The Political Economy of Hunger:

Famine in Nigeria, 1967-70

Presented to the Faculty of Commerce and Social Science

University of Birmingham

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Social Sciences

James M. Clevenger

June 1975

SYNOPSIS

This study begins with an assessment of pre-war food production and consumption patterns in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The nutritional vulnerabilities ensuing from the fundamental imbalance between reproductive and productive capacities in the region are outlined. This is followed by an analysis of pre-war politics in Nigeria. The factors which led to both the overthrow of the civilian regime and the collapse of military government into secession and civil war are discussed. The ensuing chapters are devoted to an analysis of the famine which resulted from the intersection of the socio-economic and political processes described above. First, the origins and development of the nutritional crisis are assessed and linked to the pre-war food economy and political crises. Then, the efforts made by international humanitarian organizations to reduce the severity of the nutritional crisis are discussed, and the pernicious effects of political considerations on the relief operation are examined. Finally, the goals and perceptions which underlay the 'politics of hunger' are analysed. The thesis concludes with some remarks on the relationship of the Nigerian famine to episodes of mass starvation elsewhere in the Third World.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Action Group
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CI	Caritas Internationalis
COL	Colonel
CPT	Captain
CSM	Corn/soya meal/milk powder mixture
CWS	Church World Service
DCU	Deutcher Caritasverband
DDW	Das Diakonsiche Werk
DICARWS	Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee, and World Service
FMG	Federal Military Government
HPF	High protein food
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JCA	Joint Church Aid
JCA/USA	Joint Church Aid - United States
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MAJ	Major
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NNDP	Nigerian National Democratic Party
NPC	Northern Peoples Congress
NPU	Net Protein Utilization
NRC	Nigerian Red Cross Society
UPP	United Peoples Party
WCC	World Council of Churches

LIST OF CONTENTS

SYNOPSIS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I Food and Nutrition in the Pre-War Eastern Region.

CHAPTER II Pre-War Politics.

CHAPTER III Origins and Development of the Nutritional Crisis.

CHAPTER IV Relief Operations.

CHAPTER V The Politics of Hunger.

CHAPTER VI The Political Economy of Famine in Nigeria and the Third World.

INTRODUCTION

For two and one-half years, from mid-1967 until January 1970, West Africa's most populous state, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was convulsed by a Civil War, which followed upon the Eastern Region's attempt to break away from the remainder of the Federation and establish itself as an independent state. No other aspect of the conflict between Nigeria's Federal Military Government and the secessionist regime attracted more interest than the nutritional disaster which afflicted the civilian population in the war zone. For brief periods during the war, the concern and sympathy of virtually the entire international community were engaged by the spectacle of millions of men, women, and children starving to death in Eastern Nigeria. Indeed, efforts to relieve the plight of Eastern civilians eventually drew over 100 official and private aid organizations from all over the world into contact with the belligerents.

Bitter political antagonisms developed out of this nexus. The relief organizations' intense committment to their humanitarian mission, combined with the sense of urgency which infused their operations, brought them into conflict with the belligerent governments; each of which, in turn, attempted to use the nutritional crisis to justify and reinforce its own political position. The relief agencies were accused by the Federal government and its supporters, of wrapping political support for the secessionist cause in a cloak of humanitarianism. At the same time, the Biafran regime charged the agencies with abandonment of their humanitarian principles and obligations in the face of Federal opposition to their operations. The Biafran government was accused of cynically manipulating the world's

concern for the plight of Eastern Nigerians in order to gain advantage in its quest for international recognition and support; while the Federal Military Government was widely condemned for utilizing mass starvation as a weapon in its conflict with the Biafran regime.

This furious barrage of charge and counter-charge shed little light on the foundations of either the famine or the controversy which surrounded the relief operation. The primary objective of this thesis is to present - by relating both the nutritional crisis and the relief operation to their socio-political environment - an assessment of the causes of the famine and of the disputes regarding its alleviation.

The first chapter of the thesis is devoted to an examination of the socio-economic structure of the pre-war Eastern Region. Its primary emphasis is on the food economy of the region; and on the area's vulnerability to the ravages of mass hunger.

The second chapter focusses on Nigeria's pre-war political development. In the first section of the chapter the political processes which propelled the Nigerian Army into the political arena are examined. The second section contains an outline of the development of the perceptions and political objectives which underlay the belligerents' participation in both the civil war and the politics of hunger.

The third chapter consists of a detailed analysis of the development of the nutritional crisis up to mid-1968. It will be shown that it was the intersection of pre-war socio-economic and political processes which triggered off the region's decline into mass starvation.

Chapters Four and Five are devoted to an assessment of the famine in the period following mid-1968. Chapter Four is focussed

on the development - from about mid-1968 - of international efforts to alleviate the ravages of mass starvation in the war zone. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the politics of hunger, which effectively constrained those efforts, and hence were largely responsible for the prolongation of the nutritional crisis beyond mid-1968.

The sixth and concluding chapter of the thesis is devoted to an assessment of the relevance of the Nigerian experience of famine and relief for the study of nutritional disasters elsewhere in the world.

CHAPTER I

Food and Nutrition in the Pre-War

Eastern Region

There is little doubt that it was the series of political crises which preceded, and eventually culminated in, the Civil War which triggered off the nutritional crisis in the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The mass repatriation of Eastern migrants; the Federal blockade of the Eastern Region; and the operations of the belligerents' armies: all of these distorted both supply and demand functions in the regional food economy. In order to fully comprehend the nutritional impact of these political phenomena, however, it is essential first to understand the pressures, and responses thereto, which shaped the Eastern food economy and the region's nutritional standards in the pre-crisis period.

One characteristic dominates any assessment of the actual or potential status of human welfare in the pre-war Eastern Region - the pressure of population on available resources. The region's 29,400 square miles of land area were occupied, at the last pre-war census conducted in 1962, by approximately 12,300,000 people: indicating an average density throughout the region of approximately 418 persons per square mile - one of the highest in all of Tropical Africa - and a 72% increase in total numbers during the period 1952-62.[1]

1. The land area of the Eastern Region is given in Floyd, B. Eastern Nigeria: A Geographical Review MacMillan (London, 1969), p.19. Population figures for the Eastern Region are rather less reliable, due to deliberate and inadvertent errors in the 1963 census. Floyd cites both the official figures of 12,394,462 and Okonjo's estimate of 12,332,046. (p.37) Both of these indicated very high population increases in the period 1952-62: increases about which Floyd comments, "...the best explanation for the phenomenal but highly improbable growth rates revealed in Table 2.1 (72%) is to assume an under count at the time of the 1953 census, when Nigeria was still under British rule and the census was associated with taxation, land acquisition, and military conscription; and an overcount at the time of the 1963 census..." (p.38) For further analysis of the accuracy of the 1963 census see Okonjo, C. "A Preliminary Medium Estimate of the 1962 Mid-Year Population in Nigeria" in Caldwell, J.C. and Okonjo, C. (eds.) The Population of Tropical Africa Longmans (London, 1968); Aluko, S.A. "How Many Nigerians..." Journal of Modern African Studies 3 (3) 1965, pp.371-392; and Ekanem, I.I. The 1963 Nigerian Census: A Critical Approach Ethiope Publishing Co. (Benin City, 1972).

Such rapid population growth is typical of Third World states. Indeed, it has often been cited as one of the primary reasons for the failure of underdeveloped countries to take off into sustained development.[2] Rapid population growth, or high population densities, need not in themselves, however, inevitably deter the expansion of socio-economic welfare. They lead to overpopulation and impoverishment only when they engender a level of aggregate demand for goods and services which exceeds the productive capacity of society. In the West, for example, rapid population growth since the 18th century has not justified Malthus' belief that "Gigantic, inevitable famine stalks in the rear of misery and vice to limit the numbers of mankind."[3] (In fact, the major problem confronting Western political economies in the 20th century has involved devising ways and means to fully utilize existing productive capacity.)

The fulfillment of Malthus' prophecies did loom over the pre-war Eastern Region. The rural populace, which accounted for all but 12.8% of the total regional population[4], was almost

2. See, for example, Rostow, W.W. "The Take-Off into Sustained Growth" in Agarwala, A.N. and Singh, S.P. The Economics of Underdevelopment Oxford University Press (London, 1958), pp.154-186; and Bauer, P.T. and Yamey, B.S. The Economics of Underdeveloped Countries Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1957), Ch.5.

3. Cited in McCleary, G.F. The Malthusian Population Theory Faber and Faber, Ltd. (London, 1953), p.19.

4. Floyd, op.cit., pp.38-39 (Table 2.2.)

wholly engaged in predominantly non-commercial farming activities.[5] However, poor soils - in terms of both fragility and limited fertility - and largely untransformed traditional modes of production combined to constrain the growth of productivity and

5. Agricultural production accounted for 61.3% of the Eastern Region's GDP in 1963. Even in the period following, when the exploitation of petroleum resources in the East had commenced, agriculture contributed approximately 50% of the regional output of goods and services. (Floyd, op.cit., p.169; and Oyenuga, V.A. Agriculture in Nigeria: An Introduction FAO (Rome, 1967), p.21, (Table 2.2)) The devotion of the regional labour force to agriculture was even more intense - over 75% was engaged in agricultural occupations according to the 1963 census. (Federal Census Office Population Census of Nigeria 1963 (Eastern Nigeria) (Lagos, n.d.), Vol.2, p.188)

The bulk of agricultural endeavour was directed toward the cultivation of food crops grown for the cultivator's own consumption. Food crops grown for domestic uses accounted for over 75% by value of the total regional agricultural production. The significance of such heavy emphasis on subsistence farming was noted by Floyd: "With the exceptionally high population levels for a territory of this size in Tropical Africa, this emphasis on subsistence food crops is understandable though it means that the greater share of the sweat and labour of rural residents goes on meeting daily dietary requirements, and fails to contribute to the earning of essential foreign capital for economic development through the export of cash crops." (Floyd, op.cit., p.21 (Table 2.2) and p.185)

output in the subsistence sector.[6] The rapid expansion of population against such a relatively static supply base would undoubtedly have pitched much of the Eastern population into the Malthusian maelstrom except for the mediating influence of several behavioural patterns which developed in response to over population.

The most important of these involved migration out of the rural hinterland into urban centres both within and outside the Eastern Region. Migration to the cities was a response to both quantitative and qualitative overpopulation.[7] It represented not only a flight away from the deprivation common to rural life, but

6. The poverty of the subsistence sector in the pre-war period was illustrated in a study of one group of villages in the Ibo Heartland in 1964. Researchers found that average family incomes from all sources (including the value of food produced on family croplands for household consumption) amounted to only £N155.93 per annum (or an average per capita income of only £N26.12, which was less than the £N30 estimated to be the per capita income for the Nigerian Federation). (Oluwansanmi, H.A. et.al. Uboma: A Socio-Economic and Nutritional Survey of A Rural Community in Eastern Nigeria Geographical Publications (Bude, Cornwall, 1966),p.62)

For an analysis of the physical constraints on subsistence agriculture in the East see Floyd, op.cit., and Oyenuga, op.cit. The socio-economic constraints on productivity, output, and income were inextricably bound up in the syncretism of Eastern society. 'Traditional' aspects of the production system - such as communal forms of land tenure - limited the growth of productivity; while most developmental effort and funds were ploughed into cash cropping in response to the region's nexus with world capitalism. For a detailed discussion of the socio-economic constraints on Eastern agriculture see Smock, D.R. and Smock, A.C. Cultural and Political Aspects of Rural Transformation: A Case Study of Eastern Nigeria Praeger (New York, 1972); Eicher, C.K. and Liedholm, C. (eds.) Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy Michigan State University Press (E. Lansing, Mich., 1970); and Helleiner, G.K. Peasant Agriculture, Government, and Economic Growth in Nigeria Richard D. Irwin, Inc. (Homewood, Ill., 1966).

7. Overpopulation is not a wholly quantitative phenomenon. As Mabogunje says: "The operational definition [of population pressure], based on the simple idea of high density or high ratio of population to land, ignores the more vital variable of the standard of living or social well being which the people involved expect to derive from their resources." (Mabogunje, A.L. "A Typology of Population Pressure on Resources in West Africa" in Zelinsky, W., Leszek, A.K. and Prothero, R.M. Geography and a Crowding World Oxford University Press (London, 1970), p.115.

also the determination of a semi-educated proto-elite of school leavers to seize the economic opportunities and social mobility which accrued to life in the urban centres.[8] Even the growth of a large reserve army of unemployed or quasi-employed urban residents did not deter prospective migrants. Lured on by the demonstration effect of the earliest migrants' success, and by the promise of security inherent in the social network of support provided for the newly arrived immigrant by his kinsmen already established in the city[9], most of the young men in Eastern Nigeria with primary or secondary education emigrated to urban centres.[10]

Rural-to-urban migration had a two-fold impact on the Eastern food economy. First, it reduced the absolute burden of demand for food in the region. Even in those cases where migrants

8. Most analysts of the phenomenon of migration in the Third World have attributed it to the interaction of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Hanna, in an illustration of the 'push' exerted by poverty and inadequacy in the rural hinterland, cited the findings of a survey of urban Nigerians in which 69% of respondents indicated that achievement of "improved or decent standards of living for self or family", "sufficient money to live better or to live decently", or "relief from poverty" was their greatest aspiration. (Hanna, (New York, 1971), p.36). Nzimiro, on the other hand, emphasized the 'pull' of urban life. He attributed Ibo geographical mobility to "the desire to seek for a new occupation among the educated elite." (Nzimiro, I. "A Study of Mobility Among the Ibos of Southern Nigeria" International Journal of Comparative Sociology 6 (1) 1965, p.124).

9. As an illustration of the operation of the extended family network in the urban environment, Gugler showed that, among a group of unskilled labourers and traders surveyed in Eastern Region cities, 45% had at one time been employed by a relation or fellow villager; and 48% had found some sort of employment through one or the other of these contacts. (Gugler, J. "Eastern Nigerians in Town: Life in a Dual System" Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines 11 (1) 1971, p.411 (Table 4)).

10. See, for example, the evidence presented in Gugler, op.cit., especially p.411 (Table 4). For a general analysis of the urbanization process in Nigeria see Mabogunje, A.L. Urbanization in Nigeria Africana Publishing Corp. (New York, 1968), especially Chs.3-5.

Also see Okonjo, U. The Impact of Urbanization on the Ibo Family Structure Gerhard Munch Offsettdruck (Göttingen, 1970) pp.74-75).

went only so far as urban centres within the Eastern Region, the total demand for locally produced food supplies was reduced because of the apparent propensity of urban residents to increase their consumption of imported foods.[11] Perhaps the most important effect of urban migration, however, was that it resulted in an improved supply of animal proteins in the East.

The Eastern Region produced few animal proteins in the pre-war period. There was a small cattle-raising industry in the north-east corner of the region; and fishing in the Calabar and Rivers Provinces provided a limited source of animal protein. However, contrary to what one might have expected given this low level of production, students of nutrition in the pre-war period observed that per capita consumption of animal proteins in the East was greater than in any other region of Nigeria. These nutritionists argued that this was accounted for by the flow of cash remittances from migrants to their families in the East: a transfer of funds which provided the purchasing power that induced a massive influx of cattle from Northern Nigeria and fish from

11. See the urban consumer surveys conducted in Enugu in 1961/62 and in Onitsha in 1963/64. (Federal Office of Statistics Urban Consumer Surveys in Nigeria (Lagos, n.d.).

Lake Chad, Scandinavia, and Iceland.[12]

Care must be taken, however, not to translate the relative superiority of animal protein consumption in the East into an assumption that animal proteins made up a large proportion of total nutritional intake.[13] Indeed, just the opposite appears to have been true. Nutritional surveys made before the war indicated that animal proteins made a negligible quantitative contribution to Eastern diets.[14] The bulk of whatever protein was present in the diet - and daily protein deficiencies ranged

12. This argument was brought out in a seminar on the Nigerian Civil War held at Georgetown University in 1969. (Samuels, M.A.(ed.) The Nigeria Biafra Conflict: Report of A One-Day Conference The Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University (Washington, DC, 1969), p.2). It was also stressed, in a conversation with the author, by Dr. R.G. Hendrickse, who was on the staff of the Institute of Child Health at the University of Ibadan in the period preceding and during the war. According to Dr. Hendrickse there was, prior to the war, ample clinical evidence that protein deficiencies in the Western Region exceeded those experienced in the East. He argued that this was largely due to the greater purchasing power, and hence greater access to marketed high protein foods, afforded Eastern residents as a result of remittances from Eastern migrants.

For details of animal protein imports in the pre-war period, see Aall, C. Relief, Nutrition, and Health Problems in the Nigerian/Biafran War (Unpublished manuscript, Ibadan, 1969), pp.5-7, and 40; and "Report of the Biafra Study Mission" Congressional Record (Senate) 91st Congress, 1st Session (Washington, 25 February 1969), Vol.115, No.33 (Hereafter referred to as the Goodell Report), pp. S1978 and S1980.

One indication of the flow of imported proteins into the pre-war East was seen in the fact that following the Federal blockade of the East, Iceland - one of the Region's main suppliers of dried fish - was forced to devalue its currency. (Adler, R. "Letter from Biafra" New Yorker 4 October 1969).

13. It must be kept in mind that the relative superiority of Eastern animal protein consumption was based on its comparison with extremely low levels of animal protein consumption in the Western and Northern regions. Also, that not all migrants were economically successful - witness the throngs of unemployed school-leavers in the cities - therefore not all households would have benefitted equally from remittances and protein purchases.

14. Aall, for example, showed that animal proteins supplied only 2.8% of total caloric intake on a per capita basis (although, this 2.8% of total caloric intake did account for up to 22.5% of the total bulk of crude protein ingested). (Aall, op.cit., p.49).

from 40 to 60% - appears to have been provided from the consumption of the starchy tubers, yam and cassava; which together accounted for up to 80% of total food intake.[15] Animal proteins played a much more important qualitative than quantitative role. As Aall noted, their contribution to nutritional welfare centred on the provision of certain amino acids, largely absent from the starchy tubers, which enhanced the degree of utilization of the

15. Referring to diets in the Eastern Region, Dema remarked that yam and cassava products made up the bulk of intake. "Consumption of leafy vegetables, legumes, cereals, vegetable oils, and animal products made up the residue of the diet, with vegetable oils providing the next most important source of calories, while animal products made only a minor contribution to the diet." (Dema, G.S. Nutrition in Relation to Agricultural Production in Nigeria and the Countries of West Africa FAO (Rome, 1965), p.63 (Table 10)). See also Johnston, B.F. The Staple Food Economies of Tropical Africa Stanford University Press (Stanford, Cal., 1958), p.193.

The composition of Eastern diets was typical of both Tropical Africa and low income societies in general. As Jones put it: "The diets of Tropical Africa are typical of those consumed by people with low incomes almost everywhere in the world. The bulk of each meal consists of a mass of porridge or paste made from one of the starchy staples accompanied by a sauce or gravy that adds flavour and contributes fat, protein, minerals, and vitamins." (Jones, W.O. Marketing of Staple Food Crops in Tropical Africa: Overall Analysis and Report Stanford Research Institute (Menlo Park, Cal., 1969), p.65.

small amounts of vegetable protein contained in yam and cassava.[16]

It can be argued, then, that rural to urban migration made an important contribution to the viability of the Eastern food economy. To the extent that it exported population to other regions, it reduced the total level of demand for food within the East. At the same time it accounted for an improvement in both the quantity and quality of protein food available to Eastern residents. This contribution to protein supplies within the region was doubly important in the light of another of the major responses to overpopulation in the East: the substitution of cassava for yam in the food crop structure.

Yam was traditionally the dominant crop - in terms of both value and preference of cultivation - in the Eastern Region.[17] However, Eastern farmers, under pressure to increase output in order to feed the rapidly expanding population, began to shift

16. Aall explained the relationship between amino acids, animal proteins, and vegetable proteins as follows: "Usually vegetable protein is of considerably lower biological value than animal protein. This is particularly so if only one, or mainly one, food commodity is used as a staple food. The biological value is in part determined by the degree to which the protein of the food-stuff lacks or has a low content of one or more of the irreplaceable amino acids the human body cannot synthesize, and therefore needs to have provided...If one or more of the essential amino acids is missing or only present in small quantities - as is often the case with vegetable protein - the human body cannot make full use of the protein, the missing or deficient amino acids being the limiting factor. Therefore the protein requirement is not only a question of <u>quantity</u> but also one of <u>quality</u> (Aall's emphasis)...The importance of animal protein, therefore, is that (i) not only does it contain all essential amino acids and in adequate or close to adequate amounts and proportion (sic) to each other and therefore gives a high NPU (Net Protein Utilization), but (ii) it also enables the human body to make better use of the vegetable proteins, and therefore contributes towards a general NPU increase of the diet." (Aall, <u>op.cit</u>., p.35).

17. Floyd, <u>op.cit</u>., pp.186-187. Consumer preference for yams as compared to cassava was marked: "Older people in that region [the Eastern Region] still regard manioc [cassava] as an inferior food, lacking the prestige of yams." (Johnston, <u>op.cit</u>., p.179. See also Okonjo, <u>op.cit</u>., pp.104-107 on consumer preferences for yam).

into a more intensive utilization of their croplands. They abandoned, at least in the most densely populated areas of the region, the bush fallowing system which was essential for the cultivation of yams. As Floyd remarked:

> Mounting pressure of population under a land-rotation system eventually reaches a point beyond which it is no longer feasible to have 50% or more of a community's land lying fallow. Even if yields are lowered, as assuredly they must be if alternative measures for maintaining or restoring fertility are not adopted, it is necessary for as much farmland as possible to be put under cultivation in an effort to meet the subsistence requirements of the population.[18]

As fallow periods grew shorter, and soils consequently less fertile, the substitution of cassava for yam in the crop structure proceeded apace. For the cassava not only yielded a greater quantity of consumable product per unit of cropland, it could be cultivated in soils grown too infertile for yam culture.[19] Cultivation of the cassava expanded until it equalled, surpassed, and in some cases completely replaced the yam in importance as a source of nutrition.[20]

This change in the crop structure simultaneously bolstered and diminished nutritional standards in the East. Increased production and consumption of cassava engendered higher levels of caloric intake in regional diets - 100 grammes of fresh cassava

18. Floyd, op.cit., pp.178-180.

19. On the comparative economic values of the yam and cassava, see Johnston, op.cit., pp.106-112 and Ch.6.

20. The rise of cassava cropping in relation to yam production was illustrated in the study of the Uboma village group. The researchers found that 37% of farm plots and 47% of cultivated acreage were devoted solely to cassava, as compared with 27% of plots and 21% of acreage devoted to yam culture. (This disparity is even larger when one takes into account the fact that there were, as well, many plots in which cassava was being cultivated in conjunction with another crop.) The dominance of cassava was, however, a recent development: "...its introduction dates from only a few decades ago." (Oluwansanmi op.cit., p.84).

yielding 109 calories compared to only 90 from the same quantity of yam - but a decrease in protein consumption - yam contains 2.1% protein while cassava yields only 0.9% protein.[21] In such circumstances, the consumption of even minute quantities of the animal proteins made available as a result of migrants' remittances provided an important contribution to nutritional welfare. It increased the total intake of protein and enhanced the nutritional usefulness of the small amounts of vegetable protein contained in the staple component of the diet. This enabled the Eastern populace to avoid, at least partially, the negative consequences of increasing dependence on the cassava:

> ...attempts to satisfy the pangs of hunger by the development of such crops as cassava...with very high calorie yields per acre may merely shift the emphasis from starvation and undernutrition to protein malnutrition with its serious and disabling sequelae.[22]

The substitution of cassava for yam did not, however, have wholly negative implications for Eastern nutritional standards. Protein is only one factor in the overall nutritional equation. Of equal importance are carbohydrates.[23] Carbohydrates are the basic source of energy for the body, and the shift from yam to cassava, with its higher carbohydrate content, improved the level of energy consumption among Eastern residents. There was evidence,

21. Johnston, op.cit., p.160 (Table 6-9).

22. Brook, J.F. "Nutrition" Annual Revue of Biochemistry 24 (1955), p.233. For an attack on this emphasis on protein's centrality to nutritional welfare, see McLaren, D.S. "The Great Protein Fiasco" Lancet 13 July 1974, pp.93-96.

23. As Platt argued: "...the first step in the 'arithmetic' [of nutrition] is not in fact 'protein arithmetic' but 'calorie arithmetic. A first step is to secure more food for the people so they can do more work...thus breaking the vicious chain of an inadequate supply of food, low energy intake, limitation of physical effort and so on." (Cited in Johnston, op.cit., p.161).

however, that even the shift to cassava failed to raise per capita consumption of carbohydrates to nutritionally adequate levels. Nutritional surveys made in the pre-war period indicated large deficiencies in daily consumption of calories.[24]

Another indication that even the substitution of cassava for yam in the crop structure did not eliminate the pressure of population on food resources was the development of rural-to-rural migration in the East. The inadequacy of starchy tuber production in the most densely populated areas, which had carried the substitution of cassava for yam furthest, fostered the third of the major responses to over-population - the temporary migration of farmers from the most densely populated areas into regional territory where land resources were under less intense pressure.[25] There was a flow of farmers from the elongated high density population belt stretching through the southern parts of Onitsha, Owerri, Anang, and Uyo Provinces into the less densely populated areas of the Niger-Anambra flood-plains, the Nike-group village territory, the Bende Hill country, and various districts in the lower Cross River plains.

This migration was seasonal - occurring during the February-October cropping season - and the migrant returned to his home village upon completion of the harvest. The farming activities of the migrants centred around harvesting and processing the produce of oil palms located on the property rented, and/or raising food crops to supplement those produced on plots in the home village. Though no specific figures are available to

24. Dema, loc.cit.

25. For a detailed description of migrant tenancy in the pre-war Eastern Region, see Udo, R.K. "The Migrant Tenant Farmers of Eastern Nigeria" Africa 34 (3) 1964, pp.326-339.

establish the scale of migrant tenancy, it would appear from evidence cited by Udo in his study of the phenomenon that large numbers of farmers were involved; and that the cash incomes or staple crops obtained through migrant tenancy were an important factor in preventing a decline in the already inadequate nutritional standards found in the most densely populated areas of the region. As Udo remarked:

> ...it is the sparsely settled areas that offer the necessary land for producing food in excess of local demand. But since the local inhabitants of such areas usually dislike farmwork, the task of raising more food to meet the increasing demand of both the urban areas and the impoverished over-burdened districts is increasingly being performed by the migrant tenant farmer.[26]

If, at this point, the observations made in the preceding pages are summed up, it is clear that the pre-war imbalance between the region's productive and reproductive forces had shaped a food economy and nutritional standards which made the Eastern population highly vulnerable to famine. The retention of traditional modes of production constrained productivity and incomes, limiting the accumulation of food surplusses and fostering a heavy dependence on self-produced foodstuffs for the bulk of nutritional intake. At the same time, rapid population growth absorbed any improvements in supply and demand relationships within the food economy which resulted from responses to overpopulation. As a consequence, the potential for the transformation of any disruption of current production - or reversal of such responses to overpopulation as rural-to-urban migration (which was closely

26. Udo, op.cit., p.338.

linked to political stability)[27] - into a nutritional crisis was very high. The widespread and frequent incidence of medical

27. Inter-regional migration, in the Nigerian context, was a phenomenon of political stability. It had, to a great extent, developed out of the conditions of ethnic security which followed upon the imposition of colonial rule. Although on occasion inter-ethnic tension was engendered by indigenous groups' resentment of the migrants' economic activities, the presence of the relatively disinterested colonial authority inhibited the development of insurmountable social or political barriers to the in-migration and residence of non-indigenous minority groups.

Nigerian cities were not, however, melting pots. There was little inter-ethnic integration. Economic functions and socio-political authority within the urban centres were, to a large extent, allocated along ethnic lines. Migrants tended to maintain strong psychological ties to both their urban kinsmen and their rural home communities. As Gugler noted in his study of Ibo migrants: "...even among Africans committed to a full working life in town, many continue to maintain close links with a rural area they consider home: they live in a dual system." (Gugler, op.cit., p.400).

As an unintegrated minority group within the urban centres the Eastern migrants were liable to become scapegoats - the targets of majority group frustration - and be forced back to their original homes. The indiginization of socio-political authority following independence had removed previously existing checks on the expression of inter-ethnic tensions and put the migrant minority in a position where it was vulnerable to expulsion by majority groups. First saw the migrants' vulnerability in terms of their susceptibility to a pogrom: "The Ibos in the North of Nigeria...were ready targets for a pogrom... They had lived as a minority in a traditional and static society, resented as pushful intruders. A pogrom requires both a particular social situation and the exploitation of that situation by a politically organized group. In the North, social change had begun to produce a group of Northern entrepreneurs who were ready and eager to take over the businesses of the Ibo, the alien and successful minority on which could be projected odium and guilt for any state of crisis generaged by change. The violence of a pogrom in the making can be contained where a government is strong or willing enough; in Nigeria the government proved that it was neither." (First, R. The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat Penguin Press (Allen Lane, 1970), p.328; See also O'Connell, J. "The Anatomy of a Pogrom: An Outline Model with Special Reference to the Ibo in Northern Nigeria" Race 9 (1) 1967, pp.95-100.

disorders linked to prolonged malnourishment[28] was evidence of the narrowness of the margin by which the populace was, even in peaceful conditions, avoiding mass starvation. Any further decline in per capita food consumption would undoubtedly trigger off a famine in the East.

In the chapter which follows, the development of the political crisis which was to transform this Eastern vulnerability into mass starvation will be described.

28. In his study of Eastern nutrition in the pre-war period, Dema noted that low birth weights, poor lactation performance, retarded physical development in early childhood, high child mortality rates, and loss of strength and productivity in adulthood were frequently encountered throughout the region. This indicated - since these were symptoms closely related to malnourishment - both the prevalence and seriousness of nutritional deficiencies in the region. (Dema, op.cit., p.30).

CHAPTER II

Pre-War Politics

This chapter is devoted to an analysis of political life in Nigeria prior to the Civil War. In the first section of the chapter the structure of politics in pre-coup Nigeria will be examined and it will be shown how regional competition, ethnic sentiment, and class interest undermined the legitimacy of civilian government. Although each of these mutually reinforcing phenomena was present, in essence, prior to the integration of Nigeria into the British empire, colonial status and the nationalist politics which brought independence greatly enhanced their dominance of political life. In the environment of scarce resources, which characterized most of the post-colonial period, these three phenomena exacerbated political and social tensions and eventually led to the collapse of civilian government in January 1966.

In the second section of the chapter the political impact of military rule will be examined. Three phenomena dominated the pre-war period of military government: a re-surgence of anti-regionalist nationalism; the collapse of the Nigerian army as a cohesive, solidaristic institution; and violent expressions of inter-ethnic hostility. These engendered the crises whose intersection with the socio-economic structure of the Eastern Region triggered off the Eastern famine.

Regionalism in Nigerian politics was largely a legacy of colonial policy. Even though they were confronted with widely differing indigenous socio-political structures in Northern and Southern Nigeria, the British attempted to erect throughout the colony a uniform system of administration based on indirect rule.[1] The impact of this endeavour differed widely between the two areas.

1. For a more detailed assessment of the development of colonial administration in Nigeria see Coleman, J.S. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism University of California Press (Los Angeles, 1958), pp.44-54.

In the North, indirect rule reinforced the authoritative social controls of the traditional elite. In Southern Nigeria, however, indirect rule weakened traditional authority, because colonial administrators attempted to attach alien meanings to indigenous authority structures. The gradual diffusion of the modernizing influences of Western education and modern employment opportunities - a process from which the colonial authorities tacitly protected the North - further sapped adherence to traditional authority in the South. Thus, on the eve of the expansion of nationalist politics, Nigeria, though formally unified since 1914, consisted of two largely unintegrated societies - dominated in the North by an elite based on its retention of traditional sources of authority; and in the South by a burgeoning commercial/administrative elite, whose members' status and power stemmed from their possession of the manipulative skills required for the management of the colonial economy and society.[2]

In the 1940s the colonial authorities were confronted by persistent demands from both of these elite groups. Expressing itself through fledgling political associations, the Southern elite insisted that it be given wider scope for the application of its skills and knowledge, calling for the indigenization of political and administrative authority. The Northern elite was, however, opposed to immediate Nigerianization of the modern sector of society. The Northern leaders recognized that their region's paucity of modern skills placed it at a disadvantage, and they demanded that the colonial authorities protect the North's share of the socio-economic benefits of indigenization

2. See Coleman, op.cit. for an expanded analysis of the process of elite formation in the pre-nationalist period.

from Southern encroachment.[3] After an initial period of resistance, the colonial authorities acceded to both elites' demands. The third post-war constitution, which was ratified in 1954, provided for the rapid Nigerianization of political and administrative structures in the modern sector while, at the same time, protecting the North through the regionalization of most political authority and administrative control.[4]

The 1954 constitution thwarted the development of trans-regional politics in Nigeria. Three major parties had evolved during the preceding period - the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the North, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the East, and the Action Group (AG) in the West.[5] The regionalization of power in the 1954 constitution focussed the attention of each of these groups onto its region of origin.[6] Although the parties continued to joust in the national arena, control of a regional power base became the essential criteria for effective participation in the political system. Each party sought and gained effective hegemony in its own region, fending off challenges from local minority parties and from local branches of the other major parties.

Regional control, upon which depended a party's chances of both electoral victory and the acquisition of political power

3. See Sklar, R.L. Nigerian Political Parties: Power in An Emergent African Nation Princeton University Press (Princeton, N.J., 1963), Ch.3, for an examination of the disparate pressures brought to bear on the colonial administration by Northern and Southern elite groups.

4. See Sklar, op.cit., pp.133-134.

5. The premier analysis of the evolution of Nigerian political parties is contained in Sklar, op.cit., Chs. 2 and 3.

6. See Sklar, op.cit., Chs. 4-6, 8 and 11, for a detailed analysis of the regionalist impulse in Nigerian party politics.

in the national arena, was based on 'big tribe chauvinism'[7] - the hegemony of the majority ethnic group within each region. Each of the three regions contained one dominant ethnic group, and the political entrepreneurs of the nationalist period articulated the interests of that majority ethnic group in exchange for its solidaristic support.[8]

The structure of party politics heightened both regionalism and ethnic sentiment. The political entrepreneurs who led the parties engineered the popular identification of regional and ethnic interests with the electoral fortunes of the regional parties. Both failure and success in the inter-party competitions taking place in the national arena came to be seen as the failure or success of regional and/or ethnic interests. Trans-regional nationalism was largely replaced by inter-regional competition.

In the period leading up to independence, the relative abundance of material resources available to the nationalist elites dampened the intensity of political conflict. The regional status quo was largely respected and the fruits of office were shared out on a relatively equitable basis in accordance with what Sklar

7. The term 'big tribe chauvinism' was coined by Sklar in his article "Nigerian Politics in Perspective" Government and Opposition 2 (4) 1967, p.535. As Sklar uses the term it implies not only majority control of political affairs, but the deliberate repression or disregard of the interests and grievances of the 40% of the population which belonged to none of the three major ethnic groups.

8. Zolberg has argued that, in their concentration on electoral control and success; and in their emphasis on patronage and the exploitation of communal sentiments as the mechanisms of control; the nationalist political parties of Africa more closely resembled the classical American political machine than any mobilization movement. (Zolberg, A. Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa Rand, McNally and Co. (Chicago, 1966), p.123).

called the 'principle of regional security'.[9] And the fruits of office were sweet. Those resources not externally controlled by the metropolis were largely concentrated into the state apparatuses, and the acquisition of political power became the key to wealth and prestige. Nkrumah's admonition to 'seek ye first the political kingdom and all things will be added to you'[10] became the unspoken credo of Nigerian political entrepreneurs, who took advantage of the years of dyarchy to entrench themselves in the economic structure of the state. The outcome of this process was the emergence of a 'political class' - a ruling elite, whose control of the political process opened the way to embourgeoisement through the exploitation of state resources.[11]

Things began to fall apart, however, even before independence. The 1958 Constitutional conference both revealed and reinforced what Sklar called an 'acute contradiction' in the Nigerian political economy.[12] This contradiction revolved around the fact that the foci of economic and political power in Nigeria were incongruent. The real source of wealth and economic development was located in Southern Nigeria, while, under the provisions of the constitution, the North was assured political dominance in the State.

The 1958 constitutional conference, in effect, ratified

9. Sklar, loc.cit., p.527.

10. Cited in Fitch, B. and Oppenheimer, M. Ghana: End of An Illusion Monthly Review Press (New York, 1966), p.25.

11. See Cohen, R. "Class in Africa: Analytical Problems and Perspectives" in Milliband, R. and Saville, J. (eds.) The Socialist Register 1972 The Merlin Press (London, 1972), pp.247-249, for a full description of the 'political class' as the term is used here. This article also contains an excellent review and assessment of the various points of view on the validity and applicability of class analysis in an African context.

12. Sklar, R.L. "Contradictions in the Nigerian Political System" Journal of Modern African Studies 3 (2) 1965, pp.201-213.

the legal separation of political authority and economic power, which had been implied in all the metropolis' previous efforts to protect the North from Southern encroachment. The balance of power in the Federal arena was upset by the introduction of a system of representation which virtually guaranteed a Northern majority in the Federal Parliament. This breached the 'principle of regional security' under which the regional segments of the political class had thrived. Northern dominance of the Federal government at a time when the regional pools of exploitable resources available to Eastern and Western politicians had largely been expended on patronage - and at a time when unfavourable shifts in the terms of trade portended the increasing concentration of resources under Federal authority - threatened to impede the embourgeoisement of the Southern elements of the political class. Southern politicians were faced with the possibility that, even though the majority of Nigeria's economic resources were generated in the South, Northern domination of the Federal arena would block their access to them.[13]

In the 1959 Federal elections both the NCNC and the AG allied themselves to disaffected Northern minority groups in an attempt to defeat the NPC and thereby pave the way to a restoration of the pre-1958 balance.[14] Though successful in denying the NPC an absolute majority in the Federal House, the two Southern parties were unable to resolve their own antagonisms and

13. First, R. The Barrel of A Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat Penguin Press (Allen Lane, 1970), pp.148-149.

14. For a detailed description of the 1959 Federal elections see Post, K.W.J. The Nigerian Federal Election of 1959 Oxford University Press (London, 1963).

agree on a coalition government.[15] In the end the NCNC, in what First called "a display of opportunism that set a precedent for all Nigerian politics"[16], allied itself to the NPC and, in return for dropping its trans-regional appeal, ensured its access to Federal resources. The AG, forced into opposition, was denied access to the Federal resource pool and two years later disintegrated.[17]

Following the 1959 Federal elections, political life in Nigeria revolved around the increasingly desperate manoeuvres of the regional parties and political class segments, as they attempted to gain or sustain their control of Federal resources.[18] At the same time politicians as a whole were stripped of much of their public affection and perceived legitimacy. The right of the political class to rule was initially widely accepted. There was "a prevalent sense that they had earned the right to rule through their leadership of protest movements and that they

15. A coalition was forestalled by the bitter inter-personal relations of the leaders of the AG and NCNC, each of whom greatly resented past attempts by the other to win support in their own region of dominance. For a more detailed analysis of the reasons behind the failure of the two Southern parties to form a coalition see Post, K.W.J. "The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons: The Decision of December 1959" in Mackintosh, J.P. (ed.) Nigerian Government and Politics Northwestern University Press (Evanston, Ill., 1966), pp.405-426.

16. First, R. op.cit., p.150.

17. For a detailed account of the disintegration of the AG see Mackintosh, op.cit., pp.427-460 and First, op.cit., pp.150-152.

18. Aside from the major instances of wholesale violation of ideological principles - such as the NCNC alliance with the NPC and the fission of the AG in 1962 - the desire to share in the benefits of power drove many individual politicians across the parliamentary floor. In the Western Region, in the 18 months following the 1960 elections, six NCNC members crossed to the ruling AG. After Akintola's formation of the UPP in 1962, these same former NCNC members accompanied by the majority of AG members who had supported Awolowo prior to Akintola's seizure of parliamentary control, recrossed the floor to support the UPP. (See Mackintosh, J.P. (ed.), op.cit., p.440 and 458-460).

were the legitimate successors of the colonial officials."[19] However, as the possibility of emulating the material success of the 'big men' declined, admiration for their extravagant consumption was soured by envy, and turned to disgust with their corruption.[20]

Confronted with declining support, the regional segments of the political class turned to the politics of coercion, "using ballot box, parliamentary speech, bribery, nepotism, and where required, thuggery in the struggle for power."[21] These tactics, however, cut two ways. In resorting to force and skullduggery in order to gain its objectives, the political class squandered its remaining reserves of legitimacy. It revealed the extent to which it lacked public support and, most significantly, exposed the extent to which its retention of power depended on the continued allegiance and obedience of the coercive institution to which it turned for assistance - the Army.[22]

The Nigerian Army was one among the package of institutions

19. Zolberg, A. "The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa" American Political Science Review 62 (1) 1968, p.72.

20. The most explicit demonstration of this attitudinal shift was the generally joyous popular reaction to the 'Young Majors' coup (although, the joy may have been largely confined to the South). See First, op.cit., p.301 and St. Jorre, John, D. The Nigerian Civil War Hodder and Stoughton (London, 1972), p.43.

21. First, op.cit., p.158.

22. As Zolberg has remarked: "The centre's weakness, hitherto hidden from sight, was unmercifully exposed, as when the value of the currency issued by a national banking system is drastically reduced when the credit pyramid, itself based on the productivity of the economy, collapses...Political power, normally based on the overall social structure, gives way to force...Beyond its immediate unfortunate consequences for the individuals affected, the shift from power to force as a technique of government has serious long term consequences for political life more generally in that it serves as the prelude to anti-government coups and revolutions..." Zolberg, loc.cit., pp.76-77.

transferred to Nigeria by the metropolitan power. As a professional military organization, patterned on its British counterpart, it was considered to share many of the characteristics of the 'total institution': relatively impermeable boundaries, a uniquely solidary process of socialization, and hierarchical authority relations.[23] However, the institution was flawed from its inception; and, over time, it absorbed the regional and ethnic

23. For a theoretical definition of the 'total institution' and a discussion of its characteristics, see Goffman, E. Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates Aldine Publishing Co. (Chicago, 1962), Ch.1. Goffman made no detailed examination of the professional military organization as an example of the total institution; however, several other authors have done so: for example, Zurcher, L.A. "The Sailor Aboard Ship: A Study of Role Behaviour in a Total Institution" Social Forces 43(3) 1965, pp.389-400; and Feit, E. "The Rule of the Iron Surgeons: Military Government in Spain and Ghana" Comparative Politics 1 (4) 1969, pp.485-497.

For an assessment of the extent to which the Nigerian Army resembled a total institution see Luckham, R. The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960-1967 Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1971), p.102. Luckham argued that "Each army unit was in many respects a 'total' institution...Though physically dispersed, the army's unity of structure ensured that the boundaries between army units and their local social and political environment were relatively sharply defined...The barracks was a residential unit, with all officers and men - whether married or unmarried - living in segregated areas of the same compound. Both the officers and the NCO's had their messes, each with its distinctive traditions and each providing an effective integrative focus for the social life of the unit."

A discussion of the permeability of the military's institutional boundaries in the African and Nigerian contexts can be found in Price, R.M. "A Theoretical Approach to Military Rule in New States: Reference Group Theory and the Ghanaian Case" World Politics 23 (3) 1971, pp.399-430; and in Luckham, op.cit., pp.101-108. For a full discussion of the impact of the military socialization process on the value and behaviour patterns of military personnel see Kjellberg, F. "Some Cultural Aspects of the Military Profession" Archives Europeens de Sociologie 6 (2) 1965, p.286; Bourne, P.G. "Some Observations on the Psychological Phenomena Seen in Basic Training" Psychiatry 30 (2) 1967, pp.187-196; and Price, op.cit. The pattern of authority relations within professional military institutions is discussed by Janowitz, M. The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait Free Press of Glencoe (Glencoe, Ill., 1960), Chs. 1 and 2; and Van Doorn, J. "The Officer Corps: A Fusion of Profession and Organization" Archives Europeens de Sociologie 6 (2) 1965, pp.262-282.

tensions which convulsed its civilian surroundings.

Regionalism suffused the army as a result of the civilians' imposition of differential criteria of recruitment throughout its history. These eventually created clusters of regional strength throughout the hierarchy of commissioned and enlisted ranks.[24]

24. The soldiers of Nigeria's colonial army were drawn primarily from the North. This fact reflected both the British preference for recruits from the 'martial tribes' of the North, and Southern disdain for the limited prospects of upward mobility accruing to a career in the colonial army. As Nigerianization of the officer corps got under way, the majority of regular commissions were conferred on Northerners (e.g., the first five cadets to graduate from Sandhurst were all from the North). The number of Eastern officers increased rapidly however, in the period 1956-60, reflecting the access of relatively small numbers of better educated Southern NCOs and Warrant Officers to short service commissions. At independence only 8 of 57 Nigerians commissioned had Northern origins.

From the onset of rapid Nigerianization in the post-independence period, pressure was exerted by the politicians to reduce the imbalance in the numbers of Northern and Southern officers. After 1961 a regional quota system specified that 50% of all officer cadets accepted and passed out must come from the North, regardless of the order of merit. This regulation, reinforced by steps taken in the North to increase the output of potential cadets, resulted in a gradual alteration of the regional composition of the officer corps. Easterners dropped from 65% in 1960 to 40.5% of the total number of officers in 1965; while Northerners increased from 14% to 32.5% in the same period. Though no formal regulation favouring Northern officers for promotion was ever issued, it was commonly believed that they were being pushed up over the heads of their Southern comrades. The important point about this assertion - whatever its actual validity - is its impact on the psychological expectations of officers.

By January 1966 the different criteria for recruitment had created clusters of regional strength throughout the hierarchy of officer's grades, as shown below:

Total	REGIONAL STRENGTH IN OFFICER GRADES		
Officers(%)(1)	LTC(%)(2)	MAJ(%)(2)	Subalterns(%)(3)
East 40.5	57.2	71.9	30.0
North 32.5	21.4	6.2	48.8
West 26.5	21.4	21.9	21.2
99.5 (4)			

(1) Total male officer strength January 1966. (2) Combat officers strength January 1966. (3) Combat sub-alterns commissioned in the post-quota period. Includes 3 sub-alterns promoted to captain prior to the January coup. (4) ½% of male officers came from the Southern Cameroons.

Source: Miners, N.J. The Nigerian Army 1956-1966 Methuen (London, 1971), pp.118-119 and 123; and Luckham, op.cit., pp.72-73.

See Miners pp.33-58 and 115-124; and Luckham pp.191-192 for more details on the impact of regionalism on the structure of the officer corps.

Though there was a strong institutional impulse toward cohesion and solidarity[25], fears of regional domination penetrated institutional boundaries and strained adhesion to the values of professionalism which were supposed to govern the behaviour of Nigerian soldiers. At the same time, a deepening disgust with the excesses of the political class[26], reinforced by the values and attitudes internalized during professional training, propelled some elements of the officer corps towards sympathy with an 'intendant class'[27] comprised of state functionaries, middle-level bureaucrats, and supervisory personnel who were committed to a more rational exploitation of the state apparatus. As these

25. See Feld, M.D. "Professionalism, Nationalism, and the Alienation of the Military" (Paper presented to the Sixth World Congress of Sociology, Evian, France, 1966) for a more detailed analysis of the imperatives of cohesion and solidarity within military organizations in general.

26. See Luckham, op.cit., pp.107-108,203,248 and 284 for recorded expressions of soldiers' hostility to the political class. Two things must, however, be kept in mind when considering the army's resentment of the political class. First, not all members of the military were opposed to the politicians. The army had many close links to the political class throughout the independence period, and some of the military leaders owed their positions to their friendship with members of the political elite. (For examples of the army's cooperation with the politicians see Dent, M.J. "A Minority Party - The United Middle Belt Congress" in Mackintosh, op.cit., pp.461-507 (military suppression of the Tiv rebellions in 1960 and 1964); Luckham, op.cit., p.249 (military cooperation in the dissolution of AG control of the Western Region in 1962); Braundi, E. and Letteiri, A. "The General Strike in Nigeria" International Socialist Journal 1 (5/6) 1964, pp.598-609 (military suppression of the 1964 General Strike); and Miners, op.cit., pp.150-155 (military support of the NNDP following the controversial elections in the West in October 1965).)

Secondly, it must be remembered that expressions of an anti-political nature are part of the ethos of military professionalism. As Janowitz put it: "Interest in politics goes hand in hand with a negative outlook and even hostility to politicians and political groups. It is the politics of wanting to be above politics...Among officers there is no glorification of or even respect for and understanding for the creative role of the politicians and the political process." (Janowitz, M. The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 1964), pp.65).

27. For a full definition of the 'intendant class' see Cohen, op.cit., p.249.

sentiments hardened into the belief that, for the good of both society and soldiers, the political class must be removed,[28] the Nigerian Army could be viewed as a time bomb embedded in the fabric of the state.

The decision to shatter the constraints of internal authority relations and to end the hegemony of civilian politicians was catalyzed by rumors of an impending move on the part of the NPC to seal its domination of Nigerian politics.[29] In retrospect, it appears that the prime motivation of the 'Young Majors', who initiated the military coup on January 15th, 1966, was their determination to break the grip in which the political class held both military and civilian institutions. Their action was, however, destined to be perceived through the regional and ethnic filters created by the structure of civilian politics in Nigeria. In the next section of this chapter it will be shown that, far from dissolving the regional and ethnic tensions which had wracked

28. It is difficult to trace attitudinal changes vis-a-vis the politicians within the military. As an inherent distaste for politicians seems to be a common element in military thought at all times, perhaps the best measure of heightened resentment is the frequency with which expressions of distaste for the political class were articulated. Luckham notes: "As one major political crisis in Nigeria followed another, the talk in officers' messes became increasingly political. By 1964, at the latest, there were several groups of officers who thought that military intervention 'to stop the political mess' was on the cards." (Luckham, op.cit., p.248).

29. Following the largely fraudulent 1965 elections in the West, the people of that region were in a virtual state of rebellion against the victorious NNDP and its leader Akintola. This situation was obviously untenable and rumours began to circulate that Akintola and the Sardauna of Sokoto planned to engineer the re-introduction of troops into the West in order to entrench the NNDP. At the same time, it was said, they would stage an insurrection in the East as the pretext for declaring a state of emergency and introducing Northern troops into the region. Major Nzeogwu, the leader of the 'Young Majors' coup, later said that it was their belief in the veracity of these rumours which triggered off their coup on January 15th, 1966. (First, op.cit., pp.156-157 and 166-169; and Luckham, op.cit., p.41).

the civilian regime, military government exacerbated them and led to the disintegration of the state.

The disintegration of the Nigerian polity in the period between the coup in January 1966 and the secession of the Eastern Region in May 1967 centred on three phenomena: the resurgence of anti-regionalist nationalism; the collapse of the Nigerian Army as a cohesive, solidaristic institution; and the violent expression of inter-ethnic hostility. These developments triggered off the crises whose intersection with the socio-economic structure of the Eastern Region resulted in a nutritional catastrophe. They also moulded the perceptions and political objectives which motivated and sustained the belligerent parties' participation in both the Civil War and the politics of hunger.

The military take-over in January 1966 re-vitalized anti-regionalist nationalism in Nigeria. Prior to the coup, the fortunes of groups appealing to trans-regional sentiments were at a low ebb. The Northern elite had re-inforced its hegemony in the Federal arena by repulsing Southern challenges to the 1963 Federal census results, which gave a majority of seats in the Federal House to the North.[30] Then, in the 1964 Federal elections, the regionalist coalition of the NPC and its Western partner, the NNDP (the previous alliance of Northern and Eastern interests having effectively disintegrated) defeated the anti-regionalist coalition made up of the NCNC, the remnants of the AG, and other anti-regionalist, anti-Northern groups.[31] Finally, in the 1965

30. For a more detailed analysis of the controversy over the 1963 census results see Post, K.W.J. and Vickers, M. Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960-1966 Heinemann (London, 1973), pp.80-82.

31. For a full description of the 1964 Federal elections, see Mackintosh, op.cit.; and Post and Vickers, op.cit., Chs.7-10.

Western Region elections, the NNDP secured an unexpected, and largely unwarranted, victory over the combined forces of the AG and the NCNC.[32]

Nigeria's first military government was, however, firmly committed to ending the regional political competition of the civilian era.[33] And on May 24th Ironsi announced the abolition

32. See Post and Vickers, op.cit., Ch.10.

33. The military government's commitment to the abolition of regional political competition was evident in General Ironsi's first public communications. For example, in a policy broadcast made on January 28th, 1966, General Ironsi said: "All Nigerians want an end to Regionalism. Tribal loyalties and activities which promote tribal consciousness and sectional interests must give way to the urgent task of national reconstruction." He followed this up with the following remark at a press conference in February: "It has become apparent to all Nigerians that rigid adherence to 'Regionalism' was the bane of the last regime and one of the main factors which contributed to its downfall. No doubt, the country would welcome a clean break with the deficiencies of the system of Government to which the country had been subjected in the recent past." ("Policy Broadcast by General Ironsi, 28 January 1966" (Document No.16) and "Ironsi's Press Conference of 21 February 1966 (Document No.17) in Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook 1966-1969 Oxford University Press (London, 1971), Vol.1, pp.154-155 and 155-158)).

It is possible that Ironsi's anti-regionalism exceeded that of his fellows. First asserts that most members of the Supreme Military Council opposed immediate unification of the state, but that Ironsi replied to their objections with the statement 'I'm committed'. (First, op.cit., p.310). In any event, it is likely that Ironsi's drive for unification, and the support he received from his colleagues, stemmed to a large extent from the imperatives of professionalism rather than from a realistic assessment of the nature of and possible solutions to the political crisis. As Luckham notes: "It [the military government] came to power with a political carte blanche, which permitted it to engage on a programme of reform...the general drift of which was the creation of a cohesive and disciplined society in the military's own image. It was seemingly unaware, or unconcerned, that these reforms might also constitute a very important shift in the allocation of values between political groups or between the regions." (Luckham, op.cit., p.261).

of the regions in favour of a unitary state.[34] Unfortunately though, the promulgation of Decree No.34, the legal vehicle on which Ironsi planned to base the reconstruction of political life in Nigeria, was received in the North as a confirmation of suspicions that the January coup and the policies of the military government both reflected Ibo ambitions to dominate the state.[35]

The roots of this perception were multifold, and stretched back into the era of civilian politics. The post-independence period had seen a close articulation of the interests of the Eastern elite, as reflected in the policies of the NCNC, with those of other groups opposed to the continuation of political life on the basis of big tribe chauvinism and regional competition. Northern dominance of the Federal arena had exerted increasingly fissiparous strains on the major parties of the Eastern and Western Regions, leading to the fission of the AG in 1962, and sapping the allegience of the non-Eastern/Ibo elements of the

34. See "The Unification Decree: No.34 of 1966" (Document No.24) and "The Regions Are Abolished: Ironsi's Broadcast to the Nation Banning Political Parties and Introducing Decree No.34, 24 May 1966" (Document No.26) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.169-173 and 174-177, for the details of Decree No.34.

35.The divergence between the actual content of Decree No.34 and what it was believed to have signified shows the extent to which appearances, or perceptions, had come to outweigh intentions in this period. Luckham argues that the legal/constitutional impact of Decree No.34 was minimal: "It was a gesture of the Ironsi government's commitment to national unity, but did not strengthen central control in any important respect..." (Luckham, op.cit., pp.265-266). Similarly, the Northern response to Ironsi's reconstruction of the civil service assumed changes which were in reality non-existent. Although Decree No. 34 provided for the unification of the Federal and Regional civil services, the proposed provincial civil service commissions, which would have made all except the highest appointments, would, in fact, have controlled the distribution of more posts throughout the former regions than under the previous system in which all Federal appointments were made from the centre. However, as First notes, any benefits derivable from the new administrative system were outweighed by "the sight of power at the centre in the hands of Ironsi and a close group of civil servants from the East." (First, op.cit., p.309).

NCNC.[36] As a result the NCNC began to shift away from its alliance with the NPC - a process which was mirrored by the development of an increasingly close relationship between the NPC and the UPP (forefunner of the NNDP) following the latter party's seizure of control of the Western Region government.[37] By pulling away from their Northern connection Eastern leaders evidently hoped to resurrect the NCNC's traditional trans-regional appeal, thereby providing the base for an electoral coalition which might bring NPC/Northern dominance of the Federal arena to an end, and restore to the Eastern elite its access to the Federal resource pool.[38]

This strategy failed. In both the 1964 Federal elections and the 1965 Western Region election the Northern elite and its Western allies were triumphant. The Eastern strategy did, however, result in the identification of anti-regionalism with both anti-Northern sentiment and the interests of the Eastern Ibos - at least in the eyes of the North. Consequently, when a military government was installed and began to pursue anti-regionalist policies, these actions were perceived in the North as the machinations of the Eastern Ibos.[39]

36. See Post and Vickers, op.cit., Ch.5 for a description of the strains within the NCNC during the post-independence period.

37. Ibid.

38. See Post and Vickers, op.cit., pp.99-103 and Ch.6 for a description of the groups making up the NCNC led anti-regionalist electoral coalition, and an examination of the objectives of this coalition.

39. See, for example, the suspicions voiced in a letter addressed to the New Nigerian of 19 April 1966, which is reproduced as "Federalism is Good for Nigeria" (Document No.22) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.162-164.

Northern suspicions of the military government's links to Eastern interests were not, however, rooted solely in the relationship between anti-regionalism and the NCNC. They had been roused as well by the fact that the group which instigated the coup was comprised almost wholly of Ibo officers, while its victims were virtually all Northerners.[40] Northern chariness was also reinforced by Ironsi's dilatory behaviour regarding the punishment of the 'Young Majors' for their flagrant violation of military discipline; reinforced again by the enhanced status of Ibos in the post-coup army and civil service[41]; and brought to a climax of virtual certainty by the announcement, simultaneous with the promulgation of Decree No.34 of a civil service reorganization on a basis which it was believed would favour Southerners with

40. Of the 31 officers who participated in the coup, all were Southerners, and all but 5, Ibos. 15 members of the government and armed forces were killed by the conspirators. Of the civilians killed, 3 out of 4 were from the North; and 4 of the 7 senior army officers killed were Northerners. (Miners, op.cit., pp.167-170; and First, op.cit., p.284). The strength of these facts as evidence of an Ibo plot is, however, questionable on the grounds that the ethnic composition of both the conspirator and target groups was largely determined by the articulation of the tactical objectives of coup-making and the clustering of regional/ethnic groups in the hierarchies of both government and army. For more of this argument see Luckham, op.cit., pp.44-50.

41. As a result of the depradations of the 'Young Majors', the percentage of Ibos among the 20 most senior officers in the Army rose from 30 to 60%; while the Northern percentage declined from 25 to 10%. (Luckham, op.cit., p.55 (Table 7)). This shift was reinforced by the pattern of promotion in the post-coup period. When promotions to Lt.Col. were announced in May 1966, 18 of the 25 officers named were Ibos. Even if, as Miners argues, these promotions reflected nothing more than the operation of the merit system, and the effect of past recruitment criteria, they were a "public relations blunder". (Miners, op.cit., pp.210-211). First characterizes the suspicion surrounding Ironsi's civilian appointments as follows: "Ironsi, an Ibo, it was said, was going out of his way to further Ibo power: did he not depend on an inner clique of Ibo advisers, whose instrument he was? and when key appointments were made, as of the new attorney-general and several heads of crucial commissions, were they not Ibo?" (First, op.cit., p.308).

regard to appointments and promotion.[42]

Northern reaction to Ironsi's initiative of May 24th, 1966, introduced the second of the three phenomena which dominated this period: communal violence. On May 29th anti-unification demonstrations staged by students and junior civil servants in Kano degenerated into riots directed against the resident Ibo community. Before the authorities were able to contain them three days later, these attacks had spread from Kano to Zaria, Kaduna, Jos, and other urban centres in the North.

Direct responsibility for the May riots has never been fully ascertained; but it would seem, if one discounts the propagandistic claims made by the Eastern and Federal Governments, that they resulted from the concantenation of a number of factors: ranging from the machinations of dispossessed Northern politicians to the display of offensive political cartoons by some Ibos who lived in the North.[43] What is certain is that this outburst of inter-ethnic hostility fostered the identification of ethnic security with regional autonomy which underlay Biafran policies throughout the civil war.

If the May riots laid the foundations for the reversal of the Eastern leadership's previously anti-regionalist stance, this process of about-facing was completed, and extended from the East to the North following the destruction of the Ironsi government in July 1966.[44] The counter-coup staged by Northern enlisted men and

42. See footnote 35.

43. Descriptions of the May riots, and analyses of their origins, can be found in St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.58-61; First, op.cit., pp. 311-312; the Daily Telegraph of May 24th through May 31st, 1966; and Luckham, op.cit., pp.271-274.

44. For a full description of the events of the July counter-coup see First, op.cit., pp.313-325; and Luckham, op.cit., pp.51-79.

junior officers in July 1966 had unexpected consequences. It appears that, to the extent that the counter-coup represented more than an outburst of anomic violence directed against Ibos within the Army, the instigators of the 'Northern revenge coup' intended it to be the stroke which severed Northern ties to the Federation.[45] However, once vengeance had been wreaked, Northern unity dissolved[46]; for the counter-coup ushered into prominence a new power grouping - the Northern minority ethnic groups which had been among the chief victims of the 'big tribe chauvinism' which had characterized civilian politics.

The ethnic structure of the army was such that, following the virtual exclusion of Ibos from the Federal military organization, men from the Mid- and Lower-North dominated the hier-

45. As Schwarz noted: "The rebels' idea was, first, revenge for the murdered Northern officers, and second, for the North to secede. For the North, secession was an irrational proposition. It would have cut the Region off from the sea and from Nigeria's promising new oil wealth and, not surprisingly, Northern leaders soon had second thoughts. But in July and August secession, first proclaimed in banners the previous May and embodied in the emir's memorandum in June, was still the popular Northern demand." (Schwarz, W. Nigeria Pall Mall Press (London, 1968), p.210).

46. As Luckham puts it: "...it is clear that [in the period leading up to the counter-coup] common interests and goals were widely shared and mobilized a substantial proportion of those officers and men from all areas of the North, including those previously in political opposition to one another. The common political cause of these groups was fashioned from the special political conditions prevailing in July 1966 which...defined the situation in terms of regional sentiment, resistance to administrative and political unificagion, and opposition to the real or supposed dominance of the Ibos both in the structure of the central government and the military...After the seizure of power, the consensus began to weaken almost immediately and the North no longer evoked the same loyalty. The new political balance created by the coup encouraged officers who had earlier wanted the North to secede to swing round behind a strong Federation...Many of the diaspora and Middle Belt officers came from September 1966 onwards to demand that the old North be broken up into a number of separate regions or states..." (Luckham, op.cit., pp.78-79).

archy of enlisted and commissioned ranks.[47] This gave the long-repressed minorities of the Mid- and Lower-North access to Federal power. Both military and civilian members of these groups exerted strong pressure against secession. They feared that the disintegration of the state into its regional components would return them to the grip of the 'dry' North ethnic majority. At the same time they opposed any resolution of the political crisis based on resumption of the preceding inter-regional political conflict and 'big tribe chauvinism'.

In the end, and it seems with the assistance of external pressure from American and British representatives[48], the minority groups carried the day and Northern secession was averted. This success was to be reproduced a month later at the constitutional conference convened by Supreme Military Council. Delegates from the Mid- and Lower-North, assisted by their compatriots in the army and the civil services, were able to engineer a shift in the Northern delegation's previously pro-regionalist policy. The Northern delegation came out in favour of the creation of a number of states linked together in a strong

47. The majority of enlisted recruits had always come from the Mid- and Lower-North. And the attempt to restore the balance between Northern and Southern elements in the post-independence officer corps had propelled a large number of men from the Mid- and Lower-North into officer training courses. See Luckham, op.cit., p.313.

48. First argues that both British and American diplomatic pressure against Northern secession was brought to bear in the period immediately following the counter-coup. According to First, British diplomats performed the surgery which, at the last moment, excised an announcement of Northern secession from Gowon's first public address, made on August 1st. (First, op.cit., pp.320-321).

federation.[49]

Eastern leaders, meanwhile, were moving further away from their previous affection for a strong central authority. The slaughter of Ibo officers and enlisted men during the July counter-coup reinforced the identification of ethnic security with regional sovereignty which had been engendered during the May riots. This shift was not propelled solely by fear of a hostile North, however. It apparently also reflected the Eastern leaders' commitment to the 'big tribe chauvinism' of the civilian epoch. The socio-economic structure of the Eastern Region was such that, if the

49. See Panter-Brick, S.K. Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War The Athlone Press (London, 1970), Appendix A, for a re-capitulation of the proposals and counter-proposals made by the various regional delegations to the Constitutional Conference in September/October 1966.

The final Northern position at the Constitutional Conference reflected the fundamental reconstruction of power which had occurred in the North following the imposition of military rule. The Northern soldiers' swing toward the establishment of a strong Federal authority was matched by a similar shift of civilian opinion in the North. The January coup had dispossessed the Northern political class, and, although its machinations contributed to communal riots in the North, and to the July counter-coup, it was unable to re-assert its former grip on the region. Military rule had sapped its influence; reforms instigated by the soldiers had destroyed many of its powers; and violence and unrest in the North's urban centres had robbed it of much of its former prestige. The decline of the Northern political class diminished the imperatives of Northern solidarity: "...out with the old politicians went their determination to run the North as a single political unit and thereby to control the political life of the whole Federation. This was partly because the ethnic and cultural minorities were in a strong position to assert their demands for new regions or states because of their well-entrenched position in the army; and partly because many of the new political leaders of the old North, like Aminu Kano, were willing to acquiesce in the sub-division of the North for complex reasons of their own. [However,] The creation of new regions or states was not a practicable proposition unless some kind of effective political centre could be ensured... [Thus] The merits of an effective central government could be argued both by those like the minorities who wanted more regions or states and by proponents of a reinvigorated, reformed One North." (Luckham, op.cit., pp.326-238).

long standing demands of Eastern minority ethnic groups for political autonomy were met through the division of the Eastern Region into three states - as was proposed at the September constitutional conference - the region's Ibo majority would be confined to the already overpopulated, impoverished, and land-locked Ibo heartland. The oil-rich and moderately populous areas of the region would fall under the control of potentially hostile non-Ibo ethnic groups.[50]

The conflict inherent to their divergent views on future constitutional arrangements and power relationships does not, however, sufficiently account for the bitterness and hostility which suffused relations between the Eastern and Federal leaders during this period. To account for this the other two dominant

50. The history of anti-Ibo sentiment within the Eastern Region stretches back to the colonial period. The first demand for minority autonomy appears to have been made at a conference of chiefs and other representatives in December 1953. In 1954 the COR state movement was inaugurated at Uyo and later transformed into an anti-NCNC party. Throughout the era of civilian politics, resentment of Ibo domination propelled Eastern splinter parties into electoral alliances with either the NPC or AG.

Following the January and July coups the minorities problem in the East became more complex. On the one hand members of minority ethnic groups suffered along with Ibos in the Northern riots. This tended to propel them toward cohesion with the Ibo majority. At the same time, Ojukwu attempted to temper their hostility to the Ibos by devolving some central powers to provincial governments; and by adding minority representatives to his entourage. (Ojukwu even offered to accept the results of a referendum on the question of the division of the East into ethnic states; however, he proposed the referendum only after the minority areas had been occupied by Federal forces.) On the other hand, the prospect of autonomy implied in the re-vamped Northern proposals made at the September/October Constitutional Conference was attractive to minority groups. An attraction which must have been considerable if some minority spokesmen's claims of Ibo arrogance and even assaults on minority groups were true.

For further details on the minority question in the Eastern Region see Whiteman, K. "Enugu: The Psychology of Secession" in Panter-Brick, op.cit., pp.111-115; Luckham, op.cit., pp.330-322; and Graham-Douglas, N.G. Ojukwu's Rebellion and World Opinion Gallitzine, Chant, and Russell (London, 1968).

phenomena of the post-coup period must be considered: the disintegration of the Nigerian Army and inter-ethnic violence.

The July counter-coup resulted in the fission of the Nigerian army. The counter-coup stemmed from the eruption of regional and ethnic tensions within the armed forces. Suspicions that an Ibo plot lay behind the policies of the Ironsi government were not confined to Northern civilians. They also suffused Northern elements within the army. Northern soldiers began to view their Ibo comrades with suspicion. As one Northern soldier put it: "...'the Ibo knows how to talk and pretend to be brothers. We discovered this treachery late. Most countries have one Judas Iscariot for every hundred of their people. The Ibos are ninety-nine per cent Judas'..."[51] In the period following the January coup there began to occur incidents of gross indiscipline involving Northern enlisted men and Ibo officers; with the result that during most of July, Northern soldiers were already in a semi-mutinous state.[52]

It is not clear whether the Northern 'revenge coup', when it came, resulted from a spontaneous collapse of institutional values and behaviour patterns, or whether it represented the activation of latent inter-ethnic hostility within the army by dispossessed Northern politicians.[53] Whichever the case, the counter-coup, although it exhibited an extra dimension of communal violence, was in many ways typical of the second phase of military

51. Miners, op.cit., p.212.

52. Luckham, op.cit., pp.51 and 64. Also see Miners, op.cit., pp.182-183 for a description of indiscipline in the Army following the January coup.

53. See Luckham, op.cit., pp.68-76, for a detailed examination of both anomic and organized behaviour patterns manifested by participants in the counter-coup.

intervention in politics.

The Ironsi government, like most military regimes in Africa, attempted to reproduce the pattern of political authority and administration which existed in the colonial period. During the colonial period political authority stemmed from a central source and flowed outward into society through the administrative regulations and fiats issued by authoritarian institutions. This pattern serves as a paradigm for the reforms and changes introduced by most African military governments. They perceive authority as an outward flow of command rather than an inward flow of consensual affirmation. They reject the aggregation and mediation of political interests and extol honest, efficient administration as the object of government. This conception, stemming for the most part from the values and behaviour patterns of military professionalism, results in a regime characterized by its emphasis on the promulgation of decrees and regulations; and by its failure to institutionalize effective feedback mechanisms.

This attempt to impose a neo-colonial 'iron grid' on society is, however, flawed from its inception. The source of authority - the army and its agents in the civil services - is not, as in the colonial period, external to domestic society. It is soon perceived by the subjects of the regime to be involved in the power struggles of domestic interest groups. Nor is the seat of authority outside the grasp of dis-affected domestic groups. In the absence of institutions through which support for the regime's policies can be mobilized, or dissent expressed, the only outlet for social tension is violence, which usually manifests itself in the form of a counter-coup in which one segment of the armed forces, its adhesion to institutional values and norms weakened by the initial coup, takes on the function of interest articulation

and overturns the original military regime.

In the case of Nigeria, it was soon obvious that the counter-coup had succeeded. By August 1st, 1966 General Ironsi and many other Ibo officers and men were dead, while those still alive were, where allowed, fleeing toward the Eastern Region. The Nigerian army had virtually ceased to exist as a coherent organization. A fact recognized in the agreement made within the Supreme Military Council on August 9th that all troops should be repatriated to their region of origin.[54]

The disintegration of the army into its ethnic components was of major significance for the development of the perceptual screens through which the military leaders were henceforth to view each other. Cohesion and brotherhood were important aspects

54. Most troops of Eastern origin had already fled back to the East. The main impulse behind Eastern agreement to regionalization of the Army was the Eastern leaders' desire to remove the threat poised by the presence of Northern soldiers in the Enugu garrison. A mutiny in the Enugu garrison had been only narrowly averted during the counter-coup, and so long as the Northern soldiers remained in place - they were repatriated on August 13th - there was a threat to the internal security of the East.

The West backed the repatriation agreement because it would mean the removal of Northern troops from the Western Region. Though the July coup had been directed against Easterners, Western leaders, especially Chief Awolowo, viewed the continued presence of Northern troops in the West with alarm (although re-garrisoning the region with Western troops would have required a large recruiting and training programme since only about 10% of the army's personnel were of Yoruba origin).

Even though the repatriation agreement, for all intents and purposes, dissolved the Nigerian Army into two antagonistic armed forces, the institutional impulse to cohesion still flickered in the gathering gloom. There still existed a feeling that the military men were really all comrades. St. Jorre described the scene of Northern troops' departure from Enugu as follows: "'Baba' Ogunewe, the Ibo commanding officer, had resisted attempts by the Eastern government to wreak revenge on his Northern soldiers with the same courage and determination with which he had stopped the latter from mutinying during the coup. The send-off was preceded by drinks with his Northern officers in the mess, an official photograph, and accompanied by tearful scenes at Enugu railway station." (St. Jorre, op.cit., p.80). See also, Luckham, op.cit., pp.289,304,332-334; First, op.cit., p.323; and Dudley, B.J. "Western Nigeria and the Nigerian Crisis" in Panter-Brick, op.cit., pp.103-4.

of life in the pre-coup armed forces. Because of the relative impermeability of its boundaries, and its emphasis on solidarity in the socialization process and the daily rituals of military life, the army provided a unique degree of security and predictability in inter-personal relationships in a rapidly changing society. However, in the event of institutional collapse, the dissolution of solidary relationships often results in exaggerated hostility among institutional participants. As Luckham noted, "...the corporate unity which had earlier insulated the military from politics and conflict on primordial lines only made these cleavages worse when they finally penetrated the army's boundaries."[55]

The impulse to regain the security of institutional cohesion and solidarity was strong. This was most clearly illustrated at the meeting of the Supreme Military Council held under the auspices of the Ghanian military government at Aburi in January 1967.[56] The tone of this meeting was set by General Ankrah in his opening address to the Nigerian soldiers:

> It is a saying that if Generals were to meet and discuss frontiers, wars or even go into the details to forestall war, there will never be any differences or discrepancies but unity and understanding. There will be no war because the two old boys will meet at the frontier and tell each other - 'Old boy, we are not going to commit our boys to die, come on, let us keep the politicians out - and that is the end.'[57]

General Ankrah was mistaken in this case. Although a superficial bonhomie was re-established among the participants, a

55. Luckham, R. "The Nigerian Military" in Panter-Brick, op.cit., pp.75-76.

56. See Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.312-340 (Documents 77-81), for details of the Aburi meetings and agreements.

57. Cited in Luckham, op.cit., pp.289-290.

fundamental contradiction in attitudes undermined the value of the meeting. It appears that Ojukwu came to Aburi intent on negotiating a final settlement of the crisis; while Gowon and the other representatives of the Federal government viewed the meeting as no more than a discussion prior to formal negotiations.[58] This differing conception of the importance of Aburi may partly explain Ojukwu's apparent success in gaining approval for the restructuring of the army and state on a loose confederal basis, with each region retaining control of its own security forces, administrative structures, and political organization. And it certainly explains in some part the Federal leaders' retreat from the Aburi agreements once it became clear that the East regarded Aburi as a final victory for its cause.[59]

A more fundamental flaw in the value of the Aburi meetings, however, lay in the soldiers' failure to perceive the limits on their control of the political process. Their attempt to settle their differences without reference to the aspirations of civilian power groups doomed their efforts to failure. The 'New Nigerians'[60] who had risen to positions of prominence and administrative authority in the Federal arena were unwilling to forfeit their gains and see central authority once again diminished. To the

58. See St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.92-93.

59. As St. Jorre says: "The 'Aburi spirit', three short weeks after the meeting, was already flickering out and both principals were to blame: Ojukwu for not resisting the temptation to spell out his 'confederal' victory the moment he got home and thus opening the old wound, and Gowon for not ignoring the challenge and then publicly reneging on certain crucial parts of the agreement." (St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.97-98).

60. The term 'New Nigerians' was used by St. Jorre to describe civil servants and other, mostly public, officials whose loyalty lay to the Federation rather than a particular region. (St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.73 and 107).

leading civilians of post-July Nigeria the political cost of regaining harmonious relations within the army was too high. As Dent says;

> Aburi demonstrated both the inadequacy of the military's political and constitutional skills and the vulnerable position in which they put themselves if they sought, in their sole capacity, to make generous settlements to each other at the expense of constitutional principles which some considered vital.[61]

In the end the Aburi agreements collapsed. Rather than providing a solution to the crisis they merely added fuel to the fires of bitterness and hostility which consumed the brotherhood of Nigerian soldiers; so that, by the time of secession in May 1967, the Eastern and Federal governments were led by men whose political ambitions were heavily reinforced by personal distaste for and distrust of their opponents. Bitterness and distrust were not, however, confined to the military leaders of the state. The outbursts of mass inter-ethnic hostility which punctuated the various phases of the national power struggle following the January coup reproduced a similar set of perceptions on a wider scale.

Recognizing the Ibos' industry and dynamic pursuit of upward mobility, some observers had called them the 'Jews' of Africa.[62] Following the riots which convulsed major Northern cities in May 1966, it became possible to perceive another similarity between the two groups: irrational persecution by the

61. Dent, M.J. "The Military and the Politicians" in Panter-Brick, op.cit., pp.88-89.

62. For example, in a discussion of the tradition of Ibo business success, Schwarz remarked: "If the Ibo are 'clever' it is mainly because, like the Jews, they have had to be." (Schwarz, op.cit., p.252.

community within which they formed a minority group.[63] This perception was re-inforced and converted into an outright fear of genocide by the eruption of anti-Ibo/Eastern rioting in September/October 1966.

Isolated incidents of inter-ethnic violence had occurred in the North throughout August and September 1966.[64] However, Radio Kaduna's re-broadcast, on September 28th, of a Dahomean report of attacks on Northerners resident in the East triggered off "a terrible new cataclysm which made all the year's preceding violence look like a barrack-room brawl."[65] Largely unhindered by governmental authorities - indeed, Northern soldiers in some cases led the slaughter - Northern mobs murdered thousands of Ibos and other Easterners. By the time the pogrom had burned itself out, virtually every Ibo in the North was dead, hiding with sympathetic Northerners and expatriates, or making the perilous trek back to the East.[66]

Accurate reports of the numbers of Easterners murdered or repatriated to the East were lost in the flood of Federal and Eastern propaganda which followed the autumn violence; but the riots' impact is not diminished if one accepts the lowest estimates of approximately 7,000 killed and 1,000,000 repatriated. So far as the survivors of the massacre and their comrades in

63. O'Connell, J. "The Anatomy of a Pogrom: An Outline Model with Special Reference to the Ibos in Northern Nigeria" Race 9 (1) 1967, pp.95-100.

64. See Luckham, op.cit., pp.307-310, for a description of the atmosphere of inter-ethnic tension in the North following the July coup.

65. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.84.

66. See the description of the events of the September/October massacres in St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.84-86; and First, op.cit., pp.329-333.

the East were concerned, there was little question that the autumn riots clearly revealed the genocidal ambitions of the North.

The question of the genocidal intentions of the North was to linger throughout the war. Under the Genocide Convention adopted by the United Nations in 1948, genocide is defined as:

> ...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such: (a). killing members...; (b). causing serious bodily or mental harm to members...; (c). deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part; (d). imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e). forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[67]

Whether or not the Northern massacres in fact met the criteria set up under this convention, for most Ibos there was no doubt that the evidence pointed to a deliberate attempt to exterminate the Ibo presence in Nigeria. The obvious failure of the Northern authorities to take adequate steps to prevent, or at least quell

67. Cited in O'Brien, W.V. "International Crimes" in Sills, D.L. (ed.) International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences MacMillan and the Free Press (London, 1968), vol.7, p.518.

the riots[68]; the 'callous indifference' of representatives of other ethnic groups, who responded to the news of what the Ibos saw as an unparallelled tragedy with comments such as "the Ibos had it coming to them" and "God's will"[69]; and the insistent repetition and inflation of the story of the massacres by the Eastern government's propaganda machine[70]; all combined to transform the Ibo's nascent fears of Northern intentions into a firm belief that they were the intended victims of a Northern policy of genocide.

The net result was the creation of one of the major propellants of the Eastern famine. The Ibos' fear of genocide pushed them toward secession. It sustained their support of the political objectives of the Biafran government, and sustained

68. First described the official attitude to the massacres as follows: "Curfew was imposed for the first time on the sixth day of the killings. Only with enormous difficulty were the authorities persuaded to organize the evacuation of Ibo civil servants. The press in the North, inhibited by official attitudes made only too clear, was censored or tongue-tied; during the first wave of killings, it carried not reports of the killings, but denials that they were taking place at all. In the very week that they were reaching their peak, Gowon issued an instruction to all government staff who had 'deserted' their posts to return by a given deadline. The day after the killings in Minna, the Northern military governor said publicly that the staff absences were a deliberate plan to paralyse the efficiency of the public service..." (First, op.cit., p.331).

The extent to which any desire to quell the violence could have been translated into action by the Federal commanders may have been very limited. In the first place, as Luckham argued, military commanders exercised only tenuous authority over their troops in this period. In some cases the troops simply ignored the hierarchy of authority in pursuit of their own ends. At the same time the Federal leaders may have been inhibited by their fear that the use of troops to quell the disturbances would simply result in the embroilment of those troops in the upsurge of communal hostility. (Luckham, op.cit., pp.305-307).

69. Whiteman, op.cit., p.116. As First remarked: "Hardly any Ibo lineage escaped unscathed; but if the scale of the disaster was hard to bear, the conviction that the rest of Nigeria neither knew nor cared was unendurable." (First, op.cit., p.334).

70. See the discussion of Eastern propaganda efforts in Luckham, op.cit., pp.300-303.

that government's rejection of Federal proposals which - by ending the conflict - would have alleviated the wartime nutritional crisis. As the Africa Research Group put it:

> At the beginning of the war, the Ibo people were mesmerized by the fear of genocide. An atmosphere of collective paranoia existed with what appeared to be a plausible and frightening basis in reality. Through the specter of genocide, the Ibo people were organized to support Ojukwu's secession - more by mass psychological mobilization than by any appeal to a progressive program. This image of genocide catalyzed a people into a fighting machine, converting Ibos and other ethnic groups into Biafrans. It consolidated the population behind Ojukwu's leadership, creating and preserving solidarity and determination, while retarding any significant political dissent or ethnic division within Biafra. Psychologically and politically the fear of genocide became Biafra's glue.[71]

Or, more simply, as Nwankwo remarked:

> That the Biafran propaganda sustained the support of the Biafran populace for the leadership is true. But what was the magic of the Biafran propaganda? Just this; that the Northern massacres lent credibility to the fear for the security of the Ibos which was the crux of Biafran propaganda.[72]

If, at this point, the material in the preceding pages is summed up, it is clear that after only one year of military rule the perceptual and goal structures which were to underlay the Civil War and the famine had been erected. The political objectives of the belligerents were defined. Their conflict would revolve around the determination of the Federal leadership to

71. Africa Research Group The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

72. Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. The Making of a Nation: Biafra C. Hurst and Co. (London, 1969), pp.16-17.

institutionalize a diffusion of authority away from the majority ethnic groups and regional apparatuses; and the Eastern leaders' determination to retain regional autonomy based on the hegemony of the majority ethnic group within the region. The psychological screens through which the belligerents would perceive events during the war were also in place. The Ibos' fear of the Federal regime's genocidal intentions, and the hostility and bitterness of the inter-personal relations of the opposing leaders, would condition each side's lack of readiness to temper the pursuit of its political objectives in view of the cost of that quest in terms of human suffering.

In the next chapter the impact of the belligerents' perceptual and goal structures on the nutritional status of Eastern residents will be assessed. The development of famine conditions will be traced and it will be shown that it was the articulation of these values and goal structures with the pre-war socio-economic structure of the Eastern Region which underlay the development of the nutritional catastrophe.

Before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the nutritional crisis, it seems appropriate to assess the extent to which the Civil War - the overt cause of the famine in the East - was inevitable. Military government up to the spring of 1967 had been a relatively unmitigated disaster. But did this reflect the insertion of soldiers into an already irretrievable situation; or had military intervention itself pushed the nation into the abyss of chaos and disintegration?

It appears that military rule in Nigeria both created and destroyed the possibility of transcending the 'praetorianism' of the era of civilian rule. There is no doubt that the January coup did, at least temporarily, break the grip of the political

class. However, the soldiers, largely because of the inhibitions of military professionalism, were unable to translate their initial success into a sustained attack on the other two poles of Nigerian politics - regional competition and ethnic sentiment. Their disavowal of political mechanisms for the aggregation and mediation of interests allowed these two forces untrammeled play and, in the end, they consumed the only remaining authoritative sources of national unity, the Army itself.

Following the July counter-coup it might have been possible for a civilian government to at least retard the plunge toward disintegration. But the addition to the political equation of the bitterness and distrust which accompanied the dissolution of the armed forces probably, given the essential political incompetence of the soldiers, made secession, civil war, and famine inevitable. Nigeria was like a truck careering out of control down a mountain road; and the intervention of the military in political life like the introduction of a drunkard into the driver's seat. In the chapters which follow, the ensuing crash will be examined.

CHAPTER III

Origins and Development of the Nutritional Crisis

The nutritional catastrophe which ravaged the civilian population of Eastern Nigeria during the Civil War resulted primarily from a drastic decline in per capita levels of protein consumption throughout the region. Although carbohydrate consumption dropped to low levels, the major cause of mortality during the disaster appears to have been severe protein deficiency. It was only in the latter stages of the war, and then only inside the Biafran enclave, that relief workers began to fear a significant rise in the number of deaths attributable to carbohydrate deprivation.[1] The purpose of this chapter is to examine the initial development of the nutritional disaster in the Eastern Region.

The nutritional disaster began to take shape even before secession. It was given its initial impetus by the massive influx of dispossessed migrants into the Eastern Region following the communal upheavals which occurred during the summer and

1. See, for example, JOINTCHURCHAID Press Release (Hereafter cited as JCA) JCA 87, Geneva, 19 August 1969; and the Guardian 8 December 1969.

autumn months of 1966.[2] Most of the repatriated migrants arrived in the East with few, if any, resources. As the Chairman of the Eastern Region Rehabilitation Commission put it:

> Suddenly and without warning they have been thrust out of these areas into this region. Many of them in a state of helpless indigence and penury...quite a number naked and without clothing...A refugee clutching his child and without any belongings became a regular feature for those four depressing weeks.[3]

Two main avenues of support were open to the refugees. A lucky few found either public or private employment. The

2. See Luckham, R. The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960-1967 Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1971), pp.307-308, for a description of Eastern repatriation in the months following the July counter-coup. The number of refugees which fled to the East from the Northern Region, and the number from the West and Lagos which joined them there is not certain; although, even the lowest estimates of the influx of displaced persons are of sufficient magnitude to have triggered off the nutritional crisis in the East. By the end of 1966 the Eastern Region Rehabilitation Commission reported a population of 1,175,000 refugees. (West Africa, 26 December 1966, p.1497). S.A. Aluko's analysis of the refugee problem assumed that a total of 1.6 million people eventually fled into the East. ("The Problem of the Displaced Persons" in Christian Concern in the Nigerian Civil War Daystar Press (Ibadan, 1969)). The Goodell study mission to Biafra assumed a refugee population from the West and North of 2,000,000 in its report. ("Report of the Biafra Study Mission" Congressional Record (Senate) 91st Congress, 1st Session (Washington, 25 February 1969, Vol.115, No.33 (hereafter referred to as the Goodell Report), p. S1977). St. Jorre's estimate of the situation seems a reasonably acceptable middle position on which to stand: "It is difficult to quantify but the million Easterners who fled from the North were eventually to be joined by half a million from other parts of the Federation, producing a total of something around 1.5 million refugees in the East by the time the war broke out." (St. Jorre, John de The Nigerian Civil War Hodder and Stoughton (London, 1972), p.87).

3. "Speech by the Chairman of the Eastern Region's Rehabilitation Committee" (Document No.95) in Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source Book 1966-1969 Oxford University Press (London, 1971), Vol.1, pp.380-383. Perhaps the best evidence of the general penury of the refugees was the fact that the authorities in the areas from which they had fled, felt compelled to set up organizations to safe-guard the property the refugees left behind. Estimates of the value of the property abandoned by Easterners ranged as high as £N60 m. (See Aluko, op.cit., p.32).

Eastern Region government committed itself to providing jobs for all displaced former public employees; and, by March 1967, the Chairman of the Rehabilitation Commission reported that over 28,000 refugees were employed in the public sector, with nearly 5,000 more having been absorbed into the private sector.[4]

This performance proved grossly inadequate, however, in the face of population displacement on such a massive scale. The Chairman of the Rehabilitation Commission noted:

> Already pressures are building up in the civil service, the public sectors, and the private sectors which admittedly have a limit they can absorb...nearly six thousand Railway men and about that number of daily paid workers have been unleashed on us. A couple of thousand more are overflowing from the Posts and Telegraphs Department...[5]

The pressure of demand for jobs from former public employees, not to mention the large number of repatriates who had previously been engaged in private sector employment as traders, clerks, etc., overwhelmed the absorbtive capacity of the regional employment structure.[6] Even though the authorities appeared willing to countenance the creation of vastly inflated public sector employ-

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Aluko estimated that the repatriation of Eastern migrants added about 1.1 million men to the Eastern labour force. (Aluko, op.cit., p.21).

ment[7], and even though the regional government created a number of job vacancies by expelling non-Easterners in October 1966,[8] there could never be enough jobs to go around.

For the majority of repatriates the extended family network offered the major, if not the sole, source of support. As the chairman of the Rehabilitation Commission said:

> ...this miracle [absorbtion of the repatriates] has been performed as a result of our time honoured and respected extended family system... These refugees returned and were absorbed in existing facilities of their homes...[9]

However, the absorbtive capacity of the extended family network was itself limited:

> God in his infinite mercy worked on the side of the people of this region. They arrived at a time when our harvest was at its peak and our barns were full with crops. Food was therefore not a pressing necessity... [However,] my commission knew that very soon the honey-moon would be over; very soon the elasticity of the extended family network

7. First estimated that the Eastern Region government's plans for absorbing all repatriated public employees would have expanded public sector employment by approximately 50%. The problems connected with financing such a massive expansion of public employment soured relations between the Eastern and Federal governments. According to the Aburi agreements the FMG was to pay repatriated public employees' salaries up to March 31, 1967. However, the FMG's payments amounted to no more than £N300,000 while the Eastern budget announced in April 1967 allocated £N4 million to job creation for refugees. (First, R. The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat Penguin Press (Allen Lane, 1970), p.342; Whiteman, K. "Enugu: The Psychology of Secession" in Panter-Brick, S.K. Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War The Athlone Press (London, 1970), p.119; and St. Jorre, op.cit., p.87).

8. Although the expulsion of non-Easterners was rationalized as a security measure, it seems likely that the pressures of employment creation provided one of the impulses behind the act. See St. Jorre, op.cit., p.87.

9. Kirk-Greene, loc.cit.

> would become so distended that it would burst under its own inscrutable burden. Our first task therefore was to anticipate that food in the next few months may become short.[10]

The Chairman's line of reasoning appears to have been well founded. The sudden addition of over one million refugees to the Eastern population could hardly have resulted in anything other than a dramatic reduction in the quantities of food consumed not only by the repatriates, but by the other members of the extended family whose food supplies the refugees were sharing. In the most densely populated areas of the region - such as the Ibo Heartland - which had been the most deeply involved in exporting population to the cities[11], there was little prospect of expanding food production in order to accommodate higher levels of demand. These were the very areas in which cultivation had already been intensified, the substitution of cassava for yam pushed furthest, and rural-to-rural migration developed to the greatest extent.

Nor, it appears, would there have been widespread opportunities for the repatriated migrants to re-enter the subsistence

10. Ibid.

11. Population densities in the pre-war Ibo Heartland ranged from a low of 417 per square mile in Udi Division, up to 1632/square mile in Orlu Division. (Federal Census Office, Population Census of Nigeria 1963 (Eastern Nigeria) (Lagos, n.d.) vol.3, p.54). Migration out of this overpopulated area had been extremely heavy. In Uboma, for example, researchers found that of 30 individuals who had completed primary or secondary school in 1962, 28 had migrated to urban centres. (Oluwansanmi, H.A. et al. Uboma: A Socio-Economic and Nutritional Survey of a Rural Community in Eastern Nigeria Geographical Publications (Bude, Cornwall, 1966), p.6). Similarly, Gugler discovered, in a survey of 12 Ibo and Ibibio villages made in 1961-62, that half of the men and a quarter of the women were away in urban centres at the time of the inquiry. (Gugler, J. "Eastern Nigerians in Town: Life in a Dual System" Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines 11 (1) 1971, p.411 (Table 4)).

economy and commence producing food for themselves. The system of land tenure in the East was generally based on familial ownership with usufruct vested in patrilineal descent groups.[12] The individual's right to utilize communal land was virtually inalienable. However, the pressures of overpopulation in the areas of the region from which most migrants originated were such that, in practice, land not utilized by migrants reverted to the owning body for re-assignment to resident members of the eligible descent group. Thus, "The emigrant, while his claim to a share in the communal farmland is upheld, is under constant threat that he may lose his right to a specific piece of land."[13] In a context of land scarcity, this would have largely precluded the repatriate's assumption of a productive role in the subsistence economy.[14]

In sum, it can be argued that the mass repatriation of

12. See Smock, D.R. and Smock, A.C. Cultural and Political Aspects of Rural Transformation: A Case Study of Eastern Nigeria Praeger (New York, 1972), Introduction and Ch.3 for a detailed assessment of land tenure in the Eastern Region.

13. Gugler, op.cit., p.408.

14. The tendency for the refugee to be cut off from the use of communal land was heightened by the temporal dimension of migration. Gugler's research showed that most Eastern migrants were fully committed to earning their living in town. Fully 79% of generally unskilled labourers and traders, and 95% of senior civil servants and professionals, indicated that they had never resided at home since the age of 15 (or leaving school). "Nearly all expect to spend their entire working life away from their home place...Even on retirement many will make an attempt to find other sources of urban income." (Gugler, op.cit., p.405). On the other hand, the tendency was to some extent mediated by the migrant's response to his achieved level of urban income. Gugler showed that the economic attraction of urban life, for low income groups, was complemented by an economic attraction to the home village: "Low income earners find it difficult to support a wife and children in town... Unless wife and or children succeed in supplementing the family income from employment, trade, or crafts, they have to rely on a rural income... It accrues only so long as the family continues to occupy the land; once they leave it, their rights to its proceeds lapses; the family hand becomes a family mouth." (Gugler, op.cit., p.413).

Eastern migrants must have precipitated the nutritional crisis in the East. It created a large population of essentially non-productive persons who were dependent for their sustenance on the already stretched resources of the extended family network. It engendered an upward shift in aggregate demand for food without evoking a concomitant increase in the supply capacity of the region's resources. In fact, the repatriation of Eastern migrants, by halting the flow of cash remittances to Eastern households, reduced the regional capacity to command external supplements to local production of foodstuffs.[15] On a per capita basis, Easterners' consumption of both starchy staples and imported animal proteins probably declined; a reduction in protein and carbohydrate intake which, given the already low standards of nutrition in the region, must have triggered off - at least for those who were worst off - a descent into starvation.[16]

The nutritional impact of the mass repatriation of Eastern migrants was reinforced in the spring of 1967 when the Federal government imposed an economic blockade on the Eastern Region. The erection of Federal barriers to the inflow of external resources eliminated any possibility of mediating the impact of

15. In a discussion with the author, Arnold Hughes pointed out that the influx of non-local protein supplies would also have been impeded by the forcible removal of Ibo traders from the network of food exporters and importers who met Eastern food requirements.

16. The Observer, 23 June 1968, contained an interview with a Dr. Aaron Ifekwunigwe who stated that the first cases of Kwashiokor to arrive at his hospital near Owerri came in March 1967 and were the children of refugees from Northern Nigeria.

the refugees on the Eastern food economy.[17]

The institution of economic sanctions against the East resulted from the collapse of the Aburi agreements. In February 1967 Ojukwu announced that, unless the commitments made by Gowon and the other members of the Supreme Military Council in the meetings held at Aburi in January 1967 were fully implemented by March 31st, he would unilaterally put them into operation.[18] The Supreme Military Council responded to this threat with the promulgation of Decree No.8 on March 17th.[19] Decree No.8 reflected a compromise between the more or less pro-confederal agreements made at Aburi and the objections made to those agreements by Federal civil servants, who wanted to retain some semblance of a Federal system with a powerful centre.[20]

Ojukwu rejected Decree No.8. He believed that its provisions for the declaration of a state of emergency within any of the regions represented a potential threat to Eastern security.[21] Following March 31st he proceeded to appropriate all Federal revenues generated in the East, taking over control of the Eastern assets of Federal corporations, schools, and courts as well.[22]

17. Although the forcible restriction of exports of food - such as yams - out of the Eastern Region would have mitigated in a small way the impact of the blockade.

18. See "On Aburi we Stand: Ojukwu's Dawn Broadcast, 25 February 1967" (Document No.90) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.362-367.

19. See "Decree No.8 of 1967" (Document No.99) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, pp.401-402.

20. For a detailed assessment of the manoeuvering behind the promulgation of Decree No.8 see St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.97 and 103-104; First, op.cit., pp.338-339; and Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol. 1, pp.77-86.

21. Ibid.

22. For details of the rationalization behind this action see Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, p.90.

In retaliation, the FMG immediately suspended Nigeria Airways flights to the East; and, at the next meeting of the Supreme Military Council, imposed a number of economic sanctions against the region.[23] With the addition of a naval blockade of the East in May 1967, the Federal siege of Biafra can be said to have begun.[24]

Siege warfare has a long, if not particularly illustrious, history. Reduction of an enemy through interdiction of his food and/or other supplies played a major role in medieval warfare, the Napoleonic era, and in both World Wars. Few economic blockades in history have, however, had the dramatic impact of the one imposed on Eastern Nigeria.[25] Although considerations of the effect of the Federal siege tend to focus on the barrier it presented to the international relief agencies which were attempting to alleviate the nutritional crisis in the war zone, it was also an important factor in creating a nutritional emergency prior to the war.

The blockade intensified pre-existing protein deficiencies in the Eastern Region. It disrupted the importation of animal

23. See Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, p.90.

24. The exact date on which it commenced is unclear, but it appears that the marine blockade of the East must have been imposed immediately following the announcement of Eastern secession. See Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.1, p.98.

25. For a compelling account of one blockade which did cause suffering on the scale seen in Biafra, see Salisbury, H.E. The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad Pan Books Ltd. (London, 1971).

and fish products into the Eastern Region[26], reducing the total supply of protein available to the population and, because consumption of the amino acids associated with animal proteins declined, reducing the nutritional utilization of the vegetable proteins contained in the starchy staples, which, more than ever, provided the bulk of nutritional intake. In fact the heightened demand for locally produced foodstuffs induced by the Federal blockade must have, given the essentially static level of regional food production, reinforced the reduction of per capita consumption of starchy tubers already triggered off by the repatriation of migrants; a reduction which implied, in turn, not only a decrease in the total consumption of vegetable proteins, but, because of diminished ingestion of carbohydrates, the diversion of consumed proteins from their normal bodily functions to energy provision.[27]

It appears, then, that a nutritional crisis developed even before secession. The combined effects of mass repatriation and blockade must have reduced already inadequate levels of protein and carbohydrate consumption to a point at which an increasing

26. A number of observers have pointed out, however, that at least some trade between the East and the rest of the Federation continued following the imposition of the blockade; indeed, right through the war. Akpan, for example, refers to this trade as the 'attack trade' (an indication that cross-barrier trade reached a size sufficient to warrant a general denomination).(Akpan, N.U. The Struggle for Secession: A Personal Account of the Nigerian Civil War Frank Cass (London, 1971), p.122). In Samuels, op.cit., p.10, it is asserted that there was "much interchange of goods and currency within Ibo areas, regardless of whether Biafran or not. Supplies came across and down the Niger from both the North and Midwest. Even cattle came down on rafts." Another indication of the existence of a flow of goods across the blockade lay in the Biafran accusations that the FMG was attempting to pursue its genocidal policies by poisoning food supplies procured in this manner. (See, for example, the article in the Daily Telegraph, 8 July 1968). Also in the fact that the FMG felt obliged to issue a new currency.

27. This latter point was brought out by Aall, op.cit., p.5.

proportion of the Eastern population was approaching or moving across the threshold of starvation. It was, however, the commencement of military operations by the belligerents which largely accounted for the transformation of the nutritional crisis into one of the most grievous episodes of mass starvation in the 20th century. As Aall said:

> When people even in normal times had to live on such a poor diet as 75-80% of the desirable calorie level and 50-65% of the desirable protein level, it is obvious that they would be vulnerable and prone to suffer severely even by exposure to moderate stress and strain. It is therefore not difficult to imagine the results of war destruction and consequent food shortages.[28]

Armed conflict between Biafra and the Federal Military Government commenced with the Federal capture of Ogoja, Nsukka, and Bonny in July 1967. By the end of October 1967, Federal forces had captured Enugu and its northern environs, re-taken Benin, occupied Calabar, and completed the encirclement of Biafra by linking up elements of the 1st and 3rd (Marine Commando) Divisions at Ikom on the eastern border of the region. Following a winter lull in the fighting, the Federal advance resumed and by the end of 1968 Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Aba, Owerri, and Okigwi had been secured by Federal troops. Thus, by the end of the first 18 months of combat, the territory under the control of the Biafran government had been reduced essentially to the area comprising the Ibo Heartland. And from this point onward, the land area of the Biafran enclave was steadily, though gradually and with a few reversals, eroded under the pressure of Federal

28. Aall, op.cit., p.6.

attacks.[29]

The Federal occupation of large areas of the original territory of Biafra was a primary factor in the intensification of the nutritional crisis. It led - as both Ibo and non-Ibo residents of the enclave's periphery fled from their homes in the face of the Federal advance - to the creation of an ever larger population of refugees in the East. Their flight from Federal troops took many of these refugees deeper inside Biafran territory[30], with the result that, as the Federal army compressed the land area under Biafran control, the proportion of displaced persons within the total population of the enclave steadily increased.[31] As the number of refugees built up, those individuals who had not been displaced from their normal places of residence or employment came under increasing pressure. Members of their extended family who had become refugees descended on

29. See Niven, R. The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970 Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Ltd. (Ibadan, 1970), Ch.15-17, for detailed description of the military operations of both sides.

30. Describing a visit he made with Ojukwu to the front north of Enugu just prior to that city's capture in September 1967, Akpan said: "Then we saw the refugees. We had started seeing the throngs twelve miles from Enugu. Women and children, old men and women, with fowls, cats, goats, and whatever personal belongings they could carry, moving aimlessly to uncertain destinations. We saw a few lying dead, or nearly so, from hunger and fatigue. They were among those who had been trekking for days from the most remote parts of the Nsukka Division [in which there had been intense fighting] - those who did not take to the bush." (Akpan, op.cit., pp.93-94). The Goodell study group reported that virtually all Ibos and about 40% of the non-Ibos normally resident in territory held by Federal troops fled into the enclave as the front approached. (Goodell Report, op.cit., p.S1977). See also St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.378-380, for a description of refugee movements.

31. According to the report made by the Goodell study mission, which travelled inside the enclave in early 1969, refugees accounted for approximately one-third of the enclave's population. (Goodell Report, op.cit., p.S1977).

them seeking food and shelter[32]; while, in the case of farmers, they were simultaneously expected to produce food for the use of the army and displaced persons living in refugee camps.

The struggle to increase food production within the enclave occupied the efforts of both official and private agencies. The major initiative was embodied in the Emergency Food Programme, which was launched in 1969.[33] This programme aimed at the total mobilization of all available resources in order to increase food production. The primary focus was on staple carbohydrate crops, shortages of which were beginning to threaten the conversion of the protein crisis into carbohydrate starvation. More land was to be brought under cultivation and virtually the entire population of the enclave was to be drawn into food production. The creation of a 'Land Army' attracted the most outside attention to the Biafran agricultural schemes. As described by one observer, "...the Land Army is organizing to clear 100 acres for each village. Men between the ages of 12 and 35 who are not in

32. A number of observers remarked on the pressure refugees exerted on their relatives who had not been displaced: "Under normal conditions in Nigeria, if a relative comes to visit you, however remote that relationship may be, you are bound to give hospitality. In war this meant that as soon as a family became refugees they would descend on some relatives in an undisturbed area, and these relatives would have to look after them. At least it shared the burden of suffering." (Roberts, B. Life and Death among the Ibos Scripture Union (London, 1970), p.55). See also Lindsay, K. "A Clan System that Means Agony for Biafra's Starving Refugees" Globe and Mail (Toronto), 2 October 1968; and Akpan, op.cit.,p.160.

33. For details of the Emergency Food Programme see the Goodell Report, op.cit., pp.S1978-S1979; "Emergency Relief in Nigeria and the Biafran Enclave July 1967 Through June 30, 1969" AID Foreign Disaster Relief Report Reprint (Reprinted from: Ninth Report, Fiscal Year 1969, Foreign Disaster Emergency Relief, issued by Disaster Relief Coordinator, Agency for International Development) (Hereafter referred to as USAID), pp.37-38; and Adler, R. "Letter from Biafra" New Yorker 4 October 1969.

military service are being given special Land Army training. In addition, persons up to [age] 50 will assist with the land clearing. The Land Army will plant as much seed yam as it can get; then plant early maize on the remaining land..."[34]

Although the Biafran Government proudly announced its success, the extent to which the Emergency Food Production Programme was fruitful is unclear. It appears that it was pursued with enthusiasm by the people of the enclave[35]; however, most of its objectives relating to increased unit productivity in subsistence farming were impossible to accomplish so long as the Federal blockade checked Eastern farmers' access to fertilizers, pesticides and other capital goods. More importantly, Federal military operations severed the Ibo Heartland's farmers access to the fertile croplands of the non-Ibo periphery of the region. The land which remained under the control of Biafran farmers was the most degraded in the Region: even before secession it had been incapable of supporting population densities lower than those experienced during the war.[36]

The military operations of the Federal armed forces resulted, then, in the establishment within the territory left under Biafran control of a minimum level of demand for food far in excess of the productive capacity of the resources left in the

34. Adler, op.cit.

35. See the report by Paul Connet in the Spectator (Reprinted in Press Actions, 1 January-30 June 1969 Biafran Overseas Press Division (Markpress), Geneva.

36. For assessments of the nutritional impact of the loss of the non-Ibo periphery of Biafra see Akpan, op.cit., p.193; Goodell Report, op.cit., p.S1978; and the speech by Dr. Herman Middelkoop reprinted in Perspectives Biafra: An International Conference Sponsored by Occupation Outrage, Inc. (Washington, D.C., 11 January 1969).

enclave. Growing shortages of both protein and carbohydrate foodstuffs - reflected in rising market prices for those which were available[37] - marked a fundamental deterioration in supply and demand relationships in the enclave. For most of the population of the enclave life became, as described by Nwankwo, a Malthusian nightmare:

> Living in Biafra today is like a nightmare... Food prices have risen a hundred-fold. Garri, which is the staple food, used to be less than a penny a cup. Now it's more than a shilling (twelve pennies) a cup! Yet it is the basic and commonest foodstuff which even the poorest must afford or starve. Such things as meat and fish are now exorbitant luxuries. Salt costs £105 to £120 a bag! And so on. To appreciate the situation, it must be realised that the purchasing power of money (particularly of local foodstuffs) is particularly high in underdeveloped countries..
>
> One can then imagine a situation where an average Biafran can't have a satisfactory meal on five shillings! And to crown the misery the earning power is less by more than a half now. The peasant farmers have been driven out of their lands, their crops destroyed and set ablaze by the Nigerian Army. The heavily burdened government is the only employer and its employees are (inevitably) paid <u>allowances</u> and not salaries. With an increased number of dependants, heavily reduced wages, and prices multiplied tenfold, the average Biafran is forced to concentrate on the progressively more difficult job of keeping from starvation. This is the story for the average Biafran who earns an income (no matter how small) or who has a relative who does so. There are millions of others who are below this fortunate average. These are the desperate refugees, no less than six million in number, unemployed, destitute, driven from their homes and deprived of their lands - their only means of livelihood - which have been blazed into desolation by the invading

37. See the Goodell Report, <u>op.cit</u>., p.S1978, for a general assessment of food price movements inside the enclave.

Nigerian Army. It is from this miserable group that two to three thousand die every day of hunger and disease.... They are about the streets in families, the woman, grim-faced, carrying a crying, hungry child; the rest stumbling blindly after her; all of them miserable, living skeletons, picking their weary way through the more fortunate but no more happy crowd, in search of just sufficient food to postpone the inevitable parting of ways between body and soul. At first the alms came, freely and generously. But soon they became only a trickling, as the shortage of circulating money became more acute... In any case, most of the fortunate ones walk about with little or no money in their pockets (and of course nothing in the house). And none is sure of the next meal. Under this condition, the refugees receive little and they die of hunger and of exposure to the elements of nature. The extended family, that resilient traditional umbrella in whose comfortable and protecting shade the Biafran always finds a welcome place in times of need, is useless today. The umbrella itself has been torn to pieces by the invading Nigerian forces.[38]

It must be remembered, however, that the nutritional crisis was not confined to the Biafran enclave. As Colin Legum reported, many Easterners elected to hide in the bush surrounding their homes rather than flee deeper into the Biafran enclave as the frontline approached them: "Hundreds of thousands of Ibos who fled before the advance of the Nigerian Federal troops into break-away Biafra six months ago are still living precariously in make-dwellings in the bush... Red Cross workers estimate that at least 120,000 Ibos are sheltering in the bush between the northern university town of Nsukka and the fallen Biafran capital of Enugu... By day the entire Ibo countryside 'liberated' by Federal

38. Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. The Making of a Nation: Biafra C. Hurst and Co. (London, 1969), pp.271-272.

troops is denuded of Ibo life. By night people emerge from the bush to visit their homes in the villages and gather food in the fields - and the militants to harry the troops and set booby traps."[39] Although these people were able to produce some food while hiding in the bush[40], the bulk of available evidence pointed to a drastic decline in their state of health if they remained hidden for a long period of time. (Once relief operations in the occupied areas were well under way, it was found that the incidence of new cases of severe malnourishment was closely linked to the emergence of new groups of refugees from the bush).[41]

Coming out of hiding though, did not lead automatically to a resumption of normal economic activity and the end of the nutritional crisis for inhabitants of the occupied areas. Perhaps the best illustration of this can be seen in Colin Legum's reports on conditions around the former capital, Enugu. In January 1968 Legum described the virtual absence of normal life both there and around Nsukka, even though these areas had been liberated 3½ months before. In a second report filed 4 months later, Legum found only a limited improvement in the situation: "With the return of confidence, more people are coming out of the bush; but their numbers are hundreds rather than thousands."[42] Civilians living in the Port Harcourt-Owerri sector, in the area around Ikot Ekpene, in the strips of territory bounding the

39. Observer, 21 January 1968.

40. This point was made in many discussions the author held with relief workers who had extensive contacts with groups which had remained hidden in the bush for considerable periods of time following the passage of the frontlines.

41. Ibid.

42. Observer, loc.cit. See also St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.264-265.

Niger river on either side of Onitsha, and on either side of the road linking Enugu and Onitsha, were caught between Federal security regulations, which forbade the resumption of peacetime routines, and a real fear of Biafran retaliation against collaborators who accepted the Federal presence and attempted to lead normal lives. In these, and, as Legum illustrated, in some other areas where Federal control was less tenuous, many fields remained uncultivated, markets empty, and refugee camps full long after the re-imposition of Federal authority.

In the spring of 1968 nutritional standards in the war zone deteriorated precipitously. Reports of mass starvation and rapidly escalating death rates - both inside the enclave and in the territory occupied by Federal forces - were publicized by the relief agencies and the press.[43] These reports focussed on immediate events, such as the fall of Port Harcourt in May, for an explanation of the nutritional crisis.[44] It can be argued, however, that the dramatic impact of such events was largely a

43. In the late spring of 1968 the Nigerian Civil War shed its status as the 'forgotten war' - as it was called by Dame Margery Perham in earlier days. (Observer, 17 December 1967, Letters section). The deterioration of the nutritional situation propelled the conflict onto the front pages of much of the world's press. Whereas, in the first four months of 1968, the British press, which provided one of the most complete coverages of the war, contained only 4 references to the war or its consequences for the civilian population, during June, July, and August 1968 it gave extensive, virtually daily, coverage of developments. For more details of British press treatment of the war see Appleby, D. Public Relations, the Mass Media, and Political Pressure Groups: British Opinion and the Nigerian Civil War Dissertation submitted for the degree of M.Soc.Sci. at the University of Birmingham in 1973

44. See, for example, the ICRC's appeal for support following the fall of Port Harcourt. Topical Red Cross News, No.107b, Geneva, 31 May 1968.

function of the extent to which the earlier shocks of repatriation, blockade, and military disruption had shattered the foundations of nutrition in the war zone. It appears that during the preceding eighteen months the pressures resulting from the intersection of the civil crisis with the socio-economic structure of the East had propelled large segments of the population onto and over the threshold of starvation. Consumption of proteins within a large proportion of the population had been reduced to a level at which any further contraction would trigger off the rapid development of a debilitating - and if untreated, fatal - form of protein starvation called kwashiokor.

The prolongation of the war into, and beyond, the spring of 1968 resulted in just such a contraction in protein consumption in the war zone. Unable, because of the Federal blockade, to counter the increasing scarcity of animal proteins; confronted with a reduction in their consumption of vegetable proteins and carbohydrates because of the onset of the annual pre-harvest 'hungry season'[45]; faced with a rapid increase in the number of refugees and a further disruption of food production in the enclave as a result of Federal offensives; and with production and markets in the territory under Federal control still largely in a state of collapse, the residents of the war zone had little option but to tighten their belts one more notch and endure. For many, though, there was neither notch nor endurance left.

45. The annual hungry season was the period between March and July when the supplies of food derived from the previous year's crops had been exhausted but the current season's crop was as yet unready for harvest. Although closely linked to the periodicity of agricultural production in the region, it was also a phenomenon of poverty. As Oluwansanmi said: "The failure of the family to make good their food deficits in the hungry season with local purchases is a sad reflection of the prevailing high market prices and low buying power of the householder." (Oluwansanmi, H.A. et al. Uboma: A Socio-Economic and Nutritional Survey of a Rural Community in Eastern Nigeria Geographical Publications (Bude, Cornwall, 1966), p.62).

Whether they were refugees moving along the roads leading away from the frontlines; workers faced with the growing disparity between their wages and the cost of foodstuffs; families attempting to cope with the burden of their dispossessed relations; or displaced persons lodged in refugee camps or hiding in the bush, this further contraction of protein consumption saw millions of Easterners sliding into the state of lassitude and weakness which heralded protein starvation and the approach of death.[46]

46. It must be remembered that the nutritional crisis had an uneven impact on the population of the war zone. Not all Easterners were equally affected by any one, or by the combination, of the phenomena which undermined nutritional standards. There was, as Nwankwo asserted, a "...disparity in living standards between the composite peoples of Biafra. On the one hand are the big government officials. On the other are the common men. The former have cushioned themselves from the shocks of the war and insulated themselves and theirs from its stark realities. The latter have borne the brunt of the war. The former still indulge in peace-time niceties even as thousands of the latter starve to death. While some children pine away in the houses of death, others still have monthly gifts of expensive toys to play with while their well-fed parents indulgently watch them in air-conditioned rooms, sipping beer and smoking cigarettes." (Nwankwo and Ifejika, op.cit., p.290). Aside from the disparities in the impact of the famine on different socio-economic classes, there were wide differences in the impact of the crisis on 'common men' of the same class. It is difficult to say which groups suffered most; but, at least initially, it would appear to have been the refugees. See for example the reports in the Observer, 23 June 1968; and Lindsay, op.cit., p.2. As the war wore on, however, there was some evidence (from both sides of the lines) that refugees - at least those in the camps - were beginning to fare better than some people who had not been displaced (and the displaced persons who were sheltering with them). In a report, the Biafran Rehabilitation Commission noted that: "It should be borne in mind that the vast majority of refugees in Biafra...live in private homes where they fend for themselves or live at the expense of their relatives and friends. The extended family relationship has been over-stretched and there is total breakdown as well, resulting in refugees malnutrition all round... Up to date statistics show that there are more deaths outside the camps than in the camps." (Rehabilitation Commission Notes on the Management of Refugee Camps in the Republic of Biafra (Circular No.1/1968)(Enugu, 10 July 1968)). This point was also stressed by Dr. Wolfgang Bulle, a doctor working in Federal territory under the auspices of the Lutheran church, who, in a taped interview with Dr. R.G. Hendrickse on 4 February 1969, argued that the relief agencies made a mistake in feeding high protein foods only to 'so-called' displaced persons, rather than looking for people who were not well nourished. Arguing from his experience of the nutritional crisis in the South East state, Dr. Bulle asserted that so long as no selection on need rather than residential status was used "We are not using our food very intelligently." See also Cervenka,Z. The Nigerian War 1967-1970: History of the War, Selected Bibliography & Documents Bernard Graefe Verlag fur Wehrwesen (Frankfurt am Main,1971)p.162-3.

Mid-1968 marked a watershed in the development of the nutritional catastrophe. This period saw the peak of starvation-related mortality in the war zone.[47] Although the death rate

47. The question of how many Biafrans died as a result of starvation, or even what was the daily mortality rate at different periods during the war, vexed observers of the conflict and relief operations. It is now (just as is the case with the number of casualties incurred during the 1966 riots, or the number of Easterners repatriated) a question which is impossible to answer with final certainty. As evaluations of the causes, or even the existence of, the nutritional crisis became more entangled in the political conflict surrounding the war, estimates of mortality became just another in the array of political arguments advanced to support one side or the other. To obtain some idea of the variation among estimates, see the following references: The Goodell Report, op.cit., p.S1977 (1.5 million dead in 1968; estimated deaths in the range 1-2.5 million for 1969); Balogun, O. The Tragic Years: Nigeria in Crisis 1966-1970 Ethiope Publishing Corp. (Benin City, 1973), pp.96-97 (cites press reports of death rates and total starvation related mortality and roundly condemns them as "fantastic figures...based for the most part on wild guessing of an unsubstantiated nature, and usually accompanied by hallucinatory and sensational articles..."); Speech by G.T. Orick First International Conference on Biafra Columbia University (New York, 7-8 December 1968),(mimeographed)("The death rate is talked about a good deal. In July and August when it was increasing from 3,000 to 6,000 people a day, the American State Department was talking about 200 to 400 a day and their estimates have maintained just about that degree of lag since..."); Guardian, 29 June 1968, (Leslie Kirkley, director of OXFAM, said 1,000 people would die each day in Biafra, an increase from the present rate of 200 a day, unless large quantities of relief supplies arrived in the next six weeks.); Guardian, 6 July 1968,("Things are very bad and are going to get worse in weeks to come. It is certain that in the months ahead deaths will be counted in tens of thousands a month." Statement made by Karl Jaggi, ICRC chief delegate in Biafra. Jaggi guessed that a total of 2,000,000 deaths had occurred.) Perhaps the most perceptive statements made concerning the mortality rate were the following ones: the first from Roger Galopin, Director-General of the ICRC, at a press conference in Geneva on 29 July 1968: "He [Galopin] noted that nobody had time for collecting statistics; and that nobody was consequently in a position to make an accurate estimate of the number of dying and sick." (Guardian, 30 July 1968). Secondly, this statement made by A.G. Somerville, Organizing Secretary of the World Council of Churches Refugee Relief in Biafra: "Questions concerning death rates in Biafra...are frequently raised. The simple fact is that no completely accurate statistics are available. Obviously many people in the bush, particularly in fighting areas inaccessible to relief organizations, die without any records being made... Then, too, death rates vary tremendously in different parts of the nation. Long-settled refugees regularly supported by relief organizations fare much better than populations more recently displaced." (JCA 117, Geneva, 2 December 1969).

rose during the latter part of 1969 until it approached its 1968 heights, it is commonly agreed that the crisis, following the commencement of large-scale relief operations in mid-1968, never regained its former intensity. There was a continuing nutritional emergency inside the Biafran enclave. However, the various international relief organizations operating there were, for the most part, able to fly sufficient quantities of high protein food into the enclave to keep consumption just above the level at which massive protein starvation would be triggered off. In the territory under Federal control, the relief agencies not only succeeded in restoring most of the population to its former nutritional state, but in many cases enabled residents to raise their nutritional standards above pre-crisis levels.

The intervention of international relief organizations also shifted the foundations of the nutritional catastrophe. Up to the point where large-scale relief operations were organized the foundations of the Nigerian famine could be traced back largely to the phenomenon of underdevelopment. The deterioration of the region's pre-crisis nutritional standards was triggered off by the uneven progress of the modernization process in Nigerian society.[48] The uneven diffusion of modernity in Eastern socio-economic structures accounted for the imbalance between the region's productive and reproductive capacities: an imbalance which had fostered behavioural patterns whose reversal now placed the nutritional welfare of the region's population in jeopardy.

The Eastern Region's nexus with Western modernity had been so shaped that production methods, objectives, and incentives had

48. In the sense in which it is used here, the modernization process involves the diffusion throughout Third World societies of the social, economic, and political processes which characterize Western industrial societies. See the argument in the concluding chapter.

been transformed only to the extent necessary to ensure the provision of those goods and services required by external metropoli and their local representatives. The infusions of capital, technical expertise, and socio-political leadership necessary to thoroughly revolutionize productivity in the subsistence sector of the economy had never materialized. Its connection with Western modernity had, however, induced high-rates of population growth in the East. The high birth rates typical of a low-income, labour intensive/agrarian society had been - largely independent of the initial burst of economic development which fostered similar phenomena in the West[49] translated into rapid population growth as a result of dramatic reductions in infant mortality and equally great extensions of longevity, both of which accompanied the infiltration of Western medical technology and techniques, and the introduction of Western welfare provisions, into the region.

The net result was a massive expansion of population against a relatively static subsistence supply capacity. Out of this imbalance the phenomena of rural-to-urban and rural-to-rural migration, the substitution of cassava for yam, and the large-scale importation of animal proteins sprang up. However, the political aspects of underdevelopment in Nigeria effected the reversal of at least some of these ameliorative responses to overpopulation, resulting in the deterioration of nutritional standards into famine conditions. The transposition of non-modern values and beliefs into modern social organizations and

49. For a more detailed treatment of the differing propellants of population growth in the West and in the Third World, see Coale, A.J. and Hoover, E.M. Population Growth and Economic Development in Low-Income Countries: A Case Study of Indian Prospects Princeton University Press (Princeton, N.J., 1958), Introduction and Ch.1.

institutions, which were themselves underdeveloped to the extent that they reflected metropolitan aspirations as much as indigenous requirements, generated increasingly severe political crises which wracked the state and ended in the repatriation of Eastern migrants, the Federal blockade of the Eastern Region, and armed conflict between the Federal and Eastern regimes. The impact of these developments was such that they triggered off a famine in the war zone.

From about mid-1968, however, the nutritional disaster was given a new, more obviously political, impetus. This was the restriction of the efforts made by the international agencies to alleviate the impact of the famine. The essentially humanitarian endeavours of these organizations were caught up in the conflict and relief came to be seen as just another aspect of the political struggle between the Federal and Biafran regimes. Political considerations shaped the relief operation, determining, with only secondary regard paid to nutritional requirements, both the scale and duration of the assistance rendered to the victims of the famine.

An analysis of the Nigerian famine in the period following the commencement of large-scale relief efforts, must focus on these 'politics of hunger'. In the next chapters the development of relief operations in Nigeria will be outlined, and then the nature and impact of the political constraints imposed on the activities of the relief organizations will be discussed.

CHAPTER IV

Relief Operations

The preceding chapter focussed on the origin of the Eastern famine. This chapter is devoted to a description of the efforts made to alleviate the impact of that famine on the civilian population of the war zone.

Before proceeding with a description and assessment of the development of the relief operation and the politics of hunger which impeded it, it is necessary to enter a caveat about the structure of the analysis which will be presented. The description of relief operations will be, for the most part, focussed on the efforts to alleviate starvation inside the Biafran enclave. This emphasis stems from the differing nature of the crisis and relief efforts in the enclave and in the territory under Federal control. By late 1968 the nutritional emergency in the liberated areas of the East was largely over. Dr. R. G. Hendrickse made the following comment in his report on a visit to the Federal controlled areas of the East Central State in January 1969: "There is at present no evidence of gross or widespread malnutrition in the liberated areas of the East Central State. There was a serious nutritional problem in mid-1968 which was brought under control by the activities of the ICRC and other agencies concerned with food supply and distribution. The present nutritional state of the population is at least as good as that in other parts of Nigeria, and may in fact be better than in the poorest areas of other parts of Nigeria."[1] From early 1969 on, the relief organizations were primarily attempting to alleviate the protein deficiencies which had characterized pre-war diets. Within the Biafran enclave, however, the nutritional emergency

1. Hendrickse, R.G. Visit to the East Central State and South Eastern State, 31/1/69 to 7/2/69 (Report presented to the Paediatric Association of Nigeria). See also NRC/ICRC Information Bulletin, No.15 (Lagos, 15 June 1969).

was never brought fully under control. Although the relief agencies were able to check the massive protein starvation of mid-1968, constraints imposed on their operations kept the population of the enclave at the threshold of starvation, which largely accounts for the sense of urgency exhibited by the relief organizations operating inside the enclave. The supplies of food brought into Biafra each night by relief aircraft were essential to stave off a rapid descent back into the Malthusian nightmare of mid-1968.

Relief operations developed in parallel with the political crisis which wracked Nigeria. Both the Nigerian Red Cross and religious organizations rendered aid to refugees and other victims of the communal outbursts which occurred during 1966.[2] In August 1966, the Eastern Region government established a Rehabilitation Commission which was empowered to explore a number of approaches to integrating repatriated migrants into Eastern society and economic life.[3]

Secession, and the outbreak of fighting two months later, saw an intensification of local efforts to provide assistance to the victims of the conflict. In Biafra the Rehabilitation Commission's responsibilities were widened to include the care and welfare of all Easterners in need as a result of the Federal blockade and secession[4]; and in January 1968 the Biafran government set up an

2. For details, see Nigerian Red Cross Society Nigeria Relief Action: Report of the Nigerian Red Cross Society 1966-1970 (Lagos, n.d.), p.4; and USAID, op.cit., p.69.

3. For details, see Nigerian Crisis 1966 (Enugu/Aba, 1966-67), vol.3 ("Pogrom"), p.28.

4. "Emergency Relief in Nigeria and the Biafran Enclave July 1967 Through June 30, 1969" AID Foreign Disaster Relief Report Reprint (Reprinted from: Ninth Report, Fiscal Year 1969, Foreign Disaster Emergency Relief, issued by Disaster Relief Coordinator Agency for International Development)(hereafter called 'USAID'), p.35.

Ad Hoc Refugee Comittee (absorbed by the Rehabilitation Commission in July 1968) which was responsible for the care of refugees from the combat zones.[5]

On the Federal side, the Nigerian Red Cross bore most of the burden of relief up to mid-1968. Federal advances around Enugu and Calabar created a large refugee population - estimated by the NRC to number up to 100,000 - in the territory under Federal control. In October 1967 the FMG asked the NRC to expand its operations into all the occupied areas of the East, making a grant of £N50,000 to the NRC to enable it to do so.[6]

After one year of conflict between the Federal and Biafran armies, refugee populations on both sides of the frontlines had grown to proportions which overwhelmed the human and material capacities of either of the local organizations dealing with displaced persons. In an interview in March 1968, Moses Itoh, National Secretary of the Biafran Red Cross, painted a picture of the desperate problems confronting the local agencies:

5. Rehabilitation Commission Notes on the Management of Refugee Camps in the Republic of Biafra (Circular No. 1/1968) (Enugu, 10 July 1968).

6. Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., pp.6-7. Although the organization of emergency relief in Federal territory was left primarily in the hands of the NRC, the Federal government assumed a direct role in relief operation. The Federal Army provided food and medical treatment for refugees in newly occupied areas until the NRC could move in and set up clinics and feeding centres. (See the Interim Reports of the United Nations' Secretary General's Representative, dated 9 and 30 October, and 21 November 1968, and 21 January and 27 May 1969). At the same time the FMG established agencies to ensure that civilian relief operations conformed with government policy. In late 1967 an Ad Hoc National Relief Committee was established for the purpose of coordinating the activities of the Red Cross and other voluntary agencies active in the territory under Federal control. (USAID, op.cit., p.50); and in March 1968 the FMG set up the National Rehabilitation Commission, which was given £N1,000,000 and a brief to determine priorities for emergency relief operations; and, through subordinate State Rehabilitation Commissions, to obtain food, clothing, medicines, and shelter for war victims living in liberated areas. (USAID, loc.cit.; and National Commission for Rehabilitation Emergency Relief Operations, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation: National Commission for Rehabilitation Progress Report (Lagos, 1 July 1970), p.4).

> We estimate that of the million people who have left their homes, perhaps 700,000 have migrated to other areas and found a place to live. Of the other 300,000, about 150,000 have left everything, gone into the bush near their villages and homes, and are rarely cultivating now. Another 50,000 are in more than 80 refugee camps (all in schools) and 100,000 have been taken in by families... We are short of drugs, milk, and relief materials. Our budget is £N3,000 a month. But this is chicken feed. There is danger of smallpox, diarrohea, dysentry, or polio epidemics which would be disastrous because people would have to desert the camps.[7]

At about the same time, the Nigerian Red Cross renewed, and extended to an international audience, the national appeal for funds, volunteers, and relief materials which Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, President of the Nigerian Red Cross, had launched in November 1967.[8]

The time was ripe for the internationalization of the relief operation. A sudden burst of publicity from the world's press in May and June 1968 brought the impending disaster to the forefront of world attention and stimulated the development of a massive international effort to rescue starving Nigerians and Biafrans. Discussing British reactions to the war, Kirk-Greene noted:

> ...suddenly the world remembered the 'forgotten war'. 'The agony of Biafra', it was abrasively reminded, 'is an affront to the conscience of the civilised world.' Divided over Rhodesia, disgusted at the by-now-proverbial savagery of the earlier Congo, dazed by the succession of military coups in Africa, and no more interested in a mini-quarrel 'between the blacks' than it had ever been in the continent

7. Observer, 3 March 1968.

8. Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., pp.6-7.

> even at the apogee of empire, the British public was at last presented with an issue of the Biafran struggle in a vocabulary that it could grasp and react to in a familiar way: the horrors of starvation - and of children at that. In England, Oxfam mounted a heavily advertised appeal for £200,000; Caritas, a Catholic organization that was eventually to assume a hostile political presence in Federal eyes, arranged to fly relief supplies into land-locked Biafra from Sao Tome; and the ICRC prepared an airlift that promised to be on a scale second only to that which saved Berlin in 1948.[9]

Relief operations in Nigeria had exhibited an international dimension from the beginning of the political crisis. The League of Red Cross Societies, for example, provided financial, material, and technical assistance to the Nigerian Red Cross in the pre-war period. The NRC also received assistance from Oxfam in bolstering its logistical capabilities; and from the ICRC in setting up a tracing service to enable displaced persons to regain contact with their families.[10] During the autumn riots in the North, the World Council of Churches (WCC) defrayed the cost of charter flights organized by Nigerian churches to evacuate Easterners. This was followed up in January 1967 by an appeal, made by the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee, and World Service (DICARWS), to WCC members for US$ 140,000 to aid Eastern refugees. The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) also requested the Church World Service (CWS), an American based Protestant agency, to investigate the possibility of obtaining

9. Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source Book 1966-1969 Oxford University Press (London, 1971), Vol.2, p.56.

10. Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., p.5.

US government surplus milk and grain for Eastern refugees.[11]

The first agency to embroil itself in the affair following the outbreak of armed hostilities was the International Committee of the Red Cross.[12] Acting in accordance with its organizational mandate to succor the victims on all sides of any armed conflict, the ICRC despatched loads of medical supplies for use in military hospitals to Lagos and Port Harcourt in July 1967.[13] These were followed in August by two medical teams, sent to augment the medical staff of the Federal and Biafran armies.[14]

The ICRC's involvement in the Nigerian conflict was, initially, confined largely to the performance of its traditional tasks: maintenance and supervision of prisoner of war camps; tracing displaced persons; and, most importantly, providing medical facilities for wounded soldiers and civilians. This emphasis on medical assistance was replicated by the church agencies, which worked with refugees and other victims of the conflict following the commencement of hostilities. For example, the World Council of Churches Refugee Relief operation, based on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Umuhaia, "was primarily concerned with the hiring of medical staffs for the hospitals under the control of the foreign medical missions and the provision of medical supplies for the hospitals in the area... the distribution of food was of secondary importance to the medical work being done in the eight hospitals

11. For more details see Christian Concern in the Nigerian Civil War Daystar Press (Ibadan, 1969), p.10.

12. A comprehensive assessment of the role of the ICRC in the Nigerian Civil War is contained in Hentsch, T. Face au Blocus Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales (Geneva, 1973).

13. ICRC Press Release No.843b, Geneva, 11 July 1967.

14. Topical Red Cross News, No.97b, Geneva, 25 August 1967.

under the control of the WCC operation in Biafra."[15]

International involvement in alleviating the nutritional crisis dated from the early spring of 1968, when relief organizations began to fly quantities of high protein foods into Biafra.[16] On March 27th, Caritas International (CI), in co-operation with two German religious organizations - Das Diakonsiche Werk (DDW) and Deutcher Caritasverband (DCV) - initiated a series of flights from Lisbon to Port Harcourt, using a time-chartered aircraft.[17] At about the same time, the ICRC wriggled off the legalistic hook which, in January, had snagged its second attempted flight into the enclave (the ICRC's first flight took place on November 111th, 1967). The FMG had refused to guarantee this flight safe passage[18] and the ICRC felt compelled, unlike the church agencies which operated without regard to official sanction,

15. Lloyd, H.G., Mollerup, M.L., and Bratved, C.A. The Nordchurch-aid Airlift to Biafra 1968-1970: An Operations Report Folkekirkens Nødhjaelp (Copenhagen, 1972), p.2.

16. The relief agencies began airlifting medical supplies - including small amounts of high protein foods - as early as November 1967. Both the ICRC and the church agencies had chartered aircraft for single flights into the enclave. The church agencies had gone even further, booking cargo space for relief supplies on flights shuttling arms into Biafra. (See JCA 83, Geneva, 29 July 1968; and St. Jorre, John de The Nigerian Civil War Hodder and Stoughton (London, 1973), p.238).

17. JCA 52, Geneva, 9 April 1969.

18. See ICRC Press Release No.871b, Geneva, 21 November 1967; and Topical Red Cross News, Nos.103b and 104b, Geneva, 24 January and 20 February, 1968. The FMG evidently grounded its refusal of the ICRC's request for a flight to the enclave in January on its belief that during the two day suspension of its air blockade which accompanied the ICRC's flight in November, the Biafrans had stepped up arms flights into Port Harcourt. On March 5th, 1968 the ICRC requested the FMG to issue a 'laissez-passer' for its flights into the enclave. This the FMG refused to do, but it did grant the ICRC standing permission to operate flights from Fernando Poo into the enclave - although they would have to be at the ICRC's own risk. (See "The Civil War in Nigeria - The Way Out" an advertisement placed by the FMG in the New York Times of 8 July 1968).

in the interests of maintaining its image of neutrality to operate only with the permission of the FMG. Following discussions in Lagos the Committee's representative was able to secure the tacit approval of the FMG for flights into the enclave on the condition that relief cargoes were inspected by the Nigerian consul on the island of Fernando Poo prior to delivery into the enclave. And on April 8th, 1968 the ICRC commenced a regular flight operation direct from Europe to Biafra via Fernando Poo.[19]

It became increasingly apparent following the fall of Port Harcourt in May 1968, that the scale of the Red Cross and church air operations was wholly inadequate to meet the needs of the population in the enclave. As one priest described the situation: "Help is being sent from overseas, but it is only a trickle in view of the number of refugees, estimated at nearly 4,000,000... A recent consignment of salt from Caritas worked out at one cup for 10 refugees... Yesterday we got our share of a consignment of rice and beans from overseas. There was one bag of rice and half a bag of beans to be divided among 15 camps."[20] Relief workers inside the enclave began to report the urgent need for the establishment of large scale feeding programmes:

> By the middle of June, surveys in some of the villages revealed widespread malnutrition, especially among the large number of refugees fleeing before the advancing Federal army. A limited number of feeding centres were set up in some of the refugee camps, providing three meals a week. The need for many more feeding centres soon became apparent and the system of locally run feeding centres supplied by the WCC grew rapidly, both in the refugee camps and the villages. By the end of June,

19. ICRC Information Note No.6, Geneva, 13 March 1969.

20. Daily Telegraph, 16 July 1968. See also Daily Telegraph, 4 July 1968.

> enough information about the food situation in Biafra was available to demonstrate that a large scale feeding program would be necessary if massive starvation was to be avoided.[21]

Most estimates settled around the figure of 200 tons of high protein food (HPF) imports per day as the minimum amount required to stave off starvation mortality of up to 4,000 persons per day. (Compared to the total ICRC movement of food between April and July of 400 tons; with another 20 tons per month delivered into the enclave by WCC planes and a total of 315 tons under the auspices of Caritas).[22] For example, Father Patrick Devine, a Catholic priest who co-ordinated the network of priests and nuns that gathered information on the nutritional crisis, was reported as saying:

> We calculate, working on a 'per person' basis, that Biafra must get in 200 tons of protein food a day from now until 6 months after the end of the war. This is minimal, 300 to 400 tons a day is really needed. The Red Cross agrees. Otherwise, up to 4,500,000 people are just going to die in the next few months.[23]

The key to establishing a large scale feeding programme inside the enclave lay in expanding the flow of foodstuffs into Biafra. Organizing a distribution network inside the enclave presented few major obstacles. The refugee camps and village feeding centres established by the Biafran Rehabilitation Commission represented a more or less ready made structure for the distribution of the high protein foods imported by the international

21. Lloyd et al., op.cit., p.2.

22. Guardian, 6 July 1968; Daily Telegraph, 9 and 16 July 1968.

23. Observer, 26 June 1968.

relief organizations.[24] Nor was there any problem in securing supplies for use in the relief operation. Although the ICRC had complained of inadequate response to appeals for support it made prior to the fall of Port Harcourt, in the months following both private and official sources pledged ample funds and materials to enable the international relief agencies to sustain massive feeding operations in the enclave.[25]

The major obstacle standing in the way of an increased flow of foodstuffs into Biafra was the Federal blockade. Consequently the relief agencies - through the offices of the ICRC - attempted to secure the belligerents' agreement to the establishment of corridors through which they could freely transport relief supplies into the enclave. Neither of the belligerents was, however, willing to concede the superiority of humanitarian over political considerations, which made it impossible to reach any agreement about the routes and methods to be used for moving relief supplies through the Federal blockade. In these circumstances the humanitarian agencies felt compelled, given the gravity of the nutritional situation inside the enclave in the summer of 1968, to step up their 'clandestine' airlift of relief supplies.

The large-scale expansion of the relief agencies' air oper-

24. By June 15th 1968, the Biafran Rehabilitation Commission had established 688 camps containing 482,923 refugees. In May the Rehabilitation Commission, concerned about the evidence of increasing kwashiokor both inside and outside the refugee camps, had begun to establish feeding centres in all Biafran villages. These nutritional clinics were aimed at providing protein rich meals to all children who required them. ("Notes on the Management of Refugee Camps in the Republic of Biafra", loc.cit; and USAID, op.cit., p.36).

25. ICRC Press Release No.889, Geneva, 3 June 1968. See USAID, op.cit., pp.76-77 for a recapitulation of the value of donations by the USA and 30 other nations. And see the Times (London), 15 July 1965, p.8 for a summary of British aid to the relief operations.

ations dated from the first half of September 1968. During the preceding two months the relief organizations concentrated their efforts on laying the foundations for an augmented air bridge into the enclave. First, they established and strengthened their supply and maintenance facilities on the islands offshore Eastern Nigeria - the ICRC operating from Fernando Poo and the church agencies from Sao Tome. Previously, relief flights had mostly operated direct from Europe into the enclave, utilizing the offshore islands for no more than intermediate refuelling - or, in the case of the ICRC, inspection - stops. It was obvious, however, that the logistics of a large-scale sustained airlift required a staging base closer to the enclave. A growing proportion of the relief materials made available to the agencies were despatched by donors direct to Fernando Poo and Sao Tome, where stockpiles began to build up. The ICRC's accumulation of relief supplies on Fernando Poo increased, for example, from 180 tons in June to 3,500 tons in August 1968. At the same time the ICRC based 50 'specialists in air transport' on Fernando Poo to supervise the loading and maintenance of ICRC aircraft.[26]

Secondly, they procured and positioned aircraft for use in the relief shuttle. On July 23rd the ICRC despatched a DC-6, which it had chartered for a period of three months, to Fernando Poo.[27] Also in July, the German relief groups, DDW and DCV, purchased 5 DC-7 aircraft which, by mid-August, were in position on Sao Tome.[28] This was followed by the coalescence of Danish,

26. See ICRC Press Releases Nos.889 and 905, Geneva, 3 June and 2 September 1968; Topical Red Cross News 110b, Geneva, 27 September 1968; and Lloyd et al., op.cit., ch.4.

27. ICRC Press Release No.892b, Geneva, 23 July 1968.

28. Lloyd et al., op.cit., p.6.

Norwegian, and Swedish relief organizations into a body called Nordchurchaid, which announced, on August 19th, that it was adding six aircraft to the relief airlift based on Sao Tome.[29] At the beginning of September the ICRC announced yet another expansion of its air operations from Fernando Poo. It added four planes chartered by the Scandanivian Red Cross Societies, and one taken on charter by the Dutch Red Cross, to the DC-6, whose 31 flights in August had delivered 231 tons of food and other relief supplies into the enclave.[30]

The final preliminary to the commencement of a large-scale relief airlift involved the routinization of the operational procedures involved in sustaining a regular penetration of the Federal blockade. The combined weight of Federal interceptor aircraft and anti-aircraft gunfire had virtually halted the relief airlift in July and early August 1968. However, on August 12th Count Carl Gustav von Rosen, flying a cargo for Nordchurchaid, broke through the Federal blockade, establishing the pattern of low-level, night-time evasive flying tactics which were to characterize relief flights from that point onward.[31]

From about the first week of September 1968 both the Red Cross and the church agencies' airlifts swung into full operation. The ICRC, for example, utilizing the six aircraft which it had available on Fernando Poo, mounted Operation INALWA (International Airlift West Africa) on September 3rd.[32] Initially the ICRC

29. Lloyd et al., op.cit., pp.10-11.

30. ICRC Press Release No.905, Geneva, 2 September 1968; and Topical Red Cross News 110b, Geneva, 27 September 1968.

31. See Lloyd et al., op.cit., pp.9-10 for a description of the blockade-breaking flight made by Count von Rosen on August 12th 1968. See also St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.329-331.

32. Topical Red Cross News, No.110b, Geneva, 27 September 1968.

intended Operation INALWA flights to be carried out in daylight for a period of 10 days. However, when the FMG made its approval of the operation conditional on the neutralization of Uli airport - a condition rejected by the Biafrans - the ICRC decided to intensify its night operations, for which it had the tacit permission of the PMG, while continuing negotiations with the belligerents over daylight flights and/or surface relief corridors.[33] A Red Cross press release dated 27 September 1968 described operation INALWA, its impact, and its shortcomings, in the following manner:

> Six, seven, and sometimes nine flights were carried out each night. Around September 12, however, as a result of the advance of Federal troops, the fighting came very close to the two airports of Uli and Obilagu. Mr. Karl Heinrich Jaggi, head of the ICRC delegation in Biafra, decided to cancel flights for the nights 14/15 and 15/16 September. Flights were resumed on September 16. Since the beginning of Operation INALWA on September 3, in spite of adverse weather conditions, 75 flights have so far transported 660 tons of relief and 97 passengers from Santa Isabel to Biafra. Consequently, there has been a substantial increase in the quantity of relief routed to the starving civilian population of Biafra. However, Mr. Jaggi considers that at least 5 times this amount is required to relieve famine. Only the opening of a land corridor would render such supplying possible.[34]

The essential parameters of the relief airlift in the period from September 1968 up to the collapse of ICRC air operations in June 1969 were virtually all contained in that Red Cross press release. In the case of both the church agencies -

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

which from November 1968 became known as Joint Church Aid (JCA)[35] - and the ICRC each relief aircraft made one or two trips between the offshore bases and the enclave each night, carrying an average of approximately 10 tons of cargo on each trip, with the number of trips on any given night being determined by weather conditions and the intensity of Federal harassment.[36]

Even though imports of HPF never reached the level of minimum requirements forecast by relief workers in the enclave, the quantities of CSM, stockfish, and other high protein foods which the relief agencies did manage to bring through the Federal blockade each night were sufficient to set up large-scale feeding programmes. In May 1969, at the peak of its activities, the ICRC reported that its supplies were reaching approximately

35. The name Joint Church Aid was adopted at a meeting of DDW, Nordchurchaid, and Caritas International held in Rome on November 8-9, 1968. Initially it was meant to be a titular entity through which the churches could funnel funds for the purchase of a C-130 Hercules aircraft. However, when this project fell through, the title Joint Church Aid was retained as the designation of the churches ad hoc co-operation in procuring supplies for and operating the Sao Tome-Uli shuttle. At the Rome meeting, responsibilities for the church agencies' airlift were divided as follows: Supplies - DDW: Airlift operation and technical questions - Nordchurchaid; Passenger list co-ordination - Caritas International; and PR - Catholic Relief Services, Geneva. Within the JCA structure the groups actually operating aircraft (and hence responsible for payment of charter and other operating costs) were Nordchurchaid with its 4 DC-6B's, and later Canairelief with one Super-Constellation, and JCA-USA with four C-97 Stratofreighters (aircraft numbers, types, and distribution as of 17 April 1969 - (JCA 54, Geneva, 17 April 1969)). For a detailed description of the evolution of the Joint Church Aid structure see Lloyd, et al., op.cit., Ch.14.

36. For illustrations of the nightly air operations and constraints placed on the air bridge see the following press releases: ICRC Press Releases Nos.9545 and 955b, Geneva, 19 and 22 February 1969; and especially JCA 65, Geneva, 27 May 1968.

1.5 million people through 800 distribution points.[37] At the same time, Caritas International sponsored the feeding and care of about 1.4 million people through distributions made to 1,280 refugee camps and 1,528 village feeding centres[38]; while the Protestant groups operating under the auspices of the WCC reported that they were assisting 1.9 million refugees and other needy persons, including 400,000 non-refugees whose diets were supplemented by HPF distributions to village feeding centres.[39]

As a result of the establishment of these feeding programmes, the agencies were able to check the massive upsurge of starvation-

37. Topical Red Cross News, No.117b, Geneva, 30 May 1969. The distribution of ICRC supplies was based on the following rationing system: "To about a million people, three million five hundred thousand meals are provided each week [report made in March 1969]. The meals comprise mainly dried fish, rice, milk, and CSM and are distributed as follows: a) three meals per week as a preventive measure - mainly to children and expectant mothers; b) nine meals per week - as a preventive measure - to people displaying symptoms of kwashiokor or other deficiency ailments; c) twenty-eight rations per week - as a curative measure - mainly to children in hospital due to malnutrition (kwashiokor, etc.)... In the present structure, foods are distributed from a curative point of view to 10% of the population given relief, the remaining 90% towards preventive assistance." (ICRC Information Note to National Societies on ICRC Relief Action on Behalf of the Victims of the Conflict in Nigeria, No.8, 31 March 1969).

38. USAID, op.cit., p.62.

39. Lloyd et al., op.cit., Appendix 37 and pp.84-85. Like the ICRC, Protestant and Catholic relief groups gave their highest priority to the provision of food and medical supplies for the hospitals, clinics, and mobile medical facilities which they operated. Both the Red Cross and church groups supported large medical programmes within the enclave. These comprised out and in-patient medical care, and large-scale vaccination programmes. In August 1969 the WCC reported that it was supporting five mobile medical teams which were conducting approximately 100 clinics each month at which over 50,000 patients were treated. This was in addition to their sponsorship of 28 hospitals and 100 sick bays throughout the enclave. (Lloyd et al., op.cit., pp.88-90). The ICRC reported in May 1969 that it was treating an average of 10,000 hospital cases each month. (Topical Red Cross News, No.117b, Geneva, 30 May 1969). For detailed descriptions of the joint measles and smallpox vaccinations campaigns conducted by the relief agencies see Lloyd et al., op.cit., pp.90-93; and Report on the Measles and Small-Pox Vaccination Campaign in Biafra (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Geneva, April 1969).

related mortality which had been apparent in the summer and autumn of 1968. As the members of the Goodell study mission noted:

> Since the end of October [1968], the nutritional situation has improved in the refugee camps due to the activities of the relief agencies. In particular, the prevalence of overt kwashiokor has decreased with the past 3 months [December 1968 - February 1969], though we must emphasize that in the camps we observed we did not see one single child whom we would describe as being a satisfactory state of nutrition... Regular operation [of the ICRC and JCA airlifts], accomplished despite formidable organizational, financial and weather difficulties during August, September, October and December of last year [1968], is credited with having reversed starvation of children in Biafra and probably has saved more than a million lives...[40]

Similarly, the Diggs study mission in February 1969 noted the beneficial impact of the relief agencies' operations:

> Recent reports from Ihiala, the areas around Uli airstrip, and in relief centres, indicate that there has been an observable decrease in Kwashiokor among children. Many children reportedly have recovered after receiving the needed protein. This is a real accomplishment, but it could be quickly reversed unless the children continue to receive protein in their diets.[41]

The agencies had not been able to wholly lift the pall of famine from the enclave. The failure of the belligerents to agree on the establishment of relief corridors limited the

40. "Report of the Biafra Study Mission" Congressional Record (Senate) 91st Congress, 1st Session (Washington, 25 February 1969, Vol.115, No.33 (hereafter referred to as the Goodell Report), pp.S1980 and S1984.

41. Diggs, C.C. and Burke, J.H (Chairman) Report of Special Fact-finding Mission to Nigeria February 7-20, 1969 (Pursuant to H. Res. 143 authorizing the Committee on Foreign Affairs to conduct thorough Studies and Investigations of all Matters coming within the Jurisdiction of the Committee). (March 12, 1969). US Government Printing Office (Washington, D.C., 1969) (hereafter referred to as the Diggs Report), p.57.

extent of the nutritional recovery in the civilian population. It constrained and reduced the volume of supplies the relief agencies were able to move into the enclave. Although the capacity of the airlift was augmented by the addition of Canadian and American sponsored relief aircraft to the JCA operation[42] - and enhanced even more by the introduction of larger capacity

42. Canairelief was the contribution of Canadian churches and secular agencies to the Sao Tome-Uli airbridge. In November 1968 the Presbyterian Church in Canada and Oxfam of Canada pooled their funds to procure the charter of a Super Constellation for Biafran relief operations. This aircraft went into operation from Sao Tome on January 23rd, 1969. Later in the spring of 1969 Canairelief took on charter three more 'Super Connies' so that, by early June, three Canairelief planes were making an average of six flights with 60 tons of relief cargo each night. Its total contribution to the airlift up to the termination of its flights on January 10th, 1970, was 674 flights landing a total of 10,650 tons of relief supplies in Biafra. (Brewin, A. and MacDonald, D. Canada and the Biafran Tragedy James Lewis and Samuel (Toronto, 1970), pp.92-95).

Joint Church Aid/USA was formed as a result of the amalgamation of the relief efforts of three American church agencies - Church World Service (Protestant), Catholic Relief Services, and the American Jewish Committee. Following negotiations with these groups, the US government made available to JCA/USA four C-97G Stratofreighter aircraft at a nominal purchase price of US$3,670 each. JCA/USA made its first flight into Biafra from Sao Tome on 27 January 1969, and continued its operations up to the collapse of Biafra in January 1970. (See JCA 97, Geneva, 24 September 1969; and USAID, op.cit., p.74).

aircraft into both the ICRC and JCA airfleets[43] - the flow of food into Biafra never averaged more than 150-160 tons per night in the period from September 1968 to May 1969. (On May 1st, 1969 the JCA reported that the combined operations of the ICRC and JCA since the beginning of the airlift totalled 3,889 flights carrying 38,208 tons of relief cargo).[44]

The consequence of this politically inspired inhibition of the relief effort was multi-fold. In the first place, the agencies were prevented from importing sufficient quantities of food to eradicate the threat, or presence, of serious malnutrition in the enclave. Although through their endeavours they managed

43. Throughout the Biafran relief operation it was obvious that one of the ways in which the flow of supplies into the enclave could be stepped up, in lieu of any agreement on relief corridors, was by the introduction of aircraft capable of flying to Biafra with larger payloads. One step taken in this direction was the decision made in January 1969 by the US government to sell, at a nominal price, 8 C97G Stratofreighters to the airlift operators: 4 were sold to the ICRC and 4 to JCA/USA. These aircraft had a load capacity of 16 tons, compared to the approximately 10 ton limit of the DC-6's, DC-7's, and Super Constellations which made up the bulk of the ICRC and JCA fleets.

The ideal aircraft for the Biafran airlift would have been the C-130 Hercules, with its load capacity of 20 tons and specially designed facility for operating into and out of improvised landing strips. Maj.Gen. A.E. Wrinch, National Commissioner of the Canadian Red Cross Society, testified to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence of the Canadian Parliament that, if the ICRC fleet at Santa Isabel were replaced with Hercules; its capacity would be doubled from 73 to 160 tons a night. (Brewin and MacDonald, op.cit., p.85) Similarly, the JCA flight co-ordinator, Vigo Mollerup, observed in November 1969 that "if we had Hercules aircraft to replace the Constellations, C-97's, and DC-6's we are now using, each aircraft could load up to 24 tons instead of 16 tons." (Cited in the Guardian, 19 November 1969). However, the Hercules is essentially a military aircraft and the airlift operators' only access to them was through the armed forces of owning governments, none of which, with the sole exception of Sweden, was willing to make any available to the relief agencies on a sustained basis. See, for example, the description in Brewin and MacDonald, op.cit., pp.84-89, of the conflict over the Canadian government's reluctance to devote its Hercules' to the relief operation on any other than the terms laid down by the Federal government.

44. JCA 58, Geneva, 1 May 1969.

to check and then reduce the starvation-related rate of mortality, the rapid re-emergence of famine conditions following the contraction of food imports which resulted from the termination of the ICRC airlift in June, 1969, showed that they had accomplished no more than the bare restoration of the enclave's population to the threshold of starvation. The fragility of the relief barrier which was erected between the civilian population of the enclave and starvation was indicated in a JCA press release:

> According to Doctor Herman Middelkoop, the Dutch medical missionary, the death toll in Biafra territory is already rising alarmingly [this was approximately one month after the collapse of the ICRC airlift]. After the harvest, he told Joint Church Aid delegates,... some carbohydrates are still available, but protein foods are now quite exhausted... Dr. Middelkoop pointed out that people who have endured semi-starvation for over a year have no resistance or stamina left. About 3 million people, he said, were now at subsistance [sic] levels. The situation in Biafra was fast becoming worse than it was a year ago before the JCA and ICRC airlifts started... Children who have been treated in sick bays for kwashiokor...relapse in two or three days when they no longer receive proper nourishment.[45]

The belligerents' obstruction of the relief agencies jeopordized whatever degree of nutritional recovery was achieved. Their refusal to subordinate political to humanitarian considerations - manifested primarily in their failure to conclude an agreement on relief corridors - meant that the inflow of food and medicine was not sufficient to allow the agencies to stockpile supplies inside the enclave. Each relief group distributed

45. JCA 80, Geneva, 18 July 1969. According to one nutritionist, by October 1969 the enclave's population was suffering from the highest rate of famine edemea ever recorded - even higher than in the Siege of Leningrad. (Beal, C.W. "How the State Dept. Watched Biafra Starve" Ripon Forum 6 (3) 1970.

its supplies for immediate consumption[46], moving them from Uli through central stores to provincial distribution centres either on the night of their arrival, or on the following morning.[47]

In such a situation of hand-to-mouth existence, the day-to-day operation of the relief feeding programme depended on the uninterrupted flow of supplies over the air bridge. However, the Federal government never extended its official approval to the relief agencies' night operations; and so long as the Biafran government continued intermingling its arms flights with the relief aircraft, the relief flights were subject to harrassment and occasional disruption by the Federal armed forces[48] - with a consequential reduction in food distributions and a resurgence of mass starvation.

Oddly enough, the first major disruption of the pattern of air operations established in September 1968, occurred at the ICRC's base on Santa Isabel rather than the airstrip at Uli. On

46. From October 1968 onwards JCA aircraft were wholly devoted to the transportation of Caritas and WCC supplies on alternate nights. (Lloyd et al., op.cit., p.19).

47. For detailed descriptions of the supply distribution system inside the enclave see Lloyd et al., op.cit., pp.20-22 and Ch.5; and USAID, op.cit., p.62.

48. For a detailed description of Federal harrassment of relief flights see St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.316-333. See also Col. Scott's Report in the Sunday Telegraph, 11 January 1970. In fact, the only relief aircraft to be destroyed while in flight was the Swedish Red Cross DC-7 intercepted by a Federal MIG on June 5th, 1969. All the other planes lost in the airlift either crashed due to bad weather or were destroyed on the ground at Uli. (See Lloyd et al., op.cit., Appendix 34). The most serious effect of Federal harassment was probably the abandonment of relief flights. In the period from May 1969 to January 1970 JCA reported 245 aborted flights or flights unable to land in Biafra. This represented 7.5% of all flights undertaken in that period. Of these aborted flights 40.4% were due to military actions of the FMG (either interceptors in the area, bombing of the strip taking place, or strip unserviceable due to bomb damage), with 32.7% due to technical problems and 26.9% due to bad weather. (Lloyd et al., op.cit., pp.78-79).

December 29th, 1968 the government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea - as Fernando Poo had been renamed following the island's achievement of independence[49] - forbade the ICRC to include fuel in its relief cargoes.[50] The reasoning behind this move by the government of Equatorial Guinea was obscure. Some observers saw the hand of Lagos in the affair, but the Federal government issued a vehement denial that it had anything to do with the ban on Red Cross flights. According to other reports the check to Red Cross operations was meant to be an indirect blow against the Ibo population of the island.[51]

Whatever the Guinean government's motive was, the ICRC protested; justifying its inclusion of fuel in relief shipments on the grounds that the only supplies available in the enclave were under government control, and that in order to maintain its strict neutrality, the Red Cross needed to import fuel for its lorries and hospital generators. On January 14th, the Red Cross chief in Santa Isabel, Dr. August Lindt, suspended the ICRC airlift until the contretemps could be resolved.[52] This suspension remained in effect until February 12th when the Guinean authorities and ICRC officials concluded an agreement under which the island's government lifted its restrictions on the composition of relief cargoes and authorized the ICRC to continue its operations for a further 30 day period, with as many flights during that period as would be required to transfer ICRC stocks

49. The former Spanish possession of Fernando Poo achieved independent status as the Republic of Equatorial Guinea in October 1968.

50. ICRC Press Release No.942, Geneva, 8 January 1969 and Topical Red Cross News No.114b, 30 January 1969.

51. See the Guardian, 9 January 1969 and Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.2, pp.97-98.

52. Topical Red Cross News, loc.cit. and ICRC Press Release, loc.cit.

from the island.[53]

Aside from the fact that it presaged a much more serious interruption of the ICRC airlift later in 1969, the most important consequence of the January disruption was the establishment of a second ICRC airbase at Cotonou in Dahomey. From February 1st, 1969 the majority of ICRC flights travelled on the circuitous route which linked Cotonou and Uli.[54] Even following the resumption of operations from Santa Isabel, the base at Cotonou retained the pre-eminent role in the ICRC airlift. In the period following the resumption of flights from Santa Isabel up to May 19th, for example, the ICRC mounted 348 flights from Santa Isabel to Uli. In the same period 728 flights were made from Cotonou to Uli, carrying 1,294 tons of supplies.[55]

The ICRC's wisdom in diversifying its bases was revealed on February 28th when political disturbances in Equatorial Guinea forced it to suspend its operations from the island until March 17th.[56] However, not even the diversification of its bases was able to insulate the ICRC's airlift from disruption at the point of delivery; and on June 5th, 1969 the Federal Air Force intercepted a DC-7 sponsored by the Swedish Red Cross and shot

53. ICRC Press Release No.951b, Geneva, 13 February 1969 and ICRC Information Note to National Societies on ICRC Relief Action on Behalf of the Victims of the Conflict in Nigeria No.5, 28 February 1969.

54. Diggs Report, loc.cit.; ICRC Information Note No.5, loc.cit.; and Kirk-Greene, loc.cit.

55. Topical Red Cross News No.1146, Geneva, 30 January 1969; and ICRC Information Note No.5, loc.cit.

56. ICRC Information Note No.6, 13 March 1969 and ICRC Information Note No.8, 31 March, 1969.

it down.[57] The ICRC immediately suspended its air operations into the enclave and, with the exception of one flight on June 12th and two flights made from Cotonou in August, they were never to be resumed.[58]

These events represented the culmination of a lengthy period of intensifying Federal hostility to the operations of all the relief agencies involved in the clandestine airlift. The FMG expressed with increasing frequency its belief that the relief airlift was, at best, providing camouflage for Biafra's arms suppliers; and, at worst, that the relief agencies' activities were a major prop of the rebels' campaign for autonomy. This suspicion of the humanitarian agencies appears to have been brought to a climax of virtual certainty by the sudden emergence, in May 1969, of Joint Church Aid's former chief of operations, Count Von Rosen, as the organizer of Biafran Air Force attacks on Federal territory.[59] Provoked beyond toleration

57. See ICRC Press Release No.981b, Geneva, 7 June 1969; Topical Red Cross News No.119b, 4 July 1969; and St. Jorre, op.cit., pp. 331-332

58. Topical Red Cross News, loc.cit. and ICRC In Action Information Notes No.122b, 22 August 1969.

59. For a detailed description of the evolution and operations of Count von Rosen's 'flying circus' of Swedish Minicon aircraft, see St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.333-339 and Cronje, S. The World and Nigeria: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War 1967-70 Sidgwick and Jackson (London, 1972) pp.148-150.

by the Von Rosen intervention[60], the Nigerian authorities vented their spleen on the relief agencies: first, by detaining and then expelling the ICRC's chief representative in the conflict, Dr. Lindt[61]; secondly, by destroying the Swedish Red Cross DC-7; and finally, on June 30th, by withdrawing from the ICRC the authority to co-ordinate relief operations in Federal territory.[62]

The church agencies' and the ICRC's efforts to relieve suffering inside the Biafran enclave had been replicated by the establishment of a massive relief operation in the territory

60. St. Jorre described the psychological impact of Von Rosen's intervention as follows: "As it was, the Minicon raids only partially succeeded. Several Nigerian aircraft were destroyed, but enough survived to continue the nightly bombing attacks on Uli and other targets, and although the flow of oil exports from the Mid-West, and with them Nigeria's most important source of foreign exchange, were significantly reduced by the raids the Nigerian war machine survived without undue difficulty. And, not surprisingly for those who knew the mood on the Federal side, Von Rosen's intervention produced the opposite effect to the one he had intended: the tempo of the struggle quickened. Aerial bombing, which had eased off in April/May, intensified; the ill-fated Swedish Red Cross plane was shot down by an English mercenary under pressure from a furious Federal Government (there seems little doubt that this was a direct reprisal for the Swedish count's raids); the ICRC was compelled to halt its huge night relief operation into Biafra...and humanitarians in general were viewed in Lagos with a new mistrust since Von Rosen himself had been one less than a year earlier." (St. Jorre, op.cit., p.338).

61. ICRC Press Release No.978b, Geneva, 28 May 1969; and the Observer, 15 June 1969. Although Lindt's detention at Lagos airport on May 27th was generally attributed to the over-zealous performance of his duties by the airport commander, Capt. Charles Dixon, the action taken against Lindt was not without provocation. There had been several incidents before May 27th in which the Federal authorities had been upset by the Red Cross co-ordinator's habit of pursuing his bi-lateral negotiations without seeking prior clearance for flights into and out of what the Federal authorities considered hostile territory.

62. See "Federal Government Briefs Relief Organizations on its New Policy" (Document No.208) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit., vol.2, pp.405-408.

under Federal control.[63] Although nominally under the direction of the National Rehabilitation Commission, and in partnership with the Nigerian Red Cross, the ICRC, once the FMG had delegated to it the authority to coordinate all emergency relief operations in Federal territory[64], gathered the overall direction of the Nigerian relief action in to its own hands. From mid-1968 onwards religious groups - many of which were also active in the Biafran relief operation - secular voluntary agencies, and official aid donors all funnelled their contributions of cash, material, and personnel through Red Cross coordination centres established in Geneva and Lagos.[65]

Once intiial birth pangs had been overcome in the summer of 1968[66], ICRC coordination of the Nigerian relief action was quite effective. It enabled a multitude of organizations to bring their resources and skills to bear on the nutritional crisis in

63. For detailed descriptions of the relief action in Federally controlled areas, see USAID, op.cit., pp.42-51, and 54 onwards; Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., pp.6-8; and Hentsch, op.cit.

64. When it became apparent in the spring of 1968 that the nutritional emergency among refugees in areas under Federal control was outstripping the Nigerian Red Cross's ameliorative capacities, the NRC directed an appeal for material, financial, and human resources to the World's Red Cross societies. It was decided that the ICRC was best suited to coordinate the expected response, and in April the NRC sought and received from the FMG its explicit recognition of the ICRC as coordinator of emergency relief operations in Federal territory. (See Nigerian Red Cross Society, op.cit., p.6-7).

65. For details of the coordinating system set up by the ICRC, both in Geneva and Lagos, see Hentsch, op.cit.

66. See the reports in the Times of 13 July 1968; Financial Times, 15 July 1968; Daily Telegraph. 17, 24, 28, 30 and 31 July, and 7 August, 1968; and the Guardian, 9 August 1968 - all of which deal with the problems confronted by the ICRC in establishing the Nigerian relief action.

the liberated areas with a minimum of logistical and administrative duplication.[67] In fact, the system worked so well that by the end of 1968 it was becoming clear that the emergency phase of relief operations in Federally controlled territory was drawing to a close. Increasingly, medical personnel began to orient their activities toward the provision of preventitive and curative medical treatment not connected with the alleviation of kwashiokor or marasmus (the two major forms of fatal, if untreated, malnourishment). Feeding operations, though still massive in terms of the quantities of food stuffs distributed and the number of people receiving some degree of nutritional assistance, were largely directed toward restoring - or in many cases, improving - pre-war nutritional standards.[68]

By the late spring of 1969, it had become obvious that the relief effort in Nigerian territory had evolved into a holding operation: aimed at sustaining the nutritional recovery of people whose livelihood was disrupted by the continuation of armed hostilities; but, more importantly, standing ready to move large quantities of high protein food and a large number of vehicles and experienced relief personnel into the final Biafran redoubt immediately upon the termination of hostilit-

67. A detailed assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the Nigerian Relief action - especially regarding the ICRC's coordinating role - can be found in Aall, C. Relief, Nutrition, and Health Problems in the Nigerian/Biafran War (Unpublished manuscript, Ibadan, 1969) Chs. 5 and 7.

68. For an assessment of medical and feeding programmes see NRC/ICRC Information Bulletin No.15, dated 15 June 1969 (Lagos); Final Report of the Chief Medical Advisor, May-June 1969 (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Lagos); and Report and Recommendations of the Chief Medical Advisor (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Lagos in September 1969).

ies.[69]

It had also become obvious in the late spring of 1969 that the Nigerian relief action was not immune to the political tensions which engulfed relief operations in Biafra. A virulent anti-ICRC campaign in the Lagos press - including accusations that the Red Cross was responsible for the delivery of 'fake' relief goods into the war zone, and that arms had been found in the cargo of the Swedish Red Cross DC-7 shot down by the Federal air force[70] - presaged the June 30th announcement that the Federal government was withdrawing from the ICRC and vesting in the National Rehabilitation Commission the responsibility for the collection and allocation of resources to be used in the Nigerian relief action.

This action, which was greeted with apprehension in the press and outrage in Red Cross circles[71], marked, when taken in conjunction with the essential termination of ICRC air operations into the enclave, the beginning of a rapid reduction of

69. See Projected Nutritional Needs in Federal Nigeria (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Lagos in 1969) and the Report and Recommendations of the Chief Medical Advisor, op.cit., Section 3.

70. See the major English language Lagos newspapers - The Daily Times and the government controlled Morning Post - throughout the period April-June 1969, especially during the month of June in which nearly every edition featured an anti-ICRC story.
The virulence of the press attacks on the ICRC was frightening - at least to some members of the Red Cross staff. The author can recall one session of the operations committee which met at ICRC Headquarters which was wholly devoted to discussion of the security of ICRC staff and the advisability of removing all decals and other insignia which identified ICRC vehicles.

71. See the articles and leaders in the Times (London) of July 1st and 2nd,1969.

ICRC involvement in the Nigeria/Biafra relief operation.[72] A sober appraisal of the scale and scope of ICRC activities in Federal territory engendered a Federal request that the ICRC 'phase' its withdrawal from the relief action.[73] However, the FMG's announcement on June 30th that "The ICRC will no longer be competent to appeal for any aid from the international community and foreign donor Governments on behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria" checked the flow of contributions to the ICRC.[74] As a consequence the ICRC, driven by financial considerations, began divesting itself of operational responsibil-

72. The author recalls that on June 30th, following Enahoro's announcement of the new policy on relief, there was great speculation at ICRC headquarters in Lagos about the exact meaning of the phrase contained in the announcement: "...it will also take over from the ICRC its relief and related activities in Federally controlled areas in the shortest time possible..." Based on the intensity of anti-ICRC feeling in Lagos during the weeks preceding the announcement, some staff members believed that the government would demand the departure of the ICRC within only a few days.

73. The joint communique issued by the ICRC and the FMG following their talks on the new relief policy provided for the transfer of coordinating authority to the Rehabilitation Commission, but with no date specified. This latter ommission reflected two perceptions: the first on the part of the ICRC that (as expressed in a news report) "if it were forced to abandon the job immediately, the whole operation of feeding and caring for the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war and outside secessionist held areas would grind to a halt." (Times, 14 July 1969). Secondly, on the part of the Rehabilitation Commission, that it was assuming responsibility for an operation for which it had neither adequate administrative structures nor sufficient staff. (This latter view came across very clearly in the shocked expressions of the Rehabilitation Commission's negotiators when they were informed by ICRC representatives of the scope of the operation in Federal territory).

74. Kirk-Greene, loc.cit.

ities at a rapid rate.[75] A goal was set - and met - of transferring by the end of October[76] all but its traditional activities, such as tracing or POW care to its successor as coordinator - after some dispute it was decided that the Nigerian Red Cross would take over coordination of emergency relief operations, with the Rehabilitation Commission retaining overall authority and specific responsibility for post-emergency operations.[77]

The ICRC's Biafran operations were similarly diminished. Although JCA diverted some of its supplies into the Red Cross feeding network[78], the termination of the ICRC airlift fostered a re-orientation of the ICRC's operations in the enclave. In the period following June 5th the ICRC largely returned to its traditional emphasis on the provision of medical aid and facilities for victims of the conflict - including in this case a large number of malnourished children and adults.[79]

75. From mid-July onwards the ICRC was under pressure from both the Rehabilitation Commission and the Nigerian Red Cross to slow the pace at which it was divesting itself of operational responsibility. The speed of the ICRC withdrawal was, however, essentially dictated by financial considerations. ICRC operations in Federal territory had been running to about £N1,400,000 in cash expenses each month, and the duration of its future operations was largely determined by the extent to which ongoing activities could be cut back and the funds in hand stretched over those reduced operations. However, even with drastic reductions in the level of feeding, staff reductions, and a re-organization of administrative procedures it was not possible to stretch available resources over more than 3-6 months.

76. The Nigerian Red Cross assumed the role of coordinator of emergency relief operations on October 31st, 1965. (Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., p.8).

77. The division of responsibilities in the post-ICRC relief action was a source of friction between the National Rehabilitation Commission and the Nigerian Red Cross. See the text of the NRC statement made at the meeting of voluntary agencies held in Lagos on 11 September 1969.

78. JCA 86, Geneva, 7 August 1969.

79. ICRC in Action Information Notes, Nos.128b and 131b, dated 7 November and 30 December 1969.

The termination of ICRC air operations shifted a heavier burden of supply onto the church sponsored airlift. Although its flights were subject to continuing Federal harrassment, and though its operations were briefly disrupted by the Federal armed forces, JCA managed to maintain a steady flow of supplies into the enclave.[80] In July, for example, JCA/USA - the American contingent operating under the church umbrella - flew into Uli 119 times, carrying a total of 1,904 tons of relief cargo.[81]

The inadequacy of the relief operation was, however, even more marked than before. As JCA put it in a press release issued in August 1969:

> The reduced number of JCA flights, which only accounted in June and July for 5,430 metric tons, and which were sent into Biafra since the suspension of the ICRC airlift, are estimated as having so far supplied less than 25 per cent of the minimum requirements of food and medicines to avert catastrophe as long as possible. If total starvation is to be avoided, JCA officials estimate that the two airlifts must jointly provide 480-500 tons of relief supplies daily. This represents an increase of about 50% on the maximum provided before the airlifts were reduced... An immediate full resumption of both airlifts is

80. Throughout this period the air operations of JCA were supplemented by less massive airlifts operated by the French Red Cross and an Irish Catholic agency called Africa Concern. The French Red Cross initiated its airlift from a base in Gabon in the summer of 1968, though its air operations were not freely acknowledged until July 1969. The French airlift accounted for about 4-5 tons of relief supplies each night. (See the Times, 28 July 1969). Africa Concern also opened its air bridge into the enclave in the summer of 1968. By June 30th,1969 it had operated over 100 flights carrying over 1,000 tons of relief cargo. Following the termination of the ICRC airlift its operations were stepped up to one flight each night from Libreville into Uli. (See Africa Concern Ltd. First Annual Report of the Joint Biafra Famine Appeal for the Year Ending 30/6/69; and the letter from M.M. Green in the Times 5 July 1969).

81. JCA 97, Geneva, 24 September 1969.

the last chance of saving the remaining Biafran children.[82] Nor did the situation improve with the passage of time. In the month of December 1969, JCA reported, it had managed to penetrate the Federal blockade 423 times, landing a total of 5,399 tons of food and medicine at Uli. However, it was estimated that the population of the enclave should have been provided at least 15,000 tons of relief supplies during that month.[83]

Reduced imports of HPF following the termination of ICRC flights resulted in an upward spiral in the starvation-related death rate in the enclave. JCA reported that death rates among young in-patients at one of the hospitals which it supported rose from 16% in May 1969 to 24% in June, 31% in July, and stayed in the region of 30% thereafter.[84] The impact of the reduction in HPF imports was described by the ICRC as follows:

> At the beginning of June, the ICRC had a network of about 700 feeding centres which provided over a million children, pregnant women and nursing mothers with regular meals three times a week. Kwashiorkor had almost disappeared except in some territories recently occupied by the Biafrans. However, children and adults previously exposed to malnutrition had not fully recovered.
>
> When flights were stopped, food stocks held at ICRC stores in Biafra would have allowed for continued operation on a normal scale for only ten days. Immediate steps were taken to reserve stocks for child malnutrition treatment centres and hospitals. Refugee camps being no longer

82. JCA 86, Geneva, 7 August 1969. See also the article in the Times, 17 July 1969. Horst Meiner, a member of the ICRC team in Cotonou, was reported as saying, in response to information that 4-5 JCA flights were getting into Uli each night, "That is nowhere near enough. It manages to feed and treat about 300,000 of the 1 million people in their care. We, too, look after around one million Ibos and they have had nothing since June 5th."

83. JCA 117, Geneva, 2 December 1969.

84. JCA 97, Geneva, 24 September 1969.

supplied, the number of children receiving ICRC relief was consequently reduced. At the beginning of July less than 10% of those normally receiving the benefit of ICRC relief action were receiving a little food, mainly of local origin.

The effect of the food shortage was worse than expected, especially on children who had already suffered from starvation, and in the Southern provinces where more than 60% of the children were affected. Child malnutrition treatment centres were again overwhelmed.

According to ICRC statistics, the mid-July death rate of children in 40 ICRC centres was 50 a day, and the figure rose to 100 the following week.

The situation grows worse daily. If statistics from the other centres, the villages and refugee camps were included, these figures would be multiplied many times over.

Total relief supplies now reaching Biafra are only one third of what, in May, was considered the absolute minimum to avoid a catastrophe. This is in spite of the fact that food is still flown into Biafra by other organizations.[85]

As 1969 drew to a close, relief workers began to fear that an even more dramatic rise in the death rate was imminent. Up to that point the major cause of mortality had been protein starvation; however, the compression of the enclave's population into a shrinking territory, and the excision from Biafran control of the best croplands in the East, portended the development of widespread carbohydrate starvation in the enclave. As one press report put it:

> ... basic Biafran food is disappearing. The harvest of cassava and yams...have this year been disappointing, almost disastrous. Many doctors in Biafra have in the last five weeks noticed an alarming increase in deaths from starvation. These deaths occur in circumstances which indicate that the protein deficiency which cost hundreds of lives last autumn has been replaced by plain starvation, which cannot be cured

85. The ICRC in Action Information Notes No.122b, 22 August 1969. See also JCA 86 and 87, Geneva, 7 and 19 August 1969.

by a protein supplement but only by a massive injection of basic foodstuffs.[86]

Confronted with the prospect of a situation in which the need for imported foodstuffs would skyrocket from hundreds to thousands of tons each day[87], even the churches began to waver in their commitment to the relief operation, questioning whether responsibility for the airlift should not be turned over to governments, whose resources were more appropriate for the task at hand. At a World Council of Churches Conference in December 1969, delegates even went so far as to question whether the relief operation was not indirectly prolonging the suffering in the enclave by making it possible for the Biafrans to continue resisting the advance of the Federal army.[88]

86. Guardian, 8 December 1969.

87. The logistical implications of a shift from protein into calorie starvation in the enclave were spelled out by the Goodell study group in their report in February 1969: "A calorie crisis presents far greater problems of transportation and relief than does a protein crisis. For example, our team estimates that if present airlift capacity is maintained throughout 1969, approximately 50,000 tons of food can be delivered into Biafra. This will be 35,000 tons short of the animal protein needs required to prevent substantial starvation. [However,], the calorie deficit in 1969 will be approximately 800,000 tons... Even the most optimistic projections...starkly reveal that Biafra will face a calorie deficit in the range of 500,000 to 600,000 tons this year... Thus, while the deficit in protein could be overcome by expansion of the present airlift, the calorie deficit is clearly of a different order of magnitude." Goodell Report, op.cit., pp.S1975 and S1980.

88. See the following chapter for details.

In the event, the rapid collapse of the Biafran Army in January 1970[89], and the cessation of hostilities on January 13th, overtook these developments among the sponsors of the church relief operations. Both JCA and the ICRC joined other official and private organizations in announcing their readiness to immediately set in train a massive saturation of the final Biafran redoubt with food and other relief supplies.[90] However, just as political considerations had determined both the scale and the scope of the relief operation throughout the war, they were to shape humanitarian activities once hostilities had ended. The FMG in a final, and finally triumphant, flourish of its sovereignty, barred from participation in post-war relief efforts all those organizations guilty, at least in Federal eyes, of bearing "dubious and insulting gifts" and wearing a cloak of "false humanitarianism".[91]

In the end the post-war relief operation rested largely in

89. If it was the prolongation of the war which was responsible for the intensification of the famine, it appears that it may have been the intensity of the nutritional catastrophe which triggered off the final Biafran collapse. According to most observers it was the sudden Federal breakthrough in the Ikot-Ekpene and Aba areas which was the crucial element in the Biafran collapse. (See St. Jorre, op.cit., p.395) And according to Akpan mass starvation played a major role in creating the circumstances which made that breakthrough possible. (Akpan, op.cit., pp.194-195).

90. See the reports in the Times for the period 12 to 20 January 1970. Some ideas of the scale of the aid available to the Nigerian relief agencies immediately after hostilities ended can be obtained from the list submitted by the United States Special Coordinator on Relief, C. Clyde Ferguson, to a US House Committee on Foreign Affairs. (The Post War Nigerian Situation (Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on African Affairs House of Representatives 91st Congress (2nd Session) 27 January 1970) US Government Printing Office (Washington,DC, 1970) p.13).

91. These quotations are extracted from "'The Dawn of National Reconciliation' - Gowon's Victory Message to the Nation, 15 January 1970" (Document No.227) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit., Vol.2, pp.457-461. See also the reports in the Times, 14 and 15 January 1970.

the hands of indigenous relief bodies - the Nigerian Red Cross and the National Rehabilitation Commission.[92] Although there was widespread publicity given to accusations that these organizations lacked the will and capacity to deal with the immediate post-surrender situation, it does appear - at least in the calmer waters of retrospect - that their performance was probably about as efficient and efficacious as would have been the case had international organizations been allowed free access to the former war zone.[93] The best and most balanced assessment of the nutritional situation and relief operations in the immediate post-war period was probably the following statement made by St. Jorre:

> ...there was no 'genocide', massacres or gratuitious killings; in the history of warfare there can rarely have been such a bloodless end and such a merciful aftermath. Secondly, the expectations [and some of the reports] of mass starvation were not fulfilled. Phrases in the popular press like the 'missing millions', 'the brutality of peace' and 'silent genocide' were utterly misleading. But there was mass hunger and there were concentrations of starving, sick and exhausted people, usually refugees caught a long way from home, some of whom died because aid was too slow in reaching them. There is no accurate figure for this category and probably never will be, though it ran into thousands, possibly even hundreds of thousands,

92. See "Emergency Relief Operations, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation" National Commission for Rehabilitation Progress Report, Lagos, 1 July 1970; and Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., pp.10-17. Also see the following press accounts: Times 22,24 and 28 January, 3, 5, 17 and 20 February 1970.

93. Evaluations of the performance of Nigerian relief agencies in the post-war period seem to have been as heavily influenced by the individual biases of the observers as by any consideration of the facts of the situation. Contradictory reports abounded. The Times for example carried successive wholly opposed reports on the efficacy of post-war relief operations. (Times, 16, 20, 21, 22 and 23 January and 5 February 1970).

but certainly not millions... The sudden end to the war had two immediate consequences, one bad, the other good. It caught the Nigerians with their administrative pants down; there appeared to be no contingency planning for an emergency relief operation in the event of a Biafran collapse. If the Nigerian government had opened its doors to the humanitarians and foreign governments that were clamouring to come in, it is possible that more lives would have been spared. But it does not necessarily follow. There was no shortage of food on the periphery of the affected area: the principal difficulties were lack of transport and personnel to take it where it was needed, an acute shortage of medical staff and equipment for the abandoned hospitals, an absence of any proper kind of administrative structure though the vastly improved Nigerian Red Cross did its best - and did not, in the event, perform at all badly - and finally the presence of the unruly Federal army. To let in the world's humanitarians and not remove the soldiers first would almost certainly have led to disastrous misunderstandings and, very likely, serious trouble...[94]

Given the material and financial assistance of outside donors[95], Nigerian agencies were able to bring the nutritional emergency in the former enclave under control by the end of February 1970. And, four months later, in June 1970, the Nigerian Red Cross was able to announce that the emergency phase of its operations had fully ended: the problems of relief had now become those of rehabilitation and reconstruction.[96]

Perhaps the best way to conclude this assessment of the

94. St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.404-405.

95. See Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., Annex 5 and National Commission for Rehabilitation Progress Report, op.cit., Appendix 1, for detailed breakdowns of donations of cash, material, and technical services from external sources.

96. Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., p.18.

Biafran relief operation is by comparing it with history's other famous airborne relief operation: the Berlin airlift. Statistically, the Berlin airlift absolutely dwarfed the Biafran air operations. During the period from June 1948 to May 1949, the 380 aircraft assigned to the Berlin airlift carried approximately 1,700,000 tons of cargo in 212,623 flights - an average of roughly 660 flights and 5,400 tons of cargo delivered each day.[97] Compared to this, the ICRC and JCA together mounted, in the period from April 1968 to January 1970, approximately 7,250 flights carrying roughly 80,000 tons of relief supplies - an average of 11 flights carrying a total of 125 tons each night.

There are a number of explanations for the great statistical disparity between the Berlin and Biafran operations. Flight operations in Berlin were carried out on a 24-hour basis, while in Biafra JCA and the ICRC were able to mount flights only in the hours of darkness. Berlin had 3 fully fledged airports available to relief aircraft; Biafra offered only a widened stretch of tarmac highway as a landing point for relief flights. The Berlin airlift was conducted by the world's largest airforce. The Biafran airlift was comprised of an ad hoc collection of amateur 'do-gooders', ageing aircraft, and mercenary pilots. Finally, except for the first few days, the Berlin airlift was unhindered by hostile armed forces, whereas the Biafran relief pilots were continuously confronted with an - however ineffective - enemy presence.

All of these logistical arguments miss the essential difference between the two operations. That was that the Berlin

97. JCA 52, Geneva, 9 April 1969. See also HMG Air Ministry The Berlin Airlift (London, 1949).

airlift was mounted not only in response to humanitarian imperatives, but as an overt expression of the political philosophy and will of the United States government. In the face of sophisticated opposition, and with full knowledge of the disastrous consequences which could result from a direct clash with the blockading power, the American government assumed an obligation to supply food, fuel, and shelter for more than two million Berliners. In the case of Biafra, however, neither the American authorities, nor their compatriots in other Western governments, were willing to assume a similar burden of responsibility for the survival of 8-12 million starving men, women, and children. Whereas political considerations dictated the full involvement of Western resources in the relief of Berlin, in the case of Biafra they deterred the direct involvement of authoritative and powerful Western organizations, leaving the burden of relief to be borne by unofficial groups, which, despite their strong commitment to the principles of humanitarianism, lacked the political resources necessary to overcome constraints imposed on the relief operation by each of the belligerents.

The combined results of the belligerents' obstruction and the relief organizations' political weakness have already been assessed. Although the relief agencies were able to transport into Biafra sufficient quantities of food to move the population back across the threshold of starvation, they were unable to secure arrangements which would have allowed them to import sufficient quantities of relief supplies to fully eradicate war-induced malnutrition in the enclave. They were not even able to ensure that there would continue to be a flow of food into the enclave sufficient to prevent a recurrence of the Malthusian nightmare of mid-1968.

It appears then that the Biafran relief operation was simultaneously a success and a failure. It was a success in-so-far as thousands, even millions, of lives were saved as a result of the intervention of relief agencies. It was a failure, however, to the extent that thousands, perhaps even millions, of Biafrans starved to death when they might have been saved had the activities of humanitarian organizations not been inhibited for political reasons.

The chapter which follows is devoted to an assessment of the objectives and perceptions which underlay these political constraints on the efficacy of the Biafran relief operation.

CHAPTER V

The Politics of Hunger

In the preceding chapters it was asserted that the primary cause of famine in Eastern Nigeria in the period from mid-1968 was the hindrance of efforts made to alleviate the nutritional emergency. It was also asserted that the major constraints on the activities of the relief agencies were political; that political rather than logistical or nutritional considerations determined the shape, scope, and duration of the relief operation. This chapter is devoted to an assessment of those political considerations; it is in effect an analysis of the politics of hunger in Nigeria.

The politics of hunger can be defined as that agglomeration of values, beliefs, policies and actions, which served to prolong and/or intensify the nutritional emergency in Eastern Nigeria. Defined this widely, an assessment of the politics of hunger could embrace every aspect of the war, for it was the prolongation of the conflict between the Federal and Biafran regimes which really underlay the famine in the period from mid-1968. It is possible, however, to narrow the analysis of the politics of hunger to an examination of those perceptions and objectives which underlay restrictions on the importation of relief supplies into the Biafran enclave.

Most of the limits imposed on the actions of the relief agencies stemmed from the failure of the belligerents to conclude any agreement on methods and routes by which food and medicine could be imported, unhampered by the Federal blockade, into the enclave. From the earliest days of their involvement in the Biafran relief operation the agencies had recognized that only the establishment of approved relief corridors offered a real prospect of moving into the enclave the volume of food required to meet the nutritional needs of the civilian popul-

ation.[1] For example: in May 1968, the ICRC addressed an appeal to the belligerents, requesting that "a certain number of urgent humanitarian measures be adopted." [2] Among these was a plea for the establishment of relief corridors: "...the International Committee of the Red Cross is taking all the necessary measures for medicines and food of which there is urgent need to reach without any delay the areas afflicted by the war. In so far as Biafra is concerned, however, favilities must be accorded it by the two parties opposing each other to enable transports which will be organized by the ICRC to arrive rapidly and with security on the site. It therefore requests in a pressing manner that, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Geneva Conventions, every facility be granted it to have an extensive lifting of the blockade enabling the passage through of relief supplies."[2] For almost eighteen months the relief organizations (represented for the most part by the ICRC), the Federal and Biafran governments, and, on some occasions, other interested parties engaged in what proved, in the end, to be a futile search for some agreement concerning for the movement of relief supplies. As St. Jorre put it: "All attempts to reach a mutually acceptable relief agreement failed though every conceivable possibility -

1. The question of just what type of relief corridors best met the needs of the situation was a matter of some dispute among the various groups involved in the relief operation. Some focussed on the scale of food imports needed, arguing that only surface relief corridors offered a realistic prospect of moving the volume of supplies required. Others emphasized the urgency of the situation, and asserted that only a large-scale airlift could get the needed supplies of food to the enclave's population in time to prevent starvation. See, for example, the reports in the Guardian of 6 and 30 July 1968; also Lord Hunt's contribution to the debate in the House of Lords on August 27th 1968.

2. Topical Red Cross News No.107b, Geneva, 31 May 1968.

daylight flights, land, sea and river corridors, parachute drops, aircraft carriers, helicopters - was exhaustively examined."[3]

Of all the reasons why this protracted haggling over relief corridors came to naught, one appears to have been most fundamental: that was the belligerents' refusal to acknowledge the imperatives of humanitarianism. The term humanitarianism implies the existence of a pattern of behaviour rooted in the explicit and unvarying affirmation of certain fundamental and inalienable rights - most basically the right to life - as the ideal basis for all inter-personal or social interaction. It was this vision of human existence that motivated most of the relief agencies which involved themselves in the Nigerian conflict. Throughout the war they demanded that the belligerents shape their policies and actions in conformity with the dictates of

3. St. Jorre, John de The Nigerian Civil War Hodder & Stoughton (London 1972) p.240. The range of initiatives on relief corridors was quite remarkable. When more straight-forward proposals for the establishment of land, sea or air corridors proved unacceptable, exotic plans began to come forward. One of the most intriguing of these was the idea put forward in Oct.1969 by a group calling itself the International Committee of Conscience. This group, whose major sponsors were Senator Hubert Humphrey, Mrs. Martin Luther King, and Lt.-Gen. William Tunner (director of the Berlin airlift), proposed that relief be delivered into the enclave by helicopters operating from aircraft carriers stationed off the coast of Eastern Nigeria. The Committee argued that the configuration of the helicopters would make it easy for the Nigerians to distinguish relief from arms flights. Inspection would be simplified because of the confinement of stores to a small discrete area. Helicopters would be able to deliver straight to distribution points, thereby avoiding the use of Uli. The Biafrans would not have to fear an attack on Uli by FMG aircraft 'tailgating' on relief aircraft, and there would be no contact with Federal controlled territory. (Times, 4th October 1969). However, aside from the fundamental problems of availability of the type of equipment whose use was visualized in this plan, the Committee's proposal came too late in the course of negotiations over relief corridors to offer much hope for its adoption. Even though the plan met all the requirements on relief corridors enunciated by each side, both belligerents were so set in their resistance to any proposition acceptable to the other side that any proposal on relief corridors was doomed to rejection.

humanitarianism. In October 1967, for example, the ICRC broadcast an appeal to the belligerents, emphasizing their responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions:

> It draws their attention to the humanitarian principles recognized by all peoples and contained in the Geneva Convention of 1949 for the protection of victims of war. These principles demand in particular that the lives of combatants who have surrendered be spared, that the wounded be respected and given the necessary care, that mercy be shown to the civilian populations... The International Committee of the Red Cross counts on the authorities of the parties concerned to take the necessary measures to ensure that these principles be applied strictly and in all circumstances.[4]

Similarly, in March 1968 the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church made an 'unprecedented' joint appeal for the cessation of hostilities:

> While it is not our part to declare on the issue of contention, we are bound to call the most immediate attention to the sacred issue of the human right to life itself... We therefore urge governments and international agencies in a position to act effectively in this matter to secure ...a negotiated peace.[5]

It soon became apparent, however, that both the Federal and Biafran governments grounded their policies and actions in a different, more expedient, perception of human existence: one in which human rights rated as only one among many factors which determined patterns of personal or social behaviour. The divergence between the value patterns of the belligerents and the

4. Topical Red Cross News, No.99b, Geneva, 30 October 1967.

5. Cited in Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. "The Unacceptable Face of Humanitarianism" (Paper delivered at the Centre for African Studies, SOAS, University of London on 15 November 1973 during a Conference on the problems of Christianity in post-Colonial Africa).

relief organizations was aptly summed up by St. Jorre:

> Throughout the war there was a fundamental dichotomy in the approach of the humanitarian agencies and the belligerents to the relief problem which throws an illuminating and infallible shaft of light down every down every twist and turn of the dark labyrinth of their relationship. The Nigerian and Biafran leaderships had one central overriding aim: to win the war by fair means or foul; all other considerations including the starving thousands were secondary...[the humanitarian agencies] order of priorities was thus the reverse of the belligerents', their overriding aim being to save lives, ignoring, where possible, political considerations of boundaries, frontlines, nationalities, tribes, flags and anthems.[6]

The belligerents' disregard for the imperatives of humanitarianism made it virtually certain that the movement of relief supplies would become an issue in the conflict. For the military situation in which the belligerents found themselves towards the end of the first year of the war transformed the penetration of the Federal blockade, even for humanitarian purposes, into an act of political significance.

Federal offensives during the first year of fighting had resulted in the encirclement of the territory under Biafran control. As a result, penetration of the Federal blockade assumed a central significance in the rebel leaders' strategy. First, because the Biafran army required supplies of arms and

6. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.236.

ammunition which were only available from external sources.[7] Secondly, because the prospects of success for Biafra's independence struggle depended partially on her ability to get spokesmen out into the international community (and representatives of that community into the enclave for inspection tours).[8] Finally, at least in the latter stages of the war when the Ibos'

7. According to Akpan, the Biafran Army would have collapsed following the fall of Owerri and Aba in September 1968 without an influx of foreign arms. He asserted that Ojukwu and other leaders were preparing to give up 'formal resistance' and either take to the bush to conduct a guerrilla war, or flee the country, when two plane loads of arms and ammunition arrived from outside, enabling the Biafran troops to check the Federal advance. (Akpan, N.U. The Struggle for Secession: A Personal Account of the Nigerian Civil War Frank Cass (London 1971), p.111.

Although Akpan's account of the plight of the Biafran Army prior to the arrival of arms from external sources - primarily France - may have been exaggerated, his conclusion that without the external arms supplies the Biafran Army would have had difficulty prolonging any formal resistance to the Federal troops is echoed by other analysts. See, for example, St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.211-231; Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source Book 1966-1969 Oxford University Press (London, 1971), Vol.2, pp.75-80; and Cronje, S. The World and Nigeria: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War 1967-70 Sidgwick and Jackson (London, 1972), Ch.9.

8. According to Kirk-Greene one of Ojukwu's primary objections to the inspection of relief cargoes and flights in Lagos or on any other territory under Federal control was that "[it would have] closed the sole route for his jet-set emissaries to communicate with the outside world." (Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971) Vol.2, p.121).

Kirk-Greene also noted the importance to the Biafrans of outside journalists and other observers' reports on conditions in the enclave: "In Britain, a series of stirring and engage articles in the 'I was there' vein from Winston Churchill in the Times so underlined the magnitude of the suffering inflicted by the reportedly indiscriminate strafing of Biafran civilians that the Government was forced to seek an explanation of this apparent denial or defiance of General Gowon's orders to his Air Force." (Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), p.103).

fear of genocide had been eroded by the survival of millions of their comrades in territory under Federal control, because the civilian population's will and capacity to obey its leaders' exhortations to continue the struggle became more and more directly linked to the quantity of food carried into the enclave on relief aircraft. As a British correspondent, touring the enclave one week before the collapse of Biafra's resistance, pointed out, the fear of genocide had waned and as the flow of relief supplies dwindled Biafrans were giving up their struggle: "People are now choosing, in large numbers, to risk massacre at Federal hands rather than die slowly from starvation in a shrinking enclave..."[9]

The importance of the blockade was also increased in the eyes of Federal leaders. In the first place, the relative ease with which the non-Ibo periphery of the Eastern Region had been wrested from rebel hands had been succeeded by the prospect of a long and difficult struggle for control of the Ibo Heartland. The Federal Army was probably incapable of conquering the Ibo Heartland by direct assault. (In fact, Britain's military observer, Col. Robert Scott, was emphasizing the offensive weakness of the Federal armed forces even so late as December 1969).[10] A total economic blockade of the territory still under Biafran sway offered, in the context of a protracted conflict, one of the most effective and least costly

9. Sunday Times, 11 January 1970.

10. See Cronje, op.cit., p.160.

means of eroding the secessionists' resistance.[11]

In such circumstances, proposals for the establishment of relief corridors were inevitably evaluated by the belligerents in terms of the military advantage or disadvantage accruing thereto. The most extreme articulations of these military assessments of the relief operation came from the 'hardliners' in the Federal camp.[12] This group of soldiers, politicians, and civil servants saw that relief distributions within the enclave mitigated the impact of the blockade; and that the operation of relief corridors enhanced the prospects of Biafra's arms suppliers, enabling them to hide behind a relief mask and evade interception by the Federal forces. Rationalizing the nutritional consequences of a policy of total blockade by arguing, first, that the nutritional crisis was itself a product of the war and therefore that any policy which promised to speed the conclusion of the war also hastened the end of the famine; and secondly, that starvation was, both historically and in the Nigerian context, a legitimate weapon of war, the Federal hawks stood out against the operation of any relief corridors. As Chief Awolowo, the most prominent civilian 'hardliner' put it in a speech in 1969: "I don't see why we should feed our enemies fat,

11. A second factor which enhanced the importance of the blockade was the Federal leaders' reluctance to mount an invasion of the Ibo Heartland. In June 1968 Gowon promised that "there would be no attempt by the Federal troops to drive into the heart of the East-Central state and no pursuit of the Biafrans into their homeland except as a last resort after all appeals to Biafra had failed." (Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), Vol.2, p.53) (Although, this decision was apparently nullified by Gowon's announcement of a 'final' military offensive on August 24th, 1968. (See Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), Vol.2, pp.71-72).

12. The term 'hardliners' was used by St. Jorre, op.cit., p.244.

only to fight us harder."[13]

This statement, followed one day later by a remark from Brigadier Hassan Katsina, the Chief of Staff of the Federal Army, that "I would not feed somebody I am fighting" led the Times to condemn the FMG for adopting a policy of famine:

> All the evidence now shows that starvation as an act of war is the effective policy of the Nigerian Government... one can be left in no doubt that the Government of Nigeria, whatever intentions it may have had at the beginning of the war, is now prepared to use blockade and starvation, even at the cost of a further million deaths, rather than agree to secession. Leaving aside the massacres of the Ibos, this has the effect of a policy of genocide.[14]

The Times may have been overly harsh in its castigation of the FMG. In the first place blockade and its nutritional consequences have been time-honoured weapons of war.[15] Secondly, actual Federal policy regarding relief corridors appeared to amalgamate the hawk's perception of the military disadvantages inherent in the operation of relief corridors with a more subtle evaluation of the long-range objectives of the FMG: an evaluation which recognized that the ultimate goal of the Federal government was not conquest of the Ibo Heartland, but the reconciliation of the Ibo masses with the rest of the peoples of the Federation; and that "nourishing their bodies was one way

13. Guardian, 27 June 1969.

14. Times, 28 June 1969.

15. See, for example, the letter from Judith Lady Listowel in the Times, 2 July 1969 in which it is argued that "In passing judgement on the Federal Nigerian Government, it would be fair to bear in mind that blockade, that is denial of food and medicines to an enemy, has been practiced since time immemorial..." See, also, the consideration of starvation as a weapon of war in relation to the Nigerian conflict contained in Newsweek, 30 September 1968.

of retrieving their minds."[16]

A tug-of-war between these contradictory points of view concerning the Biafran relief operation was apparent in Federal policy throughout the war. The compassion which impelled the Federal Government to propose routes and methods for the delivery

16. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.244. A few observers focussed on this more moderate impulse in the Federal leadership. Far from condemning the FMG for pursuing a policy of genocide, they praised the FMG for an unprecedented recognition of the imperatives of humanitarianism. In his report on military operations, Colonel Scott remarked: "It is perhaps ironic that this is the first time in the history of warfare that one belligerent has permitted outside agencies to succour its opponent..." (Cronje, op.cit., p.130). Likewise, Sir Rex Niven argued that the Federal government's tolerance of the passage of relief to its opponents was unique in the history of armed conflict: "When and under what circumstances have outside nations or organizations demanded the right to feed and succour an encircled population?... You can search the whole of history and you will find no case in which the besiegers seriously considered the best methods of getting food and medical supplies into the beleaguered area." (Niven, R. The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970 Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Ltd. (Ibadan, 1970), pp. 155-156).

of relief supplies[17] - and which underpinned the FMG's acquiescence in the operations of the clandestine airlift for almost one year - was matched by a suspicion and mistrust of the secessionist leadership which ensured that conditions unacceptable to the Biafrans were imposed on Federal relief proposals, that Biafran proposals were rejected[18], and that, consequently, a de facto policy of

17. Federal proposals on relief corridors dated from Dec.1967. At that time the FMG suggested to the ICRC that an airlift into Enugu be started. From Enugu food and medical supplies would be taken, under ICRC supervision, over neutralized roads into the enclave. This proposition, strengthened by the offer of Port Harcourt airport as an alternative staging point, was resurrected in the late spring of 1968 and comprised the basic Federal position on relief corridors throughout the summer and autumn of 1968 (though the Federal leaders did with some reluctance agree to demands for the establishment of an airbridge direct into the enclave, but only on the condition that relief cargoes be inspected by Federal representatives prior to delivery, and that Uli be neutralized and restricted to accepting relief flights). (See "The Civil War in Nigeria - The Way Out" An advertisement inserted in the New York Times of 8 July 1968 and Federal Ministry of Information Federal Peace Efforts (Lagos 1968), pp.8-12).

Following the autumn of 1968 disputes over air routes dominated the negotiations about relief corridors - although attention was briefly focussed on an American plan to ship relief supplies up the Cross River in chartered landing craft (See "Emergency Relief in Nigeria and the Biafran Enclave July 1967 through June 30, 1969" AID Foreign Disaster Relief Report Reprint (Reprinted from: Ninth Report, Fiscal Year 1969, Foreign Disaster Emergency Relief, issued by Disaster Relief Coordinator, Agency for International Development) (Hereafter called USAID), p.48). After it had destroyed the Swedish Red Cross DC-7 in June 1969, the FMG adopted a more stringent relief policy, adding to its prior conditions the demand that all relief flights either originate from or stop for inspection on Federal territory. (See the articles in the Times, 7 and 14 July 1969). Under ICRC pressure this position was later relaxed; the FMG agreed to allow for the origination and inspection of flights outside Federal territory but retained the power to call relief planes down for inspection at Lagos on a random basis. (See Kirk-Greene, op.cit., (1971), Vol.2, p.128).

18. It was essentially a 'hardliners'' perception of relief which underpinned the Federal emphasis on segregating arms and relief shipments. So far as the Federal hawks were concerned relief was itself a mistake; however, if the pressures of international sentiment and future political relations with the Ibo masses dictated that some effort be made to alleviate the famine, then any agreement on relief corridors should be so shaped as to minimize its benefit to the rebels. The best way of doing this was to insist on the relegation of relief shipments to surface corridors, thereby making any aircraft which approached the boundaries of the enclave a clear target for Federal interception. Failing the confinement of relief shipments to land or sea routes, it was a hawkish view of relief which underpinned Federal insistence on daylight flights and the neutralization of Uli - both unacceptable to the rebels.

starvation was employed against the Biafran enclave.

The final balance of influence between the Federal hawks and moderates appears to have favoured the former group. Certainly the net result of negotiations over relief corridors was consistent with their position. Although, it could be argued that, to the extent the Federal 'hardliners' imposed conditions on Federal relief policies which made them unacceptable to the Biafrans, they sabotaged themselves. For the failure to achieve any agreement on relief corridors virtually ensured the continuation of the nighttime relief airlift which shielded Biafran arms flights from Federal interception. (A truly cynical view of the intentions of Federal policy-makers would discount this. The hawks may have seen, as did Britain's military observer, that even if the relief shield were removed, it was improbable that the Federal Air Force would be able to check the flow of arms into Biafra. They may have therefore opted to at least minimize the mitigating effect of the relief operation.)

Responsibility for the failure of the belligerents to agree on relief corridors cannot, however, be wholly attributed to the FMG. For the Biafran regime was dominated by a group of 'hardliners' which, like its Federal counterpart, consistently subordinated humanitarian considerations to its pursuit of political goals. As St. Jorre put it: "In Biafra there were similar divisions. The hardliners, led by Ojukwu, urged a path of no compromise (as in peace negotiations): Food and relief supplies were unacceptable unless they came from sources and through channels that had no connection with the Federal Government."[19]

19. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.245.

Two military assessments underlay the Biafran position on relief corridors. The first of these was that any relief corridor which penetrated the enclave's defenses offered an opening for invading Federal forces.[20] However, as St. Jorre pointed out, Biafran protestations about the risk of a Federal assault along agreed relief corridors were probably exaggerated:

> ...concessions - such as agreement to land corridors or daylight flights under the Geneva Conventions - need not have ruined Biafra's military capacity. A single, narrow land corridor, internationally supervised and heavily defended at the Biafran end, would not have laid the country wide open, and other airfields were available for the vital arms flights (Uga, for example,) if Uli were handed over for relief or suddenly immobilized by a treacherous Nigerian attack.[21]

Of at least as great, if not greater, importance in Biafran evaluations of relief proposals appears to have been the consideration that, as St. Jorre put it: "Any relief pact, whichever route or method it adopted, would automatically remove the need for night mercy flights and the shield they provided for the arms planes."[22] The importance of this latter rationale in determining the Biafran position regarding relief corridors was demonstrated when, in the last stages of the war, Norman Kirkham reported that:

> The Biafran Government's opposition to the abortive plan by the Red Cross for daylight flights into Uli is based ostensibly on fears that Federal Nigeria would abuse the agreement and send in bombers after the relief planes to attack the strip. When I discussed this with Biafran

20. For an illustration of this attitude, see the press release BIN-246 issued by the Biafran Overseas Press Division, in Geneva on 29 July 1968.

21. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.246.

22. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.245.

> officials in Owerri I was left in no doubt that the Biafran objections are also rooted in other arguments. I met no serious denial that the Biafran leaders prefer the present night to day flights partly because the food planes provide a convenient cover to arms planes.[23]

Considerations of the military significance of relief corridors comprised, however, only one aspect of the politics of hunger which precipitated around attempts to establish relief corridors. A second, and equally important, political factor which hindered the conclusion of any agreement on the delivery of relief supplies was the attitude of each of the belligerents toward international intervention in the conflict.

The Biafran position on international involvement was summed up by Ojukwu in a speech made to the Consultative Assembly in September 1968: "Our aim all along has been to delay the enemy until the world conscience can effectively be aroused against genocide."[24] The nutritional crisis which became apparent in the spring of 1968 proferred the rebels a reprieve from the failure which had largely characterized their previous

23. Daily Telegraph, 22 November 1969.

24. Cited in St. Jorre, op.cit., p.242.

attempts to engage international support for the Biafran cause.[25] It led to recognition of the validity of secessionist objectives among a few of Africa's leaders who were most concerned about the impact of the war on civilians. On April 13th, 1968 Tanzania's President Nyerere broke ranks with the rest of the OAU's leaders and announced formal diplomatic recognition of Biafra. Arguing that unity could not be forged by the force of arms,

25. Biafra had mounted both diplomatic and public relations initiatives following secession. The diplomatic offensive got off to a shaky start. A few hours after secession Biafran Radio announced that Ghana, Togo, Gambia, Ethiopia, and Israel had all recognized the legitimacy of the secessionist regime: a claim which was hastily denied by all the countries involved. (Cronje, op.cit., p.287) Formal recognition of the justness of the Biafran cause was to prove an elusive quarry throughout the early months of the war. The most severe blow to Biafra's diplomatic hopes was delivered by her fellow African states in the OAU. Although the OAU was deeply involved in arranging peace negotiations between the Biafran and Federal leaders, it was clear throughout the war that the weight of opinion in the organization favoured the FMG. (For details see Cronje, op. cit., Ch.13). Eastern secession infringed two of the fundamental precepts underlying the OAU: first, the inviolability of the national boundaries of post-colonial African states; and secondly, non-interference in the 'internal' affairs of member states. At the same time memories of the chaos and international derision which accompanied Katangan secession remained fresh in the minds of African leaders. Although a detailed comparison of the motivations of the secessionist regimes revealed only superficial similarities, they were closely allied in their revelation of the instability and inadequacy of political authority in post-colonial Africa. Perhaps the most important factor in determining OAU support for the FMG, however, was the existence of fissiparous strains similar to those of pre-war Nigeria in many of the OAU member states. Confronted with incipient or potential secessionist movements in their own domains, few African leaders were willing to support any challenge to central authority.

Biafra also enjoyed only limited success on the public relations front during the early stages of the war. As St. Jorre put it: "In the early days, the 'religious' war was played up. The Muslim Northerners, backed by the Arabs and the Russian anti-Christs, it was argued, were bent on a fanatical jihad against the Christian Easterners. But this made little mileage, its palpable fallacies - Gowon himself and two-thirds of his cabinet were Christians, while the bulk of the Federal Army was non-Muslim - soon being exposed. Deliberate mass starvation and genocide then came to the fore, the latter having the longest and most effective run." (St. Jorre, op.cit., p.352).

Nyerere said that "it seemed to us that by refusing to recognize the existence of Biafra we were tacitly supporting a war against the people of Eastern Nigeria - and a war conducted in the name of unity. We could not continue doing this any longer."[26] Both Nyerere's reasoning and action were replicated less than one month later when, on May 8th, Gabon recognized Biafra; an action followed within twelve days by the Ivory Coast and Zambia.[27]

This same period also saw concern about the plight of Eastern Region civilians mounting in Western Europe and North America. As Kirk-Greene put it:

> Biafra had been gathering more and more support among certain classes of Britons and Americans. They were influenced by a number of factors. These included letters in the press from prominent churchmen, reports of the bombing of Mary Slessor hospital, apparently unsubstantiated accounts of the wanton killing of civilians, but above all the signal superiority of Biafra's public relations agencies in Europe and the USA.[28]

As the spring wore on, and increasingly grim reports of the nutritional situation filtered out of the war zone, this rather diffuse anxiety began, increasingly, to focus on the prospect of mass starvation in the East:

> 'Milk - not murder', shouted a Daily Sketch banner headline. 'How can we sit and wait for a million innocent people to die?' asked a skeletal Biafran child from an OXFAM advertisement. 'Biafra: starving children don't care which General wins' proclaimed another poster. Confronted with reports of a weekly death rate in the thousands, British public opinion now suffered the prickings of its

26. "'Why We Recognized Biafra' - President Nyerere" (Document No. 149) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971) Vol.2, pp.211-213).

27. See "Zambia Recognizes Biafra" (Document No.155) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971) Vol.2, pp.220-221, also pp.41-42.

28. Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971) Vol.2, p.29.

> uncomfortable humanitarian conscience, suitably stirred by the vigorous application of the swizzle-sticks of mass-media.[29]

The dilemma confronting the Biafran leaders was how to translate this international concern into a sufficient weight of world-wide affirmation of the justice and validity of Eastern autonomy to overcome Federal resistance to the disintegration of the Federation[30]; and secondly, how to sustain international concern for the civilians in the war zone until the former objective could be achieved. It was the Biafrans' solution to this latter problem which blocked the establishment of mutually agreeable corridors for the transportation of relief supplies. The hawks who dominated Biafran policy-making saw that an unhampered relief operation would, by eradicating starvation in the enclave, almost surely reduce international interest in Biafra's struggle. So far as they were concerned "the relief operation as it stood" - to use St. Jorre's words - "though far from satisfactory in terms of saving lives at home, was doing Biafra a power of good abroad, publicizing its case and filling its coffers. A relief pact would have taken the steam out of

29. Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), Vol.2, p.57.

30. It has been argued by some observers that Biafra's focus upon the international concern for starving Biafrans as a mechanism for the generation of political support was counter-productive. Cronje, for example, asserted that "On the whole, the emphasis on suffering and the relief of it damaged Biafra's chances of gaining international recognition. The problem came to be regarded as a humanitarian rather than a political dilemma; it was easier to donate money for milk than to answer Biafra's international challenge." (Cronje, op.cit., p.211) In a similar vein, the authors of The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War noted that "Relief also functions as a political ideology. By providing the images through which the Civil War is seen - tribalism, genocide, etc. - it shapes the way people understand the conflict. These images function to distort the problem and obscure the origins of the war. While they waken humanitarian impulses, they deaden political understanding." (Africa Research Group The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p.25).

the first and dried up the second."[31]

Not surprisingly, the Biafrans did not articulate their objections to various proposed relief corridors in terms of their desire to sustain a high-level of international concern for famine victims in the war zone.[32] Therefore, a statement that such an intention lay at the root of their policy can be no more than an hypothesis. The strength of such an hypothesis appears to be considerable, however, when the articulated rationalizations upon which the Biafrans based their rejections of relief proposals are compared with the impact of those rejections on the civilian population. Probably the best illustration of this disparity was to be found in the Biafrans' rejection of the relief agreement signed by the FMG and the ICRC in September 1969. Biafra objected to the principle that the FMG could call relief flights down to Lagos for inspection if it wished. The Biafrans claimed that this threatened their security by making it possible for FMG aircraft to 'tailgate' relief flights into Uli (even though the ICRC planned to eliminate this possibility by arranging for any flight called down at Lagos to fly back to Cotonou prior to heading for Uli.)[33] To eliminate any chance of Federal treachery the Biafrans demanded a third party guarantee. The ICRC responded the following day, asserting that the Biafrans had not spelled out the details of what they wanted in

31. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.246.

32. Although, as the war drew near its end, there was apparently a greater readiness to admit the political rationale which lay behind their obstruction of relief operations. According to St. Jorre, Ojukwu told Lord Carrington in late 1969 that he had rejected the daylight flight schemes proposed in the summer and autumn of 1969 because of "'mainly political reasons.'" (St. Jorre, op.cit., p.245).

33. Times, 15 September 1969.

such a guarantee, and that, in any event, such a matter was political and exceeded the ICRC's brief. ICRC spokesmen said all they could no was ask the Biafrans "'Do you persist in refusing the supplies of food and medicaments which are ready to go?'"[34] Biafra refused to budge, even to accept the written declaration of intent offered by the FMG.[35] Nor would the Biafrans accept Federal assurances that they would not use relief flights to cover a military operation when these were given to the American government.[36]

All this time the death rate from starvation in Biafra was steadily mounting. As Norman Kirkham put it in a report from the enclave in November 1969:

> ...the death toll among the children begins to mount again as Biafra reaches the end of an early harvest and prepares to reap the next early in the new year...It is impossible to convey in precise statistics the awful suffering in the worst areas... I am convinced that relief agency estimates of between two and three thousand deaths a day are modest. Many thousands more have little strength left and a few days without food would undoubtedly kill them... Church agencies have been flying in recently up to 200 tons each night from Sao Tome but they estimate that this must be increased by at least 300 tons to tackle acute problems.[37]

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Biafra's leaders were playing politics with their followers lives, counting on moral pressure from the outside to force Federal acquiescence in Biafran sovereignty. Among the various policies and percept-

34. Times, 16 September 1969.
35. Times, 23 October 1969.
36. Guardian, 18 November 1969.
37. Daily Telegraph 22 November 1969.

ions which comprised the politics of hunger Biafra's manipulation of international concern for its civilians was, however, matched in importance by another aspect of the inter-face between the belligerents and the international community: Federal hostility toward the international relief organizations which involved themselves in the conflict.

Federal antipathy towards the international relief agencies dated from the earliest days of their intervention on behalf of war victims. When the church-sponsored relief groups shipped cargoes on flights which were also carrying arms to Biafra, the FMG was outraged. As St. Jorre put it:

> Arms kept Biafra going and it was well-known that, in the early days, the Churches had condoned the despatch of mixed cargoes to Uli. This poisoned relations between the Churches and the Federal Government throughout the rest of the war.[38]

Even the first flight made by the ICRC into the enclave caused resentment in the FMG, which believed that the rebels had taken advantage of its declaration of a two-day hiatus in Federal air operations and had stepped up their arms flights into the enclave.[39]

As reports reached Lagos of a large-scale mobilization of resources for use in Biafran relief, Federal antipathy to the agents of this international concern waxed. When, in May 1968,

38. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.241.

39. Statement issued by the FMG in Lagos on 27 May 1968.

the ICRC presented the FMG with the demand that "in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the Geneva Conventions, every facility be granted it [the ICRC] to have an extensive lifting of the blockade enabling the passage through of relief supplies" the FMG not only rejected the request but appended to its rejection an accusation that the ICRC was acting as a "tool of rebel propaganda".[40] As the summer of 1968 wore on, Federal hostility intensified. On July 5th the FMG felt constrained to announce, in response to reports that the British government had succumbed to pressure from British relief groups, which wanted to use RAF aircraft to air-drop accumulated stores of food and medicine into the enclave, that "Instructions have been issued to the Nigerian Air Force to seek and destroy all aircraft which enter into Nigeria on missions not expressly authorized and cleared by the Federal Military Government."[41] This announcement was followed on the 8th of July with a general castigation of the relief agencies for their pro-Biafran attitudes and disregard for Federal sovereignty:

> Since Ojukwu and his gang began to play politics with the sufferings of the masses in the rebel held areas, several foreign relief organisations, particularly in Britain, have been trying to fish in troubled waters. They have foolishly exploited the problems created by the sick and hungry in the distressed areas to defy in a most annoying manner the authority of the Federal Military Government. They have not disguised their admiration for the rebels' continuing resistance to the Federal authorities even though they know it is this resistance that has brought

40. Topical Red Cross News, No.107b, Geneva, 31 May 1968; and Financial Times, 29 May 1968.

41. Lagos radio report, 5 July 1968 (BBC ME/2815/B/4); and Times, 9 July 1968.

> about the refugee situation which they now claim to be interested in solving. The motives of these so-called humanitarian organisations have been clear right from the time they began to feature in our crisis. Their actions and public statements have demonstrated that they are not interested in seeing peace returned to this country. It is clear to us and to all impartial observers that the sole aim of these groups is to assist the secessionist forces in their criminal act of breaking up our country. They hope that after this disgraceful objective has been achieved, the way will be open for them to carry out a carefully hatched imperialist conspiracy to other African countries.[42]

The origins of the Federal hostility to the relief agencies were multi-fold. Federal perceptions of the military significance of the relief operation, and particularly of the nightly penetration of the Federal blockade by a mixed fleet of ICRC, JCA, and arms flights, have already been examined. Of equal if not greater importance in determining Federal attitudes toward the relief operation, however, were the FMG's views on the general issue of international involvement in the Civil War.

If Biafra saw international intervention as its last, best hope of securing independence, the Federal Government was equally strongly opposed to international involvement in what it saw as a domestic affair. From the earliest days of the war the FMG stressed the domesticity of the conflict. Immediately after the outbreak of hostilities the Federal government warned fellow members of the OAU that it would consider the diplomatic recognition of Biafra a breach of relations. At the same time Gowon attempted to minimize the conflict between the Federal and secessionist regimes, referring to the outbreak of fighting as

42. Lagos radio talk, 8 July 1968 (BBC ME/2817/B/2).

"'a surgical police action and not civil war'."[43] For the first ten months of the war international involvement was minimized, with what intervention that did occur largely favouring the FMG - for example, Britain and Russia's decisions to supply arms to the Federal armed forces.[44] Things began to fall apart, however, in the spring of 1968. Recognition of Biafra's sovereignty by four African states, pressure in Britain to cut off the flow of arms to Nigeria[45], and widespread appeals for a ceasefire arrangement, all of these were indicators of the growing inclination on the part of the international community to intervene in the conflict.

Spokesmen for the FMG were quick to vent their antipathy toward any person or organization which articulated the international community's growing sense of unease about the impact of the war. For example: when Cardinal Heenan, the Archbishop of London, condemned the belligerents for the suffering they were causing among Eastern civilians, Federal spokesmen quickly retaliated with an attack on the Churches for their partisanship in the conflict: "...neither the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church is a pacificist organization. Their opposition to the war in Nigeria can only derive from their support for the break-up of the country..."[46] Its most vehement

43. Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971) Vol.2, p.3.

44. Biafra was largely limited to the commercial market for arms (at least until the French intervened in Sept.1968). For a detailed analysis of the arms trade during the war see Cronje, op.cit., Chs. 3, 4, and 12.

45. For an illustration of strength of feeling in the UK about Britain's position as the chief armourer of the Federal armed forces, see the press reports of the special debate in Parliament in August 1968. (These are collected together in the Press release GEN-285, issued by the Biafran Overseas Press Division, Geneva, 31 Aug.1968).

46. Cited in Kirk-Greene, op.cit.(1971) Vol.2, p.47.

condemnations, however, the Federal government reserved for the international relief organizations. This was largely determined by the evolving mode of international intervention in the conflict.

Rationalizing their timidity by referring to legalistic interpretations of the meaning of national sovereignty[47], most national or international bodies of an official nature avoided direct involvement with relief operations. Mindful of domestic outrage at the reported levels of civilian suffering in the war zone, they instead channelled funds and material to the unofficial organizations which dominated the transportation and distribution of relief aid for the enclave's population. Analyzing American policy towards the conflict and relief operations, Lee Auspitz noted:

> Though the United States was in the forefront of nations when it came to taking credit for the success of the Nigerian 'showcase' it has seized on the present turmoil as an occasion to withdraw to a pious wringing of the hands. The new American posture was struck in an eloquent address by Under-Secretary of State Katzenbach in December 1968. Katzenbach enumerated the reasons for America's helplessness in remedying the situation: its wisdom in not supplying arms to either side; its determination to pursue a humanitarian course; its firm belief that it could not be the policeman of the world; its reluctance to intervene in a situation that was essentially African. All of these self-imposed restraints made the United States powerless to act, though it would continue to provide relief, monies and to use routine diplomatic channels to hasten a settlement ... The lesson of Vietnam was to let the Biafrans starve.

47. For an illustration of the debate over the meaning of sovereignty in the context of the Nigerian famine, see the discussion of Canadian relief policy in Brewin, A. and MacDonald, D. Canada and the Biafran Tragedy James Lewis and Samuel (Toronto, 1970), pp.130-133.

> The US was willing to deal with the situation through intermediaries but not to take a visible role on its own.[48]

The consequences of this timorous official approach to the war and problems of relief were two-fold. The self-defined limits on official involvement in the relief operation circumscribed the effectiveness of efforts made by the relief agencies. Western governments provided all the material resources but none of the political power needed to effectively counter-act the impact of the nutritional crisis. The WCC summed up the problem in a statement issued in August 1968:

> Governments generally have avoided their own responsibility by designating the Churches and other voluntary organizations as channels of this desparately needed relief, knowing very well that without strong Government and political action the Red Cross, the WCC, Caritas, and even UNICEF cannot deliver the food and medicine to the starving people.[49]

This point of view was echoed by Lee Auspitz:

> Unfortunately, the available intermediaries are simply not equipped to exert any decisive pressure to stop the starvation. The favoured intermediaries of Mr. Katzenbach were the Organization of African Unity...for political aspects of negotiation and the International Committee of the Red Cross...for relief efforts. Both of these agencies have had severe difficulties in meeting the urgent demands of the situation... The ICRC, for its part, has sent Dr. August Lindt...as a go-between to negotiate for increased relief. But since any given proposal has military implications that seem to favor one side or the other, Lindt's experience has not been very happy. Lacking the power base

48. Auspitz, L. "Biafra and the Bureaucrats: Anatomy of a Bloody Mess" Ripon Forum 5 (2) 1969.

49. Guardian, 10 August 1968, p.7.

> that would enable him to threaten or cajole the two sides to accept his proposals, his diplomatic credit has become quickly exhausted in the recriminations on relief that are part of the propaganda war between Nigeria and Biafra. ...If Mr. Nixon wants to get massive relief into Biafra he must recognize that this means anticipating political trouble with the Nigerians, possible objections from the Biafrans, and complications for Great Power diplomacy. It is the stubborness of these political forces that makes the present policy of dealing through conventional channels and intermediary agencies ineffective... the longer the United States delays using its leverage the greater will be the cost in innocent lives...[50]

The second consequence of official Western policy toward the conflict and relief action was that the relief agencies were made highly visible targets for Federal rancour. It was left largely to the unofficial relief organizations to exert pressure for Federal acquiesence in penetration of the blockade; and when efforts to conclude an agreement on relief corridors failed, the relief agencies were left to assume the full burden of Federal resentment of Biafran relief.

The relief agencies themselves were not, however, wholly without responsibility for the hostility with which the FMG greeted their activities. In some cases their endeavours appeared to be motivated by political partisanship. As St. Jorre noted:

> [some of the agencies] went far beyond their humanitarian brief and made a bad situation worse by becoming active Biafran propagandists. This was most true of the Catholics, particularly Caritas, Africa Concern and the Irish Order of the Holy Ghost, which had more than a hundred priests and nuns in Biafra. They did a tremendous job and saved countless thousands of lives but many of them were 'political

50. Auspitz, loc.cit.

> priests' who tended to become more Biafran than the Biafrans...[51]

These pro-Biafran attitudes had complex origins. Their fundamental source lay in the relief agencies' committment to the principles and imperatives of humanitarianism. Their humanitarian fervour was translated into political support for Biafra largely as a result of the plausibility of Biafran accusations of Federal genocide. When confronted with accounts (often exaggerated) of the atrocities visited on Ibos during the May and September riots, with reports of the slaughter of innocent Eastern civilians by advancing Federal troops, and with Federal intransigence on the question of relief corridors at a time when millions were reportedly starving to death in the enclave, many of the individuals and groups engaged in the provision of relief for the population of the war zone accepted the veracity of Biafran assertions that the future safety of the Ibos could be guaranteed only by Federal acquiescence in Eastern autonomy. As the African Research Group put it: "Saving Biafrans was difficult to distinguish from saving Biafra. The image of genocide became...the catalytic impulse for the Biafran relief movement."[52]

Not all of the apparent partisanship of the relief agencies was voluntary, however. The Biafran government's attempt to transform international concern into political intervention in its favour went beyond the construction of a propaganda campaign, which linked starvation in the enclave to a Federal policy of

51. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.251.

52. Africa Research Group, op.cit.

genocide, and the survival of Ibos to Eastern autonomy.[53] It carried on into a more sinister manipulation of the humanitarian fervour of the relief agencies. The Biafran leaders imposed conditions on the delivery of relief into the enclave which if accepted amounted to a de facto recognition of the sovereignty of the secessionist regime. The relief agencies, if they wished to carry out their humanitarian mission were forced to accept these conditions, even though in Federal eyes this gave their activities a definite flavour of partisanship.[54] For example: although the Geneva Conventions allow signatories to supervise the transport of relief supplies to their destination, Biafra refused to accept food or medicine which had come under Federal control. A number of relief agencies accepted the Biafran's objections and rationalized on this basis their disregard of Federal strictures on the delivery of relief supplies.[55]

Some agencies were much more vulnerable to this form of moral blackmail than others. The ICRC, for example, resisted this Biafran ploy. Although it based its activities on a humanitarian

53. For a striking illustration of all the integral components of this propaganda campaign, see the press release GEN-246 issued by the Biafran Overseas Press Division in Geneva on 29 July 1968.

54. The involuntary nature of the apparent partisanship of the relief agencies was also recognizable concerning the question of a ceasefire. As Cervenka explained: "...the relief organizations vehemently supported the call for a ceasefire, which they saw as the necessary pre-condition for carrying out a really effective, unimpeded, relief operation in the war-affected areas. This coincided with Biafra's call for a ceasefire, which was made for entirely different reasons. Biafran leaders assumed (probably quite rightly) that, once the Federal Military Government had agreed to a ceasefire, it would be almost impossible, in the face of public opinion, to resume fighting and the existence of Biafra would therefore have to be accepted." (Cervenka, Z. The Nigerian War 1967-1970: History of the War, Selected Bibliography and Documents Bernard and Graefe Verlag Für Wehrwesen (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), p.154).

55. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.237.

mandate - specifically, the role assigned it under the 1943 Geneva Conventions - the ICRC was impelled by considerations for its future acceptability as a neutral administrator of aid to victims on both sides of any conflict to confine its activities to those which were acceptable to the FMG. In the summer of 1968, when pressure to get the large-scale airlift going was building up, the ICRC persistently attempted to restrain the impatience of other agencies at the slow - and in the end non-existent - progress being made in negotiations over an agreed relief corridor. On August 13th Hella Pick reported from Geneva that Dr. Lindt was being forced to 'appease' agencies and governments which had donated money and supplies for the relief action. "He is also evidently trying to restrain the voluntary agencies from going ahead with efforts of their own to break the blockade and fly in relief planes."[56] The Daily Telegraph of August 23rd, 1968 carried a similar report of dissension within the ranks of the humanitarians:

> At the Geneva conference last week, I understand, Mr. August Lindt...was under severe pressure from donors and charity workers to rush supplies into Biafra by any means... Oxfam, Caritas, and the WCC favoured disregarding the FMG... Mr. Lindt stressed the necessity for the ICRC to preserve its traditions of working with the per-

56. Guardian, 13 August 1968.

mission of governments.[57]

Again, in 1969, following the collapse of the ICRC airlift in the wake of the FMG's destruction of the Swedish Red Cross DC-7, the ICRC resisted pressure to recommence its flight operations without the sanction of the FMG. Its attitude was succintly summed up in the following report from the Times of September 4th:

The committee cannot, it says, do what their Cotonou

57. These differing interpretations of the relative values of neutrality and urgency underlay the failure of the churches and the ICRC to merge their air operations. There was, at least within the WCC, a strong initial impulse toward cooperation with the ICRC. At its Assembly in Uppsala in July 1968 the WCC issued the following statement: "We would once more like to explain that our policy in not operating from Sao Tome and in supporting the actions of the ICRC from Fernando Poo are mainly due to two facts: (a) For most African countries Portugal and its possessions in Africa are an expression of European colonialism and anybody who associates with them shows a lack of feeling for the spirit of freedom and independence of the new African nations. (b) We are in no position to prejudge the outcome of the hostilities in Nigeria but we must recognize that we have also a large church constituency in the Federal Republic of Nigeria and it would be tragic if, at a time when hostilities have ceased, we would be unable to extend our aid for reconstruction and development to all communities affected by the war. In supporting the relief actions of the ICRC we believe that we are keeping the doors open." (Lloyd et al, op.cit., pp.6-7). Their contacts with the ICRC, however, soon dimmed the ardour with which the WCC pursued a connection with the Red Cross airlift. Lloyd asserted that: "Dr. Lindt made it clear that he and the Red Cross did not approve of the churches' effort to start an airlift, and that they were not interested in a joint venture. When the Red Cross finally did on July 31st, 1968 get clearance to fly to Biafra at night, they were not prepared to give the code signals and radio frequency to Captain Duch [the DANCHURCHAID flight operations chief] (Lloyd et al, loc.cit.) At the same time the ICRC's commitment to operating out of Fernando Poo, where its cargoes could be inspected by the FMG's consul, drove the church agencies and the ICRC apart. The government of Fernando Poo had placed a ban on night flying which, with the Nigerian Air Force effectively restricting access to Uli to the hours of darkness, limited the daily utilization of each aircraft to one round trip into the enclave. The church agencies, especially Caritas, were unwilling to accept such a restriction on their activities, and opted to establish their base of operations on Sao Tome, where no limits on flying hours existed. (Lloyd et al. loc.cit.)

pilots have been suggesting recently, that is hand over their aircraft and relief to another organization willing to fly in defiance of the Federal government. This, they think, would be as much an offence against their own conventions as flying over Federal air space themselves without permission... The ICRC are particularly sensitive about being involved in the political discussions that have been going on since the airlift stopped on June 5th. They are aware that their position of impartiality is in constant danger and one often gets the impression, when speaking to senior ICRC officials, that they fear Biafra could be the ruination of the Committee, which was founded in 1863, if they are not all very careful... A senior ICRC official told me: 'We dare not force this issue. People often do not understand that for the sake of people in dozens of other countries and possibly many wars to come, we must work with the agreement of both sides in their involvement. At the moment we are constantly in danger of losing our position in the eyes of many countries. We have limits and they are nothing to do with courage but with our own role.'

No such considerations restrained the church-sponsored groups active in the relief operation. Perhaps the strongest illustration of the attitudes which infused the participating members of the church-sponsored relief airlift came in the following statement issued at a plenary session of JCA held in December 1969. The statement was a direct response to doubts about the wisdom of continuing the 'clandestine' airlift which had been expressed at a WCC Assembly held one week earlier:

> The organizations participating in Joint Church Aid all recognize that relief work has political side effects. This is true of relief work in Nigeria as in Biafra, but they do not see that they are left with any choice. Joint Church Aid has supported directly and indirectly all initiatives to establish more regular and effective alternatives to night flights.

> To stop the airlift now would not only have political consequences, but also result in the death of millions of innocent civilians. It would establish starvation not only as a legitimate weapon of war but also as a partisan tool in the hands of groups pursuing their own motives.
>
> Concerned to follow the divine law which commands that above all we serve our neighbour in need we have no alternatives but to continue the relief work for as long as it is an effective means of alleviating the present suffering.[58]

It is difficult to assign blame or praise to either of these groups for their choice of policy regarding clandestine deliveries of relief supplies. As St. Jorre noted, the relief agencies were, in a situation in which no agreement could be reached on methods and routes for a mutually acceptable penetration of the Federal blockade, confronted with the question:

> Should relief agencies defy a sovereign government in order to save life and fulfil their humanitarian mission? The ICRC had opted for the path of legality, the Churches, less encumbered by sets of rules, precedents and international obligations, chose defiance... Given the Protestant and Catholic Churches' deep missionary commitment in Biafra - the most intensely missionized part of Africa - it is difficult to see how they could have acted otherwise. Their local interest dictated that they should defy the Federal government, whereas the ICRC's international responsibility had, with a similar cogency, demanded that it should be obeyed.[59]

Not all of the animosity between the FMG and the relief agencies was attributable to the voluntary or involuntary appearance of partisanship on the part of the humanitarians. The agencies often unnecessarily antagonized the Federal authorities by casually disregarding Federal sensitivities. Some of the

58. Lloyd, et al., Appendix 44.

59. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.249.

relief groups which appeared on the scene in Nigeria/Biafra in the summer of 1968 were as notable for their propensity to draw attention to themselves as for their contribution to the relief of starving civilians.[60] As Kirk-Greene put it:

> ...it was not hard for some of the less experienced of the relief personnel to prejudice their position by mis-handled protocol, an inadequate grasp of ligistics, and sheer over-enthusiastic under-organization...the noisy attitudes of the international relief agencies, for all their honourable intentions, had much of the makings of provoking a conflict in their own right.[61]

What Kirk-Greene called the 'noisy attitudes' of the relief agencies reflected several disparate impulses. For example, many of the relief agencies were impelled toward publicization of their efforts by their need for contributions of financial and other forms of support. Voluntary aid agencies are constantly caught up in the problem of stimulating humanitarian reactions; and one of their most frequent approaches to solving this dilemma is a gross exaggeration of the severity and urgency of any given disaster situation. In the case of Biafra, pronouncements on the actual and prospective death rate in the enclave appear to have been inflated, and for just such a reason. At the same time the emphasis placed by many agencies on securing air as opposed to surface relief corridors reflected a desire to obtain a heightened public awareness of their endeavours - planes being loaded with blankets, medicines or other (often unessential) relief goods transmit a much greater (and more newsworthy) sense of urgency than does a ship plodding over the seas.

60. See, for example, press reports of a proposed evacuation of children from the enclave in the Guardian, 24 July 1968.

61. Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971) Vol.2, pp.57-58.

A second facet of the agencies' behaviour which irritated Federal sensibilities was the arrogance of some relief personnel. The most striking example of this was to be found in the character of Dr. August Lindt, the ICRC's chief of operations. Everyone who met, or had dealings with, Dr. Lindt was immediately struck by two characteristics: first the undoubted intellectual capacity of the man; and secondly his equally forceful display of arrogance. St. Jorre's summary of Lindt was superb:

> With tremendous energy he got the relief operation going, especially on the Nigerian side, secured the 'at your own risk' concession from the Federal government to fly into Biafra, and injected into the task a much needed inspirational spirit. But he was temperamentally unsuited to cope with the complex political subtelties of the crisis and the sensitivities of the belligerents... He flitted from side to side tirelessly arousing everyone's suspicions ... He also tended to take the law into his own hands and some of his negotiating techniques were closer to those of a nineteenth-century mill-owner handling the labour than those normally associated with an ambassador who had served his country in Washington and Moscow. 'If he spoke to the Americans and Russians as he does to us,' a Nigerian diplomat once complained to me...'it's a wonder that Switzerland is still around.'[62]

Although Lindt's insensitivity was perhaps the more serious, considering the position he occupied, his disdain for the feelings of the Nigerians was matched throughout the Swiss and most other international contingents of the relief operation represented in Lagos. It is unclear to what extent this reflected sheer racial prejudice. Conversations soon revealed that there was a great deal of this. Most important in determining attitudes toward the Nigerians, however, was the fact that they had been unable to

62. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.243.

organize for themselves the assistance their own people required. This was taken as a general mark of incompetence and when reinforced by encounters with the unquestionable lethargy and evasion of responsibility typical of the lower levels of the Federal bureaucracy, fostered a contempt for all Nigerians. Like the Chinese torture of a thousand slices, myriad small affronts to Nigerian pride and dignity finally resulted in bitter resentment of the presence of the offending relief agencies and the eventual demise of the international relief operation.

The cumulative consequence of all these irritations of Federal sensibilities - the growing involvement of the international community in the conflict, Biafran manipulation of international concern, and the tactlessness of some relief agencies - was an intensifying Federal hostility to the activities of the relief organizations. This reached a peak in mid-July 1968, when the FMG, "having taken just about all it could endure from some of the more 'where-angels-fear-to-tread' humanitarianists", summoned representatives of the relief groups to a meeting with Gowon. At this gathering all the relief agencies, but especially the representatives of Caritas and OXFAM, were cautioned against their "deepening political involvement."[63]

As relief operations actually got under way on a significant scale in August/September, 1968, and each side was able to sort out from the welter of rhetoric surrounding the question of relief the actual intentions of the other, tensions between the FMG and the relief agencies subsided to an extent. The most violent impact of Federal hostility to the relief agencies was

63. Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), Vol.2, p.58. See also the reports of talks on Lagos radio, BBC ME/2827/B/2 and ME/2831/B/2.

not to be felt until the late spring of 1969 when the FMG, frustrated by events in the military arena, lashed out at the relief agencies. It appears that the event which triggered off this Federal attack was the sudden emergence of Joint Church Aid's former chief of air operations, Count von Rosen, as the leader of a series of assaults made by the Biafran Air Force on Federal targets during May 1969. Von Rosen's 'Minicon' aircraft only marginally altered the military balance - although, in conjunction with raids made by Biafran ground forces on oil prospecting camps in the Mid-West, Biafran air strikes on Federal oil installations did crimp the surging flow of oil revenues into the Federal war chest.[64] However, as another instance of undesirable international intervention in the conflict, they loomed large in Nigerian minds.

Their smouldering anger and distrust of the international community re-ignited by von Rosen's intervention, the Federal authorities struck at that community's humanitarian agents, with which von Rosen had been so closely associated. On May 27th the ICRC's chief delegate to Nigeria and Biafra, Dr. August Lindt, was detained by the Lagos airport commander, and although Dr. Lindt was released on the following day without any charges being laid against him, the FMG declared him personna non grata on June 14th, accusing him of political involvement in the cause of the Biafrans. The meaning of Lindt's detention and expulsion was explained by Kirk-Greene:

> ...this [Lindt's expulsion] was the climax rather than the cause of months of mounting irritation by the Nigerians at the undeniable relationship (if not a causal link)

64. For a more detailed analysis of the impact of these combined air and ground attacks, see Cronje, op.cit., pp.148-157.

> between relief supplies and the undreamed of protraction in the Biafran defense... Impatience with Western European susceptibilities was exacerbated by the connection in the Nigerian minds between Count von Rosen's threatening revival of the Biafran mini-air force and intolerable interference by humanitarianists in general. The understandable resentment of Nigerian opinion now found expression in further lambasting of these relief organizations by the Nigerian press, especially the ICRC, as being run by 'thoroughly discredited European humanitarians' and 'hirelings of imperialism' and in the angry demands by student and trade union movements for the Government to remove its kid gloves and end the war forthwith. Dr. Lindt's subsequent condemnation of the rashness of the von Rosen exploits came too late to save the ICRC relief co-ordinator or indeed the ICRC itself: it never regained its position in Nigeria.[65]

This attack on the leading representative of the ICRC was, however, pushed into the background by the Federal Air Force's destruction of a Swedish Red Cross DC-7 operating in the ICRC airlift on the night of June 5th. This action ushered in a new Federal policy toward relief flights which reflected a changed balance between Lagos' hardliners and moderates. The preceding tolerance of the relief agencies 'clandestine' night air operations ended. Though the moderates' commitment to seeking a mutually acceptable relief corridor was retained, it was apparent that a hawkish perception of the nature of relief operations was the dominant factor in

65. Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), pp.117-118. Also see the Daily Telegraph, 10 June 1969 for a more extensive sampling of the expressions of hostility to the ICRC in the Nigerian press of this period.

the new Federal policy. As a leader in the Times of 1 July 1969 summarized the Federal attitude:

> The real change here is that in the past the Nigerian authorities have in some slight measure connived at relief operations to Biafra, arguing that their quarrel was with General Ojukwu and his supporters, not with the Ibos as a people. The Nigerians now put the relief agencies in the dock and ask them to prove that relief aid will not help the Biafran war effort.[66]

Under these conditions the ICRC, ensnared in its long-term commitment to an image of neutrality, had little choice but to halt its operations pending the successful outcome of negotiations over relief corridors. In an article in the Times of June 21st, 1969, the ICRC was reported to have made it clear that it would no longer allow either of the belligerents to exploit its activities for political purposes. Any resumption of relief flights to Biafra on the part of the ICRC would be, according to the ICRC spokesman, M. Jacques Freymond, strictly subject to the full acceptance of guarantees and conditions by both sides. At the same time the ICRC's spokesman rejected charges made by Diallo Telli, Secretary-General of the OAU, that Red Cross officials were insensitive to the prerequisites of African sovereignty.[67] M. Freymond said: "On the contrary, we have been extremely moderate in our relations with both sides." The fact that the ICRC had not replied to propagandistic attacks, M. Freymond continued, should not be interpreted as a weakness but rather as evidence of a desire not to provoke an open breach. The

66. For an illustration of the new balance in Federal policy see the text of Chief Enaharo's announcement on June 30.("Federal Government Briefs Relief Organizations on its New Policy" (Document No.208) in Kirk-Greene op.cit. (1971), pp.405-408).

67. See the report in the Guardian,19 June 1969.

ICRC was prepared to continue its activities for the sake of the civilian population, but would no longer tolerate the exploitation of humanitarian sentiment for political advantage.

Following a brief but virtually total collapse in relations between the FMG and the ICRC after the Federal government withdrew from it the authority to coordinate relief operations in the territory under Federal control[68], the quest for mutually acceptable relief corridors was resumed with a new intensity, which reflected the gravity of the nutritional situation in the enclave following the withdrawal of the ICRC's contribution to the relief airlift.[69] A five-day hiatus in contacts between the

68. The Federal Government's action on June 30th provoked an unprecedented outburst of indignation from the newly appointed President of the ICRC, M. Marcel Naville. The ICRC's representative at the briefing on relief agencies in Lagos had refused to subscribe to the joint communique issued following the meeting: President Naville reinforced this attitude toward the Federal initiative. He described it as 'a conscious affront to all the principles of humanity which exist in the soul of man.' It was typical of the way 'one would show the door to an unworthy servant'. He asserted that the ICRC was not in Nigeria to assuage the conscience of 'cannon merchants' and "reminded 'some people' that not all the petrol in Nigeria could produce sufficient detergent to wash away the stain of their participation in the war." (See the article in the Times, 2 July 1969 for these and other cited remarks from Naville's press conference of 1 July. Also see Document No.210 in Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), Vol.2, p.411 for ICRC criticisms of the way the press reported Naville's debut).

69. According to a report in the Times the cessation of ICRC flights had fostered a recrudescence of mass starvation. Famine conditions were expected to reappear because the interruption of the airlift coincided with the annual occurrence of the hungry season. Also the population was more susceptible to starvation than a year before simply because of the hardships undergone in the intervening period. (Times, 25 June 1969. See also the report in the Times on the next day, June 26th.) These assessments of the gravity of the situation inside the enclave in June and July 1969 were later questioned. M. Naville was reported to believe the food situation in the enclave was "much less disturbing" than most of the recent remarks made on this subject by relief officials in Geneva had indicated. Children were perishing of hunger but mass starvation had not yet begun, because of the trickle of food other agencies were continuing to move into the enclave. However, though the food situation 'is not yet alarming', Naville added that: "In a few weeks - and time is passing very quickly - the point will be reached where stocks are completely exhausted." (Cited in the Times, 18 July 1969. See also the report in the Times of 28 July 1969).

ICRC and the FMG, ended when their representatives met together with spokesmen for the British government in London.[70] They 're-established' relationships, with the result that on July 9th President Naville and a team of ICRC negotiators flew to Lagos for talks with Federal representatives. These negotiations resulted in an agreement between the ICRC and the FMG which provided, first, for the transfer of co-ordinating authority to the National Rehabilitation Commission; secondly, for the continuation of the ICRC's 'traditional' activities; and finally for one liaison flight to be made into the enclave by the ICRC, but no other flights to be undertaken by the Red Cross until a mutual agreement on relief corridors had been concluded.[71] Relief negotiations in the summer and autumn of 1969 proffered, however, no greater prospect of success than those of the previous year. Neither of the

70. See the reports in the Times of 7, 8, and 9 July 1969.

71. See Topical Red Cross News No.121b, Geneva, 25 July 1969 for more details.

belligerents had reversed its previous order of priorities regarding humanitarian and political considerations. Federal negotiators continued to insist on conditions which made their proposals on relief corridors unacceptable to the Biafrans. At the same time the Biafran leaders refused to abandon their perception of the military and political advantages accruing to the obstruction of any agreement on relief corridors.[72]

Nor had the intensity of Federal hostility to the international relief organizations changed. Although the ICRC restored a degree of cordiality to its relationship with the Federal government - largely as a result of its decision not to contest the prerogatives of sovereignty exercised by the FMG in its announcement of June 30th - relations between the FMG and the Christian groups which sponsored the ongoing JCA relief flights remained strained.[73] In the end the sponsors of JCA - at least those affiliated to the World Council of Churches - began to raise questions about the roots of this Federal animosity. At an assembly of the WCC held in Uppsala in December 1969, it was suggested within the Division on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service that Federal perceptions of the military and political benefits the Biafrans were deriving from the 'clandestine' operations of the JCA might be accurate:

> ...should the Churches' major effort to meet this human need be the indirect means by which some governments are

72. For details of relief corridor proposals in this period, and both Federal and Biafran rationales for their rejection, see the Guardian 21 August 1969, the Times 4 and 15 September 1969, and the Guardian 14 November 1969.

73. As was indicated by Joint Church Aid's vigorous rejection of attacks against it. (See "Joint Church Aid Rejects Anti-Humanitarian Agencies Propaganda" (Document No.216) in Kirk-Greene, op.cit. (1971), Vol.2, pp.426-427.

> enabled to pursue their own ends and thereby achieve their own goals...[74]

These doubts reflected three developments of significance for the future of the relief operation. The first of these was the growing concern among relief workers in the enclave that the protein crisis, which had been the chief cause of famine up to the end of 1969, might be replaced in the immediate future by a carbohydrate emergency.[75] Secondly, there was a widening perception that the onus of responsibility for the failure to establish relief corridors had to be shared by the Biafran leaders; who had pursued their political objectives without regard to the suffering this caused the civilian population. This perception stemmed partly from the erosion of belief in the validity of the rebels' claims that the FMG was pursuing a policy of genocide. As St. Jorre noted, the themes of deliberate mass starvation and genocide had been in the forefront of the Biafran propaganda campaign since mid-1968. However, they began to lose credibility as a result of the physical evidence of large numbers of Ibos living in the Federal controlled areas, and the impact of reports by foreign correspondents and other observers on the status of Ibos living in Federal territory.[76] The perceptible strength of the Biafran case waned also because of their persistent refusal to accept Federal concessions on the operation of air corridors which virtually removed any threat of a Federal assault

74. Lloyd et al., op.cit., Appendix 44.

75. See above Chapter Three.

76. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.352.

along the relief corridor.[77] As St. Jorre put it:

> Throughout the protracted negotiations with the ICRC that followed [June 1969], it became evident that the Biafrans were as obstinate as the Federals on the two central issues of exercising their sovereignty over the despatch of relief supplies and protecting their military operations... The rigidity of Ojukwu's policy was shown by the fact that he never once tried to call the Nigerians' bluff - he could have, for example, accepted day flights for a short period without undue military risk - by agreeing to one of their proposed relief corridors. Politically it would have been an astute move since if Gowon had refused to play fair the whole world would have seen clearly who was at fault.[78]

Finally, it had become increasingly obvious that the prospects of the Biafran Army winning a final victory were almost non-existent. Nor had the Biafrans been able to convert either of the two great upsurges of international concern for the war's victims into a sufficient weight of international intervention to break down Federal resistance to the achievement of Eastern autonomy. In such circumstances the relief agencies, especially the Churches, had to consider the impact of continued defiance of the FMG on the future of their organizations in Nigeria.

77. These involved the Federal government's concurrence in ICRC plans to originate flights outside Federal territory, with inspection normally taking place at the point of origin under the auspices of an international team. The FMG would have had only the right to call down random flights to Lagos for inspection. And in cases where this occurred, the ICRC planned to order the plane back to Cotonou prior to carrying the cargo on into the enclave. The Biafrans rejected this plan on the grounds that it did not meet their requirement of a third force guarantee that the FMG would not 'tail-gate' relief flights into Uli. This objection became increasingly difficult to understand following repeated Federal pledges to the ICRC and the US government that it would not misuse the relief corridor. (See the Times, 15 September 1969 for the basic elements of the disputed corridor plan).

78. St. Jorre, op.cit., p.248.

As a DICARWS statement put it:

> ...the Division expresses its deep distress at the ambiguous position in which the tremendous effort has put Christian people, Churches and agencies because of its political side-effects.[79]

These expressions of doubt came too late, however, to enable the relief agencies to reconstruct their relations with the FMG. (And in any event, Joint Church Aid rejected the WCC's idea that the relief operation might be counter-productive to the achievement of a cease-fire and the end of the Federal blockade.)[80] Within only a few weeks of the WCC conference, Biafra's resistance was brought to an end and the Federal government, freed from any constraints on the expression of its feelings about the war-time activities of the humanitarian organizations, immediately barred those groups it deemed most offensive from any further participation in relief operations.[81]

This was in effect the last act in the politics of hunger. To some observers the FMG's vituperative exclusion of the relief agencies which had participated in 'clandestine' relief was a sudden and unwelcome reminder of earlier suspicions that Federal

79. Lloyd et al., loc.cit.

80. In a statement issued at the 5th Plenary session of JCA it was asserted that: "The organizations participating in Joint Church Aid all recognize that relief work has political side effects. This is true of relief work in Nigeria as in Biafra, but they do not see that they are left with any choice... To stop the airlift now would not only have political consequences but result in the death of millions of innocent civilians. It would establish starvation not only as a legitimate weapon of war but also as a partisan tool in the hands of groups pursuing their own motives." (Lloyd et al., loc.cit.)

81. The agencies which were banned were Joint Church Aid, Caritas, Canairrelief, Nordic Red Cross Societies, and all other agencies which had participated in unauthorized flights direct into the enclave. Aid from France, Portugal, South Africa, and Rhodesia was also rejected. (Times, 15 January 1970, p.1).

rhetoric concealed a policy, if not of genocide, then at least of callous disregard for the lives of the Ibo masses. These observers saw in the structural elements of the JCA operation, and especially in the presence of a fleet of vehicles and relief cadres based on Uli, the ideal means of saturating the Biafran redoubt with food and medicines. The FMG's insistence that relief supplies be moved into the area of the final enclave from its perimeter, rather than through its centre smacked, these observers believed, of a willingness to see thousands of refugees die rather than see any prolongation of the use of the strip of widened highway which to much of the world symbolized Biafran resistance.[82]

A definitive evaluation of the motivations underlying Federal policy on post-war relief is not possible. A strong logistical argument can be made favouring the FMG's refusal to base the relief operation on Uli. Reports from relief workers who remained in the enclave up to the last days of the war indicated that the logistical advantages to be gained from re-surrecting the Uli based operation may not have been that great. Vehicles disappeared, or were in any event in very poor condition prior to the collapse.[83] At the same time many of the relief personnel who had operated the distributive network had been evacuated out of the enclave just prior to its collapse.[84] Of greater importance, however, was the fact that the key objective of both the FMG and the relief agencies was to transcend, as

82. See the lengthy analysis which appeared in Time Magazine, 26 January 1970.

83. See the report in the Guardian, 8 December 1969.

84. See the description of this evacuation in St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.395-398.

rapidly as possible, the emergency stage of operations and begin rehabilitation. In order to accomplish this it was vital that refugees return immediately to their homes. A relief operation based on distribution from the centre of the disturbed area would probably not have been as effective in encouraging these movements as one in which, as the refugees moved out of the final redoubt toward their homes, they were in fact travelling toward supplies of food and other relief materials located on the enclave's perimeter.[85]

In the end, however, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that, regardless of the extent to which they coincided with logistical and/or nutritional criteria, political considerations were the essential determinants of Federal policy with regard to post-war relief operations. Just as had been the case throughout the war, it was impossible to separate the question of relief from its political context. The war had been fought over the issue of Federal sovereignty in Eastern Nigeria. The government had sacrificed large amounts of blood and treasure in ensuring that the East remained attached to the Federation by more than the ties of geographical contiguity and a common heritage of colonial and post-colonial subordination. It was hardly surprising then that the government's reaction to

85. The following passage from the Nigerian Red Cross's report on its activities during the Civil War indicates that such a perception may have contributed to the decision not to make Uli the centre of the relief operation: "During the last half of January 1970, great masses of people trekked from the crowded former enclave to their homes, many in regions more productive agriculturally. Probably more than a million people made this exodus, and the majority of them appeared to be in reasonably good nutritional state. Few workers in the field at that time saw any roadside deaths due to starvation. 'Open kitchens' were organized along major roads radiating from the former enclave to serve the home-bound travellers at each stop. Many of them were so anxious to get home that they preferred dry rations to cooked meals unless they had children with them." (Nigerian Red Cross, op.cit., p.11).

the international hysteria which followed the final Biafran collapse was a rigid defense of its rights to call forward and accept only such aid as it deemed necessary and desirable. As St. Jorre's description of the mood of the FMG in the days following the collapse of the enclave showed, the politics of hunger proved as compelling in the post-war period as during the preceding eighteen months:

> If the Nigerian government had opened its doors to the humanitarians and foreign governments that were clamouring to come in, it is possible that more lives would have been saved. But it does not necessarily follow... In any case, the Nigerians's mood was far too bitter and xenophobic to think along these lines. To the Western world it seemed brutal and incomprehensible that the Federal government should slam the door. It was as if a poor country had suffered some natural disaster like an earthquake and then refused to allow anyone, including the International Red Cross to come to succour the victims - and all for some prickly and ridiculous notion of 'sovereignty'. The central fact, however, was that the relief situation at the end of the war could not be suddenly taken out of the context of the war itself; almost from the beginning relief had been inextricably mixed with the politics of the crisis and it was impossible to separate them overnight, especially, as it seemed, at the whim of the deeply mistrusted foreign humanitarians. Rightly or wrongly, Gowon and most Nigerians felt that the action of many of the relief organizations, particularly the Churches and the countries which supported them, had unjustifiably prolonged the war - hence the angry cry from Gowon, normally the mildest of men, about 'blood money'. Unprecedented foreign pressures, doubts and seemingly endless criticism during the war had taken their toll on the Nigerians. The sudden and virtually bloodless end came as a great relief to an emotionally and physically exhausted people. The internal reaction was not vindictiveness, as many people had expected, but mercy and magnanimity. Nobody had ever believed them during the war, the Nigerians

> complained, even when what they were saying was demonstrably true as, for example, the fact that more Ibos were eventually living safely on the Nigerian side of the line than hazardously in Biafra. Even with the war over, still the feeling of suspicion, the hectoring tone, the incredulity of foreigners, especially the whites of the West with their own ugly record of wars, brutality and true genocide persisted. There was also a political reason for keeping the foreigners out. Throughout the war it had been Gowon's firm policy to show the Ibos as a people that he had nothing against them personally. Turning over the whole relief operation to the Nigerian Red Cross, which incidentally had many foreigners working for it, was designed to prove to the defeated that the Federal government did, after all, care for their welfare. Having won the war, Gowon was determined to win the peace.[86]

Having assessed the origins and impact of the politics of hunger it now remains only to ask the question whether or not they were unique. So far as the elevation of political above humanitarian considerations is concerned, the Nigerians and Biafrans were hardly the first, and undoubtedly will not be the last, governments to pursue political objectives regardless of their cost in human suffering; although few, if any, previous relief operations had resulted in such acrimonious relations between the donors and recipients of relief aid. However, at least one observer later argued that there were likely to be extreme tensions between donors and recipients in any 'large' civil war:

> ...when viable civil wars occur, international relief agencies cannot remain pristinely non-political. If they try to ignore these tragedies, in effect they favour the stronger (usually the authorized) regimes. If they respond decisively to the suffering, they are for good

86. St. Jorre, op.cit., pp.405-406.

reason almost certain to be identified with one of the contesting sides and to be restricted or excluded by the other. The humanitarian aims of the relief organizations thus cannot insulate them from political involvement... As the events in Nigeria/Biafra showed, international relief processes in viable civil wars involve unavoidably political tasks being undertaken in an undeniably political context.[87]

87. Davis, M. "The Politics of International Relief Processes in Large Civil Wars: An Editorial Comment" Journal of Developing Areas 6 (July 1972), p.492.

CHAPTER VI

The Political Economy of Famine in Nigeria and the Third World

The objective in this final chapter of the thesis is to situate the Nigerian experience of famine and relief in relation to similar episodes of mass starvation elsewhere in the Third World; and to situate the study of acute hunger in the analysis of social change in that World.

On first consideration, the Nigerian famine appears to fall outside the general pattern of nutritional disasters in the Third World. Famine in Nigeria was an overtly political phenomenon. The disintegration of the civil order, armed conflict between the Federal and Biafran regimes, and the refusal of either government to subordinate the pursuit of its political objectives to the imperatives of humanitarianism, all of these contributed to the starvation of millions of Eastern civilians. Most nutritional catastrophes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, however, have been triggered off by natural calamities, such as floods and droughts. Although these episodes of mass starvation have often been accompanied by the disintegration of pre-existing political structures, the relationship has generally been one in which mass starvation engendered civil upheaval rather than vice versa.[1]

In fact, the origins of the Nigerian famine appear to have most closely resembled the propellants of mass starvation in Western society during the past 100 years. There famine has been closely linked to war and revolution, and to the use of starvation as a political weapon. From the siege of the Paris commune in 1870, right up to the blockade of Berlin in 1948, Western men have displayed few qualms about the deliberate creation of famine conditions where political advantages could be

1. Consider, for example, the ouster of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia and the overthrow of Hamadi Diori in Niger.

reaped from doing so.[2]

The incongruity of the Nigerian with other Third World famines was, however, more apparent than real. Certainly the triggering events were wholly dissimilar; however, whether the catalyst was a natural or a civil disaster, both Nigeria and other famine afflicted societies in the Third World suffered the transformation of disaster into episodes of mass starvation because of a common heritage of underdevelopment.[3] At the same time, flaws in the organization and administration of relief have been a major determinant of the scale and duration of nutritional catastrophes throughout the Third World.

2. In the twentieth century, the Russian people have suffered the ravages of famine more severely than any other Western group. In each case, these famines have stemmed from civil disasters. See Fisher, L.S. The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923 Harper & Row (New York, 1927); Dalrymple, D.G. "The Soviet Famine of 1932-34" in Soviet Studies 40 (3) 1964, pp.259-262; and Salisbury, H.E. The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad Pan Books Ltd. (London, 1971).

3. The term underdevelopment as used here is meant to indicate a process as well as a state. The sense in which the term is used is succintly summed up in the following definition of 'dependence': "...dependence is a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others. A relationship of interdependence between two or more economies or between such economies and the world trading system becomes a dependent relationship when some countries can expand through self-impulsion while others, being in a dependent position, can only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries, which may have positive or negative effects on their immediate development. In either case, the basic situation of dependence cause these countries to be backward and exploited. Dominant countries are endowed with technological, commercial, capital, and socio-political predominance over dependent countries - the form of the predominance varying according to the particular historical moment - and can therefore exploit them and extract part of the locally produced surplus. Dependence, then, is based upon an international division of labour which allows industrial development to take place in some countries while restricting it in others, whose growth is conditioned by and subjected to the power centres of the world." (Dos Santos, T. "The Crisis of Development Theory and the Problem of Dependence in Latin America" in Bernstein, H. (ed.) Underdevelopment and Development: The Third World Today Penguin Books (London, 1973), p.76).

In Chapter Three it was argued that the uneven modernization of Nigerian society made the population of the Eastern Region highly vulnerable to devastation by mass starvation. Production systems had been transformed only to the extent required by the capitalist nexus. As a consequence increases in productivity and incomes were small. Whatever improvements in productivity did occur were absorbed by the rapid growth of population, which had itself been triggered off by the infiltration of modern medical and social welfare concepts into Nigerian society. The net result of these developments was a general inability to generate either the food surplusses or the purchasing power which would have enabled the populace to endure an interruption of current production without severe privation. In fact, without the development of palliative responses such as migration and the cultivation of cassave, to the problems of overpopulation and economic impoverishment it is likely that many inhabitants of the Eastern Region would have sunk into starvation even without the occurrence of a disaster which disrupted production. (Though to the extent that they were reversible, these palliative responses heightened the region's long term vulnerability to famine: they shifted part of the burden of support off the regional food economy and enabled population growth to continue unchecked.)

The vulnerability to mass starvation engendered by the uneven progress of modernization in the Eastern Region of Nigeria has been widely reproduced elsewhere in the Third World. There, societies have been characterized by the retention of traditional production systems, low productivity, low incomes, high rates of population growth, and, inevitably in view of the other characteristics noted, grinding poverty. The peoples of these largely agrarian societies have enjoyed only a limited capacity to produce

food in excess of the immediate requirements of subsistence; nor have they been able to generate cash incomes of sufficient size to acquire large amounts of foodstuffs from the market. Although the actual degree of vulnerability to mass starvation has varied widely throughout the Third World - being most pronounced in those areas or societies such as the Eastern Region which have been under the greatest pressure from population growth - there is no question that it is directly related to the nature of the Third World's connection to Western capitalism.

Malthus believed that famine resulted from the natural, absolute scarcity of subsistence resources: a scarcity caused by the inherent and ineradicable superiority of man's reproductive over his productive capacities.[4] This certainly appears to have been true during most of mankind's history. Prior to the industrial and commercial revolutions which, beginning in the 18th century, transformed life in the West, virtually no society was immune to the ravages of mass starvation. In nearly all, the balance between the requirements for and production of subsitence goods was so tenuous, and societies' ability to redistribute food stocks from surplus to deficit areas so limited, that any adverse phenomenon could propel a population, regardless of its wealth in non-subsistence resources, across the threshold of starvation. As Bhatia put it:

> There was no direct relation between the economic conditions of a people and their vulnerability to famine. Thus some of the most terrible famines known in world history occurred in ancient India, Egypt, China, Greece, and Rome at a time when these were economically the most

4. See McCleary, G.F. The Malthusian Population Theory Faber and Faber,Ltd. (London, 1953), Chapter 3.

advanced countries in the world.[5]

The advent and fruition of capitalism and industrial production systems broke the 'cycle of deprivation'[6] in the West. Agricultural productivity was transfigured by the addition of capital goods to the factor inputs of land and labour with which Malthus was familiar.[7] At the same time, improvements in techniques of communication and transportation enhanced societies' capacity to transport both food and people from surplus to deficit areas. As a result Western societies were able, contrary to Malthus' beliefs, to sustain a rapid and massive expansion of population and still consistently produce significant quantities of subsistence goods in excess of current consumption requirements (even though those consumption requirements were greatly elevated as a result of widespread improvements in the nutritional status of Western populations). As Bhatia, yet again, put it:

> ...the whole tendency of the modern civilization was to

5. Bhatia, B.M. Famines in India: A Study of some Aspects of the Economic History of India (1860-1945) Asia Publishing House (London, 1963), pp.1-2.

6. It can be inferred from Malthus' Essay on the Principle of Population that he believed there was a cycle of human deprivation in which per capita consumption of subsistence goods was, because of the inherent disparity between birth rates and the rate of growth of output in labour-intensive agrarian societies, inexorably reduced to a level barely capable of sustaining human life. At this point men were highly vulnerable to the transformation of any natural or civil disaster which disrupted normal supply and demand relations in the food economy into the "powerful and obvious check" of famine - a famine which by reducing population enabled per capita consumption of foodstuffs to rise until the perennial disparity between birth rates and the growth of output resulted, once again, in over population and the reduction of consumption rates to the point at which men were, yet again, highly vulnerable to famine. (See McCleary, op.cit.).

7. See McCleary, op.cit., Ch.9 and 10.

> rear up intervening influences which rendered the relation of actual pressure to natural scarcity less certain, and less direct until the two terms, which were once convertible, came to have very little connection with each other.[8]

The material benefits of modernity were, however, largely confined to the populations of Western Europe and North America. The development in the West of the techniques and technology which made possible the consistent production of food surplusses, and the elevation of incomes to a level where consumers could command food supplies from surplus areas in order to make up deficiencies in local production, made little difference in the lives of most of the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. However, it is clear that,although the objective conditions of their lives may not have altered significantly as a result of the modernization of Western societies,the development of Western capitalism did fundamentally alter the determinants of those objective conditions.

The natural and absolute scarcity of subsistence resources in which Malthus believed was replaced by an induced and relative scarcity. This was largely determined by the nature of the Third World's nexus with Western capitalistic societies. This connection was largely exploitative. Third World societies experienced only a selective and partial modernization. Productive systems were transformed only to the extent required to ensure the provision of the raw materials or other resources Western metropoli sought from the Third World. As these resources rarely included the staple foodstuffs of the producing country - the Western world having relatively rapidly reached a point at which its major agricultural problems involved the disposition

8. Bhatia, op.cit., p.10.

of surplus domestic production of staples - there was little incentive to foster the adaptation and transfer of high productivity Western techniques of food production to the subsistence sector. Whatever modernization of the agrarian sector - and it must be remembered that these are societies in which a large majority of the population lives in rural areas and is engaged almost wholly in agricultural activities - occurred, was largely limited to the cash cropping export sector. And even in this sector, the major innovations introduced were more directly aimed at securing a wider participation in cash cropping than at improving the per capita level of productivity.

Food producing systems in most Third World societies remained mired in tradition. Neither external nor local markets for foodstuffs offered the degree of incentive required to foster the extensive adoption of new techniques. Indeed, the major force behind whatever improvements did occur in most Third World food economies was the pressure of rapid population growth. For if the imperatives of capitalism had constrained the diffusion of modern food production techniques in Third World societies, their connection with the West had resulted in the widespread introduction of Western medical techniques and social welfare concepts; with the consequence that infant mortality rates fell sharply at the same time that longevity rose dramatically. The net result - in the absence of concomitant economic developments which would have reduced the birth rate - was a rapid and massive expansion of population in most Third World states.

The vulnerability fostered by this uneven process of modernization has, over and over again, resulted in the transformation of disasters which disrupt current production into famines. The experience of famine in Nigeria was unusual only

in the overtly political nature of the events which triggered off this transformation process. Other areas of the Third World displaying the same characteristics of uneven modernization or underdevelopment have suffered more frequently and with at least equal, if not greater, severity from the ravages of mass starvation.

Consider, for example, the case of India. Based on his study of famines in India in the period from 1860-1943, Bhatia concluded that the imposition of capitalistic imperialism on Indian society heightened its vulnerability to famine. The creation of the social, political, and economic structures of underdevelopment sapped the Indians' capacity to resist the transformation of calamity into famine. As Bhatia put it:

> Under the new conditions famine ceased to be a natural calamity and was transformed into a social problem of poverty and dearth...the human and institutional factors were becoming more important than the natural calamity in causing distress and starvation.[9]

Similarly, Mitchell saw India's vulnerability to famine as a product of her nexus with the West, and the resulting underdevelopment of Indian society:

> In Western countries the growth of industries encouraged a rapid increase in population and provided for its support. In India, industrial development has been artificially restricted, and an increasing proportion of the people has been forced to depend on a primitive system of agricultural production, which, in turn, is less and less able to meet the demands placed upon it...[10]

9. Ibid. Although - and for this observation the author is indebted to Arnold Hughes - the colonization of India also engendered the growth of modern bureaucratic and transportation systems which facilitated the relief of famines when they did occur.

10. Cited in Brown, M. India Need Not Starve Longmans (London, 1944), p.vii.

Strangely enough, probably the most clear cut demonstration of the fact that in the modern epoch it has been the nexus with capitalism which has heightened non-Western societies vulnerability to famine involved an underdeveloped Western society - Ireland. The great potato famine which ravaged Ireland between 1845 and 1849 appears to contradict the assertion that, in the period following the capitalist and industrial revolutions in the West, the triggers of famine have been confined to war and revolution. However, even in the case of the Irish potato famine, the nexus with capitalistic society - in this case, particularly with the United Kingdom - underlay the transformation of a natural disaster into a nutritional catastrophe.

The ostensible cause of the famine was the destruction of successive potato crops by a hitherto unknown form of blight.[11] Closer analysis shows, however, that it was the poverty of the Irish people which converted the failure of the potato crops into a famine. "It would be impossible to adequately describe", stated the Devon Commission in its report made in 1843, "the privation which they habitually and silently endure...in many districts their only food is the potato, their only beverage water...their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather ...a bed or a blanket is a rare luxury...and nearly in all their homes a pig and a manure heap constitute their only property."[12] In fact the pre-emptive position of the potato in Irish diets was a direct reflection of the impoverished state of the Irish masses:

11. For a fascinating and detailed account of the great Irish potato famine see Woodham-Smith, C. The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-49 Hamish Hamilton (London, 1962).

12. Cited in Woodham-Smith, op.cit., p.24.

> ...the existence of the Irish people

wrote Woodham-Smith in his study of the Irish famine,

> dependdd on the potato entirely and exclusively. The potato, provided it did not fail, enabled great quantities of food to be produced at a trifling cost from a small plot of ground... The potato was moreover the most universally useful of foods...it was simple to cook; it produced fine children; as a diet, it did not pall...neither meal nor anything else could replace it. There could be no question of resorting to an equally cheap food, no such food existed.[13]

The potato had not always so dominated life in Ireland. Its supremacy dated from the late 18th century. The extraction of agricultural surplusses by (mostly British) absentee landowners created such impoverishment among the agrarian labouring classes that they were forced to take up the potato as the staple of their diet. Their production of other agricultural commodities - Ireland was a major producer of cereal crops - was almost wholly devoted to the payment of land rents, failing which there was no opportunity even to undertake the production of potatoes.[14] At the same time the potato proved itself such an excellent staple upon which to base life - being easily grown and highly nutritious - that the population of Ireland underwent a rapid expansion throughout this period.[15] Thus, when the first major failure of

13. Woodham-Smith, op.cit., pp.35-36.

14. Woodham-Smith, op.cit., Ch.3. The impoverishing impact of extortionate ground-rents was, of course, not a factor of any importance in creating the Eastern Region's dependence on yams and cassave. There, it was a combination of soils and climate which pushed the starchy tubers rather than any other foods into the leading dietary role.

15. Ibid.

the potato crop occurred in 1845, it fell upon a population which had expanded beyond the supportive capacity of any other crop grown in Ireland, and which was, in any event, too impoverished to afford any food other than the potatoes, which most families produced for their own consumption.

The Irish potato famine was not, however - and in this respect its similarity to the nutritional catastrophe in Nigeria and elsewhere is striking - engendered solely by the interaction of the crop failures of 1845, 1846, and 1848 with the vulnerabilities created by the underdevelopment of Irish society. The pincers of starvation which gripped Ireland's people in this period had another tong: the political considerations which inhibited efforts made to alleviate the suffering of the Irish masses. The political ideology of laissez-faire dominated the reaction of Ireland's masters. As Woodham-Smith noted:

> ...the behaviour of the British authorities only becomes explicable when their fanatical belief in private enterprise and their suspicion of any action which might be considered Government intervention are borne in mind.[16]

Although the British government was unable to wholly avoid involvement in relieving the famine, its unshakeable commitment to what Charles Trevelyan, permanent head of the Treasury during the period, called the 'operation of natural causes'[17] greatly intensified the impact of the crop failures on the Irish people. As Woodham-Smith remarked:

> ...It has been frequently declared that the parsimony of the British government during the famine was the main cause of the sufferings of the people...Adherence to laissez-faire was carried to such lengths that in the midst of one

16. Woodham-Smith, op.cit., p.54.

17. Woodham-Smith, op.cit., p.274.

> of the major famines of history, the government was perpetually nervous of being too good to Ireland and of corrupting the Irish people by kindness, and so stifling the virtues of self-reliance and industry.[18]

Although such a rigid interpretation of the doctrine of laissez-faire has long since passed into a well-deserved oblivion, disaster-stricken Third World societies still suffer from the inhibition of ameliorative efforts. In Nigeria, for example, this phenomenon resulted in both the intensification and prolongation of the nutritional disaster. The belligerents' perception of the military disadvantages accruing to unhindered relief operations; the Federal authorities' resentment of international intervention in what they saw as a domestic affray; the rebel leaders' manipulation of international concern for starving Biafrans; all of these constrained the ability of the relief organizations to carry out their humanitarian mission.

Nigeria presented an extreme instance of the restriction of relief efforts for political purposes; however, other examples of the politically inspired limitation of the alleviation of mass starvation in the Third World are readily found. Consider, for example, the case of the drought-stricken societies of West Africa's Sahelian region and the central provinces of Ethiopia.[19] The famine which ravaged these areas in the early 1970s clearly demonstrated not only that poverty is the chief mechanism involved

18. Woodham-Smith, op.cit., p.410.

19. The most detailed study of the Sahelian drought is contained in Sheets, H. and Morris, R. Disaster in the Desert: Failures of International Relief in West Africa's Drought Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Washington, DC, 1974). On Ethiopia's famine see "The Political Economy of Famine: A Case Study of Ethiopia" (Paper delivered by Abraham Kidane at the 1974 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Chicago, 31 October 1974). Also see "An International Perspective on the African Famines" (Paper delivered by Laurie S. Wiseberg at the 1974 ASA-USA meeting).

in the transformation of disaster into mass starvation, but that the intensity and duration of episodes of extreme nutritional privation are largely dependent on the political impulses which condition relief efforts. In the Sudano-Sahelian famines (especially in Ethiopia) a major determinant of the suffering of the masses was the unwillingness of the local elites to call for and assist relief efforts. They were evidently afraid that to do so would both tarnish their image and undermine their local power base. In fact, they even displayed a readiness to utilize continued disaster conditions to secure personal financial or political gains.[20]

Just as in the case of Nigeria, however, responsibility for the political restriction of relief connot be wholly laid upon the local elites. Of equal importance in determining the intensity and duration of the famines in both Nigeria and the Sudano-Sahelian regions was the inadequate response to these disasters on the part of the international community. In Nigeria the mode of international involvement, with the major donor states unwilling to intervene in the dispute except through intermediaries, impeded relief efforts. Although the international community did not stint in its provision of material resources for relief operations, the refusal of its leading members to act to break the political impasse over relief corridors condemned thousands in the war zone to starvation. In the case of the Sudano-Sahelian famines, the inadequacy of international response was perhaps more typical in its manifestation in that it combined both material and political shortcomings. In late 1973, for example, the Secretary-General of the United

20. See Wiseberg, op.cit.

Nations urgently appealed for US$ 30 million in cash for Sahelian relief. Four months later only US$ 4.6 million had been raised.[21] In Ethiopia the United States Government apparently connived at the 'cover-up' of the famine in the central provinces. As Senator Kennedy put it in a US Senate hearing: "We [the US Government] did not want to expose it. We were not prepared to blow the whistle on it because of our relations with them [the Ethiopian government]. As a result a lot of people starved to death."[22]

The extent to which it will ever be possible to wholly eliminate political influences on relief operations is uncertain. In the first place disaster relief itself has an inherent political dimension. Davis stressed this in his evaluation of relief operations in a context of civil upheaval: "As the events in Nigeria/Biafra showed, international relief processes in viable civil wars involve unavoidably political tasks being undertaken in an undeniably political context."[23] Even in those less politically frought situations where disaster originates in flood or drought, there is an inescapable political dimension to relief. It involves the introduction of relatively large quantities of material resources into impoverished societies: resources which can be utilized either in support of or to undermine the prevailing social structure. Secondly, relief aid differs from other types of aid only in its composition and the general urgency surrounding its delivery. So far as its other

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Davis, M. "The Politics of International Relief Processes in Large Civil Wars: An Editorial Comment" Journal of Developing Areas 6 (July 1972), p.491.

attributes are concerned the same proscriptions apply to emergency aid as to all other forms of bilateral or even multi-lateral assistance. So long as the provenance and destination of resources for use in relief is tied to national governments - and no major disaster can be dealt with solely from the unofficial resources available to voluntary agencies - both disaster aid and its administration will be conditioned by the political considerations of both donors and recipients. Even the multi-lateralization of relief operations - in the sense that resources would both flow from and be administered by a body such as the UN - would be unlikely to wholly remove the political constraints on disaster aid - witness the difficulties experienced by the UN in its relief operation in East Pakistan just prior to the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war. In any event the benefits of enhanced political acceptability which might be achieved by widening the sponsorship of relief actions would probably be tempered by a diminished administrative flexibility and responsiveness.

Flaws in the administration of disaster aid already make a large contribution to the limited beneficience of relief operations. Relief agencies generally waste large amounts of time and resources. This stems partly from their rather startling ability to ignore the lessons of previous disasters; partly from their acutely inadequate knowledge of local conditions and customs in 'normal' times; and, closely related to the preceding point, partly from their failure to establish sensible criteria for the recruitment of staff. The most important flaws - at least in the long term - in the organization of relief operations stems from the fact that they are both organized and evaluated within a framework of Western precepts of efficiency and effectiveness. This inevitably involves the location of effective

control in expatriate relief workers' hands. As a result current operations are often ineffective, and there is little improvement of local capabilities for dealing with future disasters - the relief organizations, in effect, perpetuate themselves.

The only point remaining to be made in this thesis concerns the relevance of the study of acute hunger to the general analysis of the processes of social change in the Third World. Any study of hunger could be said to approach the central meaning of human existence. In the final analysis, most of the history of the majority of mankind has revolved around the struggle to secure at least the minimum quantity of material resources required for subsistence. Even today, when most Europeans and North Americans enjoy an abundance of material possessions which enables them to live far above subsistence levels, the daily quest for sufficient food to sustain life remains at the centre of existence for the majority of the world's population. In fact, the possibility, or probability, that over the next few years millions of the peoples of Latin America, Asia, and Africa may fail in that daily quest is a spectre which haunts all of mankind today.

In the late 1960's it appeared that the development of high-yield strains of staple food plants would revolutionize productivity in the most famine-prone areas of the underdeveloped world. However, it is now recognized that the 'green revolution' has not been wholly successful.[24] Countries such as India, which only a few years ago were bravely forecasting the rapid

24. See Griffin, D. The Political Economy of Agrarian Change Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Mass., 1974) for a detailed assessment of the successes and failures of the Green Revolution.

achievement of self-sufficiency in the production of foodstuffs, now find themselves at the head of the queue of nations attempting to stave off a nutritional catastrophe by procuring a share of the West's dwindling reserves of foodgrains. Belatedly, it has become apparent that there is no miracle cure for the incapacities of the food economies of Third World societies.

It was in recognition of the centrality of the problem of hunger in the Third World that the world's nations felt compelled to meet and discuss both long and short-term measures for the eradication of starvation in those societies in November 1970. At this World Food Conference it was recognized that both famines and what Laffin has called 'normal' hunger are manifestations of the underdevelopment of Third World societies. It was asserted that the tenuousness of the balance between the production of subsistence goods and the subsistence requirements of Third World populations can be remedied only by attacking the fundamental conditions of underdevelopment which generate the imbalance between productive and reproductive capacities in the first place. It was argued that unless the nexus between Western capitalism and the Third World, which creates underdevelopment, is radically altered there will be no end to the threat of famine for most of the world's population.[25] Thus the improvement of food supplies and eradication of acute hunger were established as key criteria for the judgement of the progress of social change in under-developed countries. The world community, finally and publicly, acknowledged its belief that in a world of over-populated and underdeveloped societies hunger was, once again, becoming the 'mainspring' of politics.[26]

25. See the report on the World Food Conference in World Medicine Jan.15, 1975, pp.15-24. Also the special Report in Time Magazine 11 November 1974.

26. Cited in Brown, loc.cit.

A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

Aall, C. Relief, Nutrition, and Health Problems in the Nigerian/Biafran War (Unpublished manuscript, Ibadan, 1969).

Africa Research Group The Other Side of Nigeria's Civil War (Cambridge, Mass., 1970).

Akpan, N.U. The Struggle for Secession: A Personal Account of the Nigerian Civil War Frank Cass (London, 1971).

Aluko, S.A. "The Problem of the Displaced Persons" in Christian Concern in the Nigerian Civil War q.v.

Balogun, O. The Tragic Years: Nigeria in Crisis 1966-1970 Ethiope Publishing Corp. (Benin City, 1973).

Bauer, P.T. and Yamey, B.S. The Economics of Underdeveloped Countries Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1957).

Bhatia, B.M. Famines in India: A Study of Some Aspects of the Economic History of India (1860-1945) Asia Publishing House (London, 1963).

Brewin, A. and MacDonald, D. Canada and the Biafran Tragedy James Lewis and Samuel (Toronto, 1970).

Brown, M. India Need Not Starve Longmans (London, 1944).

Cervenka, Z. The Nigerian War 1967-1970: History of the War, Selected Bibliography and Documents Bernard Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen (Frankfurt am Main, 1971).

Christian Concern in the Nigerian Civil War (Unattrib.) Daystar Press (Ibadan, 1969).

Coale, A.J. and Hoover, E.M. Population Growth and Economic Development in Low-Income Countries: A Case Study of Indian Prospects Princeton University Press (Princeton, N.J., 1958).

Cohen, R. "Class in Africa: Analytical Problems and Perspectives" in Milliband, R. and Saville, J. (Eds.) The Socialist Register 1972 The Merlin Press (London, 1972) pp.231-255.

Coleman, J.S. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism University of California Press (Los Angeles, 1958).

Cronje, S. The World and Nigeria: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War 1967-1970 Sidgwick and Jackson (London, 1972).

Dema, G.S. Nutrition in Relation to Agricultural Production in Nigeria and the Countries of West Africa FAO (Rome, 1965).

Dent, M.J. "A Minority Party - The United Middle Belt Congress" in Mackintosh (Ed.), q.v., pp.461-507.

_____ "The Military and the Politicians" in Panter-Brick (Ed.) q.v., pp.78-93.

Dos Santos, T. "The Crisis of Development Theory and the Problem of Dependence in Latin America" in Bernstein, H. (Ed.) Underdevelopment and Development: The Third World Today Penguin Books (London, 1973).

Dudley, B.J. "Western Nigeria and the Nigerian Crisis" in Panter-Brick (Ed.) q.v., pp.94-110.

Eicher, C.K. and Liedholm, C. (Eds.) Growth and Development of the Nigerian Economy Michigan State University Press (E. Lansing, Mich., 1970).

Ekanem, I.I. The 1963 Nigerian Census: A Critical Approach Ethiope Publishing Co. (Benin City, 1972).

First, R. The Barrel of a Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'Etat Penguin Press (Allen Lane, 1970).

Fisher, L.S. The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923 Harper and Row (New York, 1927).

Fitch, B. and Oppenheimer, M. Ghana: End of an Illusion Monthly Review Press (New York, 1966).

Floyd, B. Eastern Nigeria: A Geographical Review MacMillan (London, 1969).

Goffman, E. Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates Aldine Publishing Co. (Chicago, 1962).

Graham-Douglas, N.G. Ojukwu's Rebellion and World Opinion Gallitzine, Chant, and Russell (London, 1968).

Hanna, W.J. and Hanna, J.L. Urban Dynamics in Black Africa Aldine-Atherton (New York, 1971).

Helleiner, G.K. Peasant Agriculture, Government, and Economic Growth in Nigeria Richard D. Irwin, Inc. (Homewood, Ill., 1966).

Hentsch, T. Face au Blocus Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales (Geneva, 1973).

HMG Air Ministry The Berlin Airlift (London, 1949).

Janowitz, M. The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis (University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 1964).

_____ The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait Free Press of Glencoe (Glencoe, Ill., 1960).

Johnston, B.F. The Staple Food Economies of Tropical Africa Stanford University Press (Stanford, Calif., 1958).

Jones, W.O. Marketing of Staple Food Crops in Tropical Africa: Overall Analysis and Report Stanford Research Institute (Menlo Park, Calif., 1969).

Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook 1966-1969 (2 Vols.) Oxford University Press (London, 1971).

Lloyd, H.G., Mollerup, M.L., and Bratved, C.A. The Nordchurchaid Airlift to Biafra 1968-1970: An Operations Report Folkekirkens Nødhjaelp (Copenhagen, 1972).

Luckham, R. The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt 1960-1967 Cambridge University Press (Cambridge, 1971).

_____ "The Nigerian Military" in Panter-Brick (Ed.) q.v., pp.58-77.

McCleary, G.F. The Malthusian Population Theory Faber and Faber, Ltd. (London, 1953).

Mabogunje, A.L. Urbanization in Nigeria Africana Publishing Corp. (New York, 1968).

_____ "A Typology of Population Pressure on Resources in West Africa" in Zelinsky, W., Leszek, A.K. and Protheor, R.M. (Eds.) Geography and a Crowding World OUP (London, 1970).

Mackintosh, J.P. (Ed.) Nigerian Government and Politics Northwestern University Press (Evanston, Ill., 1966).

Miners, N.J. The Nigerian Army 1956-1966 Methuen (London, 1971).

Niven, R. The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970 Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers), Ltd. (Ibadan, 1970).

Nwankwo, A.A. and Ifejika, S.U. The Making of a Nation: Biafra C. Hurst and Co. (London, 1969).

O'Brien, W.V. "International Crimes" in Sills, D.L. (Ed.) International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences MacMillan and The Free Press (London, 1968).

Okonjo, C. "A Preliminary Medium Estimate of the 1962 Mid-Year Population in Nigeria" in Caldwell, J.C. and Okonjo, C. (Eds.) The Population of Tropical Africa Longmans (London, 1968), pp.78-96.

Okonjo, U. The Impact of Urbanization on the Ibo Family Structure Gerhard Münch Offsettdruck (Göttingen, 1970).

Oluwansanmi, H.A. et al. Uboma: A Socio-Economic and Nutritional Survey of a Rural Community in Eastern Nigeria Geographical Publications (Bude, Cornwall, 1966).

Oyenuga, V.A. Agriculture in Nigeria: An Introduction FAO (Rome, 1967).

Panter-Brick, S.K. (Ed.) Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War The Athlone Press (London, 1970).

Post, K.W.J. "The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons: The Decision of December 1959" in Mackintosh (Ed.) q.v., pp.405-426.

_____ The Nigerian Federal Election of 1959 Oxford University Press (London, 1963).

Post, K.W.J. and Vickers, M. Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960-1966 Heinemann (London, 1973).

Roberts, B. Life and Death Among the Ibos Scripture Union (London, 1970).

Rostow, W.W. "The Take-Off into Sustained Growth" in Agarwala, A.N. and Singh, S.P. (Eds.) The Economics of Underdevelopment Oxford University Press (London, 1958), pp.154-186.

Schwarz, W. Nigeria Pall Mall Press (London, 1968).

St. Jorre, Jon de The Nigerian Civil War Hodder and Stoughton (London, 1972).

Salisbury, H.E. The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad Pan Books, Ltd. (London, 1971).

Samuels, M.A. (Ed.) The Nigeria Biafra Conflict: Report of a One-Day Conference The Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University (Washington, D.C., 1969).

Sheets, H. and Morris, R. Disaster in the Desert: Failures of International Relief in West Africa's Drought Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Washington, D.C., 1974).

Sklar, R.L. Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation Princeton University Press (Princeton, N.J., 1963).

Smock, D.R. and Smock, A.C. Cultural and Political Aspects of Rural Transformation: A Case Study of Eastern Nigeria Praeger (New York, 1972).

Whiteman, K. "Enugu: The Psychology of Secession" in Panter-Brick (Ed.) q.v., pp.111-127.

Woodham-Smith, C. The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845-49 Hamish Hamilton (London, 1962).

Zolberg, A. Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa Rand, McNally and Co. (Chicago, 1966).

ARTICLES AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

Adler, R. "Letter from Biafra" New Yorker 4 October 1969.

Aluko, S.A. "How Many Nigerians..." Journal of Modern African Studies 3 (3) 1965, pp.371-392.

Auspitz, L. "Biafra and the Bureaucrats: Anatomy of a Bloody Mess" Ripon Forum 5 (2) 1969.

Beal, C.W. "How the State Department Watched Biafra Starve" Ripon Forum 6 (3) 1970.

Brook, J.F. "Nutrition" Annual Revue of Biochemistry 24 (1955), pp.218-235.

Bourne, P.G. "Some Observations on the Psychological Phenomena Seen in Basic Training" Psychiatry 30 (2) 1967, pp.187-196.

Braundi, E. and Letteiri, A. "The General Strike in Nigeria" International Socialist Journal 1 (5/6) 1964, pp.598-609.

Connett, P. "Life Behind the Battle" (Reprinted from the Spectator in Press Actions, 1 January - 30 June, 1969 Biafran Overseas Press Division (Markpress), Geneva.

Dalrymple, D.G. "The Soviet Famine of 1932-34" Soviet Studies 40 (3) 1964, pp.

Davis, M. "The Politics of International Relief Processes in Large Civil Wars: An Editorial Comment" Journal of Developing Areas 6 (July 1972).

Feit, E. "The Rule of the Iron Surgeons: Military Government in Spain and Ghana" Comparative Politics 1 (4) 1969, pp.485-497.

Feld, M.D. "Professionalism, Nationalism, and the Alienation of the Military" (Paper presented to the Sixth World Congress of Sociology, Evian, France, 1966).

First International Conference on Biafra (Mimeographed) Columbia University (New York), 7-8 December 1968.

Gugler, J. "Eastern Nigerians in Town: Life in a Dual System" Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines 11 (1) 1971, pp.400-421.

Kidane, A. "The Political Economy of Famine: A Case Study of Ethiopia" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ASA/USA, October 1974).

Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. "The Unacceptable Face of Humanitarianism" (Paper presented at Conference on problems of Christianity in post-Colonial Africa, SOAS, 15 November 1973).

Kjellberg, F. "Some Cultural Aspects of the Military Profession" Archives Europeens de Sociologie 6 (2) 1965, pp.283-293.

Lindsay, K. "A Clan System That Means Agony for Biafra's Starving Refugees" Globe and Mail (Toronto), 2 October 1968.

McLaren, D.S. "The Great Protein Fiasco" Lancet 13 July 1974, pp.93-96.

Nzimiro, I. "A Study of Mobility Among the Ibos of Southern Nigeria" International Journal of Comparative Sociology 6 (1) 1965, pp.117-130.

O'Connell, J. "The Anatomy of a Pogrom: An Outline Model with Special Reference to the Ibo in Northern Nigeria" Race 9 (1) 1967, pp.95-100.

Perspectives Biafra: An International Conference Sponsored by Operation Outrage, Inc. (Washington, D.C., 11 January 1969).

Price, R.M. "A Theoretical Approach to Military Rule in New States: Reference Group Theory and the Ghanaian Case" World Politics 23 (3) 1971, pp.399-430.

Sklar, R.L. "Nigerian Politics in Perspective" Government and Opposition 2 (4) 1967, pp.525-537.

_____ "Contradictions in the Nigerian Political System" Journal of Modern African Studies 3 (2) 1965, pp.201-213.

Udo, R.K. "The Migrant Tenant Farmers of Eastern Nigeria" Africa 34 (3) 1964, pp.326-339.

Van Doorn, J. "The Officer Corps: A Fusion of Profession and Organization", Archives Europeens de Sociologie 6 (2) 1965, pp.262-282.

Wiseberg, L.S. "An International Perspective on the African Famines" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ASA/USA, October 1974).

Zolberg, A. "The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa" American Political Science Review 62 (1) 1968.

Zurcher, L.A. "The Sailor Aboard Ship: A Study of Role Behaviour in a Total Institution" Social Forces 43 (3) 1965, pp.389-400.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

Federal Government

Federal Ministry of Information Federal Peace Efforts (Lagos, 1968).

National Commission for Rehabilitation Emergency Relief Operations, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation: National Commission for Rehabilitation Progress Report (Lagos, 1 July 1970).

Federal Census Office Population Census of Nigeria 1963 (Eastern Nigeria) (Lagos, n.d.).

Federal Office of Statistics Urban Consumer Surveys in Nigeria (Lagos, n.d.)

Eastern Region/Biafran Government

Nigerian Crisis 1966 (Vol.3 "Pogrom") (Enugu/Aba, 1966-1967).

Rehabilitation Commission Notes on the Management of Refugee Camps in the Republic of Biafra (Circular No. 1/1968) (Enugu, 10 July 1968).

Others

"Report of the Biafra Study Mission" Congressional Record (Senate) 91st Congress, 1st Session (Washington D.C., 25th February 1969), Vol.115, No.33.

Diggs, C.C. and Burke, J.H. (Chairmen) Report of Special Fact-finding Mission to Nigeria February 7-20, 1969 (Pursuant to House Resolution 143 Authorizing the Committee on Foreign Affairs to Conduct Thorough Studies and Investigations of All Matters Coming Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee) US Government Printing Office (Washington, D.C., 1969).

The Post War Nigerian Situation (Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on African Affairs House of Representatives, 91st Congress (2nd Session) 27 January 1970) US Government Printing Office (Washington, D.C. 1970).

"Emergency Relief in Nigeria and the Biafran Enclave July 1967 Through June 30, 1969" AID Foreign Disaster Relief Report Reprint (Reprinted from: Ninth Report, Fiscal Year 1969, Foreign Disaster Emergency Relief, issued by Disaster Relief Coordinator, Agency for International Development).

Final Report of the Chief Medical Advisor, May-June, 1969 (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Lagos, n.d.)

NRC/ICRC Information Bulletin, No.15 (Lagos, 15 June 1969).

Report and Recommendations of the Chief Medical Advisor (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Lagos, September 1969).

Projected Nutritional Needs in Federal Nigeria (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Lagos, 1969).

Report on the Measles and Small-Pox Vaccinations Campaign in Biafra (Mimeographed at ICRC Headquarters in Geneva, April 1969).

Nigerian Red Cross Society Nigerian Relief Action: Report of the Nigerian Red Cross Society 1966-1970 (Lagos, n.d.).

Interim Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General's Representative (1-5), dated October 1968 - May 1969.

See also the following public relations publications for the period July 1967 - January 1970:

Topical Red Cross News (Geneva)

ICRC Press Releases (Geneva)

ICRC In Action Information Notes (Geneva)

ICRC Information Notes to National Societies on ICRC Relief Action in Behalf of the Victims of the Conflict in Nigeria (Geneva)

NRC/ICRC Information Bulletins (Lagos)

JOINTCHURCHAID Press Releases (Geneva)

Biafran Overseas Press Division Press Releases (Collected as Press Actions 2 February 1968 to 31 December 1969. (3 vol.) Published by Markpress (Geneva, 1970)).

NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

London Daily Newspapers

Daily Telegraph
Financial Times
Guardian
Times

London Weekly Newspapers

Observer
Sunday Telegraph
Sunday Times

Lagos Daily Newspapers

Daily Times

Morning Post

Other Newspapers

New York Times (Daily)

Periodicals

Newsweek

Time

West Africa

World Medicine

OTHER SOURCES +

Appelby, D. Public Relations, The Mass Media, and Political Pressure Groups: British Opinion and the Nigerian Civil War (Thesis submitted for the degree M.Soc.Sci. at the University of Birmingham in 1973.)

Africa Concern, Ltd. First Annual Report of the Joint Biafra Famine Appeal for the Year Ending 30 June 1969 (n.d.)

Hendrickse, R.G. Visit to the East Central State, 31 January 1969 to 7 February 1969 (Report presented to the Paediatric Association of Nigeria).

+ The following thesis, although highly relevant to the topic, was not available to the author:

Wiseberg, L.S. The International Politics of Relief: A Case Study of the Relief Operations Mounted During the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970 (Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1973).