

NND 969042

By fst Date 2 June '98 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: April 14, 1970

SUBJECT: Nigerian Complaints about U.S. Behavior

PARTICIPANTS: His Excellency Joe Iyalla, Nigerian Ambassador
Mr. Isaac J. Sagay, First Secretary

Mr. C. William Kontos, Director, AF/AFR-N
Mr. George B. Sherry, Deputy Director, AF/AFR-N

COPIES TO:

The Under Secretary
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Ambassador Iyalla called at his request to deliver a three-prong complaint against U.S. behavior and attitudes during the postwar period. These concerned the leak of information about the nutritional survey published by the Evening Star on April 7, alleged preferential treatment given Ibos in visa matters, and the current activities of "Biafran" organizations in soliciting money.

Claiming that the Star leak was carried by Reuters and therefore widely known in Nigeria, Iyalla indicated that his Government viewed this matter with concern and might be driven to refuse to permit any American doctors to come to or remain in Nigeria if they couldn't be trusted not to leak state information. He was assured that we and the CDC doctors have honored our commitment to the Nigerian Government that the results of the survey were to be released only by the Nigerian Government, and that we could not account for the leak. Iyalla's inclination was to blame Dr. Lythcott but he was given copies of Lythcott's angry letter to the Star and his apologetic letter to Dr. Silva of the Ministry of Health in Lagos. While still suspicious, Iyalla was mollified to some extent.

On the visa question, Iyalla requested that henceforth former "Biafrans" no longer receive preferential treatment but be handled in exactly the same way as any other Nigerian. He alleged that many Ibos had been given open-ended visas, that AID participant grantees were permitted to remain indefinitely in the United States after completing their training unlike other Nigerians and that in general Ibos

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were being favored. He said that by ceasing to accord them preferential treatment, the U.S. Government could help impress upon all Ibos the fact that the rebellion had failed and that their future lay in Nigeria, where they were welcome, and whence they should return to put their talents to good use. Iyalla was assured that the entire matter would be reviewed but at the same time he was asked to clarify for us the position of the FMG with regard to its willingness to pick up the educational costs of Ibo and other Nigerian students in this country who are presently in need. He promised to do so.

Iyalla brought with him an advertisement placed in the New York Times of April 12, 1970 by the Biafra International Foundation (342 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10017) sponsored by the Biafra Association in the Americas Inc. on Behalf of the Biafran Community. Iyalla's complaint related to the fact that the advertisement indicated that contributions would be tax deductible and that they were intended to "(A) aid the settlement of stranded Biafran refugees in the United States and abroad and (B) aid in the rehabilitation of our brothers and sisters at home--to enable them to achieve peace and equal treatment under their present conditions." Iyalla said that the FMG would be hardput to understand how contributions to such an organization could be considered tax deductible and that in any event the FMG would flatly refuse to let any funds collected by such an organization be sent to Nigeria. He categorized the organization as fraudulent and said further that such activities simply contribute to the irrationality of those who refuse to believe that the rebellion has failed. Iyalla was told that we would check into the bonafides of the organization and check whether in fact it enjoyed tax exempt status. (Subsequent check with Treasury has indicated that it is not tax exempt. Ambassador Iyalla was so informed. We are proceeding with a further investigation.)

Clearance: AF/AFR-N - Mr. Kontos 

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
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