

Biafran calls Federation artificial

Winston Fubara Bellgam, Biafran student leader, pleaded for Canadian recognition of Biafran distress and suffering at open meeting at the SUB on Tuesday night.

Bellgam said that it was not his purpose to discuss the causes or blame for the present conflict but to direct Canadian attention to the situation as it exists at present.

Mr. Bellgam, however, didn't confine himself to the limits of his own proposal. During what he called his explanation of the background of the war, he outlined the political rationale of the split.

Bellgam termed the Nigerian Federation artificial. "The Federation," he said, "is an invention of the British and is not based on social or cultural realities."

He went on to explain the cultural differences in the three regions of the federation.

The people of the North, traditionally nomadic, were greatly influenced by Arabian-Moslem neighbors. They had been ruled by feudal landlords who were supported by the British colonials for facilitating the collection of taxes.

The south-western region was influenced both by Arabian and western culture.

The traditional culture of the eastern region (Biafra) on the other hand was characterized by a form of republicanism based on tribal interaction. Thus this area was easily susceptible to western influence.

Mr. Bellgam's conclusion was that the people of the east were more politicized than those of other regions and could not be content to be governed by a majority less politically aware.

The precipitant of Biafran secession, said Bellgam, was the senseless killing of Ibo's who lived in parts of Nigeria other than Biafra. Over two million Ibo's retreated to Biafra as refugees.

Biafra claimed independence shortly afterward.

In the debate following Bellgam's speech it was pointed out that the 1966 coup, led by Ibo military leaders, saw many politicians killed, none of whom were Ibo's. This was suggested as a reason for the later retaliation.

Dr. Anthony Boxill and prof Kinnell, members of the panel stated their position. Their interest, they said, is that of the Canadian government, is not to take sides in the issue but to help alleviate suffering wherever possible.

Brief history of the Nigerian crisis

by ben alli

To base the Nigerian Crisis on the war alone without knowing something about its political background will be very misleading, hence in order to give a clear and objective report on the Nigerian Crisis, it is pertinent that a brief background to the events leading to the explosive situation which was created by the military operations of the 15th January, 1966 be given.

It is significant to say from the onset that the present Nigerian Crisis has its roots in the political imbalance of the structure which Nigeria inherited from the British at independence and led to a struggle between the major political parties.

The political movements were based more or less on tribal bases, the very cause of tribalistic loyalty, which constituted a great deal towards the decay of the 1st Federal government.

(a) The Northern People's Congress mainly Hausa/Fulani groups. (North)

(b) The National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, mainly Ibo. (East)

(c) The Action group - Yoruba. (West)

In each of these regions mentioned above, legislatures and regional governments were established. These governments were formed by the political parties as indicated above. This was the situation in 1960, when independence was granted to this giant country of Africa which was to be the hope of the continent and the black race. She was looked upon as a promising experiment in parliamentary democracy and a constructive force in World Politics, especially in Western European circles.

When independence was granted to Nigeria, it developed that no single party was able to win an over-all majority in parliament. So, after the general election in late 1959, the Action Group leader from

the West proposed the amalgamation of the Southern parties so as to run the 1st independent Nigeria. The Eastern political leaders fearing their Western counterparts because of their personal ambitions, rejected the offer and teamed up with the N.P.C. thus forming a coalition government. As desired, they were given key posts, President of the Country, Ministry of Education, External Affairs, Aviation, Finance and others but the Northerners retained the Prime Ministership and Ministry of defence and two others. This coalition lasted till intra-party differences developed within the alliance in 1964.

On the early morning of the 15 Jan., a "coup-de-etat" was carried out by some young army officers mostly Ibos and headed by Major Nzewgwu Kaduna.

The universally accepted motive of the coup was that the politicians were corrupt and could no longer be trusted to effectively run the affairs of the country. No one quarrelled with this argument.

But there was one fly in the ointment: the operation strongly smacked of tribal bias for no Ibo politician was killed even though it was agreed that all had to be purged.

On July 7, Ojukwu's forces attacked the Federal forces. Ben Alli is a Nigerian student at UNB.

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I think that we should be men first and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right . . . Law never made men a whit more just, and, by means of their respect for it, even the well disposed are daily made the agents of injustice.

---Henry David Thoreau

He bit his lip, nearly enough to start it bleeding. Christ, I don't understand, he said. Dib. Dib. Dib. Law No. 1. A Scout's Honour is to be Trusted. Whatever I say, whatever I do is me. Fuck! That really made him mad. That's the way it is, I told him.

Rigorous law is often rigorous injustice.

---Terence (185-159 B.C.)

By now, she interrupted. The jukebox was so loud. The same records, repeated loudness. Raising the cup of bitter black coffee to my mouth, I watch her eyes. Unfair! (She said it quite loud in competition with the jukebox.) Her eyes agreed. A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yon' justice rails upon yon' simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?

---William Shakespeare

I was tapping my fingers over and over again. Tap. Tap. Taps. Day is done, gone the sun, god is nigh. For one intense flickering second, I could feel the noose pulling tighter and tighter around my neck. I started to choke. Air. Air. The blood vessels were exploding my face. I could see only the sickening crowd through my foggy eyes. Vomit was forcing its way up my inner channels, some of the disgusting chunky fluid dribbling out of my mouth. I was blind. The intense blood pressure caused my eyes to virtually pop out of their sockets. Legs three feet from the ground were now two feet, ten and a half inches. My neck stretched, my heart beating, my mind dead. Tap. Tap. The record changed. Hello . . . I'm Johnny Cash.

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign And wretches hand that jury men may dine.

---Alexander Pope

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