

At a conservative estimate

6000 Biafrans will Die today

By Moses Chukwudum Nwachuku

The relationship between Biafra and Nigeria is just like one of those nasty marriages in which divorce must be inevitable. One cannot expect a partnership to continue if and when the relationship between the opposing parties has been frustrated by deep "tribal" hatred and jealousy. Where such an unfitting relationship is allowed to continue, it will result in the destruction of the partners concerned. . . No relationship is good or should be encouraged unless it is mutual.

Biafra wants divorce -- recognition that she may remain independent of her former partner, Nigeria -- on grounds quite simply, of extreme cruelty and genocide by the latter. The people of Biafra are, therefore, imploring all democratic peoples, religious organizations and political leaders to help settle the war between Biafra and Nigeria. They can contribute to the settlement of the conflict by urging their government to accord a full recognition of Biafra's sovereignty. . . Biafra desperately needs their help before it is too late.

The people of Biafra have a right to exist and to live in human conditions like people in other parts of the free, democratic society. This basic right of theirs (granted under the "Human Rights Charter") was grossly violated by the Nigerian Moslems two years ago by the killing of approximately 30,000 Biafran civilians in a cold blooded program. Biafra was loyally and unsuspectingly under the federation of Nigeria as Eastern Nigeria when these appalling massacres took place in the spring and were repeated in the summer of 1966.

It was these massacres which drove the people of Biafra away from other parts of the defunct federation to their own homeland, a region which was then called Eastern Nigeria but is now baptized a new nation, called Biafra which is presently struggling for survival.

When the Biafrans fled to their homeland, their government was wise enough to order the Nigerians living in Biafra to depart for their own regions or homelands in safety instead of being murdered in revenge. The Biafrans exercised a great restraint and over a million of the Nigerians living in Biafra departed safely to their own homelands.

However, a few Biafrans, who could not exercise much restraint -- especially some of those who fled home from Nigeria with their bodies half-mangled with bush machetes and poisoned arrows, or had their relatives killed and their property confiscated or destroyed -- killed approximately thirty departing Nigerians before the highly efficient Biafran police force intervened. But this was not the end of the conflict. It was the beginning.

The organized, systematic massacre of many Biafrans is still going on in the name of Nigerian unity -- unity in which there would be no Biafran left alive. Ironically, the Nigerian leader, Gowon has declared that there is no basis for unity in the Nigerian federation. . .

The massacre indicates that Biafrans are highly resented and unwanted in the federation. Now, the survivors have retreated to their own nation, Biafra, with heavy losses in terms of human life, property and investments. It is shocking and revolting to the civilized that the Nigerians are still craving for more Biafran blood.

The Nigerians claim that they want Biafrans once again to become members of the federation but the Biafrans fear that they are wanted back only to be finished off -- exterminated. Nigeria's continued massacre and war of genocide against Biafra are surely indicative of the validity of the fear.

The Biafrans also argue that if they are really being united back into the federation in good faith, the way to assure them is not by the barrel of a gun or war, but by peaceful and friendly gestures, repentance for past ills committed, and a solid guarantee for their safety in the federation.

These are steps which they Nigerians were not and are not prepared to take, they prefer to bully or fight the Biafrans into submission, that they may accept blindly their walk into their own death trap. The Biafrans recognize this and prefer to fight for their protection or die bravely rather than die cold-bloodedly in the defunct federation.

Biafra did not secede after the first series of massacres. She declared her independence a year later after attempts to work out a new form of unity which would guarantee their safety within the federation failed. In other words, she was forced into secession.

Consequently, the gulf between the two factions has widened beyond reconciliation, and only the uninformed mind would expect the two to live under the same roof without one destroying the other completely.

The Biafrans accuse Nigeria of genocide because

the Nigerian soldiers concentrate their killings on Biafran civilians, usually innocent children, babies, women and old people, wherever they overrun a city or village. When Nigerian soldiers opened a front in Biafra's sea-port, Port-Harcourt, they savagely massacred wounded and helpless soldiers and civilians lying in hospital beds. They committed a similar atrocity in Biafra's commercial and marketing centre, Onitsha; this time the victims were a group of approximately 300 "Jehova Witness" church members who were praying at the time in their church building. The women in the group were stripped and ravaged right inside the church by some primitive soldiers of the Nigerian forces before being shot to fragments.

The jet bombers, supplied and piloted by British, Russian, and Egyptian pilots, concentrated their air attacks on non-military targets, killing hundreds of civilians daily over a period of months. The Egyptian pilots joined in committing the atrocities, using Biafra as a training ground for their war with Israel.

The crime of the Biafrans is their over-industrious attitude, their absorption of education introduced to them by Christian missionaries, and their quick and easy adaptation to the Western way of life.

These accomplishments and industrious attitudes earned for the Biafrans the outrageous envy of the predominantly Moslem Nigerians who terribly lack these qualities by their own fault, as I will explain later.

I say that the Biafrans are over-industrious, at least by African standards, because, as many observers also say, most of them work objectively, energetically, and consistently towards their goals, no matter what obstacles may confront them.

They see education as their basic means to progress, and they crave for it like maniacs, such that it could be offending to an onlooker -- especially one who is lazy, indifferent to education, or afraid to take to fair means of competition in life.

For example, some Biafrans may fail examinations several times, sometimes five to seven times or even more, and never get discouraged, where others will likely give up easily. As long as they do not flunk out or lose their place completely, they keep battling patiently and hopefully, sometimes under various conditions inconducive to studies -- conditions like inadequate funds, poor food, years of homesickness in foreign lands, etc -- until they make it. Usually, they succeed and sometimes get good jobs by virtue of their educational achievements.

Old people and young people alike, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, sit side by side in classes, especially in the lower grades in evening classes -- i.e., among those parents or old people are some in their 60's and 70's, who never had the opportunity in their young days. All take pride in learning, and they utilize most of their spare time when they are back from their day's work, to learn -- at least to learn to read and write basic English and some other languages including their own language.

The poorer but brilliant ones, who cannot afford tuition and boarding fees in higher institutions, go to night schools whenever they save some money.

Biafrans are expected to, and some do make contributions to their village funds used in sending the brilliant ones among them (not necessarily their own sons) to high schools and universities. These students come back to help their poor people in return. It is almost a tradition for people in all Biafran villages to aim at turning out a good number of engineers, doctors, priests, lawyers, teachers, social workers, etc., otherwise they would not only be lagging behind other villages in educational and intellectual progress but also be ridiculed by them. In this way, the spirit of competition is very high among the village communities.

Some working class Biafrans who have long finished their high school education but could not get into a higher institution for financial reasons, or who could not gain admission into institutions on a competitive basis, usually take correspondence courses, study privately and earn their degrees.

Those who have tried but are definitely unable to cope with formal education, take to some other occupations like driving commercial trucks or as chauffeurs for V.I.P.'s, trading, shoe-making, tailoring, carpentry, hair-cutting and hairdressing, farming, black-smithing, watch-repairing, motor mechanics, domestic work -- cooking, stewardship and gardening, jazz and highlife music playing, professional boxing, etc.

Examples of this class of Biafrans are the former world feather-weight boxing champion, Hogan Kid Bassey, and the former light-heavy-weight boxing champion of the world, Dick Tiger who lost his title only two months ago in the U.S.A.

Supported by Russia, Britain and other imperialist powers, Nigeria continues her extermination of Biafran civilians. In this article, Moses Nwachuku, a Biafran, shares his bitter conception of the Biafran nation, and the Biafran war.

NORTHERN NIGERIA

Religion:
90% Moslem
2% Christian
8% Atheists

Population:
26-28 million

Tribes:
Hausa
Fulani
Tiv, etc.

WESTERN NIGERIA

Religion:
70% Moslem
21% Christian
9% Atheists

Population:
8-9 million

Tribes:
Yoruba
Ido
Ijebu, etc.

MID-WESTERN NIGERIA

Religion:
45% Moslem
45% Christian
5% Animist
5% Atheists

Population:
2-3 Million

Tribes:
Benin
Ijaw
Uhorbo, etc.

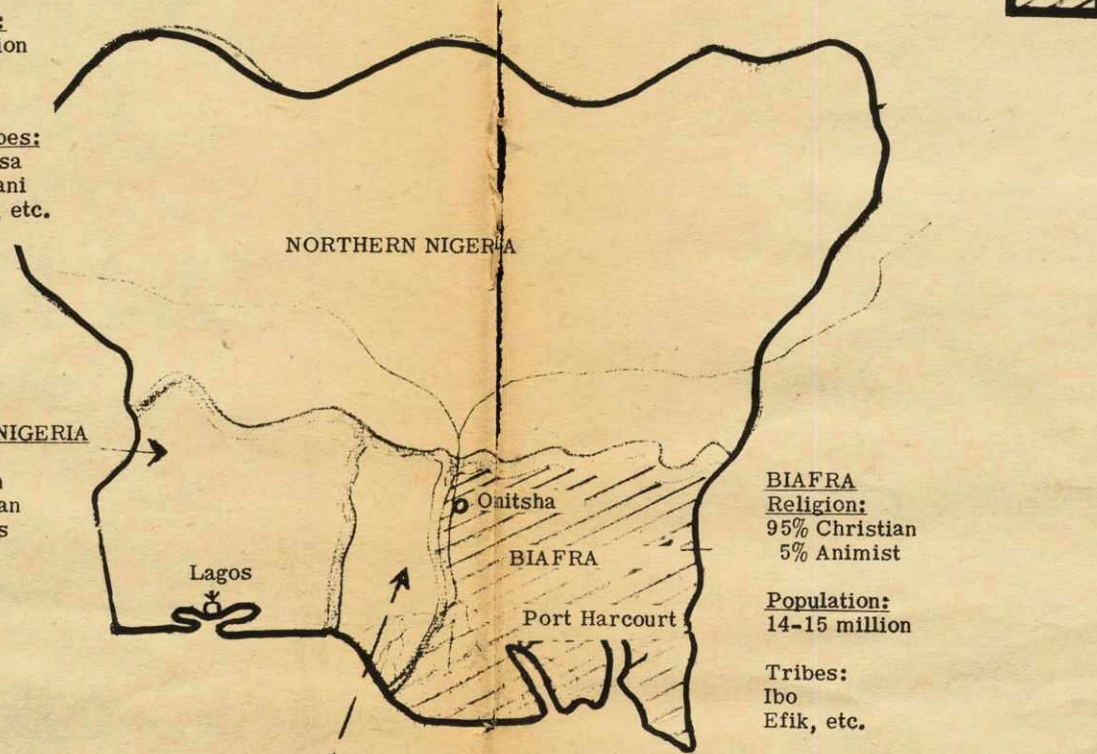
BIAFRA

Religion:
95% Christian
5% Animist

Population:
14-15 million

Tribes:
Ibo
Efik, etc.

P.S.: These figures are only approximations



All Biafrans invest their money in the education of their children and in various business enterprises.

In the ways described above, ignorance and poverty is battled against among the Biafrans by spontaneous and planned community effort. Education and the spirit of hard-work became internalised among them. Through education, they outgrow tribal mentality and ignorance which plague most of their neighbors in Nigeria.

The characteristics described above are shared by the various communities in Biafra. The only factor distinguishing one Biafran community from the other is dialect or language, otherwise they are agreeable in major variables which distinguish them from non-Biafrans.

Many Nigerians, especially the Moslems are indifferent to education and therefore, they cannot or do not care to keep pace with Biafrans; a gulf thus develops. The Nigerians find it hard to compete fairly with the Biafrans when opportunities are open for competition by merit. Usually Moslem Nigerians like to take by corrupt means what they cannot get on the basis of merit. The Biafrans, on the other hand, like to be considered on the basis of merit.

Before the crisis burst into the open, it was common to find a grade six or semi-literate Moslem as a boss to the Biafran with a doctorate degree in various national or governmental enterprises -- (e.g. government ministerial positions, positions of firm directory, positions of city mayorate, university chancellorship, etc.) It was in professional positions like law, medicine, teaching, engineering, and other skilled jobs that the Biafrans were tolerated because there were not enough Moslems with the necessary skills to fill up these positions.

The few Nigerian Moslems with good education are usually those from the Yoruba community of Western Nigeria because of the influence of their well-educated Christian neighbors from the same community.

The majority of the Nigerian Moslems (about 90%)

come from Northern Nigeria. The northern region of Nigeria forms about one-half of the total population of the old federation including Biafra (the former Eastern Nigeria), Western Nigeria, Mid-western Nigeria, and Northern Nigeria. The tribal religious groups inhabiting each region are illustrated in the map.

The Nigerian Moslems are very religious people, which is admirable. They are, unfortunately, religious fanatics.

I remember when I was at home some years ago seeing them praying in groups frequently for hours daily in the open environment, or at their door steps. Often, they sit on the bare floor and sometimes on animal skins, with their legs crossed. In that position and facing the east where they believe God ("Allah") is, they begin their prayer by nodding their heads to and fro in rhythmical succession for several hours, until they are almost exhausted. This ceremony is repeated strictly several times a day, and is almost a full time job.

When their prayer is over, they sit back waiting for miracles to happen -- for fortune to fall into their laps without working hard or objectively for it. Some engage in lazy, petty jobs, like nail-cutting for their people at sidewalk, while others engage in selling of a type of roasted beef called "suya", or selling of magical charms from house to house.

Their attitude towards education is one of spite and indifference as they regard it as a "white man's business". Their powerful feudal chiefs are mainly responsible for this poor mentality. They believe in keeping their subjects ignorant and uneducated in order to maintain their power over them and to manipulate them for their political and selfish ends. Usually, the few educated ones among them are highly suspected by the feudal chiefs and their liege lords.

The height of their fanaticism is their strong belief in putting a non-Moslem to death, especially if that non-Moslem has any quarrel or slight mis-

understanding with them. They are very narrow minded and quick tempered. Their pugnacious attitude is manifested in their habit of carrying their long bows and poisoned arrows about openly in normal situations, which they use when there is quarrel.

The Moslem Nigerians outnumber the Biafrans by a ratio of 3:1. This automatically puts the Moslems in a position to dominate the country politically ever since Nigeria became independent in 1960, in accordance with the constitution given by the British government.

Unfortunately, most of the Moslem members of parliament have little or no education to carry out their parliamentary duties efficiently. Most of them were semi-literate Moslem tribal chiefs, efficient in their obsolete feudal system of government, but grossly incompetent in the modern governmental system adopted in the federal government.

The outcome of the government was seen in bribery and corruption, disturbances leading to losses of thousands of lives weekly, rigging of elections, victimization of some election candidates, and other pandemonia which plagued the country when they were in power. These became the accepted way of life in Nigeria, particularly among the Moslem elements until consequently the civilian government was overthrown in the first Nigerian coup by a small group of young revolutionary army officers from a cross-section of the country -- from both the Moslem tribes and the Biafran tribes.

On the other hand, the people who represented the Biafrans (then Eastern Nigerians) in the Nigerian federal government were all well-educated intellectuals -- doctors, lawyers, professors, doctorates in various fields of study, etc. They were, unfortunately a minority, and consequently had little or no influence in controlling the federal government for efficient functioning.

I will not fail to point out that there are little pockets of Christian community in the Moslem Nigeria (as shown on the map), particularly in the Yoruba tribe of Eastern Nigeria, who are educated like the Biafrans. They were and still are, unfortunately, unable to speak out against injustices for fear of being massacred or victimized by the Moslems who form a majority in their tribes, or by the Moslem soldiers who have always occupied their region.

After the first coup in which four political leaders responsible for the general mismanagement died, the country was running smoothly with reforms going on, and plans for return to civilian rule under way.

Only six months later, a counter coup organized exclusively by the Northern Nigerian tribes took place, in which the Military President and hundreds of other army officers from Biafra were killed.

With the Moslems once again wielding their monopoly power, even though their military leader, Gowon, is a Christian (from one of the Moslem tribes of the feudal Northern Nigeria), the country returned to chaos. The worst crisis in modern history began with a series of indiscriminate massacres of innocent Biafran civilians (then Eastern Nigerians) by both the federal government Moslem soldiers and the Moslem civilian mobs.

The stomachs of pregnant women were slashed open and their unborn children fell out dying. Biafran young women before being killed were held to the ground to be raped by sex-starved lepers of Northern Nigeria. Some were buried or burnt alive; some had their eye-balls removed with sticks and were forced to eat them; some students had their fingers or arms chopped off and their eyes destroyed with hot irons in order to prevent them from going further with their education. All other primitive and inhuman methods imaginable were also used in killing my people.

In these ways, Biafrans were massacred in thousands within that period. I have in my possession pictures of samples of some of these barbaric methods used in killing my people.

Even after the pogrom of 1966, my people, the Biafrans, tried to work out a new form of unity or a new constitution which would guarantee their safety in the federation, but that failed as the Nigerians do not believe in compromise but in enforcing their opinion on others, especially if they have the power to do so.

It was at this juncture that my people, the Biafrans, found no alternative but to break away from the federation which they struggled for years to build and develop in peace more than any other group in the federation.

The Biafrans have demonstrated by thirteen months of bitter fighting that they have decided upon a new political organization -- independence for Biafra -- and are willing to defend it. The blood that has been shed and the suffering that has been endured for over a year by the Biafran people show their will to assert themselves as a people.

On becoming aware of these basic characteristics of the Biafrans and the Nigerians, respectively, one can easily understand why it is impossible for the two factions to live together peacefully. This is why it is reasonable to keep them apart from each other, and let each determine her own destiny or manage her own affairs.

Therefore, it is only reasonable to request all the countries of the world to recognize the existence of Biafra and her people, and also the existence of what remains of the former federation of Nigeria and her people.

People should live and let live.

The world has taken it upon itself to utter many ill-formed criticisms of the Jew of Europe for going to their deaths at the hands of the German Nazis without any concerted struggle. But out of sympathy for the sufferings of this people, and in recognition of the world's failure to take action at the appropriate time, the United Nations established the State of Israel in a territory which had belonged to the Arabs for thousands of years. It was felt that only by establishment of a Jewish homeland, and a Jewish National State, could Jews be expected to live in the world under conditions of human security. The world has recognized the State of Israel and will continue to do so because of its belief that every people must have some place in the world where they are not liable to be rejected by their fellow citizens.

But the Biafrans have now suffered the same kind of rejection within the Nigerian federation that the Jews of Germany experienced. Fortunately, they already had a homeland. They have retreated to it for their own protection, and for the same reason -- after all other efforts had failed -- they have declared it to be an independent state.

In the light of the circumstances, the people of Biafra have humbly requested the countries of the world for recognition of their state of Biafra as an independent sovereign entity and as a member of the community of nations.

Only by the act of recognition can the democratic nations remain true to the conviction that the purpose of society, and all political organization, is the service of man.

SPECIAL COMMENT

The people of Nigeria do recognize that there is no basis for unity in the old federation, as their present leader once confessed. They are fighting this war only out of jealousy and hate for the Biafrans.

In fact, the old federation was made up of three of four different nations which have little or nothing in common. To continue putting them together is just like expecting the people of Canada and the people of Vietnam or Congo to share a common government -- any one who knows the backgrounds of these component groups can hardly expect them to make compatible partners.

The Old Colonial masters, the British government created the Nigerian Federation by the amalgamation of these separate entities or nations solely for the British economic interest. There was no Nigeria before the British people came to Africa.

The British military and diplomatic support to Nigeria betray the attempt of the British government to preserve the Federation for her own interest, but against the interest of the parties -- Biafran and Nigeria -- involved. Communist Russia is also helping Nigeria for the same reason but I doubt if she has a chance of success anywhere in Africa.

These nations -- Biafra and Nigeria -- know fully well that they can benefit more by a new kind of association, i.e. common market or economic unit while they remain different sovereign states. It is the type of association practised by the prosperous Eastern African Nations.

The British government is ruthlessly exploiting the differences between Biafra and Nigeria by encouraging the latter to destroy the Biafrans for her own interest. The Nigerian economy is already in firm grip or full control of the British government. It is the hope of the British government to dominate the Biafran economy as well if she succeeds in putting the people of Biafra or their soil under the administrative control of the Nigerians whom she easily manipulates.

I must point out here that it is unfair and hypocritical of the British government to not only support the use of force but also to use its military assistance to destroy black people in Biafra while the same British government condemns the use of force against her white cousins in Rhodesia who are not struggling for survival but for supremacy. In both cases, Biafra and Rhodesia, I deplore the use of force, especially where it involves mass killing.

This is a war Nigeria and her supporters cannot win. The only way they can win this war is by complete extermination of all Biafrans at home and abroad.

If they succeed in murdering the whole of my people in Biafra, they gonna have to come here in Canada to get me too -- this is the only way they can assure their military victory.

The Biafrans are determined to fight to the last man for their protection if Nigeria and her supporters continue to molest them. Biafra and her people will either survive or perish depending on what the world, especially the democratic nations decide to do about recognizing Biafra.