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# Intelligence Note

- 830

November 26, 1969

To : The Secretary  
Through: S/S  
From : INR - Ray S. Cline

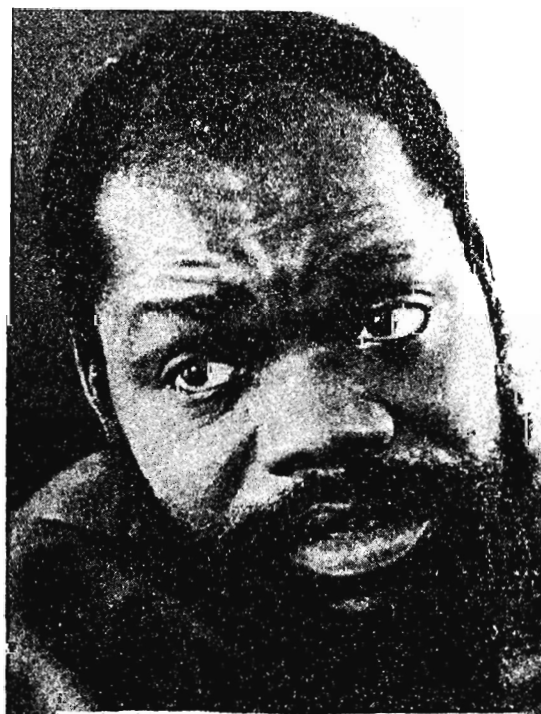
*RSC*

Subject: NIGERIA-BIAFRA: Peace or Pieces

Under heavy pressure from friends and would-be mediators, Nigeria and Biafra seem finally to have agreed to second level talks, to be held under the aegis of Emperor Haile Selassie when Ramadan ends after December 12. Much, however, could happen to upset this fragile understanding. Even if negotiations do take place, the parties are still too far apart to permit much hope of agreement. A military "solution," sooner or later, remains the most likely prospect.



Major-General Yakubu Gowon



Chukwu-Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu

*Ref 27-14 Biafra - Nigeria*

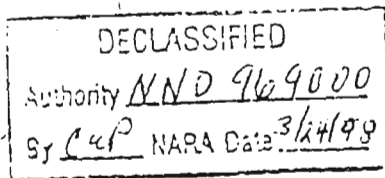
*Ref 27-17 Biafra - Nigeria*

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Negotiating Positions. The Nigerians are holding firm to their "one Nigeria" policy, though they may be flexible as to when and in what form the renunciation of secession takes place. The Biafrans, while publicly holding to their demand for a separate existence--particularly for representation on international bodies and for autonomous security forces--may have a fall-back position allowing for some concessions. Reuters recently quoted an unnamed Biafran spokesman as saying: "Since our attachment to sovereignty is functional and not sentimental, Biafra will be prepared to accept, at the suggestion of no matter who/m/, any alternative arrangement that can guarantee a nonrecurrence of the massacres of the last 25 years." The statement has since been denied, although it is thought to have been made or approved by Colonel C. Odumegwu Ojukwu himself in an effort to signal Biafran flexibility. "Flexible" or not, the Biafrans still seem quite disinclined to make the sort of basic concessions the federal side demands.

The Alternative to Negotiations. The alternative to negotiations is continued civil war. Both sides have received new weapons which could have sudden impact in either direction.<sup>1</sup> However, recent travelers to the enclave report that discipline and morale among the Biafran troops has deteriorated. Platoon commanders are said to be commandeering relief vehicles and stealing civilian crops for their men. Visitors report that many Biafrans seem to express their support for the war only if asked, and otherwise keep quiet.

1. See Intelligence Note 811, "NIGERIA-BIAFRA: New Weapons May Delay Peace Talks," November 14, 1969 (~~SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~).

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We understand that Biafran finances are in bad shape and that Biafran forces now operate on ammunition reserves more limited than before. These straws in the wind may indicate a situation in which the Nigerians would lose all interest in negotiations as they sense imminent victory on the battlefield. Ironically, the very circumstances which could lead Biafra to make the required concessions tend to stiffen the Nigerian back.

How the End May Come. Due in part to lack of effective leadership the Federal military has consistently failed to over-run the enclave. Nevertheless, Federal troops are only 20-25 miles from the two principal Biafran airfields and less than ten from field artillery range of these essential lifelines to the outside world. There are indications of expanding Federal military activity. While Federal and Biafran forces are about equal in number in the South, there are areas in the North where the Federal forces enjoy a two or three-to-one edge; they have a considerable edge in firepower. The Biafran lines are stretched thin, and a penetration of perhaps 10-15 miles by Nigerian forces could bring about a Biafran collapse. So might the capture or interdiction of Uli airport for more than a few days.

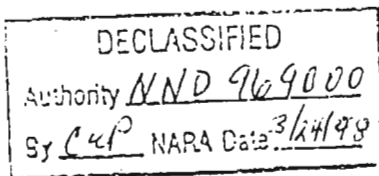
Pieces Instead of Peace: Federal troops could lose **self-control** in a retaliatory blood bath as they occupy a prostrate Biafra, especially if Biafra in desperation takes some rash last-minute action such as bombing Lagos. The Federal Chief of State, General Yakubu Gowon, and his division commanders do not want such atrocities, but their ability to control the troops at the platoon level is uncertain. The situation could be aggravated by Biafran guerrilla resistance. There is an observer team composed of two observers.

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from each of six countries; they are normally in Lagos. So small an international "force" could not be expected to exercise much restraint on Federal troops sweeping the enclave should organized resistance cave in. Such a tragic breakdown in Federal discipline is by no means inevitable, but the possibility must be taken into account.

After the Flood: There would be an immediate need for food, medicine and shelter in areas over-run by Federal troops, even if Federal discipline holds firm. This requires pre-positioning of major stocks of supplies and drawing up of contingency agreements among air line companies, relief organizations, and governments. The more effective the international assistance rendered in the wake of a rebel collapse, the better would be the hope for peaceful reintegration of the Ibos into Nigeria. A prostrate Biafra presents a sombre prospect, but this seems the likely outcome in the absence of a negotiated settlement. The attrition of fatigue, military pressure and malnutrition continues to weaken the resiliency of Biafra. A collapse could come in a week, a month, or the better part of a year.

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