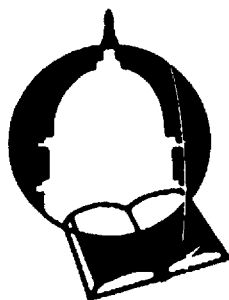


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BIAFRA: A CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENTS  
ATTENDING THE SECESSION OF THE  
EASTERN REGION OF NIGERIA

(JANUARY 15, 1966 - NOVEMBER 15, 1968)



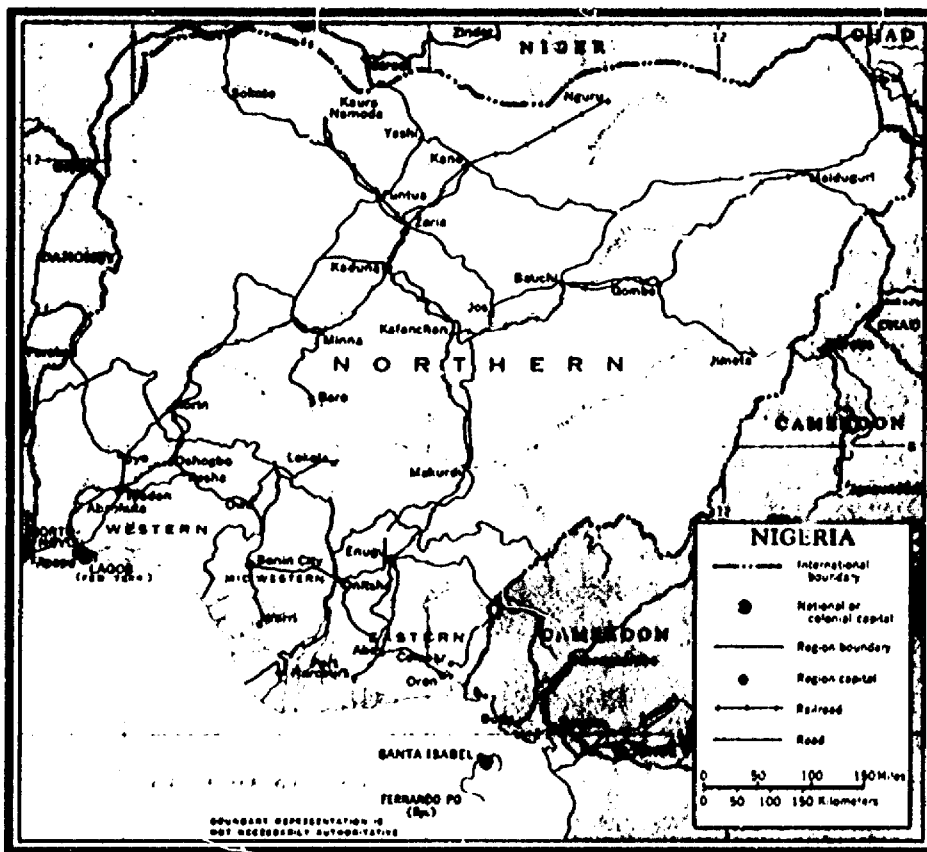
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November 22, 1968

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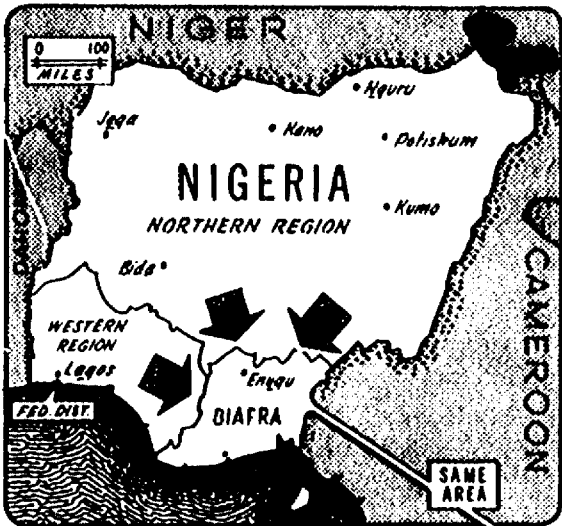
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Map of Nigeria

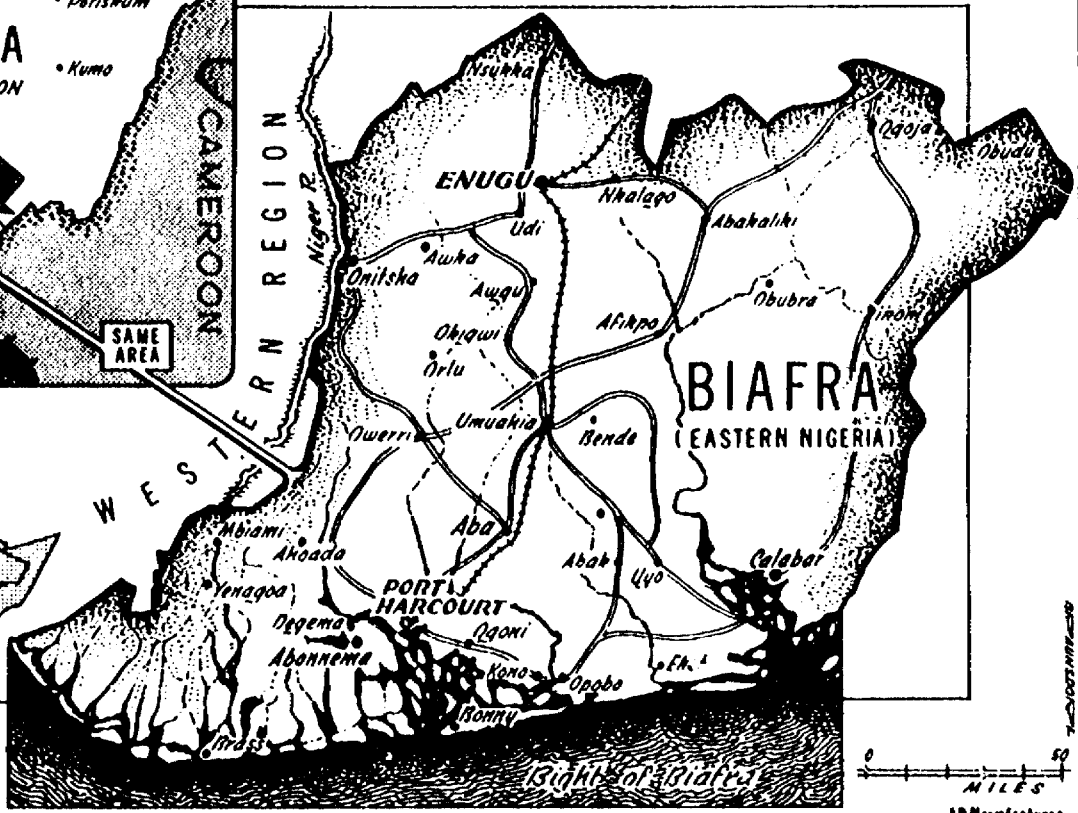
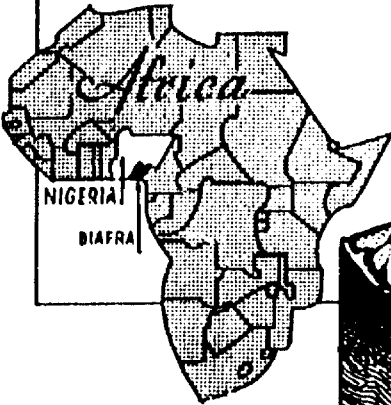


Map of Biafra

○ **NIGERIA TOTTERS -- East Secedes in Tribal Strife**



REGION	WESTERN	NORTHERN	BIAFRA	FEDERAL DIST.
AREA (sq. mi.)	62,800	264,000	30,000	27
POPULATION	12,800,500	30,000,000	12,400,000	665,000



AP Wirephotos

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### Introductory Statement

This chronology of the events leading to the secession of the Eastern Region of Nigeria and the ensuing civil war does not attempt to be all-inclusive. Rather it is designed to serve as an outline of the major events which have shaped the course of the Nigerian civil war.

By way of brief background, it may be helpful to recall the following facts about Nigeria. As a British colony, Nigeria was ruled as a unitary state until 1946, when at Nigerian insistence a tri-regional federal structure was created. Nigeria became independent in 1960 and continued as a federal state. When the constitution was revised in 1963 a fourth region was added.

As the largest nation in Africa, Nigeria has a population of approximately 62.0 million people, according to mid-1968 estimates. There are three main ethnic groups: the Hausa-Fulani (Moslem) in the North, the Yorubas (Christian and pagan) in the West, and the Ibos (Christian) in the East. However, Nigeria is actually fractured into many groups: it has been estimated that there are more than 250 distinct languages in Nigeria, only ten of which are spoken by groups of more than 350,000.

The North is the most populous region, with a population estimated at 29.8 million in 1963. At that time the other three regions combined were estimated to have a population of 25 million. As of the time it proclaimed independence, the former Eastern Region (Biafra) had a population of approximately 13 million.

LRS-2

Where it seemed pertinent, sources have been cited. In general, the following sources were used in compiling this chronology: Africa Report, African Diary, Christian Science Monitor, Deadline Data on World Affairs, Times (London), New York Times, and Washington Post.

**BIAFRA: A CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENTS  
ATTENDING THE SECESSION OF THE  
EASTERN REGION OF NIGERIA**

(JANUARY 15, 1966 - NOVEMBER 15, 1968)

Major Events Leading to Secession

1966

- January 15: After a period of intense interregional and intertribal conflict over the balance of political power in Nigeria and of increasing alienation of the citizenry from the corrupt power structure, the civilian government of Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was deposed by a military coup led by predominantly Ibo junior officers. An interim government was set up under General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Ibo, and was to serve until a new constitution could be drawn up.
- May 24: Two decrees were issued by the Ironsi government. The first called for the dissolution of all political parties until January 17, 1969, and also proclaimed a ban on all tribal unions which propagated political ideas or tribalism. The second was designed to transform the federal government of Nigeria into a unitary state. According to this second decree, the four regions were replaced by four groups of provinces, each under the direction of the National Military Government.
- (Nigeria had been a federal state since 1946, when the British at Nigerian insistence introduced a federal system based on a tri-regional organization in order to give political expression to the strong regional and tribal loyalties contained in the Nigerian polity. Now the Ironsi government was attempting to revert back to the unitary state with the avowed purpose of overcoming the intense regionalism which was undermining the concept of national unity.)
- May 28-29: Demonstrations and riots took place in several cities in Northern Region. Northerners (predominantly members of the Hausa-Fulani tribe) were protesting the establishment of a

1966

May 28-29:  
cont.

unitary state which they felt would be controlled by the Ibo Easterners. Under the federal system, the Easterners had resented the domination of the parliament by the more backward but more populous and geographically larger Northern Region. As the region which supplied the largest portion of the national revenue, the East believed it should have a stronger voice in the central government. Now, the Northerners feared the gradual Ibo (Eastern) takeover of the country because of the Easterners' higher degree of education and technological and managerial ability. Already, according to Northerners, the Ibos filled 45% of the public service posts, and they feared that this proportion would grow to 60% by 1968. Thus, during this unrest, the Northerners vented their resentment and fear of Eastern domination by massacring a large portion of the Ibo immigrants in their region. The Ibos who had originally sought relief from the population pressures in their own region by emigrating to the North to fill that area's need for skilled and educated manpower, now fled by the thousands back to the East.

July 29:

A countercoup led by Northern army officers wrested control of the government from General Ironsi and his followers.

August 1:

The new ruling group selected Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, a member of a small northern minority tribe, as head of the military government. At this time Gowon stated that the system of unitary government for Nigeria could not continue since "...a base for unity is not there or is badly rocked." Also commenting on the future structure of the Nigerian government, the Eastern Regional Military Commander, Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu (subsequently head of the separatist Biafran government), stated that during the negotiations which resulted in the formation of the new government it had been agreed that "...the republic of Nigeria be split into its component parts." (Deadline Data on World Affairs, "Nigeria," p. 41, reverse side)

August 31:

Lt. Col. Gowon issued a decree on behalf of the military government which nullified the unification decree of May 24. On September 1, according to the new decree, Nigeria reverted to its federal structure and that government was officially named the Federal Military Government (FMG) of Nigeria.

1966

- September 12: The first conference on the new constitution was held in Lagos.
- September 23: Riots again broke out in towns of the Northern Region. Mutinous troops joined civilians in slaughtering Ibo residents. In retaliation, disturbances followed in the Eastern Region where Ibos attacked Northern Hausa-Fulani traders. By October 3 these disturbances had reached such crisis proportions that Nigerian Airways canceled all domestic flights so that it could devote all its resources to evacuating all Ibos from the Northern Region. Now the Northerners and Easterners were in conflict not only over the suitable balance of political power to be created through constitutional arrangements, but also over the necessity for guaranteeing the safety and security of each area's citizens. Eastern regional officials claimed that as many as 30,000 Ibos were killed in these 1966 disturbances.

1967

January 4:

After months of wrangling over the construction of a new constitution which would fit the requirements of each region and each tribal group, the members of the Supreme Military Council (SMC -- the ruling group of regional military governors) departed for Aburi, Ghana. In Aburi they met with General Joseph Ankrah, head of Ghana's National Liberation Committee government, who attempted to mediate the dispute over the new constitution. As a result of this conference the SMC concluded that: (1) force should be renounced as a method of arbitrating regional grievances; (2) "faith in Nigeria" as a national unit should be maintained; and (3) there was a need for increased regional autonomy, although the pre-coup federal constitution was still considered the best system of government.

January 28:

Lt. Col. Ojukwu warned that he would not attend any future meetings of national military leaders until the Aburi agreements were fully implemented. In general Ojukwu's position on the constitutional issue as a whole was that there should be greater autonomy for the Eastern region. At the time of the Aburi meeting he had advocated a four-region confederation with a weak central government.

February 26:

The Eastern Regional Military Commander, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, announced that his government would move to implement the Aburi agreements within its region if the Federal Government had not done so by March 21. In concluding his remarks, Ojukwu stated: "These northern-controlled governments (Lagos and Kaduna) are prepared to sink their tribal and political differences to achieve an objective nearer to their hearts -- namely, to dominate and rule southern Nigeria. It is this policy that is now driving this country to the verge of disintegration." (African Diary, April 9-15, 1967, p. 3337.)

March 17:

SMC Decree No. 8 partially implemented the Aburi Agreements by giving the regional military governors a veto power in some areas and thus slightly decentralized federal authority. Under this decree no decisions could be made in matters concerning federal commerce, communications, and foreign affairs without the concurrence of all military governors and the Supreme Commander, Lt. Col. Gowon. However, a state of emergency could be declared in any region without the concurrence of its military governor. The terms of the decree also allowed the Supreme Military Council to step in and rule any region in order to prevent secession or any violation of the Constitution. Based on

1967

March 17:  
cont.

its own interpretation of the Aburi Agreements, the Eastern Regional Government rejected this decree on the grounds that the power of the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in any region was contrary to the intended effect of the Aburi concord. The Easterners believed that the Aburi decisions precluded the centralization of power and therefore did not allow the Federal Government to override unanimous decisions of military governors or unilaterally declare a state of emergency in a region.

March 31:

The Eastern Regional Government issued the Revenue Collection Edict of 1967, which declared that all revenues collected in that region which had previously been payable to the Federal Government would as of April 1 be payable to the Eastern Regional Treasury. Thus, on the deadline which Lt. Col. Ojukwu had set for the full implementation of the Aburi Agreements, the Eastern Region made its first move to loosen its ties to the Federal Government and implement the Aburi Agreements within its own area. (This action in regard to revenue was not without forewarning. In a white paper issued on March 16, the Eastern Regional Government called for a revision in the national system of revenue allocation which would be in keeping with the purposes of the Aburi Agreements. It had long been a grievance of the Easterners that they contributed about 35% of the total federal revenues and were only reallocated approximately 14% of these funds for use in their own region.)

April 1:

The Federal Government declared that the Revenue Collection edict was "illegal and unconstitutional."

April 4:

Nigerian Airways, which was Federally owned, cut off all service to the Eastern Region. The Eastern Government later claimed that moves were also taken by the FMG to restrict financial transactions with the Eastern Region.

April 7:

As Military Governor of the Eastern Region, Lt. Col. Ojukwu set forth three conditions for a return to normalcy:  
(1) the Northern Region must demonstrate its remorse for the atrocities suffered by the Easterners living in the North;  
(2) the North must make some gesture in atonement for the loss of life and property suffered by the Easterners; (3) all the Aburi Agreements must be implemented.

1967

- April 11: Ojukwu announced that he could agree to mediation of the Nigerian dispute by "key" African heads of state and listed Presidents Gamal Abdul Nasser (UAR) and William Tubman (Liberia), General Joseph Ankrah (Ghana), and Emperor Haile Selassie (Ethiopia) as likely members of a mediation panel. Gowon declined to endorse this plan on the grounds that the dispute was an internal affair and that such outside mediation might cause a split within the Organization of African Unity (OAU).
- April 18: The Eastern Government issued a Statutory Bodies Edict which had the effect of taking over from Federal control all federal services such as the control of ports, railroads, post offices, telegraph services, national broadcasting, coal mining, shipping and marketing. Ojukwu claimed that this takeover was necessary because the Federal Government had stopped paying the workers involved.
- April 22: A three-day meeting of the Supreme Military Council ended with the issuing of a communique promising "stern measures" against the Eastern Region if it continued its defiance of the Federal Government.
- May 1: Yoruba Chief Obafemi Awolowo, former Premier of the Western Region, addressed a mass rally in Lagos and declared that if the Eastern Region seceded, the West and the Federal Territory of Lagos would also break with the Federation. (However, following the Biafran secession, Chief Awolowo became vice-chairman of the Federal Executive Council, a civilian advisory cabinet under the military government. Observers indicated that Awolowo's action was grounded on the belief that he could influence the policies of the Federal Military Government (FMG) and that he wished to use his influence to counter the use of violence as a means of solving the Eastern problem.)
- May 5: A group of Nigerians representing all regions met in Lagos under the chairmanship of Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and formed the National Reconciliation Committee (NCR).
- May 7: The NCR sent a four-man mission to Enugu, the Eastern capital, to suggest to Ojukwu that a new summit meeting be held with the other regional military commanders and Gowon.

1967

May 18: A proposal for the settlement of the dispute was put forth by the NCR: (1) the Federal Military Government (FMG) should revoke all economic sanctions against the East and the East should simultaneously revoke all economic sanctions against the FMG by May 26; (2) the FMG should take immediate action to remove Northern troops stationed in the Western Region; (3) the security of Lagos was the responsibility of Gowon and the FMG.

The same day, Sir David Hunt, British High Commissioner to Nigeria, denied charges by the Eastern region that Great Britain was prepared to intervene militarily on behalf of the FMG.

May 20: Gowon publicly accepted the NCR recommendations. Orders were issued to lift the ban on postal and telecommunications services, shipping, and disbursement of funds to the East as of May 23. Gowon pledged that Northern troops would be withdrawn from the West by May 25. The FMG demanded reciprocity from the East by May 25.

May 23: Lt. Col. Ojukwu challenged the competence of the NCR and stated that the group to be acceptable to the East must meet the following conditions: (1) the membership must consist of representatives appointed by each regional government; (2) the agenda and terms of reference must be agreed upon in advance; (3) the time-limit for its conference must be set in advance; (4) its venue must be acceptable to all four regions. In addition Eastern cooperation would be contingent upon the lifting of all economic sanctions.

May 27: Lt. Col. Ojukwu received a mandate from the 200-member regional Consultative Assembly to declare independence from the Federation at the "earliest possible date." The mandate also provided that the Eastern Region would henceforth be known as the Democratic Republic of Biafra. (The name Biafra comes from the Bight of Biafra, an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean on the Eastern Region's coast.) In response to the Assembly's action Lt. Col. Gowon declared a state of emergency and announced that he was assuming full powers as commander-in-chief. He suspended all political activity and announced that the federation would be reorganized into 12 states with boundaries based on ethnic grouping.

The Independent "Republic of Biafra"1967

May 30: Lt. Col. Ojukwu announced that "The territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria together with her continental shelf shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of the Republic of Biafra. And I do declare that all political ties between us and the Federal Republic of Nigeria are hereby totally dissolved." (African Diary, June 25-July 1, 1967, p. 3453.) The FMG responded by declaring the secession as "an act of rebellion" and ordered a general mobilization of troops, imposed economic sanctions, and declared the Eastern coastal waterways off-limits to all ships.

(Biafran armed forces were not totally mobilized until June 3. Contemporary reports indicated that each side had forces numbering around 7-8,000 troops. By early 1968 estimated troop strength for the FMG was reported at between 40,000 and 50,000 men. The Biafrans by this time claimed to have 60,000 men under arms.)

June 21: In a broadcast from Enugu, Lt. Col. Ojukwu announced that all oil companies operating in the Eastern region would henceforth be required to pay revenues to the Biafran rather than the Federal Government. A July 1 deadline was set for the payment of the mid-year revenues.

(Nigeria, with the potential of becoming one of the world's largest oil producers and already ranking tenth, has its richest fields located in the territory which now calls itself Biafra. Ojukwu's move thus placed Western oil interests, particularly those of Great Britain and France, in the delicate position of taking sides in the conflict by making the decision as to which side to support by the payment of oil royalties. The largest foreign oil company operating in Eastern Nigeria is Shell-British Petroleum, whose investment is estimated at between \$480 and \$720 million. SAFRAP, a French concern, began production in Nigeria in 1966 and its investment at that time was estimated at \$72 million. SAFRAP's concessions straddle the borders of the Northern, Mid-western, and Eastern Regions; in Biafra they are centered around Nsukka.)

June 23: The four-member delegation of the FMG in Moscow denied reports that it was there for negotiations concerning the supply of military equipment. (This statement was later apparently contradicted by Lagos' official announcement on

1967May 27:  
cont.

August 23 that the FMG had received aircraft and military equipment from the Soviet Union "on a strictly commercial and cash basis." Reports indicate that the Soviet arms began arriving in August and that the shipments included 7 Czech Delfin fighters and 16 MIG-17's along with the services of 200 Russian and Eastern European maintenance men.)

July 2:

Unconfirmed reports indicated that Shell-BP had made a token payment in taxes and revenues to the Biafran Government. The London Times stated that this action was taken by Shell-BP because it feared that its 400 employees remaining in the area might be held as hostages until an agreement was reached. -- Times, London, July 3, 1967.) It was believed that the company had paid \$700,000 in oil royalties or made an offer of \$1.9 million out of an estimated \$15-19 million due. (Later, on August 7, a company spokesman stated that the \$700,000 had been pledged "under duress" and with the "very strongest protest.") The FMG listed a set of conditions for the peaceful settlement of the conflict. These conditions included: a withdrawal of Biafra's declaration of independence, recognition of the FMG's authority over the Eastern Region, and the division of the Eastern Region into three states to comply with the new twelve-state structure for Nigeria. At this time a Government spokesman stated that "Rapprochement with Ojukwu is not possible." (African Diary, August 13-19, 1967, p. 3521.)

July 4:

Nigeria's naval blockade of Biafra became total as oil shipments were no longer exempted from the restrictions placed upon Biafran ports. This move by the FMG had two significant effects: it denied Biafra an important source of revenue and it cut off British and French oil interests from one of their chief African oil supplies.

As of this date the largest producer, Shell-BP suspended operations since it was no longer able to export because of the blockade. It was estimated that for every week oil was not exported, the Nigerians were losing \$840,000 in much-needed revenue. (Times, London, July 17, 1967.) In 1966 the combined contribution to the Nigerian economy of the oil firms royalty payments, rental fees, and local spending was \$40 million. (Times, London, July 7, 1967.)

(Great Britain imported seven and a half million tons of crude oil from Nigeria in 1966; this accounted for 29% of Nigeria's total oil production; 85% of Nigeria's total

1967

- July 4:  
cont. production comes from the Eastern Region. Normally counting on Nigeria for approximately 10% of its total oil supply, Great Britain reportedly had planned to import as much as 14-20 million tons from Nigeria in 1967, since it had been cut off from its Middle East supply as a result of the June war. --Times, London, July 7, 1967. France, which accounted for 10% of Nigeria's oil market, relied on its Nigerian fields for only 3% of its oil supply.)
- July 6: The Federal Government mounted an offensive against the East in an effort to bring down the Biafran Government. By July 9 the Federal troops claimed to have captured three key border towns and to be marching south toward Enugu, the Biafran capital.
- July 10: The State Department announced it had turned down a request by the Federal Nigerian Government for military assistance. Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey stated that the United States regarded the rebellion as "a purely internal matter involving only Nigerians which must be resolved by the Nigerians themselves." On the same date the Biafran radio claimed that a similar appeal for military assistance by the FMG had been turned down by the British Government.
- July 15: Federal troops captured the university town of Nsukka on the approach to Enugu.
- July 16: The Federal Military Government demanded that Shell-BP make immediate payment to the Federal Government for the royalties due on oil produced in the Eastern Region. (On July 14, the FMG had issued a decree granting itself the power to control all petroleum facilities for storage, transport, and distribution and to take over such facilities from companies which do not comply with its orders.)
- July 18: The first air action by Federal forces was carried out in raids against targets located in Enugu. (The Nigerian Air Force is reportedly dependent on Egyptian and South African "volunteer" pilots. -- Hugh Hanning. "Lessons from the Arms Race," Africa Report, February 1968, p. 45. The Biafrans had earlier launched several raids on Federal supply bases with their one B-26 bomber and dropped explosives on Federal troops from six French Alouette helicopters.)
- July 20: Reporting from Enugu, New York Times reporter Lloyd Garrison stated that the killing of civilians was increasing in areas taken over by Federal troops.

1967

- July 26: Federal forces captured the Biafran oil port of Bonny. Two-thirds of Nigeria's crude oil production is exported from Bonny. The FMG also announced that its troops were now advancing toward Port Harcourt, Biafra's largest seaport and oil refinery.
- July 31: Radio Biafra announced that the Biafran Government had seized Shell-BP's oil installations. The report indicated that the property was being seized "for purposes of protection" as Shell-BP had failed to make the proper royalty payments to the Biafran Government by the previously announced July 1 deadline. On August 7 in Lagos, Shell-BP Managing Director Stanley Gray stated that the company had refused to pay any royalties in 1968 until "the situation becomes normal."
- August 8: The Federal Government claimed to have access to a Biafran document which ceded oil and mineral rights to the Rothschild Frères Bank of Paris for \$16.8 million in foreign currency. The bank denied the charge. Informed sources have indicated that this charge is unsubstantiated and may be a Nigerian propaganda ploy.
- August 9: Biafran forces, in their first major offensive, penetrated the Mid-Western Region and captured two key cities, Benin and Warri. Reportedly, mutinous Mid-Western troops joined the Biafrans following their surprise crossing of the Niger River. (Approximately 40% of the Mid-West's 2.5 million people are Ibo-speaking, like the Easterners.) On the same day, the Biafrans conducted their first air raids against Lagos. (The Biafran Air Force at this point is believed to have consisted of one B-26 bomber and several helicopters.)
- August 11: Brigadier Victor Banjo, a Yoruba of the Mid-Western Region, claimed that the Mid-West would become independent of both Biafra and Nigeria. Banjo, who cooperated with Biafran forces in taking the Mid-Western Region, stated that his next objective was to lead his "liberation army" against the West and Lagos in order to liberate them from "Northern feudalistic control." Six days later Ojukwu named Major Albert O. Okonkwo, a Mid-Western Ibo, as Military Administrator of the Mid-West; however, he indicated that Brigadier Banjo was still expected to lead the "liberation army" against Lagos and Ibadan, the Federal and Western capitals.
- August 13: In their first thrust into the Northern Region, Biafran troops captured three towns: Okene, Attami, and Ilashi.

1967

August 17:

After several days of rumors to the effect that Britain was about to depart from its position of neutrality, the Commonwealth Office made the following announcement: "Any chartering of aircraft to carry arms to Nigeria is not by the British Government. Any bids to charter aircraft or ships for arms supplies do not necessarily imply that they are with the intention of freighting cargoes of British origin.

"Any purchases of arms in this country would be on a commercial basis and would require export licenses. There has been no financial aid by Britain towards the purchase of arms originating in this country.

"The facts about British arms shipments are these. Export licenses have been granted for a small number of anti-aircraft guns, one consignment of rifles and two seaward defense boats. A number of further requests for export licenses for substantial quantities of military supplies have been made by commercial firms as a result of orders placed by the Lagos Government in the traditional way. These are under consideration and no decisions have yet been taken." (The British decision not to impose sanctions on the normal commercial export of arms to Nigeria has been subject to much criticism. According to the journal West Africa, there are several factors which are said to have influenced the British decision: (1) Britain is the traditional supplier of arms to Nigeria; (2) Since Biafra has been reported to be receiving outside aid, a position of positive neutrality would cut the Federal Government off from its traditional supplier and therefore Britain in reality would be helping Biafra and thus not be a true neutral; (3) If Britain refused to sell arms to the FMG it would lose any restraining influence it might have on that government, and whatever vacuum it might leave would be filled by the USSR. (See "Arms and Nigeria," in West Africa, August 31, 1968, p. 1000.)

August 18:

First shipment of Soviet military aid reported to arrive in Kano, Northern Nigeria. (Cf. entry for June 23.)

August 20:

Biafran troops penetrated the Western Region for the first time and captured the town of Ore. (Only 135 miles from Lagos, the Federal capital, Ore guards the main inter-section of the Benin/Ibadan and Benin/Lagos roads.)

1967

August 21:

Radio Biafra reported that Lt. Col. Ojukwu was willing to enter into peace talks to end the dispute. However, Ojukwu's condition for beginning negotiations was that Biafra's sovereignty must be recognized. The Federal Government had earlier stipulated that before peace talks could begin, Biafra must renounce its declaration of independence.

Setting forth the position of the United States on the issue of arms supply, and its concern over the Soviet decision to lend military assistance to the FMG, a State Department spokesman read the following statement to news correspondents: "Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union has in the past been an important supplier of arms to Nigeria. Consistent with that fact, the United States decided for its part on the outbreak of the current hostilities in Nigeria that it would not sell or otherwise supply arms and ammunition to either side. To have done so would have risked deepening the conflict and introducing an element of great-power competition in the internal affairs of a friendly state.

"The United States has adhered fully to that policy. Its refusal to supply arms has been stated publicly and is well known to the Soviet Union. In these circumstances, it is a matter of regret to the United States that the Soviet Union has not shown the same forbearance but, on the contrary, has decided to engage in the supply of arms in the internal conflict..." (Cf. entry for July 10.)

August 30:

The Biafran Government issued a "Memorandum on Future Association" which proposed a joint services authority for railways, harbors, roads, merchant and river shipping, airlines and internal postal services. (Some observers felt that this plan was designed to deflate the Federal Nigerian argument that Nigeria without Biafra would doom the economic future of the landlocked Federal territory.) On Radio Enugu, Lt. Col. Ojukwu announced that Biafra favored mediation of the conflict by the Organization of African Unity or, if this failed, might accept mediation by the Commonwealth.

September 2:

In a radio broadcast, General Gowon rejected the Biafran plan for "future association." At the same time Gowon set forth the following conditions for peace talks: (1) Biafra must renounce secession and agree to remain an integral part of Nigeria; (2) Biafra must agree to the new 12-state structure; (3) Biafra must replace Ojukwu with a new leader to head its negotiating team.

1967

- September 13: The Biafran radio charged that white mercenaries were fighting with the Nigerian forces which clashed with Biafran troops on September 12 near Nusaka.
- In an article published in Sovetskaya Rossia, Soviet Journalist Edward Baskakov charged that Portugal was supplying Biafra with mercenaries and antiaircraft guns, He also alleged that the United States was providing the services of Negro specialists and military equipment. (The State Department denied it was offering any military aid to Nigeria.) The same article also accused West Germany of selling arms to Biafra. This charge was later denied by the West German Ambassador to Lagos.
- September 14: The Organization of African Unity, meeting in Kinshasa, approved a resolution creating a consultative mission to be sent to Lagos to pave the way for negotiated settlement of the Nigerian conflict. The mission was to be composed of the heads of state of Ethiopia, Niger, Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia and the Congo (K). General Gowon announced that evening that he would allow the mission to come to Lagos. (However, though the group was originally scheduled to arrive in Lagos around September 27, the mission was postponed until October 5 and then again until November 12.)
- September 20: Early in the day the Mid-West proclaimed its formal secession from the Federation and declared itself the independent Republic of Benin. By the close of the day, however, Federal forces had entered the capital city of Benin and proceeded to capture four other Mid-Western towns. Enugu sources later claimed that hundreds of Ibos were killed during the recapture of Benin by Federal forces. The military administrator of Benin denied this charge. (African Diary, November 5-11, 1967, p. 3650.)
- September 30: Speaking on national radio and television, General Gowon stated: "The Ibos, when they are returned to the fold, must be given their rightful place and, as people who have been misguided and misled by their leaders, the rest of us have a duty to bind their wounds and give them our right hand of fellowship." He further stated that "After the cessation of hostilities, the new constitution will be determined by representatives of all the states, who will also help in deciding the precise form of government institutions, the system of revenue allocation, and arrangements for ensuring free and fair elections." (African Diary, November 5-11, 1967, p. 2652.)

1967

- October 4: The Biafran capital of Enugu fell to Federal forces.
- October 10: Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, published the text of identical papal messages sent to Gowon and Ojukwu in July. The Pope urged them both to "do everything possible to bring about the cessation of armed hostilities."
- October 15: Ojukwu blamed the loss of Enugu and the Mid-West on a lack of loyalty among his troops. Analysts regarded this as confirmation of "...what Nigerian newspapers have been saying -- that there is widespread unrest among Biafrans; and there is a struggle between 'progressives' who want to seek an accommodation with Lagos and the 'conservatives' who want to continue fighting." (Christian Science Monitor, October 16, 1967.) Nonetheless, Ojukwu's support did not appear to be very shaky; on October 12 a combined meeting of the Consultative Assembly and the tribal chiefs gave him a vote of confidence and recommended his promotion to full general.
- October 16: Soviet Premier Alexi Kosygin sent a personal note to FMG leader, General Gowon. The note assured the Federal Government of "...Soviet support and cooperation in preserving Nigeria's unity..." (Africa Report, January 1968, p. 46.)
- October 18: Federal troops took the port city of Calabar, a main entreport for Biafran supplies. FMG officials claimed that "Chinese-looking" mercenaries were found among the Biafran casualties. (Africa Report, January 1968, p. 45.)
- October 21: Federal forces assaulted but failed to capture the Biafran industrial city of Onitsha.
- October 30: General Gowon charged Portugal with being the major supplier of military assistance to Biafra. On November 2 the Portuguese Embassy in Washington denied the charge: "The Portuguese Government has no knowledge of any Portuguese national at the service of the rebels nor has it granted authorization to anyone for that service." (Africa Report, January 1968, p. 47.)
- November 7: The Spanish Foreign Minister denied press reports that Spain was aiding Biafra by sending arms and mercenaries.

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- November 16: In a letter to the London Times, former Nigerian President Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Ibo, denied press allegations that he was opposed to the Biafran secession. Though he explained that he did not sanction violence, he claimed that since Ibos were not wanted anywhere in Nigeria it was time to recognize certain "realities of history" and the "logical conclusion is to recognize the natural and inalienable rights of Biafrans to self determination and autonomous existence as a free, sovereign and independent nation." (Africa Report, January 1968, p. 46.) Azikiwe had been mentioned as a leader of national stature who could serve as a unifying force in an effort to reunite Nigeria.
- November 22-24: Four members of the OAU consultative mission met with General Gowon in Lagos. In a communiqué published on November 24 the mission indicated that its present function would be to serve as a channel of communication between the Federal Military Government and the secessionist government of Biafra. The mission called upon Biafra to renounce secession and accept the twelve-state structure. Biafran radio on the same day declared that the meeting had been a "stage-managed conference." On November 25 the Biafran government stated that the OAU "...has confirmed the impression held by many that it is incapable of resolving serious inter-state disputes in Africa." It further denounced the OAU as the "...willing tool of reactionary African leaders..." (African Diary, January 1-6, 1968, p. 3733.)
- December 30: Chief Awolowo, the Federal Finance Commissioner, announced that the FMG had decided to withdraw its banknotes from circulation by January 22 and issue new currency in four denominations. This tactic was designed to hinder Biafra's ability to buy arms abroad with the \$103.6 million of Nigerian currency it had seized when it declared its independence. (The Biafrans thwarted the Nigerian intentions to the extent of unloading more than \$48 million in Nigerian currency before the conversion deadline. Later Biafra established its own currency and postage stamps.)

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- January 5: As Federal forces stepped up their operations against Biafra, General Gowon appealed to the Biafran leaders to accept his offer for negotiations. Slightly modifying his stipulation that he would not negotiate with Ojukwu, Gowon named 17 Ibo leaders whom he would regard as acceptable representatives of Biafra. This list included former Nigerian President Azikiwe. Gowon also set March 31 as a deadline for military victory over Biafra if negotiations did not begin. The twelve-state organization was due to become operative by April 1.
- January 8: Reports began to circulate that the French mercenary Major Robert Denard had arrived in Biafra with a group of 100 men. (African Diary, February 11-17, 1968, p. 3793.) Earlier reports had indicated that Col. Mike Hoare, also a well known mercenary leader, had been recruiting for the Biafran forces.
- January 10: Continued dissatisfaction in the Western Region was indicated by a meeting of the banned Action Group (the West's regionally based political party), as reported in the Lagos Morning Post. Reportedly there was some desire for Yoruba civilian rule in place of military occupation in the West. (Christian Science Monitor, January 29, 1968, p. 14.)
- January 15: The International Red Cross announced that it was canceling a planned mercy flight to Biafra because the FMG had reneged on its agreement to allow the flight to pass through Nigerian territory. The Red Cross had originally intended to airlift emergency medical supplies and a 10-member medical team to Biafra.
- January 28: At a special press conference held for 26 foreign correspondents in Umuahia, Lt. Col. Ojukwu called for a cease-fire and unconditional negotiations to end the war. Ojukwu also appealed for American assistance "to bring this futile fighting to an end." The Biafran leader named the OAU, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Great Britain as acceptable mediators.
- February 5: State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey issued the following statement clarifying the U.S. position with respect to Biafra: "We've been concerned with a number of insinuations recently alleging United States support of the

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- February 5:  
cont. 'Biafran' regime. I wish to make very clear that the United States continues to recognize the Federal Military Government as the only legal government in Nigeria. We do not recognize 'Biafra' nor, so far as we know, does any other government in the world. We have, from the outset of the Nigerian crisis, regarded it as an internal conflict which, in the last analysis, only the Nigerians themselves can resolve..."
- February 6: At a press conference, Pius Okigbo, the Biafran economic adviser, reported on the state of Biafra's economy. He stated that because of a very good harvest in 1967 there was no shortage of the basic staples: yams, cassava, and rice. However, supplies of milk and salt were short and Biafra had been cut off from its source of beef in the Northern Region. (Africa Report, April 1968, p. 36.)
- February 8-11: Commonwealth Secretary-General Arnold Smith was in Lagos consulting with General Gowon. On February 12 the Manchester Guardian reported that six weeks of secret negotiations had resulted in a plan to bring about a cease-fire to be policed by a Commonwealth peace force. Hopes for the implementation of the plan were dimmed by the announcement by Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Nigerian Commissioner for External Affairs, that the presence of foreign troops on Nigerian soil would violate Nigerian sovereignty unless they were explicitly invited by the government. (Africa Report, April 1968, p. 35.) On February 16 Ojukwu commented that "We are prepared at any time to accept a ceasefire and negotiate an honourable peace. But Biafra sought peace with Nigeria, not in Nigeria." (African Diary, March 24-30, 1968, p. 3853.)
- February 23: General Gowon announced that his government did not intend to invite a Commonwealth peace force to police a cease-fire.
- February 24: The International Red Cross delegate in Lagos lodged a protest with the Federal Military Government concerning Federal air attacks on civilians in Biafra. The protest, according to the London Times, charged that the bombardment of Awgu prior to its capture on February 17 had resulted in several hundred civilian casualties. (Times, London, February 26, 1968.)

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- March 1: Biafran Foreign Affairs Commissioner Mathew Mbu addressed a letter to UN Secretary-General U Thant accusing Nigeria of genocide and "atrocious violations of human rights and fundamental freedom." (Africa Report, May 1968, p. 40)
- March 21: Federal troops took Onitsha, Biafra's major industrial and commercial city.
- March 31: In a nationwide broadcast, General Gowon summarized the progress of the war and recent political developments. He announced that ten of the twelve new states would begin functioning as scheduled on April 1.
- April 3: Upon returning from a tour of five African capitals, where he urged the heads of state to encourage the FMG to accept a cease-fire and negotiate, former Nigerian President Azikiwe stated on Biafran radio that Biafra was prepared to participate in unconditional negotiations if the Federal Government would do the same.
- April 6: A FMG communiqué announced that Federal forces had captured Abakaliki, a provincial headquarters of Biafra. The Abakaliki region is one of the main food-producing areas of Biafra and therefore the source of protein-rich dietary staples such as yams, and other vegetables. (The Biafrans had been cut off for the past year from another traditional source of protein, beef, since the Eastern Region had traditionally imported beef from the cattle-raising areas of the North. By the time Port Harcourt was captured by Federal forces on May 19 -- the Calabar area had been captured on October 18, 1967 -- Federal forces also controlled the Biafran rivers and coastal region which supported the Eastern fishing industry and thus Biafra was cut off from another important source of protein.)
- Ojukwu sent a message to the Federal Government urging a cease-fire, negotiations through neutral channels, and a UN-sponsored referendum in the former Eastern Region and the Ibo-speaking Mid-Western state.
- April 10: The Nigerian Red Cross in Lagos announced that more than two million children and 1.6 million nursing mothers were in danger of malnutrition and starvation as a result of the war. It launched an international appeal for relief services. The Red Cross stated that it already was caring for more than 500,000 persons in former Biafran

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- April 10: cont. territory now under Federal control and predicted that every week more than 25,000 additional war victims would need Red Cross care. (African Diary, May 19-25, 1968, p. 3934.)
- April 13: Tanzania became the first nation to recognize the independent Republic of Biafra. The Federal Government immediately broke relations with Tanzania. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere later explained his nation's recognition of Biafra in the following terms: "We in this country believe that unity is vital for the future of Africa. But it must be a unity which serves the people, and which is freely determined by the people.
- "For ten months we have accepted the Nigerian Government's legal right to our support in a 'police action to defend the integrity of the state'...Everything combined gradually to force us to the conclusion that Nigerian unity did not exist...It seemed to us that by refusing to recognize the existence of Biafra we were tacitly supporting a war against the people of Eastern Nigeria -- and a war conducted in the name of unity. We could not continue doing this any longer." (Africa Report, June 1968, p. 27.)
- (Biafra was also recognized by Gabon on May 8, the Ivory Coast on May 14, and Zambia on May 20.)
- April 22: Ojukwu issued a five-point proposal for getting peace talks under way: (1) talks should begin at the ministerial or official level, (2) within 48 hours, (3) at a mutually acceptable African site, and (4) under the joint chairmanship of two African heads of state, one nominated by the Biafrans and one nominated by the Nigerians; and (5) the first item for consideration should be a cease-fire.
- April 24: Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General, sent a message to the Biafran Government announcing that the FMG had indicated to him that it would be willing to begin talks without preconditions and that it would send a four-man team to London with full powers to negotiate.
- April 25: Federal External Affairs Commissioner Arikpo confirmed Smith's message and said Nigeria would negotiate with any team of Biafran representatives, including Ojukwu. (Cf. entries for September 2, 1967, and January 5, 1968.)

- May 6-15: Representatives from Biafra and the Federal Military Government met in London under the chairmanship of Commonwealth Secretary-General Smith. A communiqué issued on May 15 announced that both sides had agreed to further talks in Kampala, Uganda.
- May 15: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) made an appeal for international assistance to bring food and medical relief to Biafra.
- May 19: The FMG announced that it had captured Port Harcourt, Biafra's last surface link with the outside world and the site of the Eastern Region's rich oil refineries. A May 25 press report stated that several hundred wounded soldiers in the abandoned Biafran hospitals in Port Harcourt had been slaughtered by Nigerian troops. There appeared to be a serious food shortage in Port Harcourt, as remaining residents said they had barely subsisted since the Biafrans withdrew from the city on May 16. (African Diary, June 30-July 6, 1968, p. 3993.)
- May 21: The ICRC sent a letter of protest to the FMG for its air attacks against hospitals marked with a Red Cross. Federal officials had earlier complained that Biafra was using hospitals and schools as military bases.
- May 23-31: Nigerian and Biafran representatives met at Kampala, Uganda. It had been agreed in London (cf. entry for May 6-15) that the agenda for the Kampala meeting would roughly follow this outline: (1) agreement as to procedural questions, such as chairmanship and foreign observers; (2) discussion on a cease-fire; (3) discussion on a peace settlement. The conference bogged down over the question of a cease-fire and the talks broke off on May 31. The Biafran position stipulated that an immediate cease-fire was necessary, while the Federal Government would not agree to a cease-fire until the Biafrans had renounced secession. Both sides presented proposals for the imposition of some type of neutral peace force to police a cease-fire once it had been agreed upon.
- June 7: Lord Shepherd, British Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, met in Lagos with General Gowon and other Nigerian officials. On June 23 Lord Shepherd accompanied by British High Commissioner Sir David Hunt departed for Biafra on a fact-finding mission. Returning to Lagos on June 24, Lord Shepherd and Gowon issued a joint communiqué in which

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- June 7:  
cont. Lord Shepherd urged that an immediate negotiated settlement was necessary in order to avoid the loss of thousands of civilian lives and General Gowon reiterated that "the Federal Government were agreeable to cease-fire arrangements involving an external observer force as a means of giving a sense of security to the Ibo people." (African Diary, August 4-10, 1968, p. 4039.)
- June 24: The United States Agency for International Development (AID) announced that it was contributing \$100,000 through the American Red Cross to the Nigerian relief efforts. Under a program authorized in March 1968, AID had already shipped \$1.1 million in food aid to Nigeria.
- June 27: The Biafran government released a statement in Aba suggesting that a plebiscite be held in Biafra to allow its people to decide if they wished to remain independent from Nigeria. The Biafran Government offered the plebiscite to Nigeria as "...the converse of its insistence on a cease-fire first in regard to a negotiated settlement." (African Diary, August 4-10, 1968, p. 4040.)
- July 3: British Commonwealth Secretary George Thomson announced increased British efforts to bring relief to the Nigerians. He stated that the British Government was making available an additional \$600,000 to the Red Cross for emergency relief aid. In addition Lord Hunt was to be sent to Nigeria to lead an advisory relief team. Furthermore, Mr. Thomson indicated that Britain would be willing to dispatch a battalion to join any Commonwealth peace force formed to act as a buffer during a cease-fire.
- July 4: Lt. Col. Ojukwu turned down Britain's offer of relief aid and refused the assistance of the Hunt mission. The Biafran statement said: "...While the Government of the Republic of Biafra is grateful for all genuine offers of assistance, it cannot understand how the British Government can offer assistance in one hand and in the other furnish the Lagos Government with the arms for increasing the misery, suffering and destruction of these same people." (African Diary, August 4-10, 1968, p. 4040.)
- At this time thousands of Ibo's in the increasingly smaller area under Biafran control were suffering from malnutrition and dying of starvation. In former Biafran areas under Federal domination, refugees were also suffering from

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- July 4:  
cont.                   hunger. At this time Federal officials estimated that there were 140,000 refugees in the Calabar area alone. Heinrich Jaggi, chief ICRC delegate, estimated that 3,000 people a day were dying in Biafra (other estimates were lower) and that at least 200 tons of food a day were required to offset the massive starvation.
- July 5:                   The Federal Military Government commented that if the British plan to airdrop emergency supplies into Biafran territory were carried out it would be regarded as a violation of Nigerian air space and an act of hostility. The Nigerian Air Force was instructed to seek out and destroy all unauthorized aircraft.
- July 9:                   The ICRC announced that since February it had flown 150-170 tons of food aid to Biafra.
- July 10:                  UN Secretary-General U Thant urged the Biafrans to cooperate with the plan to airlift food to Enugu and Port Harcourt from which it would then be transported by road to previously agreed upon points within Biafran territory.
- July 11:                  President Lyndon Johnson appealed "to allow those bearing responsibility to allow supplies to get to the people who desperately need them."
- July 13:                  Dr. Nwonye Otue, a special representative of Biafra, appealed for an internationally-sponsored helicopter airlift of supplies to Biafra.
- July 15:                  Press reports indicated that Pope Paul had made an offer to mediate the Nigerian-Biafran conflict.
- Members of the OAU consultative mission met in Niamey, Niger, to attempt, once again, to mediate the Nigerian civil war. Both General Gowon and Lt. Col Ojukwu accepted invitations to joint in discussions with the African leaders. A communiqué issued on July 19 indicated that both sides had agreed to hold peace talks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which were later scheduled for August 5. Relief measures were also discussed.
- Meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, the World Council of Churches announced it would raise an additional \$3 million for Biafran relief efforts. The organization had already donated \$3.8 million in cash and goods.

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July 18:

At a press conference in Niamey, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, fearing genocide, rejected the idea of neutralized land corridors for transporting relief to Biafra. Claiming that some supplies received in Biafra had been poisoned, Ojukwu stated: "The establishment of the so-called land and sea corridors would remove the military obstacles created by the Biafrans and create routes through which Gowon's war machine can roll easily into our heartland." Ojukwu suggested instead that a neutralized air strip be set up or that Port Harcourt be demilitarized as well as the channels leading to it, or that the River Niger, an international waterway, be used to transport the emergency relief supplies. (African Diary, August 18-24, 1968, p. 4060.)

July 21:

Pope Paul admitted that the Vatican had been sending emergency relief supplies to Biafra through Caritas International and other agencies.

July 22:

Reporting to Parliament on Lord Hunt's mission, Commonwealth Secretary George Thomson stated that the Biafran starvation death rate was 200-300 per day. On the same day the Washington Post reported that official Biafran sources set the number of deaths by starvation at approximately 3% of its population per week. The announcement was unclear as to whether the figure 3% was to be applied to the whole population of 12 million or only to the refugee population of 4.6 million. In any case, according to the Washington Post article, this estimate "wildly exceeds" the estimates of private relief agencies; neutral observers see the government's new estimate as "close to preposterous." It was estimated that if the war continued, in a year more than five million Eastern Nigerians would be dead. Later ICRC figures set the death rate for July alone as 100,000.

July 30:

The Biafran radio claimed that during the war 40,000 Biafran troops had been killed (cf. entry for May 30, 1967) and that more than 100,000 civilians had died as a result of bombing. Biafran sources indicated Nigerian military casualties were twice as heavy. President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast has claimed that more people have died in the Nigerian civil war than in Vietnam. Official U.S. estimates for losses on both sides in Vietnam at the time were more than 425,000. (Washington Post, July 21, 1968, p. B1.)

1968July 30:  
cont.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk in a news conference urged both sides to exercise restraint in their military operations and encouraged them to take every opportunity to find a basis for settlement.

July 31:

The French Government issued a cabinet-approved statement on the Nigerian situation: "The French government observes that the blood that has been shed and the sufferings that have been endured for over a year by the Biafran people show their will to assert themselves as a people. Faithful to its principles, the French government believes that in consequence the present conflict should be settled on the basis of the right of peoples to self-determination and should entail the putting into action of the appropriate international procedures." (Washington Post, August 1, 1968.) This statement came very close to a tacit recognition of the Biafran regime and French spokesmen did not deny that formal recognition could follow. Observers felt that the French move was sure to strengthen Biafra's position psychologically at the impending Addis Ababa talks.

August 3:

Almost on the eve of the Addis Ababa talks, Lt. Col. Ojukwu announced that as "a gesture of sincerity" Biafran forces would observe a unilateral cease-fire. On the same day the Nigerian Government announced that the Federal forces would not consider a truce until the Biafrans renounced secession. Diplomatic sources indicated that during the Addis Ababa talks Emperor Haile Selassie, also appealed to the Federal forces to observe a truce during the peace talks.

August 5-  
September 9:

Under the chairmanship of Haile Selassie, Nigerian and Biafran representatives met in Addis Ababa to try to negotiate a settlement to the civil war and to reach some agreement on relief efforts. Lt. Col. Ojukwu was present in Addis Ababa but General Gowon did not attend as he refused to meet face-to-face with Ojukwu on the grounds that such a meeting might imply recognition of the Biafran state. Biafra presented a seven-point peace plan: (1) acceptance of Biafra as an independent and sovereign state; (2) maximum economic cooperation between Nigeria and Biafra; (3) negotiated settlement on the sharing of assets and liabilities; (4) immediate cease-fire and suspension of the economic blockade against Biafra, and the withdrawal of troops to prewar boundaries; (5) policing of the cease-fire by an international police force with troops

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August 5-  
September 9:  
cont.

from Ethiopia, Liberia, Ghana, Niger, Cameroon, Congo (K), Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast, and Zambia; (6) agreement on a plebiscite in the disputed areas inside and outside Biafra in order to allow those people self-determination; and (7) immediate agreement on transportation of relief supplies. The Federal Military Government rejected the Biafran proposals as "totally unrealistic" and "totally unacceptable," on the grounds that the OAU consultative mission had brought both sides to the conference table to find a solution "preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria." (African Diary, September 22-28, 1968, p. 4111.)

August 10:

The International Red Cross stopped its mercy flights to Biafra because its planes were being subjected to Nigerian anti-aircraft fire. Nightly relief flights resumed on August 19 and on September 2 the ICRC announced it would increase its flight schedule and would now include some daytime runs. The FMG indicated that these flights would be regarded as unauthorized and illegal.

August 14:

Special American envoy C. Robert Moore, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, met in Geneva with ICRC officials in an effort to facilitate relief efforts for Biafra.

The ICRC announced that an airstrip in Biafra had been neutralized and set aside for Red Cross use. On August 15, the FMG in Lagos rejected the Red Cross plan and stated that the neutralization of any portion of Nigerian territory was unacceptable.

August 25:

Reports indicated that Federal forces had taken the town of Aba, Biafra's temporary capital. The nearby airfield which had been used by the Red Cross to bring in relief supplies had also been bombed. (When the civil war began in July 1967, Biafra had an area of 29,000 square miles and a population of 13 million. It was now estimated that about 8 million people remained in Biafran territory, which had been reduced to 9,000 square miles.)

August 27:

General Gowon announced that Federal forces had launched the "final offensive" against Biafra.

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- August 30: The FMG invited foreign observers to accompany Federal troops fighting in Biafra. In an effort to prove that the Nigerians had no intention of exterminating the Ibos, the FMG extended this invitation to representatives of the UN, OAU, Britain, Poland, Canada, and Sweden.
- September 6: Federal forces began bombing the villages around the Biafran town of Ihiala. The Federal Government reportedly agreed to allow the ICRC to land daytime relief flights for ten days at the Uli airstrip near Ihiala. However, the Biafrans supposedly opposed the plan as they depended upon the Uli airfield for receiving arms supplies.
- The first airlift of Biafran children reached Sao Tome, a Portuguese-controlled island off Gabon, for treatment for malnutrition. The flight, the first of a planned series, was sponsored by Caritas International, a Roman Catholic relief organization.
- September 9: During a press conference President Charles DeGaulle expressed France's support for the Biafran regime and admitted that France had been giving aid to Biafra. DeGaulle did not specify what type of assistance France had been giving the Biafrans. Earlier press reports claimed that nightly flights to Biafra by Air Gabon, with cargoes of arms and food, had been flown by French pilots. (West Africa, August 24, 1968, p. 997.)
- September 13: ICRC flights were suspended as Federal troops approached the last two remaining Biafran airfields near Uliaha and Okigwe.
- September 15: Federal troops continued to advance as they took one of Biafra's few remaining towns, Owerri. Owerri had been heavily defended by Biafran forces as it reportedly harbored hundreds of thousands of refugees. Owerri's prewar population was reportedly 26,000. The only remaining large city in Biafran hands was Umuahia, Ojukwu's headquarters.
- The OAU, meeting in Algiers, passed a resolution calling upon Biafra to renounce secession and help "restore the peace and unity of Nigeria.
- September 23: Federal forces captured the Obilagu airstrip located at a junction of the Afikpa-Okigwi highway. This vital landing field was being used by the International Red Cross to bring relief supplies and by the Biafrans to bring in arms.

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- September 23: cont. Press reports also indicated that Federal troops were now surrounding Umuahia.
- September 26: Henri Jaggi, head representative of the International Red Cross, reported that Biafran deaths by starvation had stabilized at 6,000 per day. He also stated that 100 tons of food were being received daily as a result of relief flights from Sao Tome and Santa Isabel, two islands off the Nigerian coast. One day later ICRC representatives stated that 8,000-10,000 people were starving to death daily.
- September 27: Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda said that Biafra would, if it wished, be allowed to establish a government in exile in Zambia. Earlier reports indicated that the Biafran leadership was contemplating exile in Gabon. (New York Times Reuters, September 29, 1968.)
- September 30: Lt. Col. Ojukwu appealed to Communist China for aid. In a letter to Chairman Mao Tse-tung, Ojukwu expressed "...Our deep gratitude to you personally and to our dear comrades in China for the increasing understanding and sympathy that you are showing in our struggle against Anglo-American imperialism and Soviet revisionism." (Washington Post, September 30, 1968.)
- October 1: The Manchester Guardian reported in London that reliable sources in West Africa had announced that deliveries of French military aid to Biafra began the previous week. The airlift originating from Gabon supposedly contained enough light automatic weapons to arm several battalions. (Washington Post, October 2, 1968.)
- October 2: The French Information Service in Paris denied that France was giving military aid to Biafra. It stated that France was sending medical aid and food supplies.
- October 3: An international observer force reported that it had seen "no evidence of any intent" by Nigerian troops toward genocide. The report stated that Federal forces were "...taking positive action to obtain the confidence of the local population and assist them in reestablishing a normal life." (Washington Post, October 4, 1968.)

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- October 5: The U.S. Government dispatched a senior diplomatic team to Nigeria to conduct a fact-finding mission. The mission included Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Joseph Palmer and several political and aid experts.
- Total American assistance to the Nigerian relief effort reached approximately \$15 million.
- October 8: The New York Times reported that an attempt had been made by four prominent Biafran leaders to start secret negotiations with the Nigerians. Lagos reportedly rejected the peace feeler when it became obvious that the offer did not have the support of the Biafran Consultative Assembly. (New York Times, October 10, 1968.)
- October 11: In an interview Ojukwu told reporters that the situation looked "difficult but not hopeless." He indicated that arms were still Biafra's greatest military need. (Christian Science Monitor, October 11, 1968.)
- (Ojukwu has at various times indicated that if Biafra were militarily defeated in the classic sense, her forces would then resort to guerrilla warfare.)
- October 14: Press reports from Lagos indicated that the FMG was considering a plan merely to surround rather than take the last remaining Biafran city of Umuahia: thus there would remain a stronghold of Biafrans with whom the Nigerians could negotiate a settlement. Nigerian troops were reported to be only 10 miles from Umuahia.
- October 15: Another military observer team covering the activities of the 3rd Nigerian Marine Commando Division gave the Federal forces a clear report on the question of genocide. There were at this date 13 observer teams in Nigeria composed of representatives from Britain, Canada, Sweden, Poland, the UN and the OAU. (Washington Post, October 16, 1968.)
- October 19: Dr. Herman Middlekoop, a leading relief expert and head of the World Council of Churches relief program, sent a confidential report to Secretary-General U Thant stating that unless there was an immediate cease-fire as many as 500,000 Biafrans would die in December. Not only are protein-food supplies exhausted, his report noted, but carbohydrate foods will also be extremely scarce in the next seven weeks.

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- October 19:  
cont. Dr. Middlekoop estimated the rates of starvation as 6,000 per day in July, 10,000 per day in August, 12,000 per day in September and possibly 25,000 per day in December. He indicated that adequate relief was no longer possible; the only solution, according to Dr. Middlekoop, would be through an immediate cease-fire. (New York Times, October 20, 1968.)
- October 28: In Geneva ICRC President Samuel A. Gonard stated that there had been "a clear improvement" in the food situation in Nigeria and that the "famine crisis has been more or less met." In order to continue its work at the present scale for the next four months the ICRC has estimated that it will need \$6.9 million -- all but \$1.1 million of this amount has already been raised. The Red Cross is presently caring for 750,000 refugees in Federally controlled areas and 500,000 in Biafran territory, and in the past two months has distributed 12,000 tons of food and medical supplies, 3,500 tons of which reached Biafra by air. The ICRC is now conducting a food survey in remaining Biafran territory to see how much food could be harvested to feed the population there. (New York Times, October 29, 1968.)
- November 1: Mrs. Eckert-Schweitzer, daughter of the famed missionary Albert Schweitzer, announced that her father's hospital at Lambarene, Gabon would receive starving children from Biafra for treatment.
- November 3: The New York Times reported that the OAU consultative mission was planning another meeting in Liberia later this month in a third attempt to bring about a negotiated settlement of the Nigerian civil war.
- November 4: The United Nations released a report by special representative Nils-Goran Gussing which praised the humanitarian efforts being made by the Nigerian Federal Government.
- November 5: The FMG announced that it would allow the ICRC to fly daylight relief runs into Biafra. It was later learned that this arrangement was to apply only to the Uli landing field, if that airstrip was closed to all other traffic. It was unknown whether the Biafrans would accept this plan. (As noted above, Biafra has relied on the Uli strip for arms shipments.)

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November 8: Roger W. Tubby, U.S. Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, announced that the United States had pledged an additional \$2.5 million to the Biafran relief effort. These funds brought the Red Cross closer to its goal of raising an additional \$6.9 million to continue its care for refugees in both Federally controlled areas and Biafra. (Cf. entry for October 28.)

Executive Director of UNICEF Eric J. R. Heyward reported that food shortages in Biafra were becoming even more critical as supplies of starchy foods are now also dwindling. Biafrans appear to be exhausting their stores of yams and cassava flour, two of their traditional sources of starches. This situation now further complicates existing relief programs which have been operating on the basis of supplying high protein foods. In addition to the fact that present stockpiles are primarily of proteins, starches also take approximately ten times more shipping space than protein foods.

November 9: The International Red Cross announced it was adding starch foods to its relief shipments to Biafra. ICRC reported that approximately 4.5 million war victims would soon be entirely dependent on outside food supplies.

November 13: The United Nations announced that it had reached an agreement with the Nigerian Government for an emergency food aid program. The additional relief supplies under this agreement will be supplied through the UN-FAO World Food Program but distributed by the International Red Cross. Though the accord did not mention Biafra, observers assume that some of the new supplies will reach Biafra since the ICRC is operating in both Federal and Biafran territory. Relief agencies now estimate that if the Biafran harvest and the 100 tons of food now reaching Biafra daily is not supplemented, food supplies will be completely depleted by mid-December.

November 14: The United States has offered three American volunteer relief agencies \$500,000 to help pay for the charter of a Hercules C-130 transport plane to fly relief supplies to Biafra. Catholic Relief Services, the Church World Services, and the American Jewish Committee, who have cooperated in order to charter a C-130 for five to six weeks, have agreed to coordinate their efforts with the

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International Red Cross. The Hercules has a capacity of 20 tons and it is believed that in two daily flights from Sao Tome it will increase current relief shipments by 50%.

The FMG announced that its forces had killed more than 1,000 Biafrans in a recent battle at Onitsha. Reportedly the Biafrans had made a major attempt to recapture this major commercial city, which has been in Federal hands since March.

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