

THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR  
IN THE  
NIGERIAN AND WORLD PRESS

THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR IN THE NIGERIAN AND WORLD PRESS:  
A STUDY IN INTERNATIONAL NEWS FLOW

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THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The study is designed to analyze African news flow in the world by content analyzing front page Nigerian civil war news and editorial comments in January, 1970 for five newspapers : three African, one of which is Nigerian, and two non-African.

The data reveal the overall paucity of quantitative coverage, disproportionate concern for substantive subject-matter, and overly favorable news treatment of Nigeria in the publications. The data further confirm two regional differences' hypotheses which state that, the African papers will carry more civil war news, and use more substantive content than the non-African papers.

The data substantiate a strong relationship between the editorial position, the respective governments' policies on the war, and the news coverage. The disproportionate relief news in the foreign papers is attributed to Biafra's publicized genocide by starvation, foreign relief involvement, and the need for sensational content in a market oriented press system.

The thesis also highlights some open questions. It suggests that, the paucity of African news in the world can be ameliorated by strengthening local (African) reporting and facilities, establishing an African Continental News Agency, and by placing journalists with African expertise at all dissemination points.

## RESUME

Cette thèse se propose d'étudier le flot de nouvelles africaines dans le monde, en analysant le contenu des nouvelles de la première page et des commentaires éditoriaux du mois de janvier 1970 de cinq journaux : trois africains, dont un nigérian, et deux non-africains.

Les données révèlent une pauvreté générale de couverture quantitative, un intérêt disproportionné pour des sujets substantiels et un traitement des nouvelles très favorable au Nigéria. Elles confirment aussi deux hypothèses concernant les différences régionales, à savoir que les journaux africains publient plus de nouvelles sur la guerre civile et s'occupent davantage du contenu substantiel, que les journaux non-africains.

Les données permettent aussi d'établir une forte relation entre la prise de position éditoriale, la ligne de conduite des gouvernements respectifs vis-à-vis la guerre, et la couverture des nouvelles. La part disproportionnée qu'occupent dans les journaux étrangers les nouvelles relatives au secours est attribuée à la publicité accordée au génocide du Biafra par la famine, à l'engagement étranger quant à ce secours, et au besoin de contenu sensationnel d'une presse orientée par le marché.

Cette thèse présente aussi quelques questions pouvant servir à des recherches ultérieures. Ainsi elle suggère que la pauvreté des nouvelles africaines dans le monde peut être améliorée en renforçant les structures locales (africaines) de reportage et les facilités, en fondant une agence continentale africaine de nouvelles, et en plaçant des journalistes possédant de l'expérience sur les questions africaines dans tous les points de dissémination.



## PREFACE

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I hope that this meager essay will be followed by many more and that the information gathered will contribute more widely to the improvement of African news flow and thus make African states effective participants in the world news market.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the foreign and local daily news coverage of an African crisis: the Nigerian Civil War. News in this thesis refer to any informational or opinion content (regardless of how it is displayed) concerning the Nigerian war, from which the reading public can gain directly or through inference, some impression of what was happening, or was involved, in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. A crisis was chosen because only a crisis or major conflict will bring a third world country to world attention.<sup>1</sup>

The Nigerian crisis was chosen for three reasons: first, its recent occurrence and its extended scope which embroiled a large African nation in fratricidal conflict. Second, because Nigeria's relatively well developed media system permits a careful analysis of local African press performance during a crisis. Nigeria supposedly has the largest and most receptive audience,<sup>2</sup> as well as the freest and most outspoken newspapers<sup>3</sup> whose reporting should thus be least affected by military one-party rule. Finally, Nigeria as Africa's most populous nation, lauded as Britain's show-piece for democracy in tropical Africa, guarantees that the world audience has some pre-knowledge of the country on which newspapers can base their war treatment of the country.

## THE NIGERIAN WAR

Between January 15th, 1966 and January 15th, 1970, Nigeria faced two bloody military coups and a devastating civil war. The former saw dramatic changes in the political power base

between the two primary contestants, the Ibos of the Eastern region and the Hausa-Fulanis of the North. The political instability, as well as a widespread feeling of insecurity, that followed these coups necessitated the secession of the Eastern Region, which on May 30th, 1967 called itself the independent Republic of Biafra.

The Lagos government's reaction to this secessionist move, which it opposed, precipitated a bloody civil war that lasted for nearly thirty-three months, between July 7th, 1967 and January 15th, 1970. To-day, there is no Republic of Biafra. The triumphant federalists have banned even the name "Biafra" from the dictionary, so that the pieces of that torn country could be patched together again in the Nigerian federation.

#### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This study is designed to illustrate basic differences between the coverage of the January 1970 civil war events by the African and the non-African press. Also, the study seeks to determine, relative to the local Nigerian press, how far press freedom was restricted under the military one-party system which ruled during the war.

Specifically, the study is structured to test three sets of hypotheses relative to the quantity, kind and direction of news coverage. Quantity and kinds of coverage refer respectively to the amount of column-inch space devoted by a paper to the war, and the types of news content (subject-matter) reported about it. Direction refers to whether the news reported was favorable, unfavorable or neutral to the Federal Nigerian cause. The first set of hypotheses (quantity) proposes that

- a) the Nigerian civil war will tend to receive meager coverage

from the foreign daily newspapers;

- b) of the two groups of publications (African and non-African) the former will tend to devote a greater proportion of their foreign news-hole to the war events, than the latter.

The second set of hypotheses (kinds of news) proposes that

- a) socially oriented subject-matter categories will tend to receive more coverage in the foreign press than the substantively oriented categories; while
- b) the African papers will tend to be more concerned with substantive content.

A final set of hypotheses deals with the direction of news treatment and we propose that:

- a) the foreign press will tend to be more favorably disposed to federal Nigeria in their coverage; but
- b) the non-African press will tend to be more favorably disposed to Nigeria than the African press.

#### REVIEW OF AVAILABLE INTERNATIONAL NEWS FLOW LITERATURE

In journalistic terms, it took some time for the Nigerian civil war news story to get off the ground.<sup>4</sup> When it did break through, coverage was sporadic and intermittent as well as lacking in analytical depth. Why did this pattern of coverage pertain is the object of this literature review.

For several reasons, the international flow of news has become an important field of research for journalism and communications scholars, as well as for sociologists and political scientists.<sup>5</sup> Though relatively recent, an increasing number of investigations have contributed to an understanding of various aspects of news flow. Among these, to name a few, are works by



Hart, Markham, Adams, Cutlip, Schramm, Ostgaard, Galtung and Ruge, Robinson and Hachten.<sup>6</sup> In spite of the burgeoning literature, however, Karl Erik Rosengren of Lund University recently maintained that the "literature...is mostly ad hoc, rather poor of theoretical argument",<sup>7</sup> except for some 'brilliant exceptions'.<sup>8</sup>

A survey of available literature, relative to the African perspective pursued in this thesis, reveals that African news flow has received scant attention within the wider world context. The present review is, therefore, delimited to those materials which provide some explanation of the kind of African crisis news reported in this thesis.

Central to our consideration are those 'negative factors' identified by Ostgaard as impairing the "free flow of news" causing the "picture of the world" as it is presented through the news media to differ from "what really happened".<sup>9</sup> His analysis of these factors classifies them as external and internal to the news process. The former involves five political and economic variables, including government censorship, elite monopoly, global agency monopoly, economic and technological factors, and the influence of publishers.

Censorship ensures news management, weighting information flow in favor of government interests. Official and elite monopoly at the source, on the other hand, guarantees the disproportionate coverage of the activities of the political and economic elite, compared to other social groups.<sup>10</sup> The world agencies, as primary news purveyors, exhibit a geographical as well as a nationality bias, which tend to impair quantitative and qualitative news flow.<sup>11</sup> With a predominantly urban westernized

clientile, served by a predominantly western and American correspondent corps, these agencies tend to disproportionately overlook Africa in their world news service.

In addition, the dearth of communications facilities within, and among African nations impairs the flow of news about them. This results from prohibitive transmission costs, as well as delays due to communication overload of available facilities. A final factor contributing to the scarcity of African news is the role of publishers, whose economic and space considerations affect editorial policy and hence the quantity of foreign news available to the reading public.

Analyzing the factors inherent in the news process, Ostgaard identifies three additional variables which derive both from an analysis of audience (readership) interests, as well as the marketability of the news copy. These are the need for identification, simplification and sensation. Ostgaard portrays identification<sup>12</sup> as a function of physical (or geographical) proximity which measures the nearness of the source of news to a recipient country, 'proximity in time' or the newness of the news event, and finally 'cultural proximity' based on such things as shared political, economic, cultural or other attitudes between source and receiver nations.

All of these variables, Ostgaard shows, ensure the personalization of news copy, which increases its news-worthiness by catching the attention or interest of the reader. Simplification, on the other hand, guarantees that copy becomes much less complex and comprehensible to the average reader; and sensation<sup>13</sup> ensures that the copy is exciting and emotion arousing to make for good

reading. It emphasizes amusement, excitement, sorrow or grief.

Integrating both sets of factors, Ostgaard concludes that international news flow reinforces the status quo and exaggerates the activities of the big power leaders. Secondly, that the news media tend to reinforce and reflect the division of the world into high and low status nations. Finally, that the news media tend to present a picture of the world as being more conflict laden than is actually the case.

A companion study by Galtung and Ruge of Cuban, Cypriot and Congo reporting adds to our understanding of international news flow by pointing to the importance of culture bound variables<sup>14</sup> in determining news value and thus influencing the content of news copy. These are: elite-centeredness, personification and negativism.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the authors conclude that top people and top nations will always make news. Secondly, that news reporting is always person centered; and finally, that in news reporting, negative events are preferred to positive ones, especially where unknown and/or low status persons or nation are reported on.

Conclusions from both of these studies can be integrated and refined to yield the following propositions: firstly, the more distant the nation from which news flows, the greater the tendency to report the activities of the elite. Secondly, the lower the rank of the person or groups in the news, the more negative the headlines. Thirdly, the more geographically distant the nation, the more negative the event must be to capture world press attention. And lastly, the more culturally distant the reporting scene, the more the event must be tailored to the news value of the recipient nation.

Markham contributes empirical evidence supportive of the proposition that national status influences world news marketing. By testing mutual news exchanges between the United States (top-dog nation) and the South American states (under-dog nations), he shows that the former is a "news-giver" nation and the latter "news-taker" nations.<sup>16</sup> Also compared to the United States, he indicates that the South American press uses twice as much news about western Europe, as United States papers.<sup>17</sup> This indicates a world wide trend previously noted by Wilbur Schramm, who asserts that:

world flow of foreign news deals chiefly with a group of highly developed countries, which are also dominant in world politics... (hence) news flows from the highly developed to the less developed countries.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the pervasive influence of the world agencies on news flow, there is some disagreement among scholars as to their relative impact on newspaper content. For example, Markham indicates that the overwhelming dependence of the South American press on the United States based AP and UPI also accounts for these newspapers' hard news orientation.<sup>19</sup> Robinson challenges this assertion in a recent study of Tanjug, noting that the U.S. agencies carry less hard news than Yugoslavia's national news agency or TASS.<sup>20</sup> This is due to their differing selection procedures, evaluation of newspaper client wishes, as well as their concern over sending less important news over scarce channels. This discrepancy notwithstanding, the empirically demonstrated tendency for world agency news in-put to be drastically pruned by about 3/4 tends to lend some support to the latter assertion.<sup>21</sup>

Where and how does the African news flow fit into this analytic framework? Apart from Hachten's work on "The Flow of News and Underdevelopment",<sup>22</sup> and a section of his Muffled Drums,<sup>23</sup> no other studies available to the author seem specifically concerned with African news flow in the world context. A few other studies relative to U.S. media treatment of African issues are also available,<sup>24</sup> while Schramm's "Flow of Information in the world"<sup>25</sup> may be considered to cover a broad "third world" context.

Basically, Hachten and Schramm reiterate already mentioned propositions, confirming not only the disparity in news flow between African states and the highly developed countries, but also the increasing negative orientation of the available African coverage. Hachten adds to this, the persistence of colonial communication structures which have left London and Paris as the hub of African news, in order to explain the paucity of news from the continent. It is our opinion, that rather than undermine the proximity variables, as Hachten seems to indicate, this fact operates in association with them. And as Robinson points out relative to Tanjug, the national agencies of most of these nations, as well as their own correspondent corps and other non-agency sources may help to ameliorate the impact of this hub. Equally vital to the news flow is the predominance of largely incompetent, professionally untrained and often less educated journalists in the continent.

In summary then, it can be said that theoretical and empirical evidence indicate that factors inherent in the news system, as well as the number and quality of journalists, greatly affect foreign news flow and content. Relative to the

African continent, and as shall be shown in subsequent chapters, inadequate communications facilities, press control and censorship, high costs of news transmission, an incompetent journalist corps as well as excessive dependence on either of two world agencies, are factors inherent in the news system linking Africa to the rest of the world. In addition, factors external to the African societies, including a predominantly sensation oriented European and American "news value", the market orientation of editors and publishers, as well as those proximity variables enunciated by Ostgaard, further complicate the marketing of African news. These ensure a relatively meager and poor coverage, as well as a largely unfavorable or negatively oriented content. To verify the working of these factors, relative to the coverage and distribution of Nigerian civil war news, is the task of this thesis.

#### ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis is organized into six chapters, the first of which examines the international news system relative to the African continent. This divides into three sections. The first focuses on modern man's quest for news and information as a prerequisite for sociological and psychological adjustment in a complex world. The second discusses the structural organization of the global news agencies, while the third delimits their activities on the African continent, highlighting basic weaknesses.

The second chapter furnishes background information on the Nigerian press. It reviews the structure, ownership and growth of the Nigerian newspaper system, and examines the impact of press laws and military rule on press performance. This chapter

shows that in the ten year period from 1960 to 1970, press control has increased in Nigeria.

The third chapter provides an account of the major events comprising the close of the civil war between January 1st to 31st, 1970. Drawing on personal observations while living in the now defunct 'Biafran Republic', it highlights some factors contributory to Biafra's unexpected and sudden surrender, and a chronology of events before and after the January 15th signing of the surrender document.

Chapter four presents a content analysis of the Nigeria Daily Times coverage of the January 1970 events. The analysis focuses on the quantity, kind and direction of front page news coverage and editorial treatment. This definitely reflects the stringent press laws imposed on the country since the outbreak of the war.

Chapter five finally reports the content analysis of four foreign newspapers, two African and two non-African, and tests the three groups of hypotheses mentioned earlier. It compares the Nigerian Daily Times coverage with those of the other countries, highlighting similarities and differences. Two of the major terms used in the analysis, (substantively - and socially - oriented categories) are defined in chapter four, while the operational definitions of the categories appear in the appendix.

The conclusion, as the sixth chapter, provides some suggestions for possible improvements of African news flow in the world news market, noting open questions which require further investigation.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 James W. Markham, "Foreign News in the United States and South American Press". Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 25, 1961, pp. 249.
- 2 William A. Hachten, Muffled Drums, pp. 152.
- 3 Bruce A. Nord, "Press Freedom and Political Structure", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 43, 1966, pp. 531-34.
- 4 Frederick Forsyth, The Biafra Story, (Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 222-27.
- 5 See Chapter One for an examination of the importance of world news and information in the modern age.
- 6 J. A. Hart, "Foreign News in U. S. and English Daily Newspapers: A Comparison", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 43, 1966, pp. 443-48; James W. Markham, op. cit.; J. B. Adams, "A Qualitative Analysis of Domestic and Foreign News on the AP-TA Wire", Gazette, Vol. 10, 1964, pp. 285; Scott M. Cutlip, "Content and Flow of AP News - From Trunk to TTS to Readers", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 31, 1954, pp. 434-46; Wilbur Schramm, "Newspapers of a State as a News Network", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 35, 1958, pp. 177-82; Einar Ostgaard, "Factors Influencing the Flow of News", Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 2, 1965, pp. 39-63; Johan Galtung and M. Holmboe Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News", Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 2, 1965, pp. 64-90; Gertrude J. Robinson, "Foreign News Selection is Non-Linear in Yugoslavia's Tanjug Agency", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 47, 1970, pp. 340-51; and William A. Hachten, "The Flow of News and Underdevelopment: A Pilot Study of the African Press", Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism, Iowa City, August 30, 1966.
- 7 Karl E. Rosengren, "International News: Time and Type of Report", in International Communication: Media, Channel and Functions. (edited) Heinz-Dietrick Fischer and John C. Merrill. (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1970), pp. 76-77.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 77, footnote 14.
- 9 Ostgaard, op. cit., pp. 39.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 40-42.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 47.



13 For a clarification on the concept of sensationalism, see Percy H. Tannanbaum and Mervin D. Lynch, "Sensationalism: the Concept and its Measurement", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 37, 1960, pp. 381-92.

14 Galtung and Ruge, op. cit., pp. 265.

15 Ibid., pp. 266-67.

16 James W. Markham, op. cit., pp. 254.

17 Ibid., pp. 261.

18 Wilbur Schramm, "The Flow of Information in the World" in his Mass Media and National Development. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 61.

19 Markham, op. cit., pp. 259-60.

20 Robinson, op. cit., pp. 343-44.

21 Cutlip, op. cit., pp. 434-46 and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 342.

22 Hachten, op. cit.,

23 Hachten, Muffled Drums: the News Media in Africa. (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1971), pp. 51-94.

24 See William A. Payne, "American Press Coverage of Africa". Africa Report, Vol. 11, Jan. 1966, pp. 46 and Russel Warreb Howe, "Reporting from Africa: A Correspondent's View", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 43, 1966, pp. 314.

25 Schramm, (1964), op. cit., pp. 58-89.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS SYSTEM: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

This study deals with international news flow, especially news about Africa. Hence, it naturally commences with an examination of the central role of the global news agencies, described as the world's primary purveyors of foreign and international news and information.<sup>1</sup> The chapter consists of three sections. The first examines modern man's quest for news and information which is increasingly considered a prerequisite for effective sociological and psychological adjustment, participation, and even survival in modern national and international life. The second analyzes the structural organization and patterns of world news flow as determined by these world agencies. The final section examines the role and performance of these agencies in the African setting, with a view to highlighting basic weaknesses and suggesting possible solutions.

Two factors dictate the inclusion of this third section. The Nigerian civil war is the culmination of underlying factors and forces inherent in the nation-building process among many developing nations. Typically, nation-building and modernization have become the pre-occupation of the fifty odd African states since the attainment of political independence nearly a decade and a half ago. This pre-occupation is concomitant with an aspiration for effective involvement and participation, even as equals, in the turmoils of modern international life. This envisaged participation is largely a function of the quantity and quality of information flow between them and all other nations.

Basically, it demands that they be heard, understood and known in their own right and not in terms of an old colonial stigma, which inherently mitigates against their efforts and interests.

Secondly, these African nations command a majority in the United Nations (an organization twice as old as most of them) and thus as a regional bloc tend to influence that world organization's decision-making. News about events and opinions on the continent may therefore assume some significance by at least, facilitating international understanding of the problems of our age as they affect and relate to the continent as a cultural area.

## SECTION I

### MODERN MAN'S QUEST FOR INFORMATION

Ours is an information conscious age, in which man's quest for news seems to be related to the complexity of his environment. This environment, as a geographic structure, is divided into almost two-hundred territories, most of which are called nations and are more or less 'autonomous'. As a world unit, these nations constitute the international community of nations, which is stratified into "developed" and "underdeveloped" nations.<sup>2</sup>

The quest for information is deep-rooted in modern man's sociological and psychological needs to relate to, understand and control his environment. These are seemingly basic needs, since they are an inevitable prerequisite for effective adjustment, participation and even survival. They are rooted in our social requirements for surveillance and correlation of parts of the environment, to which we are constantly adjusting and in which we wish to be effective and participating members.<sup>3</sup> Both phenomena are not only inherent in, but are facilitated and affected by, the adequate and

effective flow of news and information.

Despite the complexity of the modern world, characterized by a profound nationalistic differentiation, mankind is inevitably increasing its interdependence. To-day, no peoples or nations can pretend for long to be able to go it alone or live in complete isolation and unaffected, even remotely, by decisions, actions and major events in other lands, notably the "super powers",<sup>4</sup> who are the possessors of nuclear weapons and thus the means of global self-annihilation.<sup>5</sup> The sociological and psychological consequences of this, and other trends, necessarily increase the importance and need for surveillance and correlation of everyday life in complex societies. No single human individual or nation-state can live an isolated existence any longer, irrespective of physical and psychological distance or the extent of national status.

To understand each other better, to cooperate and increase the efficiency of their interdependence, peoples and nations must know more about each other. Such knowledge comes primarily through an adequate flow of news and information between and among people. It calls for a continuous and consistent information flow, unbounded by time and space, quantity or quality. It calls for information flow confined, not only to moments of national or international difficulty and tension but, to regular daily reporting of "average" occurrences.

Modern man's quest for information, therefore involves quantitative, qualitative and speedy flow of news and information throughout the world. Two factors have facilitated the realization of this quest. First is the communications revolution which introduced the telephone and telegraph, as well as the electronic media (radio and television) and communication satellites.

All these technological innovations have increasingly conquered time and space, linking parts of the nation-state and much of the wider world together. They have also enhanced decision-makers' bids to understand and control the environment and possibly bring the world's peoples closer than ever before.

A second factor, contributing to increased information flow is the prevailing system of world news marketing. This is a crucial and intricate phenomenon, whose institutional structures and mechanisms are the telegraphic news agencies, notably the global agencies. Their role in international news flow can only be appreciated, if we understand that the prerequisites for sociological and psychological adjustment are increasingly difficult to come by. Only very large organizations can bear the cost of ferreting out and funneling volumes of information to all parts of the globe.

## SECTION II

### THE MAIN INTERNATIONAL NEWS PURVEYORS

There are some two hundred telegraphic news agencies in the world to-day.<sup>6</sup> Of these, 195 are mainly national agencies functioning as 'gate-keepers' for their own national areas. Only five deal with news transmission across national frontiers, and thus operate as international wholesalers. They are called world agencies, since they provide extensive world-wide news coverage and large-scale news distribution to their subscribers all over the globe.

The five global agencies are concentrated in four industrially developed nations of Europe and North America as follows: Reuters in the United Kingdom; Agence France-Presse (coded AFP)

in France; TASS in the Soviet Union; and the Associated Press and the United Press International (AP & UPI) in the United States of America. Each agency maintains a complex news-gathering and news-distributing organization across the globe.

The world agencies have a network of correspondents, who collect news and information in a large number of countries and send it to a headquarters staff, which edits these as well as domestic news items. Edited information is, in turn, dispatched through an extensive network of telecommunications facilities, either to the agency's regional bureaus abroad for local distribution to clients, or else direct to contracting national agencies which redistributes these items to their national press and to a few foreign subscribers and broadcasting stations.<sup>7</sup>

Generally therefore, the global news agencies are news merchants, being the major purveyors of news for the world's news media. Basically, their news services consist of an assemblage of items collected in many countries. In a wider social context, these items constitute one of the key factors on which individuals and governments base their actions towards, and evaluations of, other states.

Technically, an agency can supply its services to any country, but this is not the case since history has more or less carved out certain markets for each. They typically supply only their list of members and a number of other subscribers, who include foreign national agencies with whom exchange agreements exist.

Table I shows the degree of foreign involvement of each agency, with special emphasis on Africa. Though UPI seems to have the largest number of foreign bureaus, IIO, it is fourth in African

- 6 -  
TABLE I

GLOBAL AGENCIES FOREIGN SERVICE FACILITIES  
BUREAUS, CORRESPONDENT CORPS, EXCHANGE  
RIGHTS AND DAILY AVERAGE WORDAGE

AGENCY	NO. FOREIGN BUREAUS	NO. CORRESP. CORPS	EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS	DAILY AVERAGE WORDAGE	NO. AFRICAN BUREAU
1. REUTERS	60	250	45 agencies; including TASS, AP & AFP. 110 states subscribe directly.	Offers 7 foreign services of 35,000 each; offers a 15,000 African service.	39 (1966)  Mainly in Anglophone Africa.
2. AFP	82	74	36 agencies, including TASS, AP & Reuters. 104 states subscribe, with 410 papers & 117 radio/TV stations receiving it.	Has 7 foreign services 3 English of 26,000; German of 25,000; & Spanish of 45,000.	33 (1964)  Mainly Franco- phone Africa.
3. TASS	94	500	40 agencies, including AP, AFP, & Reuters. Over 70 states receive it.	-	21 (1971)
4. UPI	110	1000? including part-time	60 agencies subscribe to it.	-	19 (1966)
5. AP	57	1200? including part-time	Over 20 agencies including TASS, AFP & Reuters. 80 states subscribe.	-	14 (1966)

(SOURCES: Unesco, Paris, World Press: Newspapers and News Agencies, 1964; William A. Hachten, Muffled Drums; Mark Hopkins, Mass Media in the Soviet Union, pp. 256-57, 279-91; and USIS, Communications Data Book for Africa, 1966.)

bureaus, scarcely above the AP which although it claims the largest correspondent corps, maintains the least number of bureaus on the continent. In terms of African involvement then, Reuters and AFP, the agencies of the two former leading colonial masters, take the lead, with TASS in the third place. Between them these three giants dominate most of the "Third World" where several dozen states have no national agencies to report on home, let alone foreign events.

An examination of the organization of each of the world agencies further enhances the understanding of their differential role in Africa.

Agence France-Presse or AFP is the French news agency, based in Paris. It was founded in 1944, on the ruins of Agence Havas, established in 1835. AFP is both a national and world agency. Organizationally, up to 1956, it operated as a public establishment, being heavily subsidized by the French government. Since this ensured governmental control, in 1957 it was re-organized as a newspaper cooperative, with French newspaper editors controlling the managing body.<sup>8</sup>

Currently AFP is believed to be unsubsidized and autonomous. However, the French state has remained its chief client. By 1964, AFP maintained about 18 permanent bureaus in France, with 466 correspondents. Abroad, it had about 82 bureaus and 74 staff correspondents.<sup>9</sup> Its exchange arrangements were with about 36 agencies, including TASS, AP and Reuters. It serves about 104 countries, including 33 in Africa.



Reuters with headquarters in London, is a cooperative, jointly owned by the British Press Association, the Australian Associated Press and the New Zealand Press Association. This second oldest agency maintains about 60 foreign bureaus and over 250 staff correspondents abroad. It has exchange agreements with over 45 agencies including TASS, AFP, and AP. Over a hundred states subscribe directly to its services, including about 39 in Africa where the governments are its primary clients.

Associated Press, with headquarters in New York, is the world's oldest surviving news agency. It is a newspaper cooperative, owned and controlled by American newspaper and radio stations, over 2/3 of whom are members or subscribers. Considered more or less as a non-profit organization, its budget consists of subscriptions by members. Its foreign news service is received by the members and subscribers as part of the general news pool. News sales are to non-members.

In 1964, it maintained about 57 bureaus abroad, served by an estimated 1,200 staff and part-time correspondents. Over 80 states receive its services, including 14 in Africa. It has arrangements for exchange of news with about 20 national agencies, with London and Tokyo as its main overseas collection points.

United Press International is the second world agency located in the United States and a great rival to the AP. It emerged in 1958, out of the amalgamation of the United Press and the International News Service. UPI is primarily a commercial enterprise and is in competition with the AP in terms of costs and clients. With an estimated 110 bureaus in about 60 states, it is served by an estimated 1000 staff and part-time correspondents. About 60 agencies subscribe to its services and this includes 19

African states.

TASS is both a national and world agency for the Soviet Union. Unlike its contemporaries which are newspaper cooperatives, or business corporations, TASS is purely a government agency under the direct control of the Soviet Council of Ministers. It maintains bureaus and permanent correspondents in about 94 countries, which includes 24 in Africa. Its exchanges are with about 30 agencies, including AFP, AP, UPI and Reuters.

Four outstanding features characterize the agencies. They are owned by, and have headquarters in, countries where the media systems are highly developed and where there is an extensive audience. Their products are, therefore, primarily directed to audiences and clients in Europe and North America. Their extension to other countries may have been determined by political and economic consideration. Secondly, though world agencies, they also play the role of national agencies, collecting and distributing the domestic news of their home country to other agencies. However, Reuters is an exception, since Britain's Press Association acts as the national agency, with Reuters primarily distributing its products abroad.

A third feature of these agencies is that their ownership and organization reflect the basic ideological polarization of the world. Free enterprise or commercially oriented agencies, like AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters are found in Europe and on the North American continent, while the socialist subsidized TASS is located in the Soviet Union. Finally, irrespective of basic differences, as news industries and merchants, the world agencies exhibit identical competitive behavior among themselves as other industrialists selling their commodities on the world market. This

competition is generally high and has maintained spheres of influence or dominance, which were initiated by Havas, Reuters and Deutsches Nachrichten Buero at the end of the 19th Century. However, they often enter into cooperative agreements for the exchange of their products, thus bridging gaps that might result from zones of influence.

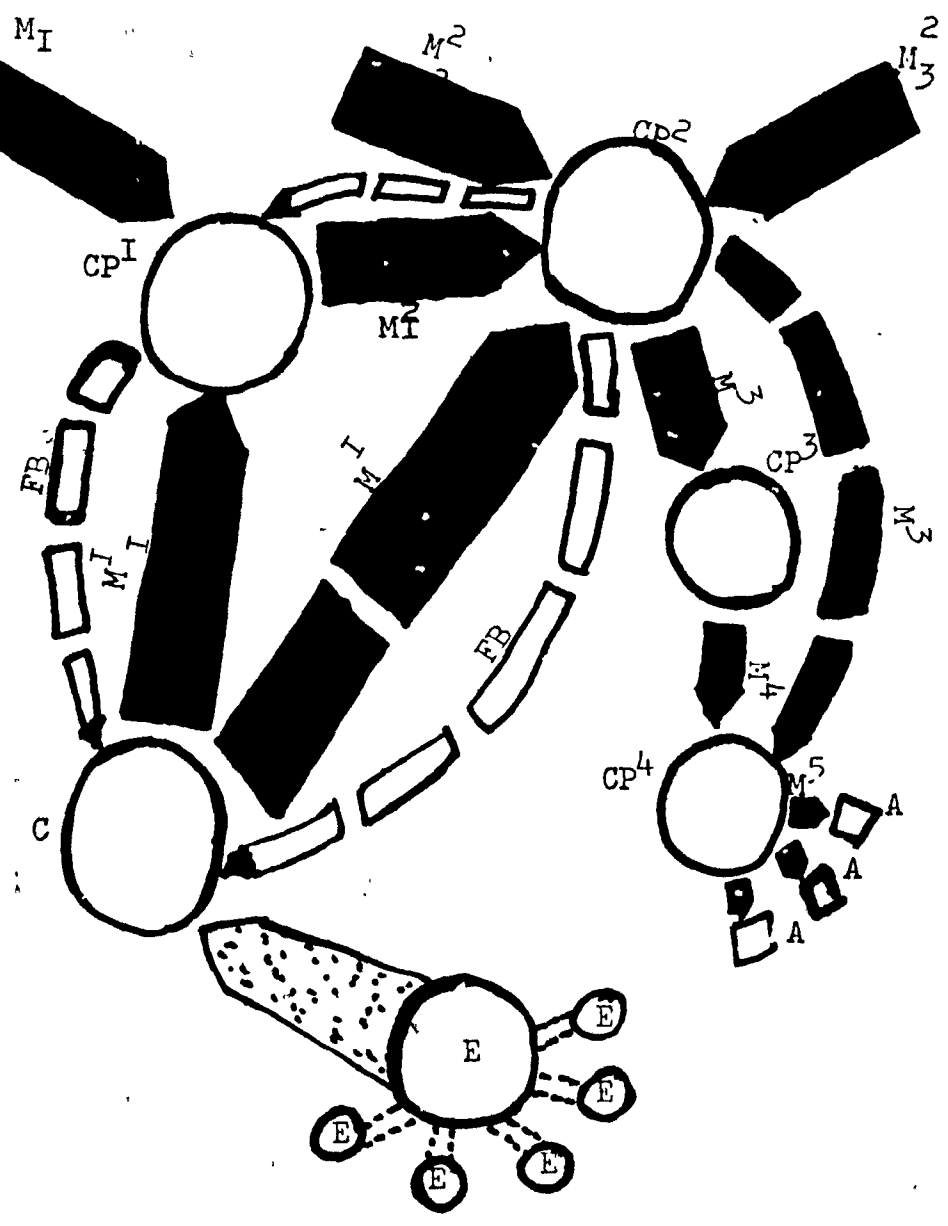
#### WORLD AGENCY NEWS FLOW PATTERN

With the organization of the world agencies before us, we now turn to an analysis of how they process the news. Foreign news is so much with us to-day, that it is easy to underestimate the complex and intricate process involved in world news marketing. Typically, a foreign news item travels on a hazardously long journey from the item's source to its various world consumers. The hazard includes editorial errors or biases, editorial selection and processing procedures as well as governmental censorship. In general, an item may either become completely mutilated in structure and meaning or get completely lost or thrown out in transit.<sup>10</sup>

Factors encouraging this development typically include the "gate-keeper" phenomenon identified by White.<sup>11</sup> From a review of foreign news content analysis<sup>12</sup> and "gate-keeper" research,<sup>13</sup> John McNelly maintains that "the most important gate-keeping is done before the news reaches the wire editor of a newspaper.

The global news decisions" he asserts, "are made in major bureaus of the big wire services."<sup>14</sup> It is to the functioning of these bureaus, relative to the "global news decisions" of the agencies, that we now turn our attention.

Figure 1) is a graphic presentation of the major stages in news-gathering and processing. It is based on John McNelly's



C =Correspondent Corps

CP<sup>I</sup> = Regional Bureau (Check-point)

CP<sup>3</sup> = National Agency ( " )

**FB = Feed-back**

$M_2$  = Message from another regional area

$M_3$  = Message from a third regional area.

FIGURE I. DIAGRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF WORLD AGENCY NEWS FLOW SYSTEM. THE FLOW IS CLOCK-WISE, WITH THE LENGTH AND THICKNESS OF THE ARROWS SHOWING THE VOLUME OF NEWS COPY AT EACH POINT.

model, which high-lights the role of what he calls the "intermediary communicators"<sup>15</sup> along the news transmission belt. The model shows that between the news source in one country, and its ultimate recipients in another, there are a series of check-points which are reminiscent of White's gate-keepers. These are the foreign correspondents, the agency's regional bureau, its central office, a national agency in a client country, and finally the local news media of the same.

#### THE CORRESPONDENT CORPS

News processing begins with a series of correspondents spread almost across the globe. As Figure I shows, this corps is the initiator of news stories, which it feeds into the agency's transmission system. As a news-gatherer, the correspondent ferrets out information through reading local newspapers, personal observations, interviews with officials and ordinary citizens, press hand-outs and press conferences. These are invariably supplemented with background readings, where necessary, to provide needed context for the hard facts in his copy.

The life of a story, technically speaking, may be said to commence with the injection of this copy into the agency's transmission and processing system. Success at this crucial stage, as demonstrated by Einar Ostgaard, is a function of political, technological and economic factors.<sup>16</sup> He shows that government censorship, non-availability of requisite technical (telecommunications) facilities, as well as very high transmission costs, mitigate against the volume, types and prompt dispatch of news copy by the correspondent. His job is however considered done, with the dispatch of his copy.

#### REGIONAL BUREAUX

The regional bureau constitutes the first main check point

for the copy. Usually, correspondents are located in states which are geographically grouped into a number of regions. One state within a regional grouping is designated the regional or principal bureau in that area. Reports from all other states within the regional area are then sent to this office. For example, currently, the AFP has two regional bureaus in Africa. The Johannesburg office caters to all of southern Africa, while the Algiers office caters to the Maghreb and West African countries.<sup>17</sup>

The regional bureau makes a selection based on central office interest and on-going stories. It also ensures the coordination and integration of materials from various states within a regional area, facilitating overall comparison among them and with other regional areas, at the headquarters. Furthermore, the regional bureau facilitates the cross-checking of facts and figures with the correspondent, or the elaboration of relatively unclear or incomplete and ambiguous coverage.

Basically, the regional bureau staff plays a vital role along the transmission belt. In the first place, its editor decides what, among the volume received from the various correspondents, should continue on its journey and is therefore judged "newsworthy". As journalists, the bureau staff contribute to the structure and substance of what is forwarded to the headquarters. Thus, they constantly re-edit, re-write and shorten or elaborate aspects of copy. In this process, they may combine related items from different states into a roundup piece. Or they may provide backgrounding or interpretation to the reorganized news material, before eventually transmitting the transformed copy.

#### AGENCY HEADQUARTERS

Each agency maintains a central office, usually in a major

or capital city of the home country. Agency headquarters operate in much the same manner, though at a higher level than the regional bureau. Certain reports may go direct from the correspondent to the headquarters, where a desk, reminiscent of the regional desk, acts promptly on them. Generally, the headquarters deal with the regional offices. Stories are further re-edited, re-written, shortened or elaborated and aspects eliminated as the case may be. A much greater pruning seems to be effected at the headquarters, which filter out approximately 2/3 of the in-put. This sharply reduced product is finally transmitted to clients, national agencies and the news media.

#### NATIONAL AGENCY AND NEWS MEDIA

At the two final levels, similar editorial processing and selection observed for other check-points also exist. But while McNelly seems to underrate the impact of filtering at these lower stages, Robinson indicates, relative to Yugoslavia's Tanjug, that editorial processing and selection fulfill the vital functions of putting events into a "local" context.<sup>18</sup>

While this discrepancy need not detract from our main concern, suffice it to say that at each stage in the transmission belt, effective machinery exists for re-structuring news copy. What finally gets read is quantitatively and qualitatively different from the original in-put by the correspondent. Cutlip shows that the 25,000 words of foreign news reaching the AP New York office is cut to about a third before dispatch to the regional offices.<sup>19</sup> Here, copy is further reduced by half, prior to the final dispatch to local newspapers where about 85% is printed. Robinson finds equally drastic slashing of world agency copy at Tanjug agency, where only a third of the dispatch is used.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that the number of check-points and their increasing

remoteness from the source of news event, enhance both the degree of mutilation and perishability of the information. The volume of total agency out-put drops progressively as the consumer nation is further removed geographically and economically from the agency headquarters. For the commercial agencies, this process of news handling enhances overall "marketability" which is the desideratum of news worthiness. For TASS however, propaganda and ideological concerns rather than a purely business bias seem to influence selection.

Whatever the criteria of news-worthiness, the final news product of the agencies faces the problem of distribution. TASS distributes free of charge to contracting agencies and newspapers or broadcasting stations. For the commercial agencies, on the other hand, it is a matter of who can afford their commodity, a factor that heightens competition, with some maintaining their stand by under-selling their rivals.

### SECTION III

#### THE WORLD AGENCIES IN AFRICA

The fifty odd Black African states are late comers on the international communications scene. Most of them still lack national news agencies to report home news. They have also failed to develop a world agency to compete with the existing agencies as carriers of news to and from Africa. Like other lesser developed nations, the African states are, therefore, compelled to depend exclusively on the global agencies for their foreign news services, including news about themselves.

By 1967, all five agencies had made significant in-roads and gains on the continent.<sup>21</sup> The extent of such in-roads, as well as the overall role and influence of the agencies differ



considerably. This is primarily a function of colonialism, which necessarily carved out news empires for some, like Reuters and the AFP, which maintain a measure of dominance in the Anglo- and Franco- phone parts of Africa.

Table II shows the extent of world agency involvement in Africa. All five together maintained about 126 news services there by 1967. Of 106 permanent foreign correspondents, 78.3% or 83 work for these agencies, while the others are employed by other minor agencies or media organizations. Table II also indicates that Reuters dominates the scene in terms of number of news services and average daily wordage flowing to London. It serves about 78% of the states, while over 20,000 words of African news is dispatched daily by its correspondents.<sup>22</sup>

The Associated Press is the least powerful agency. It serves only 28% of the states and sends an average of 5,000 words daily to its New York headquarters. In the absence of TASS figures, the other four agencies account for a daily average of 13,400 words of African news reaching the major world news capitals.

TASS tops the two United States agencies in both the number of news services and correspondents, even though all three agencies are late comers on the continent. Hopkins explains this largely in terms of the agency's connections with the Soviet government. Being a government institution, it has diplomatic reasons for furnishing its government with up to date information about areas in which the Soviet Union has tremendous political and economic interests.<sup>23</sup>

TABLE II

WORLD AGENCIES INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA  
NUMBER OF SERVICES, CORRESPONDENTS,  
DAILY AFRICAN NEWS WORDAGE

AGENCY	NO. NEWS SERVICE	PERCENT AFRICAN STATES	NO. STAFF CORPS	PERCENT OF CORPS IN AFRICA	AVERAGE DAILY WORDAGE
1. REUTERS	39	78	22	20.7	20,000
2. AFP	33	66	26	24.5	18,426
3. TASS	21	42	24	22.7	-
4. UPI	19	38	5	4.7	10,000
5. AP	14	28	6	5.7	5,172
6. OTHERS	-	-	23	21.7	-
TOTALS	126	-	106	100.0	$\bar{X} = 13,400$

(SOURCES: HACHTEN, Muffled Drums, pp. 58-66; Hopkins, Mass Media in the Soviet Union, pp. 279-291; and UNESCO, World Press: Newspapers and News Agencies, 1966.)

Despite this number of news services and a sizeable staff of correspondents, Africa remains the least reported region in the world. Both the African leaders<sup>24</sup> and some North American and Western scholars<sup>25</sup> as well as journalists<sup>26</sup> make assertions about the paucity of African news in the world news market. According to these groups, African news coverage has short-comings. Notable among these, is that it is not only inadequate, but biased, tending more often to discredit the new nations by portraying them mostly in an unfavorable light.<sup>27</sup> Also, much of the reporting tend to relate news of Africa to the cold war. This does not only trap these non-aligned nations in the East-West conflict as an ideological battle ground,<sup>28</sup> but ensures that only items more or less bordering on this conflict as it relates to Africa get published.

Since the correspondent corps, as shown in Figure I is a key factor in agency working, much of the criticism has concentrated on its shortcomings. William Payne's analysis of some

United States metropolitan papers' coverage of Africa, for instance, attributes inadequate coverage to the inadequacy of well trained full-time resident American correspondents in the region.<sup>29</sup>

Hachten too concludes that "the lack of U.S. journalists in Africa meant the U.S. news media carry relatively little news about Africa."<sup>30</sup> A former London Daily Telegraph African correspondent, David Loshok, makes the same point when he refers to "inexpert and half-baked...bleary eyed correspondents"<sup>31</sup> covering the continent.

A single assumption therefore, seems to run through the criticism of the correspondent corps. Namely, that increases in numbers (quantity) and calibre (quality) of foreign resident correspondents reporting from Africa, will ensure better quantitative and qualitative presentation of African news events abroad.

Various considerations, however, suggest that this is an inadequate and over-simplified analysis of a rather complex and intricate phenomenon. These considerations include firstly, the prevailing incidence of press control in most African states; secondly unavailability of communications facilities, including telecommunications networks, either within the states, between neighboring states or between them and the world news capitals. A third consideration is the economics of transmitting news from Africa; and finally the prevailing concept of "news value" of the agencies must be considered which is more or less dictated by clients in Europe and North America. Each of the features will be considered against the background of the true nature of the correspondent corps in Africa.

#### THE CORRESPONDENT CORPS

Available empirical studies of the world agencies and their correspondent corps are not only limited, but primarily concerned

with United States data. Hence, this analysis will draw primarily on information about U.S. agencies.

As an occupational group, the foreign correspondent corps falls into three broad categories, the permanent or staff correspondents, the stringers or part-time correspondents, and the roving or fire-men reporters.<sup>32</sup>

Based on a 1967 survey of 206 U.S. correspondents who responded to a questionnaire, Bogart showed that 72% were staffers, while 8% were stringers, with the remainder consisting of freelance or independent journalists, who may readily perform as "fire-men" for any news organization. This study gives a deceptive impression of a disproportionate use of staffers for foreign news reporting to the American media.

Wilhelm presents a different picture. In his 1963 survey of 59 U.S. correspondents stationed in parts of Africa, he shows that only 20 were U.S. citizens, consisting of both staffers and stringers. The remainder were African and other foreign nationals. Among the 59, Africans were mostly stringers. Six years later, in a survey, Ralph Kliesch shows that though the number of U.S. correspondents rose to 92 in Africa,<sup>33</sup> only 11 were U.S. citizens. Not only was there a dilution in full-time staffers, but 7 of the 11 U.S. citizens were based in a small part of Africa, with 6 in Nairobi, Kenya and one at Lagos, Nigeria.

With reference to British newspaper correspondents, David Loshok shows that of about 70 full-timers abroad in 1970, only 4 were located in Africa,<sup>34</sup> as against one in 1965.<sup>35</sup>

The paucity of resident correspondents has been explained by the "lethal economics of modern newspaper and television production".<sup>36</sup> William Payne corroborates this assertion by indicating

that the New York Times estimates it will cost about \$40,000 yearly to station a correspondent permanently in Africa. This cost, however, includes salary, housing, transportation and communication costs.<sup>37</sup>

It is likely that prohibitive costs, rather than John Wilhelm's stressed "difficult life in a tropically hot city with innumerable hardship"<sup>38</sup> dictate the disproportionate use of stringers in Africa. Though some foreign nationals perform as stringers, a greater majority of these are African journalists. This phenomenon is not peculiar to Africa, but their greater numbers has been a subject for criticism on two main grounds. Firstly, that being essentially government newsmen, whose first task is political loyalty, not unbiased reporting, they often compromise objectivity. Secondly, they are charged with lacking qualifications and adequate professional training which are considered vital for providing a cogent analysis or an informative backgrounder.<sup>39</sup>

Official pressure and influence remain incontrovertible. On the other hand, indications are that the commercially oriented prestigious world services would hardly 'buy' association with mediocre journalists. Hence, the bulk of stringers are drawn from the government services which naturally attract the best of the very few trained and qualified journalists in Africa. For example, Dr. Azikiwe, later Nigeria's President, was in the early 1940's and 1950's, a Reuters stringer in Nigeria. This was at the height of his journalistic career, when as James Coleman observes, his West African Pilot became the single precipitating force for Nigerian political awakening.<sup>40</sup>

In the same vein, Mr. Manasse Jiminiga, former Press Secretary to Togo's assassinated President Olympio, and currently

Reuters' bureau chief in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) was a former Reuters stringer in Togo.<sup>41</sup> Others, personally known to the author in Nigeria, include a former Daily Times editor Peter Enahoro, now in self-exile in West Germany, who also served Reuters. Mr. Boniface Oforkaja, a leading radio journalist in Radio Nigeria, was an AFP stringer. While a systematic study of the African stringer is yet lacking, it is our contention that poor qualification and inadequate journalism training and experience seem to be the exception rather than the rule among stringers.

In times of hot and fast breaking news, the staffers and stringers are supplemented by roving reporters. Usually, their copy may take precedence over that of the local staffer, because they have been directly commissioned by the agency headquarters.

These roving correspondents however, do not seem to escape the criticisms mentioned earlier. They are often dispatched to Africa at very short notice, to provide "spot news" on a specific event and only for a limited period. The argument against them is that meaningful and objective reportage of complex African nations is impossible for them because they lack familiarity with the fast changing emergent nations.

Our contention generally, is that undue emphasis has been placed on the role of the correspondent corps, notably the stringers. A new perspective relative to African news flow problem is called for when we realize that the correspondent can only initiate stories into the complex and intricate news processing and marketing system. Crucial as this role may be, indications are that once his copy gets fed into the system, his job is done and he loses control over its fate. Answers to the African news predicament will therefore be sought in other areas mentioned earlier.

## INADEQUACY OF COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

The inadequacy of modern communication infra-structure is a major handicap to African news flow. Without doubt, the best correspondent corps is paralyzed and thus worthless to its parent organization, if its wealth of news cannot be cheaply, easily, steadily and speedily delivered to agency headquarters in Europe or North America.

Africa seems to possess the poorest and weakest infra-structures to support a modern system of mass communication.<sup>42</sup> Firstly, the internal communications network (to facilitate the operations of the correspondent corps) in the form of roads, rail and air transport systems, telegraphic and telephonic lines as well as teletype systems so vital for modern press and electronic media are seriously inadequate, if not completely lacking in most states. Those that exist, rarely cross national boundaries, except perhaps among the East African States aspiring to an East African community.

Likewise, international communications links are grossly limited. They still reflect the old colonial legacy.<sup>43</sup> The two main operating very high frequency radio telegraph and telephone circuits are based in Europe, London and Paris. Also, the two available commercial submarine cable lines lead to London.<sup>44</sup>

These existing patterns of telecommunications links to the outside world ensure the routing of all communication flow through either London or Paris. The old colonial pattern, which served their administrative needs has thus persisted, leaving both cities as the hub of African news flow.<sup>45</sup> Even inter-African news flow is routed through either of these hubs. This affects African news since it involves higher costs and a great waste of time.

Associated with the paucity of facilities and dependence on London and Paris as the only routes for news to flow, is the high and often very discriminatory cost of transmitting news to and from Africa. Cable and telex charges are in favor of the former colonial masters' own agencies. In 1969, the telex rate from Abidjan (Ivory Coast) to France was \$4.50, but \$8.90 and \$11.90 to London and New York respectively.<sup>46</sup> While this is a current rate, press cable rates still have not changed very much from what they were before these states attained political independence. Ainslie shows, for instance, that it costs 24 cents from Kenya to France, but 32 cents and 6 cents from Moscow and New York, respectively, to Kenya.<sup>47</sup>

This high and discriminatory rate, now described as "cable colonialism" has a negative economic implication for the poor nations. In terms of news flow, it adversely affects the transmission of African news even among African states themselves. Within the continent, it impedes the flow of information among the peoples who need to know more about each other and their more or less common destiny. Outside the continent, the trend negates all efforts by these states to be generally heard in order to be understood.

A third main factor undermining the flow of news about Africa is the prevailing system of press control within the continent. This necessarily impedes the activities of the correspondent corps. Not only is the quantity and type of copy affected, but censorship, where it exists, imposes considerable delay on copy.<sup>48</sup>

A final and very important factor which influences African news is the "news value" of the agency's primary customers in



Europe and North America. This arises from the prevailing market consideration or business bias of the U.S. and European newspapers and electronic media. According to Ostgaard, three main indices of news value in these areas are identification or personification, simplification, and sensationalism. These variables are presumed to be determined by the audience, for whom they make copy acceptable. Hence, they dictate news media content much of the time.<sup>49</sup>

Contributing to the news value analysis, Galtung and Ruge indicate that "negativism" is another index of news value and newsworthiness.<sup>50</sup> According to these authors, copy emanating from geographically and culturally distant and/or low status states like those of Africa, is more likely to capture world press headlines, if it is negatively oriented. This was borne out by an analysis of Norwegian daily press coverage of the Cuban, the Congo and the Cyprus crises.<sup>51</sup>

#### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It is our contention, following these considerations, that no significant change in African news coverage will be observed should the stringers (and most of them are really able and good) be replaced by very competent "completely detached" foreign staff correspondents. News about Africa will no doubt remain meager and negatively oriented as long as these economic and political conditions persist in full force.

Another remedy which has been suggested is to increase staff over stringer correspondents, on the grounds that the former can be more objective and detached. How realistic is this assumption? Firstly, and as we have stated earlier, "freedom of the press" as it is known in the west and on the North American

continent, is virtually absent in the political and journalistic dictionary of a majority of African states. Hachten and Sommerlad cite the Nigerian press system up to 1965 as seemingly the only case approaching the "Libertarian concept" of the press on the continent.<sup>52</sup> Since the advent of military rule in 1966, she however lost that peculiar status.

Basically, all systems of press control limit the performance of staff and stringer correspondents alike. Both are involved in the same news-gathering processes and therefore face the same restrictions. In addition, the principal, if not sole, clients of the world agencies in Africa are the governments and their other institutions, including the national agency (where one exists) and the Ministry of Information. It is therefore more unlikely, that the correspondents of the commercial agencies would be so naive as to file news embarrassing to the local regimes. Such caution is further reinforced by the fact that their entry and continued presence in a given country depends on the good-will and cooperation of the regime.<sup>53</sup>

Mutual understanding and cooperation exists between the governments and the agencies. This, as we may say, cannot fail to "compromise objectivity" in ways akin to a socially and culturally involved local stringer. At the same time, the factor of a correspondent's specific location on the continent or even within a given state, affects his perception and interpretation of events. The Nigerian crisis seems to clearly demonstrate this fact. Thus generally, while we do not contend that the predicaments of the stringer are exactly the same as those of the correspondent, they nevertheless belong to the same category, a harassed and controlled group of news-gatherers. We must therefore conclude that the

responsibility for any improvement of African information flow rests primarily with both the agencies themselves and the African governments.

On the agency level, there could be more recruitment of African staff. Costs of newspaper production and radio broadcasting are rising daily, and with these the cost of keeping a foreign correspondent abroad. The increasing use of full-time stringers or the recruitment of local staffers, could greatly reduce these costs, while at the same time improving performance. Like other giant foreign corporate concerns operating in the lesser developed areas, the World agencies should seriously consider the training and development of local resources on a more permanent basis. This would obviate charges of neo-colonialism and their imperialist role. It would, at least, ameliorate the "nationality bias" of stories collected by foreign correspondents.

African governments, on the other hand, need seriously to improve the standard of telecommunications facilities both within their states, among them as well as between them and the external world. The importance of a national news agency, especially as a major "filter" of incoming agency news, and as an ultimate guarantee of its own "nationality bias" is abundantly elucidated in Gertrude Robinson's work on Yugoslavia's Tanjug.<sup>54</sup> More national news agencies are definitely needed in Africa, as they help control internal information flow, while guaranteeing external information flow about its nation.

To enhance this news out-flow demands regional news cooperatives, as exemplified by Morocco's Maghreb. Such cooperatives should ultimately pave the way for more serious efforts toward an indigenous African based world news agency. An African Continental

News Agency seems the only answer, since no single African state can muster the resources (human and material) to compete and outbid the existing world gatherers. The envisaged African world agency needs to operate as a cooperative of all the governments, since the newspaper and radio broadcasting systems of individual countries cannot yet support it. This agency would then gather and disseminate African news throughout the world, and hopefully generate and guarantee a fairer and more complete image of Africa.

A final suggestion refers to upgrading the interest and understanding of local publishers and news editors. Both will have to be encouraged to take Africa more seriously. The correspondent corps' performance is largely a function of the kind of guidance, encouragement and response they receive from their home bureaus. Abraham Bass in distinguishing the key decision-makers and other functionaries in the wire service organization shows that "the place of importance is...at the central news desk".<sup>55</sup>

Most home bureau editors and publishers know next to nothing about Africa. They also do not seem to rely on the competence of their own men on the spot. When African news is carried by their papers or radio systems, it tends therefore, to be brief and lacking in background information. This leaves it almost incomprehensible to the reading or listening public. Other stories are tailored to old pre-conceptions and prejudices. The use of journalists specializing in "reporting Africa" should be encouraged by special courses, as is now the case with such other specialized topics as medical reporting, crime and judicial proceedings. Such specialists should not only be sent to Africa, but be located at various desks through which African news travels on its way to the audience.

Finally, the performance of the global agencies in Africa is yet to reach its optimum. So far, agency coverage and hence foreign press representation of Africa, has remained low, both quantitatively and qualitatively, compared to other regions. This results in foreign audience misperception of the peoples and nations of Africa and their problems relative to nation-building and modernization tasks.

Present trends however, leave considerable room for optimism, when we reflect on the communication progress achieved since the attainment of political independence. The burden of further improvements rest squarely on both the agencies and the African governments. The urgency of the situation cannot be over stressed considering that the modern international system constantly generates tensions which can be partly relieved by adequate information flow, especially in crisis situations like the Nigerian civil war. That country's press system and its overall impact on local and foreign correspondent coverage of this war will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Francis Williams, Transmitting World News, (UNESCO, Paris, 1953), p. 12.
- 2 Wilbur Schramm, Mass Media and National Development, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 9-17.
- 3 Charles R. Wright, Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective (New York, Random House, 1959), pp 16-21.
- 4 See especially, John H. Herz, International Politics in the Atomic Age, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1959), Chapters III & VI.
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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NIGERIAN DAILY PRESS: BACKGROUND TO CIVIL WAR COVERAGE

In spite of the fact that the world agencies have few bureaus and a small correspondent corps on the African continent, Nigeria is one of the best covered countries in the region. It is serviced by virtually all the agencies. At the out-break of the civil war, the TASS bureau was located in the Soviet mission at Lagos, and all others had, at least, one permanent correspondent in the capital.

In addition to the global agencies, some foreign news organizations like the New York Times, the Times magazine and the Manchester Guardian also covered the country, either from Lagos or the regional capitals of Enugu, Ibadan and Kaduna. Considering the vastness of the country to be covered, and the paucity of transportation and other telecommunication facilities however, even those available foreign correspondents proved inadequate. How well did the local stringers, located at various capitals help out the foreigners and interpret the crisis to the outside world? No systematic study has been done on this class of journalists, and their numbers remain precisely unknown. We shall however make an attempt in this chapter to evaluate their performance.

How does the correspondent collect information? Existing literature on news gathering habits emphasize one basic fact; namely, that all correspondents spend a great deal of their time reading the local newspapers.<sup>1</sup> These, according to Bernard Cohen constitute,

their first and most important source which is then followed up, where necessary and possible, by the ordinary procedure<sup>2</sup> of filling out or checking or advancing a story.

This crucial role of the local dailies, as an overriding source of information, suggests that our study of foreign press coverage of the Nigerian civil war start with an exploration of Nigerian journalism and newspaper production. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the structure and organization of Nigeria's newspaper system and its impact, in association with the press laws and a military one-party rule, on daily press coverage of this national disaster.

The chapter seeks to demonstrate, that the press destined to cover the civil war, and thus to serve as a major source for foreign explanation of these events, was not an objective recorder, but performed as a part of the official propaganda machine of Nigeria's regime. To document this point, it reviews the state of the press for a twenty year period, between 1951 and 1970, during which governmental power over information steadily increased. For analytical purposes, the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first, examines aspects of the structure, ownership and growth of Nigeria's newspaper system. The second, analyzes the overall impact of this ownership structure, as well as the press laws and military rule on press performance, evaluating how well surveillance and correlation of the environment<sup>3</sup> were carried out, especially in times of national emergency and distress.

## SECTION I

### STRUCTURE AND GROWTH PATTERNS OF THE NIGERIAN DAILY PRESS, 1951-1970

Historical evidence corroborates the assertion that the growth of Nigeria's daily press has been coupled with progressive interference and control, first by political parties and later by the local government, (civilian and military). This section

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explores this fact with a view to highlighting its impact on news reporting in the Nigerian press. For clarity sake, press growth will be sub-divided into two phases: the phase of the party press between, 1951 and 1959; and then the period of increasing government ownership, 1960 to 1970. Press performance in both phases suggests valuable clues for what happens in the future under the country's military rule.

#### THE PHASE OF THE PARTY PRESS, 1951-1959

The Nigerian daily press, like the press in most former colonial dependencies, was the spearhead of Nigerian nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Nationalism and press journalism were inextricably bound together in the heyday of anti-imperialist political agitations for self-rule. As Hachten observes,

the press gave to nationalism its prime means of diffusion, the medium through which the idea could be disseminated. Nationalism gave to the press its principal message, its raison d'etre...The separation of the two is not feasible because they were wedded by a common heart and mind, that of the editor-nationalist.

Given such a relationship, changes in the one, notably the political, tended to induce changes in the other.

In 1951, Nigeria's political development witnessed a dramatic shift from an anti-imperialist Pan-Nigerian nationalism to a multi-party political system. The MacPherson Constitution of 1948 was a primary precipitant of this change.<sup>6</sup> It radically transformed the political structure as well as the political scene. Nigeria formally became a federation of three semi-autonomous regions.

This Constitution guaranteed the transfer of governmental responsibilities to the nationalists some eight years earlier than originally scheduled under the old and obnoxious Richard

Constitution.<sup>7</sup> Such a transfer was to be based on democratically elected regional assemblies, as against the appointment of members instituted by the latter.<sup>8</sup> One major, unanticipated but enthusiastic outcome of this political development was the multiplication of political parties.<sup>9</sup> Pan-Nigerian nationalist movements, mainly an alliance of various shades of organizations, including tribal unions, women's associations, and workers' unions, collapsed and the realignments resulted in the emergence of new parties.<sup>10</sup> These were later to battle for control of both the regional assemblies as well as the political power at the center.

Of the numerous parties, three were dominant: the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (until independence, 'Nigeria and the Camerouns') in the East; the Action Group in the West; and the Northern Peoples' Congress in the North. Each party was dominant in one region, where it was the party of the dominant ethnic complex.<sup>11</sup> Violent conflict marred the relationship between the parties as they struggled to establish their political image in the regions. The complexity of this task, among a largely rural population, assured that the mass circulation press would be used to advance party publicity and propaganda.

Except for a few Lagos leading papers, the majority of existing newspapers were owned and edited by nationalist leaders. They were, thus, irrevocably committed to the nationalist movement and cause. But, as the nationalists formed or gravitated to one or the other of the new parties, they did so with their papers. Thus were born the party newspapers, that were to shape much of the future of print journalism in Nigeria.

The limited nature of the existing dailies led most parties to establish new newspapers located at politically strategic towns.

The factors which contributed to this trend include, an expanding readership, resulting from increasing urbanization and the spread of literacy. Also contributing was a growing working class population with an increasing political consciousness. Usually, these were concentrated away from the capital city of Lagos, which was the base of a majority of the older papers. The latter could not, however, reach this far-flung growing reading public because of inefficient communication and transportation systems. The inability to swiftly and effectively circulate dailies throughout the vast territory, created an information vacuum in large parts of the federation.

This vacuum was filled by local newspapers printed in the small towns or provincial capitals. A lack of indigenous entrepreneurship made it possible only for the various parties to utilize the opportunity and to found new papers. Party papers were a necessity, not only structurally but to guarantee space and favorable treatment of different party programs which would not be covered by rival party organs. Therefore, the proliferation of party newspapers, between 1951 and 1959. As Hachten has observed, "owning a paper was a sine qua non for a successful politician"<sup>12</sup> as each leading politician founded his own political organ.

Table III highlights the predominance of party organs in this first phase. It indicates that political parties, notably the southern based parties, owned or controlled about 76% of the available dailies. The largest single ownership was by the Action Group which controlled about 38%, while its rival, the NCNC accounted for 33%. Unlike the Action Group which owned a newspaper company, the Amalgamated Press Ltd., the NCNC as a party owned no papers. Rather, it relied on subsidizing the Zik group of papers.<sup>13</sup>

One fact is that, the northern based Northern Peoples' Congress did not participate as actively in newspaper development as the southern parties. Confined to its northern ghetto, cajoling the electors through party publicity and propaganda seemed outside its program. One answer may be that its membership was almost automatic, being based on a sanctioning process by the aristocratic emirs and Islamic scholars.<sup>14</sup> Thus Mackintosh observes, the NPC relies

for its support principally on the village and district heads, native authority functionaries and chiefs, without bothering over-much with the development of mass party organs as a means of gaining widespread acceptance.<sup>15</sup>

The same table indicates that newspapers owned by private interests claiming political neutrality constitute only 14% of the total. About 10% of these are under foreign control, while state ownership, confined mainly to the north, accounts for the last 10% of the newspapers.

A final feature of the party press<sup>16</sup> is the tendency for rival parties to situate their organs in such politically strategic towns, as Uyo, Onitsha and Kano. Some of these, notably Uyo and Kano, are politically fluid areas, posing considerable opposition to the ruling party. Involving strong minority ethnic feelings, they are open to contest and possible manipulation by rival parties seeking to gain a footing in another region.

TABLE III

OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF DAILIES BY  
POLITICAL PARTIES, AND GOVERNMENT  
BETWEEN 1951 AND 1959

<u>OWNERSHIP</u>	<u>NO. OF PAPERS</u>	<u>PERCENT OF TOTALS</u>
1. Action Group (Party)	8	38.1
2. N.C.N.C. "	7	33.3
3. Others "	1	4.8
4. Private (Foreign/local)	3	14.3
5. Government	<u>2</u>	<u>9.5</u>
	21	100.0

The predominance of party newspapers throughout the period immediately preceding independence, more than any other single factor shaped the future of the Nigerian newspaper system as a whole. In the first place, it paved the way for extreme regionalization of journalism. Hence Hachten was able to observe that:

Nigeria's system of mass communication accurately reflected the political conditions. At independence in 1960, Nigeria had four systems of mass communication, not just one.<sup>17</sup>

These systems reflected the country's three regional and the federal political structures.

With such regionalization, journalism was not considered as a profession transcending regional boundaries. Journalists outside such boundaries were not seen as professional colleagues, sharing a commitment to a single national service while serving different masters. Instead, they followed trends among their individual masters, who more or less thought and acted not so much in terms of a single Nigerian nationality, as in terms of their ethnic and regional power base.<sup>18</sup>

The violent party rivalries which marked party relationships consequently infested the daily press, where it took the form of virulent political polemics, popularly described as "press wars".<sup>19</sup> The press wars seem to have pulled newsmen even further apart than the political rivalry among politicians. There was no formal national journalist or editorial association to weld these regional groups into a consistent whole. Nor did common standards exist beyond the regional boundaries. Consequently, a double standard of reporting emerged in the federation.

In such a context, it is easy to realize that journalism did not develop into a preferred profession. A report on the social and economic background of newsmen, between 1947-1960,<sup>20</sup> reveals that journalism was one of the least wanted jobs among the limited educated elite in the 1950's. Despite this, party membership and party activism were the primary criteria for recruitment and promotion in the system. This assertion is corroborated by Emmanuel Jaja, a veteran party newsman, now an editor with the Daily Times group. Contributing to an International Press Institute symposium in a paper entitled "The Problems of an African Editor" he declared:

In the days prior to independence...no one thought of newspapering as a profession. Journalism was then regarded as a field for misfits and agitators... Party activists with little or no journalist training find their way onto the payroll as editors and writers.<sup>21</sup>

Formal journalism training too was lacking since no such schools existed prior to 1960. At this point the University of Nigeria established its first professional school of journalism. The Nsukka report shows that throughout the early period, most of the training mentioned by respondents consisted of short term seminars organized either by the British Council or the United



States Information Services at Lagos or the regional capitals. However, some editorial staff of some leading papers mentioned periods of overseas training, ranging from three months to a year, notably in Britain and Israel.

Generally, a group of journalists with limited formal education and professional standards is likely to do its master's bidding. And as Emmanuel Jaja corroborates,

The (party) paper is primarily a vehicle for building a legend out of the party and the men in power. Journalism under such circumstances is not worthy of the name. Morality and ethics are bartered away, and the whole concept of public service is lost. The entrapped editor...<sup>22</sup> is gagged, and is not free to express his opinion.

This plight of the entrapped party journalist becomes all the more grave, when we realize that as a professional, he has no alternative newspaper organization to go to if he loses his job. The need to keep his position therefore, ensures virtually an absolute compliance to party demands and pressures.

#### GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPERS, 1960-1970

The attainment of political independence in 1960 marked the end of nationalist anti-imperialist political agitation, which was the basic framework of the political socialization of the era. As the primary organs of nationalist agitation and political awakening of the people, the party press saturated the society with notions of a "greater tomorrow" and unlimited aspirations in independent Nigeria. Colonial rule was presented as the only impediment to national socio-economic development which would become a reality almost automatically, with independence. But the experience of unrequited aspirations soon after independence, tended to lead to mass discontent and frustration.

In response to the political and psychological changes in

the society, the nationalist regimes instituted a new communications strategy along with a new political socialization program. The latter saw a shift from an emphasis on ridding oneself of the colonial rulers, to generating a spirit of national service. The new focus stressed individual and group contributions to the national good, rather than the benefits accruing from independence. In communication, there was a shift to direct government involvement in newspaper publication.

With the parties which used to be on the sidelines now themselves in charge of running the government's business, political leaders tended to convert their organs into government organs. Such conversion, however, seems to have been ineffective because the newspapers were unable to perform the changed information needs of the government. Two main reasons may help explain this failure: credibility and economic need. Party newspapers, it turned out, were generally distrusted since many of their earlier prophecies and promises remained utopian. As a consequence, circulation figures for the two leading party newspapers (the Daily Tribune and the West African Pilot) dropped drastically. The Pilot plummeted from 50,000 in 1959, to less than 10,000 in 1961, while the Tribune dropped from 15,000 to 8,000 during the same period.

The second feature inhibiting the press' efficient functioning was the economic crisis which befell party papers soon after the 1959 national elections. Its extraordinary costs substantially affected the amount and regularity of party contributions to the papers. Consequently, some less endowed papers folded, while the few survivors<sup>23</sup> scaled down production, and concentrated like the Daily Times on commercials and other popular interest content.

This stark reduction of the party press, left Nigerian

society with only two choices, either government subsidy of existing party papers or direct government ownership. The latter proved the more acceptable alternative for a number of reasons. First, there was foreign competition, as represented by the Daily Times group. This group took possession of the moribund Nigerian Daily Times in 1947, and renamed the paper. In addition, the group put out a Sunday edition and a series of monthlies, whose content was persistently threatening to the indigenous administration grappling with the burdens of government.

The Times group was highly innovative in professional journalism and newspaper entrepreneurship, but it was decidedly pro-British in its editorial and other policies. This posed a considerable threat, and was a constant source of embarrassment to the new administration, whose shortcomings were often emphasized. As a result, the papers were very suspect in high official and elite circles, being branded as neo-colonialist organs and agents hired to undermine nationalist efforts at independence.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the Times group's commercial success seems to have compounded their negative political image. Its unprecedented circulation near 120,000 in 1959 was additionally perceived as negating indigenous newspaper entrepreneurship. The Times made these strides largely because it held a virtual monopoly over all major foreign advertising revenues in the country.

As a consequence, when in the late 1950's, the nationalists gained control of the state machinery, considerable demands for the expropriation or at least the amelioration of the domineering influence of the Times group were made. Such demands and pressures increased in 1960 following the arrival of a second foreign newspaper group. This was the Allied Press Ltd., jointly owned by the

Action Group party and Canada's international newspaper tycoon, Lord Thompson. Since expropriation was not considered politically wise, measures permitting the government to enter into competition with these foreign papers became a necessary alternative. A further measure designed to negate their influence was the Nigerianization policy. This stipulates that major foreign concerns must expedite the upgrading of Nigerians to responsible executive and managerial roles, and ensure that a greater proportion (about 65%) of their staff are nationals.

While competition and economic factors were influential in reinforcing the drift toward government subsidy of the press, the establishment of Ministries of Information and internal political wrangling, further induced direct government involvement. The colonial administration left a strong legacy of government involvement in news and information distribution, through a number of information bureaus. These specifically served to spread government policies, clarify issues, and above all perhaps, counter nationalist propaganda. These information functions of the state increased in scope and complexity following independence.

A desire to restore the badly shattered public confidence in the governments, as a prelude to effective nation-building and modernization, further complicated the picture. Rather than abrogate the colonial information bureaus therefore, these were re-organized into highly complex bureaucratic Ministries of Information. In serving the government's increasing information needs, these Ministries later became the base for establishing government newspapers.

The fourth factor encouraging government newspaper owner-

ship may be traced to internal power conflicts within the NCNC hierarchy. Late in 1957, the party's leadership faced a division, which resulted in the resignation of some parliamentary members. This move helped create the first virile opposition in the region, which immediately challenged the propriety of undisclosed government involvement in a chain of business enterprises, notably the African Continental Bank and the Zik Group of Newspapers. All of these were allegedly personally owned by the regional premier, Dr. Azikiwe.

These allegations raised considerable concern, bordering on official scandal throughout the federation, and culminated in the Foster-Sutton Tribunal to investigate Dr. Azikiwe's premiership and the relationship of his government to his declared business interests.<sup>25</sup> This Tribunal confirmed the transfer of government funds to the private bank, and recommended its nationalization. Since this bank was the financial backbone of the Zik newspaper group, its removal, no doubt, hastened government press ownership.

Finally, there were the activities of two main pressure groups, each strongly in favor of outright government ownership. Among the first were both veteran party newspaper reporters, and the old political vanguard itself. The former were in favor of government papers, because increasing economic difficulties and declining circulation threatened them with unemployment. The latter approved because such papers would ensure continuity, with no major difference except in nomenclature, between government and party content. For both, government papers offered an opportunity not only for a more permanent and secure life, but also for a lucrative and pensionable civil service to which the average wage-earner aspires but which he may never attain.

The second pressure group consisted of leading Ministry of Information staff. In the absence of government organs, their information and publicity needs were channelled through the party press. Being better trained and educated as well as occupying a higher social status than the party newsmen, these officials vehemently resented the subordination of their Ministry's information needs to party editorial dictation and control. Government releases, including news and features, were often subject to re-editing by the newspaper staff before publication, apparently emphasizing party interests.

Though barred from active party involvement by the civil service code, some of these officials had strong sympathies for the minority parties. Even those affiliated with the ruling party, seemed more or less able to distinguish between party and civil service responsibilities. Thus generally, this mixing of party and governmental information functions was resisted, especially as it implied the subordination of government needs to party interests. The separation of government information responsibilities, from those of the party, therefore, became imperative.

By the 1960's these factors produced the proliferation of government owned newspaper organizations throughout the federation. Each state government launched a newspaper corporation, usually responsible to the Ministry of Information. Prior to the civil war, between 1960 and 1967, there was the federal government's Nigerian National Press Ltd. which published the Morning Post and the Sunday Post at Lagos. The Eastern government published the Nigerian Outlook, which on the region's secession, became the Biafra Sun. The Western government on its part, maintained the Daily Express and the Sunday Express, while the Nigerian Citizen,

(renamed the New Nigerian after the January 1966 coup) was published by the Northern government. Only the Mid-West, carved out of the western region in 1962/3, did not yet have its own paper. By 1965 however, it too had plans to start a government paper. These were interrupted by the military take-over in January 1966.

This trend toward government ownership has intensified since the end of the civil war in 1970, and the stabilization of the twelve state political structure instituted in 1967. A number of these states have now established their own newspapers. Replacing the Nigerian Outlook, which was a casualty of the war, is the Renaissance in the East Central state. In the Mid-West, the Nigerian Observer is published, while the Nigerian Chronicle and the Nigerian Tide, are products of the South-Eastern and Rivers states, respectively. Information reaching me indicates that a number of other states, including Kwara, Benue-Plateau and Kano, have also concluded arrangements for their own newspaper organizations.

Two major conclusions may be drawn from the foregoing analysis. First, that government ownership was on the rise before the civil war; and secondly that financial pressures reduced the number of papers after independence. Table IV corroborates that all papers established after 1960 are owned and published by the state, indicating that while the party press predominated in the first phase, the proliferation of government dailies became the hall-mark of the post-independence second phase. Thus, newspaper publication seems to have lost its foundation in private ownership.

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TABLE IV

PERCENTAGE OF NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP FOR PAPERS  
ESTABLISHED DURING TWO PHASES, 1951-1959 AND 1960-1970

<u>PHASE</u>	<u>PRIVATE PRESS</u>	<u>GOV'T. PRESS</u>	<u>PARTY PRESS</u>	<u>TOTAL %</u>
1951-59	14	10	76	100 (N = 21)
1960-70	-	100	-	100 (N = 9)

Table V shows additionally, that only seven out of twenty-one newspapers, comprising 33% of the original daily press were available to provide coverage of the civil war. Significantly, well over half or 57% of these were government newspapers.

TABLE V

MAJOR DAILIES OPERATING DURING THE WAR  
WITH OWNERSHIP, LOCATION AND CIRCULATION

<u>NEWSPAPER</u>	<u>OWNERSHIP</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>CIRCULATION</u>
1. West African Pilot	Private	Lagos	less 5,000
2. Daily Tribune	"	Ibadan	less 5,000
3. Daily Times	"	Lagos	est. 100,000
4. Daily Express	Gov't.	Ibadan	-
5. Morning Post	"	Lagos	25,000
6. New Nigerian	"	Kaduna	-
7. Biafra Sun	"	Umuahia	-

Most of the numerous party dailies vanished with the ban on political parties and activities after the take-over by the military regime. Of those which remained, only 28.6% were former party organs, while the final 14.3% of the papers were foreign dailies remaining outside politics. This changed distribution indicates that at the outbreak of the civil war, all newspaper ownership patterns were represented. Such variation would normally be conducive to a variety of news angles and editorial



opinions. Such variety was however negated by various regulations impinging upon press performance during the war, which will be examined in the next section.

The twenty years of Nigerian press history reviewed here indicates both a systematic growth, in numbers and circulation of newspapers as well as a trend toward government ownership. While the press commenced its existence in private hands, national political developments shifted this first to party and then to government control. The interlocking job dependence of journalists on politicians and their poor training, resulted in the reduction of the number of dailies as political activities were banned after the 1966 coup. How and what these papers published during the war, will be the focus of interest in a subsequent chapter. Meanwhile the next section examines the impact of the press laws and military rule on the press, as immediate factors impinging upon civil war performance.

## SECTION II

### PRESS LAWS, MILITARY RULE AND CIVIL WAR NEWS

Effective coverage of civil war news cannot be divorced from a discussion of the degree of press freedom in Nigeria. The previous section shows that private ownership of the daily press systematically gave way to government ownership. This trend, as we have seen, imposed considerable restraints on the editor and his reporters, who had necessarily to publish in accordance with specified government interests. How were these interests manifested and what types of press laws guided newspapers during the national crisis? This section examines some of these laws, highlighting their influence on press coverage of the civil war.

## FIVE OBNOXIOUS PRESS LAWS

Like other former British dependencies, British legal traditions shaped the Nigerian Constitution and legal system. Basically, the Constitution guarantees press freedom and the individual's freedom of expression.<sup>27</sup> Nigeria's first newspaper law was enacted in 1903. This simply stipulated conditions for printing and publishing materials for mass consumption in the country. Between 1903 and 1966, when a military regime suspended the Constitution, much press legislation regulating freedom of expression was developed. These regulations followed British traditions and were often enacted or amended according to trends in London. On paper, there seems to be nothing wrong with these measures, which are found as well in most western democracies. The difficulty lies instead in the interpretation and application of these legal requirements.

According to Dr. Azikiwe, Nigeria's newspaper legislation is made up of ten categories of offences ranging from "purely regulatory decrees to protective edicts."<sup>28</sup> These were enacted at various stages of national development, many times differently in the various regions and under the various governments of the federation. Five articles were increasingly strengthened to give all governments greater control over newspaper content. These were sedition, defamation, contempt of court, secret documents and emergency laws. Each of these is briefly examined to highlight their impact on the ways in which news about the civil war could be locally reported. Our contention is generally that the governmental takeover of the press was further strengthened and facilitated by the way in which the press laws were interpreted and applied.

The sedition clause is probably one of the most vital articles of the press law. This seeks to maintain and protect the integrity of the state. It limits the exercise of freedom of speech, especially in situations where it tends to bring the state, the government or their agents into public disrepute, hatred or contempt. The defamation clauses are second. These forbid all content likely to prove injurious to a person's reputation or profession, through exposing him or a member of his family, living or dead, to ridicule, contempt or public hate.

Between 1955 and 1959, and at the initiation of Dr. Azikiwe's Eastern government, the sedition and defamation laws were amended and unified into what came to be known as "the false news laws".<sup>29</sup> This amendment proclaimed slander and malicious falsehood to be criminal offences. It imposed penalties in the form of fines, imprisonment and the banning of papers, for content which later proved to be unfounded either in fact or truth. These measures, in particular, strengthened governmental control over content at a time when political independence should have been encouraging greater freedom of expression.

Basically, these amendments were a reaction to developments on the national political scene prior to national independence in 1960 when the three dominant parties were trying to consolidate their regional strongholds, preparatory to the impending federal elections. Opposition and any form of criticism, especially within a governing party's jurisdiction, seemed incompatible with success at the polls. The "false news laws" were therefore specifically directed at opposition organs, accused of raising false alarms, embarrassing the regime, and subsequently threatening the region with disorder. To all intents and

purposes, they were meant to silence criticism of the governments at a time when popular goodwill was most in demand.

Two vivid examples of the application of these regulations are cited for illustrative purposes. The first involves a pamphlet entitled, "The People: Facts that You must know" published by a federal member of Parliament and mathematics professor at the University of Ibadan. After strong criticism of Nigeria's political system and politicians, the author, Dr. Chike Obi, declared among other things, "down with the enemies of the people ...the days of those who have enriched themselves at the expense of the poor are numbered."<sup>30</sup> Dr. Obi and his publishers were immediately arraigned on sedition charges for a publication that brought "into hatred or contempt or excited disaffection against" the government.

A second major sedition trial involved three University professors, Oyenuga, Aluko and Odumosu. These published a series of articles in 1963 criticizing the findings and methods of the Coker Commission inquiring into six statutory corporations during the Action Group regime in the West. The articles were promptly declared seditious and all three were tried and fined.<sup>31</sup> In either case, the application of the sedition laws was not regarded as incompatible with the Constitutional guarantee of free expression.<sup>32</sup> As Mackintosh observes, these articles "would in most countries have been taken as fair comment". The effects of the decisions were significant: a widespread suspicion and fear developed in newspaper and public circles silencing trenchant criticism of established government institutions.

A third law impinging upon the exercise of press freedom was contempt of court clause. Unlike other laws, this was not

contestible in any law court. Judgment was summarily imposed by an affected court, which thus became a judge in its own cause. Contempt of court applies to publications defined as containing scandalous reflections upon the integrity of a court of law or tending to make it or its agents contemptible before the public. A fourth law relates to illegal possession and leakage of government classified documents. According to it, secret documents, whether or not in the public interest, must not become the subject for newspaper coverage or editorialization, except when expressly released by the authorities.

A final press regulation of importance to this thesis relates to emergency laws invoked in times of national stress, such as war. The clauses seek to maintain the security of the realm, embodying among other things, the rights of censorship, suppression of information and publications as well as the blocking of communications within the nation and with the outside world.

Generally, these clauses formed part of the legal code of each region. However, their basic stipulations, interpretation and application were not uniform throughout the federation. Newspapers and journalists were accordingly subject to conflicting legal demands and pressures. Even within a region, the application of legal pressures varied according to a paper's perceived attitude and/or relationship to the regime, its leadership and party. Without a doubt, these laws were vigorously invoked when an opposition or rival party organ fell foul of the stated terms:

#### THE 1964 NEWSPAPER ACT

To make sense out of the bewildering variety of press laws, a more or less unifying press law was enacted in 1964 by the

federal government. Despite its good intentions, it was a controversial bill. All sections of the press and much of the public spoke out vehemently against its enactment,<sup>33</sup> which marked the final snuffing out of any dissenting voice or opposition in the federation.

The 1964 press law was essentially an amendment to the existing laws, which were thus codified into a single federal law for all Nigerian newspaper organizations and journalists. It contains the requirement that a person wishing to enter the newspaper business must deposit a bond of three hundred pounds (about \$900) with at least one surety. Failing this, the would-be entrepreneur must deposit the same amount with the government, as a guarantee against the commission of civil or criminal libel, sedition or defamation. Furthermore, the new law obliged newspaper proprietors, editors and publishers to inscribe at the bottom left hand corner of every issue, the correct names and addresses of the editor and publisher. In addition, two copies of every issue were to be duly signed by both and deposited with the Minister of Information. This was of course, at no cost to the government: an act depriving newspaper owners of the right to their property. Finally, for our purposes in this paper, the law stipulated a three year jail term and/or a fine of five hundred pounds (about \$1,500) for false publications, especially those prejudicial to the defence of the state, to public safety, public order, health and morality.<sup>34</sup>

#### WESTERN ELECTION: BANE OF NIGERIAN PRESS

The journalists' first confrontation with the press law came nearly a year later, during the 1965 Western regional elections following the termination of a two-year state of emergency

in the state. It also marked Nigerian journalism's first major confrontation with its readers. With Nigeria's first post-independence federal elections due later in 1965, the western election was crucial not only for the troubled state, but for the federation. At the time, the NPC-NCNC coalition which ruled the nation since independence had been rocked by mutual distrust, as well as rivalry over the ill-fated Nigerian 1963 census. A realignment of parties was imminent and the west offered such an ally to either party. Hence siding with either of the two rival western parties in this election brought the two major parties into a head on collision.

The press was effectively mobilized by either side in the contest for western power. Its reporting marked the grave yard of professional journalism in Nigeria, with violently conflicting reports published as they suited party or government interests. Rival candidates were declared elected on the pages of newspapers, while in fact the outcome was still in balance. Rather than help ameliorate, the press intensified the confusion among the anxious electorate. Unexpectedly, popular discontent culminated in the press being pilloried as a willing scapegoat for political misdemeanours at the polls.

Rival papers were banned from circulating within the areas of jurisdiction by rival governments. Hence, while the Ibadan municipal government prohibited, under pains of fine and imprisonment, the circulation of the Nigerian Outlook, the West African Pilot, the Daily Tribune and the Daily Express at Ibadan, some municipal governments in the East banned the Daily Sketch, the Nigerian Citizen, the Morning Post, the Sunday Post and the Daily

Times and Sunday Times.

As if bans were not enough, anti-Action Group mobs stormed the offices of the banned newspapers, destroying copies and vital equipment. In retaliation, a pro-Action Group mob countered by attacking the Ibadan offices of the Sketch, the Citizen, the Post and the Daily Times. Copies, equipments, stationery and cars were destroyed or burnt here as well. In the confusion, newsmen were freely attacked and vendors prevented from selling copies. Other incidents of the same nature were reported in parts of the east.

While anti-press violence seemed to sweep through most of the west and the east, the north and Lagos seemed comparatively quiet. Lagos itself was not without significant incidents. Two editors, (of the Pilot and the Daily Telegraph) were arrested on sedition and false publication charges, for publishing materials purporting to reveal an official conspiracy to discredit and destroy some sections of the press. At the same time, four editors and the six directors of the federal government's newspaper corporation were summarily removed from office without cause shown. At Ibadan, the regional police arrested and detained, without charges, twenty-four journalists of the Daily Tribune and its weekly Yoruba vernacular, the Irohin.

Generally, the violence that swept through southern Nigeria in the after-math of the disputed western elections of October 1965, vividly illustrates the plight and vulnerability of Nigeria's highly politicized press and journalist corps. These predicaments knew no regional boundaries. Reactions were both intra-ethnic and intra-regional, but mostly politically oriented and motivated. Hence, all kinds of papers, government, party and



private (foreign or local), were engulfed in the violence as well as upheaval. Consequently, newspapers and journalists alike became unwanted and haunted groups, insecure in public and in official circles. For a while, it was hazardous to publish and produce newspapers, since neither the reporter, nor circulation officials, including lorry drivers, would risk identification with the profession.

#### THE PRESS AND MILITARY RULE, 1966-1967

The Nigerian press and the journalism profession were probably at their lowest ebb when the military swept away the civilian government in January, 1966. It salvaged what was left of a shaken profession, which had been cowed by a wave of intimidating and humiliating public and official reactions.

Nigeria's military rule passed through three phases before the outbreak of the civil war. Each phase, with the peculiarities of its leadership, left the press in no doubt as to the limitations on press freedom. Some of the policies and reactions of the military leaders to the press are reviewed here to shed further light on the civil war coverage to be investigated later.

Soon after the January 1966 coup, which marks the first phase of military rule, its leadership in an extraordinary broadcast at Kaduna declared inter alia,

the aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a strong united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife. Our method of achieving this is strictly military.<sup>35</sup>

Outlining what was described as the "Extraordinary Orders of the Day", in the same broadcast, the leader, Major Nzeogwu, in an apparent reference to the press declared also that:

Obstruction of the revolution..., false alarms ... harmful or injurious publications and broadcasts of troop movements or action will be punished by any suitable sentence deemed fit by the local military commander. Wavering or sitting on the fence and failing to declare open loyalty with the revolution will be regarded as an act of hostility punishable by any sentence deemed fit by the local military commander. (emphasis added)

By January 17th, Major Nzeogwu surrendered power to Major-General Ironsi, thus marking the second phase. On February 21st, the latter summoned and met with members of the press and radio. Because of the importance and subsequent impact of this meeting on the press and the next military phase, Gen. Ironsi's address will be quoted at length:

This meeting is... summoned to appeal to you once again to exercise a sense of loyalty, responsibility and restraint in the performance of your duties. You should avoid reports in your newspapers...likely to incite one section of our people against another. You should also avoid the dangerous practice of rumor mongering, which is so much in evidence in our country to-day. On this point, it might be necessary to sound a note of warning. While it is not the intention of the military government to muzzle constructive press comments on matters of public interest,...the government (will) ensure that confidential matters of state are not... made the subject of sensational press speculation, especially where such matters have not been officially cleared for release to the public. Where in doubt...check up your facts from the Ministry of Information who will either furnish you with the correct answers or make enquiries from the proper quarters on your behalf. (emphasis added)

The paternalistic tone of this address is remarkable. Neither statement seems compatible with the spirit of a free press, with the latter a reinforcement of the provisions of the 1964 press laws. Perhaps, the only positive action of the military toward freedom of expression was the lifting of the numerous locally imposed bans on a number of dailies. While everyone with the resources was free to publish and circulate a newspaper, free speech, per se, was far from being guaranteed. No less could

have been expected of a military regime, without a constitutional base, which watched with interest the violation of constitutional guarantees by the ousted civilian regimes. While the press laws intimidated the press and journalists into conformity, military rule characterized by the application of martial laws and recourse to "death by the firing squad" ushered in an era of inept and moribund journalism.

During this time, rumors and reports relating to the government cannot be published unless the paper takes steps to cross-check their authenticity. These requirements limited reports relating to controversial issues, including ethnic conflicts and other troubled situations, which were unverifiable. The additional requirement of checking facts with the Ministry of Information, erroneously assumed that this organization itself is well informed or operated efficiently in following up events. Furthermore, given the crudity of Nigeria's bureaucratic entanglements, fast breaking news (stories whose facts are not readily available) must lose their currency and newsworthiness by the time all the relevant facts have been marshalled by the officials. The situation becomes even more complicated, if the facts cut across departments, where channels of communication are so ill-defined but rigid as to make information flow next to impossible.

The third phase of the military rule followed the July 1966 counter-coup which swept Gen. Gowon to power. Basically, he upheld the policy of his predecessors. The threats of a Biafran secession, which he was determined to resist, and the impending civil war required ever more infringements of press freedom. In declaring a state of national emergency in May 1967,

he sternly warned members of the press against politicking and other related acts at this critical moment in the national history, and declared:

No political statements in the press and other publicity media will be tolerated. The military and the police are empowered to deal summarily with any offenders. Newspaper editors are particularly urged to cooperate with the authorities. 38

The Gowon regime immediately preceding the war, more than its other military predecessors, completely sealed the fate of the press as a source of civil war news. Newspapers and journalists were prohibited on threats of summary judgement, apparently involving "death by the firing squad", from publishing any materials likely to be injurious to the federal cause, or likely to enhance the secessionist cause of the "Biafran rebel". The die was cast, and the stage finally set for the reportorial activities of the Nigerian press during the 1967-1970 civil war.

#### CONCLUSION

Evidence reviewed in this chapter indicates that the local press designed to report the events of the war was a thoroughly controlled group. With a long history of party and government interference, as well as a repressive press law, local journalists, most of whom remained untrained and poorly educated, seem to have readily embraced whatever role the military handed to them in the civil war. Overall reportorial and editorial opinion on aspects of the war may have been the most vulnerable in these circumstances. These observations are corroborated by St. Jorre who asserts that:

the Nigerian press came...succumbing with hardly a token resistance to the pressures exerted on it by the military government. For all intents and purposes, the local press became part of the official propaganda armoury.

This fate of the local press, it must be remembered, affects the foreign correspondent who relies on it as a primary source. As part of the regime's propaganda machine, it exposes the correspondent to a one-sided interpretation of events, which in turn might influence his dispatches. This bias is further reinforced by the fact that the foreign correspondent goes about his routine news-gathering functions in much the same way as the local journalists, and therefore not immune to the pressures and restrictions imposed on local newsmen. As a matter of fact, these may apply more stringently to him than to his colleague. Such is the case because, while it is easy to control unfavorable reports in local dailies, it is most difficult to censor an account once the correspondent's dispatch slips through into the international transmission belt. Concern for the national image in the foreign press ensures that adequate pressures, such as highlighted in Chapter One, are imposed on the foreign correspondent.

For all intents and purposes, therefore, both the local newsmen and the foreign correspondent covering the civil war, were victims of considerable official threats and pressures. These may have impeded access to vital information, and/or the publication of unfavorable events, contrary to stated official policy. The inevitable consequence of such a situation is an inadequate flow of more or less distorted news, favorable to the federal cause. Editorialization too may have suffered for the same reasons, except where it praises the regime, its policy and achievements.

To observe the overall impact of this tradition of interference and control on local, as well as international press coverage of the civil war, chapters four and five report the

results of a comparative content analysis designed to test the validity of a series of hypotheses mentioned in the introduction of this thesis.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Leo Forst, "The Overseas Newsmen: A 1967 Profile Study", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 45 (1968), pp. 299-300; Einar Ostgaard, "Factors Influencing the Flow of News", Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1965), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Cohen, The Press and Foreign Policy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> Charles R. Wright, Mass Communications: A Sociological Perspective, (Random House, New York, 1959), pp. 16-21.

<sup>4</sup> F.A.O. Schwarz, Nigeria: The Tribes, the Nation or the Race, (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), pp. 58-64; James Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, (Berkeley: University of California, 1963), pp. 220-224.

<sup>5</sup> William A. Machten, Buffed Drums: The News Media in Africa, (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1971), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> Coleman, op. cit., pp. 271-281.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 302-311.

<sup>8</sup> Okoi Arikpo, The Development of Modern Nigeria, (Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 64-84; see also Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, pp. 272-279.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Coleman, op. cit., pp. 319-327.

<sup>11</sup> R. L. Sklar, Nigerian Political Parties, pp. 87-140.

<sup>12</sup> Machten, op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>13</sup> Zik, as Dr. Azikiwe was popularly known, was president of the NCNC from 1946-1960, when he withdrew from "partisan politics" to become the Governor-General and later the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. As a pioneer newspaper entrepreneur, Dr. Azikiwe owned a chain of papers which later served as his party's principal organ. See his, My Odyssey, Chapter X, pp. 286-309.

<sup>14</sup> The Emir is a moslem traditional ruler, who wields absolute power as a political and religious head of his emirate. Northern Emirs were local patrons of the NPC in their emirates. His party was the party of his subjects. See John P. Mackintosh, Nigerian Government and Politics, Chapter VIII, especially pp. 358-359.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix I for a list of major Nigerian newspapers, their ownership, locations and size.

- 17 Hachten, op. cit., p. 151.
- 18 See Coleman, op. cit., n. 320 and p. 346.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 346-347.
- 20 Dept. of Journalism, "Socio-Economic background of newspapermen in Nigeria, 1947-60", University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Unpublished preliminary report, 1967.
- 21 Emmanuel A. Jaja, "Problems of an African-Editor", Africa Report, Vol. 11, (January 1966), p. 41.
- 22 Ibid., p. 40.
- 23 The Action Group controlled newspapers were perhaps the most vulnerable. Survivors of the chain may be attributable to the prompt intervention of Thompson International of Canada, who acquired almost a 2/3 share in a new jointly constituted Allied Press Ltd.
- 24 Even indigenous papers, such as the Eastern Nigerian Mail, which was sitting on the fence during the nationalist struggles of the 1950's were ruthlessly forced out of the market, for not taking a positive stand against colonial rule. See, E.U. Oton, "Development of Journalism in Nigeria", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 35, (1958), pp. 72-70.
- 25 Michael Crowder, The Story of Nigeria, p. 291.
- 26 The figures are based on Nigerian Year Book, 1968.
- 27 Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 47.
- 28 N. Azikiwe, My Odyssey, p. 314.
- 29 Ibid., p. 314.
- 30 Dr. Chib, Dr. Chib: Facts that You must Know, (Lagos, Times Press, 1960), quoted in Mackintosh, op. cit., pp. 46-47. Dr. Obi was also the leader of the Dynamic Party, which was one of a number of minority parties.
- 31 Mackintosh, op. cit., p. 47.
- 32 Writing generally on Nigeria's Constitutional guarantees, Dr. Arikpo asserts that "the Constitutional provisions for the protection of fundamental rights did not prevent the unobtrusive encroachment of the governments and their agencies on the rights of the individuals." Arikpo, op. cit., p. 91.
- 33 See, the West African Pilot, 15/9/64, pp. 1 and 18/9/64, pp. 2 and pp. 6.



- 34 See Morning Post (Lagos) 9/9/64 for the 1964 Newspaper Bill,
- 35 S. K. Panter-Brick, Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War, (London, The Athlone Press, 1970), pp.184
- 36 Ibid. pp.184-85 (emphasis added).
- 37 Ibid. pp. 187-88 (emphasis added).
- 38 Federal Ministry of Information, Birth of New Nigeria, (Lagos, Nigerian National Press, 1967), pp. 4 (emphasis added).
- 39 John de St. Jorre, The Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), pp.348.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE SETTING: MAJOR EVENTS IN THE  
JANUARY 1970 PHASE OF THE CIVIL WAR

INTRODUCTION

The thirty-three months old Nigerian Civil War suddenly came to an end on January 15, 1970. This followed the capitulation of the Biafran armed forces, in the wake of a mid-December federal invasion of the remaining secessionist enclave. The news came as a surprise even to Nigerians who had virtually accepted the conflict, along with Vietnam and the Middle East, as an insoluble hot-spot of the world. This chapter highlights major events of this last phase of the civil war, between January 1 and 31, including the two weeks before and after the signing of the surrender document. Such an overview serves as an extramedia framework for our comparative study of press coverage in the two African and two non-African newspapers described in the following sections. It permits us to see what was reported or not, how and by whom. The chapter rests primarily on personal observations, collected while a 'Biafran' reporter during the civil war. It is additionally supplemented by four documentary sources, St. Jorre's The Nigerian Civil War; Zdenek Cervenka's The Nigerian War; N.U. Akpan's The Struggle for Secession; and A.H.M. Kirk-Greene's Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria, Volume II.

EVENTS LEADING TO BIAFRA'S COLLAPSE

Some reflection on what caused the sudden collapse of the Biafran resistance though outside the scope of this thesis, will nonetheless enhance understanding of the events of January 1970. At the time of its declaration of independence from

Federal Nigeria, on May 30, 1967, Biafra had a surface area of about 30,000 square miles, and a population of about 14 million people. When the republic collapsed however, it had progressively shrunk to about a tenth of its original size, with a population less than seven million. The surrender itself left over 75% of this number homeless and virtually facing possible starvation.

Throughout the conflict, Biafra remained the under-dog. She faced total blockade to the outside by air, land and sea. Arms and other materials however, trickled into her precariously held Uli-airstrip, through the world black market. This primary source, as well as the limited capacity of Uli (Biafra's only link to the outside world) was incapable of sustaining the increasing demand for arms and ammunition by the Biafran army. A serious arms imbalance therefore prevailed as the federals were readily and heavily armed by both the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. This inherent disability notwithstanding, Biafra maintained her own following high morale in the populace and her ability to tap local resources.

To this lack of arms, however, was added the perennial threat of mass starvation, disease and death. Considerable relief-assistance from world mercy organizations helped to postpone the evil day for a great many families. Supplemented with the meager local carbohydrate foodstuff, called garri, the willingness to continue with the struggle remained widespread.

The final collapse was, therefore, probably engendered more by the growing lassitude and a weakening of morale which came from deep-seated social ills, especially the exploitation

of the war situation by some of those placed in high positions. By late 1969, features ably described by St. Jorre did not only shatter the super-structure of the Biafran resistance but the very infra-structure of the "Biafran Revolution" (as the secession was described in some circles). St. Jorre aptly observed that

corruption, nepotism, war profiteering, a lively, black market in relief supplies and a growing 'attack' (illegal) trade across the lines were highlighting the embarrassing gap between rich and poor, well-fed and starving, non-combatant and combatant.

Generally, while a few, especially the non-combatants, made fortunes out of the war, many unfortunate millions starved and quietly endured various privations onto death. Corruption had eaten deep into the body politic. But after nearly two years of widespread institutional and social rottenness, the secessionist movement took a dramatic turn, with the issuance of the "Ahiara Declaration" in June 1969. Conceived largely as the manifesto of the "Biafran Revolution" it was, to say the least, a theoretical and ideological approach to correcting the growing social ills. Its objective, as disclosed during the launching was to usher in a new "socialist order". In this light, it was deemed as an attack on the emergent propertied class and the "lazy, corrupt or inefficient public servants". On the issue of "property and the community" which proved its undoing, the manifesto asserted inter alia:

In the New Biafra, all property belongs to the community. Every individual must consider all he has, whether in talent or material wealth, as belonging to the community for which he holds it in trust. This principle...implies that the state, acting on behalf of the community, can

intervene in the disposition of property to the greater advantage of all... The New Biafran Social Order<sup>2</sup> rejects all rigid classifications of society.

Widely acclaimed by the peasantry and workers, this declaration posed a major threat to the new power elite and the emergent economic class enriched by the "attack" trade. These promptly questioned and vehemently opposed the central themes of the declaration as it affected their interests. Ironically, the leadership gave way to pressures and blackmail from these groups, abrogating the vexed clauses and modifying some others to "accommodate all sections".<sup>3</sup> This meant the failure of the document as a revolutionary instrument. The immediate outcome in the society, was the emergence of the first visible opposition to the Biafran leadership, accused of back-peddalling and betraying the cause of a Peoples' war and revolution.<sup>4</sup> Henceforth, the regime became identified with exploitation and corruption.

Popular discontent and alienation mounted in proportion to the wave of corruption. Conscription, which had more or less become an acceptable feature of Biafran life, turned into a most unpopular and obnoxious instrument of an oppressive and corrupt regime. Disillusionment with the war and the social system became widespread. Demands for radical changes increased, with overt and sporadic opposition to Gen. Ojukwu's leadership.

Meanwhile, Dr. Azikiwe's October 1969 defection to the federals became the last straw that broke the people's back.

Dr. Azikiwe, formerly Nigeria's President ousted by the January 1966 coup, was late in siding with the secessionist movement.

Initially, this caused some public concern, until he became the

regime's Ambassador-at-Large. In this capacity, he was popularly acclaimed as being responsible for Biafra's diplomatic recognition by four African states. His defection was therefore indicative of a lost cause and the need to make amends with the federals. By late 1969, therefore, the national consciousness and unity, which characterized the Biafran adventure at its May 30, 1967 inception, began to crack at its very foundation. Loss of faith and confidence in the entire affair produced a yearning for peace with Federal Nigeria at any cost.

There had been a major lull following the costly Oruta invasion of mid-June, when the federal forces sought to crack down on the vital Uli airstrip. Later in the year however, the federals attacked on all fronts. The precise date of this development is still uncertain, though orders to that effect had been issued in late November. The objective of this simultaneous invasion was to liberate whatever was left of the secessionist enclave before the rainy season steps in by April 1970.

It is no coincidence that the areas, along the Aba-Umuahia axis, that proved the most vocal and critical of the Biafran regime, posing the greatest single provincial opposition, also became Biafra's most vulnerable points in late December 1969. Two factors, among others, contributed to this phenomenon. First was the role of a religious sect which virtually paralyzed the Biafran military in that axis. Most officers and men of the Biafran armed forces, irrespective of former religious inclinations, were strong adherents of the Cherubim and Seraphim sect, whose leading prophet was credited with the ability to predict the future, including success or failure in battle. Operations

were often postponed as a result of adverse or unfavorable prophetic predictions. While this left its impact on the military, a more devastating blow was the sudden execution of the prophet, apparently following conviction for complicity in a murder charge. The removal of this oracular support was destructive of general morale, badly needed in a situation where the Biafran army was fighting against great odds.

This plight was further complicated by the ruthlessness with which the Biafran regime dealt with the natives of the area. For a number of reasons, including agitation for better treatment of their sons in the military and public service, as well as alleged ill-treatment of Biafran troops, the regime imposed martial law and curfew on the entire province. Prominent persons from the area, including former Foreign Affairs minister, Dr. Nwachuku, were placed on detention without charges. Finally, the civilian Provincial Administrator was replaced by a military administrator, who was also not a "son of the soil". These developments left the Nowa (Aba) province as the first and only one under martial law and administered by an outsider.<sup>5</sup>

These were highly revolting experiences from an already discredited and unpopular regime. It is for those who lived and participated in the 'Biafran' struggle to decide whether or not any alleged short-comings of the Nowa people surpassed those of the Onitsha, Awka or Nnewi peoples throughout the conflict. These latter groups, controlled virtually every facet of Biafran military, political and economic life. They used their positions to perpetrate acts inimical to the Biafran spirit in perhaps more serious ways, than merely resisting soldiers who pillaged their

farms or making demands for social justice in a war situation riddled by corruption and nepotism, as did the former people. Yet, neither of these high official reactions was meted to those provinces.

The outcome was widespread civilian disillusionment in the Nwa area. The villager began to see himself as a minority-Ibo. Like the ethnic minorities who have remained opposed to Biafra he saw himself as a non-Biafran. A feeling of unwantedness, reminiscent of Ibo feelings in 1966, swept through the province. Reconciliation with federal Nigeria came to be seen as likely to guarantee a better or at least more tolerable future, than the continued association with a Biafra dominated by the Onitsha-Awka-Nnewi Ibo group.

Henceforth, the local civil defence organization withdrew its support and cooperation in the defence of the area whose immediate southern neighbors were the invading federal troops. Accordingly, all forms of services by the local community (upon which Biafran forces depended for reconnoitre activities, and contributions to the support of ill-fed troops in the locality) were withdrawn. Collaboration with the enticing federal troops at the corner, became preferred to identification with the Biafran forces. Through increasing fraternization, federal soldiers were encouraged to infiltrate unnoticed by the already crumbling 12th Biafran Division in the area. Both of these factors, the death of the oracle and the withdrawal of civilian support, in place of which we find hostility, sealed the fate of this part of Biafra, of the defending 12th Division and ultimately of the Republic of Biafra.



Apparently not unaware of these developments, the federal troops struck in a lightning move in mid-December, occupied Mbawsi (the Nwa province's provisional capital) after encountering minor Biafra resistance. Without delaying to consolidate, as hitherto, the advancing 17th commando brigade, moved on and surprisingly linked up with the 1st Division at Umuahia. This remarkable feat was the final undoing of the Biafran 12th Division in the south. It was completely broken, with officers and men on the run along with fleeing refugees.

The feat also effectively split what remained of Biafra into two unequal halves. Biafra I, as the larger half was called, included only two of Biafra's twenty provincial administrative units, the provisional capital of Owerri, the two vital airstrips, at Uli and Uga, and a population of about 5 million. This area was the least fertile in the largely agricultural nation. The loss of the more fertile Biafra II, including Mbawsi and Aro-chuku areas, really meant disaster as far as local staples (which were already limited) were concerned.

#### THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 1970

By the end of 1969, Biafra's 12th Division at the entire southern sectors, had completely crumbled and melted away among the crowd of refugees. Its last act in retreat towards Owerri, included blowing up the Imo River bridge at Udo (Mbaise) amidst panic stricken, fleeing refugees. A bridgeless Imo River, as a natural barrier, became the only impediment to the advancing troops' ultimate target, Owerri, some twenty miles away. By January 2nd, the river had been crossed, with the troops consolidating in parts of Mbaise division, stretching to about

thirteen miles to Owerri.

Considerable population movement accompanied this wave of federal advances from the south. All were converging on Owerri and Orlu, which were centrally located. In the past, such population movement was indicative of the loss of towns and villages to the federals. These successes, against the background of mounting social unrest, saw the rapid drop in public morale and the spread of desertion among soldiers. Retreating soldiers, most of whom were famished, dropped their guns and were disguised like fleeing refugees. Owerri overflowed with refugees by the 2nd, with all major roads and paths blocked and overcrowded. The immediate result was a shortage of food, inducing over 75% increase in the cost of local staples.

The Biafran government's silence about these developments could not be indefinite, as it left considerable room for adverse rumors, including that the leadership had deserted the republic. A Biafran war communique on the 2nd, therefore acknowledged federal advances on "several fronts", but was silent on federal gains. It, however, called for calm and increased vigilance, as well as warned against acts of sabotage and collaboration with the 'enemy'. On the 5th, a second bulletin accepted the odds of the situation to the south, but affirmed that the Biafran forces were "successfully regrouping" in some of the "worst hit areas".

The federal side also broke its long silence since the beginning of its final assault in mid-December. This also came with a communique on the 10th, announcing successes in a number of sectors, including the linking of two army divisions, and

the liberation of all towns south and east of Owerri. No mention was, however, made of the fate of the town itself which, a day before the communique, was under heavy federal artillery bombardment and air force operations.

In the wake of the town's sudden evacuation, the Biafran cabinet rushed through an emergency meeting in the suburbs, on the 10th.<sup>6</sup> It turned out to be its last, with only a few members present. The cabinet accepted the "hopelessness of the situation" following a declaration by the General Officer Commanding the Biafran forces, that "the army could no longer hold". The cabinet reflected an earlier (April 1969) muted shift to guerrilla warfare, with a "government in the bush" in the event of the over-running of the country. It was unanimous about salvaging whatever was left at the time and to "immediately end the suffering but on condition that Gen. Ojukwu quit the leadership and the republic for safety."

Owerri capitulated late on the day of this cabinet meeting. It was a psychological breaking point for all Biafrans, being the only visible prize of the thirty-three month old resistance. It was the only town ever re-captured from the federals throughout the war. Its return to federal control, after about seven months of morale boosting reconstruction and reoccupation, had considerable psychological effect on the population, including the soldiers. Desperation increased, accompanied by the desire to end the fighting now that all appeared lost.

This final phase saw a new reaction to the loss of towns and villages: No longer were people willing to run too far from their homes in the event of a federal attack. They preferred

to move short distances, usually, into the nearby bush, preferring death at the hands of the troops to a slow death through starvation in an endless trail of envisaged refugee life once they had begun with it.

Meanwhile also, the federals had ameliorated their ruthless treatment of civilian populations captured in deserted towns. The news spread fast, having been reinforced by a series of propaganda sheets dropped through the air by the Nigerian air force planes. It promised "brotherly treatment" to all law abiding citizens who need not run at the sight of "friendly troops". Most families accepted the offer in good faith, by moving away from the path of the advancing troops into a nearby bush, from whence they emerged a day or two later after the village leaders had established contact with, and received formal guarantees from the local unit commander. This trend helped to ease mass movement, as well as the extent of the refugee problem which was already out of control.

As the total collapse of Biafra became too real to be imagined, Gen. Ojukwu fled the republic on January 11th, to an undisclosed destination. He was accompanied by his family and a host of top military and civilian advisers. Less than four hours after his departure, a recorded broadcast over the network of Radio Biafra announced that he was soon to leave "the country temporarily to continue the search for an honorable peace". Gen. Philip Effiong, Biafran Chief of General Staff, was appointed to administer the government and republic in the interim. People therefore woke on the 12th to a change in the leadership, something that had been muted in many circles since the December

developments. But what the change entailed for the people (who wanted a stop to the affairs) and to the republic remained unclear, even to well informed groups.

Gen. Ojukwu's untimely flight did not appear to have received popular support. It, no doubt, appealed to those who wanted a change of leadership, even through a possible last minute coup, as a way to obviate his "mad insistence on fighting to the last man". To some others, it constituted a sellout, not unlike his handling of the "Ahiara Declaration". This latter group consisted of diehards who gloried in a final resort to full scale guerilla action as the inevitable path to the triumph of the Peoples' war and Republic.<sup>8</sup>

The capture of Owerri left the Uli airstrip as the next vital federal target. Since its loss would seal Biafra's only link with the outside world, a massive evacuation of foreign nationals was begun two days earlier. These included hundreds of relief workers, missionaries and journalists, whose fate on being trapped might, it was feared, otherwise repeat the 1968 Okigwe episode, in which four missionaries and relief workers were executed in cold blood. The last batch of these foreigners who opted to leave, flew out on the 11th, including the last foreign journalists. The immediate consequence of this evacuation was the crumbling of the infra-structure of the relief organizations upon which millions depended for livelihood in the past six months.

Uli airstrip came under heavy air force attack early on the 12th. Its defence became the task of a reorganized Biafran brigade, drawn from the remnants of the shattered 12th

division and some other ill-fated units at the Okiewe sector. The battle was the most expensive in men during this phase. By the 13th, the strip was put out of use by bombing and strafing. Some relief planes, which attempted to risk a landing, returned to Libreville, Gabon with their cargo, as all work ceased on the airstrip.

Generally, Gen. Effiong's accession to the leadership left serious doubts as to his reactions to the deteriorating military situation and a growing public demand for an end to the war, even by outright surrender. The doubts stemmed from Gen. Effiong's ethnic background and the attitude of his people to the entire Biafran adventure. As an Efik-Ibibio, his people had long been stereotyped by the dominant Ibos, as deadly enemies of the Biafran nation, dedicated to its ultimate ruin. Whether or not the general would opt for capitulation, and thus ensure a "self-fulfilling prophecy" remained the puzzle.<sup>9</sup>

He sued for peace in a January 12th, surrender broadcast. In it, he referred to the reasons why Biafra went to war, explaining it as the natural reaction of an oppressed people. He paid tribute to the "bravery and gallantry" of the Biafran armed forces, and to the "steadfastness and courage" of the civilian population. In expressing his conviction that the bloodshed must stop, and the suffering of the people brought to an immediate end, he ordered his troops to surrender in an orderly manner to federal commanders and to stop all fighting.

In the same broadcast, he appealed to Gen. Gowon, the Nigerian leader, "to order his troops to pause, while an armistice is negotiated in order to avoid mass suffering caused by the

movement of population". Ruling out the question of a government in exile, he expressed his readiness to negotiate within the terms of "One Nigeria" stipulated by the O.A.U. committee on the civil war.<sup>10</sup>

At mid-night same day, the Nigerian leader, Gen. Gowon, accepted Biafra's declaration of surrender in a nation-wide broadcast. In requesting Biafran forces to act honorably by laying down their arms as ordered, he ordered his field commanders to effect a contingency plan for the mass surrender. He too paid tribute to the federal troops for their "courage, loyalty and steadfastness", as to the "courage and resourcefulness of those who have fought so long against lawful troops". Finally, he appealed to his troops to observe the letter and spirit of their code of conduct. He also granted a "general amnesty for all those misled into the futile attempt to disintegrate the country". This, he indicated, was a gesture of "our will for honorable reconciliation within a united Nigeria".<sup>11</sup>

These dramatic declarations notwithstanding, fighting continued in the northern and western sectors, where the troops were still fairly able and intact. While poor communications may account for some of the fighting, the declarations seemed incredible to some commanders, who were often unaware of developments in other sectors, let alone the rear headquarters. Even at Uli air-strip where the events were no longer news, mutual suspicion and the humiliating and shocking notion of surrender induced a frantic zeal to fight to the end. Early on the 13th, the battle for Uli was over, after a futile and costly resistance.

At mid-day on the 13th, Radio Biafra was captured in an

obscure village jungle, only a few hours after a second broadcast appeal by Gen. Effiong, calling for immediate halt to further federal troop advances. The capture of the radio station was no doubt anticipated, and made easier by the fact that contrary to earlier practice, no attempts were made either to evacuate or conceal the station. Also the fact that leading officials, including the Director, the novelist Cyprain Ekwensi as well as Biafra's ace broadcaster and "Lord Haw-Haw", Okokon Ndem were on hand to receive the federal forces.

Later in the day, Col. Obasanjo, Commander of the 3rd Commando division, broadcast over the network. It was an inconspicuous ceremony, which began with the usual Radio Biafra signature tune of Ibo cyclophone drums, and a "this is Radio Biafra" announcement. His brief speech, after an introduction by Mr. Ndem, called for calm and the suspension of all "tactical movement of troops". He urged civilians to remain where they were, as the police took over the maintenance of law and order. He promised ruthless handling of cases of mistreatment of people or other misbehavior by soldiers if they were reported to the local command.

As expected, the broadcast ended with a Radio Nigeria signature tune of an Hausa drum-tattoo and the federal Nigerian national anthem. This miniature gesture, in an obscure Orlu village, more than any ceremonies performed later at Lagos, effectively snuffed out Biafra, drawing the curtain down on the civil war. By it, Biafra's only surviving symbol, the Voice of Biafra, had finally vanished, and with it the very notion of Biafra (the word itself is banned in Nigeria) slipped quietly

11



into history, like Nazi Germany.

On the 14th, a Biafran "armistice" delegation led by Gen. Effiong left for Lagos. It was an unenviable assignment, to put a seal on Biafra's unconditional surrender, rather than negotiate a settlement. This undramatic ceremony passed away on January 15th, at Gen. Gowon's Dodan Barracks residence. There, amidst a handful of top military men from both sides, including a few civilian officials and government journalists, the secessionist leadership formally declared inter alia, "the Republic of 'Biafra' hereby ceases to exist". They also affirmed their belief in the Nigerian national brotherhood, based on the ideals of one Nigeria. Henceforth, activities shifted to rehabilitation of refugees, reconstruction of the "war affected areas", and reconciliation of parts of the torn federation.

#### REACTIONS TO BIAFRA'S SURRENDER

In Nigeria, apparently very little excitement, jubilation and celebrations marked the news of Biafra's formal surrender and the end of the war. Apart from sporadic student demonstrations at Lagos and Zaria (both were promptly intercepted by the anti-riot police squad) no significant mass hysteria seemed to have followed Biafra's fate. The atmosphere was mainly one of profound relief after the physical and psychological strains of a long drawn out and costly conflict. Even the North, as represented by the vociferous anti-Ibo Radio-Television, Kaduna surprisingly exercised some restraint. Concern, generally in the country, was with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war affected areas, as well as their reconciliation to parts of the federation. More signs of hysteria were observed outside Nigeria,

especially in Europe and north America, where strong emotions of fear were expressed about the plight of the vanquished Ibos. This may have been a result of a sense of guilt, borne out of complicity in the crisis, and a desire to make amends. It may, on the other hand, have come from past experiences about the usual aftermaths of civil wars. In some cases too, it may have resulted from a genuine humanitarian interest and concern for the immense trail of refugees, mounting hunger, misery and disease, that accompanied the cessation of fighting. In all, foreign governments, voluntary and church organizations, as well as individuals, showed tremendous concern for the fate of the Ibos, advocating restraint and offering aid.

The Pope, apparently guided by reports from Catholic missionaries fleeing Biafra and the relief agents, expressed fear of ultimate genocide, now that the federals had their way. The British Commons, in apparent disregard of Nigeria's independence, engaged in frantic discussions involving full scale debates on the "Nigerian situation". At one stage, they expressed fears about Nigeria's sincerity of purpose, and ability to prevent whole-scale massacre of the vanquished or their gradual death through starvation.

In the United States, President Nixon used the hot-line twice to discuss the Nigerian crisis and its after-math with Britain's Harold Wilson. In apparent concern, the former authorized the State Department to meet promptly all of Nigeria's requests for U.S. aid. This followed reports from his special relief representative, who appraised the "relief situation" in

Nigeria. At the same time, Mr. Wilson of Britain, en route to Washington, flew into Ottawa where, among other things, he discussed the Nigerian situation with his Canadian counter-part, Mr. Trudeau. In Paris, President Pompidou expressed fears about the Biafrans and pressured U Thant, the United Nations Secretary-General then visiting France, for an immediate U.N. intervention and full scale emergency aid. He further appealed to the Nigerian leaders for restraint in their dealings with the vanquished..

In Africa, the O.A.U. Secretary-General visited Lagos, and hailed Nigeria's victory as "victory for all Africa". He also pledged to work to reconcile Nigeria with the four states - Gabon, Ivory Coast, Zambia and Tanzania - which extended diplomatic recognition to secessionist Biafra. On the other hand, the Ivory Coast adopted a more disturbing stand. In hailing the Biafran spirit, her President accused Gen. Effiong of a major sell out and acting beyond the powers conferred on him by the Biafran leader, Gen. Ojukwu. Completely rejecting the notion of Biafra's surrender, he stated that Gen. Ojukwu, whose movements have been traced to the Ivory Coast, "was returning shortly to continue the struggle". It was indeed an unwelcome announcement in Biafra, as it put federal guards on the alert and more strict in their dealings with the people.

On his part, the U.N. Secretary-General, U Thant, paid an unscheduled visit to Nigeria. He did not only hail Nigeria's victory, but expressed confidence in that country's ability to settle its internal problems, including the mounting relief question. At his Paris discussion with the French President, he proudly maintained that "all was fine" in Nigeria, after

having cancelled a projected visit to the war affected areas, to return to Europe.

In the wake of growing European concern for the refugees, world organizations, governments and private individuals made offers of assistance to Federal Nigeria. Some of these were promptly rejected by the Nigerian government, who asked certain donors to "keep their blood money" and stay out of its relief problems. Those affected by the ban were mostly organizations and countries who supplied Biafra with relief, in defiance of federal policy on the matter. It involved the Vatican sponsored Caritas, the Geneva based World Council of Churches, Canada's Canairelief, and the French, Portuguese and South African governments, to mention only a few. At the same press conference where the ban was imposed, Gen. Gowon accused the foreign press of undue bias, asserting that Nigeria would long have lost the war, if the positive foreign press coverage had not sustained a false image.

Subsequent to these outbursts, foreign relief agents still in the Biafran area (mostly Catholic priests and nuns) were rounded up. They were detained, tried for illegal entry into the country, and fined or imprisoned prior to deportation. At the same time, strict measures were instituted against the press (local and foreign) prohibiting their entry into the conquered areas. Detention and deportation became the order of the day, beginning with two foreign journalists who ventured to the prohibited areas.

A similar fate befell the British military attache at his commission in Lagos, as well as President Nixon's relief

representative in Nigeria. Like most journalists, the offense was adverse report and criticism of the government or its agencies. The British attache's confidential report on the Nigerian army, which ended up on the pages of a London newspaper provoked an outburst at Lagos. It not only released some military secrets but it described the "Nigerian army in the advance (as) the best defoliation agent known".<sup>12</sup> The author, Col. Robert Scott, was not only deported, but the British government was bitterly criticized and embarrassed in Lagos.

Nigeria's general hostility to Britain was considerable, and led to the deportation of Col. Scott's replacement within a week of his arrival in Nigeria. This incident occasioned another setback in Nigeria-British relations, and cost the latter much of the influence it may have exerted on the country at this moment of victory. On the heels of this second deportation, followed the expulsion of President Nixon's relief aide. He too was charged with producing unfavorable and embarrassing reports about the relief situation in the "war affected areas". These incidents, as well as those of the Catholic missionaries, indicate the federal sensitivity to objective reports on the aftermaths of the civil war. The ruthlessness with which the federal government shut its doors to foreign aid, barred newsmen and missionaries from the newly liberated Ibo heartland, and reacted to unfavorable but fairly objective reports, calls for an evaluation of the situation in the East Central State, as the Ibo area came to be known.

How much truth is there to the assertion that Nigeria was practicing genocide? In the early stages of the war,

Nigerian forces, especially the air force, practiced mass and indiscriminate killing of non-combatants. Furthermore, the federal government instituted a policy of starvation throughout the war. Though at this stage systematic killing was the exception, cases of indiscriminate shooting abounded. These were usually the result of vengeance by the Efik-Ibibio and Ijaw soldiers, whose relatives suffered or died as refugees in Biafra. The evidence for mass starvation, on the other hand, was not an accident but a reality. Every other person in Biafra was a refugee or destitute at the cessation of hostilities in January. As noted earlier, the infra-structure of the relief organizations crumbled with the Biafran regime, and the federals had no contingency plan for emergency relief in the area.

As a result of these circumstances, civilian-troop relations were far from cordial during the first three weeks of January. Apart from physical mistreatment, looting, rape and other forms of misconduct characteristic of a victorious army were enhanced by callous indifference to human suffering on the part of the troops. As the relief camps folded, refugees were eager to return home, despite federal attempts to keep them in their locations till arrangements for transportation could be made. Consequently, streams of exhausted, hungry and sick people, especially women and young girls, complicated the picture and fell victims to the troops. Strife was finally heightened by the worthlessness of the Biafran money in the local markets. This spread destitution to almost every home, except those able to find Nigerian funds.

Towards the end of January, all of this tension began to

ease out. Most families had reached home, while public servants and other working class populations streamed to the state capital, Enugu, to resume their former jobs. Others returned to the older liberated towns, where life had seemingly returned to normal, to seek for jobs. In most of these places, relief work got under way, as concern for rehabilitation, reconciliation, and reconstruction was intensified at both state and federal levels. These, and some other salient features of this last phase are likely to capture various press attention. It is to an investigation of local and foreign press reaction to these events, cataloged in Appendix II, that we shall address ourselves in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 John de St. Jorre, The Nigerian Civil War, pp. 335.
- 2 N. U. Akpan, The Struggle for Secession, 1966-1970, (Frank Cass: London, 1971), pp. 206-7. For details of aspects of the "Ahiara Declaration" see pp. 203-20.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 116-32.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 127.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 194-95.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 165-66.
- 7 Zdenek Cervenka, The Nigerian War, 1967-1970, pp. 80.
- 8 These include some fanatics in the Ministry of Information and the Broadcasting Corporation of Biafra, billed to record Ojukwu's last broadcast before his flight. Being embittered by the idea of fleeing the republic, and the act considered despicable, cowardly and ignominious, they deliberately refused to be any party to the act and thus attempted sabotage by failing to report at the appointed place and time for the recording. See Akpan, op. cit., pp. 171.
- 9 Gen. Effiong's dilemma is aptly reflected in the structure of his dialogue with top military (Ibo) personnel prior to the surrender statement. For this dialogue, see Drum magazine (Lagos, Nigeria), April 1970, also quoted in Cervenka, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
- 10 For the full text of this broadcast, see The Times of London 15th. January, 1970, pp. 1-3.
- 11 Federal Ministry of Information, Victory for Unity, (Lagos, Nigerian National Press, Ltd., 1970).
- 12 Sunday Telegraph, (London) 11th. January, 1970, pp. 8 & pp. 19.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### NIGERIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF THE CIVIL WAR

This chapter and the subsequent one report content analysis findings of civil war news in both Nigerian and non-Nigerian dailies. Both chapters seek to discover what was said about the civil war and how it was said in the sampled newspapers.

The foregoing chapters provide some background for analysis and interpretation of the data to be presented here.

To recapitulate, the first chapter examined some basic problems inherent in African news flow and news-marketing in the international arena. It showed that relatively meagre coverage is given to the continent's nearly fifty nations. Because of the strong market orientation of the European and American world news agencies, the content is additionally mostly sensational and negative.

The second chapter focused on certain fundamental features and problems of the Nigerian press which turned out to be the foreign correspondent's primary source of news. It shows that the newspaper organizations are not only poorly staffed and equipped, they are also subject to considerable official pressures and control which adversely affects the news-gathering, news-processing and news-disseminating processes. The third chapter briefly reviewed major events of the last phase of the war which are most likely to dominate the press coverage to be investigated in these two chapters.

This chapter focuses on the Nigerian press and seeks to answer three basic questions. Firstly, how much news about the Nigerian civil war was made available to the Nigerian reading public? Secondly, what content themes (subject matter) relative to the war were made available, in what proportions and with how much news attention? Finally, is the direction of the news treatment predominantly favorable, neutral or unfavorable to the federal cause?

Two factors dictate the inclusion of this chapter. Basically, this thesis focuses on international news flow about an African crisis, namely the Biafran secession. An analysis of the Nigerian civil war news in the foreign dailies needs therefore to proceed from an understanding (analysis) of how the local Nigerian press covered and reacted to these events. This, we hope, will help explain aspects of subsequent findings in the foreign press coverage.

Secondly, a literature search reveals the absence of a systematic study of any phase of the Nigerian crisis as reported in that country's flourishing newspaper system. Such a study is crucial and vital for at least two reasons. The surveillance of the environment and correlation of parts of society in response to the environment, as functions of the press, seem to face one of their greatest tests in times of national emergency. An analysis of local Nigerian press coverage will reveal the degree to which these functions were fulfilled at so critical a time in the nation's history. Secondly, the civil war constituted a challenge to, and new experience for, Nigerian journalism as an expanding profession. It offered newspaper

organizations, journalists and reporters, their first systematic and practical experience in the art of reporting modern warfare in the African setting.

A study of local press performance therefore, will highlight some peculiar problems, achievements and shortcomings. This chapter falls into two sections. The first reports content findings for the Daily Times between January 1st, and 31st, 1970. The next section discusses certain features, especially relevant to the war situation, which may have affected and shaped the observed pattern of coverage.

## SECTION I

### CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DAILY TIMES WAR NEWS COVERAGE

#### QUANTITATIVE NEWS COVERAGE

The Daily Times, like most Nigerian dailies, is a tabloid,<sup>2</sup> with a daily average of twelve pages. It published a total of 210 civil war news items, drawn from the various pages of the 27 issues printed from January 1st to 31st, 1970 inclusive. These items include news and feature articles, editorial comments and cartoons, photo-news as well as letters to the editor.

Figure II graphically represents the distribution of daily civil war items in the Daily Times. It shows very little coverage (a daily average of two items) up to the 12th, when 9 items were published. Thereafter, there was a rise to an average of 13 items by the 22nd. The highest daily average is recorded for the 23rd and 24th, with 17 items. After that, there is a steep decline to an average of 7 items between the 26th and the 31st.

A percentage bar diagram of the weekly distribution of

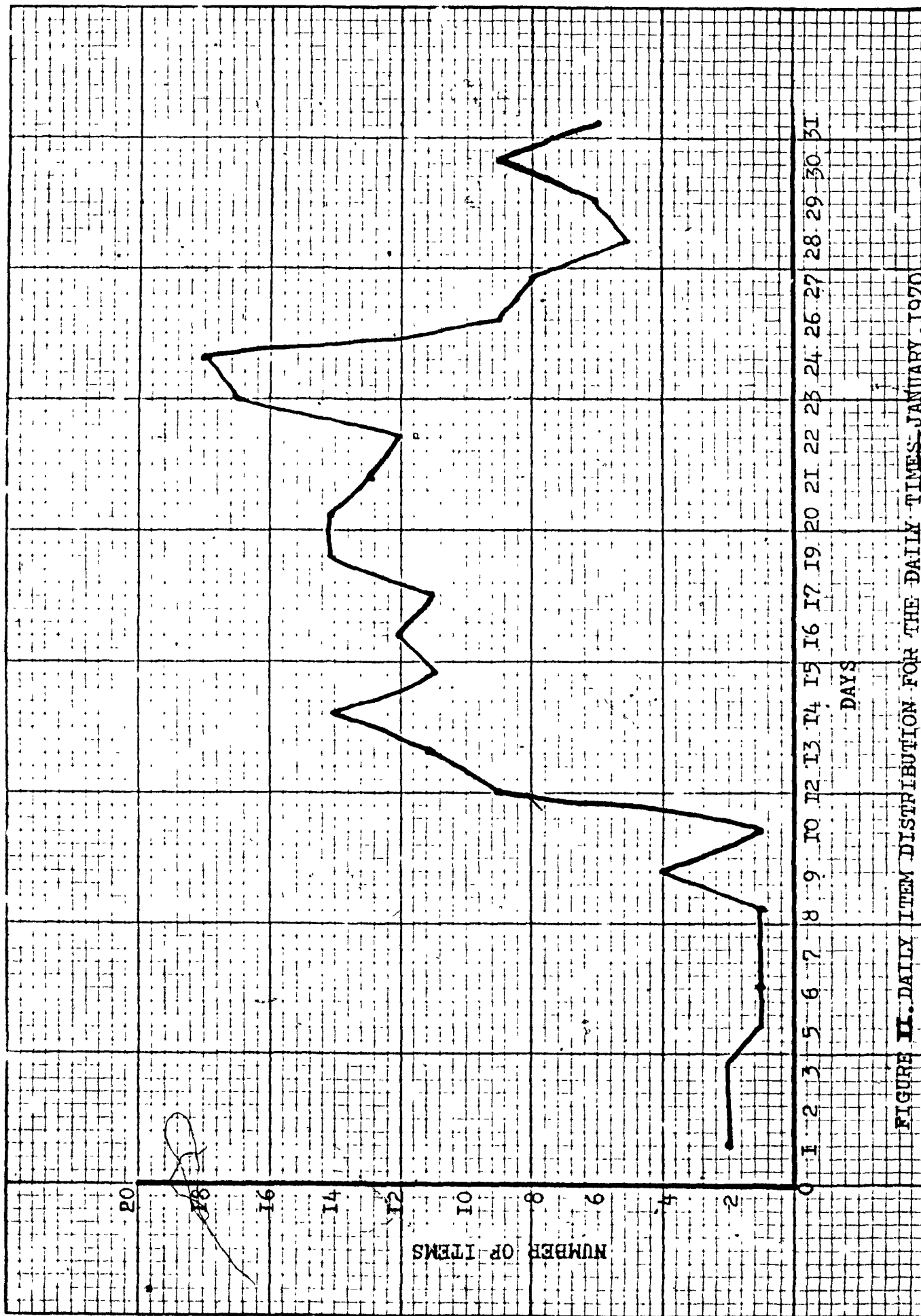


FIGURE II. DAILY ITEM DISTRIBUTION FOR THE DAYS JANUARY 1970

these items in Figure III indicates that the greatest single weekly coverage occurred in the third week. This was immediately after the formal signing of the Biafran surrender documents at Lagos on the 15th. The week records 99 news items, including editorials, constituting about 46.9% of the total. The first and fourth weeks record 7 items (about 3.3%) and 43 items (about 20.4%) respectively, while the second accounts for 29.4% or 62 items.

The implication of the observed distribution pattern is that news was not evenly distributed during the period under survey. The explanation for this trend, especially relative to the very low coverage of the first, is further explored in Chapter Five. Briefly, this is attributable to the imposition of a news blackout, following an utter silence policy seemingly pursued by the belligerents. Hence, there were no authoritative information, communiques or news bulletins, upon which correspondents and reporters could build their story. While rumors about the events were widespread, often emanating from hospitalized combatants, the press laws, mentioned earlier, drastically impeded news reporting because it excluded all reports based on such unofficially circulated 'news'.

Furthermore, the dramatic unfolding of the events of this phase, helped to skew coverage at the latter stage, when more facts came to light with each advancing day. For example, the admission of the first batch of reporters and press photographers into defeated Biafra in mid January, after two and a half weeks of restrictive measures, unearthed fresh facts and news dimensions contributing to the heavy coverage observed later..

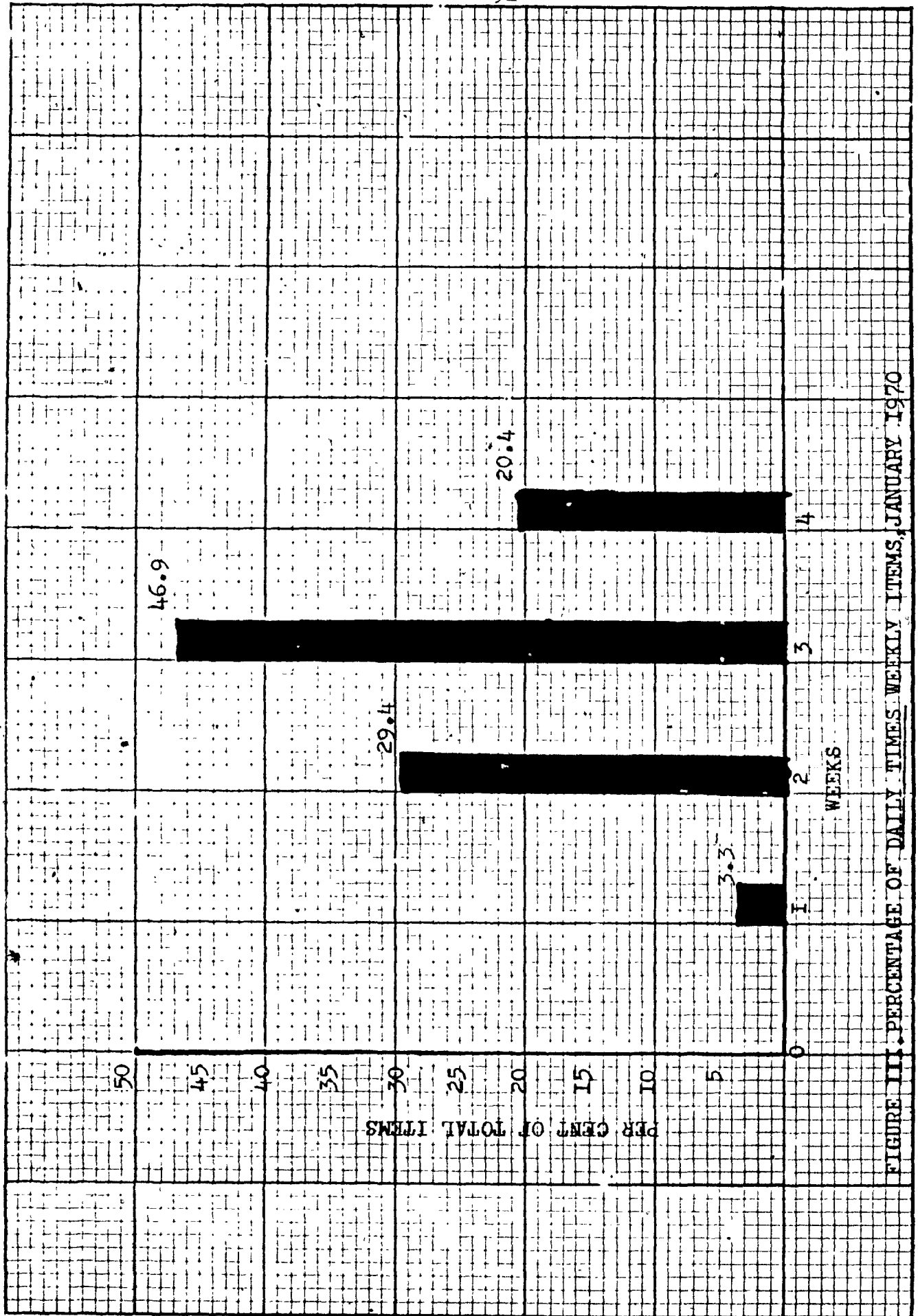


FIGURE III. PERCENTAGE OF DAILY TIMES WEEKLY ITEMS, JANUARY 1970

Another important feature of the Daily Times war news distribution is that front page items were not published daily contrary to expectation. This study is specifically delimited to front page civil war items and editorial comments. Figure IV, in Chapter Five, shows front page daily item distribution for the Daily Times and four non-Nigerian dailies in our sample. Of the former's 27 issues, only 70% or 19 carried some front page items, totalling 42. Two of the issues, 2nd and 7th, were completely devoid of any forms of civil war content on any page.

The above indicates that 30% of the time, the Daily Times carried no front page war news. This is remarkable when we realize that the war was not only crucial but decisive in the national history, and that front page items are indicative of the relative importance of items to editors and publishers of newspapers. A plausible reason may be found in the organizational structure of the Daily Times, as a foreign owned, commercially oriented daily. With tremendous advertising facilities, most of which vie for limited front page space, its policy seemed to require that only items with high audience saliency fill the front page newshole. The bulk of the observed non-war front page items were published in the first two weeks. During this period, the lack of authoritative information from official sources, as well as the means for constant cross-checking of the facts about prevailing rumors, may have encouraged the printing of non-war, more or less sensational, items as the safest strategy.

The overall implication of uneven distribution of coverage and the fact that one third of the time items did not appear

on the front page during the period, is that total coverage of the war tended to be meager. The 42 items recorded by the Daily Times constitutes about 19.9% of the total number of items reported in 27 issues of the paper in January. Of this number, about 41% or 17 items constitute lead stories. These are considered the big news-story of the day or at least, stories which occupy a full column with appropriate headlines, spread over 3 or more columns, to attract the readers' attention. Column inch wise, the entire front page item of the Daily Times account for only 35% of the general space available in the five papers under investigation.<sup>3</sup> This reflects a daily average of about 68.7 inches.

Apart from these 42 items, the Daily Times also published ten editorial comments relative to the war. Such coverage definitely reflects poor news interest given the importance of the events at the time. In retrospect, it seemed that fear, anxieties, deprivations and endurance of the people, demanded that a constant, fairly complete and up-to-date information flow should have prevailed during, and about this last phase of the war which was fought to preserve "national unity". In the light of our facts, the surveillance and correlation functions do not, therefore, seem to have been adequately performed by the Nigerian Daily Times.

Generally, this meager quantity of civil war news may be a result of two factors. One is that the greater proportion of the news-worthy events may have escaped the "watch dog" eyes of the local press and journalists. In addition, there may have been some extraneous factors which inhibited the news-gathering process and subsequently, affected civil war news publication.



Either way, the Daily Times, here representing the local newspapers, seems to have served as an adequate source of information, both for the local populations and for the foreign correspondents.

#### TYPES OF CIVIL WAR NEWS COVERED

If the quantity of civil war news released by the Daily Times is meager, what types of materials did it publish and in what proportion?

To answer this question, nine subject matter categories were developed. Among these are: foreign relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, Economic matters, Military activities, Relief and humanitarian concerns, Church and religion, Press relations and Personalities. A tenth category of "Others" is included for items not otherwise classified.<sup>4</sup> The categories can be further sub-divided into two basic classes: one reporting events directly related to maintaining the federal existence, and second, those reporting events extraneous to this basic goal.

Following this distinction, the subject-matter categories developed are divisible into the substantive oriented group, which includes reporting in the categories of foreign relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, economic matters, and military activities. Since this group is important to, and possibly has an influence on, the realization of Nigeria's federative goal, one would assume that it would be more heavily covered. The second group of non-substantive or socially oriented material on the other hand, includes the categories of relief and humanitarian concerns, church and religion, press relations, and personalities. Unlike the former, it is considered less important for the attainment of Nigeria's national survival, and one would

therefore expect less coverage.

TABLE VI  
COLUMN INCH, AND PERCENTAGE OF CIVIL WAR NEWS  
DEVOTED TO EACH OF THE NINE SUBJECT-MATTER  
CATEGORIES IN THE NIGERIAN DAILY TIMES

<u>Category</u>	<u>Column Inches</u>	<u>Percent War News</u>	<u>Percent of Total Space</u>
Foreign Relations	394.2	21.2	7.4
Biafran Affairs	637.2	34.3	12.6
Nigerian Affairs	348.6	18.7	6.4
Economic Matters	46.8	2.5	0.8
Military Acts	68.4	3.7	1.3
Relief, Etc.	151.2	8.1	2.3
Church & Religion	5.4	0.3	0.2
Press Relations	84.6	4.6	1.6
Personalities	109.8	5.9	2.2
Others	10.8	0.6	0.3
	<u>1857.0</u>	<u>99.9</u>	<u>35.1</u>

Table VI shows that three substantive categories of Daily Times civil war coverage indeed received the heaviest coverage. These are Biafran affairs, foreign relations, and Nigerian affairs. Together, they account for about 74.2% of the entire front page coverage. Considered along with economic matters and military acts, the substantive group accounts for about 80.4% of the total coverage. Significantly, the highest single category goes to Biafran affairs, with a total of 34.3% or 637.2 inches.

Conventionally, column inch (space) and number of items have each served as an index for measuring the importance of certain items of information.<sup>5</sup> Richard Budd, however, draws attention to the utility of an equally well used technique, the "attention score", when applied in combination with either or

both the column measure and the number of items.<sup>6</sup> Budd's use of the attention score technique involved five elements, three of which, headline size, position on page, and length of story, are employed in this analysis.<sup>7</sup>

TABLE VII

RANK ORDER OF CATEGORIES BASED ON ATTENTION  
SCORE, COLUMN INCH, AND NUMBER OF ITEMS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Column Inches</u>	<u>Attention Score</u>	<u>Number of Items</u>
Foreign Relations	2	1	1
Biafran Affairs	1	2	2
Nigerian Affairs	3	3	3
Economic Matters	8	8	6
Military Acts	7	6	5
Relief, Etc.	4	4	4
Church, Etc.	10	7	6
Press Relations	6	9	7
Personalities	5	5	5
Others	9	7	6

The Spearman rank order coefficient, where  $c$  = column inch;  $i$  = items; and  $a$  = attention score, is

$$c_i = .79$$

$$c_a = .85$$

$$a_i = .94$$

A computation of Spearman rank order coefficients, in Table VII corroborates the initial findings and shows that there is a high degree of consistency between the three measures. This is in accord with Budd's results using Australian and New Zealand data.<sup>8</sup> The table confirms that foreign relations, Biafran affairs and Nigerian affairs, rank in that sequence, before relief and humanitarian concerns, whose rank is consistently 4th on all three measuring devices. Perhaps, it is not surprising that military acts, so crucial an aspect in this

last phase of the war, should receive low news "play". The reason for this will be explained in the next section.

#### DIRECTION OF NEWS TREATMENT

As expected, a greater proportion, 70.9% of Daily Times war coverage consists of material favorable to federal Nigeria. There is, however, also 8.1% of unfavorable material. Apart from 45 inches of unfavorable press relation content, the other 104.4 inches relate to foreign relations. While the former consists of outright criticism of the governmental and military handling of the press and newsmen, the latter reports anti-Nigerian activities by various foreign governments and organizations. An example of this is a January 20th, lead story captioned "Israeli government backed Ojukwu to the end - says Eban". Finally, 390.6 inches of material or 21% was classified as neutral.

Table VIII shows that the general direction of all news treatment was highly favorable in most categories. Only press relation is an exception, where unfavorable content outweighs favorable material by -21.5 percentage points. Negative coverage here is quite understandable given the strained press-government relations noted earlier. In addition, foreign relations exhibits the least margin of favorability, only +35.4% points, while economic matters, military acts and church and religion received the highest favorable ratings. These latter categories, are however, also the least reported as shown in Table VI.

It is obvious from the Table, that favorable interpretations abound in the various government agencies which constitute the major sources upon which the local press depends. This notwithstanding, the press laws too ensure that even if the govern-

ment has not performed well, this will not be brought to the public's attention.

TABLE VIII

TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF FAVORABLE, UNFAVORABLE AND NEUTRAL CONTENT IN EACH OF NINE CATEGORIES

<u>Category</u>	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Margin of Favorability</u>
Foreign Relations	61.7	26.3	12.0	+ 35.4
Biafran Affairs	73.5	-	26.5	+ 73.5
Nigerian Affairs	74.8	-	25.2	+ 74.8
Economic Matters	100.0	-	-	+100.0
Military Acts	100.0	-	-	+100.0
Relief, Etc.	86.8	-	13.2	+ 86.8
Church, Etc.	100.0	-	-	+100.0
Press Relations	23.5	53.0	23.5	- 21.5
Personalities	65.4	-	34.6	+ 65.4
Others	-	-	100.0	-

Keeping these considerations in mind, it is not unlikely that quantitative coverage as well may have been affected. If there was a prevalence of unfavorable material, no paper would risk to publish it. Examples of such critical stories which never saw the light of day in Nigeria abound in the relief reports by foreign relief agents, as well as Col. Scott's reports on the army. Official Lagos reaction to these revelations in the foreign press ranged from the expulsion of the author or correspondent, to angry protests to the home governments concerned. Reaction to a local paper indulging in such publications, however, would be more punitive.

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

The content and direction of editorial comments are very similar to what has already been said about front page coverage. They too pay disproportionate attention to the substantive

matters, which they also report with a high margin of favorability.

TABLE IX

COLUMN INCH AND PERCENTAGE OF EDITORIALS  
DEVOTED TO EACH SUBJECT-MATTER CATEGORY

<u>Category</u>	<u>Column Inches</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Foreign Relations	118.8	27.4
Biafran Affairs	21.6	5.0
Nigerian Affairs	115.2	26.4
Economic Matters	50.4	11.5
Military Acts	32.4	7.4
Church, Etc.	-	-
Relief, Etc.	-	-
Press Relations	-	-
Personalities	97.2	22.3
Others	-	-
	<u>435.6</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Table IX shows column inches and percentage distributions of editorial comments in different subject-matter categories. Substantive issues account for 78% of all editorial comments. Foreign relations, with 27.4% is the highest single editorialized category, while Biafran affairs with 5% appears to be the least.

It is remarkable that relief and press relations were not subjects for editorial comments at all. This might stem from the government's sensitivity. Government handling of the relief question as well as its press relations, seemed to have left much to be desired. While these appear pertinent subjects for editorialization, it required (for reasons mentioned earlier) a brave, risk-taking editor or journal, other than the Daily Times, to give vent to his feelings on these matters.

In terms of direction of editorial opinion, there was, as expected, a high +68.6% margin of favorability. No unfavor-

able issues were aired at all, with the remaining percentages consisting of neutral materials. The entire editorial pattern corroborates the close correlation between editorial opinion and front page coverage noted by George Mott and others.<sup>9</sup>

Both in the number of items and column space used, the front page coverage and editorial comments indicate that the last phase of the civil war received relatively poor coverage in the Daily Times. This is surprising when we realise that this phase was attended by considerable fear, anxiety and rumors among the population which nothing but an adequate flow of news could have helped to ameliorate. In conclusion, we shall therefore investigate the possible reasons for this paucity of civil war news in the local daily journals, as represented by the Daily Times.

## SECTION II

### FACTORS INFLUENCING LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE

Like the military coup of January 1966, the suddenness of Biafra's capitulation surprised the world, including Nigerians. Like the coup, the incidence generated considerable fear, anxiety and speculations about the plight of the defeated Ibos. The media of mass communication, especially the press, could have played a unique role in helping to alleviate fear, in quieting anxiety and in reducing speculative rumors.

So far, the role of the press immediately after the January 1966 coup remains unexplored. The data examined in the previous section tends to confirm John Oyibo's speculative assertion that, "there was little national press coverage of the war".<sup>10</sup> What then is the reason for this significant

omission? Five factors may have throttled news coverage.

Notable among these are the system of press control in association with the war emergency regulations; and secondly, increasing inter-departmental and institutional conflicts over the control of information flow. Others include military contempt for, and hostility towards, newsmen; major irregularities in the conduct of the war, and finally, the inexperience of local journalists in covering the war. Each factor is briefly examined in the light of my own experiences as a reporter on the Biafran side, and discussions with some Nigerian reporters.

#### GOVERNMENT PRESS CONTROL

Government press control, the first factor explaining the paucity of war coverage, was dealt with in Chapter Two. There, attention was extensively drawn to the negative influence of the press laws instituted in 1964. Mention was also made of the press policies of the various military leaderships throughout the crisis, the most immediate being Gen. Gowon's stern warning to the news media and journalists at the outbreak of the war. By cautioning restraint, and ordering newsmen and publishers to refrain from publishing information likely to jeopardise federal interests or enhance the secessionist cause, he set the stage for only a minimum of press coverage of the war. Above all perhaps, his order to the army and the police to deal summarily with offenders, institutionalized this structure.

Overall, these warnings impeded the flow of war news into the local dailies. They called for considerable caution, bordering on ardent self-censorship, especially for a foreign-owned,



commercially oriented daily, like the Daily Times.<sup>11</sup> Federal Nigeria was anything but economically strong by January 1970. Stringent war emergency measures, rising costs attendant upon widespread war profiteering, as well as rising taxes, generated social and economic unrest in parts of the federation. This, in part, is illustrated by the persistent Western peasant uprising in late 1969. Furthermore, the economic and social conditions in defeated Biafra, soon after the war, should have made headlines in the local press. (The collapse of the relief organizations after all sentenced millions to near starvation.) Considering these facts, it is remarkable that only 3% and 8% economic and relief content respectively was printed during this period in the Daily Times.

Our explanation of this trend is related to the basic conditions of the press itself. Apart from the press laws, a special edict prohibited publicizing any acts, or threats of strikes including material likely to encourage industrial or general labor unrest. The 3% economic news dealt with the plight of the Ibos, as the Biafran money suddenly lost its purchasing power in the local markets. Going beyond this level of information might have given some credence to the widespread foreign press speculations about the "genocide through starvation" theory, which the federal government was hard put to refute.

#### DEPARTMENTAL CONFLICTS FOR NEWS CONTROL

Another major impediment to news flow during the war was the role of the federal Ministry of Information which controlled the country's information. These services, it turned out, were weakened to the point of inefficiency by the loss of key Eastern

(secessionist) staff,<sup>12</sup> a situation which seemed to have worsened as the war dragged on. Perhaps, a more threatening feature to the Ministry's functioning as the ultimate source of governmental information flow was a running feud over the control of the nation's complex information system. Two levels of such conflicts are discernible. The first was between the federal and state information complexes attempting to regulate internal information flow. Though much of the old regional autonomy waned under the military regime, some states tended to exercise their former information role more independently than others, especially where organs of one government were **poised against** another government. Thus, instances abound where state information releases often compromised Federal policy and were, in fact, at variance with it.<sup>13</sup> A vivid example commonly cited is the Lagos government's endeavor to allay Ibo genocidal fears by adopting a more conciliatory communication stance, while local state information systems, on the other hand, persistently reinforced them to the embarrassment of the former.

Another level of institutional conflict which impeded news flow was between the Federal Ministry of Information and the Ministry of External Affairs, over the issue of External publicity. As each claimed the right of control, the situation became complicated as the army and the Ministry of Defence also vied for control of military information flow.<sup>14</sup>

Organizational and institutional misunderstandings and conflicts such as these, in a situation of increasing administrative and organizational inefficiency, as well as an apparent inability of the military government to promptly resolve these differences, could not fail but adversely affect both the quantity

and quality of civil war news. As a result, conflicting information, based on various facts interpreted according to the outlooks of each contending unit, were released at various stages of the war. This left the local press and journalists with the dilemma of identifying which was the most authoritative source of war information. Most papers in such circumstances, and conditioned also by stringent press and emergency regulations, tended to focus on more readily certified or less controversial non-civil war themes. The ultimate consequence, as we have seen, is an increasing naucity of the war news and a bias toward some categories of information as against others.

#### MILITARY-PRESS HOSTILITY

As a military regime, which was also involved in combat, the military tended to dominate almost every channel through which the press and journalists could acquire information. In Biafra, for example, the military authorities, both at the rear and at the front, classified and stereotyped newsmen as 'idle civilians', subjecting them to conscription and other humiliations usually the lot of non-combatants. Such hostility was also the case on the federal Nigerian side, where journalists were victims of detention and threats of caning by commanders.<sup>15</sup>

Whether these negative evaluations contained some kernel of truth is difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless, newsmen accused of "pride of craft" were criticized for their 'wanton criticism' of the military conduct of the war, and for their elaboration on the mismanagement of departments. Generally, civilian criticism seemed to be completely intolerable to the military during the national crisis.<sup>16</sup>

Also, it is said that in their enthusiasm to patriotically

boost morale at home, and demonstrate the invincibility of the fighting forces, journalists ran afoul of the armed forces. They consistently produced reports which had little to do with the reality of the situation they were reporting, thus constituting a serious source of embarrassment to military commanders.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, most newsmen were banished from the front as a thorn in the flesh which must be done away with.

Some were however allowed at the front, but only if they were in possession of an official pass and were willing to have any copy cleared with the local commander. But then, even a pass did not guarantee admission to the front, as a local command could, and in fact did, refuse to honor some of these permits. This was especially the case in Biafra, where foreign journalists were suspected of giving out Biafran military locations to the federals, after a visit to the former's areas.

Journalists who were, on the other hand, permanently assigned to some military units, became co-opted and part of military discipline on the acceptance of a commission.<sup>18</sup> Such protective commission enhanced a reporter's news-gathering by enabling him to pry into aspects of a unit's organization, administration, and other activities through direct personal involvement. However, he necessarily had to submit all copy to his superior authority before reports were transmitted to the rear command. Thus either way, freedom of action was compromised, resulting in meager news tailored to the tastes of the military.

Finally, we need also to mention that senior officers, mostly at the fronts, were quite reticent. They would rarely talk about military matters, including exploits and experiences. This was apparently for fear of giving away vital information,

being misinterpreted or misquoted in ways likely to have unimagined political or social consequences.

#### IRREGULARITIES IN MILITARY OPERATIONS

A fourth factor that made the journalist's job difficult and thus affected war news coverage, pertains to the irregularities in the timing and execution of most military operations. No doubt, the way was mostly a slow moving hit and run affair, with very few set battles. My Biafran experiences show that offensives, troop and arms movements and such other vital military actions remained top secret, which nevertheless seemed rarely to work according to plan. This phenomenon was also reported on the federal side. Most of these activities were often delayed or carried out earlier and in such a way as to accommodate some personal interests of the commander.

While obtaining a permit to visit a front was a most arduous experience, getting there on time (following transportation problems and the local front-line commander's personal predisposition) to observe a scheduled activity or operation was close to impossible. At the front, journalists were generally treated like a "herd", and their fixed press trips could be delayed or cancelled without due notice by the commander. The latter's reasons often ranged from inability to guarantee the journalists safety, to the assertion that the situation in the area was not appropriate for "a sensational press". In these circumstances, most journalists rather than acting on personal observations and experiences, based their reports on military hand-outs and other forms of briefings. These, as we know, are inadequate sources, whose biases are obvious.

### POOR COMMUNICATIONS LINK

A fifth vital factor complicating news flow, especially from the front, was the poor communications link between the field and rear commands. As observed in Chapter One, even under peace conditions the country suffered from a dearth of telecommunications facilities. No wonder that Cervenka observes "one tenuous wireless link was the only line of contact between Col. Adekunle's division in Port Harcourt and Lagos".<sup>19</sup> Most sector command depended extensively on courier services by road over vast territories open to the Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighters, which was a guerilla organization.

As a consequence, an often hazy, belated and factually incomplete description of what goes on at the front reaches the newspaper. It was not uncommon for a message from the front to Lagos to be over-taken by other events, resulting in contradictory reports, or bare-faced falsehood. This phenomenon increased, as federal lines of communication lengthened, with the liberation of more Biafran held territory. This problem too affected the quantitative coverage of the last phase of the war.

### UNTRAINED LOCAL WAR CORRESPONDENTS

A final factor, which was extensively covered in Chapter Two, also helps explain poor war coverage, by noting the dearth of trained Nigerian war correspondents. Some field commanders, including government officials, felt more secure when dealing with local reporters, than with their foreign counter-parts. This was usually explained in terms of national security, but we contend that a more cogent reason is the need for control over output. Like effective coverage of crime or judicial

proceedings, or medical reporting, war correspondence requires special skills and techniques. The absence of local reporters so equipped, despite their preference by officials, contributed in no small way to the observed paucity of civil war news in such local Nigerian dailies, as the Daily Times.

All of these factors<sup>20</sup> taken together put a disproportionate amount of influence on local journalists and the press. They mitigated against adequate coverage of all aspects of the war. While any news vacuum may have been filled by reliance on local rumors, some of which were factual since they originated from hospitalized combatants, the provisions of the press laws prohibited such activity. Finally, in addition to limiting quantitative news coverage, these factors also left the local press in a condition of subserviency to the regime, whose propaganda organization they inevitably had to join.

As was pointed out earlier in Chapter Two, the foreign correspondent too became the victim of these impeding news-gathering and news-disseminating factors. They had to, additionally, cope with the threats of expulsion from the country, the delicate relationship between their agency and the government, and with dependence on local stringers, all of which adversely affected the quantity and types of dispatches. In the light of these realizations, the subsequent chapter will examine similarities and differences in the Nigerian war coverage by four foreign newspapers. At all points comparisons will be made with the Nigerian newspaper coverage of events which, after all, constituted the major source of information for the foreign correspondent.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Wright, Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective, (New York, Random House, 1959), pp. 16-23.

<sup>2</sup> A tabloid is a newspaper physical format which contrasts with standard broadsheets and measures at least five columns wide and 17 inches in length.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix III, "Data and Methodology", for the space measurement.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix IV for operational definitions of the subject matter categories.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Ralph D. Casey and T. H. Copland, "Use of Foreign News in 19 Minnesota Dailies", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 35, (1958), pp. 87-89; and Roy E. Carter, "Segregation and the News: A Regional Content Study", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 34, (1957), pp. 3-18.

<sup>6</sup> Richard W. Budd, "Attention Score: A Device for Measuring News 'Play'", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 41, (1964), pp. 259-262. See also Martin Kriesberg, "Soviet News in the New York Times", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 10, (1946), pp. 540-544, (especially pp. 542 and pp. 550-557).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>8</sup> Richard W. Budd, "U.S. News in the Press Down Under", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 28, (1964), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> George F. Mott, New Survey of Journalism, (Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1958) p. 254; W. O. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, pp. 291-92; and Einar Ostgaard, "Factors Influencing the Flow of News", p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> John Oyinkbo, Nigeria: Crisis and Beyond, (London: Charles, Knight & Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 106.

<sup>11</sup> The Daily Times' account of the killing of four foreign relief officials at Okigwi in 1968 is among a number of instances of contradictions in reporting standards observed in the local press coverage of the civil war. See Daily Times, (Lagos), 9th October, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Oyinkbo, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>14</sup> John de St. Jorre, The Nigerian Civil War, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), p. 353.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 353. See also B. Oudes, "The Other Nigerian War", Africa Report, Vol. 15, (1970), p. 17.



<sup>16</sup> N. U. Akpan, The Struggle for Secession, 1966-1970, (London: Frank Cass, 1971, p. 198, (especially footnote 1).

<sup>17</sup> Morning Post's description of the fall of the University town of Nsukka, and the battle for the Opi Road junction in 1967 perhaps typifies this trend. See Morning Post (Lagos), 24th July, 1967, p. 1 and 14th August, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> This system was widely used in Biafra, where most commanders insisted on establishing some control over correspondents and their news dispatch.

<sup>19</sup> Zdenek Cervenka, The Nigerian War, 1967-1970, (Frankfurt: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> These same features of military-press relations have also been reported elsewhere, so that they are not necessarily unique to the African situation. See, for example, Adolph G. Goldsmith, "Reporting the Civil War: Union Army-Press Relations", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 33, (1956), pp. 478-487.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FOREIGN PRESS COVERAGE OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

This chapter reviews the reporting of the Nigerian civil war in four foreign daily newspapers with particular emphasis on similarities and differences between them. The sampled newspapers are, the Ghanaian Times, the Nationalist of Tanzania, the Japan Times and the Toronto Globe and Mail of Canada.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that two of these countries, Ghana and Tanzania, are located on the African continent. The others, Canada and Japan, are located respectively on the North American and Asian continents.

The material in this chapter is structured to test three sets of hypotheses, dealing respectively with three vital spheres of news reporting. These are, the volume or quantity of news coverage, the types of news coverage, classified into substantively - and socially - oriented materials as developed in Chapter Four, and finally, the direction of news treatment indicating whether they are favorable, neutral or unfavorable, to the Nigerian cause.

The first set of hypotheses relates to quantitative coverage in the non-African and African papers, and postulates that:

- a) the Nigerian civil war will receive meager coverage in the **foreign press;**
- b) the African press will devote a greater ~~proportion~~ of available foreign news-hole to the civil war, than the non-African group.

The second set of hypotheses deals with types of coverage and

asserts that:

- c) the foreign press will have more socially oriented subject-matter than the other subject-matter group;
- d) the African group will tend to be more concerned with substantive categories of information.

A final set of hypotheses deals with the directional analysis of the news, postulating that:

- e) the foreign press will tend to be favorably disposed to Nigeria in their coverage of the civil war;
- f) the non-African dailies will tend to be more favorably disposed towards Nigeria in their coverage, than the African group.

To test these six hypotheses, three types of data were collected and content analyzed. First, how much news about the civil war was made available to the reading public in each of the four countries: Ghana, Tanzania, Japan and Canada? Second, what content themes about the war were presented in each country and in what proportion? Finally, we investigate whether each paper's treatment is predominantly favorable, neutral or unfavorable to the federal Nigerian cause.

#### HYPOTHESES ON QUANTITATIVE COVERAGE

To start with, we must ask how much civil war news was published in the four foreign dailies, individually and collectively.

In all, 103 issues of the four foreign dailies were surveyed, focusing on front page Nigerian civil war news and related editorial comments. Astonishingly, only 62 issues or 57.3% contained any such materials at all. The Ghanaian Times accounts for 20 issues, the highest number for any single paper,

while Tanzania's Nationalist contributes only 12 issues, which is the least number of issues for a paper.

Figure IV shows the graphic distribution of front page items per day for each paper, including the Nigerian Daily Times, during a 27 day period in January 1970. It indicates that the Daily Times reported its first item of the year on the first, while a second came ten days later. The first foreign press coverage, however, came on the 5th in both the Nationalist and the Globe and Mail. The Japan Times carried its first item on the 12th, the last to commence coverage. This item is a lead story captioned "Ojukwu leaves Biafra as Owerri falls to Federals". Such a pattern of news coverage seems to indicate that there were no major events to catapult the Nigerian war back into the world headlines.

TABLE X

WEEKLY DISTRIBUTION OF FRONT PAGE ITEMS  
FOR NIGERIAN AND FOREIGN DAILY PAPERS

Papers	Weeks				Totals
	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>	
<u>Nigerian</u>					
Daily Times	1	10	19	12	42
<u>African</u>					
Nationalist	3	11	8	3	25
Ghanaian Times	1	10	7	4	22
=	2	11	8	4	24
$\bar{X}$					
<u>Non-African</u>					
Globe & Mail	3	13	9	4	29
Japan Times	-	37	6	2	45
=	2	25	8	3	37
$\bar{X}$					

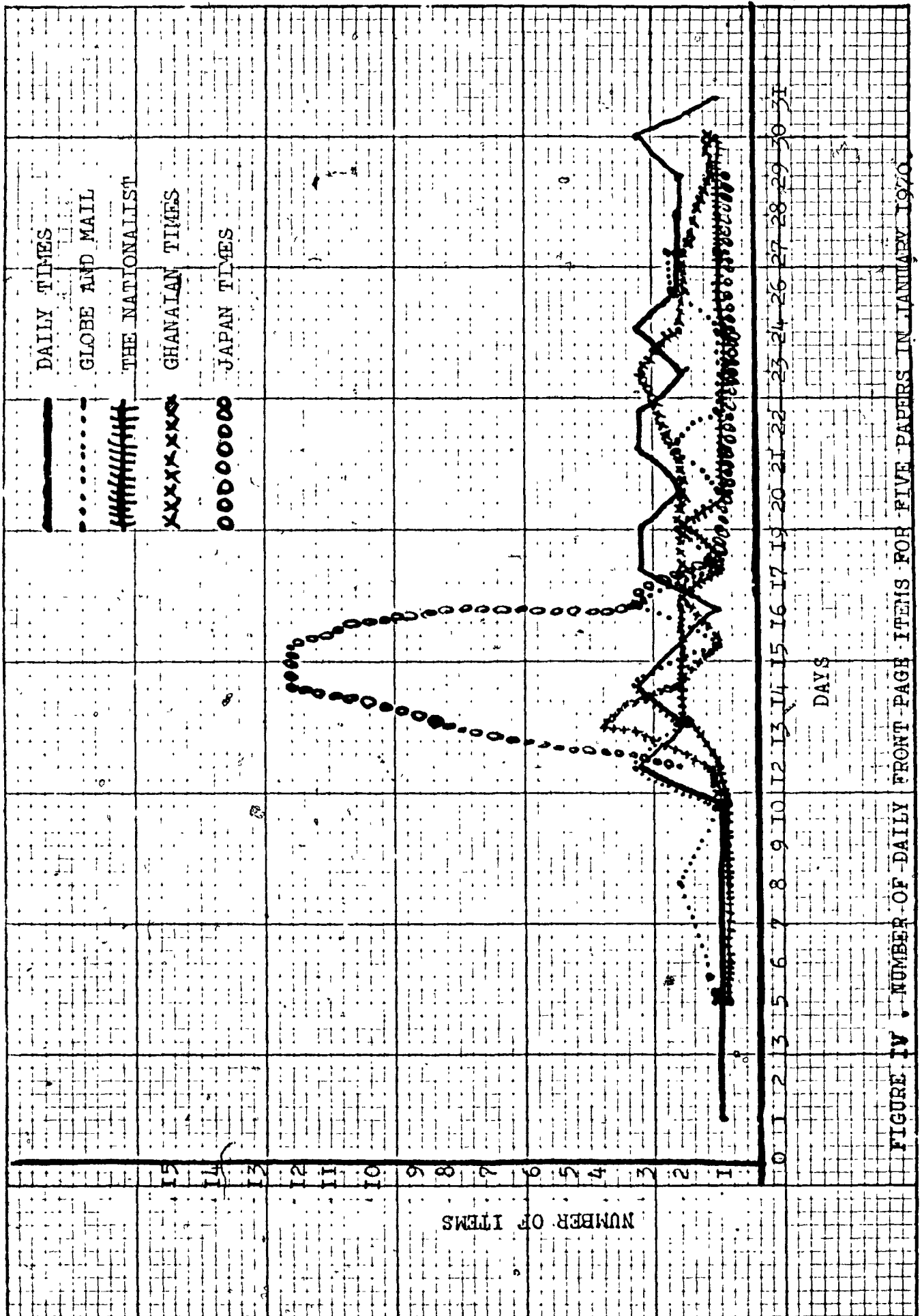


FIGURE IV . NUMBER OF DAILY FRONT PAGE ITEMS FOR FIVE PAPERS IN JANUARY 1970.

Figure V and Table X show weekly distribution of civil war news items. They show that the least coverage occurred during the first week. Figure V compares to Figure III (Chapter IV) and vividly shows that only 6% of the total coverage by the foreign papers occurred during the first week, while 3.3% was reported for the Daily Times in that week. While the former shows its heaviest coverage of 58.6% in the second week, the latter figure indicates a heaviest of 46.9% in the third.

As suggested in the previous chapter, there seemed to have been a news blackout during the first week to induce such poor coverage. Additionally, the world front pages were reflecting interest in the more globally involving Vietnam and Mid-East, two perennial hot-beds of strife. During late 1969, "relief politics"<sup>2</sup> had eased and there was a lull in almost all the battle fronts, so that few foreigners were alerted to a series of events at Christmas and New Year's, which could have catapulted Nigeria back onto the front page.

These events included the capture of two major Biafran towns, Aro-chuku and Abawsi, by the federal forces and the linking of two of its army divisions at Umuahia. This single act split the "Biafran enclave" into two unequal halves, the smallest of which was completely over-run by federal troops. Simultaneously, there was the total collapse of Biafra's 12th army division, whose officers and men melted away into the stream of fleeing civilian refugees. This threw the entire southern sectors of the war open to unimpeded federal advance toward Owerri, Biafra's last provisional capital.

These events seemed to satisfy two news value indices prevalent in most western Europe and the United States. They

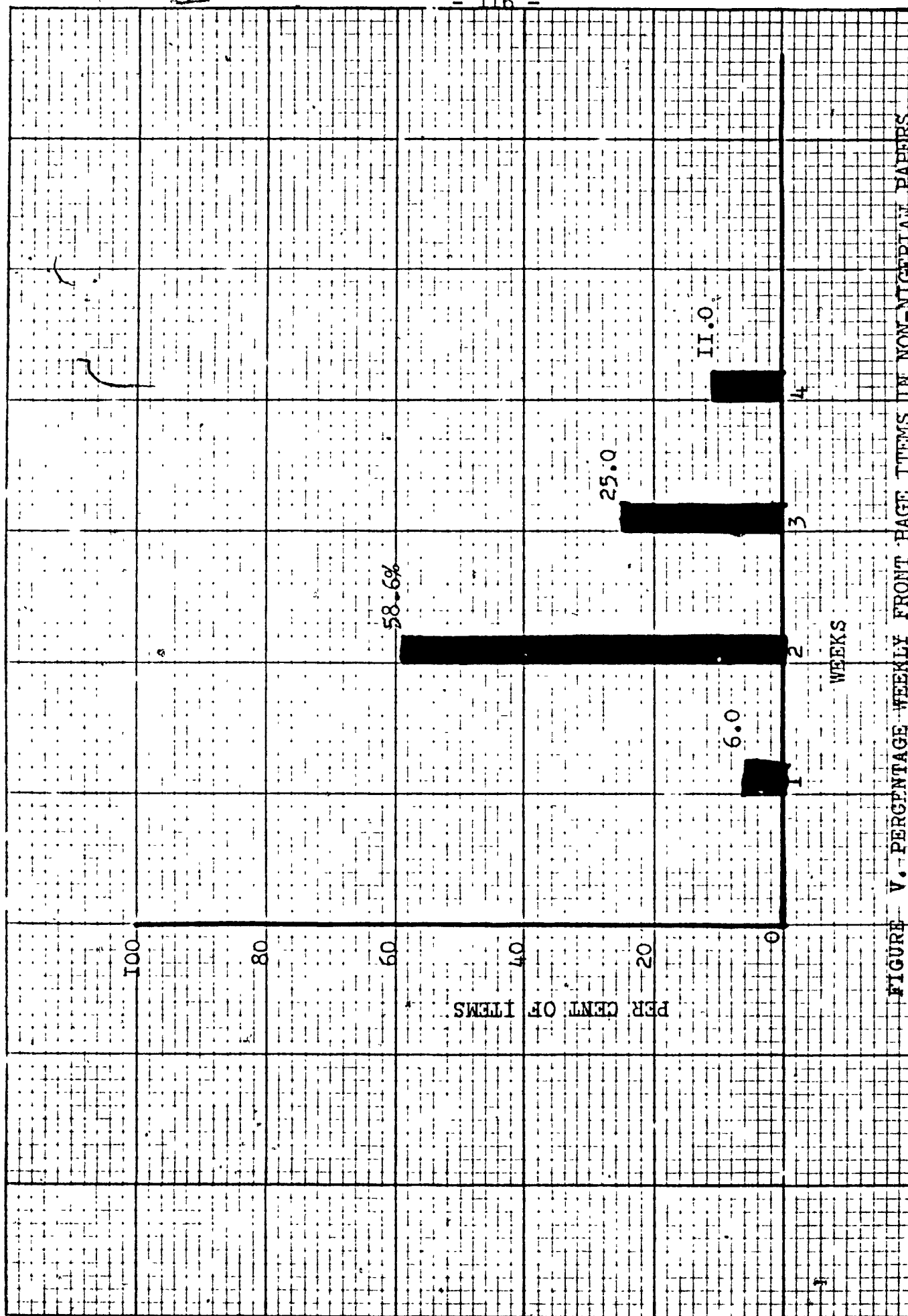


FIGURE V. PERCENTAGE WEEKLY FRONT PAGE ITEMS IN NON-NIGERIAN PAPERS, JANUARY, 1970.

contained, first of all, elements for identification as fairly large numbers of European and North American nationals, were serving with the relief organizations in dying Biafra. Like the Stanleyville episode during the 1964 Congo crisis, their fate at so critical a moment should have been sufficient to make headlines.<sup>3</sup> Second, these events inevitably pointed to the end of the war and thus contrasted sharply with other major world conflict areas, providing a significant contrast, another aspect of newsworthiness.<sup>4</sup> The only plausible explanation for their non-reporting of these events in the first week of January is the utter silence maintained by both belligerents.

My experience at the Biafran Ministry of Information is that public acknowledgement or refutation of federal Nigerian successes or claims thereof, were delayed until the situation either took care of itself or became so commonplace that continued silence or secrecy was ludicrous. Furthermore, the events of late December found most of Biafra's information and propaganda complex in complete disarray. Three factors seemed to be responsible for this. First, this was the Christmas holidays with a majority of the highly placed officials normally handling incoming items joining their families in the more remote villages. Also, the scarcity of Biafran money, which was a recurrent feature due to the Central Bank's efforts to control the growing inflation, found most news staff on the move in search for money. Thirdly, there was the arrest and detention of script-writers and editors responsible for the nation's "War Report" radio program, in which critical remarks had been made about military failings in the southern sector. This act, the third of its type in less than a month, just about dried



up all war reporting.

Nevertheless, some correspondents from the affected areas filed prompt reports and then without waiting for the usual clearance, vanished into the villages either in search of money or to join their families preparatory to possible evacuation. Many such reports lay on the desks unprocessed until early in January, since military corroboration could also not be obtained. Some foreign correspondents who sensed trouble or received tips on these events, were also unable to flash out reports due to the limited transmission facilities mentioned earlier. These were also strictly controlled by the military and the Biafran Overseas Press Services unit of the Ministry of Information. For these reasons, no words were forth-coming from the Biafran authorities by way of war communiques or war reports.

On the federal side as well, a new information policy seemed to have been in force at this time. It too was one of strict silence; contrary to the earlier practice of publicizing any positive operations and their outcome as soon as hints reached Lagos from the distant fronts. This policy was to persist until the major objective of federal unity had been achieved. Hence, both the launching of the final federal offensive and its first set of results remained top secret. This policy was in keeping with a growing concern among high military field commanders, who felt that more or less precocious public statements and publicity of their actions was not only a source of embarrassment but inimical to their war efforts.

The two Biafran bulletins which appeared between the 2nd and 5th of January were appeals to the population to maintain

calm and greater vigilance in the wake of the "massive federal vandal" invasion. Reference was made in the second bulletin to the "disorganization of our troops in certain badly affected sectors, where they are however successfully re-grouping". No more details were released even though the overrunning of the area was common knowledge, due to the massive population movement away from the affected areas.

The first federal bulletin appeared on the 10th when in fact much of the second half of Biafra, including Owerri the provisional capital, had virtually fallen to federal forces. It simply made reference to gains in the southern sectors, including the nearly ten days old linking of the two divisions at Imuhia. It spoke of a "heavy siege on Owerri" and optimistically concluded, "the end is in sight, or with One Nigeria".

As expected, these revelations by both sides finally made the news. They surely influenced the much heavier coverage of the situation in the second week of January. Unlike the foreign dailies however, the Nigerian Daily Times gave not as much coverage to these events as to those during the third week. No better explanation has been found for this. Possibly, saturated with 22 months of war reporting under the circumstances, it simply took over the path of least resistance and focused on other non-war events, such as advertising and amusements for which it was noted.

In the light of the above discussion, it is no surprise that only 57.3% of 108 issues published by the four foreign newspapers during the 27 day period in January carried front page civil war items. Our first quantitative hypothesis of meager coverage by the foreign daily press is thus strongly borne

out.

TABLE XI

TOTAL FOREIGN NEWS-HOLE, DAILY AVERAGE AND PERCENTAGE COLUMN INCH SPACE, DEVOTED TO CIVIL WAR NEWS IN FOUR FOREIGN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

<u>Paper</u>	<u>Foreign Newshole (col. In)</u>	<u>War News as % of Total Space</u>	<u>Daily Average of War News (col. In).</u>	<u>War News as % of Foreign Newshole</u>
<u>Non-African</u>				
Japan Times	4591.2	12.1	23.8	14.0
Globe & Mail	3219.3	21.1	41.4	24.8
=	3905.2	16.6	32.6	24.4
$\bar{X}$				
<u>African</u>				
Ghanaian Times	657.0	9.3	18.3	75.0
Nationalist	1126.8	8.9	17.6	42.2
=	891.9	9.1	17.9	52.6
$\bar{X}$				

As Table XI shows, all four publications used a daily average of only 25.2 inches, with the total civil war news constituting an average of 41.5% of their total averaged foreign news-hole. This amounts to about 12.8% of the front page space.

The second quantitative hypothesis, that compared on a regional (African and non-African) basis, the African group will tend to devote a greater proportion of their foreign news-hole to the civil war, is also shown to be true. Table XI indicates that the African dailies used an average of 58.6% of their foreign news-hole, as against 24.4% in the other group.

Other data in the Table, however, seem to suggest a contrary interpretation. First, the African group's daily coverage was one half shorter than that of the non-African group, an average of 17.9 inches, compared to 32.6 inches. Secondly, the proportion of total front page space devoted to Nigeria was less

in the African than in the other papers, 9.1% against 16.6%. The non-African also published a greater number of items 37 compared to 24.

While this quantitative breakdown appears at first glance to disprove our second quantitative hypothesis, two major considerations show that this is in fact not the case. In the first place, both groups of newspapers represent differing newspaper structures, in terms of number of pages and column size. Secondly, the differential global and African involvement of both groups of countries must be kept in mind.

Relative to the first consideration, the African dailies are tabloids, with a daily average of 12 pages, and consisting of five columns per page. Each column measures 1.5 inches wide and 17 inches long. On the other hand, both the Globe and Mail and the Japan Times are standard broadsheets. They average 30 pages daily, with 9 columns per page. Each column in turn measures 1.7 inches wide and 21 inches long. It therefore follows that the African group suffers from an inherent deficiency in available space. Having much less space to start with compared to their non-African counterparts, one would expect them to carry less Nigerian news coverage.

Ralph Casey and Thomas Copland assert that foreign news tends to increase as both a paper's circulation and number of pages increased.<sup>5</sup> James Markham, on the other hand, shows that number of pages seem to be the more crucial factor, observing that number of pages and foreign news column inches exhibit a high correlation.<sup>6</sup> Both studies while enriching our understanding of international news flow, seem to under-estimate the impact

of differences in column size. The present study indicates that the nearly four times larger foreign news-hole of the non-African dailies is a function both of differences in the number of pages and in column size between the two groups of newspapers.

Since the focus in this study is primarily on Nigerian civil war news rather than on foreign news per se, a second basic differentiation between the groups of papers must also be made. Canada and Japan are more globally committed and involved (culturally, politically and economically) than the two African states, Ghana and Tanzania. As a result of this, their overall interest in Africa as a whole, and Nigeria in particular, is relatively minimal. This is easily explained by reference to the Galtung and Ruze "cultural proximity" hypothesis, which states that in international news coverage, "the event-scanner will pay particular attention to the familiar, to the culturally similar, and the culturally distant will be passed by more easily and not be noticed."<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, neither Canada nor Japan is likely to devote as much news attention to the Nigerian civil war events as they would to Vietnam or to the Middle East, whose tremendous world significance dwarfs the former. Basically therefore, our data support the reasoning of our second quantitative hypothesis. They show that the African papers, which exhibit greater "cultural proximity" with Nigeria, indeed devoted a greater proportion of their meager foreign news-hole to the war issues. They used about two and a half times more space for these than the non-African group, whose news-hole is in fact four times larger.

Significant differences are however observed at the

national level between the four papers. The heaviest single war coverage is to be found in the Ghanaian Times, which used as much as 75% of its foreign news-hole, 44.5% more than the average for the other three dailies, and 32.8% more than the Nationalist which is next in line. This exceedingly heavy coverage by the Ghanaian Times, apart from the more general proximity factors, seems to have been the Ghanaian government's pro-Nigerian role in the crisis.

In January 1967, Ghana was the host to the Aburi meeting of Nigeria's military leaders, geared to easing the tension and finding solutions to those problems which ultimately culminated in secession and civil war.<sup>8</sup> A federal victory seems to have vindicated that country's pro-Nigerian policy, despite the debacle of federal abrogation of a number of major Aburi decisions. Additionally, Ghana's new alien law which affected hundreds of Biafran boys living in the country, and the role of the Nigerian High Commission in Ghana, received much attention from the Ghanaian press. This follows unsettled and disquietening conditions in the former secessionist area to which many of these refugees would be forced to return.

Among the non-African press, the Canadian Globe and Mail exceeded the Japan Times coverage by about 20.8% and by 17.6 inches in daily column space. No significant difference (less than 1%) seems to exist between the two African papers on this latter point. But they all used much less daily space than the foreign press for the reasons mentioned earlier. This greater Canadian press coverage is once again a function of government's stand and its relief involvements during the war. As we shall

see later, the bulk of its coverage relates to relief matters, something Japan was not involved in.

# NIGERIAN AND NON-NIGERIAN DAILIES

Quantitative coverage in both Nigerian and non-Nigerian papers (Table XII) indicates as would be expected, that the Nigerian newspaper carried more civil war news than the other papers in our group.

The Daily Times used about 1857 inches or 35% of its front page space, compared to 12.8% for the foreign (non-Nigerian) papers, about 22.3% more than its competitors. Also the Daily Times daily average of 68.8 inches was double the coverage of the non-African group, and 18.5 inches more than the Ghanaian and Tanzanian papers used. Finally, in terms of number of items, too, the Daily Times leads with 42, which is 19 items above the African group, but only five more than the non-African group.

TABLE XII

COLUMN INCHES, PERCENTAGE FRONT PAGE SPACE, AND  
NO OF ITEMS DEVOTED TO WAR NEWS IN NIGERIAN  
AND NON-NIGERIAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

<u>Country/Paper</u>	<u>Total War News (col. inch)</u>	<u>War News % of Total Space</u>	<u>Daily Aver. (col. inch)</u>	<u>No. of War Items</u>
<u>Nigeria</u>				
Daily Times	1857.0	35.1	68.8	42
<u>African</u>				
Ghanaian Times	493.2	9.3	18.3	22
Nationalist	475.3	8.9	17.6	25
=	484.3	9.1	18.5	23
<u>Non-African</u>				
Japan Times	583.8	12.1	23.8	45
Globe & Mail	1032.0	21.1	41.4	29
=	807.9	16.6	32.6	37
<u>X</u>				

The above figures suggest that the Daily Times representing Nigerian dailies in general, may indeed have served as a vital source for the foreign correspondents and non-Nigerian papers. Having documented the general tendency towards meager coverage in the foreign press, we now turn our attention to an examination of the types of material that were actually reported.

#### HYPOTHESIS II: TYPES OF COVERAGE

The second set of hypothesis tests the types of coverage in terms of nine subject-matter categories classified broadly into substantive and socially-oriented materials. As mentioned earlier, it was assumed that foreign dailies will tend to concentrate their coverage more on the socially oriented, than on substantive materials. It was also maintained that the African group of papers will pay more attention to the substantive information. In these hypotheses, we must investigate the proportional distribution of content among the nine subject-matter categories for each paper.

Contrary to expectation, the first hypothesis is not affirmed, as shown in Table XIII. On the average, the foreign press concentrated 60% of its reporting on substantive matters, including foreign relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, Economic matters, and Military Acts. The explanation for this substantive concentration is two fold. First of all, there is the global news agencies penchant for 'hard facts'. This leads to a measure of uniformity in world news coverage, such as is reflected in our data. Kayser's contention about the 'internationalization' of news is thus corroborated. He observes, that the reliance on the same news purveyors might destroy journalistic diversity among nations, leading to unhealthy uniformity in



perception, thought and interests among readers.<sup>9</sup>

A second explanation for this substantive concentration derives from the 'rumor theory' advanced by Allport and Postman.<sup>10</sup> Explaining observed 'shift of theme' in rumor transmission, they maintained that decreasing verisimilitude in coverage and heightening seem to go hand in hand. With reports consisting almost always of principal and peripheral themes, the former may persist during transmission, while some peripheral details may acquire some prominence, "become sharpened at the expense of the principal theme, a new theme resulting".<sup>11</sup> They also maintained that once the new theme emerges, it "begins to influence and, as far as possible, assimilate to itself all the individual details that remain in the story."<sup>12</sup>

A similar phenomenon seems to have operated relative to the civil war news reporting. Generally, apart from the one-inch fillers,<sup>13</sup> a majority of the news report consists of a number of peripheral subject-matter (themes), built around and upon a single central theme.<sup>14</sup>

TABLE XIII

**PROPORTIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF CONTENT AMONG  
NINE SUBJECT-MATTER CATEGORIES IN THE FOREIGN PRESS**

<u>Category</u>	<u>African</u>			<u>Non-African</u>		
	<u>Ghana Times</u>	<u>Nation- alist</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Globe &amp; Mail</u>	<u>Japan Times</u>	<u>Average</u>
<b><u>Substantive:</u></b>						
Foreign Relations	4.6	19.7	12.2	6.4	7.0	6.8
Biafran Affairs	22.7	23.7	23.2	8.4	20.7	14.6
Nigerian Affairs	20.6	10.2	15.4	13.3	16.0	14.6
Economic Matters	-	1.8	0.9	6.2	0.4	3.2
Military Acts	<u>9.9</u>	<u>14.2</u>	<u>12.0</u>	<u>16.0</u>	<u>16.4</u>	<u>16.2</u>
	57.8	69.6	63.7	50.3	60.5	55.4

TABLE XIII CONT'D.

<u>Category</u>	<u>African</u>			<u>Non-African</u>		
	<u>Ghana Times</u>	<u>Nation- alist</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Globe &amp; Mail</u>	<u>Japan Times</u>	<u>Average</u>
<u>Socially:</u>						
Relief Etc.	27.7	25.4	26.5	44.6	30.6	37.6
Church Etc.	-	-	-	0.8	1.3	1.1
Press Relation	0.8	2.7	1.8	3.9	5.8	4.8
Personalities	0.8	-	0.4	0.4	-	0.2
Others	<u>12.9</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>7.6</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1.8</u>	<u>0.9</u>
	42.2	30.4	36.3	49.7	39.5	44.6

Following the Allport and Postman theory, the relative importance or newsworthiness of themes in a cluster seems also to be affected by the 'leveling and sharpening' process, resulting in shifts of themes. Accordingly, each emergent theme acquires a number of peripheral themes with which it dominates news reporting, until ultimately supplanted in time.

Based on this reasoning, at one stage in the war, relief and humanitarian concerns acted as a central theme following the 'relief politics' of mid 1969. Its peripheral themes included foreign relations, Church and religion, press relations, Biafran affairs, and Nigerian affairs. Each of these seemed to generate features contributing to the controversy. And any major relief items tended to be associated with materials about one or more of these allied categories, ensuring that only a certain reduced number of topics were chiefly in the news at a particular time.

At the end of the war in January 1970, military acts, following Nigeria's crushing gains in the field, seemed to have assumed the role of a central subject-matter. Its peripheral subject-matter included four categories upon which it may have had direct and immediate news consequences. These were foreign

relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, and relief matters. These, according to our reasoning, exhibit an interlocking relationship, which explains the heavy substantive concentration of the Nigerian as well as the non-Nigerian papers both of which devoted about 89% of their space to these issues.

Generally therefore, while a common dependence on the global agencies may have a unifying influence ensuring a greater or equally high reporting of the substantive group, the clustering of subject-matter following the argument in this chapter, may have ensured their initial selection for coverage by the agencies. Hence this observed negation of the first quantitative hypothesis.

Despite this foreign press concentration on substantive matters, our second hypothesis stands affirmed as the African group devoted 8.3% more attention to this group than the non-African papers. Yet these differences are not as striking as one would expect, considering that proximity variables as well as a supposed greater African concern over the political destiny of a sister nation were operating at the time. This reinforces an earlier point that the African press, even when it is reporting its own affairs, is strongly influenced by world news patterns, which are geared to the perceptions in the old colonial headquarters of London and Paris.

TABLE XIV

RANK ORDER OF COLUMN INCH COVERAGE OF  
EACH CATEGORY FOR THE FOREIGN PRESS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Ghana Times</u>	<u>Nationalist</u>	<u>Globe &amp; Mail</u>	<u>Japan Times</u>
Foreign Relations	6	3	5	5
Biafran Affairs	2	2	4	2
Nigerian Affairs	3	5	3	4
Economic Matters	-	8	6	9
Military Acts	5	4	2	3
Relief Etc.	1	1	1	1
Church Etc.	1	-	8	8
Press Relations	7	6	7	6
Personalities	7	-	9	-
Others	4	7	-	7

Table XIV shows that in terms of rank ordering of categories, relief matters score in the first position in all four publications. Biafran affairs ranks second in all but the Globe and Mail, where it ranks fourth. Foreign relations ranks fifth in both non-African dailies, but 3rd in the Nationalist and sixth in the Ghanaian Times. This again highlights the place of relief in comparison to the other categories.

While this leading category belonged to the socially oriented group, at least three subsequent ranks are drawn from the substantive group of subject-matter. The ranking generally indicates that, despite the influence of a common source or sources, papers developed significant differences, which are largely attributed to proximity factors, differential involvement of their governments and/or nationals, and as shall be demonstrated later, differences in national foreign policy towards the Nigerian war.

Among non-substantive (socially-oriented) matters, all

four foreign dailies stressed relief and humanitarian concerns far more than all others put together. Here, the Globe and Mail of Canada with 44.6% had the highest, and the Nationalist of Tanzania with 25.4% the lowest of coverage.

The disproportionate world interest in relief matters is attributable to Biafra's 'genocide by starvation' propaganda. This was developed by her Geneva based public relations firm, Markpress, during the 1969 phase of 'relief politics', and reinstituted in mid January 1970 after the capitulation. The statement at that time reiterated charges of genocide, seeing in the federal victory, and the subsequent ban on relief agencies, a fulfillment of a prophecy. In addition, the ban on foreign newsmen entering the newly conquered Biafran areas seemed to add credence to Biafran assertions and world suspicions.

Another source of information for relief matters came from non-professional communicators among whom were the relief officials, missionaries, tourists and some international civil servants. While the world media relied heavily on the global agencies, as well as Markpress releases, these non-professional communicators filed considerable eye-witness accounts of the war's last phase, especially the ensuing refugee and relief problems. These helped to swell non-African relief coverage, as most of these private dispatches did not usually reach the African papers directly.

Finally, there is no doubt that of all categories, relief and refugee problems lend themselves to the most sensational coverage and arouse strong human interest. Hence, the growing image of starving, mal-fed mothers, children and soldiers could

hardly fail to out-do other less sensational categories, in the battle for scarce news space.

At the national level, apart from the influence of a common source, the differential relief involvement of the various nations may also account for this skewing of relief coverage among the papers. As a government and people, Canada seems to have been more intimately involved in the task of relieving hunger, disease and suffering on both sides of the battle line than the other nations. Its world-wide mercy organization, Canairelief, operated on both sides throughout the war. The operations in Biafra, like those of many other agencies, were in defiance of federal Nigerian policy, and thereby involved considerable risks to lives and property. Its services persisted until the final occupation of the Uli airstrip by federal troops, an act which rendered it unuseable and illegal for all aircrafts.

During this last phase, the Canadian government at Ottawa made a huge grant of over two million dollars to the organization for extensive mercy work in the "war affected areas". In addition, direct aid was given to the Nigerian government, including transport planes, medical personnel and supplies, food and clothing. All these relief gestures satisfy the 'identification' index and thus became newsworthy. They were lauded by the Canadian press, including the Globe and Mail, who also continuously criticized the government's delays in "coming to the aid of human suffering in the true Canadian spirit without following the lead of other countries."

Tanzania's 20% coverage of foreign relations, which is the highest for any paper (Table XVI) is also explained by differential government involvement. Tanzania was almost left in the cold,

especially in African circles, after it sided with Biafra. She however saw an opportunity in the last phase of the war for vindicating her gestures, to, and policy in, Biafra by the examination of the various implications for Africa of Biafra's fate. Having observed that foreign press front page civil war news coverage tended to be relatively small and inadequate and that some categories were preferred more than the others, we shall now consider the editorial reactions of these papers relative to the war. This is to discover any possible relationship between both their news coverage and editorial opinion on the events.

#### ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN PRESS EDITORIAL

No formal hypothesis relative to editorial comments was developed in this study. However, the data yields information indicative of a correlation between the published editorials and the front page news.

The four dailies published a total of 18 editorial comments during the 27 day period in January. The Globe and Mail accounts for six as against five each by the African papers, and two by the Japan Times. Table XV shows that 61% or eleven items dealt with substantive matters. This reinforces earlier front page findings, which rejected our first qualitative hypothesis. Like front page coverage, relief matters rank in the first place among the categories, with 39% of all coverage. The Globe and Mail which led in front page relief coverage earlier, also devoted greater editorial attention to this category, with 66.7% compared to 40% and 20% by the Ghanaian Times and Nationalist, respectively.

TABLE XV

SUBJECT-MATTER CATEGORY DISTRIBUTION OF EDITORIAL  
HEADLINES IN FOUR FOREIGN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Ghana Times</u>	<u>Nation- alist</u>	<u>Globe &amp; Mail</u>	<u>Japan Times</u>	<u>No. of Items</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Foreign Relations	1	3	2	-	6	33.0
Biafran Affairs	1	1	-	2	4	22.0
Nigerian Affairs	1	-	-	-	1	6.0
Economic Matters	-	-	-	-	-	-
Military Acts	-	-	-	-	-	-
Relief Etc.	2	1	4	-	7	39.0
Church Etc.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Press Relations	-	-	-	-	-	-
Personalities	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals =	5	5	6	2	18	100.0

The above observation corroborates Ostgaard's conclusion that "there can be no doubt that an editorial view sometimes makes its impact on the news reported."<sup>15</sup> On a regional basis, the African group devoted about 70% of the editorials to the substantively oriented subject-matter categories, while the non-African group divided its editorial attention equally to relief and substantive issues. This again confirms earlier front page findings relative to our second qualitative hypothesis.

NIGERIAN VS. NON-NIGERIAN: TYPES OF COVERAGE

Table XVI compared proportional content distribution among the nine categories for the Nigerian Daily Times and the foreign dailies. Indications are that the former was used as a blue print for content selection by the latter.



TABLE XVI

PROPORTION OF CIVIL WAR NEWS FOR EACH CATEGORY  
IN NIGERIAN AND NON-NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Nigerian</u> <u>%</u>	<u>African</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Non-African</u> <u>%</u>
Foreign Affairs	21.2	12.2	6.8
Biafran Affairs	34.3	23.2	14.6
Nigerian Affairs	18.7	15.4	14.6
Economic Matters	2.5	0.9	3.2
Military Acts	3.7	12.0	16.2
Relief Etc.	8.2	26.5	37.6
Church Etc.	0.3	-	1.1
Press Relations	4.6	1.8	4.8
Personalities	5.9	0.4	0.2
Others	<u>0.6</u>	<u>7.6</u>	<u>0.9</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Apart from the heavier coverage of military acts and relief matters in the non-Nigerian papers, the general pattern of coverage indicates that the foreign press seemed to follow the lead of the Daily Times of Nigeria. The discrepancy with respect to military and relief news in the foreign press, as has been pointed out earlier, is partly due to the news activities of a group of non-professional communicators. On the other hand, while the relief situation remained acute, the Nigerian daily underplayed it, because it was perhaps too close to these issues to evaluate them accurately. On the military aspects, while the inside story of Nigeria's military operations and strategies remained unavailable to the local media, some well placed foreign officials did "smuggle" such information abroad into newspaper houses. The Col. Scott episode is one such instance. His purported "confidential report", describing "the Nigerian army in advance" ended up on the pages of a London newspaper, the Sunday

Telegraph,<sup>16</sup> from whence it may have spread to other papers in Europe and America, given the exchange agreements between papers and agencies.

The restrictive press regulations, however, made the publication of any outside relief or military material impossible in a Nigerian paper, especially if these items were critical of the federal regime or its agencies. These facts seem to account for the slightly higher coverage of some categories in the foreign press, which the Nigerian Daily Times may have considered sensitive. In conclusion, we will claim that the Nigerian press helped to shape the critical tendency of the foreign press coverage. It may thus have provided a world blue print for the kind of information world readers would receive about the Nigerian war, as well as how they would evaluate these events, as the third aspect (the direction of news treatment) of our analysis will show.

### HYPOTHESIS III: DIRECTIONAL NEWS ANALYSIS

The final set of hypotheses asserts that,

- a) Nigeria will tend to be favorably treated in foreign newspaper coverage,
- b) the non-African papers will, however, be more favorably disposed to Nigeria than the African group.

Table XVII indicates that both of these hypotheses are indeed confirmed. First, all the papers taken together show a margin of favorability of about +9% points, that is a +39.4% favorable overall against a -30.8% unfavorable content. This supports the first hypothesis. Neutral content accounts for about 29% of the total coverage.

The second hypothesis is equally supported, in that the

non-African dailies show an average +29.3% point margin of favorability, that is +51.2% against -21.9%, while the African group maintains a -12.2% margin, +27.6% against -39.8%.

TABLE XVII

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COLUMN INCHES OF WAR  
NEWS CLASSIFIED FAVORABLE, NEUTRAL, AND UN-  
FAVORABLE IN NON-NIGERIAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Favorable</u> +	<u>Unfavorable</u> -	<u>Neutral</u> 0	<u>Margin of</u> <u>Favorability</u>
<u>Non-African</u>				
Japan Times	48.9	25.1	25.8	+ 23.8
Globe & Mail	53.4	18.6	27.9	+ 34.8
=	51.2	21.9	26.8	+ 29.3
$\bar{X}$				
<u>African</u>				
Ghanaian Times	39.3	19.5	40.4	+ 19.8
Nationalist	16.0	60.2	23.8	- 44.2
=	27.6	39.8	32.1	- 12.2
$\bar{X}$				

Considering news direction on a regional basis however, misrepresents the facts somewhat, since the Tanzanian paper overwhelmingly neutralized the positive orientation of the Ghanaian Times. It is therefore preferable to consider the direction of each paper separately. Indications are that papers tend to reflect their home government's policy on the Nigerian war. Papers in friendly countries tended to be more favorable in their coverage than the unfriendly ones, which were relatively unfavorable in orientation.

Table XVII not unexpectedly indicates that Tanzania's Nationalist used a disproportionate amount of unfavorable content. Its margin is a -44.2% negative compared to the Globe and Mail's +34.8% and the Japan Times' +23.8% or Ghanaian Times' +19.8% favorable margins. This pattern of directional coverage is not

unexpected. The Nationalist and the Ghanaian Times as government organs will normally tend to toe the government line. Hence their coverage seemed to correlate with the national government's foreign policy stand on Nigeria.

TABLE XVIII

DIRECTIONAL MARGINS OF FAVORABILITY FOR  
EACH CATEGORY IN THE FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Japan Times</u>	<u>Globe &amp; Mail</u>	<u>Nationalist</u>	<u>Ghana Times</u>
Foreign Relations	+ 39	+ 74	- 61	- 18
Biafran Affairs	+ 34	+ 70	- 16	+ 6
Nigerian Affairs	+ 92	+ 87	- 67	+ 85
Economic Matters	+100	+ 4	- 56	-
Military Acts	+ 24	+ 84	- 73	+ 26
Relief Etc.	- 8	- 1	- 32	-
Church Etc.	+100	- 11	-	-
Press Relation	- 40	+ 9	-100	-
Personalities	-	-	-	-
Others	- 82	-	+ 36	- 12

Table XVIII confirms a highly (-60.2%) unfavorable content by the Nationalist, which is in keeping with Tanzania's recognition of secessionist Biafra. Though a greater proportion of Ghanaian Times coverage (40.4%) appears to be in the neutral category, it still shows a +20% point margin of favorability, which reflects its government's favorable disposition toward Nigeria. Among the non-African dailies, the Japan Times while generally favorable carried more critical content (25%) as compared to 18.6% for the Globe and Mail. The latter's higher margin of favorability seemed to be both the function of the proximity factors mentioned earlier, and the foreign policy influence. In addition, Canada's federal system equally threatened by separatist forces, seemed to have aroused sympathetic

coverage of the Nigerian dilemma. All of these support Bernard Cohen's speculation about a possible correlation between foreign policy and press coverage of foreign events.<sup>17</sup>

DIRECTION OF NEWS TREATMENT: NIGERIAN VS. NON-NIGERIAN

Apart from the two categories of Nigerian affairs and press relations, major discrepancies exist among the three groups of papers, as shown in Table XIX. One of the exceptions consist of a positive

TABLE XIX

DIRECTIONAL MARGINS OF FAVORABILITY FOR EACH  
CATEGORY IN NIGERIAN AFRICAN AND NON-AFRICAN

<u>Category</u>	<u>Non-African</u>	<u>African</u>	<u>Nigerian</u>
Foreign Relations	+ 56.5	- 39.5	+ 35.4
Biafran Affairs	+ 52.0	- 5.0	+ 73.5
Nigerian Affairs	+ 89.5	+ 9.0	+ 74.8
Economic Matters	+ 52.0	- 28.0	+ 100.0
Military Acts	+ 54.0	- 23.5	+ 100.0
Relief Matters	- 4.5	- 16.0	+ 86.8
Church Etc.	+ 45.5	-	+ 100.0
Press Relations	- 15.5	- 50.0	- 21.0
Personalities	-	-	+ 65.4
Others	- 41.0	- 12.0	-

margin of favorability in all three groups, in which the African group recorded +9% which is the least margin in all three, for Nigerian affairs. The other is a negative margin for press relations for which the non-African group scored -15.5%, which is the least.

A greater directional agreement exists between the Nigerian and non-African publications, both of which exhibit high positive margins of favorability on five categories, which are also of the substantive group: foreign relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, economic matters, and military acts. On the

other hand, the African and non-African groups disagree with the Nigerian position on relief matters, by recording -16% and -4.5% as against Nigeria's high +86.8% favorability score. As pointed out earlier, the African figure must be interpreted with care, since they are considerably skewed by the highly negatively oriented Tanzanian Nationalist.

To conclude, the data reported in this chapter affirm five of the six postulations with which we set out. Despite observed overall paucity of the civil war news in the foreign press, the African group of papers tended more than their non-African counterpart, to publish more news about the events. In terms of individual category coverage, the foreign press focused a disproportionate attention on the relief and other humanitarian aspects of the conflict. On the other hand, considered on a broader perspective of groups of categories, the coverage tended to be in favor of the substantive group consisting of foreign relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, economic matters and military acts.

Generally, Nigeria received a disproportionate amount of favorable news treatment, except for the Nationalist, whose government's policy stand was overtly anti-Nigeria throughout the war. The data further highlight a possible correlation between news coverage, government foreign policy stand on the war, and editorial policy of the newspapers. Finally, compared to the Daily Times data, indications are that the latter may have served as a vital but inadequate source for the foreign correspondent and the foreign press. It may have helped to shape the quantity, types of coverage and the direction of news treatment in the foreign press. In the final chapter, which

summarizes the findings of this thesis, open questions for further investigation are highlighted, as are suggestions for possible improvement of African news flow in the world news market.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 See Appendix III, DATA AND METHODOLOGY, for the selection criteria of countries and newspapers.
- 2 Zdenek Cervenka, "The Politics of Relief" in his The Nigerian War, 1967-1970, Chapter 8, pp. 153-163, gives a vivid description of what in the civil war came to be known as "relief politics".
- 3 William A. Hachten, Muffled Drums, p. 82 and pp. 83-86.
- 4 Percy H. Tannenbaum and Mervin D. Lynch, "Sensationalism: the Concept and Its Measurement", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 37, (1960), pp. 381-92.
- 5 Ralph D. Casey and Thomas F. Copland, "Use of Foreign News by 19 Minnesota Dailies", Journalism Quarterly, Vol. 35, (1958), pp. 87-89.
- 6 James Markham, "Foreign News in the U.S. and South American Press", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 25, (1961), pp. 256-57.
- 7 Johan Galtung and Mari H. Ruge, "The Structure of Foreign News", Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 2, (1965), pp. 68-69.
- 8 John de St. Jorre, The Nigerian Civil War, pp. 91-98.
- 9 Jacques Kayser, One Week's News: Comparative Study of 17 Major Dailies for a Seven Day Period, (Paris: UNESCO, 1953), pp. 93-94.
- 10 Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman, The Psychology of Rumor.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 116.
- 12 Ibid. pp. 119.
- 13 A greater proportion of Japan Times coverage consists of such one-inch filler.
- 14 An item may, therefore, be considered as a conglomeration of informational themes (or subject-matter) clustering around a central one.
- 15 Einar Ostgaard, "Factors Influencing the Flow of News", p. 44; for other references to this relationship of news and editorials see V.O. Key, Public Opinion and American Democracy, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 391-92; and IPI, The Flow of News, 1953, p. 162.
- 16 Sunday Telegraph, (London), 11/1/1970, p. 8.
- 17 Bernard Cohen, The Press and Foreign Policy, pp. 198-202.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

After this complex analysis of Nigerian, African and non-African coverage of the conclusion of Nigeria's fratricidal war, what has been added to our understanding of world news flow? In addition, what does this case study of one African country's attempt at modernizing its communication facilities and techniques suggest about the strategies to be employed by others still grappling with the problems of nation-building and participation in the world news flow process?

The thesis, first of all, confirms that there is a paucity of African content in the international news market. Contrary to previous studies, however, which emphasize economic and technological impediments, this one documents the disproportionate impact of Nigerian press regulations as well as censorship, which restricted the flow from the source. As a matter of fact Nigeria, which was hailed as having one of the most liberal information systems in Africa, turns out to have moved away from a pluralistic party press to a governmentally dominated situation after independence. Not only were more than 90% of the papers founded after this period under direct government ownership and control, but the institution of that country's press laws, and the subsequent change to a military one party rule, tended to destroy whatever freedom the press and journalists may have enjoyed in the past.

Our data corroborate additionally, that top status nations get more news attention than low status countries, like Nigeria.

The comparison of African and non-African press coverage, for example, shows that the latter devoted a smaller proportion of their foreign news-hole to the Nigerian civil war than the former. Thirdly, it appears that negative events are more likely to propel a low status nation into world press headlines, than positive ones. While the end of the war, a positive event, should have garnered more world news interest, our data show that the sensational plight of refugees, hunger and disease, attracted greater foreign coverage than any other single news category.

Finally, the evidence shows that culturally more distant nations make news, only if reports are tailored to the local news values of the recipient nation. In the Nigerian war, contrary to other events, a large number of foreign nationals and governments were involved in diverse aspects of the conflict. This involvement satisfied the identification index and thus increased non-African coverage. The Canadian press consequently, followed the relief activities of its nationals on both sides of the fighting and devoted a lot more attention to Nigeria than it ordinarily does to issues so far removed from its own citizens.

The comparative nature of this study also elaborates on the very general nature of many international news flow studies, by providing evidence for explaining the relative paucity of African news. First, it turns out that in global political terms, the Nigerian civil war was a localized African affair without vast international significance. In competing for scarce front page news space about such global crises as Vietnam or the Middle East, it therefore lost out. Also, the coverage of the Nigerian crisis was complicated and made more difficult by

contradictory official releases by both sides, and the vast restriction on the local and foreign press. If despite these factors, and according to our earlier proposition, the foreign correspondent gets his prime information from local journals, like the Nigerian Daily Times, with only 35% front page coverage, then foreign press coverage of 42% represents a significant effort to report the war abroad. Low coverage, it turns out, may not necessarily result from apathy or disinterest alone. Poor local coverage, indeed, may have contributed to such low foreign press coverage.

Contrary to previous accounts, our study indicates that the foreign press performed pretty well, primarily in the category of relief news. It played a major role in exposing starvation in Biafra, in keeping the issue alive and in arousing world sympathy and support for the civilian victims of the war. Furthermore, it helped to minimize the military excesses of the victorious federal side, which was a boon to innocent citizens. By adding to the surveillance of the conduct of the Nigerian Army (often challenging the facts and propriety of certain reports by the International Observer Team, which it even called the "International Absolver Team"), the foreign press, at least indirectly contributed to the overall reduction of a possible massacre at the end of the war.

In turning to an evaluation of the communication strategies to be employed by countries striving for improved foreign coverage of their news, the Nigerian case study suggests the following points. In the first place, Africa needs its own news agency to collect and disseminate African and other world

news, in the appropriate volume and types, and with a pertinent African bias. As this study shows, dependence on foreign controlled global agencies, especially for intra-African news flow, for example, compromises major African needs and interests. For African and world events to be effectively interpreted from an African point of view, inevitably demands a news-gathering and processing mechanism entirely African in make-up and orientation. As a filter for out-going African news, such an African Continental News Agency, in association with the national agencies, would ensure improvements in the quantity and types of African news copy, at least, from the source. It would also inject a truly African perspective in the copy before its dispatch to other news organizations abroad.

An African Continental News Agency requires, among other things, a well trained indigenous journalist corps, as well as a reorientation in government-press relations. The former calls for an intensive journalism training program, geared to producing a new breed of professional journalist to improve the quality of local reporting. Even in a country as large and diversified as Nigeria, there are only two schools of journalism, both of which are relatively under-staffed and ill-equipped for the gigantic task of producing these new journalists.

The older school, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for example, has graduated less than a dozen journalists a year in the last decade. Generally, its training program is more theoretical and academic, than practical. Few journalism courses include the history of journalism, news reporting, editing, advertising and marketing. A majority of the other courses are

in the fields of political science, sociology and social psychology. The school always lacks requisite teaching staff. In 1970-71, for example, it had no Ph.d among its six academic staff, 83% of whom held no more than a university bachelor's degree in journalism. Practical training involved the publication of an internal (campus) circulating weekly, the Nsukka Record.

There has been no investigation relating to the overall training program and news activities of the student journalists in the school. However, interviews with some students, as well as my personal observations, indicate that effective training is largely impaired by factors, which include the inadequacy and poor quality of practical training facilities, inexperienced and less qualified teaching and technical staff, unavailability of journalism books and other literature, and the bureaucratic problems relating to the printing and publishing of the Record, by the printers of the government's weekly, the Renaissance. There is also the vital fact of unavailability of government scholarships for prospective journalism candidates. With journalism conspicuously absent on the annual government scholarship list, the profession is inevitably under-rated by the public, for whom the list reflects national man-power needs and therefore employment priorities. Hence, journalism still attracts only a handful, some of whom may switch to other more popular fields or professions after the first year in the school of journalism.

This thesis upholds Kruglak's contention that local training, as against training in foreign countries like the United States, is preferable for the beginning African and other third world journalists.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, his assertion that "there is no paucity of journalism programs" in these developing

areas may not stand the test. Certainly, any valuable estimation of Institutes and Schools of Journalism, such as Kruglak attempts, must go beyond mere counting of physical structures. As the Nsukka College of Journalism mentioned earlier indicates, manpower and other facilities likely to enhance the training of the calibre of journalists envisaged for present day African needs, must be taken into consideration. More institutes and schools of journalism are definitely needed to meet different national needs. Meanwhile however, existing ones, especially in Nigeria, should be effectively utilized by modernizing their facilities, including the quality and size of the teaching staff.

A major problem still besets the new breed of professionally trained and university educated journalists. This involves acceptance and integration into a profession controlled and dominated by a breed of lesser educated and inadequately trained journalists. The relationship between both groups is still inadequately understood. Nevertheless, it is common knowledge that constant friction, grounded in mutual suspicion, have tended to negate the effect on Nigerian journalism of the reciprocal relations between them. The new breed, geared to rejuvenating and modernizing African journalism, need not to be perceived as "dangerous upstarts" threatening the "older guys". Both have vital contributions to make to the improvement of African press journalism and African news flow.

The recent establishment of the Nigerian Institute of Journalism is a definite step forward. It could help bridge the gap between the two breeds now competing in African news organizations. This can be done through refresher courses specifically

designed for the older journalists to learn the new techniques of the profession. Furthermore, being a cooperative by the African Guild of Editors and the IPI, its present structure and facilities, (presently handling less than 30 students) require further expansion, if it is to serve the 50 black African nations.

As to the second suggestion about changes in government press relations, the Nigerian case study highlights the fact that a press and broadcast system financed privately is not a viable alternative on the continent. Vast amounts of capital are needed to build radio links, and maintain newspapers in a multi-national country like Nigeria, with over ten major languages and a foreign lingua franca, understood and spoken by less than 40% of the people. Only the present form of mixed public and private system as also exists in Canada, seems to be feasible. Yet, such a system requires strong built-in controls to protect the Nigerian journalist from the worst abuses of government harassment.

The press laws, which hampered effective news reporting during the crisis, should be abrogated or at least ameliorated. Major control should instead be vested in a consolidated nationwide journalism association, exercising powers reminiscent of such other professional associations, as the Medical Association or the Legal Association of Nigeria. Furthermore, there should also be an inter-breeding of journalists among the various sections or states of the Nigerian federation, as also the establishment of more newspapers, especially at the rural or small town levels. The latter measure would ensure increasing efficiency generated by the presence of competitors. The former

would also ensure greater understanding and cooperation among journalists, so necessary for a strong and effective national journalist association. To induce increased newspaper competition in the states, the governments should consider substantial financial assistance to qualified entrepreneurs who are willing to speculate in the often dreaded field of newspaper publication.

Restructuring government-press relations will also take into consideration, our study suggests, that much national African information flow is by word of mouth, through interpersonal channels. Less than 10% of the Nigerian population, for example, receive any direct exposure to the daily journals due to the fact of a high rate of illiteracy, urban concentration of the news media, and low purchasing power of the people.<sup>2</sup> A greater proportion, notably the rural peasants and a growing urban poor, depend on the traditional channels and patterns of information flow for their knowledge and understanding of national events, as well as of their fellow Nigerians.<sup>3</sup>

The prevailing channels include the local community market, the church, the small community leaders as well as various voluntary and improvement associations. These interpersonal channels need to be recognized and integrated into the general information flow networks. Thus, while more newspapers are called for, of greater importance are local community or district newspapers and other news organizations, geared to serve such local interests as exist and linking the latter to the overall national goals as publicized by the national media. Such measures will help individuals, social groups, and ethnic solidarities, to get to know each other's multiple heritage and needs, thereby



facilitating the development of that unity in diversity, considered a sine qua non for an emergent United One Nigeria for which the civil war was fought.

Various recent press releases indicate that the federal Military Government of Nigeria is heeding ~~thereed~~ to modernize the nation's communications facilities, linking not only parts of the country, but also some African states. Obviously, the most competent journalist corps is paralyzed and rendered ineffective, if its news copy cannot get around swiftly in any desired quantity and direction, due to limitations in telecommunications or other facilities. Nigeria has recently inaugurated road transport networks, airline links and telecommunications services both between its major cities, and with a number of African states, like Sierra Leone, Dahomey and the Niger Republic.<sup>4</sup> Generally, improvements in intra-African communications links is better considered in a wide world perspective. It is indicative of a concern for the role of better communications facilities in transforming at least the quantity of Nigerian news in African markets, and ultimately in the wider world. This, coupled with improvements in the calibre of African journalists, largely controlled by professional codes rather than by government press laws, will ensure considerable improvements in African news marketing, especially if initial dissemination is controlled by an African Continental News Agency.

While African news flow will remain relatively meager for sometime, the future is still bright. Though many of the African nations have actually participated in political independence and the quest for modernization only a short two decades, they are

to-day considerably better known to peoples around the world than during their colonial tutelage. Stereotypes are definitely breaking down by the increased political participation on the part of their statesmen, the convenience of modern travel and the availability of globe-spanning communications technology. The latter already puts satellite exchange programs within the realm of economic feasibility by the 1980's. Given increased material prosperity, stability and peace in the entire region, and the implementation of some of these suggestions, Africa too should emerge from communication underdevelopment in the next few decades to become an active participant in world news exchanges.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Theodore E. Kruglak, "Commitments to Media Back Home Suggested for Foreign Students", Journalism Educator, Vol. 28, April 1973, pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Paul E. Onu, "Mass Media and National Development: A Pilot Study of Nigerian and Ghanaian Daily Press Content", an unpublished Seminar paper, Department of Sociology, McGill University, Montreal, April 1973, pp. 8-14.

<sup>3</sup> For further documentation of the interpersonal communications, see Personal Influence, by Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, (New York, The Free Press, 1964), especially pp. 31-42 and pp. 309-320.

<sup>4</sup> Nigeria Embassy (Ottawa), "Press Release", May 1973.

APPENDIX 1

NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS 1951-1972 SHOWING OWNERSHIP, LANGUAGE  
OF PUBLICATION, LOCATION AND CIRCULATION

<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Circulation</u>
Eastern Mail	Private	English	Enugu	-
Daily Times	" (foreign)	"	Lagos	136,000 (1966)
Sunday Times	"	"	"	218,500
Daily Telegraph	Party (DPNC)	"	"	-
Daily Service	Party (AG)	"	"	-
Daily Tribune	"	"	Ibadan	15,000 (1959)
Sunday Tribune	"	"	"	-
Middle Belt Herald	"	"	Jos	-
COR Advocate	"	Efik/ English	Uyo	-
Eastern Observer	"	English	Onitsha	-
Northern Star	"	"	Kano	-
Irohin Yoruba	"	Yoruba	Ibadan	70,000 (1959)
West African Pilot	Party (NCNC)	English	Lagos	50,000 (1955)
Eastern Guardian	"	"	Port- Harcourt	-
Daily Comet	"	"	Kano	-
Nigerian Spokesman	"	"	Onitsha	-
Southern Nigerian Defender	"	"	Warri	-
Nigerian Monitor	"	"	Uyo	-

APPENDIX 1 (contd)

<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Circulation</u>
Eastern Sentinel	Party (NCNC)	English	Enugu	-
Nigerian Citizen (New Nigerian 1956)	Govt. (north)	"	Kaduna	-
Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo	"	Hausa	"	25,000
Nigerian Outlook (Biafra Sun 1967)	Govt. (east)	English	Enugu	50,000 (1961)
Daily Express	Govt. (west)	"	Ibadan	60,000 (1963)
Sunday Express	"	"	"	80,000 (1963)
Daily Sketch	"	"	"	40,000 (1965)
Morning Post	Govt. (federal)	"	Lagos	65,000 (1963)
Sunday Post	"	"	"	75,000 (1963)
Nigerian Observer	Govt. (mid-west)	"	Benin	-
Renaissance	Govt. (east)	"	Enugu	-
Nigerian Chronicle	South-East	"	Calabar	-
Nigerian Tide	Rivers	"	Port-Harcourt	-

Sources: William A. Hachten, Muffled Drums, pp. 153-58; Rosalynde Ainslie, The Press in Africa, pp. 266-67; and the Nigerian Year Book, 1959.

APPENDIX II

FACTS ON FILE LIST OF JANUARY 1970 NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR EVENTS

WEEK I

1. Federal troops cut Biafra in.
2. Biafra denies federal gains, claims regrouping.
3. Federal's down Biafran planes.
4. Refugees pour out of bush.
5. Thant backs O.A.U. stand on Nigeria.
6. Biafra scores Thant.

WEEK II

7. Effiong heads Biafra.
8. Owerri reported taken by federals.
9. Famine predicted.
10. Ojukwu flees Biafra.
11. Biafra government members in Gabon.
12. Biafra defeated: civil war ends.
13. U.K. federal win vindication of policy.
14. Pope fears reprisals vs Ibos.
15. Gowon assures Wilson re-reprisals.
16. Soviets hail Lagos Victory.
17. Demonstrators score Pope.
18. Reports U.A.R. pilots in Soviet planes strike Uli.
19. Pompidou urges restraint.
20. Ojukwu rejected 'bush' government.
21. U.K. aid effort planned.
22. Gowon scores relief efforts.
23. UNICEF says food available.
24. Nigerian Red Cross ask emergency aid.

25. U.N. agencies report relief plans.
26. Kolo, relief problem under control.
27. Nixon plans relief aid.
28. U.S. optimistic on anti-Ibo reprisals.
29. Gowon grateful for aid.
30. U.S. military air-craft rejected.
31. New relief plans set.

WEEK III

32. Surrender signed.
33. Enahoro scores Pope.
34. Thant visits, says none mistreated.
35. Newsmen enter Biafra area, report starvation and mistreatment.
36. Pope lauds Lagos government restraint.
37. Soviet military aid praised.
38. Ojukwu, federals will annihilate Biafrans.
39. Nigerian Red Cross begins distribution.
40. Enahoro disclaims need for air lift.
41. International Observers report no starvation.
42. Beer finds no starvation.
43. U.S. to cooperate with Lagos on relief.
44. Wilson lauds Gowon, Lagos government.
45. Eighty foreign newsmen held.
46. Black market flourishing.
47. Reports rehabilitation, reconciliation efforts.
48. Officers admit looting, rape.
49. Situation reported grave.
50. Truehart gets newsmen's release.
51. Ojukwu gets Ivory Coast asylum.
52. Two CBS newsmen arrested.

- 53. Lagos to return aid from hostile governments..
- 54. Gowon insists Lagos will handle all relief.
- 55. Emergency supplies transported.
- 56. U.S. senators, ambassadors, urge more relief efforts.
- 57. Nixon orders immediate response to Lagos aid request.
- 58. U.K.-French talks.

WEEK IV

- 59. Troops replaced.
- 60. U.N. observers report on relief, Thant role.
- 61. Red Cross steps up efforts.
- 62. Action against missionaries.
- 63. Oil output at new high.
- 64. Gowon warns vs foreign interference.
- 65. Reports foreign newsmen barred from war zone.
- 66. Gowon repeats amnesty pledge, Enahoro hints punishment.
- 67. Ports communications restoration begun.
- 68. Displaced persons resettled.
- 69. I.C.R.C. flights halted.
- 70. Wilson-Trudeau discuss aid.
- 71. Red Cross cites needs.
- 72. Three U.S. relief flights arrive.
- 73. U.S. to press Lagos on relief.
- 74. Nixon on aid.
- 75. Report survey on Ibos suppressed.
- 76. Relief aides ousted.



## APPENDIX 111

### DATA AND METHODOLOGY

#### SELECTION OF COUNTRIES AND NEWSPAPERS

One major consideration in the selection of countries is the need to eliminate the Superpowers who own and control the global agencies. Hence, the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union are left out. The contention is that these countries may skew the amount of news attention paid to Nigeria in comparison to countries without such facilities.

Newspaper selection is governed by four factors, some of which also affected the choice of countries. There is the language factor. The newspaper has to be an English language paper. The second is the factor of availability. It has to be available within reasonable distance from Montreal. A third factor is circulation size which must be 7,000 or more. Finally, there is the prestige of the newspaper based on its reputation as a leading journal in the country.

Countries chosen are Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria, Canada and Japan. These fall into two mutually exclusive categories. Ghana, Tanzania and Nigeria constitute a category of African countries. Nigeria is chosen because there is a need for a baseline in that country for an evaluation of news about Nigeria. Tanzania and Ghana are selected to represent differing African perspectives. Tanzania extended diplomatic recognition to secessionist Biafra, while Ghana remained pro-Nigeria. The category of non-African countries is represented by Canada and Japan. Canada is chosen for two reasons. First, it has a long

established role in the Commonwealth of Nations being of the old dominions. Secondly, being a beneficiary of the Canadian Commonwealth scholarship, it is considered worthwhile to assess Canadian press reactions to Nigeria's greatest months of trial as a nation. Japan is selected as a substitute for Ireland, which was dropped as the newspaper from the area proved incomplete.

The journals selected from these countries are as follows, the Ghanaian Times of Ghana, the Nationalist of Tanzania, the Daily Times of Nigeria, Canada's Toronto Globe and Mail, and the Times of Japan.\* The first two are public organs, being owned and published by the state. The others are privately owned journals.

#### SELECTION OF NEWSPAPER ISSUES AND CONTENT FOR ANALYSIS

The period chosen for analysis include the final two weeks before and after the signing of the Biafran surrender document on January 15th., 1970. It is chosen because it embraces two phases of the conflict: a period of actual military confrontation and another of comparative peace, characterized by efforts toward reconciliation and rehabilitation. Covering a maximum number of themes and issues, newspaper copies from the 1st to 31st January, 1970 will be analyzed. This would yield about 27 issues of each of the five publications producing a total of 135 issues, based on a six day work week.

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\* For information about these newspapers see, John C. Merrill, et. al. The Foreign Press, pp.286-87; pp. 297-98; pp. 311-12; and William A. Hachten, Muffled Drums, pp.164

Only items appearing on Page One of each newspaper issue, as well as editorial comments on the editorial page, will be analyzed. Three factors govern this decision. First, the page on which an item appears is an indication of its relative importance as judged by editors. Also, stories appearing on Page One are likely to draw greater readership attention than those appearing elsewhere. Secondly, the editorial line of most journals tends to influence their foreign news coverage. Hence, front page items seem to be related to the editorial position of some newspapers. Finally, the question of time and resources at my disposal mitigate against an extensive analysis of more than front page items and editorials.

#### DIMENSIONS OF THE ANALYSIS

Since the study seeks to determine what was said about the Nigerian civil war and how it was said, the analysis will proceed by reading, measuring and classifying news items by column inches, subject-matter and direction.

Three kinds of variables are to be dealt with. There are the contextual variables which consist of the five newspapers as identified by name and country. The next kind are the published news stories, feature articles, editorial comments and cartoons. These will be referred to as items. The third type of variables are the subject-matter categories. Nine such categories are constructed, and one or more of them make up an item. The categories are, foreign relations, Biafran affairs, Nigerian affairs, economic matters, military acts, church and religion, relief and

humanitarian concerns, press relations, and personalities. A tenth category for inapplicable or other types of subject-matter is also included.

Three standard measuring devices will be used to analyze the data. These are, measurement of the amount of space allocated to items in terms of column inches, news display through the technique of attention score, and the counting of genres by theme or subject-matter categories.

Space measurement will be in column inches. Since the papers do not use columns of equal size; we will construct an average column from an arithmetic mean of the five papers' column width and length. All measurement will be carried out in this standard fashion.

News display will be measured through an attention score made up of placement or location on the page, length of item and size of headlines. Scores ranging from zero to three will be assigned to items appearing on the front which is divisible into four quadrants. Items in the upper left quadrant get three points each, while those in the upper right get two points, with those in the lower left and right getting one and zero respectively. The rationale for such weighting is that items in the upper left are more likely to be read than those on the lower right and so on.

The length of items will be measured and weighted at four levels. Items occupying full column length or more will receive three points, while two points go to those of  $3/4$  column length. Items of half column length and less than half receive one point and zero respectively. Headlines will be classed into four groups according to the width or number of columns used. Those extending

across the entire page or lead stories which do not extend across the entire page receive three points. Two points for three or more column width headlines which do not extend across the page.

This also excludes lead stories. Less than three column width headlines, excluding less than one column width types, receive one point. Those with less than a column width get zero point. Each item may accumulate an attention score ranging from zero to nine points. A higher attention score is presumed to reflect a greater news interest in the Nigerian civil war and vice versa.

## APPENDIX IV

### DEFINITION OF SUBJECT-MATTER CATEGORIES

1. Foreign relations include materials about political, diplomatic, economic and military matters involving either Nigeria or secessionist Biafra and other nations relative to the civil war. This category falls into five sub-units:
  - a) Commonwealth relations which include news about the civil war activities of the Commonwealth of Nations, especially as represented by its secretariat. Also included is material supporting or criticizing the organization's role. Excluded is reference to member states as well as the organization's role in relief and humanitarian matters, both of which are considered under 1-d, 1-e and 6-b.
  - b) United Nations Organization, includes all news about that organization's civil war role as represented by its Secretary-General, the secretariat and the specialized agencies. Also included is material supporting or criticizing such role. Excluded is reference to member states as well as the organization's relief role all of which are considered under 6-b, 1-d and 1-e.
  - c) Organization of African Unity includes news about the civil war role of that organization as represented by its secretariat and special committee on the Nigerian civil war. Also included is material supporting or criticizing the organization. Excluded is material on its member states as well as its relief role both of which are examined under 1-d, 1-e and 6-b.

- d) Nations friendly or allied to Nigeria, covers materials involving nations that were favorably disposed to Nigeria, whether or not they offered her military or other aid, but in so far as such aid was not extended to Biafra. Excluded is material on the relief role of these nations.
  - e) Nations unfriendly to Nigeria, involves materials about those nations that gave military or diplomatic support to Biafra. Included are nations which withheld such support but remained more or less critical of the Nigerian cause in the war. Excluded are news about the relief role of these nations.
2. Biafran affairs embrace all materials relating to the secessionist regime and state excluding its foreign relations. This falls into two sub-topic units:
- a) General Ojukwu affairs, include material about Ojukwu's leadership up to his flight from Biafra, as well as content about his family and his aides in and out of Biafra. Excluded are materials relating to military operations, relief matters and Biafran refugees considered under 5 and 6, respectively.
  - b) General Effiong Affairs involve content on the Biafran state and regime from General Effiong's assumption of the leadership of Biafra to the formal signing of the surrender document. Included are content about his aides, and efforts to establish civil administration in the defeated area. Excluded is material on military operations and relief matters considered under 5 and 6 below.

3. Nigerian affairs here we consider news about the Nigerian society including the government's effort to maintain the unity of the country by non-military means. This consists of three sub-topic units:
- a) Government acts include news on the domestic activities of General Gowon, the state Governors and their aides on issues other than military operations, economic and relief matters as well as issues of national unity.
  - b) Amnesty, Reconciliation and national unity consist of materials relating to these matters. Included is the various reactions to government policy on these matters, as well as news of pleas for, or criticism of, better treatment of the vanquished.
  - c) Messages of solidarity and support include content pledging loyalty to and / or congratulating the Nigerian regime on its success. Included also are reports about demonstrations and any other public celebrations hailing federal victory over secessionist forces. Excluded is material of this nature from foreign political figures considered under 1 above.
4. Economic matters embrace materials relating to economic life in both Nigeria and Biafra during the civil war. This falls into two sub-topics:
- a) Trade, Business and Finance include content about the business and commercial life of both areas. Of importance is the fate of the Biafran money. Excluded is news about taxes and prices.
  - b) Labor, Prices and Taxes contain news about fluctuation



in, and control of, prices of consumer goods. Also included is news about general labor conditions, salaries and wages as well as changes in taxes.

5. Military acts include materials relating to the fighting forces on both sides of the battle line. Excluded are military personnel holding civil appointments as in 2-a, 2-b and 3-a. This category falls into two sub-topics:

- a) Military operations include news about actual military actions such as fighting, air force activities, the movement of arms and troops on both sides. Included also are other acts of military men not relating to refugees and relief matters.
- b) International Observer Team: all materials relating to the activities and reports of this team or its members relative to the war. Included are content commending or criticizing the team.

6. Relief and Humanitarian matters involve material about the plight of civilian victims of the war as well as news about world desire to preserve human life and ameliorate the suffering of the victims. This category falls into three sub-topics:

- a) Refugee affairs cover material on the plight of the refugees, population movement, disease and death among them. Included is content on military-civilian relations as manifested in charges of genocide, rape, looting and other forms of molestation and ill-treatment meted to civilians by soldiers.

- b) International relief aids contain materials about foreign relief plans or aids by governments and other voluntary or church organizations. Included are exchanges by officials and governments on Nigeria's relief problems, as well as news of Nigeria's reactions to such foreign relief plans. Included also is the plight of foreign relief personnel in Nigeria and Biafra.
- c) Internal relief efforts include content on the relief and rehabilitation plans of the federal and state governments, their agencies as well as individuals and organizations in Nigeria. Included also is material on the activities of the Nigerian Red Cross and the Rehabilitation Commission.
- 7. Church and Religion involve materials on the civil war role of the churches, religious sects and organizations including their leaders, such as the Pope. Included also is material supporting or criticizing such roles. Excluded is content on the relief role of the church and other such organizations.
- 8. Press relations involve content on the activities, fate and experiences of foreign and local newsmen on both sides of the fighting line. Also included is news about foreign and local reactions to the press coverage of the civil war.
- 9. Personalities include news about Nigerians, other than the military and political figures and their families.
- 10. Miscellaneous involves any other topic units not classified in categories 1 to 9.

## APPENDIX V

### DEFINITION OF NEWS DIRECTION

News direction is determined in terms of whether items are favorable, neutral or unfavorable to the Nigerian cause.

Favorable content: the following are considered favorable,

- a) those tending to support, foster or portray in good light, the civil war objectives and activities of the Nigerian regime;
- b) materials relating to Nigeria's military successes as well as her social, economic and political stability, including those repudiating Biafran charges of genocide, rape, looting and other misconduct by soldiers.
- c) content that portray the Biafran regime, its cause as well as its foreign backers, in a bad light, through criticisms and outright condemnation.
- d) content highlighting Biafran military weaknesses, her losses and the collapse of her resistance. Included are mentions of Ojukwu's flight and issues depicting social disorder in Biafra.
- e) there are also materials on the actions or statements by Nigerian officials about that country's favorable disposition towards the vanquished as manifested in the offer of a general amnesty etc
- f) reports on foreign military, diplomatic and other aids to Nigeria.

Unfavorable content: the following content are considered unfavorable,

- a) content which tend to support the Biafran cause or portray the regime as well as its foreign supporters in a favorable light.
- b) reports critical of the Nigerian regime or cause, tending to

portray both in a bad light. Also included is criticism of Nigeria's foreign supporters.

- c) materials highlighting social disorder in Nigeria, such as labor unrest and crimes. Also included are content relating to Nigeria's military shortcomings as well as institutional maladministration.
- d) there are also materials affirming Biafran charges of genocide, rape and looting or other mistreatment of civilians by Nigerian soldiers. Included are content on Biafran military successes and any other achievements.
- e) finally are reports about military, diplomatic, relief and other forms of foreign aid to Biafra.

Neutral content: These include materials that are neither favorable nor unfavorable, but which steer a more or less middle course, or are devoid of controversial issues. They include appeals to both sides.

Basically in assessing news direction, the assumption is that whatever is favorable to Nigeria is necessarily unfavorable to secessionist Biafra and vice versa. This is because both were diametrically opposed in their civil war objectives and policies. However, the focus in this study is on the victor, Nigeria. Hence, an item is considered either favorable, neutral or unfavorable to the federal Nigerian regime and cause.

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