

A TASK THAT MUST BE DONE:

**ISSUES ON THE FEDERALISTS' VISUAL PROPAGANDA IN NIGERIAN CIVIL
WAR**

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Abstract

The apparent interest today in Nigerian visual culture has necessitated this paper. Therefore, its primary focus shall be on the status of visual data from the burgeoning ephemera as a source of historical knowledge. Using selected visual illustrations in the posters, cartoons and photographs that were at the core of the Nigerian civil war campaign between 1967 and 1970, this paper attempts to review the visual propaganda approach of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the civil war. It seeks to employ the tools of art historical discourse to analyse the techniques and styles vis-à-vis the themes and the contexts of production of these ephemera by the Federalists' campaign in order to underscore as a summary, the role of the antecedent issues often harnessed to exacerbate and propagate crisis in the politics of might in today's Nigeria.

Introduction

The enthusiasm that greeted the declaration of Biafra as a sovereign state outside the federated regional structure of Nigeria on May 30th 1968 had hardly simmered down in its various cities when it became obvious to the establishment¹ in Enugu, (the capital of the new country) that beyond the fundamental assumptions earlier sold to its people in most visual propaganda materials, newspaper commentaries and news talks in the wake of the 1966 pogroms that the East was a truly united region, facing a common problem and a common enemy, there appeared cracks in its infancy to suggest that the contrary was the case.

For one, the May 27, 1968 creation of new states for the minority ethnic groups in the Eastern Region by the Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, had not only introduced a new rhetoric in the dynamics of Nigerian unity but also represented a strategic move to clinically counter secession and its spirited campaign by the Eastern Regional Provinces from its inception.² Clara B. Joseph aptly captures this scenario as she puts it succinctly that;

If the artificiality of the Nigerian state was raised as a reason for secession, then the artifice of Biafra soon became pronounced as internal differences, of economic disparity, religious divisions, and even more varied tribal regions surfaced. It became evident that Biafra now included Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Ijo, and Eko people who enjoyed no political unity before the advent of the British.³

¹ I have used the word establishment here to represent the statutory consultative assembly and the privileged elite who became part of the special think tank that were privy to and perhaps responsible for the suggestions that led to or resulted in the cascading events which promoted the Biafran state.

² The complexity of the Nigerian state can be best understood by this illustration. The delicate mix in the structural composition of Nigeria has lately become a rich source for scholarly discourse. In context here, the ground work for rift had previously been laid and with the new states offer, the Biafran republic was sure to experience a new kind of dissent which was to share the scarce propaganda resource on its own side.

³ Clara B. Joseph. "Nation Because of Differences" *Research in African Literatures* 32. 3, 2001.6

Haunted by these apparent congenital features, and by its defiant declaration of the “Republic of Biafra,” the new Biafran establishment knew that its sustenance as a sovereign and independent state depended on the ability to delicately manage the ethnic and economic contradictions not only within its assumed precincts but also to the outside world. This triggered what was to become a bitter and sustained propaganda war between the belligerents for thirty months and twelve days.

For Biafra, it only seemed probable that the early successes in pictorial publicity of the pogroms in Northern Nigeria and ancillary enlightenment schemes by the Eastern Nigeria Ministry of Information culminating to the declaration of secession were to become useful starting points which needed to be harnessed for a more comprehensive propaganda project of the new state. On the other hand, the defined position of the Federalists’ on the inviolability of one indivisible Nigeria meant that reasonable propaganda was needed to shore up public opinion on the illegality of secession and the need to suppress the rebellion from the Eastern region.

In this paper, I intend to engage in the analysis of the visual forms that echo the core narrative of the Federalists’ propaganda campaign against Biafra. The aim is to provide a situational link to the underlying contestations that has defined the politics of might in the Nigerian Nation today.

Whereas the idea of political propaganda may be traced back to the history of modern man, what appears common is that the most memorable propaganda campaigns are often the result of social, military or economic crisis. The World War I for instance, can easily be singled out as the first major military and social crisis of the twentieth century which exhibited an exceptional display of moving visual propaganda appeals. These visuals, produced by artists to accommodate the sentiments of these nations have become reminiscent landmarks in which the idea of this overview on the Nigerian example can be lodged in order to understand its significance to world history.

The ultimate objective of all propaganda campaigns is to facilitate success of a predetermined agenda and in case of a war, it is perhaps officially correct to earn it through guilt, fear or blackmail and even death to defend a perceived national pride. Even though propaganda encapsulates all actions taken through the mass media and direct media channels, that tend to emphasize a “deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist,”⁴ the most enduring forms of this persuasion has been through the visual media. World War posters, editorial cartoons and photographs for example, have remained the living evidence of how governments communicated with, and managed the opinions and actions of their populations through the use of symbols and slogans.⁵

Austere and Definite Campaign

⁴ Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Sage Publications, 1986 . 7

⁵ Peter Stanley, *What Did Your Father Do During The War?* Melbourne: Oxford University, 1983. 7.

Interestingly, the federalist approach to the Nigerian civil war campaign may be seen as markedly distinct in its style and approach from major world propaganda campaigns. It is perhaps possible to assume that the operational oeuvre may have promoted what could otherwise be seen now as a viciously austere and definite campaign directed from a mind-set of an all-conquering team. From strict military perspective which the Federal Military Government (FMG) operated, nothing could be more explicit as a warning to the secessionist in the eastern part of Nigeria than a visual interpretation of the Gowon's speech where he vowed to crush Lt Col Emeka Ojukwu's led rebellion (fig 1). Rendered barely a fortnight after the declaration of secession by Biafra as a front page cartoon of Saturday June 17, 1967 in the Morning Post newspaper,⁶ this illustration was to become the official propaganda poster of the Federal Government's campaign and probably anchored its main narrative thrust.

As the illustration and copy specifies, this poster employs the traditional brisk dry brushstrokes that is common with western illustrations in its class. The technique is unmistakably masterly and reminiscent of a groomed style, betraying perhaps the training and predilections of the anonymous artist. The illustration renders the two key signs which it seeks to bring into the narrative by showing the profile view for the military boot and the combination of horizontal and frontal view for the severed head. This combination articulates the strength of the Manichaeic narrative of the weak and the strong in its layout and conceptual orientation. The military boot in its spotless gleam seems to be suggesting in the circumstance of its conception, the combined strength of the Nigerian federal forces. The illustration seems to secure an amplified and frozen action of a decidedly brave hero at the very instance of "finishing off" the already hapless and severed head of the terrified villain adequately suggested by the frightened eye gaze. The cartoon/poster is simple, pointed and most provoking. The only copy in this illustration, "crush rebellion" rendered in a staggered bold and casual presentation serves to connect the message to the source lending it an apparent air of legitimacy. Put in historical context, this narrative perhaps seeks to secure a stamp of federal approval for its publication at a time when all unauthorized publication of messages in any form was wholesomely prohibited.

But a closer analysis of the Jackboot symbolism employed in the cartoon/poster reveals more curious connections with mindless brutality and cruelty even to the dead that was the unique indicator of the "pogroms" that preceded it. It is yet difficult to ascertain if the desire to behead Ojukwu and make him a martyr of the Biafran cause was an impulsive motivation by the artist or an editorial instruction, given the well-publicised code of conduct for the anticipated clinical exercise by the FMG. If this poster and editorial cartoon can be justified as a grand metaphor for the urgent task that the Federalists' needed to execute, it also leaves loose ends for ambivalent interpretation coming from a period of cascading crisis that occasioned its conception.

While the severance of the head of this supposed villain bears a symbolism of a traditional termination of a treacherous idea and defines the enormity of such an ignoble act of

⁶ The Morning Post Newspaper was founded in 1960 shortly after independence as an official mouthpiece of the Federal Government.

rebellion to the inviolability of the Nigerian State, the attendant words that serve amply as the legend – “Crush Rebellion” on its own right seems to raise new questions. The word “crush rebellion” offers three tangential narratives. As an order, the attendant collateral damage which it generated from the air, land and sea assaults and bombardments in an attempt to reclaim Biafra far outstripped its benefits as the memories of its effects particularly to the civilian population it sought to salvage from the Ojukwu stranglehold seem futile. Perhaps taking a cue from the popular sentiments and presumptions that governed the phrase “its all over by Christmas” during WW1 campaign in Britain, this order reverberated differently at least in the early stages hence making the “quick kill” police action of the federal government a wild goose chase. As a desire, it was elusive and slow to materialise. As a request, the “carrots” for the anticipated internal sabotage needed for the clinical termination of this rebellion did not seem quite obvious to the perceived saboteurs since the “imagined benefits” from the Biafran side appeared tidier (at least initially) to its key collaborators. To this group, such a request ran contrary to the grains of emotional logic occasioned by the cartoon/posters evocation of the memories of systemic massacres and countless beheadings occasioned by the earlier pogroms in the northern Nigeria in the months preceding the civil war. It wears a connection to the symbolic decapitated body of several other Easterners killed in the wake of the pogroms in Northern Nigeria (see fig. 2). On the whole, the illustration seems to key into the time tasted “Ad hominem” technique of propaganda that dwells in the attacking of the perceived opponents rather than their arguments.

As illustrated, the position of what appears as a reckless adoption of a momentous and cynical cartoon of a jack boot and a severed head of Ojukwu, the Biafran leader, smacks of the callous confidence that the federalists brought into the war and echoes Stanley Meisler’s position that;

... Part of the Biafran success in public relations stems from the Federal Nigerian Government’s failure at it. At the beginning, the Nigerians made absolutely no intelligent effort to get their point of view across. In fact, the government’s publicists often hurt the Nigerian case as much as they helped it.⁷

The Context of Size and Strength

Fundamental to the federalists’ military campaign against Biafra was the visual handling of its perceived might through the media available to them. Fortune, it appears, seemed to have positioned the belligerents with a good measure of experimentations from an assortment of complementary media not known to any major conflict before it in world history. How this played out in the cascading events of the time brings to focus the context of size and strength in the Nigerian civil war equation. It must be said that for a fledgling nation already grappling with developing the lean technical and administrative manpower after independence, the mass exodus of some personnel to their region of native origin was set to bring about obvious imbalances in trained manpower in the civil, public service and general entrepreneurial activities. In all this, the Federalist Nigeria, comprising three regions of the North, West and Mid-western Nigeria may have had its fair share of challenges in government and social activities. Filling the abrupt

⁷ Meisler, Stanley. Biafran war images, *The Nation*, March 10, 1969. 301-304

vacancies left by the fleeing Easterners after the escalations of conflicts in other parts of the country beyond the northern Nigeria was one of such challenges.⁸

Like in other key sectors of governance in Nigeria, the new entrants manning the information ministry after the Easterners left may have underestimated the profound overall effect of the exodus to the vital areas of the fledgling Nigerian polity. For instance, it is yet difficult to ascertain whether the personnel in Lagos either lacked the cognate experience to handle sensitive issues of propaganda or were scared of venturing into the terrain that may pitch them against the military government. This situation becomes further compounded by the fact that even though there were substantial military officers outside Biafra, their relationship with the press was below average. According to Meisler, “they were largely unaccustomed to journalistic glare and annoyed by it.”⁹ Perhaps, in their thinking, the sensitive information and activities that the civil war occasions would inevitably be transformed into an array of incisive interpretations in both the verbal and visual media to the detriment of the war effort. It is also possible that the military hierarchy may have been more concerned in safeguarding information which may invariably expose the inadequacies of government and its preparedness for the war. In the period from December 1967 to February 1968, for example, no correspondents were allowed at the front.¹⁰ This lacuna in the planning and flow of information became evident in the statements of military personnel and their civilian officers statements without weighing on the inherent public relations import which was quickly exploited by the secessionist Biafra and used as instant points to buttress their visual propaganda on the annihilation of the Biafran population through starvation. For instance, statement credited to Anthony Enahoro, and Obafemi Awolowo on the war only served to aggravate than alleviate an already delicate situation thus;

...There are several ways of fighting a war. You might starve your enemy into submission or you might kill him on the battlefield¹¹

... All is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons of war. I don't see why I should feed my enemies fat only to fight us harder¹²

The two excerpts above made astonishing news items in both national and international media when juxtaposed against the psychological appeals of the Biafra propaganda of kwashiorkor. It presents an idea of the several reckless management of the crisis which could not

⁸ Nzimiro, Ikenna. *Nigerian Civil War: A Study in Class Conflict* Enugu: Frontline Publishers, 1982.

⁹ The attitude of the federalist towards western media was that of suspicious caution. Perhaps convinced that the Western press had purposely set out to inflame world public opinion against Nigeria, was irritable with respect to any media report that questioned its integrity. From the viewpoint of Lagos, the Western media played a satanic role, subverting, distorting and manipulating “the truth” to serve its own devious ends. See Meisler, Stanley. *The Breakup of Nigeria, The Nation*, October 9, 1967

¹⁰ Zdenek Cervenka, *The Nigerian Civil War. 1967-1970*, Frankfurt am Main: Bernard & Graefe fur Wehrwesen, 1971.49-50. Quoted in Laurie Sheila Wiseberg, *The International Politics of Relief: A Case Study of the Relief Operations Mounted During the Nigerian Civil War (1967 - 1970)*. Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation in Political Science University of California Los Angeles. 1973

¹¹ Press statement to Daily Mirror, by Anthony Enahoro, Federal Nigeria Commissioner for Labour and Information. June 13, 1968

¹² Press statement to London Daily Telegraph, by Obafemi Awolowo, June 27, 1969.

easily be reconciled with the positions canvassed by the pro-federalist media on genuine concerns about reintegration of the dissident Biafra. These open sentiments about the Igbo as an ethnic group was further highlighted when Gowon was quoted in a Financial Times article as saying that, "... a lot of Igbo have an air of arrogance which is enraging members of the public."¹³ Going by Gowon's affirmation, it becomes easy to access perhaps the underlying sentiments of competitive control for power and resource in the Nigerian class struggle equation. It seems inconceivable that a parochial assessment of the legitimate way of life an infinitesimal class of elite and perhaps some itinerant traders and businessmen alone would condemn an entire ethnic group for being who they are if at all such generous agglomeration were true.

For a considerable period of time during the early part of the war, the Federalists seemed to believe that their position was so obviously just that it needed no selling. Alternatively, it appeared that the Federalists seemed assured that it could rely on the British Foreign Office, the State Department and the Kremlin to do what selling was necessary for the war. According to Ukpabi, S. C.;

The illegality of the act of secession provided the Federal Government with the justification and the propaganda material to back up its war-effort. Its argument would be that it was compelled to go to war to restore the unity of the country: an argument which many countries in Africa and other parts of the world would support. For Biafra, on the other hand; the act of secession placed it at a moral disadvantage since any foreign country which tried to assist it would immediately be accused of supporting a rebellion against a legal Government.¹⁴

Following the arguments at this stage, it seems that favourable propaganda for the federalists was wrought itself out of either the perceived general perception of the typical Igbo idiosyncrasy or the several government controlled and sympathetic media operating within its control irrespective of differing editorial strategies and themes.¹⁵

If the loss of territory and strategic print production equipment accounted for the paucity of visual propaganda materials in Biafra, it is surprising that its preponderance in hardware and consumables at least in the capital city and commercial nerve centre of Lagos several kilometres away from the theatre of war did not make any comparative difference for the federalist.

Strange as it seems, only two posters appear to be most visible in the thirty months campaign by the Federalists. If the thinking of the FMG here is anchored on confidence of its legitimacy and morality, it also reveals the sad picture of how not to censor historical events of

¹³ See, Anti Igbo feelings and federal policy: cause and effect relationship, Financial Times, April 28 1968.

¹⁴ See S.C. Ukpabi, *The Lessons of the Civil War, Nigeria Since Independence: The First Twenty-Five Years. Vol.VI. The Civil War Years.* Eds Tekena N. Tamuno and Samson C. Ukpabi, Ibadan: Heinemann. 1989. 278

¹⁵ Deductions to this effect are drawn from Stanley Meisler's article on Biafran war images. In the article Meisler was shocked that A. K. Disu, the Federal Director of Information could suggest reading of local papers as the preferred mode of harvesting clear policy positions of the federal government on the war. See, Stanley Meisler. Biafran war images, *The Nation*, March 10, 1969. 301-304

the magnitude of a civil war.¹⁶ However, a motley of vernacular illustrations which amply served as front and inside page editorial cartoons, or photos provided limited visual expression to the war campaign at the fledgling stage of the war and perhaps serving as the bridge for the over dramatized conquest shots from the war correspondent photographers that inundated the ending months of the war. The larger civil society, it appeared was effectively estranged or at least not encouraged to contribute to the war effort. Buttressing this, a Daily Times open opinion entitled “give intellectuals a chance to serve” laments that scores of Nigerians in our universities or abroad were despised while we walk in the dark as to what we should say to the outside world.¹⁷

The “One Nigeria” Mantra

It is however crucial to note that the Federalists’ may have had a good moral case irrespective of how poorly its campaign was cobbled together. Such signals of legitimacy is manifested in its posters, the childlike simplicity of its editorial cartoons and the seemingly stage-managed confessional testimonial photographs, and television broadcasts mostly aimed at reducing the conflict to a misguided adventure of Ojukwu to retain control of the minorities in the East at any cost.

Above all, the “one Nigeria” mantra of the Federalists’ seemed a particularly effective campaign. Since according to them, the Biafran sovereignty was seized and therefore illegal under the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the attendant moral position served as a legitimate campaign platform. The poster that captures this narrative is the “Keep Nigeria one” poster (fig.4). Rendered in a rigid and scripted look, it seeks perhaps to fit the brief of an uncompromising client. The single figured male portrait presents an idealized military pose with an alert victory assured smile. This gesture is complemented by a raised finger which perhaps attempt to signify the inviolability of a perceived indivisible number – one. The effortless manner of the raised finger perhaps implants a sense of an easy task in the recovery of the dissident state of Biafra back to Nigeria by the federal forces. Presumably, the illustration of Gowon in his handsome prime, the neat and well decorated ceremonial regalia, presents what Maurice Rickard considers as a universal archetype; “nobility of bearing”, “immediately likeable” and “thoroughly descent air of right and might” to serve as a fait accompli which the smile in his poise had already signified.¹⁸ The text in this composition forms the base in which the illustration sits presenting a triangular facade to the poster. By this arrangement, the stability of its base presents a nostalgic pyramidal look reminiscent of the Northern Nigeria “symbol of glory” – the famed groundnut pyramids. It seems right to assume by this illustration that its

¹⁶ Even though there was no policy position to encourage the culture of massive pictorial propaganda campaign for the enlightenment of its citizenry, it is still too early to foreclose on a bounty of federalist visual propaganda materials on the civil war largely because of the tangential study it offers to this work. I suppose that since they were operational tertiary institutions for training of visual artists on the federalist side like the Yaba College of Technology, the University of Ife, and Ahmadu Bello University there is a likelihood of many unpublished visual narratives in the media researched may be found at least in photo facsimiles not yet available for this study.

¹⁷ See “Give intellectuals a chance to serve” Daily Times July 22, 1969.

¹⁸ See, Maurice Rickards, *Posters of the First World War*. New York: Walker and Company, 1968. p. 29

conceptual rationale may be suggesting that it is better to stay with the north. However, this thought seems like a hapless persuasive attempt after three “genocidal” attacks on easterners in the northern region. If at all, it was a tireless repetition of a utopian idea which was readily countered by the now assertive eastern regional press and information ministry by the frequency of their broadcast to local and international audiences.

The raised finger appears a unique innovation and a departure from the conventional pointing hand and finger which has been employed in most war recruiting posters. This single figure poster style may have been scripted in the vintage recruitment poster mould of Alfred Leete’s “*your country needs you*” and James Montgomery Flagg’s “*I want you for US Army*” of Britain and the United States during First World War.¹⁹ Unlike its recruiting counterparts above, this variant appears not sure who to point at and perhaps rally for this task and may be read perhaps as a signification of the initial dilemma in the war against Biafra. It is tempting here to assume that the disparate coordination of the frontal disposition, the centrality of its gaze, the casual signification of the raised finger and the indication of the number “one” to tally with the text can be understood against the rubric of coincidences that border on Gowon’s inaugural speech after the July 1966 coup that brought him to power. On its graphic merit, the poster is heavily dependent on symmetrical balance between the text and illustration for success. It is equally difficult to determine the merits of the flat gray tonal grains which fundamentally compromise the iconographic details of the illustration which can only be appreciated as a close up imagery.

But could this demerit in its aesthetic structure have been lost due to the authors need for new significations in order to enhance its narrative? By subverting traditional typographic convention of reading four lines of text in an “all capitals” rendering as one sentence, it attracts some pondering that may lead us consider the four layers of text arbitrarily as representing the four regions that Gowon tore apart by force of decrees into twelve states. Following this trajectory of iconoclastic binge, it then becomes easy to assume through the eleven lumps of text and the illustration of the Gowon persona as individual elements which in their different symbolic attributes may easily fend an allusion of correctness in power for the twelve states he created.

This analysis becomes pertinent when juxtaposed with the popular propaganda trend that caused the Federalist’s slogans to read in the same vein. To embody this inseparable imagery of “*one Nigerianess*”, GOWON became an acronym for the phrase “[G]o [O]n [W]ith [O]ne [N]igeria”. YAKUBU, Gowon’s first name was also positioned as an acronym to stand for “You All Know Biafra belongs to Us.” Even when the second did not quite fit into the fad of acronym redefinition mold, it was a sufficiently ingenious attempt by the Federalist’s propaganda to drive the war spirit. The school children were indoctrinated to identify with the war effort by being taught to memorize “marching songs” thus;

... Ojukwu wanted to separate Nigeria,
 ...Gowon says Nigeria must be one,

¹⁹ See also, Maurice Rickards, 1968. plates 6 and 14

...we are fighting together with Gowon,
... to keep Nigeria one’.

In this vein, the principal characters of the conflict became cast in the Manichaeian mould of the hero and villain thus effectively trivialising the key issues of the crises. What is to be noted here is that even though slogans carry with them inherent propaganda flavour, they are essentially easy tools in the learning, assimilation and orientation of key policy positions of government.²⁰ They were essential elements in the reading and comprehension of the direction of the visual campaign by the federalist.

Beyond the poster, the selected cartoons by two Daily Times cartoonists Ayo Ajayi and Oke Hortons serve to elucidate the point made earlier on the role of the visual media in bringing the series of events with dire editorial concern to its readers. This body of work are purely descriptive and conceptually superficial perhaps to suite the rigid dictates of the editorial freedom limits. But they are unmistakably clear on their plot line in conferring a villain status to Ojukwu in line with the federalists’ propaganda objective. It can be said that the technique of making Ojukwu the natural default line of the cartoon narrative, the federalist unwittingly elevated him to a mythical figure for the Biafran struggle and furthered his importance by the daily visual exposure and iconic referential of a bald and bearded maverick.

Ayo Ajayi’s cartoons may have been conceived basically in three figural blocks to build its visual narrative. Independently, and perhaps as a satirical reply to the uncomplimentary media reactions to the Kwashiorkor campaign, Ajayi reveals in (fig 5) what seems as Ojukwu’s callous insensitivity to the plight of his starving masses by shoving them aside in their despondent state to brazenly arrange a military deal with a French mercenary, Carl Von Rosen.²¹ The Ajayi narrative seems to hinge its conceptual impetus on new realisations for hapless Easterners. He depicts them as dejected, cast-off and essentially astonished by the new priorities of their revered leader Ojukwu, who had previously called for their return and declared total commitment to their welfare and protection. In the second cartoon (fig. 6), Ajayi seeks to afford his readers what he perceives should be on the mind of Ojukwu concerning his huge investments on propaganda and press public relations without anticipated results. Having held Biafran campaign aloft for so long without early success for negotiated settlement on Biafra’s terms, the weariness of the press becomes evident necessitating disappointment and finger pointing from Ojukwu as the paymaster. Ajayi’s illustration seems to be making allusion on the inevitable end for Ojukwu’s key weapon of warfare due to the ever competing stories for news space in the international

²⁰ Recitation poetry was particularly rife during the period of the Nigerian civil war and the creative combination of popular arts dwelt largely on the dual picture of the victor and the villain.

²¹ In May 1969 Biafran ground and air forces struck repeatedly at FMG’s Port Harcourt oil installations. Some dozen hedgehopping and rocket-equipped Swedish-built Minicon training planes were flown mainly by Biafran pilots trained by Carl Gustav von Rosen, the Swedish count who is Biafra’s chief air force adviser. These Biafran air strikes aimed to sap the FMG’s oil-based economy and to goad British and American oil companies into pressing the FMG for peace. Quoted in Laurie Sheila Wiseberg, *The International Politics of Relief: A Case Study of the Relief Operations Mounted During the Nigerian Civil War (1967 - 1970)*. Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation in Political Science University of California Los Angeles. 1973

media. It also serves to highlight the federalists believe in the unscrupulous and unedifying posture of the international media in the Nigerian crisis.

Nowhere else did the Biafran campaign receive a grisly parody than in the humpty dumpty cartoon of Ojukwu (fig. 7) by Oke Hortons. Employing a popular nursery storyline to illustrate the crash of Ojukwu's ideas for a perceived dream empire and republic, he devalues the Biafran campaign as a child's play. Hortons uses a common political cartoon technique of visual fusion to fuse Ojukwu's iconic styled head with an egg torso. The single figure illustration anchors on the theme that places Ojukwu as the sole provocateur of the secessionist bid. The crumbling bricks in the composition seem to depict the lack base in the ideology for secession which appears not only lacking in foundational support of the minorities within its enclave but now relying on the international aid agencies for salvation. The illustration depends largely on the iconic and textual signifiers for the development of meaning.

To further demystify Ojukwu, Oke Hortons' "Blueprint for guerilla war"(fig. 8) illustrated in dual panel appears to clearly establish to the dissident Biafrans that Ojukwu is an unreliable and selfish leader who is unwilling to subject his family to the vagaries of the much touted guerrilla war life by scurrying them to safety in Gabon.²² The Che Guevara portrait within the composition of the first panel serves to give him away as a copycat.²³ But it was not only Ojukwu and his perceived allies that received attention of the cartoonist's crow-quill pen and ink. In his characteristic split panel narrative, Oke Hortons queued into the concern of the moment on the attitude of international friends of Nigeria over the war by bringing into perspective a scathing indictment of Britain's initial unwillingness to fully support Nigeria during the early part of the war.²⁴

Perhaps visually, the most byzantine approach to federal propaganda are the photographic pamphlets and photographic clips that inundated newspapers and magazines that were sympathetic to the Federalists' agenda of reintegrating Biafra back into to the "one Nigeria" fold. At a time when the photograph was perceived essentially as the utter evidence, the method of stage managed photo sessions conceived as a testimonial device (to debunk the international blackmail from the Biafran establishment) was channelled to give bite to the criticised federalists' war "code of conduct" viewed largely by Biafran protagonists as "paper talk." Much

²² Gabon was one of the few neighbouring nations that had friendly ties with the secessionist Biafran republic.

²³ Che Guevara was the Latin American guerrilla leader and revolutionary theorist, who became a hero to the New Left radicals of the 1960s. Guevara was a major figure in the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro in the late 1950s and in the subsequent Castro government. Buoyed by the success of the revolution as the only remedy for Latin America's poverty, disease, and social and political injustices, he extended his exploits to Africa. Guevara tried unsuccessfully to train rebel forces in the Congo in guerrilla warfare, but after several months, he concluded that the mission was a failure. See, "Che Guevara." Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

²⁴ By early July 1967 Lagos was worried enough about the unedifying role of international old friends to air its grievances in various radio and newspaper commentaries who, either openly accused of supporting Biafra or simply were playing the double game due to their commercial interests. "The old friends" were Great Britain and the United States, neither of which was willing to support Gowon with any marked enthusiasm. The United States refused outright to send arms, saying that the crisis was an internal affair. Radio Nigeria; quoted in Kirk-Greene, II, 3.

as they were strict code of conduct on the prosecution of the war by the head of state, the stage-managed photographic compositions of soldiers feeding captured rebels, caring for abandoned babies, women and children in liberated Igbo towns with explanatory text as the new approach to disprove the Biafran claim on genocide appeared all too pedestrian to measured sensibility. To Federal campaigners, perhaps the master narrative was impregnable and required no platitudes burnish it. But to Biafra, it perhaps only served to annoy its educated eye who had been transfixed too early to belief in Biafra. If these concerted attempts were geared to match the Biafran public relations and media propaganda, the overall results barely met such expectations. Some of the ready examples were oftentimes so lousily executed that it constituted the new media thrill in primitive sensationalism to the very parties they sought to impress. The scandalous hold-up of the execution of a Nigerian soldier (fig.10) who was facing a firing squad because he had killed an Igbo civilian was the antithesis of these attempts. The hold-up was occasioned by a T. V. reporter shouting out: "Don't shoot yet, my camera isn't quite set."²⁵

As defined, the major objectives of disproving Biafra's viability, charge of Genocide, and right to self-determination by the federalists were either poorly conceived for visual consumption or looked too real to be true. According to Habermas, "publicity [of this kind] loses its critical function in favour of a staged display; even arguments are transmuted into symbols to which again one cannot respond by arguing but by identifying with them."²⁶

But the photographic testimonials were not altogether a dismal experiment. It was largely conceived to reinforce its coordinated counter broadcast messages. In this newfound vigour, the eerie exhortations to soldiers of being captured alive and treated well as a prisoner of war notwithstanding,²⁷ the general response to these campaign of might was sustained to the end of the war. Anchored on the benefits of what the larger union of Nigeria could offer returnees, the Federalist campaign theme sought to reinforce the pre-pogrom concept of home as any location within the Nigerian State where the easterners once lived and pursued their legitimate livelihood against Ojukwu's concept of ethnic and regional heritage. It is however important to state that in the only surviving campaign proposal, the Biafran propaganda committee acknowledged the simplistic potency of the federalist campaign goals which bore strong and uncompromising military implications than flowery public relations.²⁸

²⁵ This story was widely discussed by both foreign and Nigerian newsmen as corroborated in Laurie Wiseberg, *The International Politics of Relief: A Case Study of the Relief Operations Mounted during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)*. PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1973. See, also; D.A.N. Jones, "An Execution and a Conspiracy," *The Listener*, Vol.80, No. 2059, September 12, 1968. 323-5

²⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Polity. 1989, chapters I and II

²⁷ One of the several announcements from the radio which complemented the visuals was broadcast as follows; "Don't be dead when peace returns ... It will be too late if you are dead ... You will be quite safe. You may not be released as yet, being a captured person, but you are not really a prisoner of war. You will get three meals a day. You will see a doctor any time you need one. You will rest and sleep soundly at night. You will gradually be more comfortable. Anyhow, you are better alive than dead" See September 18. 1968. Broadcast from Radio Enugu, in AHM. Kirk-Greene. *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook 1966-1969* London: Oxford University Press, 1971. 74.

²⁸ See Biafra. Directorate of Propaganda Report No. 9. .2

Conclusion

On the whole, it could be gathered from the available illustration presented here that the Federalists' elected propaganda approach was essentially reactive. This reactionary approach as a fundamental ideology of the Federal Government of Nigeria may have equally placed the idea of visual campaign and artistic expression as second rate and therefore accounting for the paucity of visuals available for analysis in this paper. Were these ideas fully imbibed, and given the necessary platform to thrive during the thirty months of unification war, a major trend independent of the seemingly teleguided sentiments of competitive control for power and resource in the Nigerian class struggle equation may have developed to form the basis of the true yearning for an indivisible Nigerian Union.

The suffocation of individual liberties as evident in the rigid Federalists' visual campaign drew little resistance from civil liberties organisation within Nigeria and the mass of the citizenry who were drawn apart by the war as they may have fallen within an already set fault line driven by default sentiments that define relationships of the typical Nigerian elite class. The only fertile ideas became that which were not only diametrically opposed to nationalistic ideals but were also fertilised by same old dispersal sentiments driven by religion, regional and ethnic templates. It highlights essentially the tripodal sentiments and antecedent traits of elite antagonism served either as a satirical platitude or as an emphatic command offering little room for the search and assessment of options for the real growth of the nation. These tendencies had become an integral part of the unwritten policy based on ingrained drive for political control by the traditional regional power blocks and fired by primal ethnic calculations that were prevalent since the early years of radical nationalism in Nigeria. The illustrations here offer an indispensable tool to understand a continually invented parameter bedeviling the prospects of a true all inclusive Nigerian nation-state. The federal winning slogan of "keeping Nigeria one" has by this analysis become "a task that must be done" not essentially for the common good of the generality of the citizenry but as long as it seems perfect in accommodating the parochial whim of a particular interest group with some degree of relative advantage wrought out of the delicate tripodal balance.

Plates and Figures

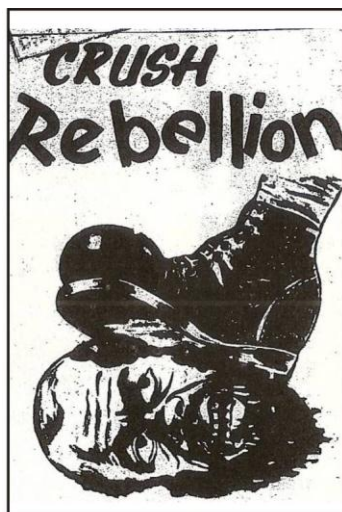


Fig 1:
Crush Rebellion

Josy Ajiboye? "Crush Rebellion" black and white (B/W) Front page Editorial Cartoon, Morning Post newspapers, July 17, 1967. This illustration was widely produced and circulated as a propaganda poster for the Federal Military Government. Size not determined. Courtesy : NU (Northwestern University) Library microfilm archives.



Fig.2:
Victim of Atrocity

1 Sh. Victim of Atrocity, Republic of Biafra poster stamp, showing the Biafran flag, a decapitated body and a tomb with the inscription "may 29, June 29, Sept 29, Nigerian Pogrom 1966, 30,000 massacred" courtesy: [www document] Source: <http://worldstamps.com/2009/10/biafra.html> Accessed July 15, 2010

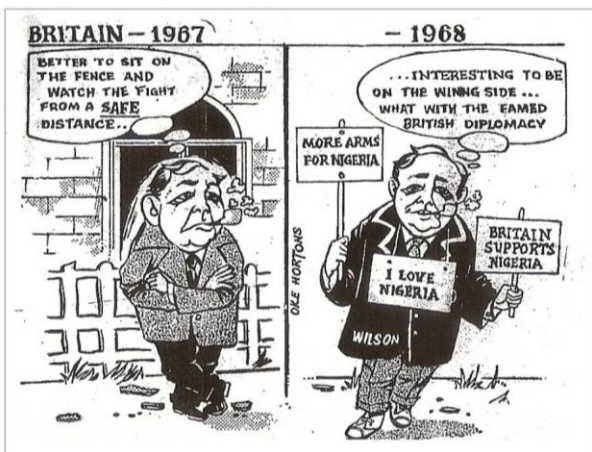


Fig.9: Britain - 1967 - 1968

Oke Hortons, Sunday times front page cartoon, b/w. October 20 1968. "Better to sit on the fence and watch the fight from a safe distance;" "... interesting to be on the winning side .."Size not determined. Courtesy: N U Library microfilm archives



Fig. 10 : Court martial execution of a Nigerian soldier Killer executed at war front.

B/W front page photo. Daily Times Nigeria Sept. 4, 1968. . Size not determined. Courtesy: N U Library microfilm archives