

Biafra

Employing suffering to gain sympathy

BY RUFUS OKOTORE

The 14 months old civil war in Nigeria has reached another turning point, the old propaganda of self-sufficiency and abundant wealth claimed by the secessionist Biafra has given way to employing human suffering to gain sympathy and recognition from the Christian world.

I left Nigeria where I had lived for over 21 years when the war was in its infancy, so I am in a much better position to give worthy opinions about the fundamental issues underlying the war. Little significance should be paid to the sayings of the many Nigerian students here in North America: most left home four to ten years ago when everything appeared smooth-sailing, politicians amassing wealth, and corrupt practices just starting. These students are less informed of the later developments in the country except news written to them by their parents on two page letter forms and probably from newspaper reports which are never free from misrepresentation. They should be urged to return home after their studies to help in the heavy reconstruction that lies ahead rather than to demonstrate, as a few of them did in Ottawa, London, etc. a few months ago, and also not to sit tight here to accumulate the dollar.

Another group of people giving distorted views about the situation in Nigeria are the God-fearing missionaries, especially those of the Presbyterian Church. These have been carried away by emotions and their untrue utterances have done great injustice to Nigeria.

Suffice for the preamble. It will take many pages to outline in detail the fundamental issues involved, so I will only mention a few important ones which I urge all thoughtful persons to consider.

Nigeria, with a population of 55 million, has been plagued with tribalism, a disease that hampers nationalism in many countries. This arose from the basic fact that the geographical divisions of the

whole country by the British, the then colonial master, did not conform with the cultural divisions. This danger was not realized until recently, and the fruit it bore constitutes one of the basic issues underlying the civil war in Nigeria. The Biafrans, mostly the Ibo tribe, now occupying one third the former eastern region of Nigeria, told the outside world that they were the Jews, the best educated and most enterprising in Nigeria, hence the persecution. This statement is entirely wrong and misleading. The Yorubas, the major tribe (approx. 8 million) living in the north western region of Nigeria rank equally with the Ibos in all walks of life. This tribe even produced the first set of Nigerian medical practitioners and lawyers. The Biafrans failed to tell the world that they are intolerant, selfish, and very possessive. For ten years before the first military take-over, they teamed up with the Hausas, the major tribe in the northern region of Nigeria who are now their external enemies, to rule the country, exploit the riches of the country much to the expense of the Yorubas in the west. The Yorubas are more quiet and sophisticated.

Exploitation was carried out at the expense of nationalism, and tribalism was getting more deeply-rooted. In fact many of the self-acclaimed Biafrans now studying in North America, Britain, many European countries, etc. are benefactors of this peaceful coexistence between the Hausas and the Ibos. The tide turned and the building of a strong nation devoid of corruption, tribalism, etc. was imminent. This brought about the first coup organized by a few intellectuals in the army including the rebel leader, Mr. Ojukwu. The coup was not successfully carried out as anticipated, and had few tribal trailings. The Biafrans living and trading in northern Nigeria exploited badly these tribal trailings of the coup. Most of the political leaders in northern and western Nigeria were killed by the insurgents, while those in eastern Nigeria, the Ibos, were left un-

touched. The wild pronouncements by these Biafrans in the North angered the natives and there was a free-for-all fight between residents and non-residents in many cities in northern Nigeria. The Biafrans suffered heavy casualties compared with the Yorubas because they were more in number and also due to their aggressiveness. So the phrase "massacre" or "genocide" frequently used by the rebel leader Ojukwu and also the Biafran students should not be accepted as such.

Events that took place later were aimed at correcting the imbalance and the defaults of the first coup, thus the second coup overtook this. The most idealistic solution to the entire problem is the division into twelve states and the overhauling of the former constitution. Nigeria is on the threshold of completing these, if the rebellion is made to end soon. This division of the country into twelve states conforms with the cultural divisions. In the former Federal set-up, there was too much regional and tribal consciousness. This had helped the Ibos to form a strong bloc, seizing the radio network of eastern Nigeria, now called "Radio-Biafra" to broadcast effectively malicious statements. They are in fact the people committing the genocide by killing all the non-Ibos in eastern Nigeria in their midst whom they take as traitors for their recent defeat by the Federal government. The world is not yet aware of this atrocity.

The Ibos or Biafrans can still live peacefully, untormented by other fellow Nigerians if they turn over a new leaf - be more tolerant, less aggressive, and less possessive. I implore all friends of Nigeria who have answered the great call - providing food for the starving Biafrans - to forget the emotional aspect of the issue, help the Federal government of Nigeria to force her way into the Ibo heartland and rescue the innocent children from the tortures of life and death. These are the future scientists - great leaders of Africa.

CUS and the Student Movement on Imperialism

Editor's Note: Another of the resolutions passed at the 32nd CUS Congress. Dalhousie voted in favour of this resolution.

WHEREAS imperialism constitutes the greatest threat to peace and to peoples seeking freedom and national self-determination.

AND WHEREAS the United States of America is the greatest imperialist power in the world today.

AND WHEREAS U.S. imperialism perpetuates economic underdevelopment in both the non-industrialized societies and in Canada today.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT CUS promote relations with other national student unions and youth organizations having as their goal national and social liberation.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CUS sever relations with national and international organizations opposed to struggles for national and social liberation.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CUS withdraw from the International Student Conference (ISC).

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this conference expresses solidarity with student struggles for national liberation from U.S. imperialism.

CUS on Vietnam

Editor's note: While refusing to unanimously support section 4 of this resolution, Dalhousie did vote for it as a whole, as did a strong majority of the Congress.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT CUS

1. condemn the imperialist and genocidal war currently being waged against Vietnam by the United States of America and its allies.
2. demand the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. and allied troops and further demand the immediate cessation of all acts of war against Vietnam in order to permit the Vietnamese to settle their own affairs.
3. condemn the Canadian government's political and material support for U.S. aggression in Vietnam and elsewhere.
4. support the National Liberation Front in its struggle for national liberation.
5. invite a National Liberation Front delegation to visit the member campuses in Canada.
6. actively support the International Week of Protest against the Vietnam war, and organize mass demonstrations during that week.

A Course in Social Change

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose
1967 (Fall)

VANCOUVER — Faced with a critical shortage of housing, UBC authorities have issued an urgent appeal to secure housing accommodation... "It's really bad," said AMS Shaun Sullivan, "people are coming into my office and telling me they can't find anything."

KINGSTON — 40 women and 50 men at Queen's University are now living in the La Salle Hotel in downtown Kingston.

The students are part of the overflow from Queen's residences.

KINGSTON — Kingston landlords and apartment owners discriminate against foreign students, a

West Indian student at Queen's University claims.

LONDON — University of Western Ontario students marched on campus Sunday and held a tent-in to protest a lack of suitable off-campus housing.

1968 (Fall)

TORONTO — A housing by-law in the Toronto suburb of North York is preventing some 300 York University student from getting adequate accommodation.

KINGSTON — Queen's University will hold a "tent-in" to protest campus housing shortages. Principal John J. Deutsch called the tent-in a "ridiculous stunt".

TORONTO — The student council at the Univer-

sity of Toronto began work Monday on a tent city designed to publicize the university's student housing crisis.

U of T president Claude Bissell said the students were right but added student accommodation was always scarce because university resources were concentrated on academic buildings.

TORONTO — A dozen University of Toronto students Thursday picketed an apartment building whose landlord they say is forcing families out to bring in student tenants at exorbitant rates.

KINGSTON — The Queen's Journal has uncovered cases of landlords evicting low-income families to provide space for higher renting student accommodations.

"Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it!" Mark Twain