lagos again. The Foreign Secretary said that they intended to deny the Biafran story in London and equally take the opportunity to point out that this was just one more example of the false reports being put out by Radio Biafra.⁴⁹⁷ On 11th January, 1969 British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, informed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the statement issued by Biafran Ministry of Information on 10th January, 1969 and broadcasted by Radio Biafra. The Radio stated that, Britain did not want peace, thus, putting obstacles in the way of peace moves and in the way of relief measures by Red Cross. What Harold Wilson wanted was a “quick kill” strategy. General Alexander leaved Britain to Lagos to direct British quick kill policy against Biafra. An assembly of British death weapons was already awaiting General Alexander at Lagos with the British hasting jet planes. At least, three shiploads of lethal weapons of British made; thirty armoured fighting vehicles plus Russian Ilyushin aircraft and military jeeps. General Alexander publicly supported a quick kill as the only humane way to end Biafra’s agony. General Alexander believed that, he could achieve a quick kill. But his task would take him to Port Harcourt in the Bight of Biafra where many British mercenaries went in but few came out. The above story by Radio Biafra was equally denied by the British government. It was described as false allegation. And that, the Hastings the radio referred to had not been in service with the Royal Air Force for more than ten years. It seemed highly improbable that, any of these obsolete aircraft were still available even from the private suppliers. Despite further misleading broadcast by Radio Biafra on similar lines on 11th January, 1969 little interest was shown in Biafran propaganda messages by the press.⁴⁹⁸

Radio Biafra, on 29th March, 1969 launched a bitter attack on the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. The timing of this broadcast was very interesting. For it was on that day, the Prime Minister was in Lagos in between his diplomatic talks with General Yakubu Gowon and on the day after Ignatius Kogbara, Biafra Representative in London, proposed to the British officialdom that, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Maurice Foley, should visit Biafra to pave way for a meeting between Ojukwu and the Prime Minister.⁴⁹⁹ On 9th September, 1969 Radio Biafra reported that, Shell/BP had recruited thirty two British officers to manned artillery and anti-aircraft installations for the Nigeria’s 3rd Marine Commando

⁴⁹⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/445, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 6th January, 1969.

⁴⁹⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/445, British Foreign Secretary to Lagos, 7th January, 1969.

⁴⁹⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/445, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 11th January, 1969.

⁴⁹⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/2819, File No. 5/1905, Nigeria: 1969, by David Bright to Teddy, 10th April, 1969.

Division. The Britons were said to have engaged ten officers and twenty two NCOS. According to Biafra's Defence Ministry, an advance team of these officers visited the installations with Shell/BP personnel on 25th August, 1969. They made detailed recommendations to Lagos and the oil companies, on the distribution of the British officers who had already arrived in Lagos. Shell/BP according to the radio had been forced by the Biafran infantry action to abandon most of the large oil wells in the Imo River basin and parts of Port Harcourt Province. Continuing Biafran pressure towards Port Harcourt town itself, also threatened, not only the remaining wells and the new wells in the swamps, but also the technical and support facilities that were re-established at Port Harcourt. Furthermore, the Radio reported that Biafran forces cut through the Nigerian lines some miles from *Igrita* and killed two hundred soldiers of the Nigeria Army. A Nigerian attack in the previous day was also countered by the Biafrans.⁵⁰⁰

On 3rd December, 1969 Radio Biafra reported the statement made by Emmanuel Aguma, the Administrator of Port Harcourt Province. He advised Biafrans that, while continuing their sincere quest for peace, they must not lose sight of Nigeria's firm design to exterminate them. And that Biafrans should get prepared for a protracted war. He said this, while addressing the Port Harcourt Provincial Welfare Association at Nnobi. He noted that, Biafra's struggle would remain a landmark event in the Africa's march to full independence. The Radio equally reported the statement made by the President of the Biafra Association in the United States, Okoro Ejiakor. Ejiakor said that, Biafrans must never look up to the outsiders to fight for their rights and freedom. The responsibility for ensuring Biafra's security and survival, rested squarely on the Biafrans themselves. Okoro Ejiakor, who was a Sociology Lecturer at the University of California, made the above statement while addressing the people of Umuaku Orlu. He warned against having a very strong hope on the immediate American support for Biafra. The United States, he said was a very strong ally and sister of Britain Biafra's enemy in the civil war. For, it would be unwise, therefore for anyone to hope that America would easily back Biafra against the reactionary British government.⁵⁰¹

From the official thinking of the British government, Radio Biafra was identified as one of the strategic and principal organ of Biafra's propaganda. To jam it effectively would interrupt the source of its communication and make it much difficult for the Biafran leadership to spread their propaganda both at home and aboard. Also, the effectiveness of

⁵⁰⁰ Nigeria Report: Shell/BP's Alleged Recruitment of British Officers. Biafran Radio in English 12/00/GMT/9/9/1969.

⁵⁰¹ Nigeria: Reports in Brief. Exhortations to Biafrans. Radio Biafra in English/06/00/GMT/3/12/1969.

Biafrans' resistance depended largely on radio communications both within and outside Biafra. Therefore, if it were possible to disrupt these communication gadgets or to confuse those operating them by coding and broadcasting false messages in their transmitters it would make the Biafra's war effort more difficult.⁵⁰² It was not until about a year after secession on 20th August, 1968 when the Federals who had previously resisted such a move, started jamming the BCB broadcasts, intermittently at first and then more strongly. The jamming of Radio Biafra appeared to have come from Lagos/Ibadan axis, as far as, it could be determined. Biafrans in their few available broadcasts said that, they were being jammed. They alleged that the federal government received from Britain, £10.5 million specifically meant for the jamming activities of Radio Biafra. Subsequently, on 2nd September, 1968 the Biafrans discarded their jammed programming until the jamming stopped. Then moved back to their 6.145m/cs, and started a new radio service, announced as "Voice of Biafra" the External Service of the BCB. The call sign "Enugu" was of course used while the station was there and its continuation after the station moved its headquarters was for quite a while a matter of dispute, particularly when the FMG captured Enugu. Still, the BCB announced before in the middle and at the end of all news broadcasts that the broadcasting was emanating from Enugu. From the time of this change of frequencies the jamming ceased. Although, there was at times very poor reception since then, this was due to technical difficulties with the radio equipments rather than jamming. A new frequency was launched by Biafrans on 24th September, 1968. This was particularly busy month for Biafrans in the civil war on 4.675m/cs.⁵⁰³

On 18th July, 1969 a meeting was held between the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Maurice Foley and the members of Foreign Office. Namely Sir John Johnston, D.C. Tebbit, P.H. Moberly, Watts, P.D. McEntee, Sykes, Reiss, Longrigg, McKernan, D. West, Brigadier McGarel-groves and Nissen. Among the decisions taken at the meeting were the jamming of Radio Biafra, and the possibility of passing false messages down to the Biafra's internal system of communication in order to confuse them.⁵⁰⁴ Maurice Foley thought that, it would be sensible to strengthen the signal of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in Enugu to ensure that it was heard very clearly throughout the Biafraland. If the programmes were carefully devised making full use of the Igbos who had defected, it would be possible to keep up a constant propaganda war directed at the secessionist areas to discredit Ojukwu and his colleagues. Foley also suggested that, it might be possible to jam

⁵⁰² TNA, Ministry of Defence, 24/589, File No. D/DB11/5/13/7, Minutes on Military Aid to Nigeria, 24/589, Note of Record on the Improvement in the Federal Government War Effectiveness, 17th July, 1969.

⁵⁰³ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Note of Record on Radio Biafra and Propaganda, 1968-1969.

⁵⁰⁴ TNA, DEFE, 24/589, Record of Meeting between Maurice Foley and British Information Officials, 18th July, 1969.

Radio Biafra. However, British officials, having looked into it, maintained that, from the previous experiences jamming of Radio Biafra was extremely difficult to carry out successfully.⁵⁰⁵ And it was not obvious, why they stopped jamming it when they did.⁵⁰⁶ Conversely, no historical evidence was found on the effective jamming of Radio Biafra.

Whatever one's opinion of BCB it was a tool that boosted Biafra's propaganda messages. It gave an insight into the strategic thinking of the Biafran government and its decisions though sometimes the services' venom continued abated. An aspect which the corporation did not accomplish much was linking many Igbos with radio sets outside Biafra with those inside. This might have provided a worthwhile usage of the radio station for the Biafrans. The service was largely destructive rather than constructive with the targets of its stories of doubtful truth very widespread.⁵⁰⁷ For instance, the Radio broadcasting activity often starts by stating that over one million lives were lost ninety five percent of them were civilians and nearly two million others maimed or disabled.⁵⁰⁸ Be that as it may, Radio Biafra fought the civil war with a considerable zest that Biafrans imbibed. The Radio was the biggest mobiliser of the people for the civil war. The people depended on it to learn about the latest exploits of the Peoples' Army and war contributions they needed to make. Thousands of young people scrambled to join the army unconcerned about tribulation or death. Radio Biafra called on everyone to make sacrifices whether in the Peoples' Army or Land Army. It cemented the peoples' resolve and resolute to fight for their right and freedom to the bitter end.⁵⁰⁹

3.5 Biafra's Propaganda and Markpress News Feature Services

The Nigerian Civil War had been to a large extent a war of words. Though, tragic and brutal, its scale and significance have often been exaggerated and distorted. Much of this blame rests with the public relations firms that acted for the two sides of the conflict. Of the two public relations firms involved in the civil war, the most successful was the Markpress News Feature Services which handled the Biafran account of the war.⁵¹⁰ Beginning from February 1968, the effectiveness of Biafra's propaganda campaign was heavily aided by Markpress.⁵¹¹ Markpress News Feature Services, an international unit of Biafran Overseas

⁵⁰⁵ TNA, DEFE, 24/589, Minute on Aid to Nigeria From P.D. MCentee to West African Department, 26th July, 1969.

⁵⁰⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/455, Note of Record on Radio Biafra and Propaganda, 1968-1969.

⁵⁰⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/445, Radio Biafra and Biafran Propaganda, 1968-1969.

⁵⁰⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/445, D. Hunt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 6th January, 1969.

⁵⁰⁹ Inyang, B. 2003. Okokon Ndem: Lesson in Patriotism. Retrieved 10th June, 2017 from http://www.Igbofocus.co.uk/html/Biafra_html.com .

⁵¹⁰ *The Campaign*, 4th October, 1968.

⁵¹¹ Doron, R. S. 2011, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, p.77.

Press Division, was a part of H. William Bernhardt Incorporated an international advertising and public relations firm set up in Switzerland in 1951. Its head office was in Geneva. The firm was named after its American born principal, also handled the accounts for a variety of products and clients. Its successful promotional campaigns had included some part in the sale of the Lockheed Star- fighter to the Western German Air Force. A man who had been prominently associated with Markpress in Geneva was Melville Mark, a Briton. While the name Markpress suggested that, Melville was the man behind the operation of the public relations firms, there was evidence to show that, Bernhardt was personally in control of the policy pursued by Markpress.⁵¹² Markpress contract with Biafrans was signed in January 1968. Various estimates were made, of the cost of Biafran account used in funding the public relations activities of Biafra propaganda, but no authoritative figures were made available. Recipients of Markpress communiqué were asked to pay for their free copies, as a way of contributing to the Biafran Refugee Rehabilitation Commission, through its account with the Union Bank of Switzerland. The war *communiqués* carried out by Markpress were radioed daily from inside Biafra to Biafra's office in Lisbon. From there, they were sending Biafran message direct by telex to Geneva. Having been sub-edited by Markpress staffs, they were distributed direct by telex to the offices of major news agencies in Switzerland and other parts of Europe. In addition to telex material, all communiqués were printed and posted to a mailing list of 3,000 including leading world newspapers and the entire British House of Commons. Markpress did not have its own official agent in Biafra, but, sends its Biafran correspondents regular advices and suggestions. The British recipients of Markpress materials get it direct from Switzerland by posts. Markpress did not rely on agents in Britain to distribute on its behalf. The unofficial Biafran representative office in London probably hands out Markpress materials as opportunity offered, but not on a systematic or wholesale basis. In essence, Markpress was a firm based in Switzerland controlled by an American and its connections with Britain, other than through one or more key members of its staffs were slight. Markpress, as a public relations agency directed Biafran propaganda in Europe and United States. Through observing the growing tendency to place curious connotations on the fact that, Biafra, in its struggle for survival had a means of communication and at least was being heard, Markpress, made available to the Biafran government vitally needed lines of communication to outside world.⁵¹³

⁵¹² TNA, FCO, 95/225, Background analysis of Markpress News Features Services, 1968-1969.

⁵¹³ TNA, FCO, 95/225, Markpress News Features Services, 1968-1969.

In the course of its involvement in the Nigerian Civil War, Markpress discovered that, the war was apparently not political but, rather, a humanitarian problem. Contrary to some impressions given about Biafra, in some press agencies across Europe Markpress agency discovered that, Biafra, a nation of 14, 000,000 people had been valiantly fighting for their lives against relentless aggression since July 1967 without anyone seemed to care. They were deeply moved to learn that Biafrans were defending themselves without any support from the outside world. While, Nigeria, the aggressors, were being unstintingly supplied with arms by major world powers, such as Great Britain, Russia, Egypt, Czechoslovakia, and other countries. Biafra was blockaded by Nigeria. A blockade which had created horrifying famine conditions and prior to Biafra's announcement of cessation, Nigerians ruthlessly massacred 30,000 Biafrans in 1966. There were approximately 2,000,000 refugees in Biafra, who fled from the federation to preserve their lives, which increased by another 750,000 people, who left their homes in the parts of Biafra invaded by the federal troops. This number swollen to an estimate of 4, 500,000 huddled into Central Biafra. Nigeria, which was not blockaded, was free to receive arms and food supplied through all normal transport channels, and massive shipments by air freighter were continuously sent from Great Britain to Lagos. This compared with Biafra's one slender link with the outside world, namely super-constellation flights from Europe to Biafra, on an average of two per week. This slender line of supply was referred to by the Nigerians as representing a terrifying threat to their military position, and their position was that of the aggressor. When these facts presented to Markpress, they were given much time to verify them for on the spot investigation. They felt that, there was no alternative but, to put its communication network at the Biafra's disposal. Thus the Biafran people and their government, which was supported by a consultative assembly, representing all ethnic groups within Biafra, could be heard and defend themselves from false information flowing for Lagos.⁵¹⁴

From January 1968 to December 1969 series of news and happenings emanating from Biafra were reported and released by Markpress. For instance, on 11th May, 1968 are; the British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomas, visited Lagos on 7th July, 1967 just a day after Nigeria opened hostilities against Biafra. During his visit, Nigeria requested from Britain, two warships to help her scare away foreign ships bound for Biafra ports. Lagos had given permission for a RAF aircraft to land at Kano, in Northern Nigeria, on 7th July, 1967. Also, the British High Commissioner in Lagos, Sir David Hunt, stated at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, that Britain was the main supplier of the bulk of weapons

⁵¹⁴ TNA, FCO, 95/225, Markpress News Features Services, 1968-1969.

used by Nigeria, in her war against Biafra. In May 1967, Britain agreed to send two companies of British troops to Nigeria on the pretext that, these would be used to neutralise Benin before the proposed meeting of military leaders. A thousand Royal Marines were dispatched to Nigeria for her projected amphibious attacks on Port Harcourt. They were recalled later, only after the hostile wave of world opinion had culminated in the razing of some British establishments in Port Harcourt, on 17th January, 1968. A British naval officer, Commander J. Rawe, planned and executed the attack on Calabar. This was reported by an eyewitness account of a British missionary in Calabar, Reverend T. Craig. In February 1968, Britain sent 600 non-commissioned officers to Nigeria. Three British army officers serving in the Nigerian Army were killed in action. These were Captain V.C. Martin killed in Bonny, Captain Joseph Clements, killed in Udi 1968, and Captain G.R.L. Nicholson, killed in Calabar/Oron, 1968. Large number of the 600 NCO sent in February 1968 were killed in the Awka and Bonny sectors.⁵¹⁵ Also, Markpress reported that, the Nigerian government established concentration camps in the Republic of Benin. Several villages, in the Western Niger were evacuated, and thousands of villagers herded into these camps. According to the Biafran spokesman, the evacuation of the whole villages and the establishment of concentration camps, were part of a central plan by the Nigerian government, and an attempt to collect Western Niger Igbos together, in furtherance of their policy of genocide. The immediate object of having these villagers in such camps, seemed to be to show them off as refugees, thus, divert the efforts of the ICRC and other relief organisations engaged in supplying aid direct to Biafra.⁵¹⁶

Lord Shepherd's visit to Nigeria was reported by Markpress on June 28th, 1968.⁵¹⁷ Another Markpress news report of July 3rd 1968 was that, the British Hypocrisy towards Biafra Shines Towards all its Action. It was quite clear that, the British government had no high regard for the lives of the people of Biafra. It was equally clear that the government aided and abetted the Nigerian government in their evident attempt at genocide against Biafrans. After Nigeria had purposely, through delaying tactics and secret manoeuvres, made the peace talks in Kampala absolutely impossible and finally brought the talks to nothing, the world came to realised the truth about Nigeria. Peace talks were of no use to the Nigerian government. Its aim and purpose was to exterminate Biafrans by force of arms.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ *Markpress, 11th May, 1968.*

⁵¹⁶ *Markpress, 5th August, 1968.*

⁵¹⁷ *Markpress, 28th July, 1968.*

⁵¹⁸ *Markpress, 26th August, 1968.*

The content of news released by Markpress and its high acceptance in Britain and other parts of the world created formidable difficulties for the British officialdom.⁵¹⁹ As a result, on 14th November 1969, N.J. Barrington dispatched a minute to R. Williams, the Private Secretary to Harold Lever, of Ministry of Technology and also a Member of Parliament. He reminded him that, Harold Lever told the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Michael Stewart, that he would be going to Geneva on 16th November, 1969 where he was expected to meet a personal friend who worked for Markpress in Europe. He asked Michael Stewart whether there was anything useful he could say to his friend. Lever, no doubt, knew that, the British government took a poor view of the activities of Markpress, because of the harm they had caused to the British government and the way they helped, in prolonging the war in Nigeria. Michael Stewart later thought that, it might be useful if, Lever, would inform his friend, out of regret that, the agency he had worked for, had been responsible, for releasing so many untrue news reports about the British government involvement in the Nigerian Civil War. The result of which, had been to damage the British government and help prolong the war, besides affecting the agency's own standing as a reputable organisation. Perhaps, regarding the feeling of regrets and dejection of the British Foreign Secretary, it was said that, Harold Lever, would not wish to be drawn into a discussion on the rights and wrong of the British policy in Nigeria. But might wish to stress how sincere the British government were in their belief that, the Nigerian Civil War ought to be settled by both sides of the war. And that, the FMG from the British perspective, had expressed their genuine determination to give security guarantee to the Igbo people inside, "One Nigeria". Thus, the best service Ojukwu could do to his people was to agree to negotiate realistically and in the meantime to allow the International Red Cross to supply relief materials ready and waiting for both side to deliver to the poor civilian population and victims of the civil war. In the course of their campaign, and in their bid to promote Biafra's propaganda messages, Markpress had, on a number of occasions, distorted and misrepresented the British government policy. Carried a good deal of criticisms and abuse of the British government and encouraged anti-British feelings in European countries. For instance, a British Shopping Week in Basle was cancelled because of the hostility caused by Markpress. It would be recalled that, the long planned "British Week" in Basle, on September 19th 1968 was closed before it opened, due to strong hostility to Britain over its arm shipments to Nigeria. The organisers feared that demonstrations would assume enormous proportions if the "British Week" were allowed to take place. The decision was taken in

⁵¹⁹ TNA, FCO, 95/225, Background Analysis of Markpress News Features, 1968-1969.

agreement with the British Ambassador in Bern and the British Consul in Basle.⁵²⁰ They were also active in promoting opposition to the British trade promotion efforts in Hamburg, Germany. For example, one of their projects was a “sticker titled “put a dead Biafran in your tank”, attacking Shell/BP. The agency was heavily engaged in fund raising for Biafra and also sponsored the sale of Biafran notes.

By using sophisticated public relations techniques, Markpress, undoubtedly made a considerable impact in spreading Biafran message. Many of the British Parliaments availed themselves in receiving series of copies of Markpress handouts about Biafra, for use, during debate sessions in the House of Commons. Some of these handouts were no more than the relaying of statements and speeches made by the secession leaders of Biafra. Other materials distributed by Markpress included, allegations and assertions, which any reputable public relations agency might hesitate to put out.⁵²¹ Markpress, as one of the major tools used to disseminate Biafran propaganda messages, served as a platform wherein the used of words for propaganda purposes manifested itself. The careful and masterful use of words in driving home Biafra’s propaganda messages was very evident in the news releases of Markpress. As a matter of fact, Biafra’s propaganda messages were very forceful as a result of the nature of words used in news reporting, some of them were anti-British and anti-Nigerian. They were aimed at letting the world know the justness of Biafran cause while others were aimed at showing the invincibility and viability of Biafran Republic as a country that could defend itself, the need for world support and sympathy for Biafra and for blaming Britain as the main figure that, instigated the war.⁵²² The activities of Markpress in the Nigerian Civil War evidently showed that, the Biafran leadership’s campaign for support was able to remain quite reliable in disseminating similar documents to Biafrans, Africans and non-Africans. Though Biafran publications were released in numerous languages in order to communicate effectively with large number of different groups of people, the Biafran government in leading the campaign for support, allowed the central theme of the campaign to remain consistent with any language that used in their publications.⁵²³

Criticisms of Markpress’ effectiveness reached the British House of Commons, where Conservative MP, M. John Cordle told the House that, “sincere people in this country believed the propaganda and muck which Markpress had put out about Nigeria. My heart

⁵²⁰ TNA, FCO, 95/225, N.J. Barrington to R. Williams, 14th November, 1969.

⁵²¹ TNA, FCO, 95/225, Markpress News Features Services, 1968-1969.

⁵²² TNA, FCO, 95/225, Markpress News Release, 9th February, 1968.

⁵²³ Gluck, J. A. 2007, *Dying for Attention: the Role of Biafran Identity in the Campaign for Support during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, 77.

boils when I compare this propaganda with what the Nigerians said...” In the open letter regarding Markpress’ involvement in Biafra publicity, William Bernhardt wrote that, “The photographs which had appeared in the press were all taken by independent press photographers, not by Markpress or the Biafran government.” He then, accused John Cordle of hypocrisy. He stated that, Markpress did the same work that Nigerians had contracted other public relations companies to do. The Nigerians government had the benefit of their own official government offices and the British Commonwealth offices assisting their public diplomacy efforts.⁵²⁴ But, Biafra was, characteristically, ahead of the Federal government of Nigerian in distribution of its case overseas. Markpress mailed over 3,200 copies of its news, such as Mbanefo’s opening address to editors and opinion makers in Europe and America within hours of delivery.⁵²⁵

3.6 Icons and Their Contributions to Biafra’s Propaganda Exercise

The account of the Biafra’s propaganda exercise is incomplete without proper interrogation of the fundamental roles various individuals played to ensure its effective execution and operation. The Nigerian Civil War produced high profile individuals from both sides of the conflict, thus, adequate analysis of these individuals and their collective roles are very important in understanding Biafra’s propaganda campaign.

The configuration of Biafra’s propaganda lied under the personification of Biafran leader, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. The emergence of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu on the theatre of the war widened the international acceptance of Biafra’s propaganda. Ojukwu’s contribution to Biafra’s propaganda exercise was accompanied with series of speeches and official engagements both at the local and international levels. His speeches at the local level, rekindled the will and determination of ordinary man in Biafra to remain calm and be vigilant in spite of the tribulations they were meant to undergo.⁵²⁶ He had the mastery of speechmaking and oratory and of welcoming foreign journalists across the globe to Biafra, and conducting interviews with them. On many occasions while engaging the international journalists in an interview he used the opportunity to project the Biafran case to the outside world, while at the same time, attack the enemies of Biafra. He always project Biafra as a viable state, demanding its freedom from their oppressors. Ojukwu’s speeches were trailblazers. He always focused on Biafra’s successes real or imaginary. Many Biafra’s propagandists drew inspirations from Ojukwu’s elaborate speeches. They formed the nucleus

⁵²⁴Doron, R. S. 2011, *Forging a Nation while losing a Country. Igbo Nationalism, Ethnicity and Propaganda*, p. 144.

⁵²⁵Stremalu, J. J. 1977, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.174.

⁵²⁶Williams, J. 2011. *Dying for Attention*, pp.13-14.

upon which Biafra's propaganda was based. It was phenomena that sharpened the diplomatic skills of Biafran officials in their quest to galvanise the international community and seek for support and sympathy for the Biafran Republic.⁵²⁷ For him, "victory over the enemy is assured though not yet complete... our advances and successes have been steady and consistent... the enemy is being starved to death."⁵²⁸ At the presentation ceremony of a book entitled "The Making of a Nation: Biafra" and dedicated to him, Ojukwu said that Biafran youths should not wait to be invited to give full expression to the idea of Biafra. They should assume the responsibility and seize every opportunity to play their part both individually and collectively. He charged the Biafran youths to employ all their resources and initiative to promote the goals and ideals to which the Biafran revolution was dedicated. He declared: "Biafra is a philosophy, the philosophy of the Blackman establishing his identity". The book which was translated into French, German and American edition was written by joint author namely, Messrs, Arthur Nwankwo and Samuel Ifejika. The book is a political history of the emergency of Biafra.⁵²⁹

In short, in a bid to win world sympathy for the Biafran cause and to boost their propaganda, a report emerged on 31st January, 1969 that Ojukwu had finalised plans for suicide action. It was known from the information obtained from the persons who escaped from Biafra that, Ojukwu ordered, over ten suicidal deaths by "burning" in several areas. His objective was to demonstrate that, people under his leadership would prefer death than reintegration with Nigeria. The immediate goal was to impress the new administration in the United States with the determination of his supporters in that civil war.⁵³⁰ This attempted suicide action was equally reported in *The Times*, 1st February, 1969 in which the federal government reacted, stating that, what Ojukwu would not inform the world was that, the persons to be used for this suicide mission showed that they were the people he had already condemned to death for opposing him and that most of them were from the Rivers and South-Eastern States.⁵³¹ Also, such report served as a veritable tool for the Federalist propaganda.

Ifeagwu Eke, a lecturer in the Humanities at the University of Biafra, Nsukka and the Biafran Commissioner for Information, played a fundamental role in projecting Biafra's propaganda to the outside world. He held a Cabinet post in the Biafran government. He was

⁵²⁷ Gluck, J. A. 2007, *Building Biafrans: the Role of Propaganda in Creating the Biafran Nation*, p.29.

⁵²⁸ Odumegwu Ojukwu, C. 1969. *The Vision of Biafra*, in *Biafra: Selected Speeches and Random Thoughts with Diaries of Events*. New York: Harp & Row, p.221.

⁵²⁹ *Markpress*, 29th July, 1969.

⁵³⁰ TNA, DO, 186/1, File No. 1/7/6C/1316/Eastern Nigeria: Biafra. Minutes on Ojukwu's Faked Suicide, from Lagos to Foreign Officer, 31st January, 1969.

⁵³¹ Ojukwu Plans Fake Suicides. 1st February, 1969. *The Time*, p.1.

responsible for all information distributed about the Biafran government. These included press statements, news releases, conference papers, and publicity etc. Eke, was an impressive figure and an eloquent speaker with a PhD in Economics from Harvard University, United States. Eke, championed the cause of Biafra in a most special way. His commitment and loyalty to the Biafran leadership earned him as one of the most vibrant individual that rekindled the need for Biafra's independence.⁵³² Until the loss of Enugu, the responsibility for Biafra's propaganda exercise rested with the Biafra's Ministry of Information. This Ministry was headed by Ifeagwu Eke and its staff of over seventy civil servants. In short, Biafra's propaganda would not have succeeded without the effective leadership of Ifeagwu Eke, as the Commissioner for Information. Eke, was able to harmonise the information that came out of Biafra in a most tactical way. He ensured the effective collaboration of the Ministry of Information, Biafran Information Bureau, the Directorate of Propaganda and Radio Biafra in the dissemination of Biafra's propaganda. In March 1968, the Ministry of Information published the pamphlet titled, "Biafra Deserves Open Support". The pamphlet first assured the world of Biafra's self-sufficiency and capabilities as a nation. Above all, Biafra had achieved the original purpose of her accession to a separate political existence. She had provided safety and security for all her citizens and stemmed a war of aggression and genocide, directed, against Biafrans by Nigerians. The paper argued that, Biafra deserved "Open Support" because of the maturity and strength with which Biafrans had faced their problems and their ability to contain them. Secondly, it presented a case for Biafra's need for a separate country and the justness of their actions. The pamphlet referred to the pogroms against the Easterners in 1966. It argued that, "by this breach of faith, Nigeria forfeited the allegiance of Biafrans to her". After being "pushed out, Biafrans should be free to save themselves. Lastly, it suggested the potential contributions to the international community that, Biafra could make only as a separate nation.⁵³³

Ifeagwu Eke was known for his eloquent speeches. He commanded the crowd and was, unlike Ojukwu a master of words. He spoke with fearlessness and was eager to ensure that, Biafran actualised their self-determination. Eke, propounded the concept of "Give Us Biafra or Nothing". On 27th October, 1967 Eke said that, the only choice open to General Gowon was to recognise the independence and sovereign state of Biafra. And to make an arrangement for the safe evacuation of Nigerian troops from the Republic of Benin, if he wanted some honourable way out of his military failures. Eke, commented at Owerri on the

⁵³² Biafran Information Commissioner Explains Position on Relief Flights, Sep.19 September, 1969. *Current News From and About Biafra*, No. 44.

⁵³³ Williams, J. 2011, *Building Biafrans: the Role of Propaganda in Creating the Biafran Nation*, pp.33-34.

statement credited to Gowon that, he was prepared to begin talks at any time to settle the Biafran crisis. The Commissioner pointed out that Gowon rejected all offers of talks including offers of cooperation and association, made to him by the Biafra's Head of State, on the eve of the OAU meeting in Kampala. At that stage of the civil war, the crisis could only end with Nigeria's recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic of Biafra. Eke noted that, peace depended on the recognition of Biafra. He said that, with the recognition of Biafra by Tanzania, the prediction of the world press that, more African countries would recognise Biafra should come to pass. More recognition of Biafra would force Nigeria to the conference table without insisting on the same preconditions that cause the war.⁵³⁴ Similarly, in April 1968, as reported by Markpress Eke said that Biafra could not stop fighting if Nigeria did not stop her aggression, datelines notwithstanding. He emphasised that, negotiations, nevertheless, depended on achieving at least, a ceasefire in the conflict. And that Biafrans must not relent, until the enemy was vanquished or until he accepts to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Biafra sought only to live in peace. The war, as Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu said, was purely a defensive fight in which, every Biafran realised, that, he was fighting for his life and his home.⁵³⁵ On 12th December, 1968 while addressing International News Conference, Ifeagwu Eke, said that it was fundamental that, anyone interested in peace moves should recognise that, Biafra was a separate independent nation. He noted that, the British government's peace move in the civil war, lacked sincerity. Harold Wilson was deceitful, but, there were other Englishmen who were sincere to see peace being actualised.⁵³⁶

Ifeagwu Eke, on 8th January, 1969 criticised the British Prime Minister's attempt to deny Biafrans their right to self-determination. In a statement, titled "Wilson and the Commonwealth", issued through the Biafran Ministry of Information, Eke accused Wilson of flouting the wishes of many Commonwealth leaders and also manipulated the organisation's principles and equally ran a morally bankrupt government. In no other area of the Commonwealth policy had Wilson demonstrated the moral bankruptcy of his government's action and its blatant disregard of cherished Commonwealth principles and conventions, as had been demonstrated in his handling of the Nigerian-Biafra conflict. The Minister of Information stated that, the prestige of the Commonwealth lied in its continuing ability to

⁵³⁴ Nnaoke Arunis, O. 1968. Library Bulletin of Abstracts of Addresses and Interviews by Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu and Statements and Press Conferences of Ifeagwu Eke, The Biafra Press Division: Directorate for Propaganda, p. 21.

⁵³⁵ *Markpress, April 1968.*

⁵³⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/209, File No. JWN 1/17/PA/5A/368/ P.A. Internal Biafra's Statements, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Voice of Biafra Radio Broadcast: Summaries of News Bulletin and Commentary, from Lagos to Foreign Office, 12th December, 1968.

demonstrate that, in a world torn by racial strife and other problems, such as cooperation between individuals and nations remained the sanest course in man's quest for happiness and social justice. The Ministry then called on the Commonwealth leaders to indistinct up their heads and defend the much advertised democratic basis of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth leaders could do this by allowing Biafrans to exercise their inalienable right and to determine their own destiny.⁵³⁷

Uchechukwu Merije was another renowned individual that nurtured Biafra's propaganda. He served as the Director of Directorate of Propaganda. He was a very deep individual who pride himself as a great thinker and often deployed solutions that played above the commonness of a fray. He was a comrade and proud of his association with the Labour and the Socialist front. Uchechukwu Merije, a graduate of Economics at the University of Ibadan in 1961. After his graduation, he first taught English and Literature at a Secondary School in Lagos before joining the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). He grew up as a young Radio reporter and producer with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and Voice of Nigeria (VON) under Chinua Achebe into a newspaper magazine reporter with the famous Drum magazine and then bloomed and blossomed into a publisher and founder of the Great *Afriscope*, a Pan-African general interest magazine. He worked as a journalist in *West African Pilot*, *Daily Times* and Radio Nigeria. He left the radio as the Head of News at the beginning of the civil war. As a journalist, he crisscrossed Africa from the East to the Western coast, watching and reporting Africa in her liberation struggles for independence against imperial domination and European colonialism. This did not only inflame a glorious caste of Pan-Africanism but imbued in him this deep sense and skill of socio-political activism in which he excelled as the sublime voice of propaganda in Africa. This, he proved during the Nigerian Civil War. His tongue of propaganda thundered in Nigeria and potently echoed the voice and tragedy of Biafra across the globe and thereby rattling the conscience of the world.⁵³⁸ Merije in one of his interviews said:

...The Directorate of Propaganda made a successful bid for more power at Umuahia and got it. We had plenty of money to do what we wanted so we expanded fast at the same time the government was starving the Ministry of Information funds and functions. The Directorate expanded to forty-one Committees with at least four or five people

⁵³⁷ Text of Report: Biafran Information Ministry Statement on Mr. Wilson and the Commonwealth, Radio Biafra in English/06/00/GMT/8/1/69.

⁵³⁸ Ogbu, E. 2016. We Missed You Our Great Dike-Ogu, Retrieved 10th June, 2017 from <http://radionigerianenugu.com>

per-committee, but with some as high as eleven or twelve.⁵³⁹

He was skilful and professional in the management of Biafra's propaganda, and often called by his contemporaries the Commander of Propaganda Forces. He and his team internationalised Biafra's propaganda. According to Major Wole Ademoyega, one of the Five Majors that led the first military *coup d'état* in Nigeria, on 15th January, 1966, "it seemed that, Uchechukwu Merije, only changed his mind in the last minute about joining the Nigerian Army after his graduation from the University of Ibadan. Because he discerned that the Nigerian military was a very dull and conservative institution".⁵⁴⁰ Nonetheless, following the coup of 1966 and the widespread massacre of the Igbo nationwide, Uchechukwu Merije fled to the Eastern Region and it was there, that his true steel was forged. He was among the public voices of Biafra's propaganda. He and his colleagues gave war propaganda a strategic lift to the point that, it was said that, they nearly won the war for the Biafrans. He was a true and fervent Biafran, who gave that nation, while it lasted, the passion of his irreducible spirit. He was a brilliant propagandist who used his skills to defend what he clearly perceived as a neo-colonialist onslaught against Biafran sovereignty. He was a great man, an articulate and intellectual politician, and a man of ideas.⁵⁴¹

Okokon Ndem was another individual that played a fundamental role in enhancing the effectiveness of Biafra's propaganda. Ndem was one of the geniuses of Radio Biafra. He was unarguably, the most well-known voice on Radio Biafra. Being an Efik man, he gave vent to the innermost frustrations of the Biafran experience, in the most colourful language. The extent of how rapidly Biafrans turned the page on the civil war was provided by the example of Okokon Ndem.⁵⁴² Ndem was born on 1st June, 1932 in Calabar. He had his education at the Baptist Academy, Lagos, and proceeded to Government School, Jos and Ibadan. He joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in 1952 and in 1962; he attended a course in Syracuse University, New York. He was a polyglot who rendered the news and its analyses in flawless Igbo language, and enjoined the people of Biafra to be vigilant, to the point of sleeplessness because enemies surrendered them. Okokon Ndem was the influence that tormented the regime of General Yakubu Gowon during the civil war. He was the anchorman on radio that sustained Biafra's propaganda machinery till the end. Everywhere in Biafra by 1970, was captured by the Nigerian Army, but not Radio Biafra nor Okokon

⁵³⁹ Stremmlau, J.J. 1977, *the International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.111.

⁵⁴⁰ Obi, N. 2015. *Uchechukwu Merije, 1939-2015*. Retrieved 10th June, 2017, from <http://www.vanguardngr.com>.

⁵⁴¹ Obi, N. 2015. *Uchechukwu Merije, 1939-2015*, p.2.

⁵⁴² Biafra and Radio Biafra, 27th, July 2015. Retrieved 10th June, 2017 from <https://www.pressreader.com>.

Ndem. His voice terrorised the military junta, so much that, it placed a price on his head and reserved a special bullet for him. Okokon Ndem was most popular as a broadcaster who kept the airwaves with the civil war blues in the defunct Republic of Biafra. Through an infectious and moving propaganda, the ace broadcaster egged on the Biafrans in that civil war. His wartime reports earned him several names, such as “The Golden Voice and The Voice of Biafra”.⁵⁴³ The Biafran leader, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, recalled the good relationship he had with Okokon Ndem during the Nigerian Civil War:

Such better ideas were shared between me and Okokon Ndem for the progress of the country. The simple life of Ndem made us proud to make Nigeria better. Before you let me proclaim that he was a hero, the type of which was difficult to come by. Together we embarked on a struggle to make Nigeria better not to make Nigeria less. Okokon Ndem was a hero. He left a worthy impression on all he served. Ndigbo will never forget him, Biafrans; most certainly will forever honour him...⁵⁴⁴

Former Executive Director of FRCN, Enugu Station, Kelvin Ejiofor, worked very closely with Okokon Ndem. He rightly pointed out:

The most striking thing for me about Ndem was that he was a man who has become famous for the very least of his many talents. For all who knew him very well, it was almost laughable that he was most well known and remembered for his unmatched voice of propaganda script on Radio Biafra. Without insulting announcers, of which I am one in a way, Okokon Ndem was anything but a mere “voice”.⁵⁴⁵

Uchechukwu Merije, in his paper titled, “Transition of Mr. Okokon Ndem: The Fall of A Lone Star”, gave further insight into Ndem’s disposition to broadcasting:

I have worked with him, as you all will know, during the civil war. He was such a dedicated and committed colleague. His prowess, artistry and sheer ingenuity in presentation and oral communication made him excel in his duties. Okokon Ndem exhibited the highest qualities of professional integrity and confidence that endeared him to millions of listeners across Biafra, Africa and the world at large. His commitment to duty and professional excellence was mind-boggling. Unfailing punctuality, painstaking rehearsal of scripts, and struggle for continual improvement

⁵⁴³ Inyang, B. 2003. *Okokon Ndem: Lesson in Patriotism*. Retrieved 10th June, 2017 from http://www.Igbofocus.co.uk/html/Biafra_html.com

⁵⁴⁴ Aluko, B. 2013, *On The Matter of Okokon Ndem Name Being Associated With Falsehood and Propaganda For His Civil War Efforts for Biafra*. Retrieved 10th June, 2017 from <https://groups.google.com/forum/m/#!msg/usaAfricadialogue.com>, p.1.

⁵⁴⁵ Inyang, B. 2003, *Okokon Ndem: Lesson in Patriotism*, p.2.

were his trademark. The result was evidently obvious. No broadcaster since the end of the Second World War made as much impact on the audience than Okokon Ndem. Although, not a professional soldier, Ndem was indeed a brave fighter in his own right and used broadcasting warfare to effectively engage his foes in control of the airwaves during the civil war.⁵⁴⁶

Okokon Ndem was as some observers and historians of the civil war would call him, “the General of the Airwaves”. To a great extent, Ndem remained one potent force behind the grim determination of Biafrans to survive the rigourousity of the civil war. The broadcaster through the use of Radio Biafra achieved what a thousand bullets from the guns of Biafrans could not accomplish. He kept the two contending parties in that civil war on their toes.⁵⁴⁷ Ejiofor argued that:

Okon Ndem and Uchechukwumerij were newscasters on Radio Biafra. They used radio and television to propagate the Biafran cause. Okokon Ndem especially usually says a lot of things about Gowon. He used Gowon’s name to sing songs on radio and was saying that he was not a good person. They were castigating him and calling him all sort of names they could think of. You know that the Eastern-Central State was created in 1967. The man, Ukpabi Asika was the Sole Administrator. He always stays in Lagos. Each time you open the radio he use to tell the Igbos to stop fighting that we are One Nigeria.⁵⁴⁸

Former Executive Governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke, shared his view on the personality of Okokon Ndem and his contributions to the Nigerian Civil War:

Okokon Ndem handled the propaganda of Biafra to the extent that neither Nigeria nor its opponent was sure of the real situation, a development which informed the announcement by General Yakubu Gowon the concept of “No Victor No Vanquished”. This declaration was the consequence of Ndem’s exploits in the radio station (Radio Biafra), which then was regarded as the best in Africa. Due to Ndem’s propaganda, Nigeria was not really sure whether it was winning the war whilst Biafra on its part was not sure whether it was losing the war, thus, creating a stalemate. Circumstances at the time placed Ndem on the Biafran side as he worked at the Enugu station of the FRCN when Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu excused the former Eastern Region from Nigeria. Yet, he became an enchanting example of

⁵⁴⁶Inyang, B. 2003, *Okokon Ndem: Lesson in Patriotism*, p.2.

⁵⁴⁷Inyang, B. *Okokon Ndem: Lesson in Patriotism*, p.3.

⁵⁴⁸Interview with Edmund Ejiofor...

patriotism as he committed his entire life to the struggle for the emancipation of his people...⁵⁴⁹

Okokon Ndem, the golden voice on Radio Biafra ventilated the very essence of Biafra's resistance against genocide, pogrom, injustice and inhumanity.⁵⁵⁰ Clement Ihesiulor stated that:

Okokon Ndem always talks about what made the youths to enter the civil war and the need to fight for Biafra. Even when Port Harcourt up to Umukusu was captured by the Federal troops, Okokon Ndem continued to tell the Biafrans that the war was still on. He always encourage the youths to join the Biafran Army. He never broadcast anything that would downgrade the morale of Biafrans in the war.⁵⁵¹

While the boys in the war front kept the federalist army busy, Okokon Ndem and his colleagues on their airwaves effectively projected the Biafra's counter view points to the outside world. In the process drubbed Chief Anthony Enahoro's propaganda machinery hands down. As a result, Enahoro was ridiculed by a group of foreign journalists at the 1968 Kampala peace talks, when he sought to clarify an agenda on the conference theme. Okokon Ndem, with his well-modulated and posh diction, reeking with the elocution of the muses, functioned as an emotional prop and invigorator of sagging spirits in the beleaguered Igbo heartland, which was at the receiving end of bombs, rockets, artillery fire, starvation, kwashiorkor and all the cruel of warfare. Behind the microphone, the style of his news delivery had character and chutzpah, which put the dread in the hearts of enemy troops. Not only did his oratory disembowelled the barefaced misrepresentation of the contending sides, but, also gave dialectical advocacy to the structural imperfections, ills and contraptions of the Nigerian Federation. He debunked and demystified the nebula of Igbo domination. After the civil war, and in the face of persecution from the conquering forces, who threatened to pull out his tongue, Okokon Ndem never recanted nor did a verbal somersault. He was a metaphor and epitome of the effervescent human spirit in its quest for excellence, fair play and liberty from the grips of hegemonic power relations.⁵⁵²

Another individual through whom Biafra's propaganda thrived very strongly was the former Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Francis Ibiam. He used his capacity as the sixth Vice-

⁵⁴⁹ Inyang, B. 2003, *Okokon Ndem: Lesson in Patriotism*, p.4.

⁵⁵⁰ Aluko, B. 2013, *On The Matter of Okokon Ndem Name Being Associated With Falsehood and Propaganda*, p.2.

⁵⁵¹ Interview with Elder Clement Ihesiulor, Age c. 66, Businessman/Church Leader, At Isialangwa Aba, 9th October, 2017.

⁵⁵² Aluko, B. 2013, *On The Matter of Okokon Ndem Name Being Associated With Falsehood and Propaganda*, p.2.

President of the World Council of Churches to gain direct access to the church leaders across the world to galvanise support for Biafra. He lectured with great effect in various towns in European countries like Switzerland; Germany; Hamburg and Norway etc. This opened up all the pulpits in various churches across those countries to the Biafran cause. It would be recalled that, in 1959, Queen Elizabeth II conferred on Francis Akanu Ibiam a knighthood in Enugu. But, Sir Akanu Ibiam later, in 1969, returned his knighthood and renounced his English name, Francis, in protest against the British government's support of the Nigerian government war against Biafra.⁵⁵³

J.C. Michael Echeruo, The Head of Biafran War Information Bureau, contributed in designing Biafra's propaganda. Filling the senior positions in the Directorate of Biafran Propaganda were scores of displaced faculty members from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, which had been occupied by the federal troops shortly before the fall of Enugu. Within a few weeks, the Directorate had entered what one participant later described as "the golden age of Biafran propaganda". Among the cadre of young University lecturers who served the Biafran public relations effort were J. Onuoha, lecturer in Physical and Health Education, and also Head of Biafra's Public Enlightenment, O. Anya lecturer in the department of Zoology and Editor of Biafra's Newsletter, Ifemesia Director of Biafra's Research and Documentation. The twelve-man Propagandists Analysis Committee was also entirely staffed by the University personnel.⁵⁵⁴

Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi and Gabriel Okara, the leading Biafra's writers of international repute, through their shuttle diplomacy and world tour promoted Biafran propaganda.⁵⁵⁵ Tanko Yakasai argued that, these top Biafran civilians acted as emissaries in projecting Biafran propaganda across the globe.⁵⁵⁶ Cyprian Ekwensi was in charge of Biafra's Overseas Division of the Directorate of Propaganda and later moved to Radio Biafra. Gabriel Okara was in charge of a "Biafran Cultural Workshop Group". This workshop was aimed at encouraging writing, drama, music, dancing and crafts in Biafra. One successful product of this group was the Armed Forces Entertainment, a leading company of performers, who toured the war frontline performing shows for the troops. Okeke Jude noted that, this group of young boys were deployed in each of the battalion of the Biafran Army. Their aimed

⁵⁵³ TNA, FCO, 26/300, Minute on the Effectiveness of Biafran Propaganda in Switzerland, from H.A.F. Hohler to J.H. Peck, 6th February, 1969.

⁵⁵⁴ Stremmlau, J.J. 1077, *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.111.

⁵⁵⁵ Achebe and Ekwensi Analysed Aspects of Biafran Struggle, May 6th, 1969. *Current News From and About Biafra*, No.10.

⁵⁵⁶ Yakasai, T. 1995. The fall of the First Republic and Nigeria's Survival of the Crisis and the Civil War 1967-1970. *Inside Nigerian History 1950-1970: Events, Issues and Sources*. Usman, Y.B. and Kwanasashie, G.A. eds. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, pp.216-217.

was not just to entertain the troops; but also help to boost their morale through their songs while at the war front. Their songs also inspired the soldiers and also enabled them to remain focus.⁵⁵⁷ The most popular act of this group was a two-hour poetic tragedy sub-titled, “The Body Without a Head”. This poet was based on an incident that occurred during the massacres in the Northern Nigeria. When a decapitated corpse was sent back by train to Enugu, the unidentifiable body later became an anonymous symbol of the Biafra’s struggle.⁵⁵⁸

Achebe was fully occupied with the Committee for National Guidance. For three months before the fall of Umuahia, Ojukwu held weekly informal meetings of up to fifty members of this Committee drawn from every walk of life to discuss the forms which Biafra would take after the war. Some of the ideas produced by this Committee were incorporated in Ojukwu’s remarkable speech on 1st June, 1969 in Owerri. This was the first time when the broadly socialist ideology behind the Biafran Revolution was tentatively propounded. Achebe’s Committee comprises of lawyers, teachers, scientists, doctors, and people of different political persuasions. They met weekly in refining the Biafran ideas and giving the ideology more concrete expression.⁵⁵⁹ Other notable leaders that championed the Biafran cause were, Ignatius Kogbara, Biafra’s Special Representative in London; C.C. Moujekwu, the Commissioner for Home Affairs; Kenneth Dike, Biafra’s Diplomat and Special Envoy; Ralph Uwachue, Biafra’s Special Envoy and Diplomat to France and the Head of Biafra Historical Research Association; and Godwin Onegbula, Permanent Secretary, Biafra’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁶⁰ Ben Okagbue, Permanent Secretary, Biafra’s Ministry of Homes Affairs and N.U Akpan, Chief Secretary to the Biafran Government played fundamental roles in projecting the Biafran case in one way or another. Akpan worked very closely with Ojukwu. He was a non-Igbo member of the Biafran Cabinet. He said:

I think our greatest misfortune has been that Britain had a Labour Government in power. They are following a Conservative policy so the Opposition supports them. If Mr. Wilson had been in Opposition I believe that he would have made a fuss, as he did over Suez. Ojukwu has three qualities; courage, wisdom and faith. It’s embarrassing to talk about him like this. But it is true. Ojukwu was the very last person to leave Umuahia. Three days later he summoned me and said; where is the Government? Within

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with Okeke Jude, Age c. 50, Civil Servant, At Nneni Anocha Local Govt. Area Anambra State, 12th October, 2017.

⁵⁵⁸ *Sunday Times*, 27th July, 1969.

⁵⁵⁹ *Sunday Times*, 27th July, 1969.

⁵⁶⁰ *Sunday Times*, 27th July, 1969.

a day or two it was reformed and working again. He had already lost a brother, a brother-in-law, and an intimate friend in the war. We have no nepotism in Biafra. Our revolution is based on total opposition to the Nigerian system. We used to have a saying in Lagos that, Nigeria is worth fighting for, but not worth dying for. In Biafra, that no longer applies.⁵⁶¹

On the Federal side, Anthony Enahoro was highly instrumental toward the success of the federalist propaganda campaign, with an active support of the British information agencies. Enahoro, all through the civil war was one of the mean international figures of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria under General Yakubu Gowon. His personality was brought to bear, on the international stage, as the Commissioner for Information and Labour. He was the powerhouse of the federal publicity and propaganda machinery. Always on international tour, explaining and justifying the Nigerian government's reasons for embarking on the civil war, and the need for more international support to be given to the federal government. Enahoro was among the think tank of General Yakubu Gowon regime. He played a very strategic role in galvanising global support for the FMG's war efforts. He was also, the choice personality among Gowon's Executive Cabinet for the FMG's diplomatic activities and other foreign related engagements.⁵⁶² For instance, he led the FMG Delegation to London, Kampala and Addis Ababa peace talks in May-August 1968 with some ability. A complex and puzzling personality Enahoro tended to keep his own counsels. As a politician, he certainly learnt to exploit tribalism. But he remained personally as Westernised and as articulate as any Nigerian could be.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ *Sunday Times*, 27th July, 1969.

⁵⁶² TNA, Ministry of Defence, 13/711, File No. SR/189/199/MO 5/5/E/690, Nigeria. Confidential: Biographical Note on Chief Anthony Enahoro Eronsele, Federal Commissioner for Information and Labour, from D. Bright to R.J. Dawo, 7th November, 1968.

⁵⁶³ TNA, DEFE, 13/711, Confidential: Biographical Note on Chief Anthony Enahoro Eronsele, Federal Commissioner for Information and Labour, 7th November, 1968.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRITAIN AND REACTIONS TO BIAFRA'S PROPAGANDA, 1968-1970

This chapter examines the salient debates of the British Parliament concerning the Nigerian Civil War, and their visitations to Biafran and Federal sides of the war. It also looks at the reactions of various non-governmental organisations in Britain towards Biafra's propaganda. The chapter also investigates the activities of the British media particularly the British Broadcasting Corporation and the British Women and Churches during the war.

4.1 British Parliamentary Activities: Debates and Visitations

The British Parliament was the major platform where the activities of Biafra's propaganda and the Nigerian Civil War generally were hotly debated. The debate intensified as a result of domestic reactions in Britain towards the civil war. The Parliament also served as an avenue where the position of the British government regarding the war was made very strongly in counter-reaction against Biafra's propaganda. Consequently, the most important observation made about the intervention of the British Parliament in the Nigerian Civil War was the degree of the time it devoted to a problem that could not had been a central issue in the British politics and one about which it could have done so little. The above scenario could also be attributed to the effectiveness of Biafra's propaganda in stirring up the consciousness of the British public towards the Nigerian Civil War. The interest of the British Parliament in the Nigerian Civil War was aroused by a number of subsequent developments. Most especially the increased attention that the British and international press accorded to the civil war.⁵⁶⁴

On 11th March, 1968 at the House of Lords debate on the British arms supply to Nigeria, Lord Brockway, asked Her Majesty Government, for what purposes did the orders for arms that amounted to about £2,317,626, were fulfilled in Nigeria by the Crown Agents during November, 1967, and what orders were placed since then and for what purpose. The Minister of State for at the Commonwealth Office told him that, expect where the British funds were involved British government was not concerned with the transactions of the Crown Agents whose responsibility was to the overseas governments and other bodies who are their principals. Lord Brockway asked him again whether he was aware that, in December 1967 ten of the fifteen arms orders worth £50,000 were supplied to the Nigerian government. And in view of the civil war in Nigeria, would government approach those governments such

⁵⁶⁴ Fafowora, O.O. 1990. *Pressure Groups and Foreign Policy: a Comparative Study of British Attitudes and Policy towards Secessionist Moves in the Congo, 1960-1963 and in Nigeria, 1966-1969*. Ibadan: Heinemann edu. Books Ltd, pp.177-179.

as Soviet Union, France and Portugal that were supplying arms, either to one side or the other, for a total cessation of arms supplies? Secondly, whether to approach the Commonwealth governments, particularly those in Africa with a view to end the civil war? Lord Shepherd reminded Lord Brockway that, the activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat to bring a peaceful solution to the civil war were ongoing. Regarding the arms supply to the Federal government he said that there was nothing to say about it. For it was responsibility of the British government to continue the supply of reasonable quantities of arms to the Federal government.⁵⁶⁵

On 28th May, 1968 Nigeria's Deputy High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Balewa visited the Foreign Office. His visit was aimed at expressing concern at the mounting press and parliamentary criticisms of the British policy of arms supplies to Nigeria. During his visit he held a crucial conversation with a British official, E.G. Norris. Norris said that he was glad that Balewa had realised the pressure the British Ministers had been experiencing for long. This pressure arose as a result of the successful Biafran propaganda which as Balewa knew had been far more successful than the Federal government's efforts to counter it.⁵⁶⁶ Furthermore, on 30th May, 1968 an All-Party Delegation of MPs led by Frank Allaum visited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Michael Stewart. Their visit was aimed at making representations about the continued supply of British-made arms to the Federal government. Mrs Joyce Butler, David Crouch, James Davidson, Stan Henig and Stan Newens and D.C. Tebbit were present at the meeting. Frank Allaum told the Secretary of State that the delegates represented differing viewpoints about the situation in Nigeria. But, all agreed that the continued supply of British arms to the FMG was wrong. The war indeed had reached a genocidal proportion. The British government's policy was in effect adding to the death toll of Biafrans. The large number of MPs who had signed the "Early Day Motion" calling for an immediate halt to shipments of arms from Britain to the combatants, showed the evidence of deep concern felt at the British Parliament on the issue. The Secretary of State said that, he was very conscious of and fully shared this concern from the MPs. Britain's long connection with Nigeria gave them no option than to be involved. They decided that, their policy of allowing a strictly limited supply of small arms, which they had always supplied to the Nigerian armed forces, was the best option. He said that, the British government did not supply any weapons of major destruction such as aircraft and bombs. He

⁵⁶⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/271, Extracts from Official Report and House of Lords Debate, 11th March, 1968.

⁵⁶⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/2258, Note of Conversation between E.G. Norris and Balewa, 30th May, 1968.

reasoned that, if they changed their policy, they would have immediately lost all the influence which they had exerted in Lagos, and that, this was highly considerable.⁵⁶⁷

On 12th June, 1968 the House of Parliament had its debate on the Nigerian Civil War. An adjournment motion was moved by pro-Biafran back-benchers, namely, Michael Barnes, the Labour MP for Brantford and Cheswick. His argument centred on the British responsibilities as arms supplier to Nigeria, and having contributed in the sufferings of Biafrans. Meanwhile, at the British Parliament, the widespread and increasingly fierce press campaign for an arms embargo had indeed created a new sense of urgency for the MPs to act in the civil war. While both the government and opposition front-benchers maintained their bi-partisan support of the Nigerian government and arms sales to them, the back-benchers MPs from both sides of the House moved in challenge of the government's actions and decisions to allow arms supplies to Nigeria. Thus, the demand for an arms embargo on Nigeria eventually prompted Michael Barnes, to demand for an adjournment of the House on 11th June, 1968 in order to discuss the effect of continued supply of arms from Britain to Nigeria. This phenomenon developed immediately after the breakdown of Kampala peace talks. To this end, the emergency debate of 12th June, 1968 formally set the stage for the controversy at the Parliament over arms sales to Nigeria. Opening the debate, Michael Barnes argued for an immediate cease-fire and for the complete arms embargo on Nigeria. His grounds of arguments were that, the Labour Government's aims in the civil war were not clear and that this had made the government to adduce conflicting reasons for its policy. He rejected the British arms sales to Nigeria as untenable on moral grounds. Thus, he dealt with the issues of arms supplies succinctly and convincingly. But the government supporters in the Parliament defended the British government, being the traditional suppliers of arms to Nigeria. The June 1968 debate brought into open the reservations that were felt on both back-benchers about the British policy in the Nigerian Civil War.⁵⁶⁸

The above debate on the Nigerian Civil War showed that, many well-meaning MPs were genuinely concerned about the return of peace in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the tone of speeches by a number of them left the impressions that, the facts of the Nigerian situation were not readily available to them. Many friends of Nigeria in Britain and elsewhere were apparently in the same position. After the debate of 12th June, 1968 Anthony Enahoro, sent a letter to all MPs at the British Houses of Parliament. He noted that whatever the British

⁵⁶⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/271, Note of Record on Meeting between the British Secretary of State and All Parliamentary Party, 30th May, 1968.

⁵⁶⁸ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Groups and Foreign Policy*, pp.180-189.

government intentions about the sale of arms to Nigeria it was quite certain that, their own existing sources of supply remained open to Biafra, and these appear not to have ended the war. He said that, by stopping arms sale to Nigeria, the Federal government might feel compelled to turn to other sources of supply. Secondly, the stoppage of arms would confirm the allegations by the FMG that; the British Parliament and its people did not really care whether or not Nigeria remained a united country. In this regard he reminded the MPs that after the liberation of Port Harcourt and securing the oil installations, the British Parliament and government were indifferent whether or not Nigeria was completely re-united. Thirdly, the stoppage would encourage further Biafra's intransigence and, thereby prolong the war. This would be disastrous at a time when renewed efforts were being made by the British government and Commonwealth Secretariat to reconvene the Peace Talks. He therefore concluded that he never doubted that the stoppage of arms would alienate the vast majority of Nigerians.⁵⁶⁹

On Tuesday, 27th August, 1968 another debate on the Nigerian Civil War was held at the British House of Commons. The arms embargo issue was again raised on a motion of adjournment that, the government offered itself so that, the situation in Nigeria could be debated. The immediate background to the debate was the unsuccessful mediation by Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia of the relief problem of that civil war. It emerged from the debate of 27th August, 1968 that, Parliamentary dissent from the government's policy had increased substantially, with back-benchers MPs from both sides of the House, sharply critical of the British policy. In his contribution to the debate MP Fisher said that, Biafra's propaganda had been very effective and very well directed. The Federal case, he said was political, economic and much more difficult to make and had to some extent gone by default. That was partly the fault of the federal leaders. They thought that, the Federal government had a good case and did not need to project it, but, one must always make one's case known. He said that, in fairness to the British press, he was told by journalists in Lagos that there were no weekly press conferences. General Gowon seldom, if ever, saw the foreign press and the journalists were often only given handouts and must work on them. If that was so, there could not be anything very interesting coming to the editors' desk in London from Lagos, and that might explained, to a certain extent, why the federal case appeared not to be very effectively put in foreign press and newspapers.⁵⁷⁰ Another MP, Whitlock stated that one of

⁵⁶⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/156, File No. JWN 1/1/5A/368/PB, Extract from Letter to Members of Parliament from Anthony Enahoro, 12th June, 1968.

⁵⁷⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/157, File No. JWN 1/1/5B/368/PB, Extracts From British Parliamentary Debates on the Nigerian Situation in the House of Commons, London, Tuesday, 27th August, 1968.

the factors which had added the difficulty in assessing the events in Nigerian were not the appalling sufferings and loss of life which they all deplore so greatly or the well authenticated reports of starvation but at times the press in Britain which had found it very difficult to obtain objective first-hand reporting from the fighting areas. In propaganda field, Biafrans had often seemed to be winning the war of words, while losing the battle of arms. Behind the success of the exercise was a highly professional operation conduct of an advertising agency in Geneva known as Markpress News Features Service. The Biafran official propaganda and publicity line were regularly telexed to Geneva and distributed wholesale and undiluted by the agency across the news media outlets all over the world. Much of the press materials supplied on behalf of Biafrans had been patently untrue. This was the kind of propaganda which was believed to have emanated from Biafra.⁵⁷¹

On 4th December, 1968 one hundred and fifty-one MPs, including thirty-nine Conservatives and five Liberals, signed a back-bench motion and called for a debate before Christmas concerning the Nigerian Civil War. Nearly one hundred and thirty-one MPs signed. A call was made in that motion for the British government to stop arms supplies to Nigeria forthwith and to help to organised a mass international operation to provide food and medical supplies to the victims of the war. The motions were sponsored by Frank Allaum; Phillip Noel-Baker and Michael Barnes of Labour Party; Hugh Fraser and Gilbert Longden Conservative; Jo Grimond Liberal and Sir John Eden Conservative. The signatories were drawn from Left, Right and Centre in the House of Commons. This reflected the mounting anxiety and concern among the MPs about the increasingly horrific reports that reached London of the high number of civilians who were in danger of dying from starvation and disease in Biafra. Five members of Labour's National Executive Committee signed both motions. They included Franks Allaum; Walter Padley, former Minister of State at the Foreign Office; Miss Joan Lester; Tom Driberg and Ian Milardo. The Liberal signatories were Jo Grimond; Lubbock, Steel; Pardoe and Winstanley. Both Nationalist MPs namely, Ewing Scottish and Gwynfor Evans Welsh also signed the motion.⁵⁷² Meanwhile, on the eve of a major House of Commons debate on the Nigerian Civil War, held on 12th March, 1969 a pro-Nigerian group of British MPs sent a letter to Brigadier Ogundipe the Nigeria's High Commissioner to Britain. They assured him of their support for the FMG, but asked for an end to the indiscriminate bombing of civilians. They noted that, the compassion of the British people had been aroused by the heartening sufferings, brought to Nigeria by the tragedy of

⁵⁷¹TNA, FCO, 65/157, Extracts From British Parliamentary Debates on the Nigerian Situation in the House of Commons.

⁵⁷² *Guardian*, 5th December, 1968.

the civil war, and in company with the civilised world. And that they were desperately anxious to help end the killings on the battlefield and the agony of the innocents.⁵⁷³ The pro-Biafran MPs that supported Ojukwu and Biafran lobbyists in both Houses of Parliaments included, Frank Allaum, A. Lyon and among others.

In curtailing the criticisms of her involvement in the Nigerian Civil War particularly in the Parliament the British government advised the Federal government to employ a full time publicity agency in Britain and some part-time consultants among the Members of Parliament. These MPs, in turn should advise some of their colleagues to visit Nigeria and to see the situation by themselves.⁵⁷⁴ Thus, as from January 1968, huge number of MPs visited both sides of the conflict. For instance, on 7th November, 1968 in a minute addressed to John Wilson, Head of West African Department of Foreign and Commonwealth Office, D.C. Tebbit stated that, MP E.L. Mallalieu spoke to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, about a visit he proposed to make to Nigeria, on Monday, 8th November, 1968. E.L. Mallalieu later explained that the object of his visit to Nigeria was to satisfy himself that, Nigerians really meant what they said about ensuring the safety of the Igbos and reintegrating them into one Nigeria structure. If he was so satisfied, he would offer to broadcast from Lagos to tell Biafrans to lay down their arms and embrace peace. Following E.L. Mallalieu visit to Nigeria Lagos Radio reported that the British MP made an appeal to the Igbos for a peaceful settlement of the war, after he assured them that he had found no evidence of genocide.⁵⁷⁵

T. McNally, on Thursday 7th -16th November, 1968 visited Biafra. His visit to Biafra was the direct result of a contact between the Overseas Development Department and Peter Dankert, Overseas Secretary of the Dutch Labour Party. He flew to Amsterdam on Thursday, 7th November, 1968. While in Amsterdam he contacted the organiser of the Amsterdam- Sao Tomé charter plane, Abey Nathan. Abey Nathan was a former Israeli Air force Pilot who had engaged in a number of exploits, including a self-initiated peace mission to Cairo. During his visit to Biafra, T. McNally held a meeting with the Permanent Secretary, Biafra's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, Godwin Onyebula. Onyebula told him that, Igbo people were the greatest exponents of true federalism in Nigeria. He estimated that, about 2 million people had returned to the Eastern Region after the massacres of 1966. The basic lack of security for the Igbo people was the root cause of the problem. The greatest

⁵⁷³ TNA, FCO, 65/158, File No. JWN 1/1/5C/368/PB, Text of Letter sent by a Group of Pro-Federal British MPs to the Nigerian High Commissioner in London, 12th March, 1969.

⁵⁷⁴ Ajibola, W. *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.190.

⁵⁷⁵ TNA, FCO, 65 /463 / File. No JWN 22 / 4 Part A, Visits by Parliamentarians to Biafra and Nigeria, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969, by D. C. Tebbit to J. Wilson, 7th November, 1968.

relief work which could be carried out at the moment was in the area of a ceasefire. He thought that, a ceasefire should be without commitment on either side. T. McNally then said that, the British policy of arms supply was fiercely attacked in Britain. If the war continued, Britain would be seen as arming Nigeria for a massacre. Onyebula felt that, the Commonwealth governments had a role to play, especially by adopting a neutral position in the conflict. Lack of OAU support of Biafra was a result of direct fear of dismemberment of their Member-States and because of various diplomatic pressures exerted by the USA; Britain and the Pro-Northern Arab countries. McNally also held another meeting with Biafra's Chief of Staff, Major-General Phillip Efiang. Efiang introduced himself as an Ibibio, one of the minorities in Biafra. He stated that, in recent week, the enemy had been on the defensive; this had been mainly due to an improvement in the efficiency of arms delivery. The Major-General strongly attacked Britain. He stated that, the figures of arms supply by Britain was misleading since on top of the arms Britain herself supplied they also supplied Nigeria with credit facilities to purchase arms elsewhere around the world.⁵⁷⁶

Another British MP that visited Biafra was John Dunwoody. During his visit, he described the effects of famine and war in Biafra. Dunwoody noted that, he travelled to Biafra by relief plane from Sao Tomé. In an elderly DC-7 plane, they carried seven tons of food to feed thousands of people that were near starvation in Biafra. Small children with protein deficiency, disease, such as kwashiorkor were the most pitiful in Biafra. He noted that, everywhere he went, he came across sick-bays, units with hundreds of apathetic and withdrawn children, with swollen legs, emaciated bodies and reddish discoloured hair. While the war rages, terrified families die together in the bush, from untreated disease and lack of food. He recalled that as at the time he left Biafra, bombs were falling and the anti-aircraft flights guns were being fired. Many of the relief flights had to turn back still fully laden. There was concerted international efforts to provide essential protein for around one and a half million Biafrans, mainly children and vital medical supplies. But the airlift could not provide the 2,000 tons or more a day needed when local food supplies were exhausted in Biafra. The political, military and practical objections to relief by other routes meant that only a ceasefire could give people hope, if not life to those at risk. This unprecedented human problem could not be solved in the absence of some progress towards a military and political settlement.⁵⁷⁷ Indeed, Dunwoody's visitation was reported by Markpress News Services on 5th December, 1968 in which he said that, "there can be no military solution to the Nigeria-

⁵⁷⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/ 463, Text of Record of Visit to Biafra by T. McNally, 7th November, 1968.

⁵⁷⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/463, J. Dunwoody to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, December, 1968.

Biafra conflict". For his observations during his visit strengthened his views about the civil war. Dunwoody said that he was concerned about the information given to the British public concerning the conflict, and had decided to visit Biafra to "see things for myself". He noted:

Contrary to opinion held in Britain, it was significant to state that there was mass popular support for the administration and struggle in which Biafra engaged herself, he declared: I cannot exaggerate the extent Biafrans have identified themselves in this struggle. I am convinced that the Biafrans were struggling for their security. It was disturbing to consider exclusively the humanitarian aspects of the Nigerian-Biafra War. The humanitarian aspects was intricately inter-woven with the political and I have not accepted the concept of a unitary Nigeria as it had been presented to me, not as one might consider European nations like France and Spain. I disbelieved that the population was not in support of the government of Biafra. As a doctor, I am opposed to the human suffering involved. The innocent people have suffered.⁵⁷⁸

John Wilson of West African Department was another eminent British official that visited Nigeria during the Nigerian Civil War. In a letter he addressed on 9th January, 1968 to D.C. Tebbit, Wilson stated that, the British policy in Nigeria was designed to satisfy a number of objectives, chief among them, were to safeguard the British interests. This policy was increasingly threatened by the pressure of political and parliamentary opinion in Britain. Ministerial attempts to placate this opinion was seen to be active in promoting the Biafran case, thus, damaging to the British interests. Ministers believed that, the British government might eventually be compelled to modify her policy in some respects. 1969 was certain to be a crucial year in the Nigerian Civil War. It was important that the West African Department should be able to make policy recommendations that considered the best possible account of all the factors on the spot, and in the fullest possible knowledge of the consequences of any causes they might propose to adopt. Within the above context, Wilson recommended that, he be allowed and authorised to pay a short visit to Nigeria in February 1969, the object of which would be to study the situation on the spot, obtain as huge information as possible, and to consider, as a background to the recommendation, the WAD might be needed to formulate the policy of the war, the pros and cons of the various policy choices which might present themselves to them. It was not until 4th -10th February 1969 that, John Wilson visited Nigeria.⁵⁷⁹ During his stay in Nigeria, he held series of talks at the British High Commission

⁵⁷⁸ *Markpress*, 5th December, 1968.

⁵⁷⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/ 463, Text of a Letter by J. Wilson to D.C. Tebbit on Possible visit to Nigeria, 9th January, 1968.

Office in Lagos about the issue of the Nigerian Civil War and the problem the British officialdom could face, if the federal army had by Easter of 1969 not succeeded in finishing off the war. He made reference of the conversation between the British Prime Minister and Obafemi Awolowo on 16th January 1969, in which the Prime Minister said that if the next campaign of the war was not the last the British government and the Federal government could face a very difficult situation, at which point he and his colleagues needed to be in a very close touch with General Gowon. Adding that, if the federal government's hopes were frustrated or proved optimistic a very serious situation would arise, in which the Prime Minister would contact General Gowon and might wish to send a British Minister to discuss the situation with the federal government so that the situation could be reviewed by Easter time.⁵⁸⁰

Michael Barnes and Alexander Lyon are MPs who also visited Biafra. They entered Nigeria on Thursday 13th February, 1969 having flown out by the ICRC airplane to Cotonou in a hired car. In reporting to the Foreign Office about the visit of the two British MPs to Nigeria, E.G. Willan from the British High Commission to Nigeria, noted that, both MPs were very pleasant and reasonable to listen, though, Michael Barnes in particular had fairly pre-conceived ideas. After their visit to Nigeria both MPs were very much impressed by the determination of the Biafrans to fight on, not in the expectation of a military victory but with the hope that they could prolong the war long enough to permit them to win sufficient diplomatic support for their secession. The effect of this determination was that there was no willingness whatsoever to compromise, either on the central question of their right to break away from Nigeria, or on the proposals for new relief routes. It was clear from their conversation with Biafran leaders that, Ojukwu's reference to a Commonwealth arrangement simply meant that, there might be some form of continued association between Nigeria and Biafra as separate units. The Biafrans were not willing to be part of a Commonwealth of Nigeria within common frontiers, and not to depend on any external force for their security. Michael Barnes said that, Biafrans would accept only that kind of Commonwealth arrangement within which both components would be separately specified, a "Commonwealth of Nigeria and Biafra". In fact, Biafrans believed that the situation after the end of the war would not be static and that there would be further constitutional developments. In particular, they did not believe that the alliance between the Yorubas and Northerners would survive the end of the war if indeed it lasted so long. Because of this attitude, Alexander Lyon, did not think that in any further peace initiative Britain would have

⁵⁸⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/463, Record of Meeting between J. Wilson and officials of British High Commission in Lagos, February, 1969.

much chances of success without the help of the United States who was expected to come out strongly in favour of Nigeria. He believed that, the Biafrans might become less confident about their future prospects in Nigeria and ready for negotiations.⁵⁸¹

Another British Member of Parliament that visited Biafra was John Cordle. He proposed on 4th March, 1969 to visit Biafra and Nigeria during his discussions with British Member of Parliament, James Johnson. He suggested that, both of them might in the light of Winston Churchill's articles, see for themselves what the Nigerian Air Force were doing especially their air raids by going to the Air Force bases, and talk to the Air Commanders and pilots etc. John Cordle, a Conservative MP was clearly shocked by what Winston Churchill said in his article. He said that, he thought the British government would have to rethink again, and look at what was had happened in Biafra. He claimed that, General Gowon sent a message to the Nigeria High Commissioner to London, Brigadier Ogundipe. He said in effect that, "ignore anything that young man said; it's nonsense". But he, John Cordle, thought that this was not good enough. He thought that, General Gowon might no longer be fully in charge and that his orders were perhaps being ignored. He ought to get rid of his Egyptian pilots and ground aircrafts. John Cordle also said that he personally thought that he ought to go to Biafra. He sent a message to Colonel Ojukwu and asked him whether he would be admitted. After his arrival to Nigeria it was reported by the Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Information on 15th March, 1969 that, John Cordle re-affirmed the support of the British people and Parliamentarians for a united Nigeria "that can take her rightful place once more as a leading, strong, and influential nation" in Africa.⁵⁸²

Another British MP that visited Biafra and Nigeria during the war was Frank Allaum, a Labour Parliamentarian. Allaum left London on Wednesday 5th March, 1969 and flew into Uli airfield via Amsterdam and Sao Tomé. He stayed four days in Biafra flew out from Uli to Cotonou, Benin on the night of Sunday 9th March, 1969 and travelled to Lagos by road on Monday 10th March, 1969. He spent one day in Lagos, and had a discussion with the federal officials and Commissioners and returned back to London on 12th March, 1969. Allaum had four busy days in Biafra and was given an hour's interview with Ojukwu on the record and a further 20 minutes off the record. During the interview, Frank Allaum reminded Ojukwu of an important statement he made to the three Scandinavian leaders who visited him some time ago. He understood from that statement that Ojukwu would accept an immediate ceasefire without pre-conditions. Ojukwu told him that, the statement was his position in the war and he believed that the war was futile. For him, Lagos could not win the war; likewise Biafra. He

⁵⁸¹ TNA, FCO, 65/463, E.G. Willan to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, February, 1969.

⁵⁸² TNA, 65/463, Text of Proposal on Possible Visit to Biafra by J. Cordle, 4th March, 1969.

said that, Biafra could continue their resistance for as long as Nigerians wished to continue to attack them, but to win total victory by either side was impossible. By accepting the fact that the war was futile, the only way to get about achieving peace was through a roundtable discussion. This had been the position of the Biafran government ever since the war began. Ojukwu said that Biafra wanted to get round the table because weapons could never win the war. They could not get round the table when there was bombing; when there was military activity all round; when in fact, some of the delegates could not get out and friends could not consult. Biafra, he said wanted to see a discussion in a comparatively peaceful atmosphere. So from the end of 1968, they kept repeating that ceasefire without conditions would be the answer to Biafra's dilemma. Ceasefire without pre-conditions and in this context entails that, Nigeria is one, with Biafra inclusive. Biafra, he said was separate and not part of the Nigerian federation. Ojukwu suggested that, Lagos should not give up anything completely and Biafra never wanted to give up too.⁵⁸³

Hugh Fraser, Conservative MP for Stafford and Stone and former Secretary of State was also a prominent British MP that visited Biafra, for fact-finding mission. According to his findings, the Nigerian troops had concentrated in a few largely abandoned towns and suburbs, avoiding, except under armoured car escort, thousands of villages, hamlets and homesteads. There were in Biafra, four fronts and every unpatrolled palm tree was a fifth column. On three of these fronts, the Nigerian High Command was to some extent, in difficulty. In the south, around Port Harcourt, it was on the defensive; in the east it was crippled by bad supply routes. In the north, the Umuahia offensive ran out of steam. Communication there was disrupted by air drops, which seriously became necessary.⁵⁸⁴ Anne Kerr was also another British MP that visited Biafra and Nigeria. She arrived in Nigeria on 29th July, 1969, and left for Douala en-route for Libreville, from where she flew to Biafra. She made no secret of her intentions in talking to the Federal officials who took it quite calmly. She said that, Britain's continuing supply of arms to the Nigerian Army was, as a Biafran told her, "like being deserted by your own father". Kerr said that her sharpest memory of the MPs visit was the great sadness of Biafrans that, Britain had taken the decision to continue supplying arms to the Nigerian government. She said that, "I believed it will be a betrayal of everything we stand for, if we allow this ghastly war to continue without such a major initiative from Britain".⁵⁸⁵ On 18th November, 1969 Anne Kerr visited Maurice Foley and discussed the Nigerian Civil War in the light of her visit to Nigeria and Biafra in

⁵⁸³ TNA, FCO, 65/463, Frank Allaum Visit to Biafra, 5th March, 1969.

⁵⁸⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/463, Hugh Fraser Visit to Biafra, 1969.

⁵⁸⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/463, Anne Kerr Visit to Biafra, 29th July, 1969.

August, 1969. She said that while in Biafra, she met Colonel Ojukwu, his wife, and other Biafran leaders which also included Mathew Mbu whom she described as the Commissioner for Education. She said that the Biafrans would not give in or accept anything less than secession. Though, the Biafrans were ready to sit down and discussed the end of the war. She said that, she was impressed by General Gowon's attitude and by the fact that he appeared obviously eager to end the war. In most of her interviews, she launched an attack on the British policy and demanded that, the British government should put an immediate stop to supplying arms and appeal to other governments concerned to do likewise.⁵⁸⁶ These visitations later became great assets towards the improvement of the federal government case. This was because the visitors started speaking on the factual situation in Nigeria in the subsequent parliamentary debates on the civil war.

On 27th October, 1969 the *Irish Times* reported that, three British MPs representing all hues of the political spectrum, namely John Grimond Liberal; Frank Allaum, Labour and Hugh Fraser, Conservative, on 26th October, 1969 led a crowd of demonstrators to No.10 Downing Street London. The MPs presented a petition to the British officials. The petitioners adduced that, "refusing to stop the further killings of Biafrans and Nigerians would not augur well for the British government". They demanded that the British government should immediately halt its supply of arms to the Nigerian government. Before presenting the petition, the MPs, joined by about thirty demonstrators held a rally in Trafalgar Square in support of the "No Arms for Nigeria Campaign". At the event, the Parliamentarians addressed the demonstrators. For instance, J. Grimond said that, "we are here to protest against the most shameful act by any British government in recent years; the supply of arms to Nigeria". F. Allaum noted that, "Nigerian Civil War was the most terrible war since 1945. It had cost more lives than the war in Vietnam. I want to see a direct approach to the United Nations, with Britain saying we are going to stop the supply of arms as other people had done". Fraser equally said that, "we are gathered here in a square dedicated to Britain's glory to protest at Britain's shame. This was a war which was no longer winnable". The demonstration was the second held for Biafra Week.⁵⁸⁷ On 6th December, 1969 during Maurice Foley's visit to Nigeria, the *Daily Express* in one of its editorials argued that, however, well intentioned Foley's visit might be, majority of Nigerians had doubt about the genuine interest of a section of the British Parliament in the Nigerian Civil War. In Fact, it later became well-known that, whenever there was strong thrust by the Nigerian troops, with

⁵⁸⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/463, Record of Conversation between Anne Kerr and Maurice Foley on the Visit to Biafra, 18th November, 1969.

⁵⁸⁷ *Irish Times*, 27th October, 1969.

a view to end the civil war, then, the outcry of the humanitarianists in the British Parliament became very audible. The paper therefore, viewed Foley's visit with suspicion and argued that, the timing was unhappy.⁵⁸⁸

4.2 British Media

The attitudes of the British media formed part of the British reaction to Biafra's propaganda and the Nigerian Civil War in general.⁵⁸⁹ The sheer amount of media attention to the conflict led to an outpouring of international public opinion which the British media were not left out. The British radio, television, and newspaper agencies played fundamental roles in covering the civil war.⁵⁹⁰

4.2.1. Newspapers

As early as 11th July, 1967 articles in support of Biafra had appeared in several British newspapers, namely, *The Times*, *Sunday Times*, *the Sun*, *Observer*, *Guardian*, *The Spectator*, *Peace News* etc. Some producers and commentators, however, were influenced by Biafran propaganda. Their programme presentations on the Nigerian Civil War reflected pro-Biafra stance except some few of them.⁵⁹¹ As the war became inevitable most British newspapers' reports centred on the leaders of both sides of the conflict. Only three newspapers, namely *The Times*, *Guardian*, and *Daily Express* said anything about the attitude of the ordinary people. The *Times* stated that, most of the minority peoples of the East would not support eastern secession, while the other two papers reported that, they would go with the East. The Federal government was generally regarded as military junta. Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was reported as taking directives from his region's assembly, even though he, unlike Gowon, was a serving Army Officer. Gowon was described as a Christian, though from a Muslim region but proud of his Christian faith. He was Sandhurst-trained and had personally done a great deal from preventing the break-up of the country. But he was also said to be a *protégé* of the Northern elites, while the army from which he derived his power from was controlled by Lieutenant Colonel Kastina Hassan. Hassan was in turn surrounded by hawks. He would agree with Gowon, but only so long as Gowon agreed with him. Above all, despite Gowon's faith, he was stated, to lack any talent for political leadership; and most southern Nigerians believed that he was speaking for the North. Colonel Ojukwu, on the other hand, was reported as being a man educated at an

⁵⁸⁸ *Daily Express*, 6th December, 1969.

⁵⁸⁹ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Groups and Foreign Policy*, p.154.

⁵⁹⁰ Achebe, C. 2012, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, p. 199.

⁵⁹¹ TNA, FCO, 65/250, Note of Record on Biafra Lobby, June, 1969.

English public school, followed by Oxford and Kimberley. He was the son of a self-made millionaire. His tutors in England said that, Ojukwu was, “very patriotic and far-sighted with brilliant ideas for the education of his people... well-disciplined, with an Oxford accent... if he survives, he was likely to develop into one of the outstanding figures of post-colonial Africa”.⁵⁹²

Though, most British papers were interested in Nigeria before secession, the formal still provided sensational headlines. Most of the papers gave general information on the secession and prediction of the outcome, as well as the mood of the various parts of Nigeria and the possible involvement of Britain. There were maps of Nigeria and the new State of Biafra, together with the photographs of Gowon and Ojukwu. Following the outbreak of hostilities, the British press failed to give a clear lead to the British public on what British attitude should be. While the right-wing paper *The Daily Telegraph* warned the British government against intervening in the war, *The Times* was ambivalent regarding what attitude it thought the British should adopt. The reason for its prevarication was underlined was that Biafra’s secession would cause delicate problems for Britain and the Commonwealth. Later, after the setback suffered by the federal forces through the loss of the Mid-west, the paper nailed its flag to the “no intervention mast. It contended that, Britain’s diplomatic support for Nigeria should not extend to arms supplies, as this would destroy Britain’s neutrality. The *Guardian* was equally torn by its conflicting sentiments over the Nigerian Civil War. It was, at first, in support of Nigerian unity, but, moved subsequently for the Igbo; it declared its opposition to the war, on moral grounds, to ensure that unity. Its opposition to the war was eventually translated into support for Biafra’s secession, which it proclaimed was sincere and deeply felt act of self-determination. As to what the attitude of the British government should be, the paper said, it was against all foreign intervention and warned the British government to stay out of the conflict.⁵⁹³

When the war commenced reports suggested that the war was primitive and that there were severe loses on both sides. When the Biafran forces were expelled from the Mid-west, heavy casualties were reported among civilian population living there. The killings were said to have been organised and executed by federal soldiers and local non-Igbo civilians in the Mid-west. But the war had not yet reached its most brutal stage; that came in 1968. In February, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that, more than thirty thousand civilians lost their lives, and in August. The *Observer* stated that, at least six thousand people, mostly civilians

⁵⁹² Ajibola, W. 1978. *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.61.

⁵⁹³ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.61-62.

died.⁵⁹⁴ On-the-spot and eyewitness report of the brutal massacre of civilians at the hands of the federal troops continued; for instance, an eyewitness reported in the *Sunday Times* said:

I have seen many things in Biafra in this week, which no man should have to see... I have seen children roasted alive, young women torn in two by shrapnel, pregnant woman eviscerated, and old men blown to fragments. I have seen these things and have seen their cause, high flying Russian Ilyushin jets dropping bombs on civilian centres throughout Biafra. These bombs are believed to be British.⁵⁹⁵

Stories of mass starvation began to appear early in 1968. There were stories of thousand of human beings who were turned into gaunt figures of skin and bone. Once bright-eyed children have match-stick legs and distended bellies... and about 600,000 people faced starvation. Stories of starving women and children continued with pictorial illustrations. By the middle of 1968, it was reported that, hunger and starvation had become Gowon's chief ally. Everyday, more than 3,000 people die of starvation. There were reports from the refugee camps where the death rate was so high that burial committees in 628 Biafran refugee camps became busier. More people died of hunger than from the bullet wounds. The number of refugees continued to rise as the war progressed, and the number of starvation casualties continued to increase.⁵⁹⁶

The *Daily Sketch* on 17th June, 1968 accused the British government of doing nothing about the starvation of more than fourteen and half million people. And that, "when the Biafrans cry for milk for their starving children, Britain sends bullets to kill them".⁵⁹⁷ Collin Legum, in the *Observer* of 14th July, 1968 argued that, only swift action by the United Nations could prevent worse horrors in the civil war. He noted that, there was serious danger with the Biafrans encircled by the federal troops and at the same time faced starvation. He doubted the possibility of public opinion's wiliness to tolerate the British support of the FMG, especially over the sale of arms; unless there was effective action to avert the possibility of hundreds of Biafrans dying from starvation.⁵⁹⁸ On 15th July, 1968 the *Daily Sketch* in the report titled "Come on Wilson! Give Us Action" queried how could the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson be sleeping at night, how he could stand up, eyes open with sincerity, and talk about the Labour Party's compassion and concern for the black Africa. The paper noted that thousands of African children, no one knew the full number, died of

⁵⁹⁴ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.66.

⁵⁹⁵ *Sunday Times*, 2nd March, 1969.

⁵⁹⁶ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.67-68.

⁵⁹⁷ *Daily Sketch*, 17th July, 1968, p.2.

⁵⁹⁸ *The Observer*, 14th July, 1968, p.1.

starvation in Biafra. But the British government was still dithering to persuade both sides of the war to let a trickle of relief Lorries to enter the war zones. It argued that there was one commodity which the British government had sent to Nigeria in unimpeded flow and that was bullets and shells. This disgraceful situation came to light fully, only through the efforts of the British press and of two newspapers in particular, namely, the *Sketch* and *Sun*. If it had been left to Harold Wilson and his colleagues, the British public would still be ignorant of what was being done in their name. The paper noted that, when the Rhodesians dared to defy Harold Wilson, the British government sent a frigate in double-quick time and with legal authority to blockade the Portuguese port of Beira. The paper then, asked why the government did not act equally decisively over Biafra. Noting that, an entire nation was being massacred mostly men, women and children and Britain was largely responsible. Since eighty percent of the weapons used to kill them, came from Britain. The British government's excuse for not stopping the war was that it gives them influence with the Federal government. If so, the paper argued, why haven't Britain used this influence to bring about at least a temporary cease-fire which alone would enable the relief supplies to go on? And why didn't Britain's representative at the United Nation, Lord Caradon, aroused the conscience of the world over Biafra? He was quick enough to make angry speeches about Rhodesia.⁵⁹⁹ *Sunday Telegraph*, on 17th July, 1968 maintained that, the agony of Biafra was an affront to the conscience of the civilised world. It criticised the ineffectiveness of the British representatives in Lagos to preserve the remnants of their special relationship with the Federal government, with what the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomas, described as "after all a sister government of the Commonwealth".⁶⁰⁰

On 28th June, 1969 the *London Times*, in an editorial stated that all the evidence in the Nigerian Civil War showed that, starvation as an act of war, was the effective policy of the Nigerian government. The editorial attacked the British government's argument that, the Nigerian government was only too keen to feed the people of Biafra. Therefore, it was the fault of the Biafran government who chose to starve their own people. It went on to criticise the British line of argument of justifying their military aid to Nigeria. The editorial maintained that, the British government was able to gain practically nothing through its supposed influence, and that it, was quite simply, morally wrong to be the accessory to the slaughter of a million people in order to protect oil supplies and anyone who does not see that

⁵⁹⁹ *The Sketch*, 15th July, 1968, pp.1-2.

⁶⁰⁰ *Sunday Telegraph*, 17th July, 1968, p.1

it was wrong was morally bankrupt.⁶⁰¹ Meanwhile, the British officialdom's reaction to the editorial report appeared to be different. For instance, the Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, said in the House of Commons, that if accusations were to be made against either the Nigerian government or Her Majesty's Government attempt to starve the Igbos, it was important to provide evidence. It was too difficult to know what the exact facts were. He felt, then, that the possibility exists of a British, not just Nigerian policy of genocide.⁶⁰²

British newspaper also reported the feelings of the people on both sides involved in the conflict to the policies, pursued by their respective leaders. They also showed how people on one side of the war regarded people on the other. Two types of reports appeared on how civilians felt inside Biafra. First, they saw Biafra as a police state, with Colonel Ojukwu, at the head of a regime whose influence was so pervasive that it did not permit other views to be expressed. Civilian morale according to these reports was very low, and very few people followed the Biafran troops in their retreat to the heartland. Most of them fled to the bush in order to escape the clutches of federal and Biafran soldiers. The Biafran elite was said to have enriched themselves out of the war. However, the second and most frequent type of report presented a very different picture. Morale was said to be high among civilians, and there was a general willingness to support the leadership.⁶⁰³ For instance, from on 4th August, 1968 to 24th March 1969, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Express*, *Sun*, and *The Times* reported:

There is a new nationalism, a hybrid mixture based on fear and hatred... and stiffed by a strong Christianity, has induced a fighting spirit rarely seen in Africa... there is no escaping the fact that this war has become a people's war... when an illiterate peasant woman who has just watched her second child die, dedicates its spirit amid tears, to the success of Biafra, it is hard, if not impossible to subscribe to the idea that twelve million people are being led astray by Colonel Ojukwu and a self-seeking clique... this nationalism now embraces a considerable proportion of the five million minorities... whatever these people felt before the war, there seems little doubt, having experienced the treatment of both sides, that they prefer the Biafrans.⁶⁰⁴

There were also reports that the Biafran leaders received a fresh mandate from the Consultative Assembly. For example, Colonel Ojukwu was reported to have been given such a mandate after the recapture of Owerri from the federal troops in April 1969. On the federal side, there were no corresponding reports that, General Gowon had received a mandate.

⁶⁰¹ *London Times*, 28th June, 1969

⁶⁰² *London Times*, 1st July, 1969.

⁶⁰³ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.68.

⁶⁰⁴ *The Observer*, 4th August, 1968.

However, after the invasion of the Midwest, the consensus of reports was that most Nigerians on the federal side especially those in the North, West and Mid-west favoured the war policy, but were growing impatient at the federal war effort. The minorities from Biafra and in areas captured by the federal troops were reported to be subjected to persecution. The Biafrans were reported to hate other Nigerians as much as the latter hated them in return. In many parts of Nigeria, the Igbos was persecuted; the *Guardian* reported on 15th May, 1968 that persecution of the civil war in Nigeria operates at more than one level. There was constant anti-Igbo witch-hunt, carried out in Lagos and other parts of the Federation. Troops at night searched for men, whose only offence was that, they belong to the same tribe as the secessionists. These were not merely acts of undisciplined soldiers, but, the evidence of hatred against the Igbos. For example, a reporter said that, he was present when cyanide poison was found, in food deliberately left by retreating federal soldiers for the Biafrans. Biafran soldiers were reported to be well disciplined and in high spirits, courage and endurance while federal soldiers were undisciplined and had to be cursed into action.⁶⁰⁵

The newspapers reported the peace initiative made by the British government before the outbreak of hostilities in late 1967, such as the official visit of George Thomas to Lagos. A report by Suzanne Cronje on *OFNS*, 13th October, 1967 noted that, the major barrier to a ceasefire in the civil war was the FMG's insistence that, the Biafran secessionists must accept the division of Nigeria into twelve states before negotiations could start. But, for the Biafrans, this looked like a demand for unconditional surrender. The decree which divided the country into twelve states was made by the Nigeria's Head of State, Major General Yakubu Gowon few days before the Eastern Region seceded.⁶⁰⁶ *The Times* report of 3rd June, 1968 titled "Nigeria, Biafra and the British" stated that, the collapse of the Nigeria-Biafra peace talks left the British policy in the war in jeopardy. The British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, told the House of Commons when the peace talks began, "the earliest possible cease-fire has been our aim from the beginning". The paper noted that, not only that, the conference table was abandoned but, the federal government, which Britain supported, had shown that it was not interested in a cease-fire. Its delegation at the Kampala peace conference refused to discuss, unless Biafra first denounced secession, which simply entails unconditional surrender. Biafra's secession put Britain in a state of dilemma, which resulted in natural concern for the fate of a federation Britain had fathered, while material interests were contradictory. Oil investments were mainly in Biafra, while other investments were in federal territory. The oil

⁶⁰⁵ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.69-70.

⁶⁰⁶ Cronje, S. Major Obstacle to Nigerian Ceasefire, *OFNS*. 13th October, 1967, p.1.

companies first decided, to treat secession as a force majeure and pay royalties to the Biafrans. But a second thought brought about by the British officialdom calculations, and based on reports from Lagos, confirmed that the federal side could win the war, the paper reported.⁶⁰⁷

British arms supplies to the Nigeria government, was the most important story which the British media reported.⁶⁰⁸ On 9th May, 1968 Walter Partington wrote that, vast quantities of guns, bullets, and mortar bombs from Britain were delivered to the federal government, to help the 80,000 federal government troops to crush the Biafran soldiers. The shipments of these arms were later stepped up. An estimated 100 tons of arms and ammunitions left Britain to Lagos, each week, to be used in a war, being fought with such an appalling ferocity and had killed thousands of civilians and mostly Biafrans.⁶⁰⁹ On 12th May, 1968 Fredrick Forsyth after his visit to Biafra reported in *Sunday Times* that there were forces let loose in Biafra that white men cannot understand. “Gutted Hamlets, and Rotting Corpses; this was genocide”. He noted that, the Biafrans believed that, the great majority of weapons in federal hands were supplied by Britain, a claimed, which was equally made by the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt. The British government spokesmen both in Parliament and elsewhere were very evasive about the arms sent to Nigeria. The paper reported that, Biafrans vigorously refuted Britain’s claim that, she was obliged to support General Gowon’s war, with arms, because he was the legally Nigeria’s Head of State. The Biafrans leader, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, pointed out that, Britain did not always feel obliged to arm military regimes, particularly when the use to which the weapons might be put is dangerous in the extreme. Ojukwu’s attitude towards the British government was indeed, one of regret that, they chose to reject the British role of as an impartial mediator, to one of greater anger, which he regarded as a betrayal of all the tenets for which a Christian and democratic country was supposed to stand. The *Sunday Times* equally maintained that, the hatred of Britain steadily grew as eighty thousand Biafrans, more than sixty five of them civilians, died. They believed that, just about everything being thrown at them was of the British origin, including bombs and rockets. The Biafrans were quick to point out that, they had nothing against the British people, but only against the British government. In their helpless frustration, they found no outlet for their disgust than to burn the buildings of the foremost British companies who used to operate there.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁷ *Times*, 3rd June, 1968.

⁶⁰⁸ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.70.

⁶⁰⁹ *Daily Express*, 9th May, 1968, p.1.

⁶¹⁰ *The Sunday Times*, 12th May, 1968.

On 29th May, 1968 Michael Lake, wrote in the *Sun*, that, while Nigerian Civil War continued, amounting to loss of lives, Britain had showed no sign of changing her policy of supplying arms to the federal government. Whitehall feared that, the federal government might seize millions of pounds worth of British oil and investments in retaliation for any arms embargo. The British government claimed that, the federal forces that fought the breakaway Biafra got only a third of their arms requirement from Britain.⁶¹¹ On 17th November, 1969 the Toronto *Global and Mail* reported that, the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Maurice Foley, made a comment on radio, on 16th November, 1969 that Britain had stepped up its arms supplies to the FMG. Britain provided up to 20 percent in terms of value of Nigeria's arms to fight Biafrans. Foley's justification of the British policy in that civil war included his statement that, "those who said that Britain's arms are dripping with blood misunderstood Britain's residual colonial responsibilities".⁶¹² Also, on 18th November, 1969 the *London Times*, reported the statement by the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, that, the British arms figure to Nigeria remained at about 15 percent. He added that, "with the increase in size of the Nigerian Army, there had been an increase in the absolute amount of arms sent to Nigeria".⁶¹³ The statements of the two British officials showed that, there had apparently been an increase in both the percentage and the absolute amount of arms deliveries, with the latter, increased greater than could be accounted for by the increment in percentage. It should be noted that, even at the 20 percent, the British arms supplies were more significant than the number indicated. The British arms consisted primarily of armoured cars, explosives and other ground weapons while Russian contributions consisted largely of very expensive air craft.⁶¹⁴ The *London Times* reported Hugh Fraser speech in the Parliament that, "I am told 60 percent of the battler weapons are coming from this country".⁶¹⁵

Among the papers that advocated for a ban of arms were *Guardian*, *The Times*, *Sun*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Daily Express*. However, the *Daily Express* was more concerned with the Labour government's policy towards Southern Africa than with the Nigerian crisis. The latter only served as a convenient vehicle for the former. All the papers advanced moral reasons for British government's halt in arms supplies to Nigeria, even after most of them had earlier relegated moral considerations to the background early on the same issue. The *Guardian* was one of the foremost proponents of a unilateral arms ban by Britain. It advanced seven reasons, of which some were also put forward by other papers in the same category. It

⁶¹¹ *Sun*, 24th May, 1968.

⁶¹² *Global and Mail*, 17th November, 1969.

⁶¹³ *The London Times*, 18th November, 1969.

⁶¹⁴ UK Increases Arms to Nigeria, *Current News From and About Biafra*, No.59, p.3.

⁶¹⁵ *London Times*, 18th November, 1969.

argued that, the war could never be won by either side, and therefore, appealed to the British government not to have anything to do with an indefinite tribal feud. Biafrans were ready to fight to the last man and already, commenced guerrilla war, meticulously planned on Vietnamese lines that would go on for years. Final campaigns would always prove to be far from final, until Wilson come under renewed pressure to stop backing a war that was unstoppable, and unwinnable. The paper's view was that, the policy of a "quick kill" was fallacious; instead, the Biafrans were subjected to slow and agonizing killings. The paper argued that, the objective of the war was no longer realisable, because if, the federals eventually won, "One Nigeria" could no longer be achieved. Instead, there would be slaughter, verging on genocide, and a harvest of bitterness and hatred, that would make any future peace unworkable.⁶¹⁶

The *Sunday Telegraph* was silent on the arms issue until 1969. Its case was based on the argument that, support for Lagos was not in Britain's commercial interest. To unite Nigeria involves working the miracle never before achieved in history of creating a true political partnership between Muslim and non-Muslim. From the foregoing, it appeared that the advocates of a unilateral arms ban believed that the war could not be won by either side or that, it was wrong for Britain to support a prolonged war. If the war could not be won and Biafra retained its independence, or even if the federals did win, the bitterness and human destruction would make a federation unworkable again. It was not, therefore, in Britain's commercial interest to continue her support for the federals. Moreover, it was morally wrong for Britain to be associated with mass murder. The attitude of both the federal government and its soldiers was not worthy of Britain's support; the federal government was not interested in peace except following an outright Biafran surrender. Contrary to the government's claim that its policy coincide with the wishes of most African states, the progressive opinion in Africa thought otherwise. On the basis of past precedent, Britain should not have committed herself militarily to one side in a Commonwealth conflict. The government's policy was alleged to have prolonged the conflict and the stoppage of its arms supplies would lead to reciprocal gestures by other suppliers and this, in turn, would lead to a conciliatory attitude on the part of the belligerent. Britain would then be uniquely placed to mediate and achieve a settlement.⁶¹⁷ *The Guardian*, on 18th November, 1968 reported the efforts made to create a vigorous pressure group in Britain to force the British government to end the Nigeria Civil War. MPs, industrialists, and literary figures were invited under the

⁶¹⁶ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.93-94.

⁶¹⁷ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.97.

auspices of the Save Biafra Committee, to discuss the formation of a group, and decide on a course of action to take. Peter Cadogan was the head of the committee, and spite of massive newspaper and television coverage. According to the paper, the civil war did not produced corresponding activity on the political front. Most energy had gone into charitable and relief work. This was based on the fact that, “this was a war between black man and black man; if black man was fighting whites, it would have been different” the paper said.⁶¹⁸

The Economist was another British newspaper that featured prominently in the Nigerian Civil War. On 30th August, 1969 *The Economist* called on Britain to end its support of Nigeria in the civil war. The article dismissed Nnamdi Azikiwe’s call for “one Nigeria”. “General Gowon might have approached Zik to speak out for unity this week, but he was no closer to getting the other Igbos back into Nigeria”. Countering Britain’s claim that, she must support Nigeria because she was the traditional supplier of arms and because Britain stoppage of arms shipments would increase Russian influence, *The Economist* said that, “the British role of traditional supplier did not stop it from suspending aid to the Makarios government in Cyprus in 1963. The situation there was not identical, but there were similarities. Like Nigeria, Cyprus was a Commonwealth country divided by civil war; the claim of the Makarios government to legitimacy was certainly as strong as that of the Gowon government. And Cypriots, like Nigerians, turned to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union for supplies of arms when they found the British uncooperative. The *Economist* originally supported the British policy on the ground that the preservation of at least a few strong black African countries was necessary, if black Africa was to be a serious continent, and therefore secession was to be deplored. If the British arms could speed up an end to the war and secession, then, the British policy would be justified. But, the paper declared:

We believed that the principle of territorial integrity was worth paying highly for. The price in terms of lives and bloodshed had been enormous. But it had not bought, it would seem, the advertised product. The war continued; the Soviet Union supplies arms, Biafra apart, federal Nigeria is no more united today than it had ever been; and the oil installations remain highly vulnerable, this alone would be a sufficient reason to re-examine British policy”.⁶¹⁹

Another British newspaper that was pro-Biafra in its reportage of the Nigerian Civil War was *Peace News*. *Peace News*, founded in 1936, was an independent weekly newspaper with an international circulation, owned by Peace News Limited, a non-profit making

⁶¹⁸ *Guardian*. 18th November, 1968.

⁶¹⁹ *The Economist*, 30th August, 1969.

publishing company which had no share capital. The members and staff of Peace News Limited are people committed to a non-violent approach to political and social change. A voluntary board of directors, elected by the members always acts as trustees for the paper and its associated activities. *Peace News* worked with people and organisations all over the world who were concerned with peace, freedom, creative living and human rights. Peace News was published on every Friday in London. By air, it reached any part of the world within a few days. It might be ordered in Great Britain through any newsagent or bookstall or ordered by postal subscription to London or Philadelphia. *Peace News* was a co-operative venture; its readers send in news and information; its sales and distribution depend on their help. Students, pensioners, and new readers get Peace News at reduced rate. Specimen copies free on request.⁶²⁰ The paper argued that, Britain was at war by proxy. It was the British assistance to Nigeria in the first few months of Biafra's secession which turned a "quick surgical police action" into a full-scale conflict. It was the British armoured cars which enabled the federal government of Nigeria to advance into the Igbo land in the summer of 1968. It was the British arms and full-square support for Nigeria, which in large measure, slowed down the international mediation and arms embargo to both sides of the conflict. Since September 1968, *Peace News* stated that, high profiled individuals in Britain, over a period of time, kept the British public in the dark concerning the Nigerian Civil War.⁶²¹ The *Peace News*, in one of its publication, called for a "British Revolt" on Biafra. It said that, there were three main reasons for the failure of public anger about the war to stir up the British Government, and particularly, the Foreign Office. Firstly, the plea that the British influence might control wilder excesses in Nigeria. Secondly, many people were reluctant to side with Biafra, and thirdly, a dearth of public information on the state of the war.⁶²² *Peace News* report of 21st June, 1968 stated that, while Oxfam does its bit to get 1,000 tons of dried milk costing £120,000 into Biafra, the British government was prodded by the growing criticisms into making a predictable effort at justifying its policy in the war. That much of the attack came from those who felt no similar inhibitions over backing America in Vietnam was balanced by those whose curiously selective consciences act similarly in other direction.⁶²³ Nadia Fowler reported in *Peace News* of 1968 that, at last, the world's conscience had awakened over the Biafran issue. Determined efforts to raise funds and supplies were made

⁶²⁰ *Peace News*, 1968.

⁶²¹ *Peace News*, 28th October, 1969.

⁶²² *The Guardian*, 18th November, 1968.

⁶²³ *Peace News*, 21st June, 1968.

but, the problem of getting aid into Biafra remains. Until a ceasefire was lifted, difficulties of transport and distribution had persisted.⁶²⁴

Roger Moody, who embarked on public fasting for Biafra outside the Commonwealth Office, on 8th July 1968, wrote on 12th July, 1968 the reasons why he was fasting for Biafra in *Peace News*. Earlier on, he had fasted for six days, before taking his action to Whitehall and made it public. An action, he sustained for ten days, with a view to pressure the British government to take more radical action in the Nigerian Civil War. He urged the public to show support for his fasting, by sending letters of encouragement, fasting privately, joining the fast for a periods of Twenty-Four Hours, by signing the public solidarity book, which he proposed to hand over to the Commonwealth Office every night, or by any other means, that would increased pressure on the British government.⁶²⁵ Roger Barnard, in one of his publications said that, the situation as witnessed in Biafra amounted to nothing less than international crisis, raised to the pitch of horror and insufferable pain. Harold Wilson discounted the Nigerian government's threat to identify and destroy all aircraft, flying relief supplies into Biafran territories. He asserted that, the British government could act no other than it had done. He had, no doubt, whatever that, if all the actual and potential victims of war, disease, and malnutrition in Biafra and Nigeria could be gathered together in one place, and at one time in England, the world would realised straight away, the utter immorality of various governments' behaviour and rose as one man to stop them going through with it. By selling arms to Nigeria, the Soviet Union had committed crime in the name of Socialism. The same crimes were duplicated in the name of Democracy by the British government.⁶²⁶ He declared concerning Roger Moody's fasting regarding the Biafran issue:

This fasting therefore deserves every possible support. It is an action fully consonant with the shameful and atrocious character of what men are doing to each other in this vile war. And it flows from an exact evaluation of what is happening and a sound if painful sense of responsibility to try to stop it. Our modern society crushes and condemns the natural, the direct, the creative, the child-like, the honest and open, and from this mutilation of the soul spring deep feelings of powerlessness. In such a world it is essential to keep alive the individual ability to say "no", the strength to nourish, whenever and wherever we can, the immediate individual act of common decency that reminds us we are still human beings. Such action is a means of affirming what kind of whole society we seek to live in,

⁶²⁴ *Peace News*, July, 1968.

⁶²⁵ *Peace News*, 12th July, 1968.

⁶²⁶ *Peace News*, 12th July, 1968.

which in turn is equivalent to saying what kind of whole men we wish to be.⁶²⁷

On 26th July, 1968 Peter Cadogan, the Secretary of Save Biafra Campaign wrote in *Peace News* that, there was lull in the killing in the Nigerian-Biafra War; there is no lull in starvation. The Niger talks which continued in Addis Ababa could have succeeded if the FMG agreed to a ceasefire without demanding the renunciation of secession by Biafrans. Biafra in some shape or form was here to stay. “Unless we understood this, we shall miss the point of the conflict and fail to see our own relevance to it”. He noted that, the blame for the terrible situation was very largely British. The very concept of “One Nigeria” was born not in West Africa, but in Whitehall. Its main architects were not so much Shell/BP and Unilever, but the Permanent Civil Servants who told both the British and Nigerian governments what to do. It was a common assertion that, Sir David Hunt, the British High Commissioner in Lagos, was more to be blamed than Gowon himself, and that he, his associates, and their predecessors, did draw up a lethal blue-print and determined to stick to it whatever the cost. He argued that, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, stocked to the civil servants. He felt that, he could not afford yet another failure in Africa. He backed Lagos to win the war. Thus, it was not until one knew these things and began to feel them that, it was impossible to understand how Biafrans felt, when they get to No.10 Downing Street to protest. They know that they were within the reach of the killers of their families and friends. “The appalling thing was that, Biafrans were so much obliged to go and do it alone. We have no excuse for ignorance and no excuses for inaction”. Over Biafra, the extra-parliamentary opposition had moved from the Universities to Fleet Street and to all kinds of wholly non-political people whose response to the situation was purely humanitarian. Unless, a settlement was reached, there would be bigger trouble ahead for Britain than any other. Presently, Biafra had the makings of a British Vietnam.⁶²⁸

On 16th August, 1968 the *Peace News* reported that, there was a real evidence of the British influence in the civil war. But, for it to be of any value, the government must declare that, it had realised the fact that, the federal had pursued a line of attack and argument that, would lead to the military conquest of the Igbo heartland, and this was completely indefensible. There was no obligation for the British government to formally recognise Biafra, but, only to recognise the reality of a situation, which the free passage of humanitarian aids was the sole immediate requirement.⁶²⁹ On 23rd August, 1968 Roger Barnard, of *Peace*

⁶²⁷ *Peace News*, 12th July, 1968.

⁶²⁸ *Peace News*, 26th July, 1968.

⁶²⁹ *Peace News*, 16th August, 1968.

News reported how the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, informed the MPs on 12th June, 1968 that, if at any time, the British government came to the conclusion that, the intention of the federal government was not merely to preserve the unity of Nigeria, but to proceed to slaughter the Igbo people, without mercy, then, the arguments, justifying the British policy of arms supply to the FMG would fall. Arguably, the paper noted that, the night after the statements was made; BBC T.V reported the slaughter of 2,000 civilians by the federal troops after crossing the Imo River near Akwa. The paper, therefore, asked whether to parcel every one of those corpses in brown paper and present them to the Foreign Secretary, with labels reading tag, “I was killed without mercy before he wakes from his torpor and acts? It said that, given the desperate jeopardy of the Igbos in the war, there was no justification for the British government’s policy in the war. And suffering in Biafra was beyond politics. Granted that, any halt in the flow of arms from Britain to Nigeria had become something of an academic point and out of suggestions on how to stop the war and reduce intolerable sufferings. Fundamentally, such action was prerequisite for more drastic measures and the only honourable gesture. Thus he urged the need for an all-out united front campaign by left, liberal, radical, anti-war, and other groups in Britain and elsewhere, directed at making the British government stand firm on the words of its own Foreign Secretary.⁶³⁰ Peter Cadogan, after his visit to Biafra, reported on *Peace News* of 30th August, 1968 that “the British in Biafra and the Russians in Czechoslovakia and the Americans in Vietnam were the same kind of men, with the same kind of values, fighting the same kind of murderous war”.⁶³¹

To ensure fair reportage of the war and production of news reports favourable to her case, highly influential British journalists namely Colin Legum and Dame Margery Perham were commissioned by the British government. Example was Dame Margery Perham’s article in *The Times* of 12th September, 1968.⁶³² These news materials were not only deployed especially through the London Press Service to all sectors of the British society particularly the news media. The news materials enhanced the efforts of projecting the British view about the war in Britain. Most of these materials were published in English and French language newspapers. Guidance materials were used in talks with editors, leading writers and commentators. These persistent efforts had a huge effect in dislodging the criticisms of the

⁶³⁰ *Peace News*, 23rd August, 1968.

⁶³¹ *Peace News*, 30th August, 1968.

⁶³² TNA, FCO, 65/441, J. Wilson to W.R. Haydon, 21st October, 1968.

British officialdom and in some important cases caused a more reasonable and informed view to appear in editorial writings.⁶³³

4.2.2. Television and Radio

New advances in technology had indeed revolutionised information access and the way wars are fought. Broadcasting media, namely radio and television, had enabled real-time images of war and sufferings to appear in the world's living rooms and even those in the jungle.⁶³⁴ The Nigerian Civil War like Vietnam War was arguably one of the fully televised conflicts in history⁶³⁵ a war of images fought in the court of public opinion. Television was better placed than any other media platforms to bring home to its viewers what life was like on both sides of the conflict, particularly in Biafra.⁶³⁶ Dame Margery Perham noted writer on African affairs and former Oxford scholar, explained in her 'Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War' in *International Affairs* in January 1970:

Through the medium of television, for the first time the sufferings of a besieged people have been carried into the homes of the great majority of our population. The Biafran appeal to our emotions came from the repeated pictures, not only of dead or dying men and women, but, even more penetrating, of small children with swollen stomachs and stick-like limbs who sometimes appeared to look straight at the viewer with a last cry for help.⁶³⁷

As in the case of newspapers the Biafrans stole a march over the Nigerian government, in providing news and excellent facilities for T.V camera teams particularly from Britain to visit Biafra.⁶³⁸ The Nigerian government never fully grasped the importance of this coverage.⁶³⁹ The use of radio and television was a potent factor that internationalised several aspects of the war, such as starvation and relief problems. It led to the creation of world-wide awareness, controversies and concern about the Biafrans; who were regarded as small Africans whose sufferings were viewed neither as worse nor on a larger scale than those of many, in other parts of the world. Night after night, in the living rooms of London, New York, San Francisco, Bonn, Berne, Stockholm and Rome, affluent white families watched appalled as the hideous images of innocent civilians passed across their screens. The

⁶³³ TNA, FCO, 26/300, Canadian Attitude to the Nigerian Civil War, 1968.

⁶³⁴ Garrison, W.C. 1999. *Information Operations and Counter-Propaganda: Making a Weapon of Public Affairs*. Pennsylvania: United States War College, p.1.

⁶³⁵ Achebe, C. 2012, *There was a Country*, p. 199.

⁶³⁶ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.117.

⁶³⁷ Perham, M. 1970. Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War, *International Affairs* vol. 46, pp. 231-246.

⁶³⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/250, Note of Record on Biafra Lobby, June, 1969.

⁶³⁹ Ajibola, W.1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.110-111.

toddlers pot-bellied with kwashiorkor, the despair in the ravaged faces of mother, the sheer misery of frightened people, made an unforgettable impact. The impact of television in that civil war was heightened by skillful Biafran propaganda, above all by the constant availability of films and facilities for Western television teams. In Britain, a curious sense of guilt associated with the colonial past, was compounded by the British government's role in helping to provide the federal forces with the sinews of war, so that Britain herself was seen by some, partly responsible for the grim plight of the civilian victims. It was also true that the communication media were to a great extent dominated by the Biafran sympathisers. So much so that, television and press reporting was partial, slanted and even mendacious. But, even without Biafran propaganda, television or press bias the sharp television images of human distress that appeared in Britain had certainly, been enough to arouse an irresistible wave of demands for remedial action in that civil war at any cost. The same pattern was repeated in the United States, Canada and throughout Western Europe.⁶⁴⁰ Starving babies, seen repeatedly on television screens, came to symbolised the Nigerian Civil War, for millions of people in Britain, Western Europe and North America. It subjected Her Majesty's Government to pressure which were unwelcome. Thereby, jeopardised on several occasions, the maintenance of a policy which the British government and indeed the leaders of the opposition strongly believed to be right. Nevertheless, the emotions generated by massive and continuous television coverage of the war reflected a strong humanitarian concern and a fierce desire for action to stop an intolerable human disaster.⁶⁴¹

The most dominant British television and radio networks that featured prominently in the Nigerian Civil War are the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Independent Television Authority (ITA). During the civil war, all the ITA programmes were characterised by on-the-spot factual type of documentary and concentrated on Biafra rather than the whole Nigeria. These programmes, however, were supplemented by studio interviews. The dominant figures were the field reporters, most of whom were people resident in Biafra. These were ordinary Biafrans, relief workers, or Biafran leaders. The most dominant centre of focus was the refugee camps, and residents in such camps featured prominently in the programmes. On the hand, while the ITA focused on Biafran grassroots, the BBC concentrated on the broader Nigerian scene. The BBC's programmes were a mixture of factual on-the-spot enquiries, interviews and debates designed both to give viewers

⁶⁴⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/805, File .No JWN 11/59/5A/369/ Politics of Relief Resulting from Civil War in Nigeria, by West African Department to Foreign and Commonwealth Office , June 1970.

⁶⁴¹ TNA, FCO, 65/805, Draft on the Politics of Relief and the Nigerian Experience, by Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Sir Leslies Glass, June, 1970.

background information to the issue of debate and to refresh the memories of participants in the subsequent discussions on the reality of the issue. Background coverage was usually supplied by the BBC's own reporters. Materials from other current affairs programmes were sometimes used. The participants were generally Nigerians and Biafrans. On several occasions, General Yakubu Gowon and Colonel Ojukwu were interviewed. Among other Nigerians whose previous interviews were used were the Governors of Western and the Mid-Western Regions, the late Premiere of Northern Nigeria, and some Northern Emirs. These interviews were intended to give viewers an insight into those aspects of Nigerian society that the reporters wanted to illustrate. At the second level, BBC used interviews and debates. Among the people who participated in the interview were the British Prime Minister and the Ministers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Members of Parliament, and other individuals who had shown concern over the Nigerian Civil War. Care was taken to give fair representation to people holding opposing views on the British government policy in the civil war. Among those who were critical of the policy of the British government were mainly two British MPs namely, Hugh Fraser and Edward DuCann, and two British journalists such as Auberon Waugh and Winston Churchill. Among the supporters of the British government policy that were also interviewed are the two MPs namely, Woodrow Watt, who was a member of the federal lobby in the British House of Parliament, and Patrick Gordon Walker.⁶⁴² On 4th December, 1968 Roy Jenkins, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said on a BBC television programme, that "there was no way the British government could solve the problem of Nigeria and Biafra".⁶⁴³

On 10th January, 1969 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart informed the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, about the BBC television 24 Hours programme conducted on 9th January, 1969 and which carried a long film on Biafra including substantial passages of an interview with Colonel Ojukwu. Apart from the assertion by the commentator that, the federal aircraft dropped British bombs in Biafra, the tone of the programme was generally reasonable. An interesting picture of Biafrans was presented, which however gave it the aspect of being a gallant little country, strongly British character, resisting malevolent from the outside.⁶⁴⁴ Before the BBC's 24-Hour Programme on Biafra, the BBC had continuously, pressed the Federal government to provide them with materials backing their position in that civil war, but received no response. Therefore, it was difficult

⁶⁴² Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p.114.

⁶⁴³ *The Guardian*, 5th December, 1968.

⁶⁴⁴ TNA, FCO, 26/306/PBM 5/310/1/ Part B, BBC News reporting on Biafra with Claims of Inaccuracies and Bias, 1st January, 1969-31st December, 1969, by British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Lagos, 10th January, 1969.

for the British government to do anything to counter the 24-Hour Programme, because what they did was not very suitable for vivid visual presentation.⁶⁴⁵ On 10th January, 1969 A.J. Collins of WAD warned the danger of Britain becoming directly involved in the propaganda war.⁶⁴⁶ On 11th January, 1969 *Daily Times* reported that, foreign supporters of the Biafran cause in Britain had televised another show on the BBC television on Thursday night in London, designed to justify Biafra's claim of genocide against the Federal government. A documentary film programme, 24-Hour, which was deliberately screened, coincided with the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference. It showed Ojukwu boasting that, he would fight to the finish" and that, Biafra shall never enter the Nigeria's political orbit". The programme showed children claimed to be suffering from malnutrition. And a commentator who alleged that, the federal planes had bombed hospitals in Biafraland.⁶⁴⁷

Ahead of the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, BBC mounted a special campaign on behalf of Biafra and against the Federal government. Three television programmes were shown on television, but went off with bad start. Also, the BBC Panorama programme set off a series of programmes designed to influence the Commonwealth leaders against the federal government. For this programme, the BBC lined up President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia as well as the Biafra's Economic Adviser and Overseas spokesman, Pious Okigbo. The BBC then, also invited the Nigerian delegation to provide a speaker. This delegate, it was later realised, would have been put on the defensive position, right from the beginning of the programme, since out the twenty-eight Commonwealth leaders that, attended the conference, only leaders of the two countries which recognised Biafra were invited by the BBC to participate in the programme. The FMG delegation declined the invitation. The BBC then found it impossible to proceed with the programme and so cancelled it. It announced in the *Times of London* that, the Nigerians had declined to talk about the civil war on the eve of the Conference. In fact, no statement was made by any member of the Nigerian delegation. Other BBC current affairs programmes criticised the non-inscription of the Nigerian civil war as an item on the conference agenda. The BBC continued their anti-Nigerian campaign throughout the period of the Conference and afterwards.⁶⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the British officialdom was unhappy over the attitude of the BBC and their reporter who attempted twice to ignore the Nigerian Commissioner for Information, Anthony Enahoro in London. No doubt, the BBC had pitched battle with Federal government

⁶⁴⁵ TNA, FCO, B.R. Curson to J. Peck, 10th January, 1969.

⁶⁴⁶ TNA, FCO, 26/306, A. J. Collins to D.C. Tebbit, 10th January, 1969.

⁶⁴⁷ *Daily Times*, 11th January, 1969.

⁶⁴⁸ TNA, FCO, 26/306, Publicity on Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, 1969.

of Nigeria on behalf of Biafrans and had stoutly refused the High Commissions' representative a chance to refute tendentious allegations with which it had fed the British public. This was a serious unwarranted hostility to people of Britain. It was certainly a scheme master-minded by some Labour MPs, with connivance of other British quislings and executed by the British journalist working in the BBC. The British High Commissioner, Sir David Hunt, said that, the BBC's role in furthering the cause of neo-colonialism was well known. But, this hostility towards Nigeria had come at a time when people everywhere, who were anxious for the return of peace to Nigeria, had never been more optimistic. By given Biafrans such moral support, the BBC had helped to prolong the war in Nigeria. It was difficult not to believe that, new development in the attitude of the BBC towards Nigeria did not reflect the policy of the British government. He warned, however, that this new development in the civil war would not help the good relations between Britain and Nigeria. The High Commissioner noted that, they were rather flummoxed that the British government could afford to remain mute over the antagonising role of the BBC towards the Nigerian government. He suggested that, one way to correct the BBC excesses in their reportage was for the Federal government to take drastic measures against them.⁶⁴⁹ On 14th January, 1969 *Daily Sketch* warned that, it would not be wise in the circumstances of the civil war, to ban the BBC from Nigeria, and that, the FMG stands to lose too most, if they order the BBC correspondent out of Nigeria. Over the years the BBC has built up a near perfect image, and her treatment meted out to Nigerian supporters and spokesman of the federal case had been rather strange and bewildering and definitely lays the BBC to open accusation of supporting Biafra and being hostile to Nigeria. At worst, the BBC ought to give each side to the civil war equal opportunity to put its case to the British public, the paper said.⁶⁵⁰

On 13th January, 1969, B.R. Curson of British Information and Policy Department said that despite the continuing stream of complaints from the British High Commissioner about the tenor of BBC reporting, there were in fact, remarkably specific instances during the civil war which could form the basis of a high level approach to the BBC. At the time of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, the BBC had a correspondent, Fredrick Forsyth, based in Enugu. Some of his reporting was inaccurate and emotionally slanted in favour of the Igbos. But enquiries made in the I.P.D and WAD failed to turn up instances of inaccurate reporting between the end of 1967 and several instances of other news report of the Corporation. For instance, the BBC Overseas Service conveyed a misleading impression of

⁶⁴⁹ TNA, FCO, 26/306, D. Hunt to British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, January, 1969.

⁶⁵⁰ *Daily Sketch*, 14th January, 1969.

replies by the British Prime Minister in the House of Commons on 3rd December, 1968 regarding the relief supplies to Biafra. This was shown subsequently too, had been due to an interruption of the Press Association report, because of other news which broke out at the time. The BBC themselves carried a full and balance report in their African Service on 4th December, 1968 without any consent from the I.P.D. Thus, further materials were relayed later after they had approached the External Services. On 20th December, 1968, the BBC African Service broadcasted a story about tax riots in Ibadan which they had got from AFP and UPI sources. The story in fact originated by Markpress, and was datelined Umuahia. The BBC when taxed with the matter admitted that a grave mistake was made. From the forgoing, it was clear that, the rift between the BBC and the FMG could only be solved, if the BBC was pressured to accept a change of doctrine.⁶⁵¹

Consequently, on 16th January, 1969 John Peck drew the attention of Sir Dennis Greenhill, concerning the rift between the FMG and BBC. He said that, a tremendous row occurred between the Nigerian delegates and the BBC about their treatment by the television services at the Commonwealth Conference. He expressed worry over the situation, and was optimistic that, the FMG would not execute their extreme threats of expelling the BBC correspondent and breaking off all forms of contact with the BBC.⁶⁵² In spite all warnings not expel the BBC, on 25th January, 1969, at a press conference; Anthony Enahoro announced the temporary withdrawal of certain facilities hitherto being used by the BBC in Nigeria. These included the presence of correspondent at press conferences and the use of Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation facilities. Nigeria also proposed the withdrawal of the NCE staffs, working for the BBC in United Kingdom. Enahoro said until the new Director-General of the BBC had settled down; the Nigerian government would be quite willing to review her position on the BBC in Nigeria. Until there was some satisfactory evidence that they intended to be fair in their reportage, these facilities remained suspended. This action, he added, had nothing to do with the BBC reporters in Nigeria. There were no complaints against them. But, their organisation had shown quite clearly, at least, that they were not fair to the Federal government and people of Nigeria. The British newsmen and independent television would still be welcomed in Nigeria. Enahoro said that, the move was not against the West or the British government.⁶⁵³ Meanwhile, the *Daily Sketch*, on 26th January, 1969 reported that, the Federal government's withdrawal of facilities of BBC would not ensure a reversal of the

⁶⁵¹ TNA, FCO, 26/306, B.R. Curson to J. Peck, 13th January, 1969.

⁶⁵² TNA, FCO, 26/307/File No. PBM 5/310/1/Part C, Minutes on BBC News Reporting on Biafra with Claims of Inaccuracies and Bias, 1st January 1969-31st December, 1969 by J. Peck to D. Greenhill, 16th January, 1969.

⁶⁵³ TNA, FCO, 26/307, Withdrawal of BBC Facilities from Nigeria, January, 1969.

BBC policy on the Nigerian Civil War and that, Biafrans were unhappy as well as Nigerians with the BBC coverage, but many Nigerians had continued to believe the BBC's reports.⁶⁵⁴

On 28th January, 1969 the Nigerian Broadcast Corporation sent a letter to the Director-General of BBC in London. The Director-General was told that the FMG had suspended their dealings with the BBC forthwith until further notice. This suspension also included the withdrawal of all NBC staffs undergoing training or serving in working attachments in the BBC. The use of voice-cast facilities enjoyed by the BBC staff correspondents based in Nigeria also remained suspended. The London-based staffs of the NBC were mandated to move out of the suite provided by the BBC. The NBC was also instructed to stop the use of any BBC transmission service programme on sound or television. The NBC Director-General, E.V. Badejo who wrote the letter, reminded the BBC Director that, since the beginning of the civil war, they had experienced some moments of anxiety as a result of the BBC's handling of news items and other programmes relating to the civil war. The experience of the Commissioner for Information, Anthony Enahoro and the Administrator for the liberated part of the Central-Eastern States, Ukpabi Asika in a BBC programme was perceived as the effort of partisanship on the part of some BBC producers and editors. He also informed the BBC Director that, the interviewer allowed them only six minutes to reply to a point made in fifty minutes in the earlier programme in which agents of the secessionists government had taken part. Even when they had settled with the producer for the eighteen minutes before the programme started. According to the report, Ukpabi Asika faded off in the middle of statements, and the producer was reported to have passed a remark which was definitely from the Biafran government.⁶⁵⁵ Also the *Nigerian Tribune*, on 29th January 1969 reported that, that whatever might have been responsible for the behaviour and obvious partiality of some BBC officials during the Commonwealth Conference of Prime Minister particularly the shabby treatment of Enahoro which all Nigerians resented, they did not believe that, on the whole the BBC as an organisation was partial or anti-Nigerian. But if the Federal Commissioner for Information had a contrary opinion and wanted to impose sanction on the BBC, less than half measure would not do. He should impose sanctions which would really bite the BBC.⁶⁵⁶

Furthermore, on 8th February, 1969 Sir David Hunt informed John Wilson, Head of West African Department, that, the BBC did not realise the negative effect, their reportage had had on the British foreign policy. It was only natural to credit all Biafran bombing with

⁶⁵⁴ *Daily Sketch*, 26th January, 1969.

⁶⁵⁵ TNA, FCO, 26/307, Text of a Letter by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation of Nigeria to Director-General of British Broadcasting Corporation, 28th January, 1969.

⁶⁵⁶ *Nigerian Tribune*, 29th January, 1969.

honest strategic aims while viewing all the federal bombing as wicked and genocide act. The High Commissioner later urged John Wilson to checkmate the BBC. Any action that could be taken to tame the BBC was very essential. He expressed his anxiety that the British government while fighting a losing battle, the BBC were very strong in their self-conceit and fixed in their determination and that, it would be wrong to let them have a walk-over. If by any means that the BBC was defeated, they should have destroyed something which had done so much damage to the British interests than any other single agency.⁶⁵⁷ On 26th February, 1969 in a reply to Sir David Hunt's letter, John Wilson suggested that the only way to remedy the damage caused by the BBC was to ensure that the highest echelon of leadership in Britain were very anxious in their overall treatment of public affairs. They should be honest and impartial. On their own part, they had done their best to overcome the admitted obstacles. He said that, with the parliamentary and public opinion so divided, he was frankly doubtful whether they could expect the BBC to do more than adopt a position of impartiality between the Nigerian government and Biafra; they were most unlikely to favour the FMG in their presentation of events. They were constantly being attacked by pro-Biafran MPs and others for alleged pro-federal bias. Equally, the BBC management was very sensitive to charges of pro-Biafran bias and of plain inaccuracy in their presentation of news. The two problems were quite different, and required different handling. The question of accuracy was of course a world-wide phenomenon. The BBC was perceived to have hoisted in the point about Biafran propaganda and AFP, and that the British government was able to get the signs that Markpress and the Biafran propagandists overreached themselves all over Europe. John Wilson suggested that, the only best contribution they could make was to call errors of facts to their situation. But unfortunately, corrections were not good news pegs. And while they never wanted to stoke up the Federal government's row with the BBC, it might be possible, when the BBC make an error, for their correspondent in Lagos to cable something that looked like a formal rebuttal of an inaccuracy which could be used for publicity. Impartiality was in general, more difficult to sustain; no doubt, all the denials and self-justification was partly intended to cover up the fact that, they had severely shaken by the Nigerian row.⁶⁵⁸

On 26th February, 1969 John Wilson recalled that during his visit to Nigeria, everywhere he went in the country, he heard from the British representatives, leading Nigerians and from the British businessmen, unanimous condemnation of the standard of reporting of events in Nigeria by the BBC Overseas Service. He was greatly struck by the unanimity and strength of the views expressed to him. He was told that, the Service was

⁶⁵⁷ TNA, FCO, 26/307, D. Hunt to J. Wilson, 8th February, 1969.

⁶⁵⁸ TNA, FCO, 26/307, J. Wilson to D. Hunt, 26th February, 1969.

listened to by everyone who counts in Nigeria, owing to the total unreliability of local news sources. The BBC had benefited from the world-wide reputation for impartiality and accuracy which it used to enjoy in the Lord Reith time. Dissatisfaction with the BBC reports in Nigeria later became universal and seemed later to do them more harm than good. The main complaint was that the news editors either through ignorance or prejudice, consistently, include totally misleading reports about events in Nigeria drawn from sources which everyone else regards as suspect. The BBC regularly quotes reports from Biafra Radio, which had always made wild claims as if they were worthy of credence. For instance, Fredrick Forsyth had once reported the Igbo invasion of Northern Nigeria. It was later revealed that, the report was false. But the British residents in the North assumed that because the report was from the BBC, it must have been true. So, they evacuated the area with their families. The Head of WAD then suggested that, the British officialdom should take urgent steps to ensure that the BBC report of the Nigerian Civil War was professional, accurate and credible. He also reacted to the damage they did on the British image in Nigeria, and insisted that the BBC should mend their ways.⁶⁵⁹

On 5th May, 1969 Chief Anthony Enahoro held a conversation with the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary for African Affairs, Maurice Foley. Enahoro informed the Under-Secretary that, the restrictions earlier placed on BBC had been withdrawn. But the Federal government was not happy about the Corporation. Indeed, he said that, after the way the BBC had handled the *Uzuakoli* affair, General Gowon had asked him to consider the re-imposition of the restrictions on the BBC. The FMG, no doubt, remained uneasy about the BBC television coverage and about the way in which their radio service had reported the civil war in Nigeria. Then, Foley said that, the problem was that one or two BBC television producers were committed pro-Biafrans. He had discussed these problems with Charles Curran and he thought that, the BBC should have done what was right. Broadly speaking, he noted that, the position in the United Kingdom was, so far as public opinion on the Nigerian Civil War was concerned, a little bit far. He pointed out that, initially the civil war had been presented in Europe as a holy war between Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria. But, this was no longer so, thus, the issue of separateness had persisted. The genocide charges were no longer pressed and effective. For a long time, the Biafrans had had things, their own way in Canada and Western Europe. Chief Enahoro agreed, and admitted that, the BBC was not fair in its report of the war. He felt there was no excuse for the way they had reported events in *Bend*, *Uzuakoli* etc. For it was becoming increasingly difficult to defend them in

⁶⁵⁹ TNA, FCO, 26/307, J. Wilson to B. R. Curson, 26th February, 1969.

Nigeria. Foley reiterated that the British government had a discussion with the BBC about the matter. He revealed that, the *Agence France Pressé* (AFP) reports were suspected. They had undoubtedly made some errors. John Wilson, at the meeting with the BBC, said that, the Foreign Office had dealt thoroughly with the BBC concerning the report of *Uzuakoli* incident. The BBC pointed out that, the report they had carried had come from all the news agencies. Thus, the Foreign Office later established that the real trouble was that the reports came from the agencies' correspondents on the Biafran side who were Igbos. Chief Enahoro noted that, this was undoubtedly the trouble. He complained about the reliance the news agencies had placed on the correspondents who were committed pro-Biafrans.⁶⁶⁰

Similarly, on 9th May, 1969 a conversation was held in London between Chief Anthony Enahoro, after his visit to the United States and Maurice Foley. Also present at the meeting was Brigadier Ogundipe, Nigeria's High Commissioner to London. The conversation was opened with a reference to the programme carried on the BBC television 24-Hours on the night of 8th May, 1969 called, "The Biafra File" which was an examination of the public relations work done for Biafra first by Robert Goldstein and accordingly by Markpress. The programme left the impression that, the public relations officials concerned were rascals. Chief Enahoro said that, Nigerians in London who saw the programme were surprised that the BBC had carried it. Foley then said that, the British government hoped to persuade the BBC to release the file to other T.V. networks overseas and to make use of the film in their information work. Brigadier Ogundipe noted that, he was a little worried about the involvement of the Nigerian Ambassador in the United States, since it was stated that he had been personally involved, in buying Robert Goldstein's public relations agency.⁶⁶¹

On 6th December, at a meeting with General Gowon and Federal government's officials, the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary spoke of the problem public opinion had caused to the British and Nigerian governments. He said that, television had become increasingly important in moulding domestic opinion. It was difficult to defend the British policy when the news media did not give a fair hearing to the British government's case. He had appeared together with Group Captain Cheshire, on the "Twenty-Four Hour" BBC programme which was given an extremely pro-Biafran view. This was one example of the pressures which the officialdom was subjected to. Gowon told him that, Nigerians found the British public opinion baffling, for surely, the British populace were the people who should

⁶⁶⁰ PREM, 13/2820, Note of Conversation between Chief Anthony Enahoro and British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, 5th May, 1969.

⁶⁶¹ PREM, 13/2820, Note of Conversation between Anthony Enahoro and British Parliamentary Under-Secretary by John Wilson to Sir David Hunt, 9th May, 1969.

have understood them better. Thousands of British people had served in Nigeria and Britain had been associated with her for a very long time.⁶⁶² On 13th January, 1970 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, gave an extensive interview on the BBC's World Service. When asked about the prospects for the future security of the Igbos in the Nigerian State, he said that, there was a good guarantee of security for the Igbos in a peaceful and honourable united Nigeria. He cited the International Observers Teams that had always reported that, the federal troops had managed to behave well in areas they have occupied. Huge number of Igbos was willing to live in peace in the federal-held territory. The FMG gave the full assurance that with the end of hostilities, they would be prepared to have International Observers monitor the security of the Igbo people as they integrate in the federation.⁶⁶³

Conduct of interviews on the television with some highly reputable international and British journalists was a veritable medium used by the British government to react to the Biafra's propaganda messages. Before his departure to Nigeria on 27th March, 1969, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, granted an interview to a group of selected journalists in Britain. The interview was recorded by Alan Watson, a staff of the British Overseas Information Service (BOIS) on behalf of the Central Office of Information. The Prime Minister was reminded in the interview that, Britain had been criticised, for not doing enough to influence the course of events in Nigeria and what sort of influence could the British government would have made to resolve the conflict. The Prime Minister replied:

Well, this is a Nigerian problem; it is a problem of a great federation, one of the richest countries in Africa, one which for many years worked, despite all their internal difficulties and their tribal problems, worked very well as an independent Nigeria, and at the end of the day the problems must be solved by Africans... We have represented the views of the British people, and I believe of world opinion, for example in saying that when there is a settlement, there must be a settlement one day, there must be no recrimination, there must be no genocide, that the Igbo people, who may have made mistaken under the leadership they have, must not be subject to threats, massacre, genocide to any interference to their life, liberty, pursuit of happiness and these are the things that Britain have pressed

⁶⁶² PREM, 13/2822, Mr. Foley's Interview with General Gowon, 6th December, 1969.

⁶⁶³ TNA, FCO, 65/758, File No. JWJ 3/548/3/PA/5A/369 Briefs on Policy of the United Kingdom to Civil War in Nigeria, 1st December, 1969- 31st December, 1970. British Foreign Secretary's Interview on BBC's World Service, 13th January, 1970.

upon them. But we are not in a position to dictate and I don't want to dictate.⁶⁶⁴

The Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria was extensively covered in all the media outlets in Britain, particularly the Central Office of Information and the BBC. Two media personalities, namely, George Holt and Auriol Kaufmann, from the C.O.I. were among the Prime Minister's entourage to Nigeria. This enhanced the steady flow of information being fed back home for use both by the C.O.I. and, on several occasions, the BBC. The Prime Minister agreed to be interviewed by Alan Watson before he departed and this material was sent out for distribution across the British Embassies and High Commissions both in Europe and North America. A coloured version, lasting just over one minute was sent to Canada and New York, where the BBC issued the paper, immediately to the major local television and radio networks in New York. Through electronic syndication circuits' probability to about 150 television and radios stated, a longer 5½ minutes version in black and white, out to Nigeria; Kenya and Ethiopia. In addition, Visnews carried extracts of the interview to all Africa and Commonwealth countries. Extracts were also carried by either Eurovision or through London-based correspondents to France, Belgium, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. The sound version of the television interview referred above, together with a profile of the British Prime Minister was sent out to numerous posts as a curtain-raiser to the visit. The Prime Minister gave an interview on Radio News Line in Lagos at the conclusion of his talks with the Nigerian government officials; this was transmitted to London on 30th March, 1969 and distributed in Africa, Europe, North America countries and Australia. On the Prime Minister's return to London, Allen Watson did a second report that rounded up the visit. The weekly political commentary, "Report from London" dealt extensively with the Nigerian situation. Before the Prime Minister's departure to Nigeria, a preliminary piece was sent to all the British overseas posts which underlined the objectives of his visits and during his stay in Lagos, twelve stories were sent back by Holt, the LPs. On the Prime Minister's return from his visit to Nigeria, his statement in the House of Commons together with supplementary questions and replies, were the subject of further coverage. The whole operation was rounded up with an international comment that, underlined the British policy in the civil war. Local 35mm coverage of the visit was obtained by COI for inclusions in the African and Asian cinema newsreels.⁶⁶⁵

On 25th November, 1968 the News Department of Foreign Office, proposed the possibility of the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary for African Affairs, Maurice Foley,

⁶⁶⁴ TNA, CAB, 164/409, British Information Service Interview with British Prime Minister, 27th March, 1969.

⁶⁶⁵ TNA, CAB, 164/409, Publicity on British Prime Minister's Visit to Nigeria, March, 1969.

to conduct a television and radio interviews for the Central Office of Information (C.O.I.). The C.O.I. had received request from Canada, Lebanon and other Middle Eastern and South American countries for T.V. and radio coverage by a Minister, of the British position in the Nigerian Civil War. It was the view of the News Department that, since Foley had assumed the responsibility for African Affairs at the Foreign Office, it was a golden opportunity for him to undertake the task if he was prepared to do so. The coloured T.V interview which was projected to be shot in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, would be screened primarily on commercial television stations in Canada in the regular British Fifteen-Minute weekly Programme titled “ London Line”, which would be screened on about Forty-Two T.V. stations. The interview was projected to have a viewing figure of over two million people. The radio interview would be recorded at the same time and broadcasted on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and commercial radio stations in Canada, and on the radio services in the other countries mentioned previously. The T.V interviewer was proposed to be provided by the C.O.I and with the following suggested questions. Such as whether the Biafrans should secede from Nigeria, and had the Federation broken finally? The Minister was urged to comment on the reports of deliberate massacres of Biafrans by the federal troops; whether the continual supply of arms by the British government did exacerbated the situation; to comment on the British position on aid, relief organisations, starvation and foreign intervention in the war.⁶⁶⁶

On 28th November, 1968 A. J. Collins of West African Department, was asked to prepare a question and answer brief for the fifteen minute television and radio interviews. The general plan of the brief was to provide questions and answers which would broadly cover all aspects of the Nigerian issue and the British policy to it. The sequence of the interview in general was proposed to be for and against Biafra in the African context in order to provide a reasonable basis of understanding British policy in the civil war.⁶⁶⁷ It was not until 5th December, 1968 that the interview involving the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary was arraigned and conducted.⁶⁶⁸ Similarly, on 19th February, 1969 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, gave an exclusive interview on the Nigerian Civil War to a huge number of European journalists in London. The interview which was filmed by the C.O.I. was distributed and screened in Finland, Germany, Luxemburg, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, and Canada. The interview was arranged mainly as a European exercise, but the Information Policy Department arranged through the C.O.I. to send copies of the film to other British diplomatic missions, who on the strength of the text,

⁶⁶⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/179, Minute on Ministerial T.V. and Radio Interview Under C.O.I. Auspices, by P. Pendleton News Department to R.J. Wilson West African Department, 27th November, 1968.

⁶⁶⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/789, A.J. Collins to Barder, 28th November, 1968.

⁶⁶⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/179, Minute on Mr. Foley’s C.O.I. Television Interview, by J. Wilson to Miss Deas, 3rd December, 1968.

were able to secure a slot for it.⁶⁶⁹ These interviews helped tremendously in boosting the British counter propaganda efforts during the war.

The effect television and radio had on public opinion during the war was highly significant. Although, judgements based on television newsreels might be superficial, emotional and blind, to the qualifications and subtleties of the true situation, they nevertheless, tended to correct the opposite tendency of governments and officials to be unduly concerned with national interests at the expense of such considerations as compassion, generosity and tolerance. It might be inconvenient to governments for their electorates to become angry and concerned at the visual evidence of human suffering in faraway places.⁶⁷⁰ While the main reason television became so much important in the war was based largely on the nature of democratic value and tradition of the British society as a western nation and being the major arms supplier to the Nigerian government, the withdrawal of British subjects from the war areas at the beginning produced a highly vocal and respectable lobby of administrators who, because they were in the main impelled by nothing more vicious than local attachment and sympathy, created a groundswell of emotion and indignation which was hard to counter after it had been exploited by much less respectable people.⁶⁷¹

Apart from the coverage of the war, many British journalists, and other international reporters visited Biafran and the Federal sides of the war on a fact-finding mission. These included both the anti-Biafran and pro-federal foreign and British journalists. From the foregoing, on 2nd February, 1968 the Information Officer of the British Embassy in Lisbon, C.T.W. Skeate informed R.S. Gorham of Central Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, that a group of twelve journalists left Lisbon in the early hours of 26th January, 1968 for Biafra in one of the Constellations that regularly make the trip. The visit was organised by the Biafran public relations officer Robert Goldstein. On board the plane, which returned to Lisbon on 31st January, 1968 was Bruce Loudon, the Lisbon correspondent of the *Financial Times*, *Daily Express*, *Sunday Telegraph*, and *Argus News Agency*. The main impression Loudon brought with him from Biafra was one of violent and anti-British feeling at all levels of the Biafran society.⁶⁷² On 24th April, 1968 H.C. Byatt of British Embassy, Lisbon confirmed, Bruce Loudon's visit to Biafra, in a minute addressed to C.M. Le Quesne

⁶⁶⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/309, File. No JWN 3/548/1, Nigeria, External, Statement on British Government Policy in the Nigerian Civil War, 31st December, 1969-1st January, 1970. Minute on Nigeria: T.V Interview by Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 20th February, 1969.

⁶⁷⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/805, The Politics of Relief: Some Reflections on one Aspect of the Nigerian War, June 1970.

⁶⁷¹ TNA, FCO, 65/805, from D.C. Tebbit to John Wilson, 13th July, 1970.

⁶⁷² TNA, FCO, 65/466/File No. JWN 13/5, Comments and Visits of Journalists Covering the Biafra War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969, C.T.W. Skeate to R. S. Gorham, 2nd February, 1969.

of West and Central African Department. He described Bruce Loudon as an articulate journalist whom they treated with some caution, but he stroked them as an accurate observer. He came from Biafra with a very definite impression of Biafran determination to win effective autonomy and of the strength of the public feeling in Britain. In the course of his three-week stay in Biafra, he had a number of conversations, most especially with Nnamdi Azikiwe who came back from his tour of African countries; with the Commissioner for Internal Affairs and finally on 21st April with Colonel Ojukwu himself.⁶⁷³

In a conversation with H.C. Hyatt concerning his visit to Biafra, Bruce Loudon said that, he was much impressed by the extent, Colonel Ojukwu's regime managed to deal with the influx of refugees and to keep essential services running. He was able to make telephone calls between Aba, Port Harcourt and Umuahia. He saw people at work on rail maintenance and even on new construction. Tertiary arrangement seemed to be adequate and Biafra so far managed to avoid serious epidemic despite shortage of drugs. He thought that credit for this must go to the civilians, some of them refugees, whom Colonel Ojukwu was relying on as much as his military staffs. Loudon said that, he not evidence that there were many mercenaries on the Biafran side. He thought there were a few Frenchmen and perhaps some Americans. The only pro-Biafra he heard of was Frederick Forsyth who had visited Biafra as BBC correspondents.⁶⁷⁴ Winston Churchill, the grand-son of Sir Winston Churchill was another prominent British journalist that visited Biafra. On 27th January, 1969 he held a meeting with E.A. Bryant concerning his intended visit to Biafra. He was accused of being ill-informed and critical of the British policy. Churchill strongly criticised the British arms supply to the FMG which he contended should be stopped because of the very high rate of death caused by starvation inside Biafra. Winston Churchill believed that the British government had a political axe to grind in their support of the federal government in order to defend their policy of supplying arms. He therefore produced pro-Biafran counter arguments for almost everything that the British government said in support of the federal government. ICRC in Geneva told Winston Churchill that two or three people had died in each of their eight hundred camps inside Biafra. On the basis that there must be just as many people dying outside camps, he concluded that there must therefore be about one thousand fifty thousand people dying per month. In the face of this, Winston saw how British government could

⁶⁷³ TNA, FCO, 65/466, C.H. Byatt to C.M. Le Quesne, 24th April, 1968.

⁶⁷⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/466, Record of Conversation between H.C. Byatt and Bruce Loudon, April, 1968.

defend their arms policy, but this brought them back to the issue of land corridors, a moment that led to the exit of Churchill from the meeting.⁶⁷⁵

Alan Hart of News-at-Ten was another journalist that visited Biafra. He said that the picture that he brought from Biafra was one of starvation entering its worst phase in Biafra. Ojukwu was overwhelmed by this tragedy and honestly looked for a face-saving formula to get peace talks started. He believed that, he could only enter such talks from a position of strength since Biafran troops had taken the initiative on all fronts, and the morale of the federal troops was known to be deplorably low. Despite Ojukwu's resistance to earlier attempts by the British government restart the peace talks, Ojukwu would now be prepared to accept a helpful suggestion from the British government. He felt that, this was the psychological moment for the British government to take some initiative and that they would find a response from Ojukwu if they did so. Alan Hart referred to the *Reuter* report of a Biafran spokesman, that Biafra was willing to abandon its demands for secession, if the security of its people could be guaranteed. He thought this was a very hopeful sign, and fitted in with his impression of Ojukwu's state of mind.⁶⁷⁶ Other international journalists that visited Biafra and Nigeria are Natrop, editor of the Frankfurt newspaper, *Allgemeine Zeitung*, and F.R. Tom Burns, editor of *The Tablet*. Both journalists were guest of the FMG. Burns' visit was arranged after he had seen Sir Adetokunbo Ademola in London. While Natrop came to see British officialdom following a request from the German *Charge d'Affaires*, Both men said that, they arrived Nigeria with the strong pro-Biafran sympathies and leanings common in their own countries and in most other countries of the Western Europe, but had been thoroughly converted to the federal cause as a result of their close-up view of the Nigerian Civil War. One was struck by the relatively high calibre of people the FMG brought to Lagos. Following the visit of Natrop and Burns to Lagos, some weighty articles were written at the convenient of the German and British publics. The main object of Natrop's visit was to disprove the Biafrans' allegations that the federal government of Nigeria was committing genocide. He visited seventy or more villages just behind the frontline, all of which were totally deserted. There were no signs of shooting, destruction or mass burials. Natrop concluded that, the inhabitants had withdrawn from the North with the Biafran forces. He considered that, this was sufficient evidence to disprove the charges of genocide.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/440/File No. JWN13/2/5A/369, Minutes on Activities of Journalists in the Nigerian Civil War, by E.A. Bryant to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 27th January, 1969.

⁶⁷⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/440, E. M. Booker to J. Wilson, 3rd November, 1969.

⁶⁷⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/451/File No. JWN13/15/5A/369, Minutes on Visitors to Nigeria Sponsored by the Federal Government of Nigeria, by G.D. Anderson to CT.W. Slater, 11th November, 1968.

Before his visit to Nigeria, Tome Burns views on the Nigerian Civil War were fragile. He had listened to the harrowing accounts of oppression and suffering of the Igbos, in his discussions with missionaries and journalists from Biafra. He weighted this against private information and reports from his own correspondent in the federal territory. He was aware of the widespread believe that, a place called Biafra really existed; that there was a people predominantly Christian and majority being Catholics seeking freedom from their oppressors; persecuted by surrounding Muslim and pagan States and bent on genocide. Biafra made its appeal to the religious leaders and humanitarians of every kind. The Pope himself, in a public address in July, 1968 spoke of some points of the earth where these sufferings of the whole population had become so frightened that, world public opinion deplores it with a sense of horror. They referred to Biafra, as the beautiful region which he had been privileged to visit a few years ago, meeting people open to civilisation in complete civil, cultural and religious development⁶⁷⁸. Within the context of winning the war against Biafran propaganda, Tom Burn's account of his official visitation to Nigeria, even though his account did not state precisely, a visit to Biafra and of having an interview with the Biafra leader, Colonel Ojukwu, really boosted the British and FMG's case.

The Tablet was seen by the British officialdom as a huge counter-propaganda value in certain diplomatic circles, particularly in countries where Biafra propaganda had been directed. The Roman Catholic groups found it very useful, when quoting some of the views expressed by the highly influential Roman Catholic weekly.⁶⁷⁹ In fact, after his visit to Nigeria the editor of *Tablet* Tom Burns said on his return to Roman that, he now had a conception of Nigeria and of the position of the Church there. This was completely different from the Catholic case as projected by the Biafran propagandist. During his discussion with the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir D. Hunt, on 11th November, 1968 Tom Burns described Biafran propaganda effort as one of the most successful propaganda exercise of the 20th Century. "Biafrans had successfully pulled the wool over the eyes of public opinion throughout the Western countries".⁶⁸⁰ *The Tablet* was a highly quality and influential periodical. A forum for the Catholic intellectuals, so much so that, it was suggested by the British government that certainly, if Tom Burns had addressed himself seriously to the tasks of removing the scales from the eyes of the British public and of countering the effects of what he described as one of the most successful trick of the twentieth century, worked by the Igbos on a gullible Western public opinion, preconditioned by its own humanitarian outlook,

⁶⁷⁸ *The Tablet*, 7th December, 1968.

⁶⁷⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/451, Guidance Department to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 11th December, 1968.

⁶⁸⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/451, G.D. Anderson to J. Wilson, 14th November, 1968.

then *The Tablet* might be worth reading till the end of the war. In spite of Tom Burn's visit to Nigeria and his account, taking pro-federalist stance, a serious caution was applied by the British government on his visitation, which they said must not be a magnifying mole hills. For he did not in fact strike them as a very clear headed or incisive individual. His song which he might have sang, in return for his federally-supplied supper might not be as audible, as his hosts would wish or might be pitched in a minor and not a major key.⁶⁸¹

In addition to Bruce Loudon, other prominent British journalists that visited Biafra, include Auberon Waugh, Frederick Forsyth, William Norris of Times, Lloyd Garrison of *New York Times*, Norman Kirkham of *Daily Telegraph*, Walter Parrington of Daily Express, Richard Hall of *Observer*, Roger Parkinson Scotsman, John Barnes *Newsweek*, and Mathew Rosa-Robinson of *New York Times*. Owing to this battalion of journalist that visited Biafra, the British officialdom feared that the bodies of public opinion in the United Kingdom would swallow the stories about the British involvement in the civil war. They could start an ill-informed press campaign in support of Biafra. This would not only embarrass the Her Majesty's Government domestically, but would tarnish the British image in the eyes of the FMG just when they began to heed and listen to their advice. It would moreover tend to confirm to the Biafrans that, their stories of the British supply of aircrafts, pilots and bombs had had some substance and made future reconciliation even more difficult.⁶⁸²

Auberon Waugh, a foremost British journalist and editor of the *Spectator*, on 7th December, 1969 quoted the British Foreign Secretary, in reference to the Nigeria's attitude to relief flights. He said, "as far as I know this is the first occasion on which a government who was in a position to starve its enemy out have said that, we are willing not to do so provided that there are conditions which ensure that our generosity was not exploited for military ends". Auberon Waugh therefore, disagreed with the above statement made by the Foreign Secretary. He said that, the Foreign Secretary did not know that, Britain and United States, specifically allowed the Red Cross through their blockade to feed starving children in German-occupied Greece, from 1942-1943. Under the Geneva Conventions, no country might prevent the Red Cross from breaching a blockade in order to relieve starvation.⁶⁸³ Similarly, Auberon Waugh reacted to the report of the investigation of Biafran charges of genocide. The report was sponsored by the International Committee for the Investigation of Crimes of Genocide, based in Paris and under official Jewish and Christian auspices. The group consists of international jurists from Italy, France, Russia, Mexico, Brazil, Tunisia,

⁶⁸¹ TNA, FCO, 65/451, G.D. Anderson to P.D. McEntee, 16th November, 1968.

⁶⁸² TNA, FCO, 65/466, Visit by Journalists to Biafra, 1968-1969.

⁶⁸³ *Spectator*, 7th December, 1969.

Rumania, Venezuela and England. An investigating team under Emmanuel Mensah was in Nigeria and Biafra, took affidavits from over a thousand individuals including members of the Nigerian Armed forces, relief workers and other independent witnesses, as well as consulting every available source.⁶⁸⁴ Llewellyn Chanter wrote in the London *Daily Telegraph* on 31st May, 1969 that, the genocide investigative report found the evidence of gruesome and barbarous methods of extermination meted against Biafrans. All these, Mensah stated came within the definition of genocide laid down in international law. The report was circulated to all embassies around the world, including the British Parliament and the United Nations.⁶⁸⁵

On 27th October, 1969 the book “Biafra, Britain’s Shame” which contained strong pro-Biafran views about the civil war was published in England. The book was authored by Auberon Waugh and Suzanne Cronje. It dealt with the British supply of arms to the FMG. The London *Daily Telegraph* reported that, the book condemned the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson and other Ministers’ support of the war. It described their action, as the “most atrocious and bloody failure in the British history”. The book attacked the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart accusing him of being obstinate and inflexible over the British complicity in the mass murder of Biafrans. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that, the British government officials, especially the Foreign Secretary, were startled by the appearance of the book. Its publication came at a time when many Members of the British Parliament were increasingly questioning the rationale behind the British policy on the war.⁶⁸⁶

4.3 Non-Governmental Organisation Reactions

The fierce concern generated by massive coverage of the Biafran stories, both on the British newspapers, radio and television provoked public reactions in Britain regarding the civil war. For instance, the Friends of Biafra Association was the first of the extra parliamentary groups that emerged in Britain. The association was established, specifically with the aim of lobbying the British government and public opinion in support of Biafra. Its membership consisted mainly of Britons, who had lived and worked in the former Eastern Region and had been forced to leave Nigeria during the outbreak of the civil war. These persons formed a formidable brigade of the disaffected, from which the secessionists were able to draw moral and political support. Inevitably, the presence in London of these British citizens from Biafra became known to the active Igbo community in Britain and to the newly opened Biafra office at No. 30 Collingham Gardens, London. The opportunity to organise

⁶⁸⁴ *Current News from and about Biafra*, 3rd June, 1969, Number 5, p.2.

⁶⁸⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 31st May, 1969.

⁶⁸⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 27th October, 1969.

these people in form of association, supporting Biafra itself, came on 7th November 1967, when James Udo-Afia, the leader of Biafran delegation in London, addressed a press conference in a committee room of the House of Commons under the auspices of the Movement for Colonial Freedom. A number of the British exiles from Biafra were invited to this meeting. And after, the press conference, met the Biafran delegation to discuss the setting up of a friendship association in Britain to promote public goodwill for Biafra. The initiative for setting up the association was soon taken by the Biafra Representative in London, Francis Ellah, who issued invitations to an inaugural meeting on 24th November, 1967. There were about thirty people at the inaugural meeting. A research officer at the British Museum, Peter Hogg, who married an Igbo woman, was elected Secretary. As a lobby group, the FBA did not campaign very actively like other pro-Biafran groups. So therefore, did not have much impact on the public opinion. It's Secretary, Peter Hogg, though strongly committed to the Biafran cause, did not have the flair for the fire-brigade kind of activities that many people felt was needed to put the Biafran cause to the public. He ran the association in an amateurish manner, often alienating, sections of those who were basically in support of Biafra. The FBA was, however, valued by other groups for its international contacts, and welfare among the Igbo students in Britain. But, its activities in Britain was minimal the Biafra office in London soon ceased to cooperate with the FBA, preferring instead, to work with a new organisation the British-Biafra Association, (BBA) which was set up in December, 1967.⁶⁸⁷

As the Nigerian Civil War lasted, Biafra had gathered huge support among certain classes of Britons and even Americans. They were influenced by a number of factors. These included letters in the British press from prominent churchmen; series of reports of bombings such as the Mary Slessor Hospital; the accounts of the wanton killing of civilians, and above all, the superiority of Biafra's public relations agencies in Europe and the United States championed by Biafran propagandists. In England, this support later crystallised in the formation of Britain-Biafra Association. This association eventually began to play active role using various tactics such as publications, demonstrations, rallies etc.⁶⁸⁸ The British-Biafran Association was formed in December 1967 as a breakaway movement from the FBA by both Biafrans as well as British citizens who felt that the FBA was not energetic enough to adequately publicise the Biafra's case in Britain. The initiative for the formation of the association was taken by Margot Parish who had worked in Lagos as the Secretary of an Igbo-owned publishing company, the *West African Pilot*. It was at Margot Parish's invitation

⁶⁸⁷ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, pp.118-119.

⁶⁸⁸ Kirk Greene, A. H.M. 1971, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria*, p.29.

that, the association's inaugural meeting was held on 18th December, 1967. Among the British citizens present at the meeting held at Margot Parish's house were people who had left the FBA and had previously worked in the Eastern Region as missionaries, teachers, or civil servants. Among these were the Chairman, Owen Davies, reader in Physics at Queen Mary College, London and former Dean of Science at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; the Press Officer, David Jowitt, who had taught at a grammar school in Onitsha, and the secretary, Faith Lawson, former Head of Department at UNN. In December 1968, David Jowitt resigned as press officer of the lobby group in London administering a special fund for Biafran students affected by the war. On 8th January, 1968 Faith Lawson resigned as the Secretary of the BBA because of the reservation she had about the position of the non-Igbo minorities in Biafra regarding the civil war. Unlike some of the missionaries, the businessmen, and the professional publicists who joined the Biafra lobby for self-seeking reasons, the younger members of the BBA were true believers in the cause of Biafra. They were engaged in a crusade for democracy; for the right of self-determination; for the possibility of the African dream and for the abolition of power politics in Africa. They opposed the British military support for the Federal government of Nigeria, which they regarded as a direct and wanton negation of the highest moral principles which Britain was obliged to comply in the conduct of its international relations. One of such believer in the Biafran dream was Margot Parish, who later succeeded Faith Lawson as Secretary of the BBA. She was a woman of great organisational ability; she was, throughout, the driving force in the association. She ran the BBA's campaign on a business-like basis and enjoyed the total confidence of the Biafran office in London, as well as the active support of the large, militant and vociferous Igbo community in Britain.⁶⁸⁹

The basic aims of the BBA were two fold. First, it sought, to get Harold Wilson's government to discontinue the supply of arms to Lagos. Second, it sought, through the pressure of public opinion, to bring about a ceasefire between the federalist and the Biafrans. When the question of strategy was first discussed by the Executive Committee of the BBA, there was a split among its members as to whether the direct and activist kind of campaign was to be adopted or whether pressure should be brought to bear on the government, mainly through Westminster and Whitehall. The older members of the association were professional men, and not traditional political activists or agitators. And so, had an aversion to public demonstrations and the fire-brigade kind of mass campaigns. These people were basically middle-class figures, for whom the rough and tumble of political agitation would be a totally

⁶⁸⁹Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, pp.119-121.

new and frustrating experience. The younger members were, on the other hand, excited by the prospects of a far more activist kind of technique, including such methods as mass demonstrations and public meetings. Because of the determined opposition of older members of the association to anything involving street demonstrations, it was agreed that, the activities of the association should initially be confined to deputations to Whitehall, and the submission of memoranda to Ministers and Members of Parliament. Several of such deputations were led to the Whitehall, a well trodden path for middle-class protest campaign.⁶⁹⁰

On several occasions, the BBA's deputations had face-to-face contact with one of the junior Ministers in the Commonwealth Office, usually Maurice Foley. For instance, on 28th October, 1968 the BBA Secretary, Margot Parish, sent a letter to Michael Stewart, British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. BBA, in the letter, expressed concern over the marked increases in the capacity of the people of Biafra to resist incorporation into the Federal Republic of Nigeria. They believed that, a change in Her Majesty's Government's policy as expressed by the Minister in the House of Commons was even more urgent. The BBA therefore, suggested that at the convenient of the Minister, the association would be grateful for the Minister to meet a group of delegates from their association and at the same time receive from them a petition signed by a great number of Her Majesty's Government's loyal subjects.⁶⁹¹ In a minute dated 19th November, 1968 A.J. Collins reminded P.H. Moberly of WAD over the request by the Britain-Biafra Association intentions to meet with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He noted that, the association was one of the several pro-Biafran bodies in Britain. Others also known to them were the Save Biafra Committee, the Friends of Biafra Association and the Biafran Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He confirmed that, the British officialdom had few contacts with the Association and knew little of its strength.⁶⁹²

The need for further review of the recommendation by the British officialdom to meet the delegates of the BBA was made in a minute D.C. Tebbit addressed to Miss Deas on 3rd December, 1968. It was stated that, the matter needed to be considered from three different points of views, such as, within the context of British relations with the Nigerian government, their own standing in the eye of Biafrans themselves, and the position of Ministers in the Parliament. No doubt, the Britain-Biafran Association was openly committed to the Biafran

⁶⁹⁰ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, p.121.

⁶⁹¹ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, p. 122.

⁶⁹² TNA, FCO, 65/499/File No. JWN 3/3/ Part A, Britain-Biafra Association: Her Majesty's Government Policy, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969 by A.J. Collins to P.H. Moberly, 19th November, 1968.

cause. Within the context of the British relations with the federal government, it was the view of the British officialdom that, it would be the best option not to have any dealings at all, with the BBA, particularly with its Biafran members. In short, a meeting with the officials of the association was less damaging than a meeting with the Ministers. However, the British government had all along told the FMG that, in order to maintain their policy of support for them, they needed to have more political flexibility.⁶⁹³

When the Britain-Biafran Association eventually met Maurice Foley on 6th February, 1968 they handed over to him, a memorandum that detailed the background foundation of the association, the high echelon of leadership of the association, and its main objectives of the association. They stated that, their aims was to work towards the cessation of hostilities between Nigeria and Biafra; to promote friendship between the people of Biafra and Britain; to widen the organisation to bring in all possible sympathisers; to circulate materials on Biafra's case to Members of Parliament, trade unions and other organisations as well as individuals. With the aid of this material, they hoped to win the support of the British government and people for the recognition of Biafra as a sovereign independent state. The BBA delegations that held a meeting with the Parliamentary-Under-Secretary were led by Owen Davies, Chairman of the Association, David Jowitt, Miss Margret Green, and Joan Mellors. After handing over to Maurice Foley the memorandum, setting out the approach for action by the British government a full discussion was on the Nigerian Civil War was held. Owen Davies pressed particularly for a British diplomatic initiative in conjunction with the other major powers namely United States, Russia and France to secure peace in Nigeria, comparable to the French initiative in the Middle East; for a British initiative to achieve international arms embargo; and to bring much pressure on the Nigerian government to respond to Colonel Ojukwu's offer for a truce and talks without preconditions. Miss Margret Green, who had travelled and returned from Biafra, gave her impressions of the area, which was similar to other reports received by the British officials. Maurice Foley then, pressed particularly the failure of Colonel Ojukwu to respond to Obafemi Awolowo's offer for talks in London without preconditions and for greater flexibility and a more constructive approach on the part of the secessionists towards the problems of achieving a lasting negotiating settlement.⁶⁹⁴

An additional techniques of the BBA was that of face-to-face contacts with the MPs. Usually, through either Michael Barnes, the Labour MP for Brantford, or Hugh Fraser, the

⁶⁹³ TNA, FCO, 65/249, D.C. Tebbit to Miss Deas, 3rd December, 1968.

⁶⁹⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/249, Record of Meeting between BBA and British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, 6th February, 1968.

Conservative MP for Stafford, meetings of back-benchers were arranged, to which speakers from the BBA were invited. The first of such meeting was held on 22nd February, 1968 under the Chairmanship of Lord Soper. Among MPs present at the meeting were Albert Booth Conservative; Frank Allaun Labour and David Winnick Liberal. They all agreed to continue to ask questions in the House and to send a deputation to the Commonwealth Secretary-General. On 7th May, 1968 the Biafran Representative in London, Ignatius Kogbara and the BBA press officer David Jowitt, addressed a meeting of Labour back-bench MPs under the chairmanship of Tom Dribeg, Labour MP at the House of Commons. Through these meetings, the BBA was able to establish direct contact with the back-bench MPs from all the three major political parties in Britain. As a result of which, some MPs, such as Frank Allaun Labour, Hugh Fraser Conservative and Tom Dribeg Labour found reinforcement of their pro-Biafran sympathies. Much useful contact was also made with other influential people through these meetings. Among whom were the well-known and controversial Anglican Bishop, Trevor Huddleston; Lord Fenner Brockway, the Leader of Movement for Colonial Freedom, and H.G. Hansbury a former Professor of Law at the University of Oxford.⁶⁹⁵

The BBA supplemented its contacts with the MPs by issuing pamphlets in support of Biafra's case. Four of such major pamphlets were issued before the end of the war. The first pamphlet was issued in February, 1968 under the joint authorship of Geoffrey Birch and Dominic St. George. Neither of the authors had been to Nigeria when they wrote their pamphlet. They had no direct knowledge of Nigeria beyond the contacts that they had had with the Igbo students at the Holborn College of Law, in London, where they were both lecturers. The central arguments of the authors was that Biafra's secession was "an act of self-preservation" prompted by the failure of the federal authorities to protect the Igbo. They rejected the attempt to equate the Biafra's secession with that of Katanga. Rather, argued that, the Biafra's secession was not fostered by any external agency as was the case of Katanga. Furthermore, they argued that, the Biafra's secession had nothing to do with oil. Once it was established that, secessions in Africa are not externally induced, such secessions were justified. Turning to the British policy in the war, the authors condemned the decision of the Wilson's government to let the federalist buy arms from Britain, such move was described as deplorable and short-lived", adding that by pursuing such a course; Britain had sacrificed its neutrality and its capacity to fully exercise vital influence in that civil war. This pamphlet sold remarkably well, with over 2,000 copies being sold to the members of the public in Britain. In addition, through an anonymous donation of eighty pounds, further copies were

⁶⁹⁵ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Groups and Foreign Policy*, p. 123.

distributed free to all MPs, embassies, church leaders, and members of the press and trade unions. It was the first written publication that argued in support of the secessionists. It undoubtedly, had a considerable impact on those people who later became strong protagonists of the Biafran case. Reflecting later on the impact of this publication, one of the leaders of the association remarked that, “I am sure there was nothing in the Association’s activities that had any greater effect in Britain in escalating public opinion in favour of Biafra than the pamphlet authored by Birch and St. George.”⁶⁹⁶

Encouraged by the success of the first pamphlet, the BBA issued another pamphlet in July 1968, titled “Biafra: A Challenge to the Conscience of Britain” under the authorship of H.G. Hansbury. The pamphlet insisted that, the British support for Nigeria was morally untenable. Hansbury’s powerful ammunition for his denunciation of the British policy came from an article by Margery Parham, in which the influential Oxford don had argued that, the “dissidents are overwhelmingly the wronged party. Hansbury’s pamphlet which was directed primarily to the British intellectuals repeated Biafra’s allegations of genocide and warned that “the real purpose of British policy was to enable the British government to bomb, torture, and mutilate the Biafrans into submission, which would undoubtedly be followed by a systematic annihilation.”⁶⁹⁷ On 26th October, 1968 H.G. Hansbury presented a copy of his pamphlet to the British government through a letter he sent to Lord Chalfont. He stated that the British involvement in the Nigerian Civil War resembled the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. He accused the British government of supplying arms to Nigeria, thereby, became a partner in committing genocide. On 13th November, 1968 in his reply to Hansbury letter the Earl of Lyton noted the feeling of H.G. Hansbury about the tragic civil war in Nigeria. But, he could not accept the fact that, the British support for the FMG was analogous with the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. The British government’s decision to continue arms supply to the FMG was sometimes presented as being directed against the Igbo people, but this was not so. While it was possible to sympathise with the wishes of Biafrans to manage their own affairs, it was never necessary for them to engage in rebellion and to forsake the search for a negotiated settlement.⁶⁹⁸

In December 1968 the BBA launch a further major attack against the British government in another pamphlet titled, “Aspects of the Biafra Affair: a study of British attitudes and policy towards the Nigerian –Biafra Conflict”. Its author, George Knap was the senior partner in the External Development Services, a London public-relations firm that

⁶⁹⁶ Fafowora, O.O.1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, pp.123-124.

⁶⁹⁷ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, p.124.

⁶⁹⁸ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, p.125.

provided advisory services to some African and Middle-East governments on political and economic matters. This firm had acted as political and economic advisers to the Eastern Region government since 1959. And in the months preceding Biafra's secession had been re-engaged to prepare the ground for the projection of Biafra's image in Britain. In his pamphlet, Knapp reinforced previous arguments about moral aspects of the war and added two new ones. He blamed the British High Commission in Lagos for misleading the British government, and claimed without any shred of evidence to substantiate it, that, the British army and naval personnel were involved in the fighting on the federal side. The British naval officers, he alleged, were in fact controlling the operations of the federal blockade against Biafra. BBA presented to the Parliament another memorandum on 15th July, 1968. They reminded the MPs that, a critical period had reached where action by Her Majesty's Government, and to a lesser extent, other world governments could prevent the death by starvation of millions of Biafrans. One of the lessons learnt from history was that, a major traditional weapon of war was to starve a beleaguered enemy into surrender.⁶⁹⁹

The Britain-Biafra Association equally presented an important memorandum which was produced by the International Committee for the Investigation of Crimes of Genocide. It comprised 102 pages and included details of evidence believed to have been received by the investigator. The report claimed to substantiate many types of atrocities, amounting to genocide, alleged to have been committed against Biafrans. The Commissioner alleged that the methods used by Nigerians were similar to those used by Adolph Hitler in the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem". He concluded that, "I am of the opinion that in many of the cases cited, hatred of the Biafrans and a wish to exterminate them was a foremost motivational factor".⁷⁰⁰ Though, this document sought to substantiate, serious instances of genocide, it failed for a variety of reasons, to convince most of the British MPs who were interviewed by the author, including pro-Biafrans; MPs complained that the document portrayed strong elements of propaganda.⁷⁰¹

The Movement for Colonial Freedom which was formed in 1954 under the leadership of Fenner Lord Brockway, in order to co-ordinate the activities of organisations concerned with anti-imperialism and colonialism was also another prominent organisations whose activities was equally visible in Britain during the Nigerian Civil War. Amalgamated from

⁶⁹⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/249, Memorandum on the Nigerian Civil War by BBA to British MPs, 15th July, 1968.

⁷⁰⁰ Britain-Biafra Association, 1968. *The Nigerian Conflict*, p.102.

⁷⁰¹ Ajibola, W.A. 1978. *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion: A Case Study of British Foreign Policy over the Nigerian Civil War*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, p.155.

the British branch of the Congress against Imperialism, the Central Africa Committee, the Kenya Committee and the Seretse Khama Defence Committee, its original aim was to unify less than one roof, the objectives of other organisations concerned with international issues that had suffered from the isolation of specialised activism. The office was first at No. 318 Regents Park Road, then at No. 374 Grays Inn Road and finally at No. 313-5 Caledonian Road, London. Funds were provided through affiliations and membership, cultural events and annual appeals, totalling £2-3000 which allowed for a staff of 2-3 publication of a bi-monthly journal, information sheets and campaign material, as well as funding private and public meetings. The movement was sponsored by up to 100 Members of Parliament, had an individual membership of one thousand and regional, national and international affiliates which brought the total number involved to about three million varying, of course, from year to year. Much of the early work of the movement was concentrated on informing and pressurising MPs to raise colonial issues in both Houses of Commons and Lords, in which parliamentary committees were set up for this purpose. As the work spread to the Labour movement and the general public, further committee were instituted and area councils were formed. In 1956, the movement started a Committee against Racialism in Sport, which introduced the anti-racist campaign work alongside the more specifically colonial issues. The movement was also engaged in various meetings, demonstrations, deputations, and campaigns. Up to the mid-1960s, the pressing issues of political independence, especially in Africa, drew most of the MCF's attention, while after this period, centred on the international struggle for economic self-determination. The post-colonial world had blurred the demarcation line between reaction and progress and provoked the proliferation of pressure groups often with the help of MCF, such as the anti-Apartheid and War on Want leaving MCF itself to redefine its unifying role in the light of this new situation. The name liberation was first introduced as the title for the journal and eventually as the new theme behind the whole organisation.⁷⁰²

MCF gave later birth to Committee for Peace in Nigeria which became nominally, the most broadly based of all the anti-policy groups. Prior to this time, the MCF of which, Fenner Brockway was the President, was already active in the propagandist activities on behalf of the people of Biafra, but it had no contact with officials of the British government. Hence, its activities were limited to arousing public sympathy for Biafra. Due to lack of accessibility the leaders of the MCF were convinced that, in order to be influential, they had to broaden the base of the organisation, to include people who were not previously associated

⁷⁰² Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, p. 137.

with the organisation. The organisation therefore, sought to attract to its ranks, people with first-hand knowledge about Nigeria, as well as, those who would present a non-partisan outlook. Thus, twenty-five people were invited to an inaugural meeting of the Committee for Peace in Nigeria at the office of the MCF in April 1968. Among the foundational members were MPs and peers from the three main political parties, two former Governor-generals of Nigeria, as well as representatives of business, church and academic life. There were also, those that represented the Nigerians and the others, the Biafran side. Thus, at the beginning, the representative of the group was broad-based.⁷⁰³

The Committee for Peace in Nigeria was formed following a meeting in a room at the House of Commons on 4th March, 1968. The meeting was held at the initiative of Lord Fenner Brockway, leader of the defunct Movement for Colonial Freedom. The committee, which described itself as “an all party group seeking for peace in Nigeria”, had no constitution. But in the original minute that set up the committee, its aim was clearly, “to seek peace in Nigeria, to send deputations to the British government, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and to contact the OAU, with a view to realising this purpose. Brockway was elected chairman of this committee, and his former Personal Secretary in the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Barbara Haq, a Jewish woman, was elected Secretary. Prominent members of the committee included Sir John Macpherson and Sir James Robertson, two former Governor-Generals of Nigeria; James Griffiths a former Labour Colonial Secretary, and a dozens of MPs, from the three major British political parties, including James Johnson Conservative; John Tilney, Conservative; David Steel, Liberal and Frank Allaun of the Labour Party. There were, in addition, other members, such as former colonial civil servants, academics, and judges who had previously served in Nigeria. In composition, the Committee included British citizens from different walks of life and of different political persuasions, all of whom were brought together by their concern for Nigeria. The committee had a number of aims. Firstly, to secure an immediate ceasefire in the Nigerian Civil War, secondly to urge the British government to stop its arms sales to the Nigerian government. Thirdly, the CPN wanted a settlement that “would recognise the right of the people of Biafra to self-determination in mutually acceptable association with the people of Nigeria. The linchpin of the committee was Fenner Brockway. And the committee’s activities were centred on him. It would not be out of place to regard the committee as a “one-man lobby”. It was completely dominated by Brockway. In view of his exertions during the war, not only for Britain to stop arms sales to Nigeria, but also, to persuade the federal authorities to accept an unconditional

⁷⁰³ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Foreign Policy and Pressure Group*, pp.137-138.

ceasefire, Lord Brockway's views on the war were due principally, to his total oppositions to all wars, and his dedication to the cause of African freedom, which he had spent a lifetime in the British Parliament espousing. Once described as the "anti-establishment member of the House and a continuous one-man Grosvenor Square demonstration, he had been a great fighter for moral issues. His elevation to the peerage did not diminish his ardour as a moral crusader. As a strongly committed dissenter on a variety of issues, he had waged a struggle against all forces of injustice.⁷⁰⁴

Lord Brockway's first major attack on British arms sale to Nigeria was made in January 1968, long before the policy itself became so controversial. Not satisfied with the position of the British government on the war, Brockway embarked on his own personal diplomacy to try and get the belligerents to stop the war by themselves. In a letter he sent to Gowon and Ojukwu, as well as other African leaders, Brockway complained that, "it must pain all of us that, Africans should be killing Africans and that, one of the best examples of an independent state should be dismembered". He therefore, proposed that, the OAU should intervene, to bring the war to an end. Throughout the war, Brockway made use of his wide contact with African leaders, some of whom he knew personally, through his activities in the MCF, to press for international intervention to end the conflict. In Britain itself, Brockway was prominent in every movement that had advocated the need for the British government to stop the war.⁷⁰⁵ On 30th August, 1968 Lord Brockway sent a letter to the Prime Minister that was endorsed, by the most representatives and influential people in Britain. In the letter, the members of CPN expressed deep concern over the conflict between Nigeria and Biafra and its terrible consequences. They realised that, the necessary condition to relieve the hunger was ceasefire. And for the British government would exert its influence towards this end. The second desirability was a cessation of all arms supplies to both sides.⁷⁰⁶ At his request, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, received a CPN delegation on 17th September, 1968 and in a direct confrontation, Brockway again asked the Prime Minister if, he would not now stop arms supplies to the Nigerian government, in view of the strong public opposition to the British policy. He was again told that, the British government would reconsider its policy of arms sales to Nigeria if, there was evidence that, the prosecution of the war by the federalists was an act of genocide.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁴Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, pp.131-132.

⁷⁰⁵ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, p.133.

⁷⁰⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/207, Text of Letter by Lord Brockway to British Prime Minister, 30th August, 1968.

⁷⁰⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/207, Record of Meeting between British Prime Minister and Committee for Peace Deputation, 17th September, 1968.

On 6th November, 1968 another meeting was held between the British Prime Minister and a deputation from the CPN. Among the British officials present at the meeting included the Prime Minister Harold Wilson, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Michael Stewart, Lord Shepherd, R.J. Dawe, while the CPN was heavily represented by Lord Brockway, James Griffith, John Tilney, David Steel, Lady Asquith, and Lady Elliot of Harwood. The British Prime Minister then, said that, Britain had lived with the Nigerian problem not just since 1967 but, for a number of years with a background of earlier tragedies in efforts to create a viable Nigeria. He had known Abubakar Tafawa Balewa very well and indeed at his suggestion, the 1966 Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference was held in Lagos. With Abubakar's death, Nigeria was immediately plunged into great problems and, subsequently, a growing tragedy seemed to be almost inevitable. He did not propose to go all over, the government's arguments again as they were well known to the deputation. He thought that, Lord Brockway at the Labour Party Conference had very generously admitted that, there was something in the government's case. It was generally agreed that, a ceasefire was the first and most urgent step to take. The government had pressed this on both sides on a number of occasions. On the Biafran side, he authorised the first meeting with Sir Louis Mbanefo. He also discussed the whole question with the Church of Scotland leaders when he attended the General Assembly meeting in May 1968.⁷⁰⁸

Lord Brockway's determination to end the civil war was not confined only to pressure on the British government. He maintained regular correspondence with both Gowon and Ojukwu. For instance, in a letter he wrote to General Yakubu Gowon on 8th November, 1968, Lord Brockway reminded him of his proposal to visit both parties involved in the civil war, and seek to help bring about a settlement. He told Gowon that, the Biafran representatives had accepted this proposal and he was very glad to have heard from the Nigerian High Commissioner in London that such a visit would also be acceptable to them. In view of the involvement of France in the war and the efforts of the OAU and the British government to bring about a settlement, Lord Brockway assured Gowon that, his visit to Lagos should be held in abeyance until the outcome of these efforts are known.⁷⁰⁹ On 12th November, 1968 Lord Brockway wrote another letter to the British Prime Minister. He reminded the Prime Minister about his contact with I.S Kogbara, Biafran Special Representative in London, who informed him of the desire of Colonel Ojukwu to welcome him during his visit to Biafra.

⁷⁰⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/207, Record of Meeting between British Prime Minister and Committee for Peace in Nigeria Deputation, 6th November, 1968.

⁷⁰⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/207, Text of Letter by Lord Brockway to Nigeria's Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 8th November, 1968.

Kogbara said that they would like another member of the Committee to accompany him to Biafra and that Biafrans would like representatives of the British government itself to come to Biafra this represented a change from the time when they would not consult with the British representatives nor had anything to do with them. Lord Brockway urged the Prime Minister to use his influence to facilitate his visit to Lagos.⁷¹⁰ The British endorsement for the visit of Lord Brockway and James Griffiths to Nigeria was confirmed on 29th November, 1968 by the British Foreign Secretary, in a minute to the High Commission in Nigeria. He stated that, both members of the CPN had informed them of their intended visit to Biafra on 3rd December, 1968 accompanied by a doctor. They hoped to go on to Lagos and have an appointment with Enahoro on 8th-9th December, 1968. The FMG was therefore, presumably aware of the visit. But they were not sure how much, if any consultation there was about their visit to Biafra. The British government hoped that, the FMG would take pains to welcome Brockway and Griffiths and to explain their attitude to them, as they did to such good effect with Margery Perham.⁷¹¹

British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson equally sent a letter to Lord Brockway. The Prime Minister thanked Lord Brockway for his letter of 8th -12th November, 1968 about his proposal to visit Nigeria, including the area in Colonel Ojukwu's hands. He equally appreciated the information contained in the Lord Brockway's letter that, Colonel Ojukwu would welcome a visit by representatives of the British government. But the Prime Minister noted that, there was little he could do about the reasons for the NHC's suggestion that, his visit to Nigeria should be held in abeyance.⁷¹² On 3rd December, 1968 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, sent a letter to Nigeria's Commissioner for External Affairs, Okoi Arikpo .He reminded him of a likely visit of Lord Brockway and James Griffiths. He told him that, the members of the CPN wished to go first, to Biafra, with the hope that, they might be able to bring some influence to bear there, and to promote an ending to the civil war. Hunt told the Commissioner that, he was further informed that the two Parliamentarians accompanied by a doctor Wallace a medical adviser, would fly from Sao Tome to Uli on airport on the night of Wednesday, 4th December, 1968 and return in reverse direction on the night of Friday 6th December, 1968. Hunt was informed by the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to inform the FMG to ensure that, all possible

⁷¹⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/207, Text of Letter by Lord Brockway to British Prime Minister, 12th November, 1968.

⁷¹¹ TNA, FCO, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Lagos, 29th November, 1968.

⁷¹² TNA, FCO, 65/208/File No. JWN 1/ 14/ Part D, Lord Brockway's Committee for Peace in Nigeria: Correspondence with Committee and Request to see the Secretary of State. Text of a Letter by British Prime Minister to Lord Brockway, 2nd December, 1968.

precautions should be taken against any attack on the aircraft on which the Committee members would be travelling with. He warned Arikpo that, the FMG would have a full sense of the possible damage to the federal cause which would be produced if as a result of federal attack, anything were to happen to the aircraft carrying the CPN members on their way to Biafra.⁷¹³

When Lord Brockway and James Griffiths visited Biafra they were received by Colonel Ojukwu. On 10th December, 1968 an exclusive interview was held between his Excellency, Lord Brockway and James Griffiths. Before the interview started, Ojukwu welcomed the CPN members on behalf of the government of Biafra. He noted his long anticipation of having the opportunity of meeting such distinguished personalities from Britain, and had always looked forward to the opportunity, because he felt very strongly that the problem that exists between Biafra and the British government was one that could be best resolved by negotiation. He also said that, to understand Biafra, and their struggle, the feelings of her people, and aspirations, one had to look at the faces of the people of Biafra and to see them in their market places. Only by so doing could one truly understand their plight. Unfortunately, for the Biafrans, Ojukwu said, they have to operate in a language which was alien to them and that made for certain inadequacies and they found it extremely difficult to put across every aspect of the problem. Ojukwu noted that, he was satisfied personally that, the CPN members have had the opportunity of seeing as it were, a cross-section of Biafran population. He told the CPN members to go anywhere they wanted, see everyone they wanted to see, and discuss. Ojukwu stated that, the basic thing he wanted to say at the opening of the interview was that, Biafrans had had a long history of association and friendship with the British people. This struggle had altered these feelings. It was the administration of Harold Wilson that Biafrans found enemy. Ojukwu made it clear that, any criticisms coming from Biafra which the CPN members might hear was directly at the Harold Wilson administration which they firmly believed did not reflect the public will of Great Britain.

After their official visit to Biafra, Lord Brockway and James Griffiths paid another visit to Lagos on 18th -22nd December, 1968. During their visit to Lagos, Lord Brockway said that, they had had a difficult press conference at Lagos airport where they had been attacked as pro-Biafrans. They defended themselves against this charge with the result that the Nigerian press reports the next day were reasonable. While on their tour of Lagos, they had

⁷¹³ TNA, FCO, 65/208, Text of Letter by British High Commissioner to Nigeria to Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs, 3rd December, 1968.

first seen the Nigerian Chief Justice, Ademola whom they had found sympathetic, particularly towards the idea of a Christmas truce which, he said, demonstrated again that the civil war was not a religious war. Lord Brockway recalled that, Lord Shepherd had told him before he and Griffiths set out for Lagos that, he had argued the case to General Gowon for a Christmas truce, but without obtaining a conclusive reply. They had argued the case for a Christmas truce again with Okoi Arikpo who made the objections that, the Biafrans would not observe it and that, it would endanger federal forces. Arikpo stated, however, that no decision had been taken on the issue. The appointment of Lord Brockway and James Griffiths with Gowon was scheduled for 5: pm, but to their surprise they were summoned urgently at 12 noon, immediately after the meeting of the Supreme Military Council. After seeing General Gowon, Lord Brockway and Griffiths lunched with the British High Commissioner to Nigeria whom they described as “very cooperative”. It was then, that they sent their telegram asking for a message to be sent to Colonel Ojukwu.⁷¹⁴

On 2nd January, 1969 Lord Brockway and James Griffiths met the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson concerning their visit to Nigeria. Griffiths spoke earnestly of the need for effective action to end the civil war. He and Lord Brockway insisted that, there was no hope of arranging a meeting between General Gowon and Colonel Ojukwu, for Gowon had spoken with the utmost hostility of Ojukwu and they believed that the latter, and his principal colleagues, were convinced that their own lives would be in danger if, they allowed themselves at any point to be put in the federal hands. Moreover, James Griffiths said that, he believed that, Ojukwu would be reluctant to leave Biafra for fear of a coup against him by some of his colleagues. But he and Lord Brockway thought that, there was a real possibility of a fruitful discussion between the Chief Justices of the two sides who were old friends and both took a sensible view of the problem.⁷¹⁵

The most militant of the pro-Biafran lobbies in Britain was the Save Biafra Campaign, which was formed in May 1968 as a breakaway movement from the BBA, in protest against the BBA’s reluctance to adopt mass demonstrations and public meetings as a form of pressure tactics. The SBC was, in spite of its name, really a fringe group kind of lobby. Its interests went much wider than those of the other Biafra pressure group, which represented a specific interest and were concerned with a single issue and that was the support for Biafra. The SBC was basically a norm-oriented lobby for which Biafra happened to be a convenient case. When it was first formed, it was called the Save Biafra Committee. It consisted of the

⁷¹⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/208, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 18th December, 1968.

⁷¹⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/207, Record of Meeting between Lord Brockway and British Prime Minister, 2nd January, 1969.

Friends of Biafra Association, the Britain-Biafra Association, the Biafra Student Union, and the Committee of 100. Its principal function was given as organising public demonstrations, and soon afterwards, the veterans of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The No-More-War Movement and other pacifists infiltrated the committee and re-launched it as the Save Biafra Campaign. All these groups, though, united in their opposition to British arms sales to Nigeria, were stimulated into direct action by other ethical values for which they stood for, and of which, the British arms sales to Nigeria represented a negation. The breakaway movement from BBA was led by the veterans of the Committee of 100 with the expressed intention of taking the cause into the streets. Hence, the series of demos” in the summer of 1968 which helped to bring the issue of starvation into the forefront of the war. Formed essentially to give a hard edge to the Biafran protest movements, the SBC’s Secretary, Peter Cadogan, a former member of the Communist Party of Britain and Secretary of the Committee of 100, quickly established himself as the driving force behind the campaign. With the active help and support of his Israeli Secretary, Hanneth Bareth, Peter Cadogan turned the SBC into the most militant of the Biafran lobbies. In contrast with the FBA and BBA, which in spite of occasional aberrations, were committed to operating within the system, the SBC worked outside the usual channels of pressure-group activities. Having chosen the mass-assault technique of pressure, it organised public marches, rallies, and sleep-ins in Trafalgar Square, Whitehall, Westminster, and up and down the country, in support of Biafra. Among those that joined in the public demonstrations were Sir Winston Churchill daughter, Isabella Churchill, and the former leader of the Liberal Party, Joe Grimmond. Some of their direct action efforts included an unsuccessful Tilbury Docks campaign to block arms loading for Nigeria, flying the Biafran flag at the Commonwealth Institute in Kensington, and occupying Whitehall’s Banquet House. Though, Biafra remained the main plank on which the SBC campaigned, it was equally concerned with other issues, such as Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, nuclear weapons, and the state of British democracy, which were then, fashionable issues in left-wing coteries.⁷¹⁶

Another prominent organisation that emerged in Britain in the wake of public reaction to Biafran propaganda was the group of British officers of former Eastern Nigerian Public Service. In an apparent reactions against the British policy in the Nigerian Civil War, they issued a memorandum to the British Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomas based on the fact that, the government of Republic of Biafra, having accepted the obligations of the former Eastern Nigeria government towards them, and since no other

⁷¹⁶ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, pp.128-130.

public service came into de jure or de facto existence to replace the former Eastern Nigeria Public Service, they regarded themselves as being members of the Biafran Public Service and considered their future being tied with the future of their fellow African colleagues in the service. Their main purpose of writing the memorandum was to seek an interview the British Secretary of State. Not to plead the cause of Biafrans, which its government was quite able to do for itself. But they did not seek to conceal the fact that their sympathies, like those of almost all their compatriots who had lived and worked in the former Eastern Nigeria and who have knowledge of the course of events there and affecting it over the years, were very much with the Biafran people. The group expressed worry over the policies adopted by the British government in the Nigerian Civil War. And the manner in which its actions and the pronouncements of its spokesmen both in Britain and Lagos were interpreted, which increased the difficulties that existed from the beginning of the hostilities and before, which must be surmounted before the British government could effectively assume its role of peace maker.⁷¹⁷

As part of the efforts to ensure a better British policy in the Nigerian Civil War, a meeting between the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomas, and a deputation of serving officers of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, led by A.G. Saville was held on 19th February, 1969. Other British officials present at the meeting are D.C. Tebbit and P.D. McEntee, while the group was equally represented by E.S. James, J.A. Garrod, E. Wilson, and A.T. Doel. The Minister of State said that he understood and sympathised with the members of the deputation, who had spent their lives serving in Eastern Nigeria, and the deep respect they held the Biafrans and the Biafran cause. He then answered the points raised in a memorandum which the deputation submitted prior to the meeting. He said that Britain had an obligation to continue to supply arms to the FMG, for they were the traditional suppliers, and to have cut-off the supplies of arms in the early stages of the struggle would merely have encouraged Eastern Nigerian secession. The OAU and all African countries were opposed to secessionist movements. The Minister of State defended the British government. He said that, they did not supply weapon of mass destruction to the FMG. Rather, they had only continued to send reasonable quantities of weapons of a kind supplied in the past. Also, he noted that the British government did not believe that a military solution was the answer to the Nigerian problem, but stopping supplies of arms which in any case the FMG could obtain elsewhere would merely weaken the British influence with the

⁷¹⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/212, File No. JWN 1/12/TX 1/73, Minutes on Nigeria Internal Political Affairs and Meetings With the Members of the Public in the Nigerian Civil War. Records of Discussion with Notable Members of the Public on the Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969.

FMG for moderation towards the Igbos. It was for these reasons that, they had continued to supply the FMG with arms. However, they should like to see diplomatic talks without preconditions, started and all their efforts were directed to that purpose.⁷¹⁸

The activities of Biafra lobby inevitably led to the emergence of groups that worked actively to arouse support for Nigeria in Britain. These groups operated to sustain and encourage an existing government policy. As such, they occupied the political centre and reaped the advantages of respectability and access to Whitehall and the elites already disposed to favour Nigeria. Among the groups that worked actively in Britain in support of the federal case, the most prominent was the West Africa Committee of the Conservative Commonwealth and Overseas Council, a body made up of Conservatives MPs and British people with business interests in the former British West Africa. The role of this committee in the civil war was crucial for two reasons. First, it was essentially an opposition back-bench committee that found it supporting the policy of a Labour government. Second, it also served as a ginger group that worked actively to gather support for Nigeria in the Conservative Party, which on several occasions appeared to be reluctant in its support for Nigeria. The West Africa Committee though, a back-bench committee, was quite influential within the Conservative Party. The source of its influence was the expertise it had in African affairs and its intimate knowledge of the English-speaking West African countries. Its meetings, which were usually attended by ex-colonial civil servants, dons, and businessmen with first-hand knowledge of West Africa, were a valuable source of information on recent political developments in West Africa. Experts on African affairs were often invited to its meetings and provided useful background information on the English-speaking West African countries. Prominent among its members during the Nigerian Civil War were John Cordle, Chairman, Marston Riley, Chairman of BEWAC, a British motor company with extensive Land Rover interests in Nigeria, and John Tilney, a former Under-Secretary in the Commonwealth Relations Office and a director of John Holt, the Liverpool shipping company with wide economic interests in Nigeria. The WAC was also part of the group in Britain that emerged during the civil war that had business interests. In 1970, it had 166 member firms namely, the United Africa Company Limited, the biggest company in Nigeria; John Holt and Company Limited; Barclays Bank D.C.O. Shell International Petroleum Company Limited; and Elder Dempster Lines Limited. Its main objectives were to provide liaison between the firms and

⁷¹⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/212, Record of Meeting between Group of British Officers of Former Eastern Nigerian Public Service and British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 19th February, 1969.

the governments of the countries of West Africa and the British government. It had highly sophisticated bureaucracy which maintained constant contact with the Members of Parliament as well as the civil service.⁷¹⁹

The West Africa Committee was primarily concerned with the effect which the civil war and the British policy would have on their future interests in Nigeria. Before the outbreak of the civil war, the federal government of Nigeria blockaded those territorial waters of Nigeria which extended to the areas claimed by Biafra. This action affected the operations of the British shipping and oil interests. At first, members of the West African Shipping Lines, a consortium of shipping companies plying the West Africa route of which Elder Dempster and Palm Lines temporarily agreed among themselves to respect the federal blockade. The WAC subsequently, met members of the government in order to discuss what should be done about the blockade and, in particular, to consider how oil tankers might be excluded from it. The government also received strategic reports of the situation in the areas of conflict. It should be noted that, some of the companies such as Shell/BP, John Holt and UAC were well placed to give detailed assessment of the situation in the areas of the conflict, because these companies had enormous trading interests there. The government advised the companies to continue to respect the federal blockade and George Thomas, the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, was sent to Lagos to meet the leaders of the federal government to discuss the question of the oil blockade. The group was not initially involved in the arms negotiations. Rather, it asked the British government not to take precipitate action. However, when the war was being prolonged and there was damage to their properties, the group wanted the government to use its support for the federal government as a lever to extract concessions from the latter on the compensation to be awarded for damaged or destroyed properties.⁷²⁰

The other lobby group that was formed specifically to win the support for Nigeria in Britain was the United Nigeria Group. Formed in December 1968, as a Parliamentary group of MPs, from all the three parties, its stated objective was to work in favour of preserving the need for a pro-federal lobby in the British Parliament. This group was far less active than the WAC Committee. Its only notable success was in persuading the federal government of Nigeria to engage a firm of public relations consultant, Galitzine to improve its image in Britain. Though, the activities of various groups that featured prominently during the civil war were less crucial than the role played by the humanitarian lobbies, the public relations

⁷¹⁹ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, pp.137.

⁷²⁰ Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.144-145.

consultants, and the mass media in shaping the British public opinion about the war, the moral concern that was felt in Britain over the allegations of genocide, starvation, and heavy civilian casualties was the direct result of the part played by these groups in arousing the British public's concern and opposition to the war.⁷²¹ As Biafran propaganda became more vocal in Britain, another pro-federalist group emerged. This group was motivated by the British government's giving into anti-policy pressures by Biafran partisans and British mass media. It was called the Federal Nigeria Group which attracted people from other groups such as the United Nigeria Association. Its Chairman, Sir Miles Clifford, was a former Senior Resident in Adamawa Province of Northern Nigeria and Chairman of the Nigerian Electricity Supply Company. The group wanted to make known the truth about Nigeria, because of the huge propaganda that surrounded the civil war really clouded the basic issues which provided overwhelming evidence in favour of preserving the unity of Nigeria. Indeed, the FNG was one of the pro-federalist groups in Britain which had direct channels of communication with the Members of Parliament and continued to feed them with material favourable to the FMG. For instance, they used MPs like James Johnson and Nigel Fisher to distribute pro-federal information to both House of Parliament and House of Commons.⁷²²

From 29th September to 1st December, 1968 the Biafra Nurses Association organised a very successful public exhibition at Trafalgar Square in its effort to bring home to the British public, the enormity of the task that the Association faced to raise money towards the Hospital Appeal Fund, which it launched before the exhibition. As a positive response to the challenge created by the war, the Association sent the first and second batches of nurses to Biafra, to assist in the relief work. Gabon and Sao Tome were the two countries where the Association send their members after the evacuation of Biafra children. The value and substance of the message and the activities of this Association was highly motivated by Biafran propaganda. They invited to their meeting, some of the most distinguished personalities, both from Britain and elsewhere, to give their professional touch to various aspects of the intriguing problem of war and humanity.⁷²³

On 2nd October, 1968 the National Executive, at the Labour Party Conference, held at Blackpool, adopted two resolutions on the Nigerian Civil War. The Conference deplored the British government's action in selling arms to Nigeria. It called upon the government to stop the sale of arms to the Nigerian government. It urged the British government to intensify its

⁷²¹ Fafowora, O.O. 1990, *Pressure Group and Foreign Policy*, p. 143.

⁷²² Ajibola, W. 1978, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, pp.140-154.

⁷²³ MS, 321463/Box 27, News Materials on Nigerian Civil War, Biafra Nurses Week, 25th November-1st December, 1968.

efforts to bring the two sides together, and to end the conflict. They considered that, these efforts could be compromised by the sale of arms to one side.⁷²⁴ The Chairman of the party announced that, the resolution of the conference was accepted by the Party Executive Committee. Chalmers, a member of the Executive Committee, noted on behalf of the Committee that, the British government desired to see the end of the Nigerian Civil War, and to give massive and speedy aid to the starving on both sides of the conflict. Britain's involvement as an arms supplier was one of the responsibilities of Nigeria being a foreign colony. He said that, "If there was a possibility of ending this war by stopping the supply of arms to Nigeria, then, we call upon our government to stop the supply now".⁷²⁵ In his reaction, to the resolution of the Labour Party Conference, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that, while the Labour Party's resolution reflected the strength of feeling in Britain, about the civil war in Nigeria, there would be no change in the British arms policy. The resolution of the Conference was only accepted with one important amendment and that was, if the British government thought that, stopping arms supplies would bring peace nearer, they would be prepared to undertake the step. But, the government views was that, a step would not in fact improve the prospect of peace, and they were therefore, not intended to take it.⁷²⁶

From 23rd to 24th December, 1968, the Biafran Ad-hoc Committee which comprised of all shades of public opinion in Britain organised a Thirty Four hour fast and vigil at the City Hall, London. This event included a public donation and collection of money, which was sent to Oxfam to help the people of Biafra who were starving as a result of the civil war. This collection was heavily sponsored by various shops at the city centre. Also, individuals that fasted prior to that occasion were given sponsorship forms as another way of getting money. About three hundred Queens University students made pledges and took part in the night vigil, while support equally came from other notable voluntary organisations. Various clergy men that made pledges included the Dean of St. Anne's Cathedral; Chaplains from the University and several Roman Catholic priests. This Association was motivated to organise this event in view of the terrible suffering of the Biafrans and the prospects of nearly eight millions projected to die in that civil war. They urged the British officialdom to stop supplying arms to the federal side, and to support the opening of a corridor for the supply of

⁷²⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/273, West African Department to British High Commission, Lagos, 2nd October, 1968.

⁷²⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/273, From Foreign Office to Lagos, 3rd October, 1968.

⁷²⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/273, Secretary of State's Reaction to the Labour Party's Conference Resolution on Arms Supply, from Foreign Office to Lagos, 3rd October, 1968.

food and other relief supplies to Biafra.⁷²⁷ On 10th January, 1969 a Middleborough docks, stopped loading shells and bullets onto a ship that belong to the Nigerian National Shipping Line, destined for Nigeria. According to the docks' shop steward, Harry Keighley, the stoppage was on the grounds of "moral conscience", stimulated by BBC-T.V's "Twenty-Four Hours" special film on Biafra, night before the decision was taken. For him, "The docks were sending food parcels in one case and bullets in the other". The Dockers had had a lot of doubt about this ever since the ship started loading. "We have been loading arms for quite a while, about two years... but this is the first time we have loaded ammunition". The lightning strike embarrassed the ship agents, namely MacGregor, Gow and Holland, and also the West Africa Joint Services, a subsidiary of Unilever, of which Nigerian National Line was a part, who were responsible for most of the arms shipments to Nigeria from Britain. Initially, Arthur Bottomley, Labour MP for Middleborough East, told the Dockers that, "we cannot afford to default on orders of this kind". Later, Frank Allaum, Labour MP for Salford congratulated the strikers on "their stand for peace and principle... in line with the Labour Party's Conference decision on arms supply to Nigeria".⁷²⁸

On 15th January, 1969 the Save Biafra Committee organised a demonstration on the last day of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in London. The Committee shared the view that the leaders of the Commonwealth should not be allowed to leave Marlborough House, until they had solved the problem of the war. They asked for a new level of support especially from the Universities and Colleges for this noble cause. They said that, "Our on-the-street campaign in the spring and summer availed a little. The white faces stayed away. Our Biafran friends were appealed at the lack of English response. It was that situation we now have to change beyond recognition". "January 1969 must see the end of the war, this is our responsibility and anything later would be too late for too many".⁷²⁹

From 30th April to 5th May, 1969 a public opinion survey was carried out in Britain by the National Opinion Polls Limited. This was on the British arms supply to the Federalist. The report of the opinion poll was submitted to the Foreign Office by the Save Biafra Group.⁷³⁰ In that survey, a systematic probability sample was used. Interviews were conducted in hundred representative constituencies across Great Britain. A total of 1,902

⁷²⁷ MS, 321463/Box 28, News Materials on Nigerian Civil War, Biafra Ad-hoc Committee Press Release, 18th December, 1968.

⁷²⁸ *Peace News*, No. 1699. 17th January, 1969.

⁷²⁹ MS, 321463/Box 28, News Materials on Nigerian Civil War, Invite Biafra to Commonwealth Conference Action at Marlborough House by The Save Biafra Committee, 19th December, 1968.

⁷³⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/333, File No. JWN 10/1/1/Part D/ 5A/368/ Title/ Nigeria: Defence Supplies and Policy. Minute on Public Opinion Survey from Overseas Secretary to Parliamentary Under-Secretary, 15th May, 1969.

interviews were obtained with electors whose names were drawn from the electoral register. The question posed at the electors was whether they think that, “the British government was justified or not in supplying arms to the FMG”. At the conclusion of the opinion survey, the NOPL report showed that a majority of the British electorates believed that the British government was not justified in continuing arms sells to the FMG. 53% of all the British electors shared the view. The result showed that the men are less against the continued supply of arms than women. 37% of male electors consider the sale of arms justified as against 15 % of women electors, though in both cases, a large portion believe is not justified than the rate of the continued supply of arms to Nigeria justified. In the class groups, the upper middle class are also less against the government’s activities in the field of arms supply than the middle or working class. It is interesting to state that, the age group most against the British action are not the younger generation, but between the age of 55 and 64, the generation possibly most directly involved in the Second World War, those between 25 and 34 in 1939. Political party’s breakdown revealed that the Liberals considered the British actions unjustified, though a majority of the supporters of all three parties thought that continued supply of arms by Britain was unjustified.⁷³¹

On 4th July, 1969 the Greater London Young Conservatives, at its Executive Committee Meeting, passed a resolution which called upon the Conservative Opposition at the British Parliament to withdraw its tacit support for the Federal government’s systematic decimation of Biafrans. They called for the immediate recognition of Biafra as a sovereign nation. This resolution was supported by the branches of the organisation across Britain. They later confronted their Front Bench MPs, and wrote a letter to Sir Alec Douglas Home and Edward Heath, over the Biafran issue.⁷³² On 7th July, 1969 an exhibition of photographs from Biafra was organised at St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Trafalgar Square, London by Lord Goodman. The photographs were taken by an Italian photographer, Roman Cagnoni. The exhibition was organised by the Medical Aid for Biafra, a group sponsored by the newspaper company known as, *Spectator*. The two weeks exhibition was staged primarily to combat a country-wide outbreak of malaria in Biafra and with the aim of raising funds for the supply of medical facilities and drugs to the victims of the war. The organisation, which was heavily funded, six weeks before the exhibition, had several leading British MPs, clergymen and academics on its committee. They later confirmed that, through their efforts, drugs and

⁷³¹ TNA, FCO, 65/333, National Opinion Polls Limited, 1969. Report on the Survey of the British Arms Supply to Nigeria. NOP/35/75, pp.1-2.

⁷³² MS, 321463/Box 37, News Materials on Nigerian Civil War. H. Beneth. The Young Conservatives are Moving, 20th September, 1969.

medicines were sent to Biafra.⁷³³ Furthermore, a public meeting known as the British Conference for Biafra was held at the Tavistock Hotel, Tavistock Square, London from 20th-21st September, 1969. The purpose of the Conference was to draw the various pro-Biafran organisations in Britain together and agree on common objectives and actions towards the Biafran cause. The Conference was aimed at transforming the genuine humanitarian concern, felt by the people of Britain for the plight of Biafrans into a forceful awareness that, political action, especially in London, could change the situation.⁷³⁴ After the successful International Conference on Biafra, held in London in March, 1969 which gave birth to Action Biafra International, Peter Cadogan, Secretary of the Save Biafra Campaign, put forward the idea of a National Pro-Biafran Conference. This idea was taken up eagerly by many great organisations, groups and individuals throughout Britain who felt that, much closer co-operation and more vigorous campaigns were needed if, an effective impact could be made on the largely apathetic British public, the press and the mass-media which tended to keep Biafra in the background news on the negligent of British policies in the war. The Friends of Biafra Association and its Secretary Peter Hogg agreed to form a Convening Committee. They were joined by volunteers from the Save Biafra Campaign; the Britain-Biafra Association, London Branch; Haringey Action Committee for Peace in Nigeria-Biafra War and Biafra Christian Crusade. Their work resulted in the conveying of the National Conference, and was attended by one hundred representatives of organisations, groups and individuals, dedicated to the Biafran cause. Most importantly, representatives of the associations such as the Biafra Nurses Association, Movement for a Democracy of Content, Inter-University Jewish Federation, the University Action Society Liverpool, Biafra Friendship Society Leeds, Peace Action Centre Fordsham Cheshire, Biafra Action Group University of Newcastle, Old Calabar Biafra Association, *Comité de Recherche et d'Action non Violentes* France, University College Biafra Action Group, Biafra Science Group Leeds, Horn Young Liberals, Botswana Overseas Students Union and the Tanzania Students Association were amongst the participants at the conference. Joan Mellors, member of the Friends of Biafra Association and the Britain-Biafra Association and known as a staunch supporter of Biafra within the Labour Party, agreed to chair the Conference. The proceedings of the Conference were opened with an address by the Special Representative of the Biafran

⁷³³ J. De St. Jorre, *Medical Aid for Biafra*, 5th July, 1969. *The Observer*. p.19.

⁷³⁴ MS, 321463/Box 37, News Materials on Nigerian Civil War. Official Communiqué by British Conference for Biafra, London, 29th September, 1969, p.1.

government in London, Ignatius Kogbara. He elaborated on the prevailing international mood concerning the Nigerian Civil War.⁷³⁵

4.4 British Women

The outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War saw the vulnerability of women and children in an unprecedented magnitude. Egodu Uchendu argued that hardly did women take part in the decision of any group to go to war. But when war breaks out they take a heavy toll on the women. Also observed was the fact that the emergence of high-altitude bombing, more powerful bombs and a strategy of total warfare has practically ended the distinction between combatant and civilians as targets of war, making women and children the majority of the mounting numbers of casualties. Women are not spared during internal and external disturbances. They were directly and indirectly affected by fighting. Many join in the fighting, either out of choice or necessity. Others were forcefully displaced, threatened, and intimidated; and both combatants and noncombatants suffer various abuses during such crises. They were challenged by starvation and epidemics when they occur and are confronted with increased workloads. Many inherit the responsibility for the survival of their families, the protection and maintenance of their elderly relatives, and sometimes their husbands.⁷³⁶ That women and children were the major victims of the war was in doubt. Women felt the brunt of the war in a unique way. With much of males killed by the Nigerian Army in their bid to combat the challenge of Biafra, a substantial number of women had no male family member to protect and maintain them during the crisis, as was the custom. They were left to contend with the soldiers; in order to cope with the situation, they adapted themselves to the challenges it engendered.⁷³⁷

The level of reportage in the international media concerning the Nigerian Civil War accelerated the reactions of the British women regarding the war. The motives behind these reactions were the frustration over lack of progress using diplomacy in solving the main issues that precipitated the civil war and the alarming rate with which the great powers namely Britain, Russia, France, and other European countries were involved in supplying arms to the Nigerian government and Republic of Biafra. Thus, the British women were involved in appealing to the British government for more political action and peaceful settlement of the war.⁷³⁸ As mothers

⁷³⁵ *Official Communiqué by British Conference for Biafra, p.2.*

⁷³⁶ Egodu Uchendu, 2007. *Women and Conflict in the Nigerian Civil War*. Trenton: Africa World Press Inc, p. 2.

⁷³⁷ Uchendu, 2007, *Women and Conflict in the Nigerian Civil War*, p.11.

⁷³⁸ John O' Callaghan, Pressure to End Biafran War, *The Guardian*, 18th November, 1968.

who bear part of the burden in the family and society, British women saw the war as a huge challenge to womanhood.⁷³⁹

Anne Kerr and Lena Jeger were prominent British women Members of Parliament from the Labour Party that championed the cause of the Nigerian Civil War in the British House of Parliament. On 2nd October, 1968 Anne Kerr, Laurie Pavitt and Joyce Butler were among the Sixty Five MPs and Trade Unionists in Britain that supported and signed the Labour Party 418 resolutions which bordered on the Nigerian Civil War at the Labour Party Conference, held in Blackpool. At the Conference the National Executive Committee of Labour Party deplored the British government's action in selling arms to Nigeria. It urged the British government to intensify its efforts to bring the two sides together, and to end the conflict. They considered that, these efforts could be compromised by the sale of arms to one side.⁷⁴⁰ On 12th December, 1968 Anne Kerr and Lena Jeger joined forces with their male MPs numbering about twelve in number to abstain from voting on the floor of the House against the urgent appeal by the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, to potential Labour activists to swallow their doubts about the Nigerian civil war and rally round the government in the division which concluded the House of Commons debate on Foreign Affairs. Wilson's appeal, which was phrased at times in highly emotional language, was an unprecedented step, in the history of the British government. It indicated how seriously the government viewed the mounting disquiet over Biafra. Wilson's appeal was issued on a number of grounds. First, that the government's majority might be threatened. Secondly, that the government was seeking to achieve a Christmas ceasefire in Nigeria. Third, that a large abstention might be misunderstood abroad. Wilson concluded, "I pray that every member would be able to support the government tonight. He gave a warning that a large number of Labour MPs were absent sick, and that the Opposition was dividing the House on the Falkland Islands rather than Biafra. These women and their male counterparts however, wanted to abstain on Biafra. They believed that it was now impossible to hold Nigeria together and that Britain should join in breaking up the Federation. But, the British government feared that such action could result in the balkanisation of Africa in which there were 2,000 ethnic groups."⁷⁴¹

Hannah Baneth was the Chairman of the supporters of Biafra in Britain that considered the need to set up a Volunteer Force of several hundred to offer themselves as fighters to the Biafran government. This idea was suggested at a Conference of nearly twenty organisations as part of a far more militant campaign than they have pursued. The militant

⁷³⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/273, West African Department to British High Commission, Lagos, 2nd October, 1968.

⁷⁴⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/273, West African Department to British High Commission, Lagos, 2nd October, 1968.

⁷⁴¹ 22 MPs Abstain Over Biafra, *The Guardian*. 13th December, 1968. P.1

activities included the occupation of public buildings and interruption of public meetings, leaflet distribution, meetings at the Labour Party Conference, and a campaign to boycott the major oil companies. Suggested stickers read: "Put a Dead Biafran in your Tank Fill it up with Shell/BP". The Conference which drew about hundred supporters resolved that the organisations should work together for the recognition of Biafran rights and an immediate end to the calculated British-Nigerian government starvation of Biafrans. Hannah who also served as the Treasurer of the Save Biafran Campaign said that the organisations hoped to transform the genuine humanitarian concern for the plight of Biafra into awareness that political action, especially in London could change the situation. The immediate evidence of this new militancy came during the Biafra Week held in London. This included large demonstrations in London and elsewhere, picketing the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and newspapers which were said to have been less than fair to Biafra, and massive distribution of pamphlet. Fund-raising activities included a pop concert in Albert Hall, a ball at Madame Tussaud's, lunches and a film show.⁷⁴² Hannah Baneth later called for a National Pro-Biafran Conference from 20th -21st September, 1969 which would serve as a forum of all Pro-Biafra organisations to meet each other and agree on common objectives and actions. She argued that slowly but surely the awareness of the rigidity of the British policy towards Biafra was spreading and being supported by organisation such as the Greater Young Conservatives.⁷⁴³

On 3rd July, 1968 Margret Hutchinson of Richmond, Yorkshire sent a cheque of £50 meant to buy dried milk for the children of Republic of Biafra.⁷⁴⁴ In a letter she wrote to the wife of the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Wilson on 1st July, 1968 she wanted the money to be used to buy dried milk for children and other war victims in Biafra. Indeed, she had tried to send milk to Biafra through a relief agency up to no avail.⁷⁴⁵ On 4th July, 1968 the Foreign Office stated that the British Red Cross would be loading a consignment to be shipped to Biafra and would be gladly include the £50-worth of milk paid for by Hutchinson' cheque. When the milk reaches Republic of Biafra it would be distributed as with all the Red Cross

⁷⁴² Volunteers to Fight for Biafran Plan. The Guardian, 22nd September, 1969.

⁷⁴³ MS/321463/Box 8/Folder 37/Nigerian Civil War News Materials/September 1969. A Call for National Pro-Biafra Conference, 20-21st September, 1969.

⁷⁴⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/298, File No. TX/11/5/Part B/West and General African Dept./6C/1066/Title: Disasters and Relief Operations and Financial Aid, 1967-1968. Prime Minister Office to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 3 July, 1968.

⁷⁴⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/298, Confidential: Text of A Letter from Margret Hutchinson to Mrs. Wilson, 1 July, 1968.

consignments, through the International Committee of Red Cross. She was assured that her money would be utilised to the best advantage for the purpose for which she had asked.⁷⁴⁶

Dame Anne Bryans who served as the Vice Chairman of the British Red Cross Society was a great British woman who facilitated several relief activities during the Nigerian Civil War. Her organisation provided £1000 for Nigeria and £1000 for Biafra for relief operation. She chaired a meeting of the Disaster Emergency Committee held on 2nd May, 1968. The meeting was convened by the British Red Cross Society.⁷⁴⁷ The most important item on the agenda of the meeting was to consider the emergency relief situation in Nigeria in view of the appeal letter from the International Committee of Red Cross. During the meeting, she stated that her organisation was rather worried about the multiplicity of appeals for assistance to Nigeria and Biafran government, as apart from the fact that too many appeals might mean a loss of interest, it was by no means certain that money collected by small bodies or individuals could be utilised to the best advantage.⁷⁴⁸ Miss A. Hopkin member of the British Red Cross Society was among the attendant of the Forty-Fourth meeting of the Disaster Emergency Committee held on 5th December, 1968. The Committee considered the allocation of funds from the appeal launched against the £105, 000 received by the Committee. It was agreed to allocate £100,000 between the five charities in equal allocation of £20, 000. The British Red Cross Society's share of £20,000 was proposed to be transferred straight to the Committee.⁷⁴⁹ On 9th May, 1969 Dame Anne Bryans presided over the Forty-Fifth meeting of the Disasters Emergency Committee which was equally attended by other members of the Committee among whom was Miss Acworth a member of Oxfam. The final accounts for the Nigeria War Victims Appeal operated by the British Red Cross Society which was closed on 31st December, 1968 were circulated at the meeting and agreed. It was also agreed by the other charities that the unallocated balance of £798 should be paid to the British Red Cross Society who had made no general charge for administration of the appeal.⁷⁵⁰ Sally Goatcher was a British nurse who worked for the Save the Children Fund in Biafra. She was held captive for sixteen days in war-ravaged territory. She was arrested after

⁷⁴⁶TNA, FCO, 38/298, FROM V.E. Davies to P.H. Moberly, 4 July, 1969.

⁷⁴⁷ TNA, Ministry of Overseas Development, 30/162, File No. WNA 242/456/01/Part A/ Title: Nigeria Post-war Relief and Reconstruction Aid, 1967-1969. Note for Record on the Meeting of the Disaster Emergency Committee, 2 May, 1968. The Disaster Emergency Committee comprises of five British voluntary organisations engaged on relief activities in the Nigerian civil war. These are British Red Cross Society, War-on-Want, OXFAM, Christian Aid, and Save the Children Fund.

⁷⁴⁸ TNA, OD, 30/162, Note for Record on the Meeting of the Disaster Emergency Committee, 2 May, 1968.

⁷⁴⁹TNA, FCO, 65/392, Note of the Forty- Fourth Meeting of the Disaster Emergency Committee, 5 December, 1968.

⁷⁵⁰ British Red Cross Museum and Archives, Box 1/24, Notes of the Forty-Fifth Meeting of the Disasters Emergency Committee, 9 May 1969.

she took a wrong turning in her Red Cross Landing-Rover. Biafran soldiers stopped her at a road block. She said: “they told me to put up my hands, which I did with some speed. I was never frightened”. Sally was held for four days by the Biafran Army and spent the rest of the time in prison. While she was with the Army, she was accused of being a spy and was questioned daily. At one time, she broke down and cried. But, she said that she was never treated badly. For her: “I was never intimidated. They respected the fact that I was European and a woman and treated me very kindly indeed.” In the prison, she was looked after by very charming policewomen. She was later released and arrive London on 17th June, 1969 and reunited with her family. Sally’s mother, said: “we are just thrilled to have Sally home”.⁷⁵¹ Miss Muriel Monkhouse from the International Welfare Section of Foreign Office in August 1969 wrote a memorandum to the British officialdom concerning the case of a Biafran family who had managed to reach Britain with the help of the Catholic Women’s League. She confirmed that this Biafran family at their arrival in England was badly in need of bedding and other welfare items. And it was agreed that they should be provided with the most necessary items such as blankets, pillows and charge the expenditure to Nigeria-Biafran funds which was about £25-30. She noted that many efforts were made by various organisations to reunite Biafran families by bringing the wives and children from Biafra to live with husbands and fathers in Britain. But that permission had to be obtained from the Biafran Office in London and the fares have to be paid to that office. She stated that Caritas hoped to be able to bring families or at least children to England free of charge. She predicted therefore, the tendency for the increased numbers of Biafran refugees which would require help. She suggested the need for some of the Nigeria-Biafran funds to be set aside for welfare cases in the United Kingdom arising out of the civil war as had been done in other emergency situations.⁷⁵² The British women were major component of the British society that reacted to the Nigerian Civil war. They saw the war as a challenge not only to womanhood but to all the women around the world. In the wake of reactions to the war dominated by men the British women distinguished themselves and became part of the formidable force that brought the issue of the war nearer not only to the British populace but to the global community.

4.5 British Churches

The major Churches that reacted to the Nigerian Civil War in Britain were the Church of England, Roman Catholic Church in Britain, Protestants and Orthodox Churches. The reactions of the British Churches falls within the purview of the following factors; holding

⁷⁵¹ David Tattersall. Biafra Captive Sally is Home. Daily Mirror. 18 June 1969.

⁷⁵² British Red Cross Museum and Archives, Box 1/24, Memorandum on Funds for Nigeria/Biafra from Muriel Monkhouse to Foreign Office, August, 1969.

meetings with the British government officials, issuing *communiqué*, petitions and memorandums. Some of them were also involved in humanitarian activities. They equally participated in series of protest conducted by pro-Biafra groups in England. On 18th August, 1967 the Church of England issued a statement about the British arms supplies to the Nigeria government. This was done on behalf of the Conference of British Missionary Societies, Church Missionary Society, Church of Scotland, Foreign Mission Committee, and the Methodist Society. They expressed deep concern over the war particularly the civilian casualties and recognised that the Federal government was the only legal government in Nigeria, but were aware that Biafra, which was in a state of disagreement with the Federal government, contained more than 7,000,000 people, and consequently, the proportions of the dispute, surpassed the limits of local pacification by the Federal government. They warned that military confrontation of such a widespread character could lead to an embittered war of sporadic nature. This could be extended to a very long duration, with permanent results of estrangement and bitterness between the regions. They therefore, urged the British government not to permit arms to be sent to the Federal government. As sending arms could not only prolong the fighting but increase the bitterness being felt in Biafra. They believed that, the paucity of arms on both sides was a vital factor which might shorten the period of negotiations and a solution to the problem.⁷⁵³

The Anglican Church headquartered in England and established in both the Western and Eastern region of Nigeria, as well as in some parts of Northern Nigeria, was hesitant to commit herself to either side of the conflict. But later began to find ways of engaging towards resolving the war and also participate in humanitarian activities. For example, on 27th February, 1968 Reverend Patterson, Anglican Archbishop of West Africa visited the British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomson. The Minister informed the Archbishop that, the British government regarded the war in Nigeria as a tragedy. There was, for instance, the question of arms supply, which the Archbishop of Canterbury raised in the House of Lords. Archbishop Patterson said that, he was present when the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered his speech in the House. The Minister also said that, the Archbishop of Canterbury's proposal for a cessation of British arms supplies was more attractive on the surface, than when deeply examined. He warned that, if they took the Archbishop's advice, their influence in Lagos would be destroyed. He told Reverend Patterson that, the British government was not hostile to the Biafrans. But, Archbishop Patterson said that the Biafrans were extremely sensitive. They were also hurt, because, no one in authority in London had

⁷⁵³Kirk Greene, A.H.M. 1971, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria, Volume II*, p.152.

ever prepared to visit them. The Archbishop asked whether some contact would not be possible on unofficial basis. The Minister of State consented to the idea. He said that, he was anxious to remove the impression that, Britain was anti-Igbo just because they supported Nigerian unity. On the contrary, they believed that, the Igbos was entitled to the guarantee of safety and security. Archbishop Patterson equally noted that, the British government ought not to be deterred too much from exercising leadership role in what was after all, British sphere of influence.⁷⁵⁴

Similarly, on 11th March, 1968 the British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office received a delegation from the British Council of Churches at the Commonwealth Office. The British government was represented at the meeting by the Minister of State, A.D. Brightly and J.N. Allan while the British Council of Churches were represented by K. Johnstone, Reverend P. Oestreicher, Reverend A. Booth, S.D. Bailey, Reverend H.E. Morton, and Reverend A. F. Griffiths. The Minister appreciated the letter he received from the British Council of Churches concerning the war in Nigeria.⁷⁵⁵ On 12th March, 1968 Bishop Moynagh, the Irish Roman Catholic Bishop of Calabar and Reverend Father O'Sullivan held a meeting with the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomson and D.C. Tebbit of Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Bishop said that, he was in London to see Cardinal Heenan and the Archbishop of Canterbury, against the possibility of making a strong appeal to both sides of the war through the World Council of Churches. More interestingly, the Minister of State asked the Bishop about the level of morale in Biafra. The Bishop replied that, morale was high among the people as at the time he left Biafra. There was wholesale slaughter of the Biafrans whenever the federal troops enter the area. Roman Catholic missions in Calabar were searched five or six times a day by federal soldiers, looking for the Igbos. It was the Ibibios who led the Federal soldiers in search for the Igbos. They even threw their dead bodies into the Cross River after killing them. The Minister of State said that, he was shocked to hear about these deliberate killings of the Igbos. In explaining the British policy to the Bishop, the Minister of State said that, they have tried their utmost best to prevent the war from breaking out in the first place and had at every stage done their best to promote understanding and negotiation. The British government was not in the least anti-Igbo. They wanted to see peace talks and had strongly supported Arnold Smith's peace efforts both in London and Lagos. He thought that the Biafrans might have

⁷⁵⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/212, Record of Conversation between the Minister of State and the Reverend Cecil J. Patterson, Archbishop of West Africa, 27th February, 1968.

⁷⁵⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/212, Record of Meeting between the British Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs and British Council of Churches, 11th March, 1968.

succeeded in getting negotiations going about two months in 1968 if they were more moderate in their conditions at that stage.⁷⁵⁶

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches met in Geneva in February 1968 and passed a resolution about the Nigerian Civil War. The Committee declared, "We will seek opportunities for Christian fellowship with our friends, by sending fraternal visitors to the Christian communities on both sides of the war whenever possible".⁷⁵⁷ In fulfilment of this pledge, the three member Churches of the World Council of Churches in Britain closely associated with the Churches in Nigeria, sent delegations to the Federal and the Biafran sides of the war for a week visit. Their visit was aimed at expressing the deep sense of Christian fellowship with their Christian brethren in Nigeria and to encourage the spirit of reconciliation among Nigerians. The delegation to the federal controlled territory consisted of Bishop Kenneth Sansbury, General Secretary of the British Council of Churches, who represented the Church of England, the Very Reverend Archibald Watt, Ex-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and Reverend Maldwyn Edwards, past President of the Methodist Conference of Great Britain. This delegation arrived in Lagos early, on Tuesday morning, 5th March, 1968. After visiting Ibadan they returned to England on 11th March, 1968. The delegation to Biafra consisted of the Reverend Leonard Wilson; Bishop of Birmingham; representing the Church of England, Reverend James Douglas; the Convener of the Overseas Council of the Church of Scotland, and Reverend Hugh E. Thomas, Area Secretary for West Africa of the Methodist Missionary Society. This delegation arrived in Republic of Biafra on 6th March, 1968 and left for England on 11th March, 1968.⁷⁵⁸

The two delegations met in London to compare notes at the British Council of Churches meeting held on Wednesday, 20th March, 1968. They afterwards, discussed their findings with a group representing the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, the three Churches concerned and particularly their missionary departments, and the Roman Catholic Church. They believed that, there was sufficient area of negotiation to make feasible a meeting of the two parties in the war, to work out a new formula of association. They would encourage all efforts on the part of the outside authorities to bring them to the conference table. They believe it was important to help break down the sense of isolation felt by the people of Biafra and would urge fuller press, radio and T.V coverage on both sides of the

⁷⁵⁶ TNA, FCO, 212, Record of Conversation between the Minister of State and Bishop Moynagh, 12th March, 1968.

⁷⁵⁷ *World Council of Churches, Press Release on the Nigerian Crisis, 20th March, 1968.*

⁷⁵⁸ *World Council of Churches, Press Release on the Nigerian Crisis, 20th March, 1968*

war. They urged for strong and generous support of the work of the International Committee of Red Cross and allied agencies, especially Christian Aid in providing relief, medical supplies and manpower for both sides of the conflict. They also commended the attention and prayers for their fellow Christians in Nigeria and Britain, the joint appeal issued by His Holiness and the officers of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.⁷⁵⁹

On 28th March, 1968 the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office held a meeting with the representatives of the Church delegations that visited Lagos and Biafra. Commenting on the public statement made by the two delegations during their visit the Minister said that, the party which visited Biafra appeared to have espoused the Biafran cause almost unreservedly, whereas the delegation which visited Lagos had been more restrained. He went on to express his shock that the Bishop of Birmingham had made statements concerning Biafra which according to reports, were openly critical of the British government policy. And that, he did not deem it fit to visit the Ministers before the visit so as to learn at firsthand what that policy was. The Bishop of Birmingham had gained the impression that the Commonwealth Office had no wish to see the Churchmen before their visit to Biafra and Lagos. But, he had followed the debate in the House of Lords and had heartily disagreed with the British government's policy in the war. He considered that, the Biafrans had the right to fight against the Federal government of Nigeria particularly after the murder of Igbos in Northern Nigeria. The Bishop saw no possibility of the reintegration of Republic of Biafra into Nigeria by force of arms, that, Biafra had a right to her independence. He had denied reports in Biafra of the British bombers being used but he had been shown British bombs though he appreciated the fact, that, these might have come from sources other than Britain.⁷⁶⁰

It would be recalled that, in one of the 1968 debates in the British House of Lords, the Archbishop of Canterbury had said that, "a third condition for a peaceful settlement and I agree with the Noble Lord, Lord Brockway is the cessation of the supply of arms to either side..."⁷⁶¹ Soon after the debate, the Church of England dispatched their envoys namely Bishop Leonard Wilson, Molvir Edward, Achibald Watts and Kenneth Sensbely on a good will mission to Republic of Biafra.⁷⁶² The leader of the delegation, Bishop Leonard Wilson, spoke in support of the Biafran independence. On 7th March, 1969 he told a welcoming crowd in Aba, that, "I think it will be absolute stupidity to wish you anything but

⁷⁵⁹ *World Council of Churches, Press Release on the Nigerian Crisis, 20th March, 1968.*

⁷⁶⁰ TNA, FCO, 212, Note of Meeting between Minister of State and Churchmen Delegations, 28th March, 1968.

⁷⁶¹ *Biafra Newsletter, 7th May, 1968.*

⁷⁶² *Biafra Newsletter, 7th May, 1968.*

independence". He explained that, the purpose of his delegation was to ensure that Biafrans had their independence in peace. He said that his delegation had already seen evidence of the people's love for freedom and courage. The Church of England would do its best to help bring peace. The Bishop said that even though he was not a politician, he could say that if Biafrans were allowed to enjoy their independence they will then be free to enter into some form of common market arrangement or economic association with Nigeria and other West African countries. He explained that, the church in Britain was not the government. But, Church leaders in Britain had, in all their speeches condemned the British government's policy of arms supply to Nigeria. Earlier, the delegation read a message from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsay. The Archbishop said that, Biafrans must be guaranteed happiness and protection from violence.⁷⁶³

On 23rd May, 1968 the British government was criticised by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh for continuous licensing and export of arms to the Federal government. "Blood soaked in Biafra", the Reverend A.C. Russell, Convener of the Africa Area Committee of the Overseas Council had lamented. Other speakers emphasised that, Biafrans were being massacred and hunted with the aid of the British arms by Muslim dominated federal army over which the Federal government had lost its control. In an emotional debate staged on the day Nigerian peace conference began at Kampala, Uganda, the church made its attitude clear and voted unanimously for a declaration of its profound regrets over Britain's arms being sent directly to the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary. A former moderator of the Assembly A.C. Craig declared that, "it is the sense of shame that, in a conflict in which our nation should remain neutral, the policy of our government had not been truly neutral".⁷⁶⁴ On 30th August, 1968 churches from different denominations in Britain endorsed a letter that the Committee for Peace in Nigeria sent to Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister. Among those that signed the letter were the Archbishops of Canterbury; York; Blackburn; Bristol; Chester; Uthchester; Durham; Leeds; Lincoln; London; Newcastle; Norwich; Oxford; Portsmouth; Ripon; Bishops of St. Alban; Winchester; Worcester; Woolwich and others.⁷⁶⁵

Another aspect of church role in the war was the intervention of the Roman Catholic Church. The most important of which was the diplomatic contacts between the Vatican and the British government concerning the war. As early as 10th October, 1967 the Deputy

⁷⁶³ *Biafra Newsletter*, 15th March, 1968.

⁷⁶⁴ *Guardian*, 24th May, 1968.

⁷⁶⁵ Text of A Letter sent to the British Prime Minister by Committee of Peace in Nigeria, 30th August, 1968.

Secretary of State at the Secretariat of State, in Rome, Monsignor Casaroli, informed the British officialdom about the Pope's great anxiety concerning the situation in Biafra where there was a large number of Christians, principally the Roman Catholic community. The report gathered from the reliable sources suggested that thousands of Igbos had been massacred in the civil war; that there was the danger of even greater massacre, as the war drew to an end, though, not necessarily with the approval or knowledge of the Federal government. Meanwhile, it was gathered that the Pope had already made an appeal for mercy through the Apostolic Delegate in Lagos and the religious authorities. But he wondered whether there was anything which Her Majesty's Government could do as a fellow member of the Commonwealth to resolve the issue of the war. In response to the Vatican's claim, a British official, Williams told Monsignor Casaroli that, he could not confirm reports of massacres in the war, but, the British Ministers had publicly expressed the need for the restoration of peace and the spirit of reconciliation between the two parties of the conflict. He had no doubt that, the British High Commissioner to Nigeria; Sir David Hunt had done everything in his power to facilitate a just settlement of the crisis. Monsignor Casaroli noted that, the Pope was sure that, Her Majesty's Government was alive to the dangers of the war. But he nevertheless, wished his anxieties to be brought to their attention, in case there was anything, further that might be done.⁷⁶⁶

Reacting to Monsignor Casaroli's message to the British government regarding the war situation, the British High Commission in Nigeria informed the Foreign Office that, the major objective of the Federal government was to clear and hold the non-Igbos areas in Eastern Nigeria, which virtually surrounded the main Igbo heartland. But, in a bid to achieve this objective, there might be an outbreak of a Biafran guerrilla campaign, thereby tempting the federal forces to occupy the thickly populated Igbo areas, village by village. The dangers of provocation and civilian bloodshed in such a situation were too clear, which would not only increase the difficulties of obtaining peaceful settlement, but would make the Igbos not to cooperate. The British government shared the Vatican's concern over the Igbo civilian casualties in the war. They were convinced that, early negotiation before the federal troops resort to a military occupation was the best way to facilitate a satisfactory outcome.⁷⁶⁷

Furthermore, on 15th December, 1967 the Secretariat of State in Rome Monsignor Dominic Conway, Rector of the Irish College in Rome and Monsignor Georges Rocheau,

⁷⁶⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/262, File. No, 3/51/6C/1066, Nigeria: Political Affairs, External, Bilateral Relations, Holy See Interest in the Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1968. Holy See to Foreign Office, 10th October, 1968.

⁷⁶⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Lagos to Foreign Office, 20th October, 1967.

Director of International Affairs of the French Secours *Catholique* were appointed as representatives of Caritas *Internationalie* to deliver a message from the Holy Father to the war victims.⁷⁶⁸ On arrival at the Lagos Airport the two envoys released the following statement:

We have come as ambassadors of the love of the Holy Father. His esteem and affection for the whole of Africa were recently expressed in his "Message to Africa". This esteem and affection was shown in a particular way to the population which he, as Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, had occasion to get to know personally during his unforgettable visit in 1962. The Pope's mission was to reach peace and to promote all works of charity. The Holy Father has invited us as representative of Caritas *Internationalie* to bear witness of his anxiety for all those, of whatever religion or region, who have suffered or continue to suffer because of the violence and massacres which afflict this beloved part of Africa so tragically. We shall be happy to be able to alleviate any distress, and to be able to contribute to the avoidance of further grief and destruction...⁷⁶⁹

On 22nd December, 1967 the Pope delivered a Christmas Allocution to the College of Cardinals and the Roman Curia. The Allocution was a review of developments within the Church in six months of the year, which also concerned itself with international affairs. In delivering his speech, the Pope talked at a great length about world peace. He was really comforted by the support of the Synod of Bishops for his initiative for peace; and he trusted that the institution of a World Peace Day on 1st January, 1968 would turn the thoughts of all in the direction of peace. Concerning the war the Holy See had followed very attentively the development of the conflict and had done what it could to bring about true reconciliation between the two sides.⁷⁷⁰

On 23rd December, 1967 Monsignor Conway and Monsignor Rocheau, accompanied by the Apostolic Delegate, His Excellency Monsignor Bellotti was received by General Yakubu Gowon in Lagos. During their conversation, Gowon expressed his pleasure over the interest shown by the Holy Father in Nigeria and its people. He promised the two delegates he would facilitate, in every way, their free movement in the territories controlled by the federal troops. He also declared himself in favour of a visit by the two delegates to Republic of Biafra, provided that their security was guaranteed, which however, he himself was not in a position to do. At the end of the conversation, and at the request of General Gowon, the

⁷⁶⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Holy See to Foreign Office, 15th December, 1967.

⁷⁶⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Communiqué of Caritas Internationalie Vatican Mission to Nigeria, 19th January, 1968.

⁷⁷⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Chancery of British Legation to the Holy See, Rome to Western Department of Foreign Office, 11th January, 1968

Apostolic Delegate and all those present together recited the “Our Lord’s Prayer” for the smooth return of peace to Nigeria. During their stay the delegates had on several occasions, visited certain number of Protestant and Moslem religious authorities. They expressed the hope that, peace would return to Nigeria. The delegates also held discussions with the representatives of the International Committee of Red Cross, the League of the Red Cross Societies and the Nigerian Red Cross. To coordinate relief, a Committee was set up under the Chairman of Ndongak, Secretary-General of the Nigerian Red Cross, uniting many private organisations and particularly the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria and the Catholic Relief Service. The delegates gave the Red Cross, in the Holy Father’s name, a considered sum of money for the population of Calabar and also a five ton of Lorry to transport relief supplies. During their visits, the delegates visited the Archbishops of Lagos and Kaduna, the Bishops of Benin, Lokoja, Ibadan and Ogoja, the Apostolic Prefect of Minna and the Vicar- Capitulat of Makurdi.⁷⁷¹ The delegate later issued a *communiqué* through the press service of the Roman Catholic Secretariat Lagos:

The humanitarian mission sent by the Holy Father to the metropolitan zones of Lagos, Kaduna and Onitsha has completed its visit to the metropolitan zones of Lagos and Kaduna and awaits the possibility entering the region of Onitsha. General Gowon has assured the mission that it would be granted the necessary facilities, provided it received reliable guarantees from the East. Meanwhile, such guarantees have been given by Colonel Ojukwu, and a private aircraft at Lagos is ready to take the mission to the Eastern Region, provided General Gowon gives the necessary authorisation...⁷⁷²

On 31st December, 1967 the British Foreign Secretary, George Brown and the Vatican Foreign Minister, Monsignor Agostino Casaroli held a conversation on a wide range of issues, including the Nigerian Civil War. Brown said that, the Federal government was capable of establishing their authority over the whole country, whether the Vatican likes it or not. There were many who sympathised with Biafra; he stated the need to recognise the facts on ground. Both men agreed that there was a real risk of revenge and reprisals by the federal troops with danger to foreign missionaries and to Christians in Biafra. The British Foreign Secretary suggested that, the Holy See and Her Majesty’s Government should concentrate on influencing the Federal government to prevent reprisals attacks. This could be done by

⁷⁷¹ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Communiqué of Caritas Internationalie Vatican Mission to Nigeria, 19th January, 1968.

⁷⁷² TNA, FCO, 38/262, Communiqué of Caritas Internationalie Vatican Mission to Nigeria, 19th January, 1968.

recognising that the federal authorities were certainly the one to win the war.⁷⁷³ After the official visit of the Papal delegates to Lagos and other places under the federal control, they wrote an official letter to Gowon thanking him for receiving them despite his busy schedule, and commended him in facilitating the accomplishment of their mission to Nigeria. They opined that, their mission was born primarily out of the Holy Father's anxiety and concern for all suffering people, irrespective of religion, in the three ecclesiastical metropolitan zones of Lagos, Kaduna and Onitsha.⁷⁷⁴ Reacting to the Vatican Mission to Nigeria, L. Monson reminded the British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office that, the Roman Catholics was more strongly entrenched in Eastern Nigeria than in other Regions of Nigeria. Certainly, Christian missions were excluded from the Muslim areas of Northern Nigeria by the Colonial Administration. Historically the Methodists and the Anglicans got a head start in missionary activity in Western Nigeria. Thus, it might be that the Holy See has the capacity to influence the opinion of Biafrans against an excessive intransigence towards peace settlement of the conflict.⁷⁷⁵ On 11th January, 1968 the Catholic Secretariat in Nigeria told the press that both Biafran and Nigerian governments had agreed to facilitate mission to the Republic of Biafra. The British High Commissioner, Sir David Hunt, confirmed that the Biafrans indicated their willingness to receive the Papal Mission and that the Federal government equally announced that they would not object if the mission wanted to visit the Republic of Biafra.⁷⁷⁶

Following the controversies that trailed the Vatican Mission to Biafra, the British High Commission in Nigeria had stated that a number of sources informed them that, the Roman Catholic leaders in Lagos had suspected the Commission of being anti-Vatican Mission. Even to some extent, were responsible for the Mission's failure to visit Biafra. But, the allegation was denied by the officials of the Commission. As a result, on 17th January, 1968 M. J. Newington visited Reverend Father Byrne of the Catholic Secretariat, in Lagos whom he confined the allegation. Father Byrne said that, it was true, there was some suspicion about the attitude of the Commission towards the Vatican Mission, and strangely, the United States Embassy was eager to see the Mission disappear. Father Byrne said that, they received report to the effect that the British Foreign Secretary during his visit to Rome, had told the Vatican to stay clear from Nigeria. Meanwhile, M. J. Newington assured Father Byrne that the Commission wished the Vatican Mission well in their journey to Republic of

⁷⁷³ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Record of Conversation Between the British Foreign Secretary and the Vatican Foreign Minister, 31st December, 1967.

⁷⁷⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Text of Letter to Yakubu Gowon by Monsignor Conway, 23rd December, 1967.

⁷⁷⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/262, L. Monson to Minister of State, 3rd January, 1968.

⁷⁷⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 12th January, 1968.

Biafra, and wished to have a private conversation with them. The Federal government seemed to have some suspicion of the Vatican Mission, perhaps because of a general feeling that the Church was pro-Biafran and because the Vatican seemed to be trying to bring about an unconditional ceasefire which would be in the Biafran interest. Father Byrne said that since the Catholic Church was the strongest Christian community in Eastern Nigeria it was natural that Catholic missionaries tended to be pro-Biafran. But, the Vatican had been very careful not to get involved in the conflict, and the Mission was emphatically not in Nigeria to mediate. Their purpose was to bring material and spiritual help to the people, and to demonstrate the Pope's concern over the war. The Mission wanted to go to Biafra, but not to sneak in through the back door. He added that, if Vatican had wanted to engage in diplomacy they would have sent a very different kind of Mission; in that Monsignor Conway and Rocheau had no experience which would qualify them for such role.⁷⁷⁷

On 7th -22nd February, 1968 the Vatican Mission visited the Ecclesiastical Province of Onitsha in Biafra. The Mission was received by Colonel Ojukwu. In his opening remarks, Monsignor Conway emphasised that, the Vatican Mission had no political or diplomatic character. They favoured neither side in the conflict, nor had they come to express any judgment, to act as mediators or arbitrators of the terms of peace. The Papal Mission was solely interested in exhorting both parties in the conflict to cease hostilities and to restore peace by means of honourable negotiations. Colonel Ojukwu told the Mission to inform the Holy Father that Biafra, without further consultations or discussions, was ready at any moment to accept a ceasefire and to enter into negotiations for honourable peace to be achieved. Biafrans had always maintained that, the conflict could only be resolved by means of just and honourable negotiation. The Mission visited all the eight dioceses of the Archbishop of Onitsha. Everywhere in Biafra, the two envoys were received exceptionally warmly. The two envoys had taken personal note of the grave problems posed by the refugees in Onitsha territory. In 1966 two million Igbos fled from the Northern Nigeria where 30,000 people were killed after the *coup d'état*. It was calculated that in the course of the war another million Igbos had taken refuge in the same registered territory. Some were with their families and hundreds of others were scattered in various refugees' camps. Everywhere in Biafra, missionaries and religious authorities of all denominations cooperated to help those in needs. Also in Biafra, the voice of the non-Roman Catholic Churches had united with the Roman

⁷⁷⁷ TNA, FCO, 28/262, M.J. Newington to P.D. McEntee, 20th January, 1967.

Catholic Church to support the appeal of the Holy Father for an immediate and lasting peaceful negotiation.⁷⁷⁸

On 16th February, 1968 and in the course of conversation with a British official in Rome, the Vatican Under-Secretary for Public Affairs, Monsignor Gaspari, said that, it seemed to him a tremendous pity that, Nigeria should become fragmented; in Africa, just as in Latin America, after those countries had obtained their independence from Spain. He emphasised that, this was his personal view, but Vatican officials were not usually prone to express genuinely personal views on such matters and it was in line with those of the Pope, who probably briefed the Vatican Mission to Nigeria. If an opportunity arose to influence the Biafrans towards a peaceful settlement which would result in a return to federal unity, the Vatican would probably take it⁷⁷⁹. On 18th March, 1968 Monsignor Gaspari handed an *aide memoire* to the British officials in Rome. The memoire reiterated the Vatican's concern about the civil war in Nigeria. According to the *memorie*, the Holy See had done all in its limited power to help the victims of the civil war, both by sending a special mission of *Caritas Internationalie*, first to the areas under federal control and then to Biafra; and also appealed to the governments of countries around the world and competent organisations to contribute to the cessation of the conflict and the resumption of negotiations. The *aid memoire* stated that the Holy See had always found Her Majesty's Government's sensitivity to its concern for the preservation of Nigeria unity. Accordingly, the Holy See requested and called on the British government to renew and intensify their efforts for peace in Nigeria.⁷⁸⁰ In what appear to be the height of the Church's reactions to the Nigerian Civil War, on 20th March, 1968 the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches united in one voice and issued a joint statement simultaneously in Rome and Geneva. They launched an urgent appeal to both contesting parties of the war for an immediate cessation of arms hostilities and for the immediate establishment of a lasting peace by honourable negotiations in highest African tradition. Indeed, this was the first time the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, had appealed together to all men of goodwill around the world to unite their voices in prayer to God for the attainment of peace in Nigeria.⁷⁸¹ According to the statement:

Anguished at the appalling loss of life caused by the war,
we most solemnly recall to both parties, and to the world in

⁷⁷⁸ TNA, FC, 38/262, Minute on Vatican Mission to Nigeria by Chancery to West and Central African Department Foreign Office, 26th March, 1968.

⁷⁷⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/262, J.A. Snellgrove to P. D. McEntee, 16th February, 1968.

⁷⁸⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Holy See to Foreign Office, 18th March, 1968.

⁷⁸¹ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Common Statement of Appeal by the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches for the Establishment of Peace in the Nigerian Civil War, 20th March, 1968.

general, the sacredness of human life, of which God is the sole Arbiter of its earthly duration, and in his name appeal for the respecting of his rights especially in the avoidance of all atrocities, general massacres, mass hatred and vindictiveness. We further point out that war is an inhuman and futile attempt to settle disputes. In this sad conflict, especially arm hostilities cannot achieve a settlement of the differences; on the contrary they are liable to bring on a scale that is frightening to contemplate, only further loss of life, starvation, suffering and devastation...⁷⁸²

For the Roman Catholic Church, the statement was issued under the authority of His Holiness Pope Paul VI. While, the World Council of Churches, it was authorised by the Officers of the Central Committee; Franklin Clark Fry, Eugene C. Elaka, Ernest A Payne and Principal Russell Chandra. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, a fellowship of more than two hundred and thirty Protestant and Orthodox Churches, had previously pleaded for peace in Nigeria in separate statements.⁷⁸³ When the British Ambassador to Germany paid a farewell visit to the Apostolic Nuncio, on 1st April, 1968 the later urged the need to bring the British influence to bear in stopping the war in Nigeria. He said that, the war had already caused so much trouble, distress and danger to Nigeria and more specifically to those in Biafra. The Nuncio spoke with some feelings, clearly on the basis of reports of the Catholic Missions in Nigeria. No doubt, the British officials in Germany had received huge number of letters from the German public on this subject, mainly adding to the requests for the British intervention to stop the war. They also reproached the British supplying arms to the Federal government. Among the substance of these letters was one from the Association of Catholic Men in Germany of the Diocese of Speyer. There were also a number of Parliamentary questions addressed on 29th March, 1968 to the federal government of Nigeria on the subject of the civil war in Nigeria. The Parliamentary States Secretary in the Foreign Office gave an account of the position of the British government towards the civil war. It was revealed that, Sir Francis Ibiam, who was a prominent member of the World Council of Churches, had earlier visited Germany and promoted publicity for the Biafra cause. The Parliamentary Secretary of State was asked about arms supplies to the FMG in the German House of Parliament. Some Western and Eastern European countries, including the Russia, had supplied weapons and explicitly Germany had none. He was asked whether there was the possibility that Western European countries, above all those supplying arms to Nigerian would support the call for peace of the

⁷⁸² TNA, FCO, 38/262, Common Statement of Appeal by the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches for the Establishment of Peace in the Nigerian Civil War, 20th March, 1968.

⁷⁸³ TNA, FCO, 38/262, Common Statement of Appeal by the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches for the Establishment of Peace in the Nigerian Civil War, 20th March, 1968.

Vatican and the World Council of Churches. He noted that, Germany would welcome such a good step.⁷⁸⁴

When a British official, M. S. Williams from the British Legation to the Holy See in Rome, accompanied the Minister of Public Building and Works to a Papal Audience on 8th July, 1968, he was informed about the efforts being made by the Roman Catholic community in Britain to collect funds for relief work in Nigeria. The Pope expressed his appreciations for the efforts being made by the British Roman Catholic community and went on to state, how personally concerned he was about the civil war in Nigeria. He had personal interests in the matter because; he had once visited the area during an African tour some years ago, while he was the Archbishop of Milan. He had seen during that visit, that Roman Catholicism was more predominant in Eastern Nigeria and that he was saddened by the destruction which had been wrought, including the cathedral of Onitsha. His own policy in the area was to bring about peace and the relief of suffering of the people. The Pope hoped that, nothing he did would be unacceptable to the British government, since his sole objectives was peace, for which he had worked in the past and would continue to work in the future. The British government had done well to secure the agreement of the two sides of the conflict to re-open discussions in London, and that, he welcomed Lord Shepherd's visit to Lagos.⁷⁸⁵ On 29th July, 1968 the Apostolic Delegate in Lagos, Archbishop H.E. Cardinale was instructed by the Secretariat of State of His Holiness to submit a memorandum to the British Prime Minister. The memorandum urged the Prime Minister to use his good office to allow the Catholic Relief Association, *Caritas Internationalis* and the World Council of Churches, to use their DC/7 planes to fly food and medical supplies from the Island of Fernando Po to Biafra.⁷⁸⁶

On 4th December, 1968 the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Church leaders in Britain presented a motion concerning the Nigerian Civil War in the British House of Parliament. This motion was signed by over 130 MPs irrespective of political parties they belong. This particular motion raised an issue of greatest moral importance about the conflict. According to the motion, informed observers seemed to agreed that the figures for death and destruction in Biafran territory might hitherto been exaggerated. Yet it was equally agreed that unless something happen to break the deadlock to and bring about a ceasefire between Christmas and New Year of 1968 a catastrophic was bound to occur which could not be exaggerated and vast numbers in more than one territory would die of starvation in January

⁷⁸⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/262, A.C. Goodison to J.A. Snellgrove, Holy See, 16th April, 1968

⁷⁸⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/262, M.S. Williams to C.M. Le Quesne, 9th July, 1968.

⁷⁸⁶ *The Daily Mail*, 12th September, 1968.

and February. This ghastly possibility seemed to create a new situation for national decisions.⁷⁸⁷

On 11th December, 1968 the British Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Paul Gore-Booth and John Wilson held a meeting with Bishop B.C. Butler, President, Social Morality Council and Assistant to Cardinal Heenan, Professor A.J. Ayer, President, British Humanist Association and Edward Oliver. Bishop Butler opened the conversation by inquiring from the Permanent Under-Secretary whether he had seen the letter published in *The Times* signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Heenan, the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, Professor Ayer and himself. To them, the civil war in Nigeria was a moral problem. There seemed to be the possibility of a major disaster in Nigeria. This seemed to them a moment when they ought to put forward their views as men representing a wide range of opinion. The crucial point seemed to them to get Biafra moving and to move Colonel Ojukwu from his hitherto rigid position. Sir Paul Gore-Booth said that, it was a pity that the Bishop and his colleagues did not consult with them before they wrote their letter. He noted that, the main problem was how to get Colonel Ojukwu and his regime to change their minds. The British government shared the anxiety the signatories of the letter had expressed about the civil war in Nigeria. The problem was not whether they could do anything to bring the war to an end, but how.⁷⁸⁸

Meanwhile, the Permanent Under-Secretary on 12th December, 1968 received Bishop B.C. Butler, Head of Saint Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, Ware Hearts England, also Assistant to Cardinal Heenan, for a discussion on the Nigerian Civil War. It would appear that the meeting was held against the backdrop of Bishop Butler's intention to send a message to Cardinal Konig, Archbishop of Vienna, through the Foreign Office. Nevertheless, in his message to the Cardinal, Bishop Butler said that, as the President of the Social Morality Council, he had taken an initiative to help break the dead-lock and achieve peace. This was against the fact that, all observers seemed to have agreed that vast numbers of Biafrans were certain to die from starvation in January and February following a cease-fire before the New Year. The initiative resulted from among other things, a Joint Letter to *The Times*, published on 11th December, 1968 and signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Heenan, the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, Professor A.J. Ayer; President of the British Humanist Association and himself as the President of SMC. The letter, which *The Times*

⁷⁸⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/2262, United Action Needed in Nigeria, A Motion Submitted to the House of Parliament by Archbishop of Canterbury and Others, 4th December, 1968.

⁷⁸⁸ TNA, PREM, 13/2262, Record of Meeting between British Permanent Under-Secretary and Bishop Butler, 11th December, 1968.

supported in its leading article, pressed for the developed countries most closely concerned to act jointly to end the civil war at the 11th hour. It was believed that only the pressure of world opinion would bring Nigeria and Biafra together and agree to a cease-fire. But, this opinion must be expressed, in a practical way, such as total suspension of arms supplies to both sides. Other Christians and Humanist moves to give a moral lead to the war were hugely progressive and public opinion in Britain was increasingly concerned. In particular, the Apostolic Delegate recommended to the Vatican to intervene in promoting joint action by Britain and France as the principal supporters of the either side. It was felt that, the French might use their influence to stop arms supplies to Biafra in return for an equivalent suspension of arms supplies by Britain to the federal government of Nigeria. Bishop Butler therefore suggested that the Archbishop of Vienna should contact the Vatican and if possible, His Holiness personally in support of this move, which was incidentally the first major fruit of co-operation between believers and non-believers.⁷⁸⁹ On 12th December, 1968 the Vatican Under-Secretary told the British Head of Chancery in Rome, that, he did not see how the Pope could avoid including a peace appeal for Nigeria in his 1968 Christmas Allocutions. But, his Holiness was most anxious not to say or do anything which might prejudice the efforts made by Her Majesty's Government and others governments towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict.⁷⁹⁰ On the whole, the effects of Biafran propaganda in Britain forced the British government to figure out wide range of strategies and the best means of reacting to the propaganda.

4.6 British Government Reaction

The reaction of the British government to the Biafra's propaganda was based on cautious toleration and justification of its involvement in the civil war exemplified by the series of actions undertaken in the war. These actions had political, diplomatic and humanitarian impact on the war. Moreover, in taking these actions, the British officialdom took cognisance of the public opinion in Britain already influenced by Biafra's propaganda.

The adoption of propaganda line of argument concerning the war was one fundamental step taken by the British officialdom in reacting to Biafra's propaganda. The wide coverage of the Biafra's case by the pro-Biafran groups and lobbyists in Britain created the need for the British government to produce a more robust argument about the war. For instance, on 21st October, 1968 the Head of West African Department at the Foreign and

⁷⁸⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/2262, Text of A Letter from Bishop Butler to Cardinal Konig, Archbishop of Vienna, by Foreign Office to Vienna, 12th December, 1968.

⁷⁹⁰ TNA, PREM, 13/2262, Conversation between Vatican Under-Secretary and British Head of Chancery on the Nigerian Civil War, by Holy See to Foreign Office, 12th December, 1968.

Commonwealth Office, John Wilson was deeply worried about the continuous criticisms of the British involvement in the Nigerian Civil War. He declared that, perhaps Britain had a good case to present to the world and ought to put it even more vigorously. He queried the reasons the British government was not successful in projecting their image to the outside world.⁷⁹¹ John Wilson suggested that, Britain needed to take a rather tactical line of stories and embark on the offensive. He described the British propaganda exercise in Nigeria as unduly defensive and apologetic. He emphasised the need for the British government to make their points forcefully and continuously by employing such point like the Igbos brought much of their predicaments in the civil war on themselves. Although, he made reference to the fact that there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the civilian regime of 1966, the coldblooded murder of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and S.A. Akintola, the Premiere of Western Nigeria, by the Igbo army officers did not solve the crisis in Nigeria and was in fact, the root cause of the civil war. The wave of popular support throughout Nigeria for the new regime was quickly turned into suspicion and hostility in the North. Igbo's arrogance and General Aguiyi Ironsi's unification decree convinced the Northerners that the first *coup d'état* was Igbo organised and that the Igbos were determined to take over the government of Nigeria such behaviour did not justify the inexhaustible massacre of Igbo civilians which followed but it certainly caused it.⁷⁹² John Wilson's observations and recommendations about the British war propaganda in the Nigerian Civil War came on the hills of pro-Biafran sympathies that were sweeping across Britain.⁷⁹³

The backing of British possible initiative towards the promotion of peaceful negotiations in the Nigerian Civil War was another aspect of British government's reaction to Biafra's propaganda. For instance, when Lord Shepherd met Anthony Enahoro on 13th November, 1968 he warned him on that occasion that, in the light of the political pressures and effects of Biafran propaganda in Britain which the British government was the main target, they needed to undertake some steps in the field of peace-making in order to safeguard their policy of support for the Nigerian government. In particular, they needed to be seen as being more active in encouraging the two sides of the conflict to resume peaceful negotiations. One possibility that was suggested was to send a message to Ojukwu either through the Biafran Unofficial Representative in London, or through some other diplomatic channels, such as sending a message from a Foreign Office Minister on the line of British

⁷⁹¹ TNA, FCO, 65/441, J. Wilson to W.R. Haydon, 21st October, 1968.

⁷⁹² TNA, FCO, 65/441, J. Wilson to W.R. Haydon, 21st October, 1968.

⁷⁹³ TNA, FCO, 65/441/File. No JWN 13/2/Part A, Minutes on UK Propaganda on Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969.

readiness to help bring the war to an end. The prime reason for this attempted diplomatic move was the sudden public realisation of Biafrans' capability to continue fighting the war up to the New Year of 1969. A situation when occurred would lead to a severe shortage of bulk of food in Biafra in addition to the existing lack of protein. The indication of this public concern were the *Times* editorial of 29th November, 1967; Colin Legum's front page article in the *Observer* on 1st December, 1967; Cardinal Heenan's renewed call for a cessation of all supplies except food, clothes and medicines. Others were the action of the Labour Party Executive in announcing their intention to summon Ministers to explain their Nigerian policy; the talk of organisation by pro-Biafran sympathisers of an All Party Parliamentary Mission to Biafra and the broadcast on 1st December, 1967 of the Deputy Director of Oxfam appealing for an initiative by the British government for relief operations and with the warning that unless the war were stopped, at least two million people would starve in Biafra before the spring. These were by no means an exhaustive list of the developments which made it clear to the British government that it was not enough for Her Majesty's Government to continue her arms supply to Nigeria while nothing was being done in the field of peace-making.⁷⁹⁴

The British government reluctance to approve the export licence application for the acquisition of Military Aircraft of British origin by the Nigerian government in the execution of the civil war was another potent reaction to Biafra's propaganda. It would be recalled that on 1st July, 1967 the Nigerian Head of State, Major-General Yakubu Gowon wrote an official letter to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. He demanded that the British government should permit the sale from the British sources, of the following equipments to the Nigerian Armed Forces, namely; twelve Jet fighter-bomber aircraft and twenty four anti-aircraft guns, among other military equipments. He hoped that, in view of the extreme urgency of the matter, the aircraft and anti-aircraft guns be made available to the federal government within forty-eight hours, that was, latest on Monday, 3rd July, 1967.⁷⁹⁵ When the British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomson, visited Gowon in July, 1967 he informed him that, the British government would not permit the sale of jet aircraft and fast patrol boats for which he had asked.⁷⁹⁶ Also, on 17th July, 1967 the Prime Minister clearly told Gowon that, there was nothing that he could do to help the Nigerian government in the

⁷⁹⁴ TNA, PREM, 13/2261, File No. 34E/4S/1850/7645946, Nigeria: 1968-1969. Secret: Possible British Initiative to Promote Negotiations from Foreign Office to Lagos, 2nd December, 1968.

⁷⁹⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Text of General Gowon's Letter to the British Prime Minister from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 1st July, 1967.

⁷⁹⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Confidential: Minute on Nigeria Arms Request, from O.G. Forster Private Secretary to A.M. Palliser, 14th July, 1967.

provision of Jet aircraft.⁷⁹⁷ Consequently, on 17th July, 1967 the British Prime Minister held a meeting with the Nigerian Commissioner for Labour and Information, Anthony Enahoro. Enahoro told the Prime Minister that, Nigeria was in a very difficult situation. In his letter to Gowon, the Prime Minister had referred to the British agreement of placing Nigerian orders for arms of types similar to those they had obtained in the past. But Nigeria needed aircraft. The Prime Minister instead told Enahoro that Her Majesty's Government hoped for a settlement of the conflict on the basis of a united Nigeria and in continuing friendly relationship with Britain. Enahoro said that two aircraft would make all the difference in helping the federal government to end the war. They would be much more effective at that critical stage of the war. The Prime Minister outrightly rejected the appeal, and said that it would not be possible for Britain to supply aircraft to the federal government. He rather commented that the British government was prepared to supply anti-aircraft guns which could deal with old transport plane being operated by the Biafran regime.⁷⁹⁸ The British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, at a meeting informed the Nigerian High Commissioner to United Kingdom, Brigadier Ogundipe that the British government had looked at the Nigerian government request for aircraft in great detail, but he was sorry to state that the British government could not retreat on their previous refusal of similar requests from General Gowon and Anthony Enahoro. The High Commissioner expressed his disappointment and emphasised that, he did not asked the British government to supply aircraft but merely to allow the federal government buy them from private suppliers; they would now be force to try elsewhere. He noted that it was better to know the true position of things and he was not in a position to state where would obtain the aircraft. The Minister said that, so far as the question of buying rockets was concerned, as the Prime Minister had stated in his letter to Gowon, the British government would be as helpful as possible about individual arms orders but each application would have to be considered on its merits.⁷⁹⁹

On 5th November, 1968 General Gowon wrote another official letter to the British Prime Minister. He recalled that he had made enquiries with the British High Commissioner in Nigeria whether it would be possible for the British government to supply fighter aircraft to enable the Nigerian Air Force intercept the planes involved in the airlift of arms supplies to Biafrans. Unfortunately, the response from the High Commissioner was in the negative with

⁷⁹⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Confidential: Text of British Prime Minister's Letter to General Yakubu Gowon, 17th July, 1967.

⁷⁹⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/266, File No. TX 10/1/Part B/6C/1066/West and General Africa Department/ Nigeria: Arms, Legal Importation and General Policy, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1968. Confidential: Extract of Record of A Meeting Between the British Prime Minister and Anthony Enahoro, 17th July, 1967.

⁷⁹⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Record of A Meeting Between the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs and Nigerian High Commissioner to United Kingdom, 28th July, 1967.

the explanation that fighter aircraft were in very short supply. Gowon wondered whether it would be possible for the British Prime Minister to approve as second best the supply of six Jet Provosts, with No. BAC.167. In view of the increased French threat to the mutual interests of both countries, Gowon urged the need for the British government to give a thought to the necessity for a decisive assistance to be given to them by the British government. He also had in mind the need for the British government to relax its policy of not supplying military aircraft to the Nigerian Air Force.⁸⁰⁰ On 27th November, 1967 after the submission of a memorandum for the relaxation of British arms policy in the Nigerian Civil War by the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee⁸⁰¹, the British Ministers decided that the civil war in Nigeria justified a slight relaxation in their arms policy, restricting the exports of arms from Britain to Nigeria. It was agreed that, in the future, licenses would be approved for a wider range of infantry weapons such as Sub-Machine guns and Mortars⁸⁰² and for larger quantities of ammunitions. No change in the refusal to supply military aircraft or offensive weapons of mass destruction such as bombs and rockets was made.⁸⁰³

On 7th November, 1968 a meeting was held between the British Secretary of State, for Foreign Affairs, Michael Stewart and Anthony Enahoro. The Secretary of State said that, Her Majesty's Government would have great difficulties in supplying aircraft to the federal government. The British government had already explained in Parliament the position about the supply of military aircraft.⁸⁰⁴ Similarly, on 8th November, 1968 the British Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, Lord Shepherd, held a meeting with the Nigerian Deputy Under-Secretary Ministry of External Affairs, Edward Enahoro. Others present at the meeting were Nigerian High Commissioner, Brigadier Ogundipe and Permanent Secretary, Nigerian Ministry of Information, Mohammed Joda. On aircraft, Lord Shepherd said that he had nothing to add from the position of the British Prime Minister. He personally wished that the British government could supply some aircraft to the Federal government, but there were no Jet Provosts available unless they were to be supplied from the Royal Air Force squadrons. If they carry out the action it could hardly be regarded as a purely commercial transaction. He pointed out that the British government had had to fight very hard for their policy and that,

⁸⁰⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Confidential: Text of General Gowon's Letter to the British Prime Minister, 5th November, 1968.

⁸⁰¹ TNA, FCO, 38/268, Cabinet: Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, Memorandum on Nigeria: Arms Supplies to the Federal Government by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs/OPD/67/86, 20th November, 1967.

⁸⁰² TNA, FCO, 38/268, Extract from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet Ministers, 23rd November, 1967.

⁸⁰³ TNA, FCO, 38/268, Confidential: Minute on Arms for Nigeria, from Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 27th November, 1967.

⁸⁰⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Confidential: Record of Meeting Between the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Anthony Enahoro, 7th November, 1968.

politically, things had become more soft but the Prime Minister made it clear that if they supplied aircraft to the Federal government, and a Division was called in the House of Commons they would be defeated. He referred to the Jet Provosts which they knew was available in Sudan and Southern Yemen and about which they informed the Federal government of their existence. Lord Shepherd thought that the best answer was for the Federal government to hire or rent aircraft from Sudan or Southern Yemen. It was noted that the aircraft in Sudan was too old but the ones in South Yemen were believed to be in good condition and being maintained by Airwork Limited who were well known to the federal government as they were in business in Kaduna.⁸⁰⁵

The refusal to grant the request for the sale of Military Aircraft of British origin and other destructive air weapons to the Federal government of Nigeria was based on various strategic considerations. Such as, taking cognisance of the emergence of media reports in Britain concerning the sale of arms supplies to the Federal government and these media agencies were already under the influence of Biafra's propaganda. For instance, on 9th July, 1967 the British Deputy High Commissioner in Enugu, John Parker informed the British officialdom of a BBC news broadcast which referred to the discussions between General Yakubu Gowon and the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, George Thomson during his visit to Nigeria on the "possible military assistance" to the FMG. He said that such report had caused great anger in Biafra and could lead to very serious consequences such as escalation of public outcry in other countries like Britain.⁸⁰⁶ John Parker later asked Ojukwu what he makes of the BBC reference to Ministers discussions with Gowon, and Ojukwu said "I do not know what to make of it". However, Ojukwu feared the outburst of popular reaction if the report was allowed to go uncorrected.⁸⁰⁷ In short, on 11th July, 1967 BBC news reported that according to *Sun* newspaper, the British Cabinet would have a meeting to consider the supply of arms to Nigeria. This subject was raised by British journalist at the Federal government press briefing in Lagos. But, the federal government spokesman denied the fact that Nigeria was not seeking arms from the British government or from any other government buy was apparently evasive when asked if they were seeking arms from commercial organisations in Britain. Then, it was observed by the British High Commissioner in Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, that the British journalists in Nigeria were capable

⁸⁰⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/330, Confidential: Record of Meeting Between the British Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Nigerian High Commissioner to United Kingdom, and Nigerian Deputy Under-Secretary Ministry of External Affairs and , 8th November, 1968.

⁸⁰⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Confidential: Minute on Minister's Visit to Nigeria from Enugu to Commonwealth Office, 9th July, 1967.

⁸⁰⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Confidential: Conversation between British Deputy High Commissioner in Enugu and Ojukwu, 9th July, 1967.

of issuing reports that Her Majesty's Government would permit the federal government to buy military equipment direct from British firms.⁸⁰⁸ Some of the media reports in Nigeria during this period were, "Federal Government denies United States False Aid Propaganda and Says No Arms Bargaining". "No United States Aid Needed to Crush Rebellion". Even the *Reuter* reported that based on informed sources, the British Cabinet met on 11th July, 1967 and discussed Federal government's request for permission to buy British arms on a commercial basis but reached no final decision.⁸⁰⁹ From the foregoing, the influence of Biafra's propaganda on the considerable press reports over the British arms sale to the federal government as from 1967 prompted the British government decision not to supply aircraft to the Nigerian government. The significant of this action was that none of the military aircraft of British origin was used in the federal air raids that occurred during the civil war.⁸¹⁰

Due to the intensified domestic environment in Britain, the British government declined to go beyond their existing policy of arms supplies to the Nigerian government. In short, on 22nd July, 1967 John Parker, warned that, any form of air freighting certainly by the RAF would draw maximum attention especially as they already had the evidence that the locals were watching aircraft movements in Biafra through their monitoring systems. However, much they might conclude that these were defensive weapons, to the populace; they would view as guns and ammunitions, and a further indication of British support to the Nigerian government. They could also take on an offensive role if mounted in an invasion fleet.⁸¹¹

The British government intransigence to grant the Nigerian government's export licence application for the purchase of military aircraft from Britain and General Gowon's desperation to acquire such equipments had great geopolitical implications. For it led to the Nigerian government decision to acquire such equipments from other sources in Europe particularly the Communist bloc countries such as Czechs and Russia. For instance, the British High Commissioner in Lagos, Sir David Hunt had earlier on 1 July 1967 reminded the Foreign Office that the objective of Gowon seeking for military equipments particularly from Europe was to pave the way for the acquisition of such equipments from Communist countries, a move that Gowon discussed with the British Defence Adviser in Lagos. He noted

⁸⁰⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/265, from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 11th July, 1967.

⁸⁰⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/265, from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 12th July, 1967.

⁸¹⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Nigerian High Commissioner Call on the Minister of State, 26th July, 1967.

⁸¹¹ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Confidential: Minute on Arms for Nigeria from Enugu to Commonwealth Office, 22nd July, 1967.

that if the British officialdom could not help the FMG quickly there was no argument to be used to dissuade them from seeking military assistance from the Communist bloc.⁸¹²

The arms deal involving Lagos and other foreign governments especially Russia and Czechs alarmed the United States government whose policy in the civil war was that of non-military intervention. For example, when on 24th August, 1967 the accredited Special Representative of the United States government in Nigeria, Mathew, met General Gowon he noted the US State Department's regrets of the Nigerian government's purchase of military aircraft from Russia even though US had chosen to remain neutral in the civil war because it did not wish to introduce arms race to Africa. The US government was also very aware of the military traffic passing through Portugal a closed allied to the US in NATO to Biafra.⁸¹³

The US saw the Russian move in the civil war as that which would enhance the military supremacy of Moscow thereby allowing Communist tendencies to gain its roots across Africa and elsewhere around the globe. This made observers to believe that the primary objective in Russia's intervention in the Nigerian-Biafran war was the ambition to expand Soviet influence in Africa.⁸¹⁴ Politically, the decision to deal with the Russians proved to be one of General Gowon's wisest foreign policy moves in the war. Nigeria's non-aligned status championed at the peak of the cold war instantly acquired new credibility, and for the duration of the war Gowon could use the threat of greater reliance on Russia to ensure the flow of British small arms to Nigeria.⁸¹⁵ So, in spite of her opposition to arms supply to Nigeria by foreign governments the British government stiffened her decision to continue the delivery of what it described as conventional weapons to the Federal government. For it was forced to reason that the refusal to supply Gowon arms might give the British opponents in the war chance to push him into action contrary to the British interests and which he does not want. The effect of such refusals would affect Shell/BP very seriously and they might face nationalisation or confiscation of concessions and would have to place all their hopes on victory by Ojukwu.⁸¹⁶

The endorsement of amnesty programme for the Biafran leaders and the need to allow Ojukwu to go on exile after the war shows another British response to Biafra's propaganda. On 12th September, 1968 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt informed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London that the Nigerian Ministry of Information

⁸¹² TNA, FCO, 38/265, from Lagos to Foreign Office, 1 July 1967.

⁸¹³ TNA, FCO, 38/266, Confidential: Two Faces of the United States in the Nigerian Civil War from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 24 August 1967.

⁸¹⁴ Biafran Radio in English, Biafran Report of Soviet Military Mission to Lagos 18/00/GMT/25/2/1969.

⁸¹⁵ John, Stremmlau 1977, *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War*, p.80.

⁸¹⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/265, Sir David Hunt to Foreign Office, 14th July, 1967.

Handout had reported that General Yakubu Gowon told journalists on 9th September, 1968 that the Federal Military Government would carry out its promise of amnesty for the Biafran defectors, and that, the Biafran leader Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu would be dealt with according to the law, applicable to persons who commit treason. *Daily Times* of 12th September, 1968 further quoted Gowon saying “Ojukwu’s case is a special one not to be confused with that of others in the Biafran leadership”. Since 1965 when Ojukwu made his first move to take over Government of Nigeria, General Gowon recalled that, the Biafran leader had brought so much trouble in Nigeria. He said that if Ojukwu was, “I will have to consult my attorney General to have him tried for treason. Asked what penalty of treason was, the Head of State replied “we have to follow the English law”. General Gowon declared that the life of Ojukwu was not as important when compared with the lives of the fifty million people in Nigeria. He said “what I have to do is to save the lives of people in this country”.⁸¹⁷

The adoption of amnesty as a major strategy of resolving the Nigerian Civil War was initiated by the Organisation of African Unity Summit on peace and unity in Nigeria held in Algiers on 15th September, 1968. The conference in its resolution, appealed to the secessionist leaders to cooperate with the Federal authorities in order to restore peace and unity to Nigeria. they appealed for an end to the hostilities and recommended that the Federal Military government of Nigeria if the foregoing conditions are met to proclaim a general amnesty for the Biafran leadership and to cooperate with the OAU with a view to assuring the personal security of all Nigerians without distinction until such time as mutual confidence may be restored. The Committee asked that all states members of the UN and OAU should abstain from all action liable to prejudice the unity and territorial integrity and peace of Nigeria.⁸¹⁸ After the OAU summit released its resolutions on the Nigerian civil war, the reaction of the British government was that the Federal government should accept the terms of the resolution. But the only point which seemed to present them with any difficulty was the call for a general amnesty for the Biafrans leadership, including Ojukwu. It was difficult to tell according to British officialdom whether Awolowo remarks an amnesty probably including Ojukwu are to be taken as a definitive change in the Federal government’s attitude to the civil war.⁸¹⁹ On 20th September, 1968 a junior member of the Nigerian Delegation to the OAU Summit informed the British Embassy in Algiers that the federal government was prepared to accept the OAU resolution and all its implications, including an amnesty for

⁸¹⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, File No. 34E/4S1850/7645944/ Nigeria: 1968. Minute on Amnesty from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 12th September, 1968.

⁸¹⁸ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, Minute on OAU and Nigeria: Adopted Resolution Calling for Peace and Unity in Nigeria from Algiers to Foreign Office, 16th September, 1968.

⁸¹⁹ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, Minute on OAU and Nigeria from Algiers to Foreign Office, 19th September, 1968.

Ojukwu.⁸²⁰ On 23rd September, 1968, Sir David Hunt held a discussion with Okio Arikpo concerning the OAU resolutions on the Nigerian civil war. Hunt asked Arikpo about the amnesty proposed by the OAU at the Algiers summit, Arikpo said that he personally agreed with Awolowo statement that a general amnesty must also apply to Ojukwu but there was little danger of Ojukwu claiming the benefit of the amnesty because to do so he would have to swear allegiance to Nigeria. As far as he could gather, the main person who thought Ojukwu should be excluded from the amnesty was Gowon. Arikpo realises the propaganda advantage of an absolutely unrestricted amnesty to Ojukwu and promised to persuade Gowon. Arikpo stated, "I am sure myself that Ojukwu exclusion or inclusion in the amnesty would make no difference whatever to the prospects of his surrender or intention of the Igbos to fight on. Ojukwu pride reaches megalomania and he would much rather die than accept an amnesty."⁸²¹

It would be recalled that at the second meeting with Gowon during the Lord Shepherd visit to Nigeria on 28th September, 1968, Gowon informed him that the FMG accepted the Algiers clear and concise peaceful resolutions including amnesty but he warned that if Ojukwu escaped, the Federal government would demand his extradition and they hoped that no friendly government especially in Africa would shelter him. In a minute sent to A.D. Brighty on October 7th 1968, A.M. Palliser said that the British Prime Minister had learnt from Lord Shepherd after his visit to Nigeria, that General Gowon still insisted that Ojukwu should be brought to trial and also inquired to find out if it was true, that what has been said to Lord Shepherd by Gowon after their meeting on 23rd September was the same what Lord Shepherd told the Prime Minister.⁸²² On 11th October, 1968 the Foreign Office confirmed that the subject of an amnesty for the Biafran leaders was raised by Lord Shepherd with General Gowon. The FMG accepted the terms of the OAU resolutions, which was quite clear. An OAU resolution that called for a general amnesty provided that the Biafrans co-operated in restoring peace and unity to Nigeria. General Gowon, however, however, indicated that if Ojukwu were to flee to another country, the FMG would demand his extradition; he added that he hoped that no friendly country would embarrass the FMG by accepting him. Later in the conversation General Gowon repeated the personal safety of any Igbo leader coming forward to co-operate with the FMG within the framework of the OAU resolution would be guaranteed, but obviously did not have Ojukwu in mind. There have

⁸²⁰ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, Nigeria and OAU, from Algiers to Foreign Office, 20th September, 1968.

⁸²¹ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, Minute on Nigeria and OAU, A Conversation between the British High Commissioner and Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs, 23rd September, 1968.

⁸²² TNA, PREM, 13/2260, Minute on Negotiated Settlement from Lagos to Commonwealth Office, 28th September, 1968.

been other indications that, although the FGM have stripped Ojukwu of his military rank, they might nevertheless seek to try him under military law. Lord Shepherd told General Gowon that he was glad to hear his remarks about the Federal Government's acceptance of the OAU resolution relating to an amnesty. Lord Shepherd also said he understood the FMG's attitude towards Ojukwu; but he warned General Gowon that attempt to secure Ojukwu extradition from another country could be a stumbling block. The British officialdom impression about amnesty, was that while the FMG was prepared to deal leniently with everyone except Ojukwu, they regarded Ojukwu so much as the villain of the piece that they were not going to let him go scot-free if they could help it. The British government found it so difficult to persuade the FMG on the matter. Rather, they said that, if Ojukwu were to bring himself down to accept the terms of the OAU resolutions that might make a difference but they firmly believe that Ojukwu would never accept it.⁸²³

During an official visit to Nigeria, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, took the opportunity on his drive from the State House in Lagos to the Airport in General Gowon's car, on the morning of Monday, 31st March, 1969 to raise with him the possibility of an amnesty being offered to Colonel Ojukwu and his close associates. He remarked that Obafemi Awolowo had told the Commonwealth Prime Ministers who met during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in January 1969 for an informal discussion of the Nigerian Civil War in Lancaster House London that the FMG were prepared to offer such amnesty. But this had not been said publicly. He believed it would be of great advantage if they could make such a gesture of generosity to the Biafran leader. General Gowon told the Prime Minister that this would present considerable difficulties. The FMG had no intention of pursuing a vindictive policy towards the Igbos at the end of the civil war; and would certainly not seek to punish many of their leaders. But in the particular case of Ojukwu himself, he Gowon thought that an amnesty would be hard to accept. The Prime Minister said that he hoped that, on reflection, General Gowon might feel able to reconsider his view. As the least, it should surely be possible to allow Ojukwu to go into exile abroad. He could understand that Ojukwu might, when peace came, find it objectionable to profess his loyalty to a united Nigeria; and that the FMG would find it difficult to accept that he should not do so. But surely it should be possible to let him quietly leave the country. General Gowon said that he would reflect on what the Prime Minister had said; but he gave him no cause for optimism.⁸²⁴

⁸²³ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, from A.D. Brighty to R.J. Dawe, 11th October, 1968.

⁸²⁴ TNA, CAB, 164/409, Record of Meeting between British Prime Minister and Federal Government Officials, 31st March, 1969.

The relief operations in the Nigerian Civil War created very important avenue for the British government reaction to Biafra's propaganda. The relief situation that occurred during the war showed very clearly, the essential need for an international and impartial authority to act as a buffer between governments and as a channel for governmental relief assistance. All concerned in the controversy over relief operations sought to a greater or lesser degree to turn it to their own advantage; the Nigerian and Biafran governments sought to extract propaganda advantage from it and by trying to deny their opponents either propaganda or military advantage. Also, the British government by demonstrating her active involvement in the war decided to get involved in the relief operations as a safer substitute for more direct political commitment, thus in effect buying off criticisms emanating from the domestic pressure groups and lobbies that had being influenced by Biafran propaganda.⁸²⁵ On 26th November, 1969 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart told the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the British government and indeed the British society shared the mounting concern in Britain at the evidence of starvation, malnutrition, disease, and other deprivations on both sides of the conflict in Nigeria, but more particularly inside Biafra. He argued that the absences of any effective agreement on a resumption of the International Red Cross airlift to Biafra which was suspended in June 1969 had undone much of the improvement brought about by the International Red Cross and Church organisations' airlifts of relief materials in Biafra. The estimates of the number of deaths each day inside Biafra varied from several hundred to two or three thousand. There was no evidence on the exact numbers, but the suffering was unquestionably very great. Partly as a result of this, there had been a significant upsurge of public concern in the British Parliament and the press, as evidenced in the renewed criticisms of the British general policy in the civil war. Following the above, the British Prime Minister, had a discussion with the Secretary of State for Defence and the Foreign Secretary in 1969 concerning the possible initiative which they might take, both to help towards alleviating the sufferings in Biafra and to demonstrate their positive concern, thus taking the edge off some of the criticisms to which the British officialdom was subjected.⁸²⁶

One key measures which the British Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary proposed was the offer of a significant contribution of money to suitable British relief

⁸²⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/805, File No. JWN 11/59/5A/369, Politics of Relief Resulting from Civil War in Nigeria, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Confidential Report on The Politics of Relief: Some Reflections on One Aspect of the Nigerian Civil War, p.2.

⁸²⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/2822, File No. 34E/4S/1852/8190819/7649006/ Nigeria: 1969. Confidential: Supplementary Provision for Nigerian Relief/FCS/69/55/ from Foreign Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 26th November, 1969.

organisations engaged in the support of relief work in Biafra as well as the federal side of the war. It would be recalled that, the British government had earlier contributed almost £1 million to the International Red Cross, which was made available for the ICRC expenditure in Biafra as well as on the federal side. But the suspension of the ICRC airlift led to the curtailment of their relief work in Biafra, and in any case the last British contribution was designed to help finance the ICRC programmes only up to the end of August 1969. A provision of about £250,000 in bilateral relief assistance was also made available by the British officialdom, but in practice, it could not be used because of the refusal of Ojukwu to accept direct aid from the British government as long as they continued their arms supply to the Nigerian government. Moreover, nearly all the £250,000 provision was later committed for urgent needs in the federal areas. Therefore, the British government came under severe criticism of being ineffective in helping to mitigate the suffering in Biafra. From the foregoing, the British Foreign Secretary in an official memo to the Chancellor of Exchequer sought an agreement with the Chancellor to the supplementary provision of £200,000 to be given as grant in aid in equal proportions to Oxfam and the British Council of Churches, towards their relief expenditure on both sides of the war. This agreement was subjected to the Parliamentary approval. They proposed to discuss with both organisations how these contributions might most appropriately be spent, with the object of ensuring that the funds was not used directly to finance the existing Joint Church Aid airlift into Nigeria, since this was contrary to international law and the expressed wishes of the federal government of Nigeria. The British government also wished to be in a position to explain to the federal government that their money was being put to good uses and so not finding its way into support of Biafran war effort. Subject to these requirements, they proposed to make the recipient organisations of the funds accountable in detail for the ways in which they spend the contribution. It was discovered that the Ministry of Overseas Development expressed their readiness to accept relief expenditure up to a total of £1 million which amounted to £500,000 expenditure.⁸²⁷

On 20th December, 1968 the British High Commissions across the world were instructed to appeal to their host countries to do all they could to persuade Ojukwu to take a soft landing in the execution of the civil war, and to see reasons. Thus, if Ojukwu refused to do so, Britain would have no choice than to deflect from Her Majesty's Government's blame,

⁸²⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/2822, Confidential: Supplementary Provision for Nigerian Relief/FCS/69/55/ from Foreign Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 26th November, 1969.

for the massive starvation and hunger in the civil war.⁸²⁸ Also a British official, G.S. Little-John Cook initiated the idea of possible British propaganda line in the civil war. He stated that, he was not convinced that, the defensive approach of the British propaganda would be effective, because, facts were, already known to those who prepared to listen. He therefore suggested that, the British publicity and propaganda line should emphasise a few, clear and telling points. These were; if Ojukwu refused day-light relief flights and overland supply routes, there would be misery and starvation in Biafra; the federal government was ready to negotiate a fair peace, which some responsible and internationally respected Igbos would be prepared to accept; the majority of African states did not recognise that, the Igbos had any right to secede from Nigeria. This propaganda line would effectively remove Britain and the British policy from the area of emotional discontent and turn the spotlight on Ojukwu for being responsible for the plight of his people.⁸²⁹

The move to incorporate the British Royal Air Force into the relief operations of the Nigerian Civil War also signified the British reaction to Biafra's propaganda. Owing to the need to by-pass the rigidities and controversies occasioned by the relief impasse between the FMG, ICRC and Biafran leadership the British government initiated the proposal to allow airplanes of the RAF for immediate use in the supply of relief materials into Biafra. On 11th December, 1968 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart asked John Wilson, Head of West African Department whether the Ministry of Defence thought it feasible to arrange for the RAF planes to parachute or free-drop relief supplies direct into Biafra. The view from the Ministry of Defence over the above enquiries indicated that, dropping food supplies by parachute would normally have to take place about 600 ft. and free-dropping supplies even lower than this. At this height, a plane would be a sitting target even small arms fire. To make it reasonably safe to use either method, a plane would have to fly at about 500-600 ft. free-dropping would not be possible from this height. And dropping by parachute would mean that the supplies would fell over such a large area. Thus, it would not be a practicable proposition.⁸³⁰ Later, the Foreign Secretary informed the British High Commission in Lagos that, the Oppositions at the House of Parliament was likely to propose at the debate on 12th December, 1968 that the RAF might be used for an "unsupervised" airlift of relief supplies from Lagos to Umuahia. He argued that, it would be impossible to use RAF Airlift in this way, unless both the federal government and the Biafran authorities were in agreement.

⁸²⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/441, Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Lagos, 20th December, 1968.

⁸²⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/441, G.S. Little-John Cook to West African Department, 20th December, 1968.

⁸³⁰ TNA, PREM, 13/2262, File No. 34E/4S/1850/7645949, Nigeria: 1968. Minute on Relief, by P.D. McEntee to D.J.D. Maitland, 11th December, 1968.

Instead, two alternative proposals which might be suggested would be for the RAF to parachute supplies to Biafra or free-drop them from the low level. There were obvious objections to both courses. British officialdom realised that Colonel Ojukwu had rejected all British relief assistance while Her Majesty Government was supplying arms to the FMG. The Foreign Secretary therefore suggested that, it would be helpful if the Ministers were in a position to say that the possible use of the RAF for relief operations had been discussed again with the FMG who for their part have no objections. This would now at any rate make clear that the responsibility for any refusal was Ojukwu's own making. The Foreign Secretary therefore, sought for an urgent discussion of the idea with the federal government by Sir David Hunt or Lord Shepherd and if possible obtained from them an assurance that they for their part would go along with such an idea and that they would see no objections of raising the matter public in the House of Parliament.⁸³¹

On 14th March, 1969 the British government suggested the need to propose to the Nigerian Head of State, Major-General Yakubu Gowon to request for the use of military aircraft from the RAF, the Americans and Canadians, for the transportation of relief supplies to Obilago for stockpiling, against the possibility by Colonel Ojukwu's intransigence to the federal government's offer of a daylight flight and surface route for relief supplies into Biafra. The advantage of this proposal was to make it more difficult for Ojukwu to refuse federal government's offer on Obilago route; to demonstrate, in a new and dramatic fashion British government's practical efforts for the relief of starvation on the Biafra side; to help counteract pressures for a special airstrip to be constructed in Biafra by relief organisations. Before taking this offer further, British officialdom were very careful in estimating the capability of the federal armed forces to ensure the security of aircraft landing at the strip. At this juncture, the United States government has not apparently shared the British view that food stockpiling near Obilago might increase pressure on Ojukwu to accept the FMG's offer. Moreover, they believed that the control of Obilago was being contested. But, British government imagined that both the Americans and Canadians might fear that, the use of military air craft even for relief purposes connected with Biafra might be presented by Ojukwu as military intervention against Biafra. Against this backdrop, the British government was inclined to doubt whether the US and Canada would wish them to put this suggestion to General Gowon, and that it would be prudent for them to offer this help unless

⁸³¹ TNA, PREM, 13/2262, Minute on Relief by Michael Stewart to High Commission Lagos, 11th December, 1968.

both governments were willing to participate⁸³². On 17th July, 1969 British Prime Minister held a conversation with the Foreign Secretary about the Nigerian Civil War. He suggested that if the negotiations to get relief into Biafra went sour, they should consider, putting forward a proposal that, aircraft of the RAF Support Command (RSC) should fly relief supplies by day into Uli Airport. For, there were plenty of supplies available in and around Nigeria. He perceived that, the FMG might insist that the flights should land at Lagos Airport, but this should not give them much difficulty. But, it was possible also that, they might trust the British government more than the relief agencies and agree to the flights going in from Cotonou or some other relief base without touching the federal territory. The Prime Minister stated that, Colonel Ojukwu could turn down the proposition but if he did, would be seen to be resisting the flying in of reliefs by day. The Prime Minister also suggested that such offer needed to be made before the Parliamentary Recess and that it would therefore, be as well to do some contingency planning with the Ministry of Defence.⁸³³

It would be recalled that the Prime Minister had earlier said during his conversations with Lord Hunt, the leader of the British Relief Mission to Nigeria, on 3rd July, 1968, that he would not wish any potential assistance from RAF Support Command to be inhibited by considerations of cost. In the sense of any substantial charge for Support Command's Services, having to be met from the money provided for Nigeria's relief services by Her Majesty Government. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary then, commented that in addition to possible difficulties over cost, there might also be problems of timing if at any stage it seemed that there might be a need for the emergency use of RAF aircraft to help transport relief supplies into Biafra. The Prime Minister later said that, he realised that there could be difficulties in either respect. But he gave instructions that, if such difficulties arose, he should be informed of them at once so as to ensure that immediate top level consideration was given to their resolution⁸³⁴. From the foregoing, on 21st July, 1969 the Defence Secretary Dennis Healey was asked to examine the possible use of RAF to fly relief supplies into Biafra. It was the view of the Foreign Office that, contingency planning might not be practicable without a much fuller knowledge of facilities and organisation on the ground in Britain. They also recalled that many months ago, a RAF officer was sent to Lagos to make a

⁸³² TNA, Prime Minister Office, 13/2818, File No. 34E/4S/1852/7648769, Nigeria: 1969. Minute on Relief Supply via Obilago, by Michael Stewart to High Commission Lagos, 14th March, 1969.

⁸³³ TNA, PREM, 13/2821, File No. 34E/4S/1852/7648772, Nigeria: 1969. Minute on Relief, by E. Youde to J.A.N. Graham, 17th July, 1969.

⁸³⁴ TNA, PREM, 13/2258, Confidential Note of Conversation between Lord Hunt and British Prime Minister from A.M. Palliser to P.R. Mackilligin, 4th July, 1968.

survey, but he was not permitted to do so. Thus, no final decision was to be taken without preliminary examination.⁸³⁵

On 4th July, 1968 the Biafran government, through her Special Representative in London, I.S. Kogbara, wrote an official letter to Lord Shepherd, that the British government's offer of relief services to the people of Biafra which included the employment of RAF for such purpose would in certain circumstances be regarded as an act of generosity in keeping with the British humanitarian tradition. But, in the circumstances, where the British government was supplying arms to Nigeria, and actually sponsoring the war against Biafra, the people of Biafra felt unable to accept this offer. Indeed, the situation which deemed it necessary for the people of Biafra to reject the British government's relief offer was an unfortunate one. It was the view of the Biafran government that contradictory position of the British government was unnecessary and that the British government certainly possessed the means to get itself out of it, for the good of all interests involved.⁸³⁶ On 6th December, 1969, at a discussion with General Gowon on the issue of relief the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary asked him what plans the federal government had made for relief operations. He wondered whether the FMG had considered the possibility of airdrops operated from Lagos, either to those federal areas or civilians' areas in Biafra. Was there any way which the British officialdom might help, either with the use of RAF or otherwise? Gowon said that he did not like the airdrop idea. The Nigerian government wanted to keep the air free from the smugglers who could drop arms so easily as relief. This would be very difficult to control if there were too many aircraft flying all over the areas, especially as others would join in and drop military supplies and arms. It would be very difficult to differentiate between relief planes and arms smugglers. It would be a mistake to introduce any new proposals on relief until daylight flights had been got going, otherwise Ojukwu would simply jump at anything else as an excuse not to agree.⁸³⁷

Even though the above offer of the RAF planes for relief supplies into Biafra was rejected by both the Biafran authorities and Nigerian government, the reason behind such action was as a result of the huge concern expressed by the British officialdom over the prevalent pro-Biafran sympathies and activities in Britain. During a conversation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Michael Stewart, on 19th November, 1969 the British

⁸³⁵ TNA, PREM, 13/2821, J.P. Mayne to Teddy, 21st July, 1969.

⁸³⁶ TNA, PREM, 13/2258, Text of A Letter to the Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office from London Special Representative of the Government of Republic of Biafra, 4th July, 1968.

⁸³⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/472, Note of Record of Meeting Between Maurice Foley and General Gowon, 6th December, 1969.

Prime Minister, Harold Wilson asked the Foreign Secretary how to handle the renewed publicity in Britain which was being given to the problem of relief supplies to Biafra. This was because, the efforts which had been made by the British government to assist the International Committee of Red Cross in their discussions with the Nigerians and Biafrans, and to obtain the resumption of relief flights was not getting enough publicity in Britain. For some time, the press reports and headlines had concentrated not on the British relief efforts but on their arms supplies to the FMG. Although, the Prime Minister had spoken earlier and very strongly about the relief issue at the Guildhall and pointed out that the finger at Colonel Ojukwu intransigence, and the pro-Biafran lobby were still getting a lot of publicity for their case. The Prime Minister therefore suggested to the Foreign Secretary that it was necessary for the government to take an initiative which would test clearly and publicly, Ojukwu good faith. This idea would be similar in conception to what the Americans had done in giving their assurance to Colonel Ojukwu that IRC flights into Uli would not be exploited. He now suggested further that they should inform General Gowon that an RAF airlift should be mounted to fly relief supplies into Biafra. The flights might begin in Accra, touch down again in Lagos, and then fly into Uli. If the flights landed in Lagos, this would meet a main Nigerian requirement. It could have the advantage that, if this was considered desirable, additional food could be loaded there. Moreover, the FMG made the point that their air traffic control could only guarantee the safety of the flights if they left for Biafra from Lagos. General Gowon could be told that the cargoes could be inspected at Lagos, though British officialdom expected a high degree of trust that they would not allow anything other than relief supplies to be carried. To meet any reasonable Biafran requirements, there could be International Red Cross or United Nations observers or observers appointed by, for instance, President Nyerere of Tanzania to assure Biafrans that there was no threat to them from these relief flights. Colonel Ojukwu would however be required to give a safe conduct pass for the airlift.⁸³⁸

The heavy parliamentary and press pressures mounted on the British officialdom appeared to have also enhanced the idea of utilising the RAF for relief operations. No doubt, the British policy in Nigeria was designed to satisfy a number of objectives, chief among them, were to safeguard the British interests in the civil war. This policy was increasingly threatened by the pressure of political and parliamentary opinion in Britain. Ministerial attempts to placate this opinion by being seen to be active in promoting relief and other issues

⁸³⁸ TNA, PREM, 13/2822, E. Youde to J.A.N. Graham, 19th November, 1969.

of the war had produced strong reaction in Nigeria, and damaging to the British interests.⁸³⁹ It would be recalled that Group Captain Cheshire had earlier waged an emotional campaign in the British press and on the television in favour of having the RAF to enter into Nigeria and free-drop relief supplies into Biafra, whether the federal government agreed or not.⁸⁴⁰ On 28th June, 1969 Winston Churchill wrote a very long editorial in the *Times*, which caused great anxieties within the government circle in Britain. He wrote to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson urging support by Her Majesty's Government for the immediate resumption of relief flights without waiting for formal agreement between the two sides of the conflict. He called for an end to the British support for the Federal government, unless they agree to a scheme for relief operations forthwith. These editorials were indicative of mounting press pressures in Britain which intensified until the FMG issued their statement at the Conference on relief operations held in Lagos in June 1969.⁸⁴¹ On 20th November, 1969 the Foreign Office alerted the British High Commissioner in Lagos that, the government in London were now faced with a serious parliamentary and pressures over the continued failure to break impasse over daylight relief flights into Biafra, arising from their apparent inactivity in this regard. Thus, the British Ministers thought that it might be necessary for the government to take an initiative which would test clearly and publicly Ojukwu good faith. The Ministers might therefore, wished to put to Gowon, as a preliminary to putting to Ojukwu, that an RAF daylight Airlift should be mounted to fly relief supplies into Biafra.⁸⁴² From the foregoing, the aim of the British contribution to relief operations in Biafra was to tame Parliamentary criticisms and Biafran propaganda.

The continuous tolerance of the existence of Biafran Representative Office and Status in London was also another form of British reaction to Biafran propaganda. When the chances of arranging a meeting between the Prime Minister and Colonel Ojukwu was not achieved during his visit to Nigeria, the Foreign Office, on 3rd April, 1969 suggested the need for the British officialdom to make a reassessment of the pros and cons of permitting the Biafran Office in London to continue operating. It was thought that the officialdom wanted the possibility of making diplomatic contact with the Biafran leadership, but they paid a very heavy price in doing so in terms of the propaganda war being engaged by the Biafrans. It

⁸³⁹ TNA, FCO, 65 /463 / File. No JWN 22 / 4 Part A, Visits by Parliamentarians to Biafra and Nigeria, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Text of A Letter from J. Wilson to D.C. Tebbit on Possible visit to Nigeria, 9th January, 1968.

⁸⁴⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/805, File No. JWN 11/59/5A/369, Politics of Relief Resulting from Civil War in Nigeria, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Confidential Report on The Politics of Relief: Some Reflections on One Aspect of the Nigerian Civil War, p.2.

⁸⁴¹ TNA, OD, 30/168, Foreign Secretary to Lagos, 28th June, 1969.

⁸⁴² TNA, PREM, 13/2822, Foreign Office to Lagos, 20th November, 1969.

might even be that the British government had no power to prevent the Office from continuing to exist, or at least none to prevent the Biafrans who manned the Office from occupying the place. But it was suggested that the British government ought to conduct a reassessment, and get convinced that their policy of toleration was still valid.⁸⁴³ On 18th April, 1969 the Head of West African Department, John Wilson, stated that the British government had considered the issue of Biafran representative in London but came to conclusion that it would be the best idea to allow the continued operation of Biafran Office. After all, the office does not enjoy any official standing, immunities or privileges, and that they did not recognise its representative, I.S. Kogbara and his associates with the status of private citizen. He agreed that it was at times vexing that Biafrans took advantage of the British government tolerance to make vicious propaganda against Britain. For instance, during a conversation with Maurice Foley, Nnamdi Azikiwe praised the British extraordinary good naturalness in allowing Biafran Office to remain in London. Nevertheless, it was the official thinking of the British officialdom that on the balance it was desirable to allow the Biafran Office to continue operation and served as a strategic link with Biafrans and might be useful for instance, when the two sides get to the stage of working out a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Moreover, the existence of the Biafran Office enable the British government to have an insight into the policies of the Biafran government which it thought would be a difficult thing to lose. Further complication was the fact that while Kogbara was in Britain and provided he kept the law, it was very difficult to push him out as a Commonwealth citizen. To expel Kogbara would undoubtedly cause a political row which was suggested to be a mistake during the period. On the balance, John Wilson thought that it would be appropriate for the British government to allow the official continuation of the Biafran Office in London.⁸⁴⁴

On 7th October, 1969 it was suggested that it would be in the best British interest to allow the Biafrans to have an Office in London, even when the Biafran leadership had sometimes showed some disposition to close it, but it might be preferable to remove Kogbara from the office. I.S. Kogbara was accused by the British government of making inflammatory statements against them, thus, they considered either giving him a warning or sending the Biafrans a message possibly through the government of Ivory Coast, that they were not prepared to deal further with Kogbara but had no objection to the continuance of the Biafran

⁸⁴³ TNA, FCO, 65/494/1, File No. JWN 28/11/5A/368, Nigeria: Diplomatic Service and Biafra Representation in London, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Secret: Minute on Biafran Office in London from D.C. Tebbit to J. Wilson, 3rd April, 1969.

⁸⁴⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/494, John Wilson to D.C. Tebbit, 18th April, 1969.

office in London.⁸⁴⁵ Having continued the toleration of a Biafran Office in London, the British government noted that it would be politically difficult to defend a decision to force the Biafran Office in London to close down, since this would be interpreted by their critics to imply that they no longer had any interest in making effort to maintain contact or work towards a peaceful solution of the conflict. But they were determined to checkmate the conduct and activities of I.S. Kogbara which they never dream of tolerating in an accredited diplomatic representation. The British officialdom complained bitterly of a situation in which Kogbara made some sort of allegations about their policies in the war which even their most extreme critics would hesitate to make. He was also believed to have helped to organise meetings in London that led to the occupation of buildings and other manifestations which went beyond the normal exercise of free speech being made and reported in the press. The difficulties in trying to pass a message to the Biafrans through a third party about the conduct of their representative in London and the doubt of the possibility of whether the government of Ivory of Coast would relish passing on a warning to the Biafrans were mentioned. Thus, the need for a British official to contact Kogbara personally and warn him, that the British officialdom had all long been the watchdog of Britain and would continue to be, but it would appear that he had overstepped his boundaries. Kogbara was advised in his own interest not to over-step the limitations imposed even on the representative of a country whose independent existence they recognised.⁸⁴⁶

On 9th October, 1969 J. B. Johnston said that Kogbara's semantic extravagance was self-defeating. He specifically doubted whether the Kogbara's letter of 2nd October, 1969 which especially contended that the British overall security should be carelessly traded for food was to overstretch the patronage of the masses and did the Biafran cause any much good. Since the Biafran representation in London was entirely self-styled and had no official status, the British government could not very effectively close it down. Although, Kogbara could be removed but would be replaced by another person, the British officials complained that they have no means of stopping the press printing letters they might receive from Kogbara even though removed from office or any of his successors, nor stopping the Biafrans in London organising series of meetings. The British officialdom viewed that, to chase out each of the Biafran representative in turn and to deport the Igbos from London would develop a serious public debate to the detriment of British position in the civil war. Thus, there was the need not to take these excesses too seriously, and that it would be better to continue to

⁸⁴⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/494, John Wilson to D.C. Tebbit, 7th October, 1969.

⁸⁴⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/494, D.C. Tebbit to Sir J. Johnston, 8th October, 1969.

tolerate the Biafran office. It was that, if Britain eventually pressured to any sort of Parliamentary or other criticism over her attitude towards the question of Biafran representative in London, they should take the tone of a “wished father towards a silly child”, and show how tolerance they have been as evidence in their desire to leave open all doors which might lead to a peaceful settlement of the war. J. B. Johnston also suggested that Britain might sought the support of individuals like Group-Captain Cheshire or Irish Priest, when given an opportunity to speak at the Parliament, they should say that if Kogbara gets any sillier in his public utterances than it was obvious that he had built up a strong lobby over the attempt to kick him out of London.⁸⁴⁷ Then, in reaction to Biafra’s propaganda, using the instrument of Biafran representation in London, the British government adopted the argument that though they have all along recognised the Federal government as the legitimate government in Nigeria, they had equally maintained informal contact with the Biafrans as necessary. There was an unofficial Biafran Office in London and every time, they had endeavoured to welcome Biafran visitors to London as well as British and other visitors to Biafra. Despite vitriolic Biafran propaganda claims that the British government was at war with Biafra, the British officials maintained that they have always allowed Biafran representatives to come freely to London and stay as long as they liked. They tolerated the existence in London of an Unofficial Biafran Office with which they had contacts when necessary, though have no diplomatic recognition to the Biafran representatives. Privately, they saw many Biafran representatives. These included men close to Ojukwu both Commissioners and other officials. In addition, a good number of informal contacts at the official level with visiting Biafran personalities such as Sir Louis Mbanefo, Nwokedi, C.C Mojekwu, George Onyebula and others. The last occasion of contacts of Biafran with British officials was during Sir Louis Mbanefo’s visit to Britain in October 1969.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/494, J.S. Johnston to British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, 9th October, 1969.

⁸⁴⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/494, Confidential: Background Brief No.8 of Foreign Affairs Debate on Nigeria and Contacts with the Biafrans, 8th-9th, 1969.

CHAPER SIX

BRITISH AND OTHER DIMENSIONS OF BIAFRA'S PROPAGANDA, 1967-1970

This chapter examines how the British government initiated the idea of examining the effects of Biafra's propaganda and its reactions in certain European and North American countries. It discusses the various factors that prompted the British officialdom's decision in examining the effects of Biafra's propaganda and wide range of case studies as the dimensions of the effects of Biafra's propaganda. The chapter also interrogates the British counter measures against Biafra's propaganda; the use of leaflets as counter-propaganda strategy, and the influence of Biafra's propaganda on the attitudes of African countries towards the Nigerian Civil War.

6.1 Frontier of Global Reactions: British and Biafra's Propaganda in Europe and North America

During the first six weeks of the commencement of the Nigerian Civil War, it was observed that the Biafran's propaganda machinery had been comparatively, more efficient in Britain, United States of America and in other European countries than the Federalist propaganda. Undeniably, the Biafran's domestic publicity services as propagated by Radio Biafra had snowballing effects with the efforts of the BBC's journalists, such as Fredrick Forsyth. Thus, it seemed to the British officials that whilst the Federal publicity services were ineffective, they had at least taken objectivity rather than subjectivity as their guide.⁸⁴⁹ On 24th January, 1968 a British official, John Peck, from West African Department, wrote an official memo to B.R. Curson, from Information and Policy Department. He proposed that a memo should be sent to the British High Commissions in certain European and North American countries where the activities of pro-Biafran groups were most prevalent. The content of this memo included, specific request for information to ascertain the degree of the effectiveness of Biafran propaganda and how to improve the British image and propaganda efforts.⁸⁵⁰ In his famous letter, John Peck, noted:

For this purpose, we need to make a more detailed analysis of Biafra's propaganda, its channels, themes and impact upon particular sectors of international opinion; the impact of the Nigeria's information efforts, if any and the particular targets and themes... Are there, for example, any signs of a reaction against the falsity of much of the output of Radio Biafra, the operations of Markpress, and the regularity with which *Agence France Pressé* (AFP) serves as a channel for Biafran propaganda? It is not our business

⁸⁴⁹ TNA, FCO, 26/299, File No. PBM 1/310/1/PA/6C/973, Information: Nigeria's Publicity and Propaganda, Biafra, 1st January, 1967-31st December, 1969 from G.D Anderson to P.H. Moberly, 1st September, 1967.

⁸⁵⁰ TNA, FCO, 26/299, Text of Letter on the British Information Efforts in Europe by J. Peck to B.R. Curson, 24th January, 1968.

to serve as the information service of the federal government of Nigeria but we have a major interest in seeing that the Nigerian Civil War is fairly reported and our own role properly understood...⁸⁵¹

The above directive signified a systematic gathering, collection and examination of views and perceptions about the British role in the Nigerian Civil War particularly in Western Europe and United States. On 30th January, 1968, John Peck, again, dispatched a note, to Sir Roger Jackling, of the British High Commission in Bonn, Germany. He demanded full and critical study of the effects of Biafra's propaganda. For him:

In the current Nigerian situation, the Biafrans have been able, thanks largely to the highly competent activities of Markpress, to make the most of their propaganda appeals of emotive issues such as starvation of children and the defiance of the big and powerful by the small and weak. The federal government on their part had presented their case in a less able manner, and they have to rely on more intellectual arguments which do not possess the same headline value with Biafra's propaganda. In these circumstances our support of the federal government has meant that we have tended to share their odium despite the fact that our actions have throughout been directed to the ends of political instability and relief of sufferings.⁸⁵²

The idea of the British Heads of Missions in Europe and elsewhere to examine the widespread effects of Biafra's propaganda was suggested by John Wilson, the Head of West African Department, of Foreign and Commonwealth Office, on 15th January, 1968.⁸⁵³ It followed series of diplomatic discussions and exchanges, initiated between the British officials in London, and the British High Commission in Nigeria under Sir David Hunt, on the propaganda battle between the defunct Republic of Biafra, the FMG and the British government. The Nigerian Civil War was so special to the British officialdom that, it could scarcely be used as a yardstick, in judging the effectiveness of their information machinery in Europe and North America than the application process for the British entry into the European Economic Common Market.⁸⁵⁴ But, there were negative feelings within the government circle in Britain that the pro-Biafran view was put into perspective in Europe and North America, especially by the media.⁸⁵⁵ On 14th June, 1968 the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt, said that "the Biafrans had made tremendous

⁸⁵¹ TNA, FCO, 26/299, J. Peck to B.R. Curson, January, 24th January, 1968.

⁸⁵² TNA, FCO, 38/229, File No. Tx2/1/6c/1066/Part A/ Minute on Nigeria and the United Nations, by J. Peck to R. Jackling, 30th January, 1968.

⁸⁵³ TNA, FCO, 26/299, Note of Meeting on British Propaganda and Publicity Line on Nigeria, 15th January, 1968.

⁸⁵⁴ TNA, FCO, 26/299/ File No. PBM 1/310/1/ Part A, Nigeria: Information, Publicity and Propaganda about Biafra and Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1968.

⁸⁵⁵ TNA, FCO, 26/299, Information Works in Europe, 1968.

propaganda efforts and that agencies such as the International Committee of Red Cross and their officials had equally been influenced by the propaganda.⁸⁵⁶ As rightly observed by a British official:

The Biafrans had gained international sympathy by claiming that the federal government is bent on a policy of genocide. This sympathy throughout Europe and North America led to the widespread and most embarrassing criticisms of Her Majesty's Government's own policy and international image...⁸⁵⁷

The incident that involved the British Minister of Technology, Anthony Neil Wedgwood Benn, and a group of students in Germany added more impetus towards the examination of the effectiveness of Biafra's propaganda. The Minister visited Hamburg, Germany, to deliver a lecture at the Overseas Club, on 17th November, 1968. A group of German students on a systematic hunger strike, for Biafra demonstrated outside the venue of the lecture hall. The Minister invited the students and held hourly talks with them. The students thereafter, left a protest letter to the Minister which was written, in both German and English languages.⁸⁵⁸ In the letter, the students told the Minister:

The war against the Republic of Biafra and the massacre of Biafrans is only possible through the British moral, political, military, and economic supports as well as the arms supply to the Nigerian government. Britain supplied warships, uphold the blockade which caused the death of 25,000 Biafrans daily, most of them children. The British military advisers are responsible for the military success of the Nigerian Army at whose hands more and more Biafrans perish. This policy of your government is only comparable with that of the Nazi regime. As a Minister in Harold Wilson's government, you are also responsible for this policy. Your visit to Hamburg is an unbearable provocation! How can you justify this British policy and your visit to Hamburg?⁸⁵⁹

On 20th December, 1968 the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Michael Stewart, after receiving the information about the German incident asked that full detailed information explaining the political and moral reasons, justifying the British policy on the Nigerian Civil War should be send to the Minister. The Foreign Secretary expressed his views that, the German students who Benn encountered could be better

⁸⁵⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/272, File No. TX 10/1/PH/ 6C/1066, Nigeria: Defence, Arms, Legal Importation and UK General Defence Policy, by D. Hunt to E.G. Norris, 14th June, 1968.

⁸⁵⁷ Karen, E.S. 2014. The U.K. and Genocide in Biafra. *Journal of Genocide Research*, Volume 16, No.2-3. Retrieved on 7th December, 2015 from <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/5926/>, p.14.

⁸⁵⁸ TNA, FCO, 26/299, B. Wedgwood to British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 17th November, 1968.

⁸⁵⁹ TNA, FCO, 26/299, a Text of Protest Letter by Group of Biafran and German Students to the British Minister of Technology, 17th, November, 1968.

employed to help the British government in countering Biafra's propaganda in their respective countries than in flying around with a series of accusations against the British government.⁸⁶⁰ He expressed his displeasure over the apparent ineffectiveness of the British information officials in putting the British case on the war across to the global audience. He was concerned about the widespread effects of Biafran propaganda and its reactions in Europe and North America. And asked whether the British Heads of Missions have neglected to do something which might help to get across the British case in a more positive and persuasive manner and whether this particular instance pointed to a weakness in their diplomatic and information exercise generally.⁸⁶¹

The examination of the effects of Biafra's propaganda fall within the purview of the following factors; namely, the methods and instruments by which the Biafrans have used to spread their propaganda; the themes which they had purveyed; and the effects which these efforts have had. In the light of these, due consideration was given of the British interest in the civil war and the propagation of it through various channels open to the British Embassies and British Information Services in their various host countries, their counter-propaganda methods and the degree of the efforts of the Nigerian Embassies in presenting the federalist's case and arguments. Thus, the examination of the effects of Biafra's propaganda was conducted in the following Western European countries, namely Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and United States. To show the extent of the effects of Biafra's propaganda across European and North American countries, *New Nigerian* on 25th March, 1969 and in its first installment of special feature on the British role in the Nigerian Civil War said that diplomatic activities and propaganda campaigns in the major capitals of Europe and North America had intensified with every major military breakthrough by the Nigerian Armed Forces.⁸⁶²

In a report submitted to the West African Department on 13th February, 1969 the British High Commissioner to Austria, A. Rumbold, maintained that the chief instrument in stirring up anti-British feelings regarding the war in Austria were the religious organisations. They had been influenced by Markpress News Features Services which had successfully fed them Biafra's propaganda materials. In spite of this growth, the British image began to improve quiet early in Austria when Markpress reduced its daily circulation of Biafra's propaganda materials in 1968 this led to the gullible and reluctant acceptance of these propaganda materials. There was equally, some improvement in the quality of Austrian newspaper reporting. For example, through the reports of on-the-spot journalists, people

⁸⁶⁰ TNA, FCO, 26/299, N.J. Barrington to J. Wilson, 20th December, 1968.

⁸⁶¹ TNA, FCO, 26/299, J. Peck to R. Jackling, 30th January, 1968.

⁸⁶² TNA, PREM, 13/2818, Minute on the Nigerian Press on PM Visit to Nigeria, Sir David Hunt to Foreign Office, 25th March, 1969.

became more aware about the true situation of things in Nigeria. They began to pay more attention and realistic descriptions of what was going on. Many of these newspaper journalists, pointed out that, the real blame for the suffering in Nigeria lay fairly to the Nigerians themselves and not on outsiders who were involved in the civil war in one way or another. The visit of Prelate Ungor to Nigeria in September 1968 improved the British image in Austria. When Ungor returned to Austria in October 1968, he noted that, in view of the situation in Nigeria the Austrian press reports were mostly paid and that, Biafrans and the Federal government were obliged to accept equal responsibility for the continuation of the war. On 13th May, 1968 a well-produced petition with over 1,000 signatures, including one of Vienna's most prominent journalists, demanding the seizure of the British government arms deliveries to Nigeria was delivered to the British Embassy in Austria. Similar petitions were delivered to the Embassies of the United Arab Republic and Russia. The petition was well documented and couched in highly moral and idealistic language. It was handed over by two smartly dressed university students.⁸⁶³

In Canada, the major salvo the British government received over her involvement in the war came from the Biafran Union of Canada based in Ottawa and Ontario on 18th July, 1968. In a petition written to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and signed by the leaders of the Union, namely Ogbu Kalu for Toronto branch, Lawrence Nwakwesi for Montreal, John Nduaguba Kingston, Urant Wanzell Canada, and W.A. Umezina for Quebec, these Biafrans in Canada and concerned Canadians were greatly disturbed by the policy of the British government in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. According to the petition, the most important problem the British government ought to have tackled was not that of supplying relief to Biafra, but, that of bringing about immediate ceasefire and stopping arms shipment to Nigeria.⁸⁶⁴ On 8th August, 1968 another petition was sent to the British Prime Minister, through the British Trade Commission, in Montreal, Quebec by the Committee to Aid-the-Victims of the Nigeria-Biafran War. This group of Canadians and Americans with first-hand experience and interest in West Africa and its people, joined their Biafran friends in a public rally, and pleaded for a direct and immediate aid to be delivered to the suffering victims of the tragic war.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶³ TNA, FCO, 26/57/File No.IJM1/215/1, Minutes on Information, Nigerian Publicity and Propaganda, by F.D. Robins to Joint Information Policy and Guidance Department, 13th May, 1968.

⁸⁶⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/222, Text of a Petition by Biafran Union of Canada, Ottawa and Ontario to British Prime Minister, 18th July, 1968.

⁸⁶⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/222, Text of a Petition by the Biafran Association of Canada, Montreal Chapter to the British Prime Minister, 8th August, 1968.

On 19th July, 1968 Biafrans demonstrated peacefully at the British High Commission and Russian Embassy in Canada. Although, the British officials at the Commission were warned by the Canadian authorities and by radio, and press announcements to expect about 200 demonstrators who were to converge on Ottawa from Montreal, Quebec, Kingston and Toronto. In the event, only thirty Biafrans turned up and only half of these were Africans others were Canadian sympathisers. They came on time in the clear afternoon and proceeded peaceably to parade in front of the British High Commission with placards declaring that military approach would not solve the Nigeria-Biafran problem that a million might die. Some of the placards were intended for the British government with the inscription like "is the just Society only for Canada?". The press, TV and radio stations warned by the demonstrator's announcements were well represented. The demonstrators presented a letter to the British officials. After reading the letter, the officials of the High Commission informed them that, the British government had made concerted efforts towards resolving the conflict. When they handed their letter to an official of Russian Embassy they were told by the Russian official that their letter was very insulting to his government and he refused to accept it. The demonstrators then went to the Canadian External Affairs Department where an official received them and accepted a letter on behalf of the Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau. The Ottawa and Toronto press reported the event the following day but without comment.⁸⁶⁶

Visiting leader of the Canadian Senate, Paul Martin, who was received by Ivory Coast President, Houphouet-Boigny on 4th December, 1968 was given an emotional account of the sufferings of Biafrans. Houphouet had been categorical that the Biafrans would never abandon their independence. Though in years to come they might agree to some form of association with the rest of Nigeria. The Canadian Senator said that the President had given him an account of what he had instructed Usher to say in London. He added that Houphouet expected the British public opinion to exert a growing influence on the Her Majesty Government's attitude towards Biafra. According to the Canadian *Charge d'affaires* who was present at the meeting the question of arms supplies by Ivory Coast to Biafra was not raised.⁸⁶⁷

In Denmark, the Biafran Student Union in Denmark wrote a petition to the British Prime Minister, through the British Ambassador in Copenhagen. These students strongly protested against the British involvement in what they tagged as a war of aggression and

⁸⁶⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/222, W.N. Hugh-Jones to D.C. Tebbit, 26th July, 1968.

⁸⁶⁷ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, from D.J. Cheke to Lagos, 6th December, 1968.

genocide against the peace-loving Biafrans. According to them, it was true that the war was planned and sustained by Britain. The British-made bombs destroyed the civilians in their thousands; the British mercenaries were employed by the Nigerian invader to kill Biafrans. They further protested against the lies the British told the world. It was also shocking to note that, the BBC was used as a propaganda medium to enhance the effort of the British government in that war. If Britain supported genocide in Biafra, why not use force in Rhodesia to suppress their revolution? The Union queried the British Prime Minister. The fact that, four African countries recognised Biafra, and that, others had defended their cause, clearly indicated the justice of the Biafran struggle. If Britain had regard for African lives, she should have called off intrusion in the whole civil war affair. The world was aware of the fact that, there had never been any basis for unity in the Nigerian federation and that Biafra was pushed out of Nigeria. A State was then created to serve and protect its people. Nigeria was unable to give Biafra any protection, thus, had the inalienable right to self-determination. Authority and responsibility went hand-in-hand. Nigeria wanted authority without responsibility. Biafra did not believe that unity and peace could be won by sheer force; rather they had demonstrated their unity in pursuit of their cause. Britain should recognise this and stop waging war against those who had good intentions towards the British people. Britain and Nigeria would be answerable to the bar of history for atrocities they had committed in Biafra. There could not be any solution of the Nigeria-Biafra conflict except the recognition of Biafra.⁸⁶⁸ On 1st May, 1969 the Danish Biafra Committee sent a letter to the British Embassy in Copenhagen. They noted that, according to the various press reports, including the Swedish national dailies, *Dagens Nyheter*, Britain like the Soviet Union from the beginning of March 1969 was said to have supplied military planes to the FMG. They were said to be aircraft of the Hastings type normally used for transport only but were of a variant. Various authorities in this field including the distinctive Swedish Air Captain, Carl Gustaf Von Rosen, had claimed that aircraft of this type were used to attack a children's hospital at Umuahia on 21st February, 1969 when Biafrans mostly women and children were killed. In reaction to this allegation, the British Embassy in Europe particularly at Stockholm informed the Swedish press know as *Dagens Nyheter* that Britain had not supplied air craft for the

⁸⁶⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/222/File No. 5865307/7625718/45C/6C/1066, Minutes on Nigeria Political Affairs and Internal Demonstrations. A Text of Petition by Biafran Students Union of Denmark to Harold Wilson, 30th May, 1968.

bombing of Africa's 39th State, Biafra. The Committee therefore, asked the British Embassy whether Great Britain supplied Aircraft to the FMG, and how many and of which type?⁸⁶⁹

The leading figure that championed the Biafra struggle in France was Francois Debré, the son of French Foreign Minister, Michael Debré. Francois was a young writer, who had worked for the periodical "*Afrigue*" for three years. He was a notable advocate of Biafran cause in France, having travelled widely in Africa and equally visited Biafra in 1968. His major contribution in boosting Biafran propaganda in France was his notable article titled "Biafra" which was published in one of the French newspaper named, *Le-Monde*, on 5th December, 1968. In his article, he strongly criticised the policies of the British government towards Nigeria. He attributed it to the major cause of the civil war. The huge support he gave to the Biafran cause threw much light to position of his father, Debré Pere Michael, in the civil war. For one of the element that contributed to the pro-Biafran shifting stance of French foreign policy in the civil war was the change of foreign minister. While the former Foreign Minister, M. Couve de Murville, remained cool and cautious to the Nigerian Civil War, P. Michel Debré adopted an essentially emotional mystic attitude to the Igbos. In his article Francois Debré, held Great Britain responsible for the state of affairs in Nigeria. For him, the British government wanted the Northerners to take vengeance against the Igbos. The English administrators have had a grudge against the Igbos since 1930s. The support which Britain gave to the federal government served, only to limit the chances of success of peace negotiations and missions of mediations. Francois gave prominence to the anti-British remarks by Colonel Ojukwu. To the effect that the British record in Nigeria had been one of uninterrupted violence, trickery and exploitation, and that individual friendliness between British and Biafrans was unknown. Francois Debré alleged that, Britain aided the Federal government in the war with armoured tanks but also with military instructors and pilots. The British policy was attributed to the interests of Shell-BP, Unilever and Anglo-Saxon economic imperialism.

Meanwhile, Francois defended French policy in the civil war. He said that it was an understood and approved policy in Europe and Africa. French help was originally in food and medicine. But, since the beginning of September, 1967 had equally taken the form of military assistance from certain circles which the French government preferred to overlook. As for the Igbos, Debré stated that, they were neither a group nor a tribe, a class or elites, but a nation. As far as such minorities, namely, the Ijaws, and Efik were concerned their persecutors were

⁸⁶⁹ TNA, Prem, 13/2820, Text of A Letter from the Danish Biafra Committee to the British Embassy, Copenhagen, 1st May, 1969.

not the Igbos but the federal authorities. Francois Debré's criticisms of the British colonial policy in Nigeria generated widespread reactions notably in France and in London.⁸⁷⁰ In a letter dated 4th December, 1968 the British Embassy in Paris considered Francois's article as a major factor that boosted Biafra's propaganda in France and thereby, made it difficult for their policy and positions in the Nigerian Civil War to be accepted by the French public. To this end, a counter-propaganda move was adopted, aimed at defending the British colonial policy in Nigeria. It was suggested that, an independent scholar or authority experienced in African affairs could be commissioned to write an article that would immediately debunk most of Francois Debré assertions. This article could be written and published in *Le-Monde*, the same newspaper that, Francois published his own article. In furtherance of this proposal, Margery Perham was commissioned to write the article.⁸⁷¹

On 7th February, 1969 the British and French officials were engaged in an intense argument over the Nigerian Civil War. At the meeting of the Western European Union after Lord Chalfont, Minister of State at the Foreign Office said that Ojukwu, the Biafran leader, was the real obstacle both to a negotiated settlement and relief services. M. Jean de Lipkowski, the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, replied that, the obstacle did not come from the Biafran side, and that, a French hospital in Biafra was bombed twice by the federal air force. M. de Lipkowski told the audience at the meeting that Biafra was a reality, thus, the FMG had shown itself incapable to reduce it. He deplored the fact that, no settlement was possible and, in the meantime, emergency relief was very paramount. As a result, France organised an airlift for this purpose from Libreville in Gabon. In his statement, Lord Chalfont said that, the war was primarily an African problem, and that, Africans did not welcome European interference. The meeting also heard an appeal from the Italian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Signor Mario Zagari, for a total embargo on arms deliveries to Nigeria and Biafra. He added that, the W.E.U. should take the initiative to bring about a ceasefire.⁸⁷² A young Gaullist Deputy, M. Jean-Claude Fortuit, attacked Britain at a public meeting in Paris, France. He said that, the British government inspired the 1966 coup in Nigeria and was deeply implicated in the assassination of General Aguiyi Ironsi. He added that, during his visit to Biafra, he was told that, the British officialdom took part in the programme of killings, torture, and murder of children and slitting of pregnant women's stomachs. M. Foruit, who stayed in Biafra for three days, with another Gaullist Deputy, M.

⁸⁷⁰TNA, FCO, 26/299, I. Fielding to West African Department Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 10th December, 1968.

⁸⁷¹ TNA, FCO, 26/299, Extracts from Dame Margery Perham's Article in Answer to Debre Viewpoint on Nigeria, 10th December, 1968.

⁸⁷² P. Strafford, British Clash with France on Biafra, 7th February, 1969. *Politik*, p.1.

Alain Terrendoire, accused Britain of having encouraged discord in Nigeria with the use of the ancient principle of divide and rule.⁸⁷³ He said:

The English were worried that the Igbos would organise a unified high level cadre, so after the coup they organised a counter-coup with Gowon as its head in order to impose Mohammedanism on a Christian country. Britain started the Nigerian war by refusing to allow the oilfields to escape the British control. They had helped directly in the movement of Nigerian troops. Britain had continued to take part in atrocities and the wide scale delivery of arms. Federal troops executed everyone they found in towns and villages. In a Red Cross hospitals in Northern Biafra the patients were murdered in their beds and the doctors and staffs, including Europeans, shot as they tried to protect the sick.⁸⁷⁴

Germany was a major country hit by Biafra's propaganda in Europe. This was due to the involvement of the German churches on the Biafran side from the early beginning of the civil war. For instance, it was on record that the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Germany had began to receive convincing reports about the war as early as the autumn of 1967 mainly through reports from missionaries in the Eastern Region and by visiting Igbo priests to Germany. They noted that the civil war represented quite simply a Hausa/Fulani Jihad against the predominantly Christian Igbos. The anti-British feelings in Germany began to arouse with the visit to Germany, of, Sir Francis Ibiem, a former Governor of Eastern Nigeria and one of the six presidents of the World Council of Churches. Francis was easily able to convince the leaders of the Evangelical Church, of the justness of the Biafran cause. His visit coincided with serious deterioration of food situation in Biafra which further aroused the consciences of the German people. The Evangelical Church immediately launched a vigorous two-pronged fund-raising campaign for the starving women and children in Biafra. On one hand, they awakened the press interest over the civil war, with coverage of pictures of human disaster. From the pulpits, all over the country, they exhorted their parishioners with the messages that, "to remain silent and inactive in the face of a tragedy of the magnitude of the "Jewish final solution", would mean that on judgment day they would have to bear their share of responsibility for it". Needless to say that, the Catholic Church wasted no time in weighing into the civil war with a similar campaign for support of their own Caritas Organisation which went even further than their competitors in search for lurid adjectives.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷³ *Sunday Telegraph, Feb. 9th, 1969.*

⁸⁷⁴ *Sunday Telegraph, Feb. 9th, 1969.*

⁸⁷⁵ TNA, FCO, 26/300, R.W. Jackling to J.H. Peck, 10th February, 1969.

The press and television in Germany were engaged in showcasing the pictures of starving and dying children conveniently provided by Biafrans. Germans attributed the outbreak of the war to the mistakes and selfish greed of the former Nigeria's colonial power, Britain, a story line that was provided to them by Francis Ibiam.⁸⁷⁶ The activities of pro-Biafran sympathisers in Germany was so strong that the effort made by the British Information Service to persuade editors to give space to the sound and logical arguments behind the British government policy regarding the war met with virtually no success. The Society for the Promotion of Arts and Sciences was one of the notable pro-Biafra organisations that championed the Biafran cause in Germany. It had headquarters in both Berlin and Kampala, Uganda. The head of the organisation was a German citizen known as Guentes Meissner and Ernst Zivier. In the Second World War, Meissner was a paratrooper who later became an actor. His last active service was in the encircled Nazi garrison at the French Atlantic seaport at Brest in 1945. Meissner was a personal friend of Colonel Ojukwu, the Biafran leader. Him and his Secretary, a theology student, raised £20,000 to cover the cost of airlift of food to Biafra. The organisation wrote a petition concerning the plight of Biafrans in the civil war. They stated that, the secession of Biafra need not be regarded as final; rather a sovereign state would be expected to be willing to fit itself into a greater comity of nations. The reunification of all the Nigerian peoples should be the political responsibility of all African nations. However, it could only be reached on the principle of free decision, humanity and mutual trust. It could not be enforced by military pressure. Within the context of Nigeria's political development, it was not likely that a foundation of mutual trust exists necessary for the successful integration of the people of Biafra into the Nigerian federation. This view was expressed in the comments on the problem of Biafra which the President of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere and the French Council of Ministers published. The group stated that the right to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, referred to different international treaties, and it had several times been confirmed by the Executive Committees of the United Nations, especially on the resolution of the plenary session of 16th December, 1952.⁸⁷⁷

On 12th February, 1969 the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, visited Germany for a diplomatic talk with the German government officials. While in Bonn, Harold Wilson and German Chancellor, Kurt Kiesinger, were trying to sort out some of their differences

⁸⁷⁶ TNA, FCO, 26/300, R.W. Jackling to J.H. Peck, 10th February, 1969.

⁸⁷⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/202/File No. JW1/2/PA/5A/368, Minutes on Nigerian Civil War and British Meeting with the Public. A Text of Petition from the Society for the Promotion of Arts and Science to Harold Wilson, 13th October, 1968.

against a local uprising in Germany. As the Prime Minister arrived at the Town Hall for a civic reception about five hundred Biafran and German students screamed “Wilson murderer”. Later, plastic bags filled with “animal blood” were thrown at his car and others in the British convoy. This frightening performance came from the demonstrators, protesting against Wilson’s government’s policy of arms supply to the FMG.⁸⁷⁸ As early as 30th April, 1968 a report was delivered to the British government by the British Information Officer in Switzerland that the Swiss had began to criticise the British arms supply to Nigeria. He said that, “a Swiss newspaper, *Tages-Nachrichten* of Munsingen near Berne wrote an article which was typical of many other articles on the subject of the Nigerian Civil War. The paper accused the British officialdom of supporting genocide by providing arms and other military aids for the Nigerian government. He went on to deliver to the British government other similar articles from *Der Bund* and the *Neue Zurcher Zeitung*. He noted:

For over a while the situation changed but, they needed propaganda materials which they could use to combat Biafran propaganda and public opinion in Switzerland. In that, such opinions were held by many influential Swiss, and Swiss official often approached them at social functions, demanding for such materials, thus he emphasised that if we are properly briefed, we have a chance of meeting this criticisms... Swiss memories are long and that there may not be much they can send, but the publicity of these Swiss articles are exceedingly damaging to them in Switzerland which is pro-Smith in the Rhodesian question.⁸⁷⁹

The later remarks showed the extent the Swiss morally supported Biafra which required a major effort and could take a long time to change their minds. On May 2nd, 1968 the British Information Officer wrote again to the British government. He said that, it was clear that, a wave of strident publicity was been mounted in Switzerland in which Britain was roundly accused of supporting genocide.⁸⁸⁰ A National Councillor and a Senior Federal official in Swiss government on a separate occasion became very angry with the British Head of Chancery in Switzerland, when he tried to put the British case to them. Faced with this ugly situation, it was not easy to explain the British position in the war in a calm atmosphere. The attitude of most Swiss was that Biafrans were right beyond any reasonable doubt. It was a waste of time to listen to any other views contrary in these circumstances. The report that the Nigerian Army bombed a Red Cross hospital in Biafra confirmed the Swiss anger and

⁸⁷⁸ *Evening News*, 12th February, 1969.

⁸⁷⁹ TNA, FCO, 26/57/File No. IJM1/215/1/6C/974, Minutes on Information, Nigerian Publicity and Propaganda, by P. Arengo-Jones to N. W.H. Gaydon, 30th April, 1968.

⁸⁸⁰ TNA, FCO, 26/57, P. Arengo-Jone to N. W.H. Gaydon, 2nd May, 1968.

rekindled their pro-Biafra views of the civil war. Such action by the Nigerian Army Forces whether true or not added very considerably, to the difficulties of projecting the British and federalist case in Switzerland. Biafran propaganda in Switzerland was mainly disseminated by Markpress in Geneva, right on the British doorstep, using all available information media.⁸⁸¹

Igbos and other pro-Biafran visitors to Switzerland served as the most important catalysts in projecting Biafran propaganda in Switzerland. For example, Sir Akanu Francis Ibiam, former Governor of Eastern Nigeria who in his capacity as a Vice President of the World Council of Churches had a direct contact with the leaders of the churches in Switzerland he lectured with great effect, in various Swiss towns, this opened up all the pulpits in Switzerland to pro-Biafran propaganda. Other less distinguished Biafrans equally lectured in Switzerland. Francis found a ready hearing for his lectures, by large groups of influential Swiss, and steady and toiling tricks of other church dignitaries, doctors and students. Having won the full sympathy of the Swiss, Francis Ibiam left no stone unturned to bring pressure to bear on the British Embassy in Switzerland, its Consular Posts and directly on the authorities in London to stop the sale of arms to Nigeria. To this end, the British Embassy and its Consular Posts at Basle and Zurich received up to forty letters and petitions per a day, most of them couched in strongest terms. Many Swiss populace called the British government “murders and the word “genocide” which frequently appeared in the public opinion domain, on a daily bases. For instance, two Northern Swiss newspapers published a form for protest with a space for signatures, for their readers with instructions that, they should be signed and posted to Queen of England, British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, the British Embassy in Switzerland, and it’s Consular Posts all over the country. Many of these forms were received by the British Embassy. Signatures for petitions were collected on the streets and handed over to the Embassy and Consular Posts. The Consulate in Basel was smeared with pro-Biafran signatures. Numerous organisations collected money for Biafra throughout the country an exercise that continued until the end of the war.⁸⁸²

From 3rd to 4th September, 1968, the Foreign Ministers of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway, assembled for their annual Nordic Foreign Ministers meeting in Stockholm. At the end of the meeting, they agreed to send a message to the United Nations Secretary-General, U-Thant. This was based on the Joint Nordic Government statement of 14th August, 1968, other Nordic initiatives and appeals. The Foreign Ministers informed the

⁸⁸¹ TNA, FCO, 26/300, P. Arengo-Jones to West African Department, 6th March, 1969.

⁸⁸² TNA, FCO, 26/300, P. Arengo-Jones to West African Department, 6th March, 1969.

UN Secretary-General that they had discussed extensively the possibilities of alleviating the sufferings of the civilian population in Nigeria which had caused great anxiety among the global community. In this connection they expressed their appreciation of the efforts which the Secretary-General and his representatives made to give aid to the population. In view of the central position which the Secretary-General held in respect of the humanitarian work the Ministers requested that, he would indicate what measures in his opinion could be considered in the civil war. The Ministers pledged the continued participation of their governments in the relief operations and assured the Secretary-General of their full support of such initiatives as he requested.⁸⁸³

Another major effect of Biafran propaganda in Sweden was the launching of an appeal by the Eighty-Three eminent Swedish and Finish Scholars, Scientists and Nobel Prize Winners, on 20th April, 1969. They appealed to the British government to consider its responsibility for all Nigerians, including Biafra and to stop its arms support. The appeal was reported in the *London Times* on 26th April, 1969. The Scandinavians delivered their plea in a petition to the British Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, through Professor Gustaf Siren on 25th April, 1969. It was received by Kenneth Mackenzie, the Swedish *Charge'd'Affarés*. The petition cited Britain's record as a socially concerned nation and regretted the British military aid to Nigeria which was inconsistent with this concern. In addition, the petition called on Britain to strive for an immediate peaceful solution to the conflict.⁸⁸⁴ The Eighty-three signatories in the context of their positions were people of real distinction and with implacable character. Their participation in the appeal was an indicative of the unsatisfactory state of educated opinion on the Nigerian conflict in Sweden and presumably in Finland. The British government took notice of the appeal by the Scandinavians and proposed that, the British Ambassador in Sweden should send a personally signed replied diplomatic letter to the Swedish signatories after a reasonable period of time had elapsed. This might take the form of a brief letter enclosing a booklet on the British view in the Nigerian Civil War which was previously send to Paris France on 29th April, 1969. Furthermore, it was suggested that, publicity would be mounted on the proposed letter. With the view that the appeal by the Scandinavians had been read and received with sympathy and concern by the prominent British Ministers, and that, the signatories would find a reasoned statement of the British govern policy together with a historical review of the cause of the Nigerian Civil War as enclosed in the letter. Thereafter, copies of the booklets on the British view on the Nigeria

⁸⁸³ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, A Text of Letter sent to the United Nations Secretary-General by the Foreign Ministers of Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Finland, 3rd September, 1968.

⁸⁸⁴ *The Times*, 26th April, 1969.

conflict was sent to the British Embassy in Stockholm to be delivered to the eminent signatories of the appeal. This was higher than fifty copies of the booklets ordered by the Embassy.⁸⁸⁵

On 10th June, 1969 a Swedish Professor of Neurology, Eric Kugelberg, wrote an official letter to the British Embassy in Stockholm. He criticised the British government for their involvement in the Nigerian Civil War. He said:

I am in receipt of the publication of the British pamphlet on the conflict in Nigeria. It was an astonishing and indeed wholehearted plea for the aggressor with many worn-out arguments for the moral justification of aggression. What is clear is that the military aid given by Britain to Nigeria had contributed to the death of over 1 million Igbos and countless children, if they survive, will have contracted irreversible brain damage due to lack of protein. The publication by Her Majesty's Government, with its strong support for Nigeria, gives rise to a strong suspicion that Britain has not only supplied military equipment but also military advisors, who have planned the strategy leading to the hunger and blockade of Biafra. I consider the Nigerian aggression an extremely serious crime for which the British government is also responsible. I do not agree that the attitude of Her Majesty's Government towards this tragic conflict is full and consistent with its recorded support for the advancement of humanity and social welfare.⁸⁸⁶

The main points which particularly stuck out in relation to Biafra's propaganda and its effectiveness in the United States were the extremely intensive lobby which they managed to achieve in the inner circles of the United States government through the concern citizens and the fact that the greatest part of the Biafran case was presented by Americans themselves to other Americans and not by individual Biafran spokesmen.⁸⁸⁷ It was strategic to stress that United States was a country highly influenced by television and radio broadcasting. Virtually all the media in the US operated at least sixteen hours per day and they were commercial in nature and therefore their services could be bought or donated to the benefit of almost any cause. Added to these two art forms were the newspapers which played a substantive role in the Biafran propaganda war. In a minor way these newspapers consisted of news articles from reporters on the spot. These have been relatively few and far between, though there have been a notable series of pro-Biafran reports from individuals such as Lloyd Garrison of

⁸⁸⁵ TNA, FCO, 26/301/File No. PBM1/310/1/PC/6C/973, Minutes on Information, Nigerian Publicity and Propaganda, Biafra, by D.D. Brown to J. Wilson, 30th April, 1969.

⁸⁸⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/289, File No. JWN 3/363/PC/5A/368, Nigeria: Swedish Attitude towards the Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Text of A Letter from Eric Kugelberg to the British Embassy, Stockholm Sweden, 10th June, 1969.

⁸⁸⁷ TNA, FCO, 26/300, E.E. Tomkins to J.H. Pecks, 21st March, 1969.

New York Times which was widely syndicated. But more eye-catching to the media sources have been the full paged picture and advertisement appealing for funds and accusation of the FMG of committing genocide. Perhaps even more effective than the use of public information media was the personal lobbying done not so much by individual Biafrans, but by Americans who for one reason or the other fell for their case and then propagated it freely for them.⁸⁸⁸

On 5th July 1968, a group of students came to the British High Commission Office in New York. They infiltrated singly into the British Information Service Reading Room, and invested the lift lobby in the mission thus gained access to the main building of the mission. Since the offices were in a public building it was practically impossible to prevent the incident from occurring. The police responded quickly and the Biafrans were confined to the areas they had invested. The primary concern of the British Mission in New York during the demonstration was to prevent any violent incident from occurring. Some of the Biafrans were in an unpredictable mood; one had received information that, his brother was killed, but then, they were comparatively reasonable in their conduct if not in their statements. Biafrans had demonstrated against the British mission in the past and thereafter, handed over a protest letter to the commission before leaving.⁸⁸⁹ Another demonstration spearheaded by Biafrans in the US took place on 2nd August, 1968. Biafrans protested in front of the British High Commission Office in New York. The Embassy officials were given advance notice by the police, who turned out in force to protect the Embassy office. The embassy was warned that, about five hundred demonstrators might come for the event. In the event, they numbered about 35, mainly local Igbo Students. Three of them were allowed into the Embassy and were received by Iyn Lyth the Administration Counsellor. They did not present a petition, although they said had promised to prepare one for immediate delivery to the British Ambassador. They tried to deliver a mock coffin, but, the British officials at the embassy refused to receive it, but, they later heard that, the police had took the coffin away. While given vent vocally to their views about British policy in Nigeria, they were well-mannered and not aggressive. To the surprise of the British officials, they were not accompanied by the press and no report of the demonstration appeared in the local newspapers.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁸⁸ TNA, FCO, 26/300, Memorandum on Biafran Propaganda Effort in the United States of America, 27th March, 1969.

⁸⁸⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/222, United Kingdom Mission New York to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 5th July, 1968.

⁸⁹⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/222, R.J.R Owen to P.D. McEntee, 6th August, 1968.

At the British Embassy in Washington, series of letters of protest were received by the British officials from different non-governmental organisations, in United States, namely, the Fairfield County Connecticut Food for Biafra Committee and from three to four individuals protesting against Britain's role in the Nigerian-Biafra dispute. They proposed to support an American boycott of British goods.⁸⁹¹ In reacting to the threat to boycott the British goods US, R.J.R. Owen of British Embassy informed the West and General Africa Department, on 13th September, 1968 said that, it was true, that, the vast majority of the United States public were dimly aware of the civil war in Nigeria if at all. Those who were aware of it and very vocal, however, were very sympathetic to Biafra. Thus, the fact that, the US general public were generally ill-informed about the civil war and unaware of its historical background had tended to help the Biafrans. Their over-simplified picture of the issues was more easily accepted, particularly so in the absence of any concrete efforts being made by the FMG to explain their case.⁸⁹²

Eminent personalities both within the US government, Congress and society in general supported the Biafran cause in the United States. These individuals made their opinion known about the civil war tragedy and contributed their quota in one way or the other on the need to end the civil war. Among these personalities was Senator M. Edward Kennedy. Senator M. Edward Kennedy had been at the forefront of support and sympathy for Biafra in the United States. For instance, on 23rd September, 1968 the Senator made a statement about the Nigerian Civil War at the floor of the United States Senate. He said that, for more than a year, civil war in Nigeria had divided a once promising federation and produced human destruction of gigantic proportions. Each day, journalists and cameramen, missionaries and relief workers, dispatch to an uncomprehending world of the cold, nearly all wandering fearful and penniless through the bush; casualties, some ten times greater than those in Vietnam; and over a million children, and thousands of others, died of starvation at a rate which grew too well 300 per day to over 7, 000 later.⁸⁹³ On 25th September, 1968, a British Official at the British Embassy in Washington, R.J.R Owen informed the Foreign Office that, the speech delivered by Edward Kennedy on Biafra was the first since the assassination of his brother, J. F. Kennedy. And that this was the principal reason for the wider publicity the speech received when compared to those of President Richard Nixon and H. Humphrey. He also revealed that, Senator Thomas Dodo later joined the league of US

⁸⁹¹ TNA, FCO, 38/237, L.E.T. Storar to D.V. Bendall, 5th September, 1968.

⁸⁹² TNA, FCO, 38/237, R.J.R. Owen to P.D. McEntee, 13th September, 1968.

⁸⁹³ TNA, FCO, 38/237, Official Press Statement by M. Edward Kennedy, 23rd September, 1968.

Senators that supported the Biafran cause. The Senator had earlier, strongly advised for an air drop of relief supplies to the civilian populations.⁸⁹⁴

On 29th May, 1969 Bruce Mayrock, a 19 years-old Columbia University student was too disturbed about the pictures of starving Biafran children and the genocide. He wrote letters to the American Senators and President, individuals, Christian organisations, and United Nations, and called on them to assist Biafrans. Mayrock lamented that, the Biafrans had faced extermination. All these people, the United Nations inclusive, could not do anything. Thereafter, he went to the front of the United Nations building and doused himself with gasoline, struck a match and set himself on fire on the lawn of the United Nations. When they were chasing him to put away the fire he was running with the inferno. He ran until he collapsed. He was taken to the Bellevue Hospital and by mid-night on 30th May, 1969 he died. Ojukwu was so humbled that, a 19 year old boy sacrificed his life for a people he never knew, thousands of miles away. His parents were unhappy that, he sacrificed himself. But, he told his priest that it was the only way he could get the attention required, from the United Nations, to take notice and save the lives of Biafrans.⁸⁹⁵ Mayrock carried a protest sign which reads, “You must stop genocide, please save nine million Biafrans”. The sign was found by the guards who extinguished the flames around his body when they rushed him to the hospital. Bruce Mayrock was described by Rabbi who was a close friend of him as “an idealistic young man, deeply upset about the events in Biafra”. People were killed and he felt that, no one had done anything. Funeral services were held in Rockville Centre, New York for him. Many Biafrans, resident in the New York area attended the services and presented flowers to the family of the deceased.⁸⁹⁶ The death of Bruce Mayrock coincided with the celebration of two years of the declaration of Biafra Republic, held on 30th May, 1969. This celebration was marked by Biafrans both at home and abroad. Bruce London writing in the *London Daily Telegraph* of 30th May, 1969 said that, in Biafra, the day was designated time of reflection and thanksgiving. Biafra Head of State spoke to the members of the Biafran Armed Forces. In his speech Colonel Ojukwu recounted the struggle of the last two years and praised the Biafran Armed Forces for having been able to endure for so long in the face of almost insurmountable odds. Biafran Radio, said that, thousands of Biafrans attended the memorial service and kept vigils on Thursday night to mark the anniversary.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁴ TNA, FCO, 38/237, R.J.R. Owen to P.D. McEntee, 25th September, 1968.

⁸⁹⁵ *Vanguard*, 3rd December, 2016.

⁸⁹⁶ Current News from and about Biafra, 1969. *Man Burns Self to Death to Protest Biafran Genocide*, Number 5.

⁸⁹⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 30th May, 1969.

In the United States, Biafrans participated in dances and marches in a number of cities. In New York, Biafrans and some Americans assembled in front of the United Nations building. After observing a minute silence for Bruce Mayrock the group began to march through midtown, Manhattan. The marchers sang Biafran songs to drum accompaniment. They carried signs urging the US government to follow the examples of Senator McCarthy and recognise Biafra. They noted that peaceful solution to the war was the real solution to the death in Biafra. At Columbus Circle Biafran representatives for the US and Canada, Otue spoke and another minute of silence was observed for Bruce Mayrock. Charles Kenyatta equally spoke. He said that Biafra flag would become a symbol of freedom for the newly oppressed people of the world. In the evening, dance was held at the Hotel Diplomat in New York. About a thousand persons attended the event, including representatives of the countries which recognised Biafra, namely, Dick Tiger, Pious Okigbo and Charles Kenyatta.⁸⁹⁸

One popular organisation that supported the Biafra case in the United States particularly in New York was the American Committee to Keep Biafra Alive. This organisation was genuinely run by the Americans themselves, although, it undoubtedly worked in close cooperation with the Biafran office in United States. This Committee had collected signatures for petitions addressed to the British Ambassador, Sir Patrick Dean and the United States Secretary of States. The total number of signatures on the petitions sent to the British Embassy ran to about 5, 000.⁸⁹⁹ For instance, in one of the petition signed by the American Committee to Keep Biafra Alive and sent to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, through the British Ambassador to the United State, the organisation noted:

We the undersigned, as citizens of the world, cannot be silent witnesses to the catastrophe facing the Biafran people. We abhor Britain's continued military involvement which had made possible a war of genocide against the Igbo people. In realisation of the untold suffering caused by this war, for which Britain bears the major responsibility, it is beyond our comprehension as to how Britain can continue to participate in this crime against humanity.⁹⁰⁰

On 3rd July, 1969 a group of fifteen young people, some of them were Biafrans, demonstrated in front of the United Nations building and then, in front of the British High Commission in New York. The British officials reported that, the demonstrators were noisy, but, nonviolent. Also, they were warned by the New York police that, they would come. The police stationed one of their officers in each of the four floors of the Commission. A British

⁸⁹⁸ *Washington Post*, 31st May, 1969.

⁸⁹⁹ TNA, FCO, 38/237, R.J.R. Owen to P.D. McEntee, 13th September, 1968.

⁹⁰⁰ TNA, FCO, 38/237, Text of Petition by American Committee to Keep Biafra Alive to the British Prime Minister, September, 1968.

official, N.M. Fenn, spend an hour with the delegation of the two groups; namely Paul Connett, President of the Committee to Keep Biafra Alive and who was also a British citizen. The other was Emmanuel Isu, President of the New York Chapter of the Biafra Association. The group demanded that Her Majesty's Government should stop supplying arms to the FMG.⁹⁰¹ At a rally held at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, in New York City on 14th September, 1968, sponsored by the American Committee to Keep Biafra Alive, the Vice President of the Citizen for Humphrey-Muskie delivered a speech concerning the Nigerian Civil War. The speech was read by George Backer, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Citizens for Humphrey-Muskie also author and former publisher of the *New York Post* and former member of the Council of the City of New York.⁹⁰²

6.2 Biafra and Recognition by African Countries

The major effect of Biafra's propaganda in Africa was in the area of recognition of the defunct Republic of Biafra. As early as 21st April, 1967 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said that, judging by the way events were moving in Nigeria the declaration of the Republic of Biafra might soon lead to a clamour for recognition of the state by majority of countries in Africa, Europe and North America.⁹⁰³ Just a day after the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, a prominent daily newspaper in Tanzania known as *Nationalist*, on 31st May, 1967 reported in its headline "Tanzania Regrets Ojukwu Decision" that, a Tanzanian spokesman at the Foreign Affairs Office had said that, Tanzania stands by the principle and resolutions of the OAU, which recognised the territorial integrity of its Member States as at the time they achieved independence. He added that, Tanzania could only regret the decision of the Eastern Nigeria to secede from the rest of the federation. The situation in Nigeria was an unhappy analogy to that of the Congo, Katanga in 1961 when Katanga under then Tshombe made an abortive attempt to secede from the rest of the Congo. Besides, the Central African Federation which had been imposed on the people by the British colonialist, the only federation in Africa that had been dissolved was that of Mali in 1960 when both Senegal and Mali withdrew from the federation and proclaimed their separate independence.⁹⁰⁴

Contrary to the above official statement from the Tanzanian government, on 29th September, 1967 top secret information was intercepted by the British High Commission in

⁹⁰¹ TNA, FCO, 65/243, File No. JWN 2/3/PA/5A/368/ Nigeria: Political Affairs, Multilateral, and United Nations Attitude towards the Nigerian Civil War, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969 Minutes on Biafran and United Nations by United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations to West African Department, 7th July, 1969.

⁹⁰² TNA, FCO, 38/237, Press Release on the Demonstrations by the Citizens for Humphrey-Muskie, 14th September, 1968.

⁹⁰³ TNA, FCO, 25/234, Minute from E.G. Norris to C.M. Le Quesne, 21st April, 1967.

⁹⁰⁴ *The Nationalist*, 31st May, 1967.

Dar es Salam that there seemed to be the possibility and imminent Tanzania's recognition of Biafra.⁹⁰⁵ On 10th December, 1967, Biafran Mission accompanied by former Premier of Eastern Nigeria, Michael Okpara, arrived in Tanzania. At a press conference held on 11th December, 1967 Okpara said that, the purpose of the visit was to give correct picture of what was happening between Nigeria and Biafra and to correct the extravagant claims made by the federal government that it was overpowering the secessionist state. He said that, "Nigeria will not win the war in spite of internationalising it. They have the support of Britain and Russia. The British Broadcasting Corporation was their greatest weapon". Okpara described his talks with President Julius Nyerere as very satisfactory.⁹⁰⁶ In reaction to Biafra and Tanzanian romance, the British officialdom said on 15th February, 1968 that although, Tanzania was emotionally inclined towards Biafra and it would not hesitate to recognise it.⁹⁰⁷ On 5th March, 1968 the Dar es Salam press reported the joint *communiqué* issued in Dakar following President Nyerere's state visit to Senegal, on 3rd March, 1968. Both Nyerere and Senghor, President of Senegal said that, "they have noted with great concern, the deteriorating position in certain parts of Africa and consider that genocide, and oppression of the minorities was holding back progress towards African unity".⁹⁰⁸ Indeed, this statement seemed to be very interesting and served as a furthest public step hitherto taken by Nyerere in condemning FMG's actions against Biafra. All the indications showed that Senghor shared his views. Tanzania, on 13th April, 1968 broke the silence and issued a statement of official recognition of Biafra. The message was read by the Tanzanian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, C.Y. Mgonja, at the State House. The statement was later released by the Tanzanian Ministry of Information.⁹⁰⁹

Gabon hit the world headlines when it became the major West African country to recognise the defunct Republic of Biafra. On May 3rd, 1968 President M. Albert Bongo of Gabon made a statement on Biafra in the course of a press conference in Paris, France. Following a cabinet meeting held under the Presidency of Albert Bong, a *communiqué* was issued on the recognition of Biafra.⁹¹⁰ On the eve of Ivory Coast's recognition of Biafra, President Felix Houphouet-Boigny made a remark concerning the British interest in the Nigerian Civil War, using the Rhodesian crisis as a case study. He said:

⁹⁰⁵ TNA, FCO, 38/249, W. Wilson to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 29th September, 1967.

⁹⁰⁶ TNA, FCO, 38/249, W. Wilson to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 13th December, 1967.

⁹⁰⁷ TNA, FCO, 38/249, Crosec to Dar-es-Salam, 15th February, 1968.

⁹⁰⁸ TNA, FCO, 38/249, Dar-es-Salam to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 5th March, 1968.

⁹⁰⁹ C.Y. Mgonja. 1968. *Press Statement on Tanzania's Recognition of Biafra*. Dar-es-Salam: Tanzanian Information Service Division, p.1.

⁹¹⁰ *Markpress*, 10th May, 1968.

...I hardly find it difficult to accept, the attitude of the British government towards the people of Biafra. That the British government, leader of the Commonwealth, whose duty it should have been in the face of such a terrible drama, to play the role of mediator; that England, hostile to all use of violence in Rhodesia; England, which had graciously recognised the independence of Ireland...⁹¹¹

On 20th May, 1968 *Reuter* reported that, Zambia had recognised Biafra. In a statement to a press conference, Zambian Foreign Minister, Reuben Kamanga said that, “the indiscriminate massacre of innocent civilian population had filled us with horror. His government was convinced that, the heritage of the bitterness stemming from this horrifying war would make it impossible to create any basis for the political unity of Biafra and Nigeria”.⁹¹² Following the recognition of the Republic of Biafra by the Zambian government, the FMG immediately took the decision to break off diplomatic relations with Zambia forthwith.⁹¹³

6.3 Biafra’s Propaganda and British Countermeasures

As the effects and reactions to Biafra’s propaganda reverberated in Europe and North America, tremendous and vigorous counter-propaganda campaign was launched by Foreign Office in London through the West African Department. On 21st February, 1968 the Foreign Office revealed how a staff of Shell/BP, Read informed them that Stanley Gray, the General Manager of Shell/BP in Nigeria, was approached by the Nigerian government. This was in respect of the anxieties they had about their image in the United States and Western Europe and the efforts they had undertaken to put their publicity and propaganda apparatus right. Gray noted that, the Federal government had later, concluded an arrangement to send Information Teams to the United States and Europe in order to project their case. Meanwhile, they asked the Shell/ BP to help them in establishing the right contacts. The Federal government were indeed worried about the impact of Biafra’s propaganda in the United States for they feared that the wife of the US President, Richard Nixon, in particular, had gone over completely to the Biafran side. Read asked the Foreign Office whether the British government had been approached by the Federal government to help in a similar way. The Foreign Office explained on confidential basis that, they had previously urged the Federal government to make strenuous efforts to repair their battered image. They equally gave them a great deal of advice about how to go about it. But they were not asked to help the information teams which the Federal government were sending nor had they been consulted

⁹¹¹ TNA, FCO, 38/250, Biafra a Human Problem A Speech by President Felix Houphouet-Boigny, 1968 from Lagos to Foreign Office, April, 1968.

⁹¹² *Reuter*, 20th May, 1968.

⁹¹³ TNA, FCO, 38/250, W. Willan to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 21st May, 1968.

about them.⁹¹⁴ From the foregoing, the British government was very interested on how to improve the federalist image in the face of widely circulated Biafra's propaganda.

The issue of getting the Federal government to conduct an effective publicity campaign in support of her policy in the war was on top of the agenda of the British Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria on 29th March, 1969.⁹¹⁵ When the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, visited Nigeria, he reminded the Federal government about the public relations firm which they had engaged with in Britain. He said that the FMG had chosen a reputable and highly competent firm. But in order for them to make use of the firm to the fullest advantage they should ensure that it was supplied with constant flow of correct, rapid and up-to-date information; otherwise the firm would find it impossible to do their job.⁹¹⁶ It would be recalled that the federalist had virtually written off the propaganda war but in April 1968 they hired a British public relations firm, Galitzine, Chant, and Russell and Partners for an annual fee of £10,000. The task of countering Biafran propaganda was an uphill one, which the FMG later realised and decided to invest its resources in that direction.⁹¹⁷

The use of psychological warfare was a major idea that the British government recommended as one of the ways of improving the federalist's effective persecution of the propaganda battle.⁹¹⁸ On 14th July, 1969 the British Ambassador to the United States, Patrick Dean, submitted a report to the Foreign Office in London. In that report the American Under-Secretary of State, Richardson, suggested to the British government the urgent need to do more in improving the effectiveness of the federal forces to enable them in the absence of a diplomatic settlement, finish off the war quickly.⁹¹⁹ From the foregoing, a number of suggestions were put forward and among other things, it was clear that, from the report of the International Observer Teams, more and more Igbos were crossing over into the federal-held territories. There was also evidence of opposition to the recruitment into the Biafran Armed Forces. Therefore, the right time had come to take full advantage of the situation in Biafra by dropping large number of carefully drafted propaganda leaflets all over Biafra-held territories. By this means the British officialdom envisaged giving further advice to the Igbos in Biafra to defect to the federal territory; advised them on how to avoid conscription into Biafra army; and also give advice to those in the camps to return to the federal-held areas. Psychological warfare of this kind was noted to have been a very effective weapon in

⁹¹⁴ TNA, FCO, 26/300, D.C. Tebbit to P.H. Moberly, 21st February, 1968.

⁹¹⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/440, Suggestions on Nigerian Propaganda Campaign during the Visit of British Prime Minister to Nigeria, March, 1969.

⁹¹⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/440, J. Peck to J. Wilson, 19th March, 1969.

⁹¹⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/440, Lagos to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, June, 1969.

⁹¹⁸ TNA, DEFE, 24/589, From J. Wilson to D.C. Tebbit, 17th July, 1969.

⁹¹⁹ TNA, DEFE, 24/589, Note of Record on the Improvement in the Federal Government War Effectiveness, 17th July, 1969.

situation such as it existed in Nigeria.⁹²⁰ On 18th July, 1969 a meeting was held between the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Maurice Foley, and the members of the Foreign Office. A number of decisions were taken at the meeting namely, the issue of the application of psychological warfare as a component of the federalist propaganda battle.⁹²¹

Consequently, to counter Biafra's Propaganda, the British Information Officers initiated series of publicity measures. The first was the mounting of publicity on the French involvement in the Nigerian Civil War. Major publicity approach was sought by the British officialdom to counter the involvement of France in the Nigerian Civil War. On 31st October, 1968 the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State suggested to the British government that one way of bringing pressure to bear on the French government's involvement in the Nigerian Civil War, and over its support of Biafra, might be through judicious placing of articles about the civil war in organs of the press in the Francophone African countries. He believed that, articles taking the OAU line of argument against secession and blaming the French intervention in the civil war and for the prolongation of the hostilities would be picked up by the *Agence-France Pressé* in West African countries and be reported back to France. There might thus, be a reasonable chance of obtaining coverage for them in French newspapers.⁹²² On 7th November, 1968 the British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office held a meeting with Anthony Enahoro. The Minister pressed Anthony Enahoro to recognise the importance of not giving Biafrans a propaganda advantage.⁹²³ On 18th November, 1968 a meeting on achieving counter propaganda measures, including handling of French arms supply to Biafra was proposed by the British officialdom. It was not until 21st November, 1968 that the meeting was held at the office of the British West African Department attended by the British publicity and information officials such as John Wilson, D.C. Tebbit, and J.H. Peck. To boost the federalist propaganda, it was suggested that the FMG should encourage influential personalities from the United Kingdom, Europe or North America who did not have a totally closed mind to visit Nigeria. Since such visits had a salutary effect, as had been the case with Dame Margery Perham, and the Special Adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau's envoy who told the British official, John Wilson that, "Biafran propaganda was the greatest confidence trick in history". Or the editor of *Tablet* Tom Burns, who said that he was now convinced that, "Biafrans' propaganda

⁹²⁰ TNA, DEFE, 24/589, Note of Record on the Improvement in the Federal Government War Effectiveness, 17th July, 1969.

⁹²¹ TNA, DEFE, 24/589, Record of Meeting between Maurice Foley and British Information Officials, 18th July, 1969.

⁹²² TNA, FCO, 65/441, File No. JWN 13/1/PB, Minutes on Nigerian Propaganda, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969, by D.C. Tebbit to G.S. Littlejohn Cook, 31st October, 1968.

⁹²³ TNA, FCO, 65/441, Record of Conversation between British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and Anthony Enahoro, 7th November, 1968.

effort was one of the most strikingly successful of the 20th century; for they had successfully pulled the wool out of the eyes of public opinion throughout the world”.⁹²⁴

The British government also initiated the idea of embarking on diplomatic shuttle as a means of presenting their case to the global audience. For example, following the Fifth Anglo-American Parliamentary Conference organised jointly by Ariel and Ford Foundation which was scheduled to hold in the United States Virgin Islands from 20th to 24th March, 1969, and was programmed to be preceded with preparatory talks due to take place in New York from 18th to 20th March, 1969. The British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Maurice Foley, being in acting capacity as the Minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office responsible for African affairs, proposed to the British government to attend these meetings, which British officialdom found useful, to enable Foley when he was on the other side of the Atlantic, to take the opportunity of going to Washington and Ottawa. The object of this visit was to exchange views with the United States government on the Nigerian Civil War especially against the background of outpouring of world opinion championed by Biafran propaganda.⁹²⁵ Consequently, Maurice Foley later attended the Fifth Anglo-American Parliamentary Conference on Africa held on 20th -24th March, 1969⁹²⁶. At the Conference, a paper entitled “Nigeria: Prospect for Peace” was delivered by a renowned US Congressman S. Benjamin Rosenthal. The paper dealt with the issues of the Nigerian Civil War.⁹²⁷

The idea of producing propaganda leaflets was also another major counter strategies adopted by the British government. This idea was broached during the meeting of British officials on the British publicity and propaganda line of the Nigerian Civil War and the French arms supplies to Biafra, held on 21st November, 1968.⁹²⁸ As early as January 1969, the booklet titled “Conflict in Nigeria: The British View and the Shaping of Modern Nigeria” was produced. The booklet was based on historical background of the Nigerian Civil War, accompanied with series of questions and answers. After the production of the propaganda booklets, the next step was whether to proceed with the intention of translating it in French, German, and English languages, for distribution, on a liberal basis, through the British

⁹²⁴ TNA, FCO, 65/441, Record of Meeting on British Publicity Line on Nigerian Civil War and French Arms Supplies to Biafra, 21st November, 1968.

⁹²⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/471/File No. JWN22/12/5A/368/PA, Minutes on Visits of Maurice Foley the United States and Canada, by D.C. Tebbit to K.W. Wilford, 21st February, 1969.

⁹²⁶ TNA, FCO, 65/471, L.M. Deas to Information and Other Departments of Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 27th March, 1969.

⁹²⁷ TNA, FCO, 65/471/File No. JWN22/12/5A/368/PA, Minutes on Visits of Maurice Foley the United States and Canada, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969. Fifth Anglo-American Parliamentary Conference on Africa, Nigeria: Prospect for Peace, Benjamin S. Rosenthal, 20th-24th March, 1969.

⁹²⁸ TNA, FCO, 65/441, Record of a Meeting on British Publicity Line and Propaganda, 21st November, 1968.

information officers overseas, and also for use in Britain. No doubt, there had been the need on the European Continent and in North America for a better understanding of the British views in the Nigerian Civil War. The activities of pro-Biafra groups and the associated anti-British sentiments in Germany, for instance, were well-known. The Biafra's propaganda machine captured the mood of the people in Austria where it was thought that, the British role in Nigeria and West Africa in general was thought to be explicably villainous. Therefore, publishing such a booklet was seen as a way of combating the effects of Biafran propaganda in such places.⁹²⁹ It would be recalled that the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs expressed worry about the scale and effect of their information efforts in Europe with regard to the Nigerian crisis and that misunderstanding of their policy on Nigeria had led to a most unfortunate and unwarranted fall in the high esteem which Britain was held by the public in European and North American countries. Therefore, the British officialdom believed that the booklet when published in English, French, and German languages and made available to all their diplomatic post across the world and distributed to journalists and the people on the European Continent and if necessary in North America would help boost their case concerning the civil war.⁹³⁰

On 29th April, 1969 the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, informed the British High Commission in Paris and other British High Commissions across Europe and North America, that in response to the requests from the majority of their diplomatic posts were the British policies concerning the Nigerian Civil War had been attacked they had prepared a booklet which could be used at their own discretion to hand out to government officials, and journalists, most importantly to counter the criticisms and allegations levelled against the British officialdom, as well as for reference purposes. The booklet was published in English, German, and French, and was primarily designed for use in European and North American countries, where the pressure on Britain had been the greatest, but might also be of use elsewhere. The booklet included a fairly extensive historical treaties showing how Nigeria developed up to the period of the war, as well as questions and answers about the war and British polity towards it.⁹³¹ On 16th May, 1969 John Wilson of West African Department sent a memo to Foreign Office. He said that, having giving due consideration to the extent of the distribution in the United Kingdom of the booklet titled " Conflict in Nigeria: the British View, he recommended that they should be distributed, broadly in accordance with the

⁹²⁹TNA, FCO, 65/442, A.J. Collins to P.D. McEntee, 28th February, 1969.

⁹³⁰ TNA, FCO, 65/442, D.C. Tebbit to L.M. Deas, 17th April, 1969.

⁹³¹ TNA, FCO, 26/301, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Paris, 29th April, 1969.

standard of the C.O.I. address lists to the press and broadcasting agencies, trade unions and political parties, the British Council, other official addresses, universities, education officers, teacher and student organisations, public libraries, industry, voluntary organisations and religious bodies, and if Maurice Foley agreed to all Members of Parliament. He noted that, the booklet was produce principally for overseas consumption. The issue in the booklet was expected to provoke some comments and reactions, and this was likely to be the effect mostly noticed. The distribution of the booklet was envisaged to help speed the process of improving the understanding of the British policy, which later improved since the debate in the House of Parliament in March 1969 which coincided with the Prime Minister's visit to Nigeria.⁹³²

The British government endorsement of the invitation of International Observer Teams to Biafra also served as another countermeasures against the Biafran propaganda. They circulated the reports of the International Observer Teams on the conduct of the federal armed forces together with summaries of suitable articles from the British press. For instance, on 18th October, 1968 A.N.R. Millington of West African Department, informed John Wilson that, in the past, they had been hampered by the slowness of the Federal government in reacting to Biafran propaganda accusations but :

Now that the Observer Team is in operation and their report ready, we will have enough ammunition from an independent source which we can use against our critics without appearing to bear the responsibility of the FMG for defending itself from world opinion. Much of the discredit which has accrued to the FMG can be attributed to the activities of Markpress. All too often Biafran accusations of the FMG received world publicity, while federal denials are blotted out of sight. At the present time we are not in receipt of regular supplies of Markpress releases... if the FMG could be rapidly informed of the context of these releases, and if it could with equal rapidity, issue a denial of fable allegations, brought up wherever by observer reports, the credence of Markpress would be more effectively undermined...⁹³³

All these counter efforts fundamentally shifted international public opinion towards Britain and the Federal government at the detriment of Biafrans. For example, on 30th August, 1968 the Netherlands Foreign Minister, J.M.H. Luns and the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, held a meeting concerning the Nigerian Civil War. The Foreign Minister told the British Foreign Secretary that there had been very strong pro-Biafra lobby in Holland where 10 million guilders (£1.3 million) were collected in one day for Biafra and

⁹³² TNA, FCO, 26/301, J. Wilson to D.C. Tebbit, 16th May, 1969.

⁹³³ TNA, FCO, 65/441, File. No JWN 13/2/Part A, Minutes on UK Propaganda on the Nigerian Civil War, by A.N.R. Millington to John Wilson, 18th October, 1968.

that he had been asked by his colleagues to raise the matter with the British government. The Minister noted the denial of the British government of any participation by the British nationals in the war. He also noted the Foreign Secretary's statement in the Parliament that any developments towards large-scale slaughter or starvation could make the British officialdom change her policy in the war. He asked the Foreign Secretary whether the British influence in Lagos could be used to save the Igbos from extermination, without affecting the issue of the Nigerian unity. He said that the government in Lagos seemed reasonable; but the trouble was that the Army seemed much in complete control. The British Foreign Secretary told the Foreign Minister that Biafran propaganda about the British participation in the war was totally unfounded. Nigeria was a Federation, recognised by the United Nations as such. If an attempt at tribal secession were successful, it could set a gravely injurious example for the whole of Africa. The Nigerian government was entitled to resist secession. If the British government as its principal supplier of arms had cut off arms supplies automatically should have been backing the secession. The Foreign Secretary stated that the British government did her best to bring about a peaceful compromise by the means opened to them, and he accused Ojukwu of blocking the agreement. There was further point that not all the inhabitant of Biafra was Igbos or wanted secession. In effect, the Nigerian government by winning the military struggle, and the British government bearing a grave responsibility if they did anything to prolong it he did not think large-scale massacres or starvation were likely. The Nigerian government offer to admit foreign observers and food supplies in the war-torn territories was a perfectly reasonable action. Thereafter, it was agreed that the Netherland Foreign Minister should inform the press that the British government shared the Dutch government's concern that there should not be massacres or starvation on a large-scale in the civil war.⁹³⁴

Similarly, the Netherlands Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. De Waal, said that the heat of Biafra's propaganda representing the civil war as a religious conflict had died down in his country. He made this known when he visited the Nigerian Federal Commissioner for Education in Lagos, Wenike Briggs, on 1st August, 1969. He noted that, the people of Netherlands and the press had gradually understood the truth about the war. Therefore, he appealed to the FMG to step up its external publicity and propaganda so that the world could be better educated on the real causes of the secession and civil war. The Ambassador had

⁹³⁴ TNA, PREM, 13/2260, Confidential: Extract of Record of Conversation between the British Foreign Secretary and The Netherlands Foreign Minister, 30th August, 1968.

earlier traced the history of the war and disputed its connection with religion.⁹³⁵ Also, an opposition MP in France, M. Aymar Achille-Fould, after his visit to Nigeria in 1969 told the Press that although the civil war in Nigeria was a terrible and pitiless war but the French Parliamentary Delegation to Nigeria later discovered that there was “no sign of a deliberate policy of genocide of the kind practiced by the Nazis in Germany.”⁹³⁶

⁹³⁵ TNA, FCO, 65/436, Dutch Ambassador’s Criticism of Biafran Propaganda, Lagos Radio in English/06.00/GMT/ 1st August, 1969.

⁹³⁶ *Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 9th, 1969.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

No doubt the Biafrans had been brilliantly successful in the use of propaganda during the Nigerian Civil War. They had grabbed the importance of image-creation in presenting their case to the global audience. This was in comparatively superior to the Federal side which experienced some challenges in the propaganda exercise both at the beginning and middle of the war. Indeed, the versatility of Biafrans in disseminating war propaganda created the platform for widespread reactions to the war in Britain. This was championed by different facets of the British society, namely, eminent Members of Parliament, Non-governmental organisations, Church and opinion leaders and news media. The propaganda equally spread to other parts of the world leading to massive chain of events arising from the war. The above scenario became worrisome to the British government whose policy was in support of the Federal government of Nigeria.

Owing to the massive response to Biafra's propaganda in Britain series of emphasises were made on the difficulties the British government encountered in their efforts to defend their policies vis-à-vis the Nigerian Civil War. It was discovered that, the fundamental factors that hampered the process of projecting the British view about the war was the influence of the French government in the Biafra's publicity and propaganda exercise as opposed to its arms deliveries to Biafra. Another factor was that the fact did not go unnoticed. The British public was strongly divided over the question of arms supply and the British government's position in the war. Also, the British press particularly the radio and television coverage of the problem did not help the government to present their case. The British officials equally faced the challenge of Christian and humanitarian feelings on the part of the public in Britain. Criticisms of the British government were further stimulated by two dominant forces of Biafra's propaganda, namely, the Biafran public relations agency, Markpress on the one hand, and a genuine public reactions against the war. The former had not hesitated to play on the former using various strong propaganda themes such as genocide, the starvation of children and sufferings of civilians. The important complicating factor in the situation had been the fact that many people, however, well informed; felt that, Britain had some moral obligations for ultimate control over its ex-colony Nigeria, somewhat in the same way as France bear responsibilities over many of her former colonies.

The fact that, the FMG did little to establish its own case in the court of international public opinion rubbed off the British government efforts in countering Biafra's propaganda.

Even the Federal government's case of trying to re-establish political stability in Nigeria and relief of suffering had tended to be ignored. In short, in propaganda terms the Biafran government exploit the sensational aspects of their case both by open means and through paid lobbyists. They had also been supported in effect by the highly dramatised appeals for funds, made through religious organisations and International Committee of Red Cross.

Biafra's propaganda as a veritable information strategy was a home grown idea that took the advantage of massive political upheavals that confronted the Nigerian State as from 1966 onwards. It later became internationalised thereby served as a tool of global public diplomacy during the civil war. It is important to note that the British government struggled with morality and human justification in the Nigerian Civil War, bearing the efficacy of Biafra's propaganda. Efforts were intensified to diplomatically end the civil war so as to save the officialdom from further criticisms spearheaded by pro-Biafran sympathisers in Britain. Indeed, the ability of a people believed to be under siege in projecting their stories throughout the world surprised the British government. For many years, after the end of the Second World War, the British society were confronted with one of the most effective propaganda exercise in the 20th century. Biafra's propaganda messages were effective because of its adoption of cultural approach and inclusion of emotional themes. Thus, through the general reaction it received in Britain and elsewhere, there developed a consensus and the perceptions of the need to either grant Biafrans independence or to end the war. The propaganda campaign of Biafrans became a major issue which encompasses diplomacy, public debate and geopolitics. This scenario, made the British government to perceive the Biafran issue as a serious threat to its colonial political structures bequeathed to post-independence Nigeria. Indeed, what appeared to have worried the British officialdom was the growing threat of Biafrans to convert international public opinion through their propaganda and humanitarian concern into diplomatic action.

The British response to Biafra's propaganda was more reactionary than purposive, as she took countermeasures like the refusal of military aircraft to Nigeria and proposed peaceful negotiations. In spite of these, Biafra's propaganda still held sway in Britain. The Biafra's propaganda was described as a phenomenon that could not be anticipated and countered in advance but could only be offset by patient and through education and slow explanation.⁹³⁷ In recognition of this fact, the British officialdom engaged in continuous production and distribution of guidance materials, texts of all Ministerial speeches and important answers to questions in both Houses of British Parliaments; guidance materials

⁹³⁷ TNA, FCO, 26/299, J. Wilson to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 15th January, 1968.

amplifying Her Majesty's Government's attitude to the civil war and filling in the background to their thinking; briefs providing answers to the most pertinent questions being asked and giving the form of words to be used in explaining their official views. For instance, about sixty papers on the British policies in the civil war were issued to the British Embassies across Europe and North America. With these documents, the British officials in their various diplomatic posts had a great deal of information to counter Biafran propaganda. Also, due to the pressures mounted by the British officialdom the federals later awoken to the gravity of the war situation and took the bold steps towards strengthening their own propaganda campaign. For instance, they hired a public relations firm and consultants in London to help disseminate their own case to the world opinion. The Federals in their propaganda campaign decided to initiate the idea of inviting a party of foreign journalists to visit the federal territories as a way of debunking Biafran propaganda claims.⁹³⁸

The propaganda exercise conducted during the Nigerian Civil War had great political and diplomatic implications. First, it conceptualized the conflict as a major international issue of great consequence by inflaming public opinion in almost all Western European and North American countries. It forced Western governments to be active in the war either on diplomatic or humanitarian ground. Thus, created diplomatic animosity and rivalry among the great powers that were involved in the war, namely, Britain, France, Portugal, Soviet Union over arms supply and along the line opened up debates about arms embargo and the clamour for the inscription of the conflict on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly. Nevertheless, the emotion generated by massive and continuous media coverage of the war issues like the starvation in Biafra reflected to a large extent a humanitarian concern and a fierce desire for action to stop an intolerable human disaster. It was certainly true that the huge publicity accorded to the humanitarian action in the war was heightened by the skillful Biafra's propaganda and by the constant availability of film and facilities for Western television teams. It influenced the demand for strong relief action geared towards helping the war victims. It was this volume of insistent demand for action, the swell sympathy for the Biafran cause which accompanied it, which drew foreign governments into the much complex humanitarian politics of the civil war.

The notion that the "Republic of Biafra" ceased to exist at the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, appear not to have diminished completely and to some extent, the issue of Biafra from the larger spectrum of local and international public opinion. In corroborating the above assertion, on 15th April, 1970 the idea of a joint Anglo-American diplomatic assessment

⁹³⁸ TNA, FCO, 26/310, B.R. Curson to J.H. Peck, 12th March, 1969.

on the future political leadership and personalities in Nigeria was raised by the United States government. This included an assessment of who-is-who in Nigeria; their capabilities and areas of strength that would drive the political development of Nigeria in the future. In this exercise, the US State Department sought the cooperation of the British government to gather information about Nigeria's stance in the future US foreign policy and global affairs. This was as a result of the strain diplomatic relationship that existed between the FMG and US government at the peak of the Nigerian Civil War. On Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, it was the Anglo-American view that, Ojukwu would probably get tired of staying in Ivory Coast for a very long time. He might try to become the champion of an *émigré* (emigrant) organisation keeping alive the idea of Biafra. But, the effectiveness of this scenario would depend upon the political situation in Nigeria. If things get very difficult for the Igbos in the Nigerian State, Ojukwu would become the figure who could lead them out of adversity.⁹³⁹ Many years later, this Ojukwu's analogy, had metamorphosed and led to the formation of many pro-Biafra groups, such as, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Zionist Front Movement (ZIN) Eastern Consultative Assembly (ECA) etc. These organisations put together were the conglomeration of different ideas of pro-Biafra groups that existed during the Nigeria Civil War both across Europe and North America, Britain in particular. They had continued to keep alive the Biafran case at both the local and global level, the central being the agitation for the restoration of the Republic of Biafra which seized to exist after the civil war in 1970. They had continued to be a very strong instrument challenging the existing status quo of the Nigeria State and political elites at the detriment of the British foreign policy in Nigeria. The activities of these groups, with majority of young people as their members had reactivated those series of verbal attacks meted against the ruling elites in Britain by pro-Biafran sympathisers, thereby, threatening the existing political structure in Nigeria. This argument signified that there had been changes and continuities in the Biafran struggle.

⁹³⁹ TNA, FCO, 65/750, File No. JWN 3/304/1/Part B/5A/802/ Attitude of United States to Nigerian Civil War. Minute on Nigeria: United States Reassessment from B.P. Austin to Watts, 20th April, 1970.

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Theresa Mbawke	80+	Business Woman	Umuru Adazi-Ani, Anocha Local Govt. Area, Anambra State	6 th September, 2017
Onianwa Afamefuna George	72	Retired Teacher and Head Chief, Umuanumudu Village, Asaba.	No 3 ^B Umuanumudu Village, Umuagu Quarters, Asaba. Delta State	4 th October, 2017
Elder Ben N. Miti	60+	Business Man/Church Leader	Ibadan, Oyo State	30 th October, 2017
Orjiugo Nwosu	60+	Business Woman	OwerriNwkorji, Nwerre Local Govt. Area, Imo State	25 th October, 2017
Mr. Afamefuna O.	50+	Business Man	Ugbawka, Enugu State	27 th October, 2017
Edmund Ejiofor	70+	Business Man	Eziora Ozubulu, Ekwusigo Local Government Area, Anambra	8 th October, 2017

			State	
Emmanuel Nwokwu	58	Business Man/ Church Leader	Amichi, Nnewi South Local Govt. Area	30 th October, 2017
Elder Clement Ihesiulor	66	Business Man/ Church Leader	Isialanqwa, Aba	9 th October, 2017
Joesph Nwosu	70	Ex-Biafran Navy Officer/Business Man	OwerriNwkorji, Nwerre Local Govt. Area, Imo State	12 th October, 2017
Okeke Jude	50	Civil Servant	Nneni, Anocha Local Govt. Area, Anambra State	12 th October, 2017
Emeka Nnmadu	57	Politician	No 4 Jesus Saves Road, Asaba	10 th October, 2017
Abdulahi Yusuph	53	Retired Teacher	No 10 Sanyo Ibadan	13 th October, 2017
Godwin Afolabi	50+	A Farmer	No 20 Elyele, Ibadan	19 th October, 2017
Abubakar Umaru	60+	Trader/Farmer	No 6 Umuda Village Asaba	29 th October, 2017
Olarewaju Akinjide	62	Trader	Sango, Ibadan	25 th October, 2017

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Appendix I

Newspaper Cutting on British Attitude in the Nigerian Civil War

Extract from
Evening News, London
11 MARCH 1969

Nigeria peace trip is more 'personal diplomacy' and will not silence the critics

BIAFRA HUSTLE 'JUST ANOTHER WILSON TRICK'

By JOHN DICKINSON

Determined MP critics of the Cabinet's performance over Nigeria will now demand big policy changes when the issue comes up for critical debate in the Commons on Thursday.

The head of the Diplomatic Service, Sir Denis Greenhill, arrived in Lagos today to discuss the civil war with members of the Federal Government.

He is due back in London at the weekend to report to the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister. This mission has been hailed in some quarters as a "surprise move." But to others more cynical there seems very little surprising about it at all.

A more common reaction among critics is that the Greenhill mission, or any other Minister or official was an entirely predictable response by Mr. Wilson to a difficult situation.

The belief among the critics is that Mr. Wilson has taken the obvious way out by having Sir Denis involved in diplomatic contacts at the very moment the debate takes place. In this way he has sought to prevent any possibility of opposition being demanded. Mr. Wilson's ingrained habit of indulging in this kind of "personal diplomacy" at such awkward moments has been wryly noted.

Band of critics

But it is not likely to mollify the formidable band of critics which spreads over backbenches in all parties. The Cabinet's obvious worries will encourage the critics to step up their demands. They want first and foremost a halt in the supplies of arms to the Federal Government.

There will be other calls for guarantees against the bombing of civilians in Biafra and for new peace initiatives.

The Government are spared one acute headache by the Shadow Cabinet's decision not to force a vote. But the official Opposition line will be to insist on going into the lobby.

Shaking for Ministers

This is virtually certain to happen unless there are major concessions by Ministers. And the number of opponents of the Cabinet's policy is formidable enough to give Ministers a shaking.

Sir Alec Douglas Home is to put forward a new peace plan for the Tories, but will not urge at the moment that the arms supplies to Lagos should be stopped. But Labour MPs would prefer the new peace plan to come from their own side.

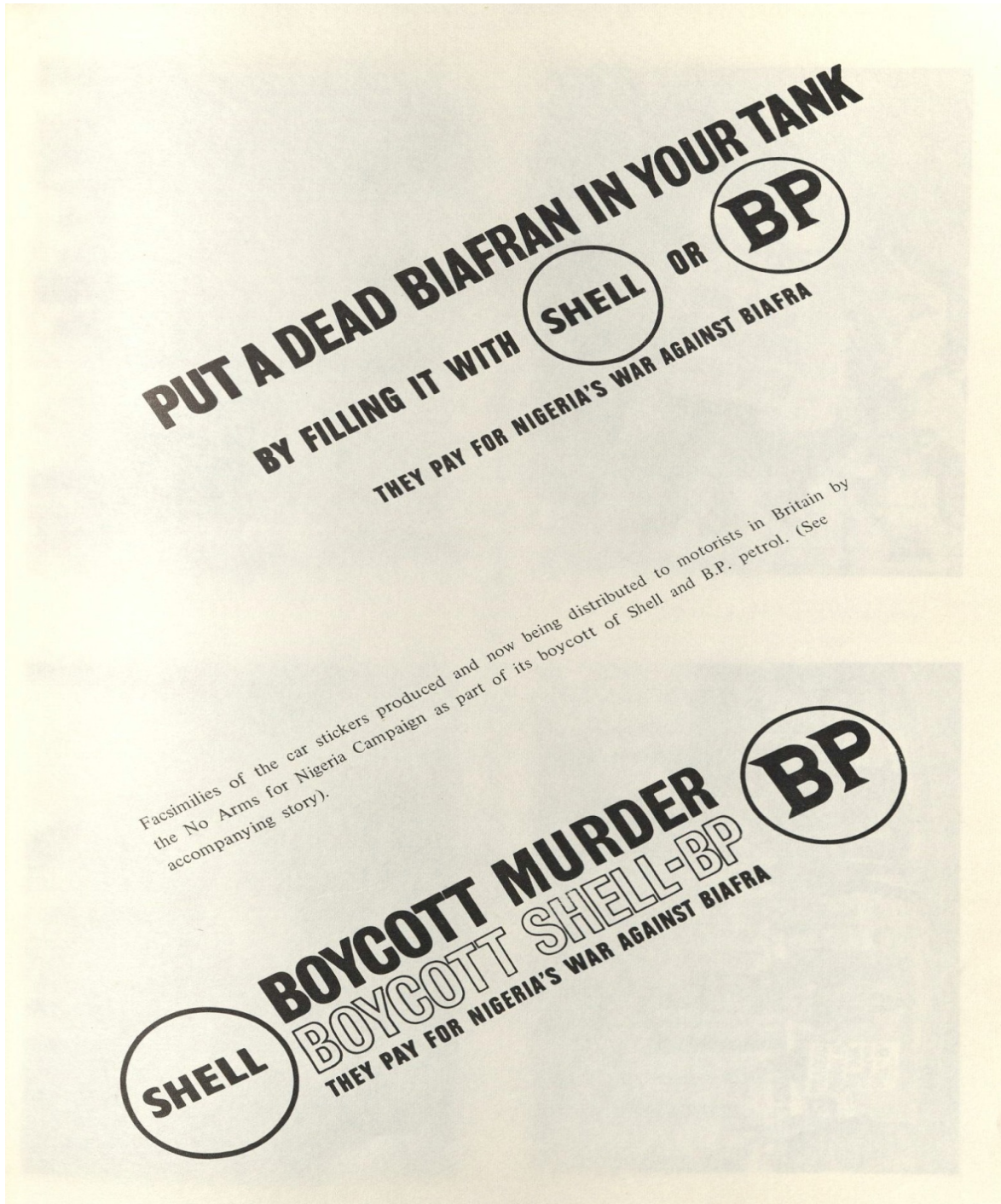
Extract from
Daily Telegraph, London
12 MARCH 1969



Source: *Daily Telegraph*. 12th March, 1969.

Appendix II

Biafran Propaganda Sticker



Source: *Markpress*, Gen. No. 731. *Put A Dead in Your Tank*. 25th October, 1969.

Appendix III

Scene at the Demonstration against Shell/BP held in London, 24th October, 1969



SCENES AT THE DEMONSTRATION AGAINST SHELL AND B.P. HELD IN LONDON ON OCTOBER 24.



Source: *Markpress*, Gen. No. 732. *London Demonstration against Shell/BP and British Arms Supply to Nigeria*, 26th October, 1969.

Appendix IV

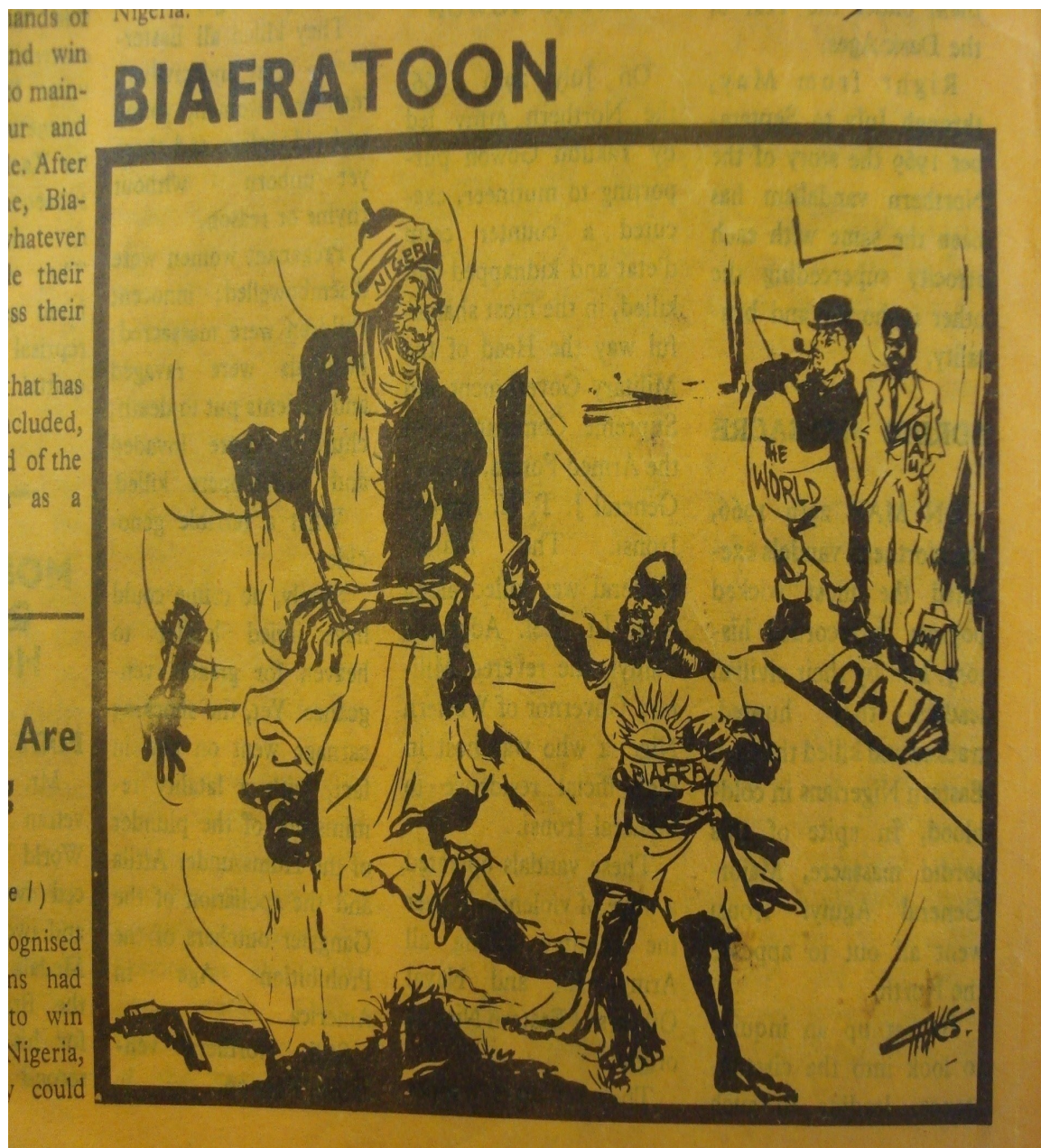
Biafran Propaganda Slogan



Source: *Biafra Newsletter*, 27th October, 1967.

Appendix V

Biafratoon



Source: Biafra Newsletter, 27th October, 1967.

Appendix VI

Nigerian Propaganda Leaflet and Safe Conduct Pass

O BO AKPAN IKOT

TIBI GOMETI BI, O TIN YEMI, WAJ NI ORO AMA MO BO E

Bei bi, akj ni o tin yemi ye; tin bi boni ose la dou - owei, ere mani kala tobou ni mo kpo mala fani East Central State bo deji ye mo: Enugu, Onitsha, Awgu, Awka, Abakaliki, Calabar, Port Harcourt, Degema, Yenagoa, Bonny, Uyo ni mo bo e. Tiji Gometi bi, suo ni o tin yeme, oro ndu timi da, bolou mbele timi ngi yo bemeni, pa beingbai bo meni oro ama mo gho bo sin e.

Oro bina otu mo bin ye ki, waj boni oro ama mo, doo ye gbele gha bara timi powei yeme. Omini erein mose fiyai la fii yemi. Seri-mose la ni oro don mo kpo Zuoyemi. Bei fun akpakpamo, oro foto mo, omo eri ni o duba nima bara bi, eni oro bolou mbele yemi bara bi.

Sii-sei, ose waj ni, oro ama mo bo, beingbai bo, bolou mbele doo timi ngi yo bemeni, ma bou gho timi kumo.

Tiji Gometi bi tje ni o pri nima ye mo na:-

- * Oro ndu mo mo, ma nana ye mo mo kpo doo ki, timi ngimi.
- * Diri ama aki na oro don mose zuo sin ngimi.
- * Fiyai ama timi na moun kori yemi otumose gbale ngimi.
- * Aya Wari ama aki na, wari fa otu mose pri ngimi.
- * Bolou mbele mo pasa pasa pa bin mo timi ni, o mo oro owou mo mo pri ngimi.

UKARA OFURI NIGERIA EFURI EKOT MBUFO NDINYON NDI K'UFOK MBUFO

Emi edi akpan ikot enode esok kpukpru mbufo - me iren owo, me iban, ye mbufo mkpri ndito, emi esuk efeghede ekpon ufok ekedibe ke akai ikot - enyono edi ufok mbufo ke me obio emi ukara ofuri Nigeria efakde esio k'ubok mbon nsouibuot. Me obio ntem edi:- Enugu, Onitsha, Awgu, Awka, Abakaliki, Calabar, Port Harcourt, Degema, Yenagoa, Bonny, Uyo ye me ediwak obio eken.

Ukara ofuri Nigeria eseme eno mbufo ndinyono ndi ufok, ke ufon mbufo.

Ediwak iman mbufo enyono edi ke me ufok mo ke ifure ye inemesit. Mo ke edia udia eyuhö kpukpru usen, mo ke ebö ibök usöbö kpukpru ini, nte ekemede ndikut ke enyin mbufo ke me usio-idem emi.


Mbö enyono edi ke ufok mbufo mfin emi, man edu ke ifure ye inemesit.

Ukara ofuri Nigeria enwono emi:-

- * Uwem ye inyene mbufo eyedu ke ifure
- * Ibök Usöbö ke kpukpru udono mbufo
- * Udia ndida nsuk biön mbufo
- * Me mbufa ufok iduñ edieke muyeneke aba
- * Inemesit ye uyuhö ke idem mbufo ye nitö mbufo.




Red Cross Relief and Federal Government Aid for you.
Red Cross mo Tiji Gometi mo bara tua pri ye mo aki ni jori neimi.




Olu inye aka Red Cross na Gometi etiti na alu maka unu.

I WANT TO RETURN TO MY HOME !



Safe Conduct Pass

I WANT TO RETURN TO MY HOME !

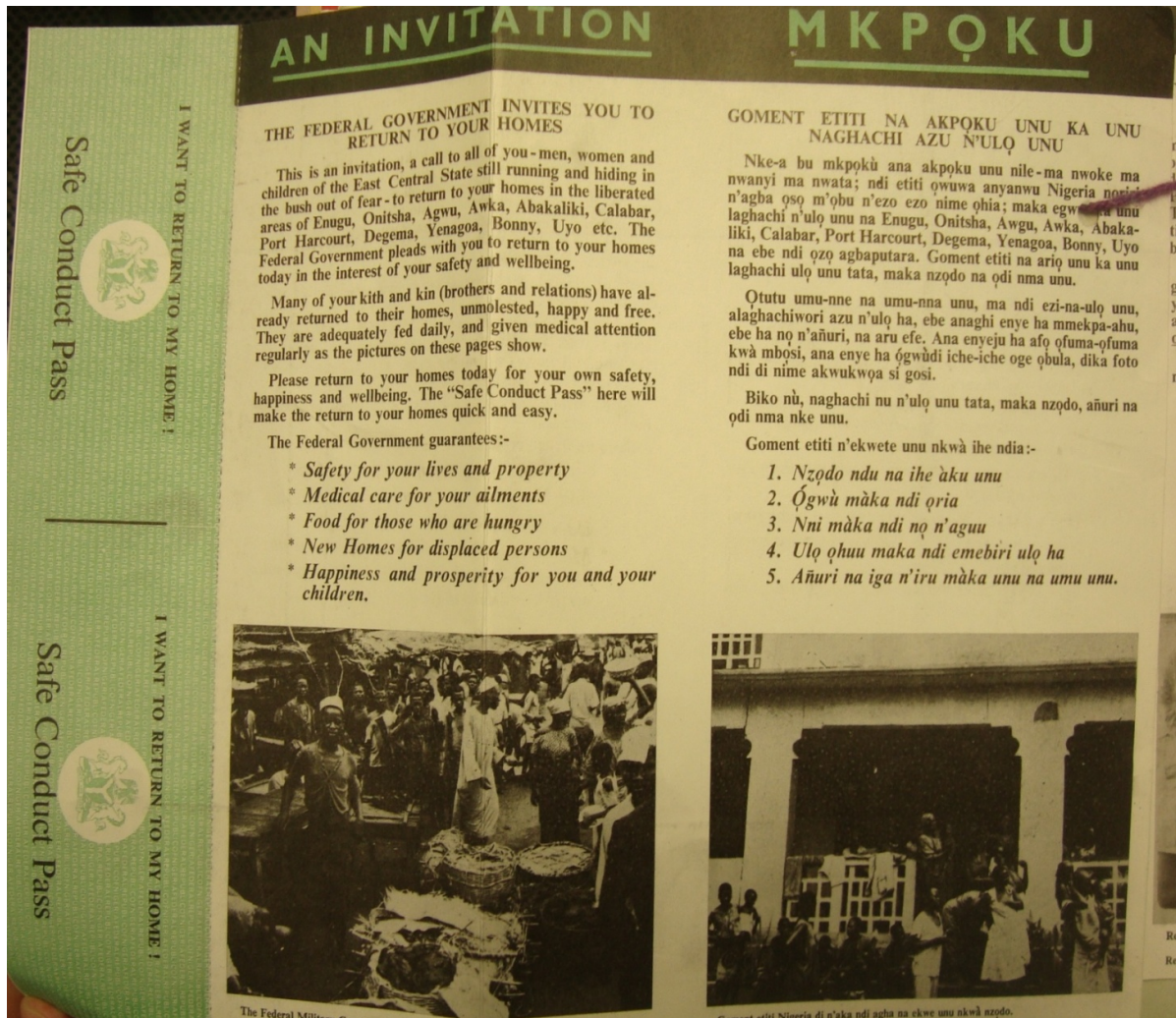


Safe Conduct Pass

Source: TNA, FCO, 38/288, File No. TX 10/16/Part E/6C/1066/ Nigeria: Defence and Military Operations Against Biafra. Miinute on the Use of Propaganda Leaflets and Safe Conduct Pass by the Federal Troops, from G.D. Anderson to P.D. McEntee, 15th August, 1968.

Appendix VII

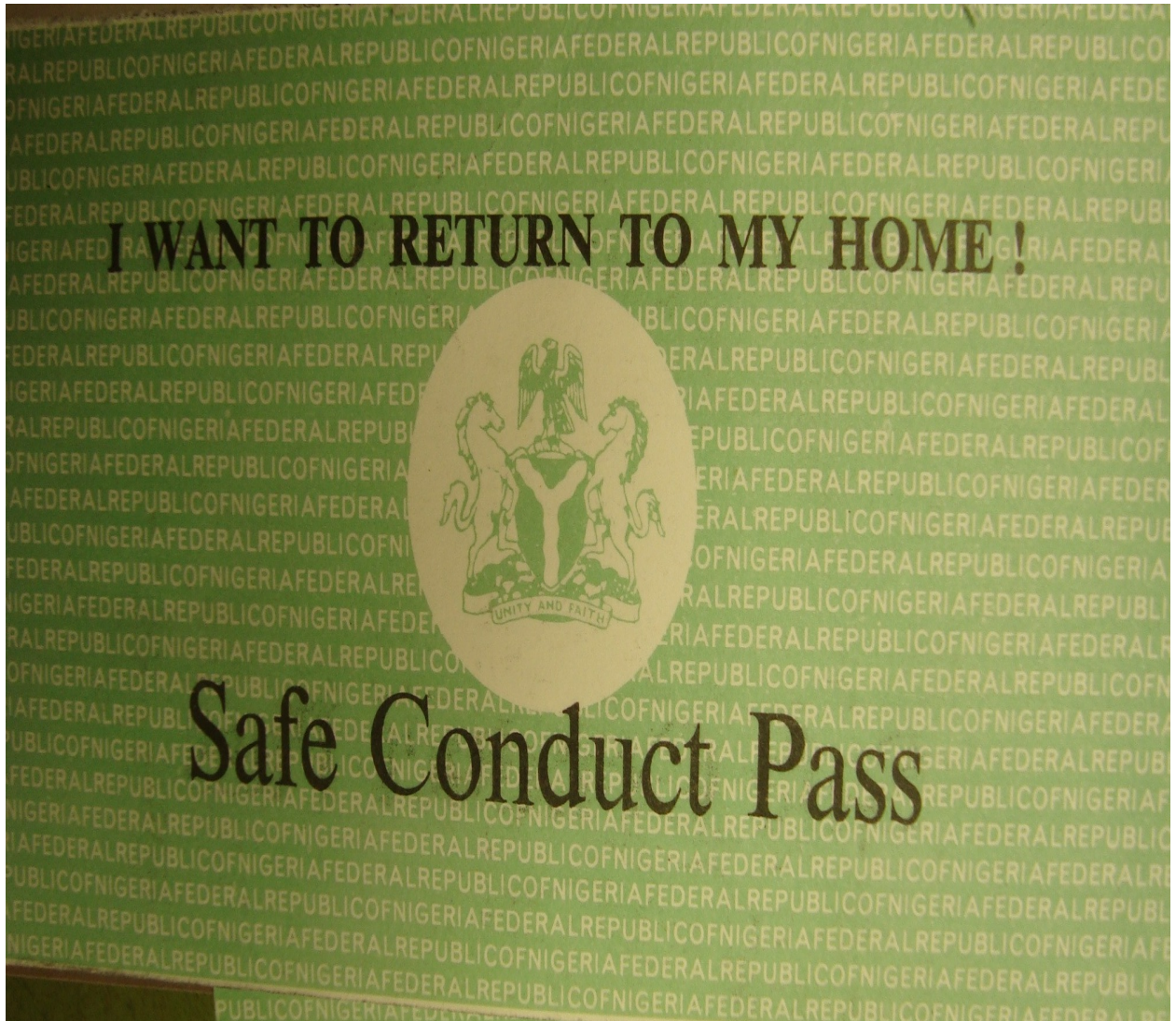
Nigerian Propaganda Leaflet and Safe Conduct Pass in English and Igbo Languages



Source: TNA, FCO, 38/288, File No. TX 10/16/Part E/6C/1066/ Nigeria: Defence and Military Operations Against Biafra. Miinute on the Use of Propaganda Leaflets and Safe Conduct Pass by the Federal Troops, from G.D. Anderson to P.D. McEntee, 15th August, 1968.

Appendix VIII

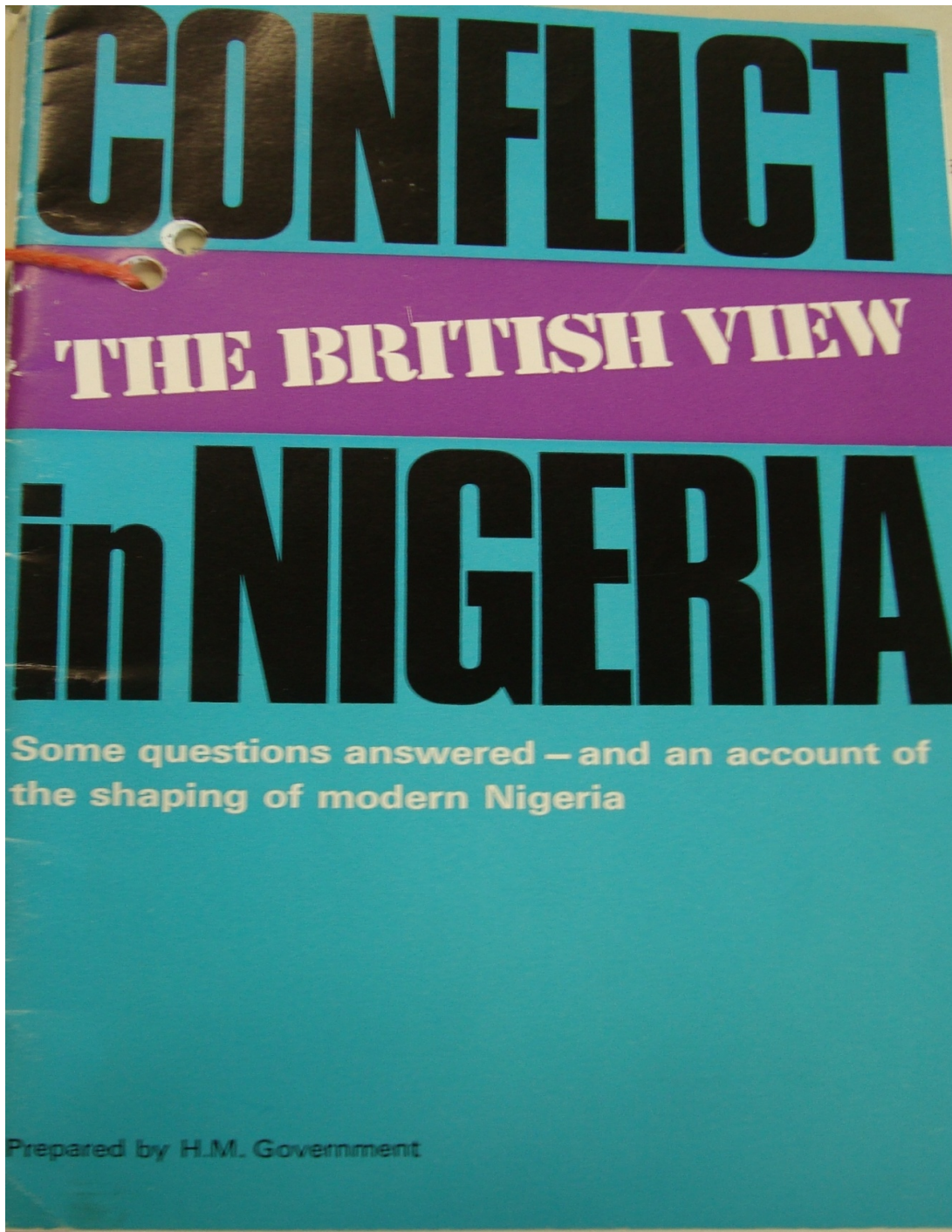
Safe Conduct Pass



Source: TNA, FCO, 38/288, File No. TX 10/16/Part E/6C/1066/ Nigeria: Defence and Military Operations Against Biafra. Minute on the Use of Propaganda Leaflets and Safe Conduct Pass by the Federal Troops, from G.D. Anderson to P.D. McEntee, 15th August, 1968.

Appendix XI

A Sample of British Propaganda Leaflet



Source: TNA, FCO, 26/302, File No. PBM 1/310/1/Part D/ 6C/973/ Dept. Information Policy / Information: Nigeria, Publicity, Propaganda and Biafra, 1st January, 1968-31st December, 1969.

Appendix X

Biafra Cartoon



Source: TNA, FCO, 65/210, File No. 1/17/Part B/5A/368/West African Dept/ Nigeria: Political Affair, Internal, Biafran Statements on Civil War, 1st January-1968-31st December, 1969.

Appendix XI

Still Starving in Nigeria

STILL STARVING IN NIGERIA

Good and bad reports have been made of post-war relief in former Biafra. Among the small scattering of detailed observations published over the last three months, certain stand out for their optimism—those of Andrew Clark, the Quaker relief worker, and Dr Lusty (see letter to the *Observer* March 29) for example. While for pessimism, and predictions of even worse to come—one can read Dr Graeme Duffy and the *Observer's* special correspondent (March 22).

To a large extent, each individual's assessment of the present situation must be coloured by what he knew of Biafra before the collapse. It is more significant that relief workers from former secessionist territory now believe the situation to be "worse than ever" than that pundits who knew Nigeria in the colonial days, now believe the suffering is "typical of this part of the world" at the best of times.

Observers' pictures are also influenced by where they have been and who they talk to. The *Observer's* special correspondent talked of Abagana "... not (having) seen any relief." But Dick Moberly (*Guardian*, April 13) points out that Abagana was the location of one of his earliest emergency kitchens.

Dick Moberly himself can write of "talk about the 'starving millions of Biafra' being grossly exaggerated" simply because his initial work in the area took him through the main roads, and not into the bush.

The report we publish this week was written by someone with admittedly little previous experience of such work. It is a description of a trip conducted with other relief workers in mid-March. But there can be no doubt—from the close observations made—and from the pictures he has taken (one of which we publish, but several of which we have seen) that there is still preventable starvation in Nigeria, and many thousands of children have been unnecessarily "condemned to death" in the last few weeks.

According to another source (Gemini News Service, April 3), 15% of children in the former enclave who survived the war will almost certainly die soon unless relief—if it has arrived at all—has come too late. Many of these would no doubt have died in any event—since they were beyond saving when Biafra



**"A HOPELESS
INEFFICIENCY"**

MARCH 23, 1970—NIGERIA.

for 300 miles to the East and is distributed. But I live on the road from Lagos to the East and see very few relief lorries on that road.

Source: *Peace News* 23rd March, 1970.

Appendix XII

Sick Baby



Source: Photo by Jonh Varley. In the face of one Child, all the horror of a nation torn by civil war. *Daily Mirror* 29th July, 1968, p.9.

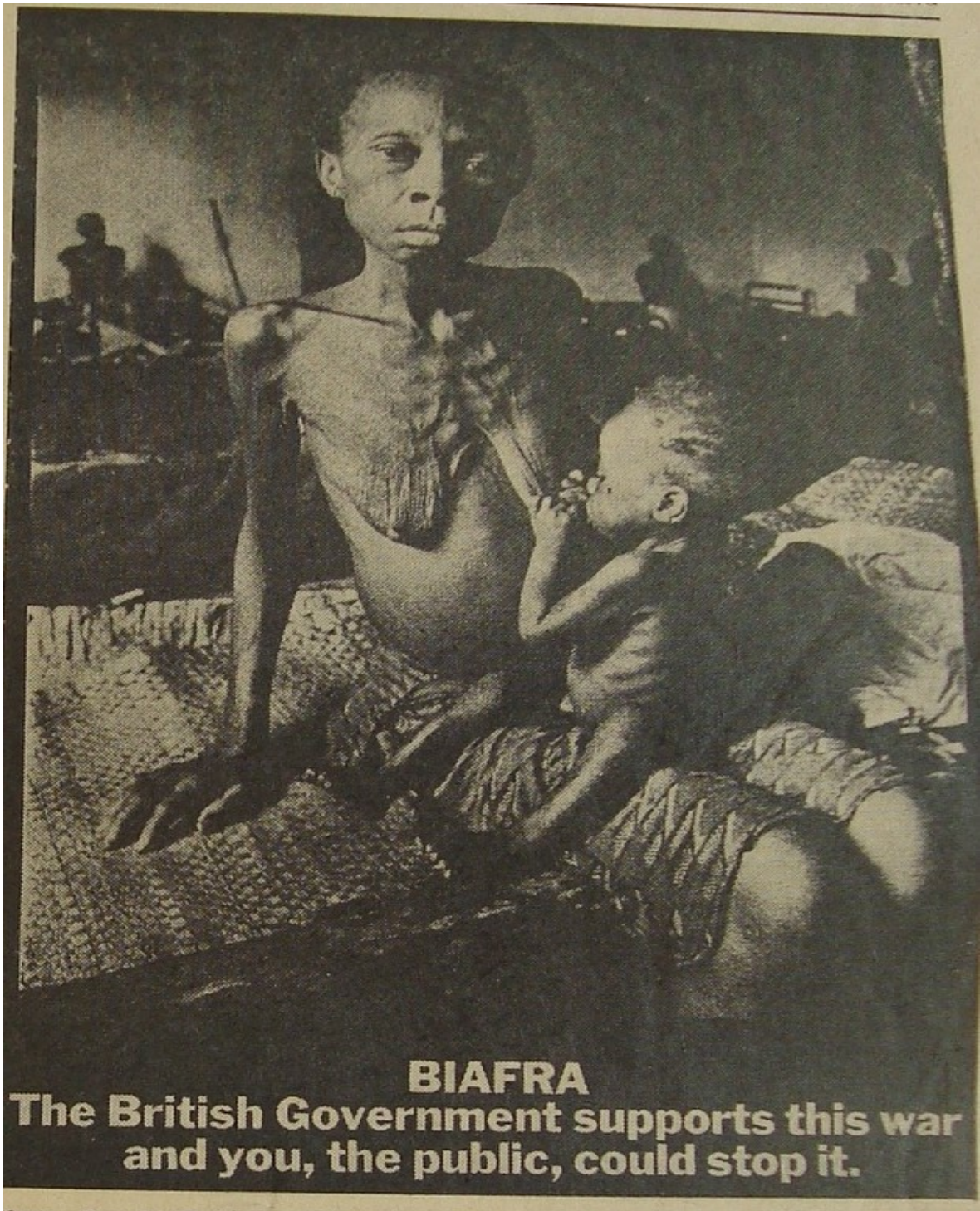
Appendix XIII
Pot-Bellied Baby



Source: *Peace News* 2nd May, 1969.

Appendix XIV

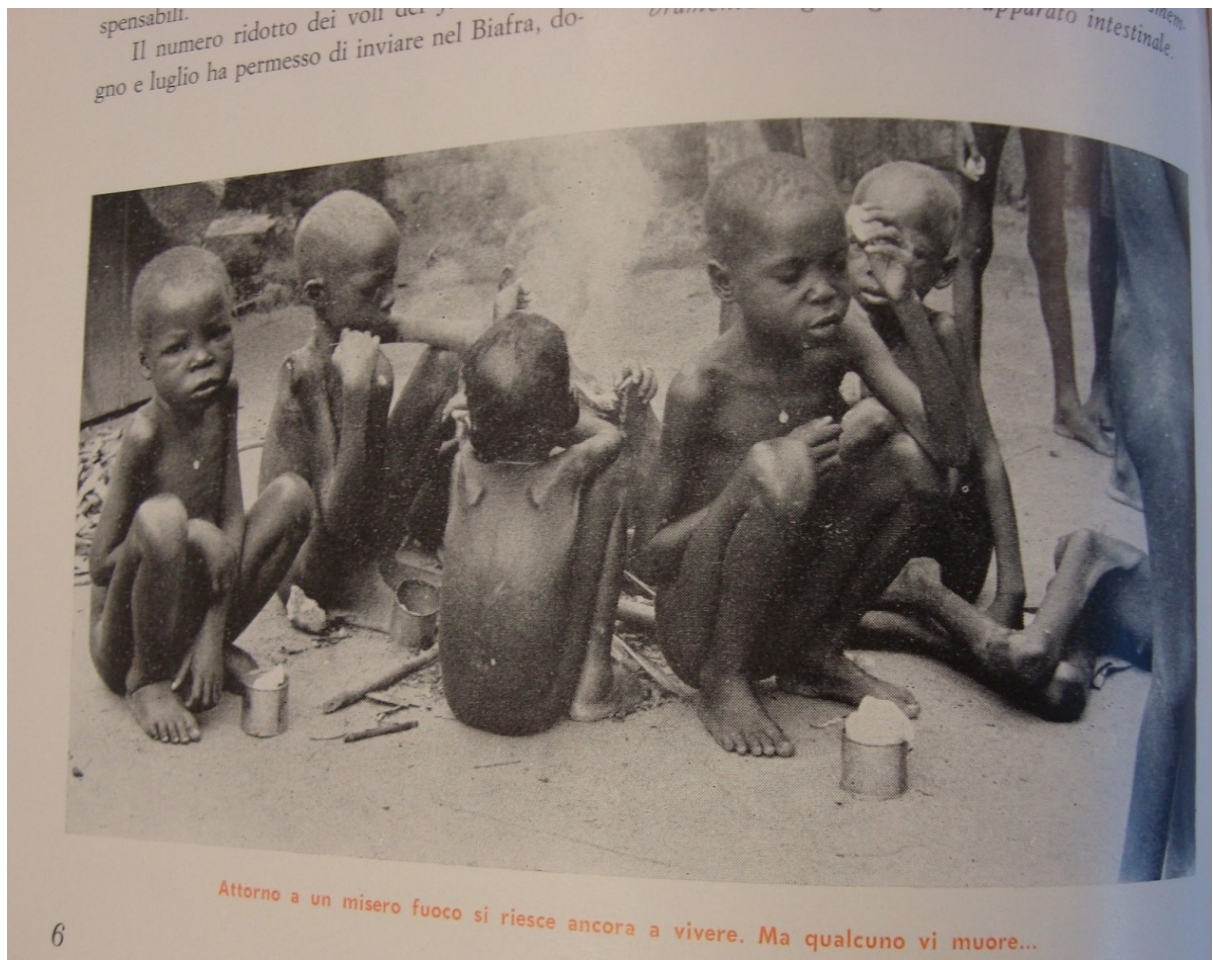
A Biafran Mother Breastfeeding Her Child



Source: Photo by Donald McCullin. *Peace News* 28 September, 1969.

Appendix XV

Sick Babies



Source: Mistica Rosa, Gessiche Biafra! 1969.

Appendix XVIII

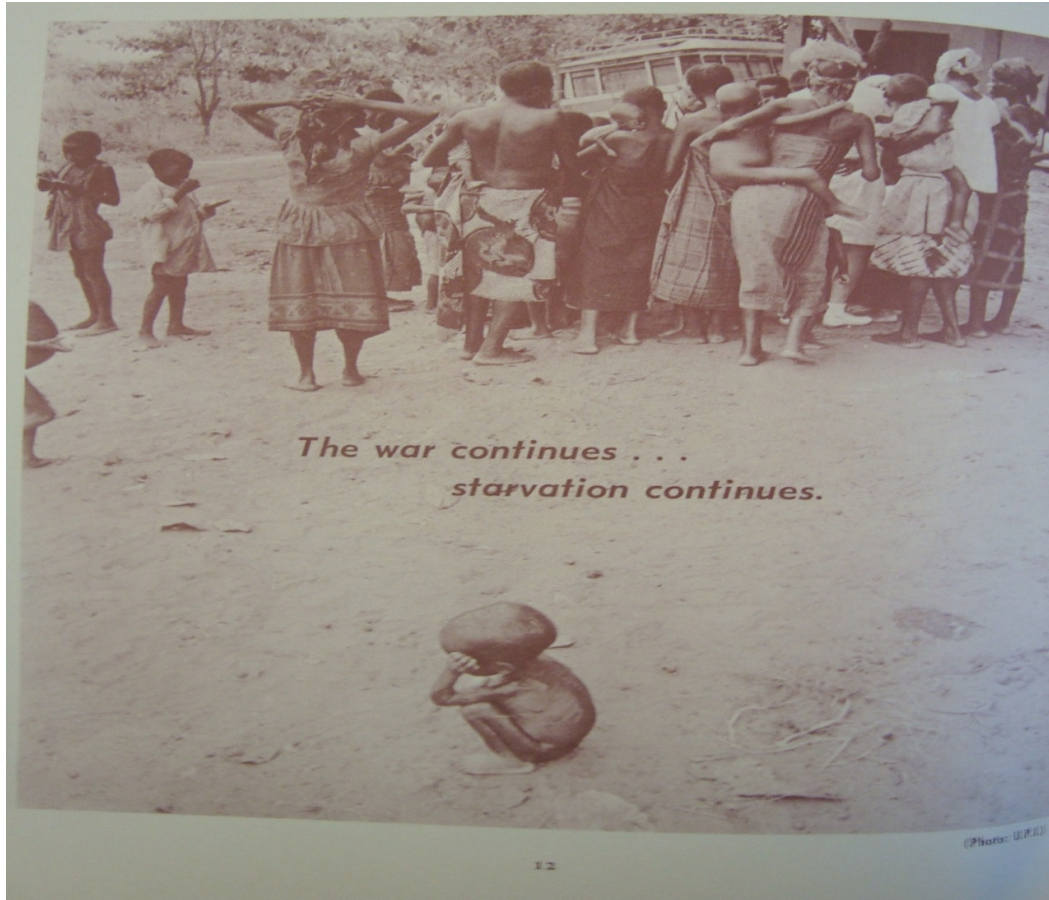
War Affected Children Posed for Pictures



Source: *Daily Sketch*, Monday 1st July, 1968.

Appendix XIX

The War Continues... Starvation Continues



Source: Paul, C. 1969. *The Biafran Experience. New: The Multimedia Album Vol. 4, No.3, p.12.*

Appendix XX

Why We Asked You for Money



Source: *Daily Sketch*, Monday 1st July, 1968.

Appendix XXI
War Affected Babies in Hospital Bed



Source: TNA, Folder 27/Box 6/MS 321463/27/Nigerian Civil War News Materials, November, 1968.

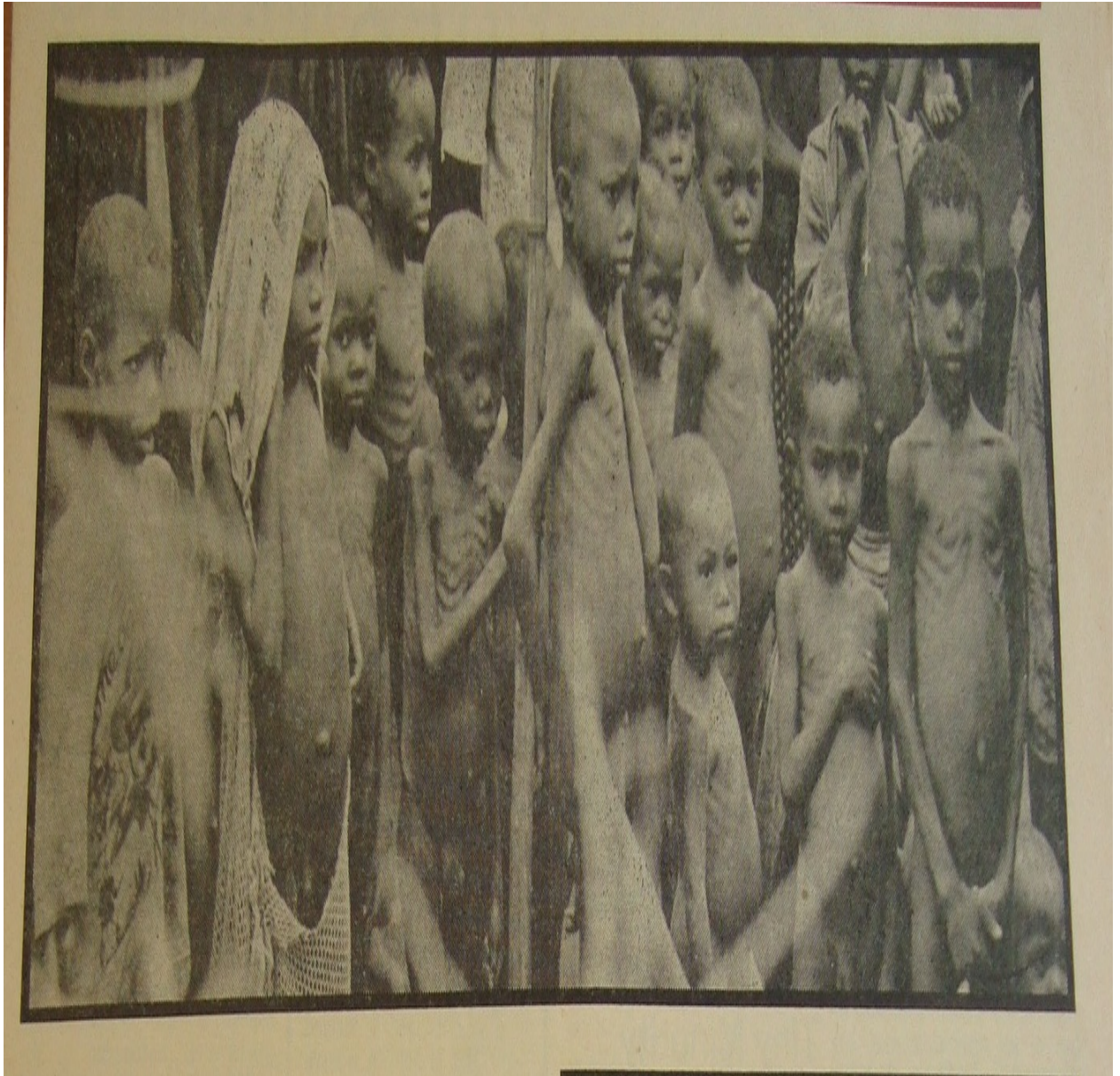
Appendix XXII

Baby Suffering from Malnutrition (*Kwashiorkor*)



Source: Gordon Thompson of Socialist Leader: An Independent Labour Party Weekly, Volumw LX No.49, 7th December, 1968.

Appendix XXIII
Children Suffering from Malnutrition (*Kwashiokor*)



Source: *Peace News*. 20th August, 1968.

Appendix XXIV

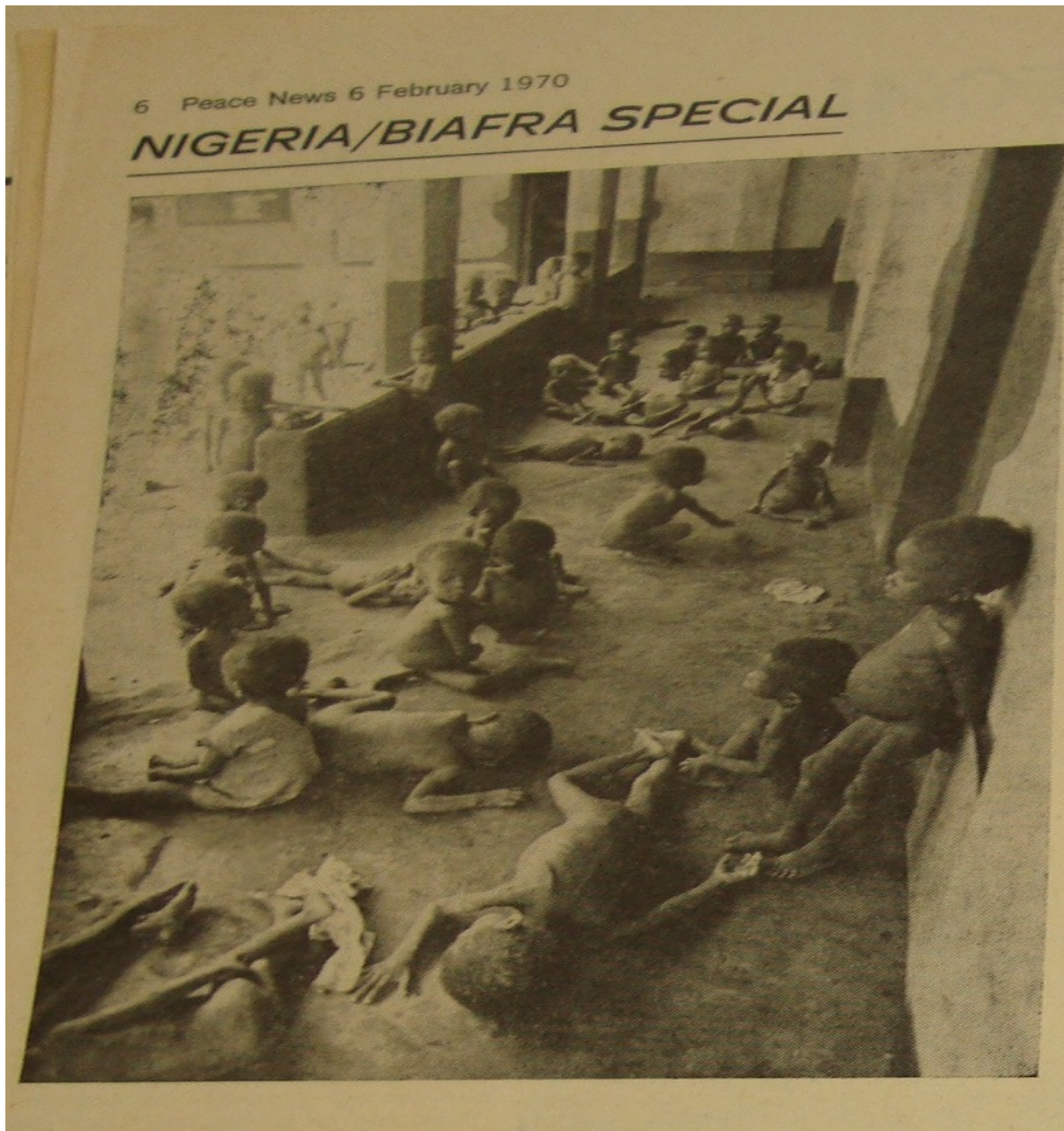
War Affected Baby Suffering from Malnutrition (Kwashiokor)



Source: *Peace News*, 6th December, 1968.

Appendix XXV

Pot-Bellied Babies Suffering from Malnutrition (Kwashiorkor)



Source: Biafra Today. *Peace News*. 6th February, 1970.

Appendix XXVI
A Child Affected by the Civil War



Source: Biafra Today. *Peace News*. 6th February, 1970.

Appendix XXVII

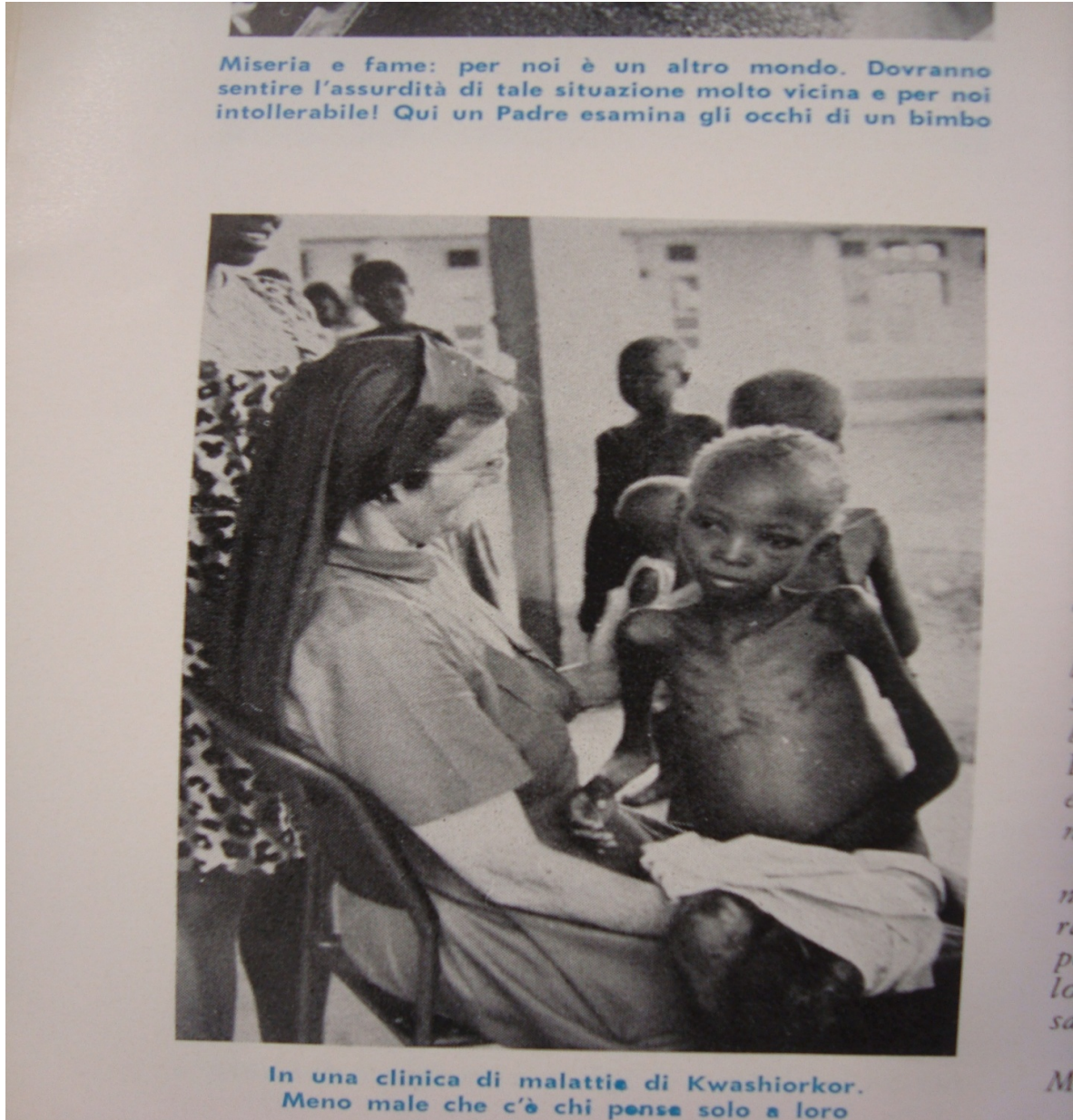
A Dead Child Being Buried by An OXFAM Staff, Kip Warr, In 1968



Source: *OXFAM's Year, 1968-1969, p.4.*

Appendix XXVIII

A Reverend Sister with a Sick *Kwashiorkor* Child in the Medical Clinic



Source: Mistica Rosa, *Gessiche Biafra!* 1969.

Appendix XXIX
Sick Crying Child Sick



Source: *Peace News*. 23rd December, 1968.

Appendix XXXV
Picutre of Starving Babies



Source: *Peace News*. 22nd March, 1970.

Appendix XXXVI
Starving and Suffering War Affected Baby



Source: Pictures of Suffering War Affected Babies retrieved 2nd August, 2019 from [www.http://gettyimages.com](http://gettyimages.com)

Appendix XXXVII
Starving and Suffering War Affected Child



Source: Pictures of Suffering Biafran Babies retrieved 2nd August, 2019 from [www.http://gettyimages.com](http://gettyimages.com).

Appendix XXXVIII
Starving and Suffering War Affected Child



Source: Pictures of Suffering Biafran Babies retrieved 2nd August, 2019 from [www.http://gettyimages.com](http://gettyimages.com).

