

NND 969042

By ffg Date 2 June '58 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DECLASSIFIED  
PA/HO Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
April 21, 2005

## Memorandum of Conversation

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PART II

DATE: February 9, 1971

SUBJECT: Admission of Former Biafrans to US

PARTICIPANTS: H.E. Joe Iyalla, Ambassador of Nigeria  
David D. Newsom, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs

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Ambassador Iyalla raised during the course of a luncheon the question of the admission to the U.S. of key members of the former Biafran regime.

Referring to his recent consultation, he said that General Gowon made a special point of emphasizing to Ambassador Iyalla the problem posed by the continuing admission and activities in the U.S. of the former Biafrans. General Gowon, according to the Ambassador, was being criticized by anti-American elements for his friendship with the U.S. and for the stance which the U.S. seemed to be taking on this issue. The Ambassador said also that Nigeria might wish to recall some of the figures of the Biafran regime for trial.

In response, Mr. Newsom expressed surprise that this matter had been raised since he had not been aware that it was still an issue. He had seen nothing in the American press about continuing efforts of former Biafrans. He knew that Ambassador Iyalla had been aware of Dr. Dike's appointment to Harvard and there had been no objection.

Ambassador Iyalla reiterated that there were a number of key figures in the U.S. and that they were continuing to make statements which got back to him and got back to Lagos. He mentioned particularly Mr. Mojekwu and a long speech that the latter had made at Amherst.

Mr. Newsom said he knew of the Mojekwu case and that the question of a visa for him was currently pending. The U.S. is limited in what it can do either in restricting the admission of otherwise qualified applicants or in extraditing people for political crimes. There is a particular sensitivity about the tradition of asylum

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as the recent case of the Lithuanian seaman demonstrated. It is important that the Nigerian Government understand U.S. limitations so that there be no misunderstandings in the future. In this connection, Mr. Newsom asked what the British position was toward the residence of former regime figures. Ambassador Iyalla said the British watched them more closely and had "special arrangements" with the Nigerians to keep them under control.

Pointing out that Mr. Mojekwu was traveling on a Sierra Leone passport, Mr. Newsom asked why Nigeria did not raise the problem with its fellow African state. Ambassador Iyalla acknowledged that this might be done. He asked whether the Department could advise him confidentially of the nationality of passport carried by former Biafrans whom he might list. Mr. Newsom promised to look into this.

Stressing that it was in the interest of both parties to define the problem clearly, Mr. Newsom suggested that Mr. Foley might prepare an informal paper for Ambassador Iyalla on our pertinent visa regulations. Ambassador Iyalla said this would be helpful.

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