

CONFIDENTIAL

MINUTES OF "CONSULTATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS IN NIGERIAN-BIAFRAN STRUGGLE" - Wednesday, July 31st, 1968, 10:30 A.M. - Room 800 B.

The following were in attendance:

Rev. Floyd Honey - U.S. Conference of World Council of Churches  
Mr. George Hauser - Executive Director of American Comm. on Africa  
Rev. David Hunter - National Council of Churches  
Mr. James Jennings - U.S. Bishops Commission on Peace and Justice  
Mr. Donald Keys - International League for the Rights of Man  
Father Fintan Kilbride, Port Harcourt, Biafra  
Miss Naomi Spatz - Asst. Exec. Dir., African-America Labor Center  
Mr. Mark Saperstein - Union of American Hebrew Congregations

American Jewish Committee

Dr. Bertram H. Gold, Executive Vice-President  
Dr. Simon Segal, Director, Foreign Affairs Department  
Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director, Interreligious Affairs Department  
Mrs. Judy Banki, Assistant Director, Interreligious Affairs Department  
Mrs. Hanna Desser, Latin American Specialist  
Mr. Sidney Liskofsky, Director, Division of International Organizations  
Rabbi James Rudin, Asst. Director, Interreligious Affairs Department

The meeting was chaired by Dr. Gold, who opened the discussion by setting forth the political and human rights questions that are involved in the current Nigerian-Biafran civil war. Rabbi Tanenbaum reported on various relief efforts that have been undertaken in the Jewish community in cooperation with the Catholic and Protestant agencies, and he indicated that the relief aid is inextricably linked with achieving a cease-fire and an end to the war.

Father Kilbride then gave an eye-witness account of the political situation in Biafra. He stressed the need for an immediate massive airlift of foodstuffs and medicines to Biafra. In addition, he feels the U.S. Government has been too passive during the past year and he urged that American public opinion be mobilized to move the State Department from its "neutral position". His hope is that a cease-fire can be arranged as soon as possible and that during the cease-fire huge amounts of badly needed food and medicines would be brought into Biafra. Father Kilbride also questioned the reliability of a so-called "mercy corridor". He was convinced that such a corridor would undermine Biafra's already precarious military situation and he expressed doubts about the Nigerian Government's sincerity in this matter.

A general discussion ensued regarding whether genocide was actually taking place in Biafra, the current military situation itself, the possibility of some positive achievements from the upcoming peace talks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, beginning on August 5th. Britain's key role in supporting the federal government of Nigeria was pointed out as well as shipments of Russian arms and Egyptian pilots who are aiding the Nigerians.

Mr. Hauser felt that only a dramatic and gigantic air-sea effort could save the Biafran people from starvation and destruction. He envisioned a U.S. aircraft carrier anchored on the coast of Biafra with an "air-bridge" of helicopters flying to Biafra with medicines and foods.

Mrs. Banki questioned whether American Negro groups had involved themselves in this Biafran question. Mr. Keys noted that four African countries (Gabon, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Zambia) had recognized Biafra and he felt that these nations may have some leverage in bringing about a cease-fire. Mrs. Desser asked whether the full resources of the United Nations had been used in settling the civil war. Mr. Liskofsky replied that no special General Assembly had been called for, and that the matter had not been brought to the attention of the Security Council as of this date. Dr. Hunter acknowledging the tremendous humanitarian need of the hour felt that the certain political aspects of the situation could not be ignored. There was general agreement on this point.

The group consensus centered on two main points:

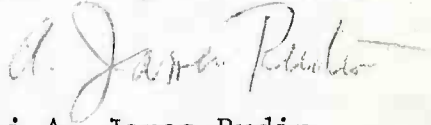
1. That a paper be prepared immediately for presentation to the Organization of African Unity and that this paper would also be presented to the representatives meeting in Addis Ababa. This paper would call for a temporary cease-fire in Biafra and would stress the need for a massive humanitarian effort in order to save the famine stricken population of Biafra. It was agreed that this paper would be couched in broad moral and humanitarian tones. Mr. Hauser agreed to have such a document prepared.
2. That a second paper be prepared immediately for presentation to the appropriate State Department and Congressional leaders. This second paper would also call upon the good offices of the United States Government to arrange a temporary cease-fire in Nigeria and it would also urge that the United States work towards establishing the badly needed airlift of food and medicines for Biafra. In addition, it would call upon the Government to use its influence upon the government of Great Britain in order to bring about a cease-fire. It would also urge the State Department to contact Emperor Haile

Selassie of Ethiopia who is the host at the Nigerian-Biafran peace talks beginning next Monday. The second paper would be more specific than the first and hopefully it would touch upon the various political aspects of the Nigerian civil war. The group also felt that our concern should be expressed not only to the State Department and key members of Congress but to the various Presidential candidates as well. It was also felt that a small but select delegation should call upon the State Department and Congress early next week to present the aforementioned document. It was agreed that both organizations and individuals would sign the memos.

Dr. Gold asked Mr. Hauser and Mr. Keys respectively to prepare the two memos; both agreed. Two draft documents will be ready when the group reconvenes at The American Jewish Committee offices on Friday, August 2nd, at 10:30 A.M.

It was also stressed that the World Council of Churches and the Vatican should use its diplomatic influence with Emperor Selassie and the two delegations in Addis Ababa.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Rabbi A. James Rudin  
Acting Secretary

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