

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Nigeria is an amalgam of over 250 ethnic groups. Under the strong arm of the British colonizers, this behemoth appeared to hold the hope of a great nation in the making. Six years after independence the cookies started to crumble. The January 15, 1966 coup d'état set the ball rolling. The killings of some of the emergent independent leaders were misconstrued, ethnic motives, rather than poor governance ascribed to their elimination. The Igbo people were stigmatized and became targets of sectarian violence in most Northern Nigeria cities between May to October 1966. The massacre of ordinary Igbo people residing in Northern Nigeria in particular and other parts of the country during the period bordered on ethnic cleansing. The world leaders did not hold General Gowon to account. The Igbo returned enmasse to their region, abandoning their jobs, businesses and properties. After half-hearted attempts at peace building particularly the reneging of January 1967 Aburi Accord, the Republic of Biafra was declared on May 30, 1967.

The Nigeria-Biafra civil war was brutally prosecuted by both sides. However, Nigeria had the initial advantage and quickly over-ran the border town of Nsukka and what was worse Enugu, the Biafran capital in barely three months after the commencement of hostility. Nsukka and Enugu provinces represented a large chunk of Biafran territory. For over two years of hostilities, the Nigerian army occupied and administered these Biafran areas. These occupation forces were not known to observe rules of engagement in a war. Instances of highhandedness, summary

executions of the civil population, abduction and rape of young girls and women abound, looting of the University town of Nsukka and Enugu, the Biafran capital were glaring. How did the Igbo civil population survive this “reign of terror” by the Nigerian army? Most of the survivors are aging and passing away. Those who caused the pains have gone scot-free. However, there is the need to capture and document the experiences of the victims to avoid a repeat in the future.

Statement of Problem

The Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu area of Biafra would remain a ghastly and horrendous experience to the survivors. For more than two years, the occupation forces virtually “enslaved” the local population, hounded and battered them. After over forty-five years of the civil war, there has not been a scholarly account of the occupation of these areas that first experienced the war. This research is an attempt to address the gap in literature of the civil war. The predominant literature is on the causes, course and personal accounts of the active participants in the war. The harrowing experiences of the Igbo local population in these areas remain scanty. This research is an attempt to remedy the situation.

Purpose of the Study

The people of Eastern Region had borne the brunt of the pogrom, the counter coup d'état that decimated its officer corps in Nigeria and the sporadic outbursts of sectarian and ethnic cleansing after the first military coup of January 15, 1966 and the emergence of Ironsi as the military Head of State. However, the declaration of the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967 led Lagos to declare a “police action” on the Eastern Region. In less than three months of the commencement of hostilities, Biafra lost its northern town of Nsukka and its capital, Enugu, with all its stores. Nsukka area is the borderline separating Biafra from the Northern region of Nigeria, while

Enugu was the capital of the emergent Biafran Republic. However, with the speedy over-running of these two major areas (Nsukka and Enugu) by the Nigerian soldiers from July 1967 to January 1970, the civil populations were subjected to horrendous and inhumane treatments. The Biafran civil population passed through excruciating moments of summary executions, pass system, and arbitrary commandeering of young women as sex slaves by the Nigerian. The University town of Nsukka and Enugu were systematically looted by the invading Nigerian soldiers. This research captured the experiences of the Igbo who survived the Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas during the war. Therefore, the purport of this study is to describe, analyze and evaluate the Nigerian-Biafran Federal troops occupation of the Nsukka-Enugu areas. The study captured the experiences of the Igbo who survived the Nigerian army occupation of these areas. It also further provided insight into the brutalities meted out on the people by the Federal troop and showed how the spill-over effect of this occupation impacted on the psyche, orientation and attitudinal disposition of the people up to 1979. The outcome of this research will add to the existing literature on the Nigerian-Biafran War.

Significance of the Study

War is detestable, an admission of aggressive instinct of man and despite great strides in human civilization, mankind has acknowledged the inevitability of war and its futility. It would be wishful thinking to contemplate a period when mankind will outgrow hostilities, strife and outright wars. However, an examination of Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu would enrich our understanding of the havoc, pains of war and how to curb the excesses of the troops in occupied territories. There were no records of combatants on both sides of the conflict charged for war crimes. Yet the Nigeria-Biafran war was marked with brutalities, sadistic behaviours and callousness. It is hoped that this research would provoke further research into

Nigerian army occupation of other towns in Biafra and serve as reference points in understanding troop's behavior in war-torn countries across Africa. It will also benefit governments in understanding their responsibilities in war torn countries and help the youths to understand that war is not a tea party. It is easier to beat the drums of war but the rhythms of war are very difficult to dance.

Scope of the study

The commencement date for this study is May 1967 when the Republic of Biafra was declared following the unease tension between the Federal Government and the Eastern Region over the pogrom against the Igbo in Northern Nigeria. The work covers the three senatorial zones of Enugu State: Enugu North, Enugu East and Enugu West. The terminal date of 1979 marked the return to civilian rule in Nigeria. It was also the year NPN [National Party of Nigeria] enthroned an Igbo man as vice president the highest government position occupied by an Igbo man after the civil war. The ruling party at the center NPN also entered into an accord with NPP (Nigerian Peoples Party) a predominantly Igbo party in 1979 that enhanced the political visibility of the Igbo at the national level. Through the NPN-NPP Accord an Igbo man was also enthroned as speaker of the Federal House of Representatives.

Methodology and Sources

Literature on Nigeria- Biafran civil war abound. What is lacking appears to be a detailed account of the Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas. However, employing oral interviews of eye witness accounts of survivors of the occupation era, greatly aided in the reconstruction of the history of the period. Experiences of survivors of army occupations whether in Korea, Japan or South Sudan, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Libya, Syria among others are

harrowing and bitter. The official Nigerian account had been of benevolent army of occupation. This is farther from the truth. This research is an attempt to unearth account of the survivors of the Nigerian army occupation of Enugu and Nsukka in order to strike a balance.

Data for this research is mobilized through both primary and secondary sources. Primary data is from archival materials such as official documents, in-depth interviews of eye-witnesses and newspapers of the period. In-depth interviews are conducted with two categories of people. The first group consists of elders who were adults within the period and can relate sensibly their experiences within the occupation context, which is of immense value to this research. How the occupation experiences impacted on their lives, and their view of present crises in Nigeria when juxtaposed with that experience, was crucial in my analysis. Another category of respondents is intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences who are knowledgeable about or have interest in the Nigeria-Biafra question. Secondary sources of information include published books, journals, unpublished thesis and manuscripts, magazines and newspapers. These sources are used to compare and evaluate information collected through other methods. The information is finally subjected to the standard method of interpretation and analysis applicable to the history discipline.

To understand the effects of the Nigerian army occupation on the social life of the people who experienced it, it is helpful to take phenomenological and narrative approaches using semi-structured interviews to validate the findings. Thus, I adopted a multi-qualitative method of research adopting a historical approach. A historical approach is the only workable approach for the study because all of the experiences I seek to recount are already in the past. Two qualitative techniques, namely phenomenological and narrative approaches are the techniques used for data

collection. Phenomenological questioning is used to elicit information from the respondents. This is because the reality of any situation is better understood from the people in that situation and the meaning that they attach to such an experience. In-depth interviews are taken from the respondents that was identified. With the permission of the respondents, all interviews were recorded to make data capture more accurate. To this end audio recordings of discussions is transcribed to enable me to put direct quotations in proper context. Ultimately, the transcripts are used to develop key themes for the project. Primary data from the respondents is supplemented by secondary data, archival materials and expert judgement. Giorgio Agamben's theory of state of exception is used in analyzing the issues as the Igbo civil population were deemed to exist outside the Nigerian state protection and their safety could not be guaranteed by the Nigerian state. The state of exception theory is also complemented by the frustration-aggression hypothesis advanced by Dollard et al. The research is presented in thematic, chronological and analytical order.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of state exception as propounded by Giorgio Agamben in 1995 is employed in this research. He developed three concepts namely: bare life, state of exception and *homo sacer*¹. In his analysis of the concept of bare life², he used the Jews as a case study. He opined that the Jews simply by the pure fact of their birth became highly politicized by the Nazis. The Nazis

portrayed the Jews and then defined them as a people “whose presence (they) can no longer tolerate in anyway.”

Agamben also defined state of exception as a kind of exclusion or isolation. The state of exception is devoid of law and since those quarantined in a state of exception are outside the confines of the law, their murder is not homicide. It is akin to Hobessian state of nature wherein life is short, nasty and brutish. Here, he opined that the Nazis created a paradigmatic example of a totalitarian regime, and they used their power not only to murder anyone who opposed them politically but to attempt to eliminate the Jews as an entire category of citizens, not just in Germany but in all Europe. In doing so, the Nazis waged a ‘legal civil war’ against the Jews². However, in analyzing the issues that led to the Nigerian-Biafran war and the Nigerian army occupation the theory of state exception is applied. The military government led by Gowon made the world to believe that the war waged against the Igbo is an aftermath of the Biafran secession. With the much-touted Igbo coup, the other ethnic groups waged a ‘legal civil war’ in which the Eastern Region was unofficially quarantined in a state of exception.

Through the July revenge coup, May riots, September-October massacres and above all a systematic war of extinction by the federal government, facilitated by the strange and most unusual collaboration and collusion of communism and capitalism to suffocate a people struggling for survival³, the Igbo became a pariah, despised by the rest of Nigeria. The Federal and Northern Regional governments, using their sovereign power gave a silent nod to the massacre of the Igbo domiciled in the North. In fact, it is inferred that Nigerians, at that point in time and until now, will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common

resentment of the Igbo⁴. Like the Nazis, they gave the Igbo a symbol of “people whose presence they (the other ethnic groups) can no longer tolerate in any way.” The Igbo were politicized, treated like outcast. The government sanctioned an environment of hate and resentment created by self-serving politicians and military personnel which resulted in government supervised persecutions, terminations and dismissals of Igbo people based on their ethnicity⁵. Owing to the fact that a state of exception is devoid of law, killings of the Igbo were not considered homicide. The Igbo were massacred not only in the July revenge coup but in the pogrom, that followed suit. Nobody was prosecuted, convicted nor held responsible. Up until now, none of the actors were indicted by the International Crimes Commission, ICC. No effort has been made to investigate and unearth mass burial of the Igbo who lost their lives during the pogrom. Lamenting further on the pogrom, Achebe observed that in that case, a detailed plan for mass killing was implemented by the government, the army, the police, the very people who were to protect life and property. It was far more devastating, because it was a premeditated plan that involved careful coordination, awaiting only the right spark⁶. Indeed, from the 1966 crisis upto the civil war, the Igbo were consigned in a state of exception in Nigeria.

Again, Gowon’s failure to implement the Aburi Accord, despite its strategic importance set the stage for the civil war. Had Gowon not reneged and had Ojukwu been more pragmatic, the civil war might not have been and the Igbo may not have been consigned to Agamben’s state of exception in Nigeria and its collateral damage thereafter.

Furthermore, Agamben's theory is complemented by the frustration-aggression hypothesis advanced in 1939 by researchers at the Yale University Institute of Human Relations published as a small monograph –Frustration-Aggression hypothesis led by John Dollard, Neal E. Miller, Leonard W. Doob, O.H. Mower and Robert R. Sears⁸. According to this hypothesis, frustration generally leads to acts of aggression. Frustration emerges when people are unable to achieve their full potential as a free people. Aggression is always a consequence of frustration. This means that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration. The existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression⁹. Resolution only occurs when the instigator of such aggression has become displaced or removed. As Frantz Fanon argued, in his book, *Wretched of the Earth* that the time of colonialism and war of independence in colonial Africa typically represents such movement from frustration to aggression on the side of the African natives¹⁰. The desire to obliterate the white man symbolizes a desire for freedom. Now, returning to the 1966 crises in Nigeria, it could be likened to the North or core Fulani being frustrated at the daring of the Igbo in eliminating their semi-divine rulers in January 15, 1966 *coup d'état*. Out of frustration they then visited their aggression on the hapless Igbo residing in the North which further drove the Igbo into seceding. However, they controlled the narrative and painted the victims of their frustrations as the aggressor in the so-called war of unity. Indeed, Agamben's theory appears more suitable for the research because the pogrom unleashed against the Igbo had official Nigerian government imprimatur.

Literature Review

There is abundant literature on the Nigerian- Biafran war. Much of the literature dwell on the causes and course of the war. However, there is no in -depth account of the Nigerian army occupation of the liberated parts of the defunct Biafra yet. This research will attempt to fill the

gap in our knowledge of the war. Nonetheless reviews of some of the available literature are as follows:

Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country. A Personal History of Biafra* succinctly discusses the events that led to the declaration of Biafra on May 30, 1967 after the failure of Gowon's regime to implement the Aburi Accord. He highlighted some of the sufferings inflicted on the Igbo by the Nigerian army occupation of various Igbo communities such as summary executions, rape and looting. Achebe was distressed at the Nigerian bombing of civilian targets such as markets, churches and hospitals. He specifically mentioned the Nigerian army invasion of Oji-River Hospital where fourteen nurses and the patients in the Hospital were murdered¹¹. Although the work does not focus on the occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas, it is useful in understanding the callousness of the Nigerian forces especially in their relationship with the Biafran civil population.

Blood on the Niger: The First Black-on-Black Genocide by Emma Okocha, captured how in a single day Asaba malefolk were almost wiped out by a brutal Nigerian army of conquest. Young girls and married women became booties of the Nigerian soldiers. He lamented how Chuks Momah's attempt to rescue his abducted wife from a Nigerian soldier led to his murder¹². This book is relevant to this research especially in its examination of the summary execution, forceful conscription of women into sex slavery and other atrocities committed by the federal troops during the war.

Also, *To Save Nigeria: The Revolutionary Coup and the Civil War* by Goddy Onyefuru x-rayed the issues that led to the January 15, 1966 *coup d'etat*. He asserted that the January 15, 1966 *coup d'etat* was revolutionary and rebutted contrary undertones of ethnic motive. He condemned

the abortion of the coup by General Ironsi over what he alleged was his inordinate ambition for power. According to Onyefuru, General Ironsi's lust for power beclouded him from the course of handing over the reins of power to Alhaji Zara Dipcharima after the murder of the Prime Minister, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa¹³. He painted a scenario of three contrasting interest groups in the Nigerian army after independence; the first group was the politically inert, unconcerned army officers. The second group was those officers in army uniform willing to advance the interest of the politicians with the force. While the third group constituted the revolutionary-minded officers who desired a change in the country. It was this group that carried out the January 15, 1966, coup d'etat¹⁴. This research benefitted from the work as it highlighted the events leading to the January 15, 1966 *coup d'etat*, the aims of the coup leaders and how it was aborted by General Ironsi.

The work by Peter Nyaba entitled "Southern Sudan: Black Africa's Emerging New Gem" discusses the crises in emergent independent African nation of Sudan. The author lamented what he termed the conspiracy of Juba Conference of 1947 by the British overlord which lumped Southern and Northern Sudan together as an independent country without the consent of the Southern Sudan. He noted the differences between the North and South Sudan was so deep to be overlooked. According to him, the Arab North Sudan was arrogant, religious bigots who refused to share power with the Christian South Sudan. These cultural differences and fear of domination resulted in the war of secession 1983-2005¹⁵. Like the Biafran War in Nigeria, the forces of secession were too weak to achieve Independence by force. The civil war in Sudan was destructive, in which more than two and half million-people perished as a result of military action or war-related causes such as diseases, famine among others with four to five million people internally displaced or becoming refugees in neighbouring countries¹⁶. Although the work is not on Nigerian- Biafran War, it is beneficial to this research especially in understanding

the social dichotomy between Southern Sudan and the Arab Muslim North – two disparate groups who were foisted on each other by the British. The destructive nature of the war on the South as a result of military action or war related causes is useful in this research.

Half of a Yellow Sun written by Chimamanda Adichie captured vividly the causes and course of the Nigerian- Biafran war. She discusses the penetration of the University town of Nsukka that led to the fall of Enugu, the Biafra capital. Using a fictional family setting, she was able to x-ray the effect of the war on the civilian population. The civilians in Biafra enclave suffered because of economic blockade imposed by the Federal government as starvation became a “legitimate weapon of war.” The little relief materials could not go around because the International Organizations could not bring much because of the blockade. The war was fought with nothing, the Biafran soldiers had no food, no boots and no uniforms¹⁷. Sometimes a whole day would go by without food. One could also grasp the role of women who fed the home or engaged in *Ahia* attack, which is trade along the enemy line to get food especially salt. Those engaged in menial works preferred to be paid with food instead of money as there were no places to buy food. The nonchalant attitude of the world powers who were worried over the ripple effect of Nigeria war because of oil was equally discussed. The Federal war planes destroyed markets which she labeled “forest markets.” Although the setting of this work is based in Nsukka, it did not explain how the civil population domiciled in Nsukka and Enugu felt the effects of the occupation. Rather, it gave insight into the innumerable and harrowing experiences suffered by the civilian population in other parts of Igboland as captured in the book.¹⁸ This work is useful especially in appreciating the traumas of the civil population during the Nigerian army occupation of the area.

In his article “Ahia Attakie and Yakambaya: Interrogating the Moral Dilemma and the Role of Ozuitem-Bende Women in the War Economy of Biafra, 1967-1970”, Victor Ukaogo examines the social consequences of the kind of war policies adopted by Gowon and his war cabinet. He discusses the role of women in the war as they quickly assumed the role of breadwinners in their family while their husbands were at the war front. As a result of the difficulties of war and lack of essential food items, some women engaged in Trans-border trade popularly known as ‘Ahia Attakie.’ This trade involved many risks as they trade with the Nigerian soldiers and also acted as spies. He mentioned that the trade equally led to another social malaise known as ‘Yakambaya.’ These were women who abandoned their families and married Nigerian soldiers and had children with them. After the war, some of them returned to their husbands’ homes with kids. They were out rightly rejected by their husbands’ families and also their immediate families for the disgrace brought upon them. Victor Ukaogo identified three reasons why women engaged in ‘Ahia Attakie and Yakambaya’: one, some of them were compelled by the circumstances and exigencies of the war and thus decided to leave their husbands and children and follow the Hausa and Yoruba soldiers to form a new alliance of marriage or union. Two, some others did the same thing purely on account of their desire to enjoy life which Nigerian soldiers afforded them at the time of extreme deprivation in Biafra. And three, a few cultivated such unethical union purely based on greed and out of their acquisitive drive to make it in life by whatever means¹⁹. He x-rays the psychological trauma inflicted on the prodigal wives and their children by their communities. He is also of the view that despite these, the war brought out the ingenuity of the women involved in feeding and maintaining their homes during the Nigeria army occupation. Although the work is not on Nsukka- Enugu areas, it will be beneficial in understanding the consequences of the war on women, children and the larger families’ cohesion.

In his book, *A History of the Nigerian War 1967-1970*, Zdenek Cerverka succinctly traces the build-up to the January coup and other crises which culminated in the Nigerian war. The various peace talks and their failure were equally highlighted. The role of the various world powers especially Britain, France and Soviet Union among others is not left out. He divided the events of the war into four phases which led to the final capitulation of Biafra on January 12, 1970 and total surrender on January 15, 1970. However, on the atrocities of the war on the civilian population, he recalled an eyewitness account of Prof Jean Mayer who watched as hospitals, schools, refugee camps and markets were systematically attacked by the Nigerian air force. In his words, “We witnessed such attacks and saw hundreds of casualties from previous attack”²⁰. Although the work mentioned the attack on Nsukka sector, it did not fully investigate how the civilians in Nsukka and Enugu sectors suffered from the MIG17(Mikoyan-Gurevich) of the Nigerian air force or bombing by its illusions,²¹ as feeding lines and refugee camps were systematically strafed daily. The work is useful in understanding the brutality of the Nigerian Armed Forces against the civil population of Biafra.

Surviving in Biafra by Alfred Obiora Uzokwe discusses his family’s experience in Lagos in the heat of 1966 crisis. As an Igbo family resident in Lagos, his family passed through the trauma of ethnic bias from friends betraying their Igbo friends and even plotting their death. The experiences of the civilians during the war were not left out including the impunities exhibited by the federal troops when they occupied Nnewi, the author’s hometown. Mr. Uzokwe alluded to the experiences of a people being subjugated by merciless conquering foes.²² The conquistadors flaunted their menacing powers in everything: whether at the village stream, fuel station or at the market, they displayed the superior air of the victor to the chagrin of the Biafran civil population

Although the work is not on Nsukka and Enugu areas, it is relevant as it gives first hand insight into the relegation of the Biafran civilians to the status of second class citizens.

Ben Odogwu in his book, *No Place to Hide* paints a gory picture of self-inflicted problems that confronted the ill-fated Republic of Biafra. Odogwu enumerated the crises which ranged from self-doubt, “sabotage hunt,” envy and jealousy that pervaded the officer corps of the Biafra army. He lamented the indiscriminate bombing by the Nigerian Airforce which the Biafran High Command had no answer for. As Biafran Military Intelligence Chief, he witnessed how the Nigerian Air force bombed Aba on 27 April 1968, which left 148 civilians dead, mainly women and children²³. According to Odogwu the Nigerian bombing was not restricted to military targets, but had Nigerian soldiers dumping their bombs anywhere and anyhow²⁴. Ben Odogwu under war situation expected the Nigerian forces to dump food rather than lethal bombs on Biafran occupied areas. If Biafra had enjoyed the air advantage during the war, they would not have acted differently. Rather than admit Biafra’s poor counter strategy, Mr Odogwu became too emotive, blaming every person other than the Biafran leadership. However, the work is relevant to this research as it analyses the crises and conflicts that rocked the Biafran Republic.

Because I am Involved by Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu highlights his thoughts on Nigeria as a corporate entity. Ojukwu discusses his thirteen years of exile in Cote D’Ivoire and remembers with nostalgia his homecoming after such lonely years in exile. He equally affirms that he has no apology for being at the forefront to defend his people who were persecuted and massacred at that time in the North. On the January *coup d’etat*, he noted that the coup was never an Igbo coup as had been propagated in many quarters. Ojukwu also observed that it was comic that it was the late General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo who single-handedly dismantled the coup in Lagos, while himself, another Igbo, rendered it immobile in the north²⁵. Although Ojukwu failed to give

cogent reasons for not incorporating the leaders of the January 15, 1966 coup in the Biafran army, the work is useful in understanding the philosophy and ideology of Biafra which he said still lives on.

Chinua Achebe in his work *The Trouble with Nigeria* blames the leadership for the ills of the Nigerian State. Although it was too simplistic to assume that with a strong leadership, a cure-all solution to Nigeria's ills would be achieved. However, the focus is on Achebe's lamentation of how the Igbo have jettisoned their traditional values for everything foreign. He observed the proliferation of "kings" in Igboland in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria against their cherished republicanism. He bemoaned the state of the Igbo in Nigeria since the end of the Civil War with the covert and overt discrimination against the people. He concluded that under such scenario, peace, stability and progress would continue to elude Nigeria²⁶. Although the work does not dwell on Nigerian occupation of Nsukka and Enugu, it is useful especially in understanding the resentment of other ethnic groups against the Igbo in Nigeria.

Nzeogwu by Olusegun Obasanjo is a portrayal of one of the architects of the January 15, 1966 *coup d'etat* as a patriot by his friend and confidant General Obasanjo. Although the coup failed, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu through his correspondences with Obasanjo appeared to have been motivated by the love of Nigeria and out of a genuine desire to arrest the ship of the state from inevitable shipwreck. Major Nzeogwu appeared to be shocked by the turn of events and the subsequent drift of Nigeria to Civil War. According to General Obasanjo, Nzeogwu appeared helpless as Ojukwu and Gowon drove Nigeria into the war of attrition²⁷. When a young man throws a deadly stone as Nzeogwu and colleagues did on January 15, 1966, its catastrophic

consequences cannot be prevented. The January 15, 1966 *coup d'etat* created more problems than it set out to solve. Nigeria was plunged into 30 months civil war in which over two million people perished. Nigeria since that coup has remained more polarized and divided. Although the work did not examine the Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas, it is useful especially in understanding the person and character of one of the coup leaders Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu.

Sunset in Biafra by Elechi Amadi, an Ikwerre Igbo turn coat, who opportunistically allied with the Nigerian army as the tide turned against the mainland Igbo, the proponents of Biafra. He cruelly alleges that the Biafran soldiers singled him and his people out as saboteurs during the war and harassed other Eastern minorities for the same reason. Indeed, the issue of saboteurs was misused by the Biafran authority but it was never directed against any ethnic group, lest of all the Ikwerre Igbo. Elechi Amadi, an intellectual who should know the difference between variants of Igbo dialects, alleges that the Igbo imposed their Igbo language on his people²⁸. Unfortunately, it was only the Ikwerre Igbo that the Igbo could impose their language on- not on the Ijaw, Efik and the Ibibio. Rather than shamelessly implore the victorious Federal forces for some crumbs from their table, he went to the extent of denying his Igbo identity. According to Mr Amadi what irritated him most was that Ojukwu refused to concede that his people were the first to strike on January 15, 1966²⁹. A *coup d'etat* is a secret conclave of some dissatisfied officers and never an ethnic agenda to wrest power. Even though the work did not discuss Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas, it gives insight into the hysteria over saboteurs by the Biafran leadership.

Ben Gbulie in his book *The Fall of Biafra* attempts to x-ray the critical issues that led to the collapse of Biafra. He discussed the cannibalism prevalent in the Aba Province. The Ngwa

people of Aba were killing refugees and even Biafran soldiers who strayed into their traditional homeland for meat and in their false belief that eating of human flesh makes a man invincible³⁰. Unfortunately, the Biafran High Command did not react sufficiently to dissuade the Ngwa people from such practices through severe extermination of those found culpable. Again, Gbulie lamented how field commanders of Biafran army fell to the guile of fake prophets who determined for the troops when to launch attacks against the enemy forces. Biafran troops suffered severe reverses due to these manipulations of “men of God”³¹ who extorted the troops of their little stipends. The work is useful in understanding the harrowing effects of the war on the Igbo.

Michael Gould in his book *The Biafra War: The Struggle for Modern Nigeria* discusses the issues that precipitated the civil war such as the failure to implement the Aburi Accord. He enumerated the high-handedness of the Nigerian army against Biafran civilians. These soldiers engaged in wanton rape of Biafran women and summary executions of men believed to be Biafran sympathizers. According to Gould, the Federal troops at Afikpo rounded up some of the villagers into a block of houses and detonated explosives which blew up the buildings. Those who survived the explosion were shot on sight³². The Nigerian army did not observe the code of conduct for war. There was clear evidence of war crimes which the international community did not address. Although the work does not dwell on Nsukka and Enugu areas, it is useful in appreciating the horrors of occupation by the Biafran civil population.

John Toland’s *Occupation: A Searing Novel on Post-War Japan* discusses the United States occupation of Japan after the Second World War. Japan had been defeated, its key cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in ruin after the atomic bomb was dropped on them. Tokyo was in shambles and the Japanese government in disarray. Shortly after its unconditional surrender, the

USA occupied Japan. Many Japanese Officials were put on trial for their various roles in the war. The humiliation was similar to what Biafran officers suffered after the Nigerian- Biafran war. Japan's former Prime Minister, General Tojo and Foreign Minister Togo faced the military tribunal presided over by the United States³³. Indeed, Toland's work is useful for this research in appreciating the consequences of military defeat by any nation.

In her article "A Walk Down the Memory Lane: Reminiscences of the Nigeria- Biafra war," Ada Uzoamaka Azodo discusses her war experiences as a young female who had to survive the war in spite of hardship, starvation and other horrible experiences. She maintains that although women bore the brunt of the war severely, writers had not actually investigated deeply on the role of women in fending for their families throughout the war years. She opined that many times, women had to do whatever they could to put food on the table for the family. Some women went behind enemy lines in "attack trade" to bring back life giving provisions for their families³⁴. In such a way, women wore themselves out fending for their families at great personal risks. The devastations of war made life miserable and disillusionment set in after the war as many were rendered homeless because of air raids and demolition by the federal troops of "occupied" areas. It is instructive also that the end of the war ushered in looting and brigandary as they lost their personal effects in Enugu. It is a truism that the work did not x-ray in greater detail the experiences of civilians in occupied areas around Nsukka and Enugu; it is beneficial especially in understanding the impact of the war through the prism of a woman.

Post- Civil War Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983 by P.O Obi-Ani canvases that the Igbo were marginalized contrary to the general amnesty proclaimed by General Gowon. The victorious Federal government used Decree No. 46 of 1970, the Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree, the Banking Obligations Decree, abandoned property issue among

others to stunt Igbo recovery in post-civil war Nigeria³⁵. However, on the occupation of Biafran enclave, he observed that the civilian population experienced a reign of terror. The soldiers commandeered livestock, looted private and public property, raped women and teenage girls, forcefully married others and murdered anybody who challenged their highhandedness³⁶. The work does not fully dwell on the atrocities committed by the victorious federal troops on Nsukka and Enugu; it is valuable in understanding the after effect of occupation of Enugu and Nsukka areas.

In his book, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*, Madiebo recounted several woes that bedeviled the nascent nation, Biafra, such as the existence of crisis of confidence, the Biafran financial disaster owing to the change of currency by Nigeria in January 1968³⁷ which was the most important single reason for the loss of the war and finally, there was by far too much time and energy wasted in frequent struggles for power and position inside Biafra during the war.³⁸ Though the work focuses mainly on the causes and course of the war, it is of immense value in understanding why Nsukka and Enugu sectors fell into the hands of the Nigerian soldiers during the early years of the war and why the capital—Enugu was evacuated and the numerous efforts made to recapture it failed till the end of hostility in January 1970.

A History of the Igbo People by Elizabeth Isichei x-rays the history of the Igbo people from time immemorial to the post-war Igboland. She explained that the genesis of Igbo migration to North started with the colonial railway construction. She called this wave of migration “the second Igbo Diaspora” in which the first Igbo Diaspora was during the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade. She observed that when the railway was under construction from the North to the East, the Igbo settled along the route, wherever there was a camp. The camps were built to help the workers on the roads and these camps were mainly inhabited by Igbo who came to work on the railway line.

They came first of all singly. After sometimes, they brought their wives, small brothers and sisters, usually to help them in domestic work. In the North, the Igbo settled down with their families and began to farm. Gradually, they diversified into trade and produce buyers. Increasingly, they appeared to their new neighbours as a privileged group and roused sentiments accordingly.³⁹ They were regarded as usurpers who took opportunities that rightly belonged to the indigenes. The resentment was acute against the Igbo traders especially in Tivland where they refused admittance of Igbo traders in their markets. At a time of rapid social change or economic hardship, the Igbo easily became scapegoats, with a myriad of problems for which they were not in fact responsible⁴⁰. Such were also the cases that followed the May killings, September-October pogrom in which many Igbo became victims of political conspiracy. The Igbo were massacred in thousands owing to bottled – up grievances. Although, the work was silent on the Nigerian Army occupation of Igboland during the war, it is a good source material especially in understanding the motive behind ethnic cleansing targeted against the Igbo after January 15,1966 coup d'état.

Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup by Adewale Ademoyega enunciated the reasons behind the first military revolution of January 15,1966 which triggered series of tragic events that later ended in a 30- month civil war between Nigeria and the Eastern Region. He tried to justify either the fact that the January coup was never tribalistic or an attempt to pave way for the Igbo domination of the country. He postulated that it was Ironsi's mishandling of the achievement of the coup that gave the Northerners the impetus to commit the heinous atrocities of May- October 1966 against the Southerners. He equally affirmed that the war was totally avoidable but for the personality clash between the two protagonists- Ojukwu and Gowon. Being trapped in Biafra during the war, he canvasses that the

Economic blockade reduced everyone of us to the level of the most primitive man, who had to do without all the good things that civilization had brought to modern men. Clothing, food and the other things we needed badly were denied us. Inside the prisons and in many refugee camps, men were dying hourly in hundred from hunger, thirst and other deprivations⁴¹.

As a soldier he lamented that the Federal Air Force were indiscriminate in their choice of victims; detention camps, refugee camps, prisons, hospitals, markets, schools, private and public homes, churches and every conceivable target-even trees and grasses, producing a most horrifying and most disgusting spectacle that could be perpetrated in any community of human beings.⁴² Though the work did not capture the harrowing experiences of civilian population of Nsukka and Enugu areas, it is a critical source material in understanding the rationale behind the first military coup.

In his Novel *Sunset at Dawn* Chukwuemeka Ike was able to capture the tragedies of the Biafran war especially how it generally affected the civilians. Using fictitious names, he was able to demarcate the life of educated Biafrans who were at the various Directorates and the villagers who suffered most as a result of lack of basic essential commodities of life. The war brought so many vices in Igboland ranging from false prophets, rumor mills, saboteurs' saga, and even suspicious of refugees who left their various communities in the heat of the war. Narrating through one of the characters the futility of the war, he mentioned that the war," said to be waged against rebels, was in fact no more than the cold-blooded slaughter of innocents." Ami Junior was no rebel, Halima, her son and all others massacred at the Obodo air raid were no more than statistical data on a population census chart. None of them contributed to the decision to separate Biafra from Nigeria, and none was in a position to influence the course of war. Their massacre made no sense."⁴³ In essence, all the innocent civilians who were shelled, strafed and raided had

no influence in the course of the war. However, it is a trite that the work did not capture the life of the civilians in the so-called “liberated areas” especially Nsukka and Enugu sectors, it is beneficial in understanding the horrors of the war on innocent civilians who had no say in the cause and course of the war.

In his article “A Futuristic Exposition of Ndigbo In Chimamanda Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun” Chiemeka Oha diagnosed the horrors of war and lessons for the future of ndigbo. He opined that telling the Biafran story is an endless task for the ndigbo because it impinges on their past and their futuristic stance. He maintained that the civil war was aimed at ensuring that the independence of Biafra, the land of the rising sun will never grow full blown, but will wither under the unrelenting attack of the federal forces⁴⁴. Using the characters in the novel, he succinctly portrays the dehumanization of war fought without helpers and weapon. He maintained that the political culture of the Igbo had cost them the inability to understand the intrigues of modern politics in this complex nation. His view is that Republicanism is no more favorable to the exigencies of modern day politics. Finally, he quoted Achebe that tomorrow is pregnant because what we must do is to look back and try to find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us⁴⁵. Although the work is not on occupation of Nsukka and Enugu per se during and after the war, it is beneficial to this research especially in his examination of this tragic event that trapped the people by the sheer horrors of the war.

Biafra: Britain’s Shame written by Auberon Waugh and Suzanne Cronje is a critical source material for this work. They gave eye witness accounts of life among the civilians in Briafran enclave during the crises. Having visited Igboland at the heat of the inferno, they were able to critically examine the conspiracy of the world powers: Britain, Russia and USA. In a bid to protect their economic interests, the super powers supplied arms and even deceived their

parliaments on the true condition of events between Lagos and Biafra. The super powers buried their ideological differences of cold war to have a common policy on Biafra. The role of African Heads of State under the auspices of O.A.U was equally examined especially the role played by the then Secretary General of the Organization, Mr. M. Dialo Telli who myopically saw the war through the prism of Muslim North versus Christian South⁴⁶ and thwarted every move to reach peace settlement through the organization.

Tracing the call for riots in the North to the tragedy of the pogroms they were able to narrate the sufferings of the Biafra during the war in which the troops saw themselves as on a mission of extermination. They flouted the “code of conduct” of warfare and went on a killing spree of both occupied and unoccupied areas of Eastern Nigeria. Method of extermination included machine gunning of all males of Biafran origin in newly captured towns, conscripting of younger Biafrans for use as cannon fodder; burial alive of children with their executed parents in mass graves (as Asaba); devastation of houses, farms and livestock, starvation, bombing and other methods which included mass execution by slitting of throats and the chopping of heads in the market place of newly captured towns, the killing of unborn babies by slitting open the stomachs of pregnant women, the plucking out of eyes from prisoners-of-war and the skinning of live Biafrans⁴⁷. These atrocities were committed and every Igbo community in Eastern Nigeria has such harrowing tales of woes perpetrated by Lagos and her soldiers. In the opinion of the authors, certainly, it is a fact that scarcely a single person was brought to trial after some thirty thousand easterners had died in the 1966 massacres, many of which were conducted by contingents of the Nigerian Army, and it may well be that these soldiers felt that their behavior was condoned. The atrocities in Igboland were just a continuation of what started in May to

October 1966 against the Easterners domiciled in other parts of the country. The work though not specifically on Nsukka and Enugu, is of immense value to the completion of the thesis.

A History of Nigeria by Toyin Falola and Mathew Heaton traced the emergence of early states and societies in Nigeria upto 1500CE. The political and economic transformations in the 19th century was not left out. The transition to British rule which led into the amalgamation of these states and societies was discussed. Independence was ushered in with fear among the various ethnic groups. This fear and all the problems that Nigeria suffered from the 1960 was what they called the “national question⁴⁸”. They went on to state that since regional identity was weak, the greatest fear of most Nigerians in the 1960s was that their region would become “dominated” by another⁴⁹. Thus, the struggle to control power at the centre plunged the nascent country into a national debacle which resulted in census crisis, federal election debacle, and Western Region crisis to which lives and properties were lost. The political class stalled while the country rose into a molten magma. This became the last straw as five majors of Southern origin carried out a coup on January 15, 1966. This coup set the ball rolling as the aftermath ended in a civil war. It is a trite that the book is not on the Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu, it is beneficial as it examined the crises and instability which led to that horrible past.

“The Nigerian Civil War in Nsukka Zone” by Ugwuanyi Gabriel Chidia appraises the war in Nsukka as a border town to the North of Nigeria. The war according to him was felt by the entire populace who lost lives and properties. The conquistadors’ major target was the destruction of University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus especially the Princess Alexandra Auditorium where Ojukwu addressed staff and students. The Federal forces according to Ugwuanyi thought that the destruction of the University community would lead to the demise of Igbo intellectuals⁵⁰. Civilian targets such as houses, churches, schools and markets were burnt. Planted crops and

livestock were consumed. However, contrary to widely held assumption, the people of Nsukka resisted federal invasion with machetes and dane guns ignorant of modern ways of warfare while many joined the army. Nsukka zone lost their sons through these ways. Although the work is silent on occupation of Enugu Zone, it is a good source material for this research.

“Ukpor Women during the Nigerian Civil War” by Emerah, Obiageli Patricia discusses the issues that precipitated the political impasse in the declaration of the Republic of Biafra on 30th May, 1967. The war according to her did not reach Ukpor owing to the gallant defense of Nnewi by the Biafran soldiers but the Ukpor people contributed to the war efforts. Their men were conscripted into the army while their women fended for their families. The women provided food every three weeks to the Biafran soldiers in the war front. They alleviated the hardship of the war refugees through clothing, food and provided farm work for them. They also engaged in local and attack trade despite the risks involved.

The women of Ukpor felt the traumatic experience of the war. Some lost their husbands and sons, others died of hunger, and some husbands came home incapacitated creating more burdens on such women. The war also led to moral decadence as some women especially married ones could not endure the hardship of the time abandoned their families for the Nigerian soldiers.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the work does not dwell on Nsukka and Enugu is useful in appreciating the role of women during this period as farmers, traders and breadwinners.

“The Impact of the Civil War on Extended Family System in Nguru” By Nwagwu, Vivianne Chikannele canvasses how the war affected her people. The war was not fought in Nguru per se but her proximity to Owerri made her people to feel the impact severely. Nguru people had what she called the returnee problem: those who had stayed away from the town for so long and

hastily returned to their homestead penniless and were not able to recover their lands held in custody by the extended family members. This sowed the seed of animosity among family members. The effect on the extended family system also led to loss of respect for elders and hierarchical recognition of elders as against the Igbo egalitarian and republican society. It also led to prostitution among girls and married women who lived in concubinage with Nigerian soldiers. They derisively looked down on their husbands; they saw their family as secondary to their survival⁵². This neglect of family life saw the breakdown of extended family system. The work is beneficial as it discusses the high rate of moral decadence in Igboland since 1970.

Fredrick Forsyth's *The Making of AN African Legend: The Biafran Story* is a detailed account of Biafran war experiences in the fifteen chapters. He presents the atrocities, roles of foreign agents and war time peace conferences on the crisis. The federal government wrecked farms, sacked and looted buildings, executed civilians especially killing of innocent women and children. The war situation made it imperative for women to engage in trading activities. The market places therefore became the preserve of women with their babies strapped to their backs. It also became a highly prized target of the Nigerian Air Force. The Air force at Awgu market on February 17, 1968 threw a bomb that killed 103 people in less than a minute and in October at Aguleri market where 510 people lost their lives.⁵³ Nevertheless, how the book generally and clearly accounted for the events is worthwhile only that it lacked accounts on other communities like Nsukka. It is a good source material for this research.

Nigeria: The Challenge of Biafra by Arthur Nwankwo espouses the challenges faced by the Biafran nation in her quest for self-determination. He lamented that corruption, nepotism among other vices were some of the ills that plagued Biafra. Also, Ojukwu's disdain for the old politicians made him to relegate them to the background. He despised and distrusted the old

Brigade and mostly used civil servants, new political upstarts and a brigade of “rediscovered” political leaders. Most of them included Prof. Eyo Ita, Dr. Alvan Ikoku, Mr Nwokedi and Mr Isaac Iweka which in the fifties opposed the NCNC. These were naturally opposed to the “successful” politicians⁵⁴. This infraction according to him was a huge mistake that cost Biafra many some diplomatic battles as Gowon employed the services of Awolowo, Anthony Enaharo, Aminu Kano and Joseph Tarka to execute the war⁵⁵. He also points out that the rot and corruption in the different directorates and the military led to the death of hundreds of Biafran soldiers as many were hungry while some had no boots and uniforms. These were some of the infractions which led to the collapse of Biafra. The work though did not elucidate more on the civilians’ experiences in Nsukka and Enugu areas; it would be beneficial in understanding the plight of the Biafran soldiers who had no option than to embark on looting to survive.

A Social History of The Nigerian Civil War: Perspectives from Below by Axel Harneit-Seivers, Jones O. Ahazum And Sydney Emezue succinctly capture the war, the soldiers and the state in Biafra. People developed various survival and survival strategies as the economic blockade took its toll on the civilians. People devised means of making ends meet in the face of glaring deprivations as a result of war policies adopted by Lagos. The women through their war efforts provided for the soldiers and also become the breadwinners. Some engaged in attack trade while others enrolled in Civil Defence and Red Cross services. Aside from these, women in the federal –held areas married soldiers to avoid violence against them or their families. Women were sexually abused while others who married the Nigerian army and had children were left behind while their children were taken away. In other words, the days following the end of the war was very traumatic for women as their personal belongings in most cases were confiscated from them

by the Nigerian soldiers who gave them to their mistresses and girlfriends⁵⁶. Their work is relevant to this study especially in understanding the effect of the war on women.

The War of Nigerian Unity 1967-1970 by Sir Rex Niven is an account of the protracted Nigerian-Biafran war. In the twenty-one chapters of the book, attempt was made to present the background of events leading to the war. However, with the title “the war of Nigerian unity,” the author appears to defend the Nigerian government reasons on why the war was fought. As such tends to rationalize the atrocities, sufferings, hunger and death of innocent civilians that characterized the war. Furthermore, not even a paragraph was dedicated to the predicament of women and children in Biafran territories. Thus, creating the impression that can make one assert that the author is totally biased. In fact, the use of such words as “the so-called Biafran” clearly supports the above assertion.

The sheer suffering, hunger and inhuman treatment on Biafran women and children were considered as a mere propaganda. He postulates that” no one ever explains how the pictures of starving children came about as their backgrounds apparently had well-nourished adults⁵⁷”. Nevertheless, the failure of this book to treat such sensitive issues such as the brutalities, massacres and rape justifies this research.

In her work,” *Igbo Women and Politics in Nigeria, 1929-1999*, Esther Ojiakor examined the participation of Ibo women in Nigeria politics since the women war of 1929. She observed that Igbo women went through what she termed oppressive nationalism economic nationalism and radical nationalism⁵⁸ to dismantle the obnoxious laws especially the imposition of taxation and foreign rule on the people. Their efforts culminated in the government apointedment of anthropologists to investigate the social, cultural, economic and political organizations of the

Igbo. Women continued to play active part, organizing themselves into market women association of their various localities in pre-independence, independence and post-independence Nigerian politics. Some women rose to be the members of Eastern House of Assembly where they canvassed for women welfare. During the war, she mentioned that the women automatically became the breadwinners by engaging in the attack trade while others joined the Militia, Red Cross and BOFF to contribute to the war effort. Her work although focused on the general experiences of the Igbo women, it is a good source material for the completion of this research because it provides vital information to our understanding of how the war affected the women.

The above literature is invaluable to the successful completion of this thesis. They are good source materials for the the completion of this research because they provide the vital information to our understanding of the origin, courses and consequences of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The literature focused on the war but how the people experienced the army occupation and how these experiences altered the social life and social processes of the people of these areas is the focus of this research and the gap it would fill.

Organisation of Study

The study is embodied in six chapters. The chapter one is the introduction of the study which provides the background of the study. It also provides the theoretical framework; statement of problem which is the reason for the study, purpose and significance of study is also captured. It also covers scope, methods and sources of data and literature review. Chapter two presents Enugu and Nsukka on the eve of Jan.15, 1966 *coup d'etat* . Here, the work considered Enugu as a Regional Capital, the University town of Nsukka, the January 15, 1966 coup and its perceptions and the declaration of the Republic of Biafra and the Civil War. Chapter three

examines the Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka area 1967-1970. It touches on the overrunning of Nsukka, the looting of University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus and the harrowing tales of occupation of Nsukka. Chapter four is on the fall of Enugu and Federal Occupation of its environs: 1967-1970. This aspect of study captures the activities of Biafran partisans and the imposition of pass law, collaborators, saboteurs and attempted annihilation of freeborn in Nkanu, the “Butcher” at Agbani, Traumas and sorrows of Chiene Nnaji and passive resistance in Udi. Chapter five looks at the effects of the occupation in Enugu and Nsukka areas. 1970-1979. Here, the work considers the social stigma, economic pauperization of the people, breakdown of communal cohesion and women liberation and other issues. Chapter six contains the summary and conclusion.

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CHAPTER TWO

ENUGU AND NSUKKA ON THE EVE OF JANUARY 15, 1966 *COUP D'ETAT*

The wind of change blowing throughout Africa according to the former British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, enabled Nigeria to gain Independence on October 1, 1960 from Britain. The 1960s has been termed the years of Africa because of the large number of countries that won their freedom from their colonial masters during the decade. However, in Nigeria, independence meant different things to Nigerian nationalists. It meant an era of regional competition, unhealthy rivalry, ethnic chauvinism and fierce power struggle among the young and inexperienced nationalists. There was political turmoil in Western Region due to crisis in the Action Group, AG, the ruling party in the region. The 1962/1963 census controversy created distrust among the regions while the 1964/1965 election crisis and the boycott by some regions created tension throughout the country.

In Enugu, the Eastern Regional capital, an uneasy peace prevailed; making it impossible for schools to function, hospitals and businesses to thrive; the climate in the country was foreboding. Indeed, the people of Eastern Region of Nigeria had a huge population of their people widespread and resident in other parts of the Nigerian federation. Thus, any crisis in other regions of Nigeria was usually followed in Enugu with keen interest. Unfortunately, other ethnic groups in Nigeria see the large Eastern population in their midst as an economic parasite at best and at worst a target to vent their frustrations during times of crisis in Nigeria. This is the crux of the crisis in Nigeria which culminated in the January 15, 1966 *coup d'état* and the eventual Nigeria/ Biafran Civil War. Nonetheless, let us examine in great details some of these issues like

the emergence of Enugu as a regional capital, the University town of Nsukka, the January 15, 1966 coup, the declaration of Republic of Biafra and the Civil War among others.

Enugu as Eastern Regional Capital

The emergence of Enugu as regional capital could be described as a child of circumstance or happenstance or the iron-law of unintended consequence. Other towns like Calabar and Onitsha had had many years of contact with the British imperialists. Enugu area was one of the last Igbo communities to be penetrated by the British. Before the British occupation, Enugu town as is known today was a vast farming land of the Nike, Ngwo and Akegbe people.

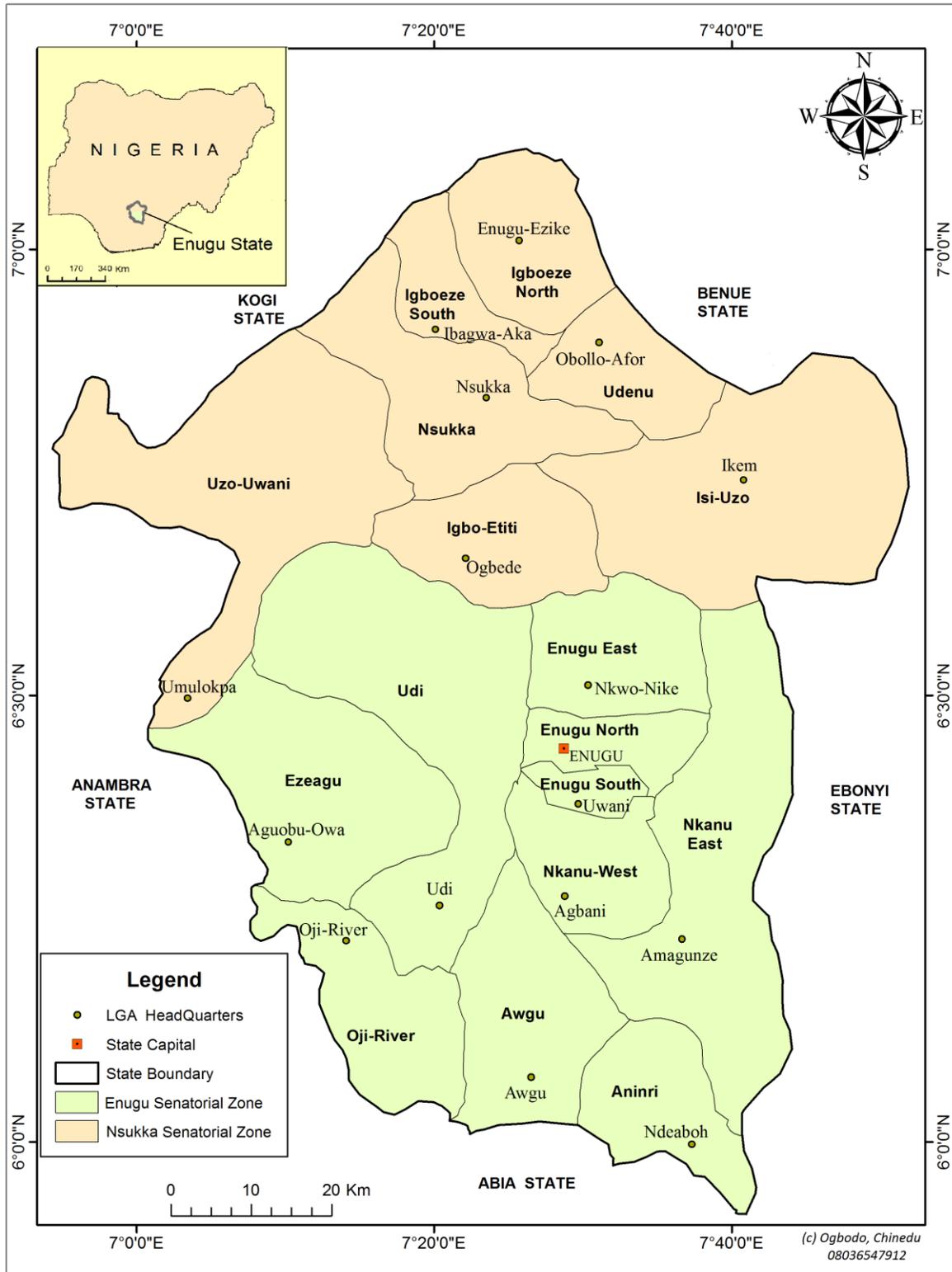
Europeans first arrived in Enugu area in 1903 when the British/Australian geologist Albert Ernest Kitson led an exploration of Southern Nigeria to search for valued mineral resources under the supervision of the Imperial Institute London¹. Although the search for silver was elusive, the team was rewarded with another mineral –**Coal** in 1908/9 in the village of Enugwu Ngwo in Udi and by 1913 the coal deposit was found in commercial quantities. Lord Lugard took a keen interest in the new discovery such that the immediate construction of railway line to link Enugu and Port Harcourt harbour ensued. The railway was completed in 1916 and a mining camp was set up. With this rail linkage, Port Harcourt experienced rapid economic growth owing to the railway line and its harbour. On her part, Enugu owed its growth to the mining camp. It grew rapidly that it quickly overshadowed Udi which had been the administrative capital². By 1929, Enugu had expanded enough to be made the headquarters of the Southern Provinces comprised of core Igboland and parts of Yoruba, Edo their minority neighbours of Ibibio, Ijaw among others. Enugu became a major coal mining area in West Africa. The new mining camp and the railway offered employment to thousands of people and attracted petty

traders who dotted the railway and saw to the needs of the miners and rail workers. By 1917, Enugu has acquired its distinct status as called Enuugwu- Ngwo but was later renamed Enugu in 1928 to distinguish Enugu the township from Ngwo village in Udi. By 1939, following the split of the Southern Protectorate, Enugu became the headquarters of the Eastern Provinces and later Region in 1951. Enugu as regional capital became the hub of economic and administrative centre. Many young school leavers flocked to Enugu for clerical jobs and other opportunities in life.

Enugu became a municipality in 1956 and Umaru Altine from Sokoto became its first mayor. Indeed, Enugu was cosmopolitan with people from different ethnic groups in Nigeria living together. This explains why the first Mayor of Enugu, Mallam Umaru Altine, from Sokoto was elected in 1956. Enugu was home to many Nigerians and even people from British Cameroon. Four years later, Nigeria gained her independence in 1960. The ethnic diversities of the constituent units that under the colonial administration were unnoticeable became so glaring. The political class polluted the atmosphere and introduced regionalism and ethnicism. The census controversy of 1962/1963 did not help matters. The country was plunged into one crisis after another culminating in the first military coup of January 15, 1966. The Igbo people, the dominant ethnic group in Southeast Nigeria, were mischievously fingered as the mastermind of the coup. The Igbo people residing in the Northern region of Nigeria became targets of genocidal mobs especially after the counter-coup of July 29, 1966. Enugu became a refugee camp as survivors streamed to the regional capital for succour. As the crisis of 1966 deepened, Enugu became the rallying point of those afflicted. By May 1967, Enugu was suddenly transformed from a regional capital to the capital of the short-lived Republic of Biafra. Enugu was sacked, vandalized and occupied by the Nigerian troops between October 1967 to January 1970. The fortune of Enugu is

intertwined with the fortunes of the Igbo people. It had fluctuated: hosting the regional capital to the current status of a mere state capital in a balkanized Nigerian federation of thirty-six (36) states. However, one remarkable thing about Enugu is that the Igbo still consider it their capital. Enugu is so cosmopolitan, accommodating and ever expanding along many frontiers that in few years time, it will border Opi in Nsukka, L.G.A, Agbogugu in Awgu L.G.A and Owo in Nkanu East L.G.A.

Plate 1 : Map showing old Nsukka and Enugu zones



(c) Ogbodo, Chinedu
08036547912

Source: GIS Laboratory, Department of Geography, University of Nigeria, 2017.

The University Town of Nsukka

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the tempo for independence from the British increased in Nigeria as well as in other parts of Africa. The war had unraveled the weaknesses of the British raj in the world. The Axis Powers had at some points during the war proved superior to the Allied forces. The previously held view of British invincibility in warfare was utterly discredited. The contentious issue of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 on the principle of freedom of all colonial peoples' applicability to Africa became explosive. The Second World War veterans and nationalists in Africa challenged Winston Churchill's position that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to Africa. Many of the war veterans that took part in major theaters of the war such as Burma, India knew that the British were not as formidable as previously believed: they cried like every other man and died as well as others in combat situations. This personal contact during the war emboldened the nationalists who demanded for the restoration of the sovereignty of the people stolen during the scramble and partition of Africa.

The British appeared to have realized the inevitability of independence of Nigeria and accelerated through constitutional developments the process of complete independence for the colonial subjects. They also realized the need for high level manpower production and thus established the University College, Ibadan in 1948 for Nigeria and University College Legon in Gold Coast, Ghana, 1949. The nationalist realized that this was mere tokenism and agitated for more scholarship awards for brilliant Nigerians to go abroad to further their education.

In the Eastern Region of Nigeria, the hunger for higher education remained unsatisfied by what the University of Ibadan could offer. The Premier of Eastern Nigeria, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, a

United States educated journalist, philosopher and politician sought to ameliorate the difficulties encountered by his people in their quest for higher education. In 1958 the government had set up the Cook-Hannah-Taggart Commission to study the feasibility of setting up a university. In April 1959, the Eastern Nigeria Government accepted the Cook-Hannah-Taggart Report which was favourable to the establishment of the University of Nigeria. It quickly set-up a provisional council whose membership reflected the international support and cooperation the University was beginning to attract. They included: Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (Chairman), Dr T.O Elias, Dr Okechukwu Ikejiani, Mr. J.S Fulton, Vice Chancellor of the University of Sussex, Britain, Dr Marguerite Cartwright, an Afro-American and Dr Eldon Lee Johnson, President of the University of New Hampshire, United States while Mr. P.S Wright from the United Kingdom served as Secretary to the Provisional Council³.

Thereafter, the Eastern Nigeria Government entered into a ten-year agreement with Michigan State University on March 18, 1960. The contract provided for advisory services on planning, administering and organizing the University of Nigeria. Dr Troy Stearns, a professor of education at Michigan State University was selected as the first acting principal-designate. Indeed, a thousand-acre site had been chosen at Nsukka, a rural community lying on the northwest corner of the Eastern Region at a distance of roughly sixty-five KM from the regional capital. The Michigan State University's support was invaluable in the take-off of the University.

On October 7, 1960, Princess Alexandra of Kent representing Queen Elizabeth II of Britain at the Nigerian independence celebrations, formally opened the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Thereafter, lectures commenced for the 220 pioneer students of the University, 24 of who were women. The six foundation Departments were: History, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, English and Mathematics.

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka was a dream by a people still under colonial rule for mental emancipation. This strong desire to restore the battered and adversely eroded dignity of the Nigerian people was aptly encapsulated in the motto of the University: *To restore the dignity of man*. The University of Nigeria was built from the sweat of palm oil and palm kernel produce, the major occupation of the people of old Eastern Region. It was conceived based on our peoples' quest for knowledge, wisdom, freedom, liberty, equality, the main armour against foreign domination, poverty and enslavement which British rule epitomizes⁴.

On her part, Nsukka Division never wavered on her loyalty towards the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC). In fact, Nsukka Division remained one of the safest constituencies of the party. This was because it became the only party accepted by the new Nsukka elites, and those who wanted to make impact in politics or aspire for important political positions at federal and regional levels associated themselves with the party⁵. To belong to another party was almost an abomination in Nsukka zone. Therefore, it was not surprising that when the idea was mooted to establish another university in Nigeria to supplement the efforts of the University College Ibadan, Zik quickly picked Nsukka as the place for such utopian development. The University of Nigeria, his home and personal library were all located in Nsukka. Those were Zik's gift to Nsukka for her loyalty to him and NCNC. Nsukka became the intellectual home of the people of Eastern Region, Nigeria and the International community at large where men and women are brood in the nest. Even at his retirement, Nsukka became the official and administrative headquarters of this maverick personality. The people remained loyal to NCNC and Zik until the First Republic was terminated by the January 15, Coup d'etat of 1966. This unique institution has continued to attract scholars from around the globe.

The January 15, 1966 coup and its perceptions

The January 15, 1966 coup d'état in Nigeria came on the heels of political wrangling, corruption, incompetence on the part of the ruling elite, accusations and counter-accusations of electoral fraud, and the near descent of the country into anarchy. The young Majors (Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, Christian Anuforo, Wale Ademoyega and Tim Onwuatuegwu) were initially hailed as messiahs, on a salvage mission to save Nigeria from further political convulsion, nepotism and economic turmoil. Unfortunately, their mission was aborted midstream, their patriotic endeavor misinterpreted while a crown of shame was hoisted on their heads as they suddenly became villains. Since then, propaganda and ethnic sentiments have beclouded a more balanced and fair interpretation of the January 15, 1966 coup d'état. Was it indeed an Igbo agenda to dominate Nigeria as some propagandists and their imperialist allies attempted to portray it? Were the young Majors hasty and naïve in sacking the political class? Could the political class have made a detour on their path to self-destruction? Would the January 1966 coupists been able to steer Nigeria away from a civil war if they had succeeded in fully taking over the government? So many questions and conjectures stare us in the face. This was and still is caused by the inability of the Nigerian government to release their investigations and reports to the National Archives for easy access by the public.

Nigerian nationalists' struggle to achieve independence from British colonialist bore fruit on October 1, 1960 with the concession of full independence by the British imperialists. Unfortunately, the nationalists underrated the problems of nation-building in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria. The various ethnic groups in the country fiercely sought to take advantage of the departure of the British to enthrone new overlords. The emergent political overlords were intolerant of opposition. Many of the politicians could not distinguish between state treasury and personal purse. They were high-handed, corrupt and inept. In the three existing regions (Western,

Eastern and Northern regions), the parties in power monopolized the state resources and apparatus of office to the total exclusion of opposition parties. Census figures were falsified and manipulated, thereby defeating the statistical value of such exercise. Intimidation of political opponents and occasional outright imprisonment of some were frequent. General elections became mere charade as the party employed all manner of subterfuge to evade submission of nomination forms of opposition candidates thereby returning their members as unopposed. These democratic aberrations resulted in Western regional crises of 1962, the Tiv uprising of 1965, the census controversy of 1962\1963, the Western regional elections crises of 1964/1965, the imprisonment of Obafemi Awolowo in the treason trials of 1963 and the aftermath of the 1965 federal election crises when the president reluctantly invited the NPC (Northern People's Congress) to form a government⁶. The political instability occasioned by these undemocratic practices led to the January 15, 1966 coup d'état.

The January 15, 1966 coup was initially received throughout the country with celebrations. Many felt that the sacking of the political class was justified due to the inept, corrupt and amateurish behavior of the politicians. It was indeed a big relief from political thuggery, intimidation, mayhem, and electoral fraud. However, the initial support and enthusiasm for the coup soon started to evaporate when the full details of the casualties became public knowledge. The coup had led to the death of Sir Ahmadu Bello (the premier of Northern region), Alhaji Tafawa Balewa (the Prime Minister) from the Northern region, Chief S.L Akintola, the premier of Western region; were executed during the coup. Another prominent politician that also fell in the putsch was Chief Festus Okotie-Ebo, the flamboyant federal finance minister, from the Mid-Western Region⁷. Unfortunately, there was no prominent politician from the Eastern region killed in the military uprising. In an emergent country as Nigeria was then and still is now, the

pattern of those executed was viewed through the prism of ethnicity. The ring-leaders in the military putsch were mainly from the Igbo ethnic group and the average Nigerian would easily interpret it that they tipped off their eminent politicians such as Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe who was abroad on medical check-up while the premier of Eastern Region, Michael Okpara was hosting Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus in Enugu. This sheer coincidence notwithstanding, many Northerners strongly held the view that it was a cruel Igbo plot to wrest power from them. Their view was further heightened by outside media houses and commentators who fueled the speculation of the Igbo plotting to hijack leadership in Nigeria.

This was also strengthened by the cold-blooded murder of top military personnel particularly from the Northerner region. The assassination of Brigadier Miamalari, Lt. Col Largema, Col. Kur. Mohammed and Lt. Col. Pam; all senior Northern officers lend credence to a calculated attempt to whittle down the influence of officers from that part of the country in the army.⁸ Although other officers from other parts of the country were killed during the military mutiny, such as Brigadier Ademulegun; a Yoruba of Western Region and Lt. Col. Unegbe; an Igbo of Mid-West Region the attention was beamed only at the Northern Nigerian losses. The Northern school of thought posited that such deaths were accidental or mere camouflage intended to mitigate suspicion over the planned onslaught against them. Besides this, the escape of Maj. Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi, the Commanding Officer of the Nigerian Army, an Igbo inflamed suspicion of Igbo conspiracy to dominate Nigeria. Rumors became rife that it was in fact a sinister plot by the ambitious Igbo of the East to seize control of Nigeria⁹. Again, as Achebe further observed:

In a country in which tribalism was endemic the rumour of an "Igbo Coup" began to find acceptance. Before long, many people were persuaded that their spontaneous jubilation in January had been a mistake¹⁰.

To further exonerate that it was not an Igbo Coup, Ademoyega; one of the inner caucus wrote that, “it would be recalled that by late 1965 the efforts of the Balewa government to Northernise the top echelon of the army was already bearing fruit. Some Northerners were already holding most of the strategic positions in the Army. However, Ironsi was ordered to proceed on leave from mid-January to be relieved by Brigadier Ademulegun”¹¹. Again, he buttressed further that:

*there was no plan to arrest or kill all the officers above the rank of Major as was later claimed by extreme Northern propagandists. Even among those earmarked for arrest only four were Northerners, two were Westerners and two were Easterners. But the North had always had more than 50% of the intake of officers into the Army since 1961, and more than 70% of the intake of the other ranks. Therefore, if casualties were to happen, it was more likely to be in that proportion than anything else*¹².

Nzeogwu and Ademoyega lamented that their aim was pure patriotism devoid of ethnic sentiments. Ademoyega aptly stated that “the wicked propaganda that followed the coup was only made possible by the weakness and non-revolutionary principles of the Ironsi regime, which had no semblance to the well ordered and well controlled government that was envisaged and could have been run by us if our plans were fully executed”¹³. Accordingly, Goddy Onyefuru observed that: “not only that Ironsi lacked a revolutionary spirit, he should have restored the government that the “rebels” sought to disrupt but the lust for power by him marred the essence of such patriotic act. He failed to release the political prisoners and to heighten the suspicious of the Northern elites, he promulgated the infamous Decree 34 which abolished federalism and entrenched unitary government”¹⁴.

Nonetheless, Maj-Gen. Aguiyi –Ironsi’s role in aborting the coup d’etat is usually swept under the carpet. Again, it was alleged that Ojukwu told Ironsi to crush the coup. Therefore, one wonders how Ojukwu, an Igbo, advised Ironsi, another Igbo to crush an Igbo coup. Damola

Awoyokun wrote in a national daily claiming access to American secret file on January coup and Biafran war. He quoted a Northern Military Governor as having described Nzeogwu as a nationalist not a tribalist who acted for the good of all Nigerians¹⁵. One wonders why his noble action was linked to ethnic sentiments. Often such misinformation and brainwashing hardly augur well for ethnic harmony and nation-building in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. However, according to Ademoyega, the initial plan of the Majors was to free Awolowo from Calabar prison and make him their leader. As Mazi Chike Chidolue opined that the best interest of Ndigbo would not and could not have been served by Awolowo as the new leader of the revolution. Again, if it was an Igbo coup, the arrangement would have been that power would ultimately be handed over to an Igbo man and not Awolowo. On the same subject, Chidolue rhetorically asked: if it were really an Igbo coup, how come a Yoruba was a member of the inner caucus? His book, *Why We Struck* should have been a compass to guide all the ethnic jingoists littered everywhere in Nigeria¹⁶. Fate would have allowed Ifeajuna and Nzeogwu to write their account of the coup.

Indeed, this bogey of Igbo domination was as a result of the poor handling of the operations in southern Nigeria by Major Ifeajuna. One of the main regrets of Major Nzeogwu was to be associated with sectional killings during the military uprising. In one of his letters to Olusegun Obasanjo, he lamented thus: “Ifeajuna and my colleagues in the South made such nonsense of this affair with the result that people are accusing us of being one sided”.¹⁷ The bungling of the coup plot in the Eastern Region gave the ethnic jingoists the propaganda weapon to latch on and turn the tide against the young revolutionaries. Unfortunately, the loyalist troop had no better lesson to teach their “rebel” counterparts. During the May 29, 1966 riots in Northern cities particularly in Kano, Kaduna and Zaria, the Igbo were singled out for massacres. According to

John de St. Jorre, “the army stood aside and did nothing¹⁸”. Revenge is not a virtue. But that was exactly what the Northern aristocracy plotted and executed against defenseless Igbo civilians living in the cities throughout the Northern Region. General Aguiyi-Ironsi’s government appeasement policy emboldened them to take the laws into their hands. On July 29, 1966, the anger of the Northern region boiled over in what was termed the “revenge coup” in which the Igbo military personnel in the armed forces were systematically decimated with Supreme Commander of the armed forces, General Ironsi, executed. These excesses of the Northern-injured pride ran out of control degenerating into genocide. Whenever the Hausa-Fulani and their Northern satellites are offended, they destroy everything in sight and senselessly butcher women and children in their sleep. Although, the *coup* was aborted but the danger is still staring us in the face. The coup is still termed as Igbo coup by recent commentators even where the reverse has been the case over the years. The problem is that some Nigerians are too sentimental and find it difficult to think rationally.

This propaganda of Igbo agenda to dominate Nigeria after the January 15 coup was orchestrated by the BBC and the Times of London. As Ruth First, a South African anti-apartheid activist and scholar has observed, “it was the BBC that turned the tide on the Nzeogwu coup d’etat of January 1966 that had been accepted and celebrated in all parts of Nigeria as an” Igbo coup open to Northern reprisals”¹⁹. The BBC correspondent had alleged that all the young Majors seemed to be Igbo. The British had never been comfortable whenever power was in the hands of the Igbo. Hence, like in every other African country, they favored the easily pliant and amenable groups. The imperialist propaganda was further inflamed on January 23, 1966 by the Sunday Times of London editorial entitled, “Can Ironsi Hold Nigeria?” In the words of the Sunday Times editorial:

According to reliable evidence, Major General Aguiyi –Ironsi, Head of the Military Government, has a list of seventy further notables (apart from the Sarduna of Sokoto and the Prime Minister) who have disappeared, largely Northern leaders. Again, Ramadan, the Muslim fast, closes at the end of the month with religious celebrations, which could easily lead to violence. And the Northerners would have plenty of Ibo targets...for, despite Nigeria's sharp geographical divisions, the Ibos, the most adaptable of all the tribes, have spread through the nation as workers, traders and officials.²⁰

The claim that General Ironsi had a list of seventy more Northern leaders to kill was quite inaccurate but it served the British imperialist interest of inciting one ethnic group against the other in Nigeria. This is in line with the British policy of divide and rule. Again, it served the interest of the Northern elites who gradually excluded the Igbo in a state of exception. Like the Jews, the Igbo were given a symbol; therefore, killing of an Igbo was never a homicide by the Nigerian law rather it became a patriotic endeavor. Thirty thousand civilian men, women and children were slaughtered, hundreds of thousands were wounded, maimed and violated, their homes and property looted and burned and no one asked any question. A Sierra Leone living in Northern Nigeria at the time writes home in horror “the killing of the Igbos has become a state industry in Nigeria²¹”. Those in the West and Mid- Western Nigeria were not spared at the apogee of state of exception.

The promotion exercise in the armed forces in the heat of all these raised suspicions. There was a complaint that some of the January coup plotters were promoted. Again, it was widely complained that the promotions favored the Igbo officers and rather consolidated their control of the military. The above issues served the British imperialist interest commission. Goddy Onyefuru noted in his book that:

Dr. Nowa Omoigui, while admitting the factuality in this, stated however that “No Igbo or Igbo speaking men was promoted who was not due for promotion²¹”.

He analyzed further that between 1955 and 1961 when there was no recruitment quota in the armed forces, the bulk of the recruits were Igbo or Igbo speaking officers²². When the quota system was put in place, 50% of the recruitment quota went to the Northern region and 50% was to be shared by the Eastern, Western and Mid-Western Regions.

Any violent overthrow of an elected government is illegal and those responsible are speedily tried and executed for treason. The January 15, 1966 coup d’etat was a violent eruption against the government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Although that government was very undemocratic, the armed forces were not expected to arbitrate in any political crisis but to protect the government of the day. However, those who carry out successful coups and take full control of the government of a country invariably win legitimacy. But those who are involved in an unsuccessful coup bear the full consequences which are normally capital punishment or life sentence. The January 15, 1966 coup, however popular and desirable, was unsuccessful. Those who took part in the abortive coup were expected to face a military tribunal. Maj-Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi’s government, rather than apply the law, became sentimental. The aggrieved Northern Region that lost the cream of its politicians and military personnel screamed aloud for justice to little avail. The January 15 boys were detained in prison with half salary paid to them. They were treated as heroes instead of villains. The ineptitude of Ironsi’s government became discernible as it faltered now and again. One of the ringleaders of the coup, Emmanuel Ifeajuna recognized their predicament thus:

On January 15, the question has been asked by some, whether it was not indiscipline on our part to have taken up the arms entrusted to us without proper command? Yes, it was. But this

*was indiscipline to cure all cases of indiscipline... we fully realized that to be caught planning, let alone acting on our lines, was high treason. And the penalty for high treason is death. We know we were well aware of our action, and we were aware of the consequences.*²³

The Northern emirs had in a secret memorandum sent to Ironsi through the military governor of Northern Region, Major Hassan Kastina articulated their grievances and demanded remedy from the government. They had urged the government to abolish the unification decree 34 which they felt symbolized Southern interference. This decree sought to make the country operate as one composite entity without due recognition to ethnic and regional factors. It implied the abolition of the quota system which meant triumph of merit over mediocrity. It was perhaps obvious that if such a policy was implemented in the country, it would have meant that the Southerners who appeared to be better placed, education-wise, would take all the privileged positions in the country. It would even mean that the Southerners would head civil service even in the North. Nothing would have been more provocative. They also demanded for the trial of the “January Boys” as a test of the government’s good faith²⁴. These demands were not outlandish but were rebuffed by Ironsi. In the first place, the unification Decree was ill-conceived and its intent could have been achieved under the unified command structure of the military government, without raising an eyebrow. The summary execution of the January boys did not call for a debate or lobbying by the aggrieved north. That is what any responsible government should have done or even incarceration of Northern politicians because they were solely responsible for the conflagration after the coup. Ironsi was a let down. However, the Hausa-Fulani or indeed the Northern Region over reacted when they could not separate the Igbo military men from the Igbo civilians residing in the Northern Region. The Yoruba also suffered high casualty figures during the January 15 uprising. They did not embark on ethnic cleansing, murderous rioting and looting of Igbo property in their area. The exemplary courage of the military Governor of Western

Region, Col. Fajuyi, by accepting death rather than betray his guest, General Ironsi, had not received official recognition it deserved.

The complete breakdown of law and order in some parts of Nigeria between 1960 and 1966 was a major cause of concern for all patriots and nationalist who were appalled at the inability of the political class to manage the affairs of the country. The January 15, 1966 coup had the trappings of a patriotic call to duty by the young majors. A closer scrutiny of the motives of some of the ringleaders in the putsch appeared to be everything but patriotism. Ndigbo or the Igbo State Union as at the time had no hand in the coup as confirmed by Ademoyega. He further affirmed that:

Contrary to the load of wicked propaganda that has since been heaped on us, there was no decision in our meeting to single out any particular ethnic group for elimination or destruction. Our intentions were honorable, our views were national and our goals were idealistic. We intended that the coup should be national in execution so that it would receive national acclamation. We planned that the use of force should be minimal so that our methods could at once be seen as superior to that of the politicians, who simply went on killing the very people they were called upon to govern. The need to bring more of the middle level officers was discussed. But the few names that could be mentioned had to be dropped because their inter personal connections would compromise the security of the planning²⁵.

From the above analysis, one can safely deduce that the fate of the soldiers and politicians arrested in Lagos was determined by the failure of the coup there. The bungled revolution threw the young Majors into a quandary probably, in the ensuing confusion and tension, the arrested politicians and soldiers became a heavy load and were unfortunately shot. However, in spite of what many know as the intention of the five Majors who plotted and executed the January revolution, it is still termed an Igbo coup. Odia Ofeimun debunks this falsehood when he wrote thus:

*Therefore, let me make a clean breast of it; my one great rationale for wanting to see the document “outed” is to help shore up nation-sense among Nigerians by rupturing the culture of falsehoods and silences that have exercised undue hegemony over the issues. I take it as part of a necessary revolt against all the Shenanigans of national coyness and the culture of unspoken taboos that have beclouded and ruined the national discourse. What primes this revolt is, first and foremost, the thought of what could have happened if the **forgotten documents of the War** had seen the light of the day at the right time. How easy, for instance, would it have been to stamp the January 15, 1966 coup as being merely an Igbo coup if it was known that the original five majors who planned and executed it were minded to releasing Awolowo from Calabar prison and to make him their leader.²⁶*

If the leaders intended from outset to release Awolowo from prison and hand over federal government to him, how then could the January coup still be regarded as an Igbo agenda to dominate. Or could it be that Gowon took a cue from the primary intentions of the young majors and speedily released Awolowo as the first step after acceding to power to gain the support and solidarity of the Yorubas, thereby making the Igbo a pariah. As Agamben rightly posited “using sovereign power to decide on his own who could and would be killed”²⁷. Thus, in this context and its zone of exclusion, thousands of the Igbo were butchered without it being considered, murder or genocide at least by the Gowon led administration. In this state of exception, the enclaves harboring the Igbo were therefore devoid of law. The Igbo in other words were separated politically from the rest of other ethnic groups laid outside the Nigerian political boundaries. As a result of the Igbo being outside those limits, many things could be done to them that cannot be done to other members of the component ethnic groups, including being killed at will by anyone. The war against the Igbo therefore started smoldering right before May 1966 when the Hausa\Fulani hegemonic jihadists who were destabilized by the January revolution launched their campaign of pogrom and genocide against Easterners in general and Igbo in

particular and given government sanction when Gowon said that the basis for unity did not exist, which pushed them into widespread ethnic cleansing²⁸.

However, General Olusegun Obasanjo observed that the personal ambition of the executors in the South mixed with vendetta marred the patriotic rhetorics.²⁹ Some of the coup plotters felt that their superior officers were clannish and therefore stalling their promotion prospects in the army. But in the process of Nigerianisation, the major political parties controlling the three regions in Nigeria and their high-ranking officers were all guilty of clannishness and ethnic chauvinism. Nevertheless, there were genuine men among the conspirators whose patriotism cannot be faulted. Majors Nzeogwu and Ademoyega felt that Nigeria needed an urgent rescue operation before the political class destroyed it³⁰. But their co-conspirators' mundane and ethnic considerations marred the success of the venture. Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu was a detribalized Nigerian and the encomium that had continued to pour since his demise testifies to it. In one of his last interviews in May 1967, Nzeogwu condemned the clamour for secession by the East. According to him:

*In the first place, secession will be ill-advised, indeed impossible. Even if the East fights a war of secession and wins, it still cannot secede. Personally, I don't like secession and if this country disintegrates, I shall pack my things and go.*³¹

Nzeogwu was a nationalist whose interest was embodied in rescuing the nation from drift and politics of divisiveness. He was neither petty nor cruel to project the interest of the Igbo ethnic group nor power hungry for his selfish personal aggrandizement.

The only non-Igbo ringleader of the January 15, 1966 Major Ademoyega had continued to maintain the justness of their cause and the patriotic fervor that drove them to change the inept

political leadership of the country in 1966. His conviction even after the end of the civil war could not be bought or diluted by officialdom. According to him:

Contrary to the load of wicked propaganda that had since been heaped upon us, there was no decision at our meeting to single out any particular ethnic group for elimination or destruction.³²

Some lily-livered materialist could have over a mere bowl of porridge after long years of detention following the civil war embellished and betrayed the young majors through deliberate distortion of facts, but not the strong-willed Major Ademoyega. After more than 50 years of the Jan. 15, 1966 coup, its perception by most Nigerians has been emotive and sentimental. To the average Northerner, it was a cruel plot by the Igbo to decimate its elite corps and dominate Nigeria. To the average Igbo man, it was a patriotic endeavour to rescue Nigeria from the brink of the precipice. Yet, in between these two opposing views lie the fact that the young majors allowed their personal grievances against their superiors becloud their better judgment while the Northern zealots in their bid for revenge committed genocide against the Igbo civilian population living in their midst. It is unfortunate that blind fury over perceived marginalization had driven northern mobs into committing heinous crimes against other Nigerians on many occasions. No nation survives on such brutality, where the security forces cannot maintain law and order or where mobs rampage freely without sanctions.

Declaration of the Republic of Biafra and the Civil War

In the midst of rumours and counter rumours of Igbo bid to dominate Nigerian politics as mentioned earlier, Ironsi faltered. His inability to court martial the January coup plotters, the promulgation of the infamous decree 34 and his appeasement gestures to the Northern elements all culminated in July 29, 1966 revenge coup. Incitements and instigations grew in the military

and a time bomb was getting set to blow up. As Ironsi prevaricated on the Northern grievances, so also did he waiver on intelligence report on the possibility of a coup against his government. The group of plotters led by Murtala Muhammed held secret meetings, wrote secret letters to the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon stating that if the senior officers did not take action within a certain time frame, they themselves would do something and the senior Northern officers would have themselves to be blamed for the severity³³. The three officers who formed the nucleus of the July counter coup were; Lt. Col. Murtala Muhammed (signals), Major T.Y. Danjuma (General Staff Officer Supreme Head Quarters) and Captain Martin Adamu (2nd Battalion Ikeja)³⁴.

In the wee hours of July 29, 1966, the plotters in a feat of rage unleashed terror against the Ironsi regime. Ironsi was then on tour all over the country in a bid to explain the essence of his unification decree. At that point, he was in Western Region. He was arrested with his host Lt. Col. Adekunle Fajuyi by a group of coup plotters led by Major T.Y. Danjuma. It was alleged that they were taken to a nearby bush, tortured and then shot³⁵. The July coup was an instant success. Within hours all the major targets were annihilated. Officers of Eastern Region especially of Igbo origin and Igbo speaking areas of the Mid-west were killed. The killing continued unabated for days. In Kaduna, Zaira, Kano, Gasau and other parts of the North, army officers and civilians of Igbo origin were killed in hundreds for several days. The few survivors had no option than to flee to the East. At the end, it was estimated that more than 185 army officers of Igbo origin had been decimated. However, an informant who was undergoing training in Nigeria Airforce Kaduna within the period estimated the death toll to be more than 200³⁶. Thus, began the tales of woes for the Igbo.

The first phase of the 1966 pogrom against the Igbo started on Sunday 29th May 1966 to June 5. This was the first large scale orgy of Igbo bloodletting by the Northern miscreants. It was estimated that in this first wave of killings, at least six hundred people of Igbo origin lost their lives in the massacre which took place in Kano, Bauchi, Sokoto, Kastina and Zaria. It started as a riot but saw to the death of thousands. From May 1966, onwards sporadic outbreaks of hostilities against the Igbo in the North became a state duty in Nigeria. As Achebe repulsively observed that “if it had ended there (July revenge coup) the matter might have been seen as a very tragic interlude in nation building, a horrendous tit for tat. But the Northerners turned on Igbo civilians living in the north and unleashed waves of brutal massacres that Colin Legum of The Observer (UK) was the first to describe it as a pogrom”³⁷. It was a premeditated, carefully coordinated onslaught against the Igbo. It was a traumatic experience in living memory. The idea according to Isichei was to drive the Easterners out of the North, perhaps out of Nigeria³⁸. In fact, the Igbo were so politicized, quarantined and made a pariah in consonance with Agamben’s state of exception. In this orgy of bloodletting, ex-politicians, civil servants, local government officers, former party stalwarts stage managed the exercise. The main difference was that this time the army joined in³⁹. For the Igbo, residency outside their original enclave became a sure gateway to the beyond.

It was only Ndigbo that knew the whole terrible story. No part of Igboland was devoid of these trails of tears. They faced extermination aside those killed, many refugees of over 600,000 fled to the safety of the Eastern Region. They were hacked, slashed, mangled, stripped naked and robbed of all their possessions. The orphans, widows and the traumatized fled to Igboland. Isichei narrated how a woman mute and dazed arrived back in her community after travelling for five days with only a bowl on her lap with which she held the head of her child severed before

her eyes. Men, women, children arrived with arms and legs broken; hands hacked off, mouths split open. Pregnant women were cut open and unborn children killed⁴⁰. Virtually every town in the north was guilty of this orgy of bloodletting. Women and children were slaughtered in their sleep, places of work and markets. In the North, up until most recently any perceived injury or issue as trivial as cartoon drawing of Muhammed from another part of the globe draws their ire and must be atoned. At Kano International Airport, the Igbo waiting to be airlifted to the Eastern region were surrounded by armed Northern soldiers and civilians and killed. Those who boarded the trains ran into ambushes of Northern soldiers and civilians who looted their belongings and maimed thousands⁴¹. These insane killings obliterated the corporate existence of Nigeria. As Zdenek Cervenka further observed that:

the pogrom and the fear of repeated killings were undoubtedly the main factors which influenced the decision on secession. It was slaughter so brutal and so massive that it cannot be forgiven for many years. Everything that has happened since has confirmed Easterners in their view that the slaughter was premeditated and organized, because it was so widespread in the Northern region, and because Middle belt were so prominent in it⁴².

The total casualties were unknown. The Federal Government statistically put the numbers of the victims at 5,000 but in accordance with what Zdenek Cervenka wrote

the main point about the massacre was that they affected the mass of the people and created the sort of emotional climate in which secession was possible. The argument about numbers (whether it was 5,000 or 50,000 killed or whether there were 700,000 or 2 million refugees) is irrelevant. Whatever the number, it was sufficiently large to create a trauma of considerable proportions, because it affected so many families and stretched right down through the society⁴³.

The people became disillusioned, dismayed and disappointed in the sincerity of the Federal Government to protect them or to even reassure or sympathize with them. It was like a horrible conspiracy and a horrible dream to the Igbo. Indeed, the federal government which made light of the number of casualties did not take any steps to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. The Igbo who were the victims had no alternative but to recourse to self-help to protect themselves. What was worse, the federal government had totally abdicated its responsibility to the Igbo, the people had no choice but to defer to the new emergent leadership in the Eastern Region no matter how poorly they were led or served.

This was the greatest of man's cruelty to his neighbour. At the end of this organized genocide, over 100,000 Igbo people had been exterminated while 1.5 million people were turned refugees in their own country⁴⁴. The perpetrators were neither punished nor the victims compensated. The failure of both the federal and Northern Regional governments to stop the pogrom convinced the Igbo that they were not secured in any other part of country. The Igbo saw themselves as victims. The events of May through September to October 1966 became obvious to the Igbo that they were mapped out for ethnic cleansing of which they had no answer or solution. Zdenek Cervenka further noted that:

from the nature of the disturbances, it became apparent that the (massacre) were essentially tribalistic. Presumably the riots were prompted by the combination of fear of Southern domination, the state of tension, malaise and confusion, and by the common belief in the North that the Ibos were responsible for most of the frustrations facing the Northern societies from rising food prices to the decline of northern power. The outbreak of anti-Igbo hostilities however, demonstrated the fragility of the regime (Ironsi). General Ironsi had not dared to use the army to protect Ibo citizens⁴⁵.

Achebe further noted that, "when we noticed that the federal government of Nigeria did not respond to our call to end the pogroms, we concluded that a government that failed to safeguard the lives of its citizens has no claim to their allegiance and must be ready to accept that the victims deserve the right to seek their safety in other ways including secession"⁴⁶. The irony as pointed out by Lt. Col Chukwuemeka Ojukwu the then governor of Eastern Region was that the Igbo spearheaded the fight for Nigerian independence and were later driven out by the rest of Nigeria, which waged war with the secessionist republic to conserve the very sovereignty of a nation (Nigeria) within whose walls Biafrans did not feel free, safe or desired⁴⁷. It is unfortunate that a government that lacked the sincerity to protect a people against genocide shamelessly waged an internecine war to force them to remain within its fold.

The move towards the declaration of independence was very clear and sharp. After all, the Igbo probably felt that as they played a major role in the Nigerian independence. Again, secession may have been possible, because the northern army officers during the revenge coup cried for secession but new evidence has shown that the superpowers especially Britain was against such move. Thus, Goddy Onyefuru observed, that the British did everything to scuttle this move; they closed in on Gowon and advised him that North would be worse off if they seceded from Nigeria. It was alleged that frantic last-minute modifications were made to Gowon's broadcast to the nation but part of the original intention still filtered into his address thus: "Suffice it to say that putting all considerations to test – political, economic, as well as social, the base for unity is not there, or is so badly rocked, not only once but several times."⁴⁸ Goddy Onyefuru further observed that:

It was laughable when Gowon said he was fighting to keep Nigeria one. If Gowon fought any battle in Nigeria as far as clear records show, it was a battle to permanently dislodge the

*southern effective involvement in the Nigerian army and to permanently and perpetually entrench Northern domination in the army and to use same as an effective and safeguarding Northern domination of Nigerian politics*⁴⁹.

However, a number of distinguished and well-meaning Nigerians mediated under the aegis of National Reconciliation Commission, but they were meeting with leaders of a people who were both emotionally and psychologically exhausted. Achebe opined further that many of these same Igbo leaders had been at the vanguard of independence struggles, and after years of spearheading the “one Nigeria” mantra had very little to show for it⁵⁰. In January 1967, General Ankrah of Ghana interceded in the impasse. He convened a meeting of the Nigerian Military Council at Aburi Ghana from January 4-5, 1967. The Aburi conference articulated the following resolutions: (a) None use of force in the settlement of the crisis. (b) A confederal status for the regions without boundary adjustments. (c) A veto power for all members of the supreme military council that would enjoy a unanimous concurrence of the regions before any major decision could be taken. (d) The payment of salaries of all displaced persons until March 31, 1967. (e) Finally, the head of the federal military government should assume the title of Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces⁵¹. Both the Federal and Eastern Regional Government left Ghana with different interpretation and understanding of the resolutions.

Gowon came back to Nigeria and rallied round the Federal Civil Servants who after thorough perusal of the Aburi Agreement, told Gowon that he had been outwitted by Ojukwu. Two months after, Gowon led administration refused to implement the resolutions. The Easterners had no choice than to sever relationship with Nigeria. Different mediation groups tried to wade into the issues but none yielded any fruit. By March 1967 that is two months later, Gowon stalled and prevaricated. The Easterners grew so weary of the implementation of the Aburi Resolution. The

common chant among the Igbo was “**On Aburi We Stand.**” The Eastern Government issued series of warning to Lagos and threatened secession. By March 17, 1967, Gowon issued Decree No. 8, which rejected some of the resolutions of the Aburi agreement; Ojukwu in turn rejected Decree No. 8⁵². At the end of March through April 1967, Ojukwu issued a number of edicts to safeguard the region’s economic interest. Ojukwu systematically severed all Biafran ties with Nigeria. First, he froze all official communication with Lagos and then followed this swiftly by disconnecting the Eastern Regional Government administration and revenues from those of the federal government⁵³. However, the federal government retaliated and imposed economic sanctions against the region. The face off continued until May 26, 1967 when Ojukwu summoned an emergency meeting of the Eastern Region Consultative Assembly and Advisory committee of Chiefs and Elders in Enugu. On May 27, the assembly empowered Ojukwu to declare the eastern region an independent sovereign state to be known as the Republic of Biafra. However, in the final analysis according to Ahazeum, Emezue and Axel,

apart from a few ambivalent individuals, the level of awareness of the issues surrounding the declaration of Biafra is high among Igbo men, the soldiers, returnees, educated and the uneducated alike. From conception to declaration, Biafra did not appear to have its affairs conducted like the ‘sermon from the mount’, but would appear to have great popular appeal, hence, the massive support for her cause. Nonetheless, the fact remains that there were also people who were passive but receptive to Biafra and who saw it as something they had without playing active roles⁵⁴.

On May 30, 1967, Ojukwu declared the Republic of Biafra. He cited a variety of malevolent acts against Igbo Easterners such as the pogrom that claimed thousands of lives and the failure of the Federal Government to ensure the safety of Easterners in the presence of organized genocide. The federal government declared the action null and void and made clear its determination to

suppress the secession. Precisely on July 6, 1967, the federal government launched a two-pronged attack against Biafra. From the northern border at Nsukka, Biafra resisted stiffly the federal onslaught. The federal “police action” lasted for 30 months with the capitulation of Biafra on January 11, 1970.

At this juncture, it should be noted that, Gowon surrounded himself with the best brains comprising northern permanent secretaries, intellectuals from Western and Mid-Western Regions like Obafemi Awolowo and Anthony Enahoro.

He got wind of the date of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra and on May 27, 1967 divided the nation into twelve states. He assumed sweeping powers under Decree 14 which banned political activities and introduced press censorship. He was advised by his think tank that dividing the East into four states, land locking the Igbo into the East central state and isolating the oil producing areas of Nigeria outside Igboland, weaken secessionist sentiments in the region and empower minority group that lived in oil-producing regions to stand up to what they had already dreaded for years- the prospect of Igbo domination⁵⁵.

Gowon according to Achebe had no Oxford certificate in History but he had the best brains. He applied Machiavellism in his dealings with the Igbo. He and his advisers perfectly understood inter-ethnic rivalry in Nigeria and especially in the Eastern Region after Nnamdi Azikiwe’s experience of carpet crossing in Western Region in which he ran to the East and ousted Eyo Ita the Premier of Eastern region who came from the minority group of Calabar region. The ire of such act has not really been doused⁵⁶. The creation of states out of these minority groups was the expedient action to further clip the economic wings of the Eastern Region. However, the birth of the Republic of Biafra was heralded with difficulties. The egoistic and publicity conscious General Ojukwu alienated supporters within Biafra and outside the republic. The twelve states created by the General Gowon further exacerbated ethnic chauvinism among the minority groups

within the ill-fated Republic of Biafra. Thus, Biafra was undermined within by ethnic bigotry, poor leadership as represented by General Ojukwu's antagonism and suspicion of Biafran high command and total exclusion of the wise counsel of men like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

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CHAPTER THREE

NIGERIAN ARMY OCCUPATION OF NSUKKA AREA, 1967-1970

The impasse which existed between the federal government led by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon and the Eastern Regional Government led by Lt.Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu by early 1967 had reached its climax. Ojukwu declared Republic of Biafra on 30th May, 1967 citing the various atrocities committed against the Igbo. The Nigerian government, having made an earlier proclamation to use force against any recalcitrant region, vowed to crush the young Republic of Biafra. In the early morning of July 6, 1967, the Federal Government made good her promise and attacked the Eastern Region in two different axes- Garkem in Ogoja and Nsukka, the Northern border of Biafra. The Nigerian army invaded Nsukka through four major areas: Okwutu via Igala border, Obollo-Afor via Amalla, Enugu-Ezike via Okpo and finally through Adani. The invasion of Nsukka started early in the morning of July 6, 1967 with such ferocity, taking the civilians by surprise. The various communities were bombarded with the kind of military artillery never seen. Many lost their lives on that fateful day. Informants recounted that dead bodies littered the roads. People left behind their loved ones because there was no time to look out for one another. The quick fall of the various communities surrounding the University town of Nsukka spurred the advancing forces into capturing the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus.

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka was then housing most of the Igbo intellectuals who returned home during the pogrom. These people were believed by the Nigerian authority to have encouraged the governor of Eastern Region, to opt for secession, therefore the need to capture the University and dislodge the intellectual arm of Biafra. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka

was the major target of the federal forces. They viewed the University as an intellectual fortress of Biafra. Thus, capturing it would cripple the secessionist forces of its source of propaganda and bring the war to a speedy end. The Nigerian army spared no efforts to capture this all-important citadel of learning. Unfortunately, Ojukwu did not see the institution in the same light. The Biafran government gave the impression that they could hold the advancing federal forces. Thus, many staff and students barely escaped the capture of the University. There was no coordinated effort to evacuate the campus until it was too late to do so. The Nigerian troops vented their anger on the books and other equipment abandoned by the Biafran government. The Nigerian soldiers made a bonfire of the books in the library while other valuables were systematically looted.

Indeed, with the fall of the University of Nigeria, most young students and lecturers who were enthusiastic about Biafra were killed in battle. The federal troops occupied the University when Nsukka fell and quickly went on a looting spree owing to the fact that the University was not properly evacuated. Faculty buildings were burnt, much of the science equipment were stolen and those that could not be pulled out were all smashed and damaged. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka which the federal troops felt was the temple of secession was horribly targeted, destroyed and looted. The Nigerian troops felt that the destruction of the University might end Igbo agitation for secession and probably the death of Igbo intellectuals. Nsukka was the first theatre of the civil war and experienced longer duration under the occupation forces. The Nigerian soldiers were better equipped than their Biafran counterpart and also had the backings of the super powers whose business interests in the country needed to be protected. As Nsukka fell within the first three months of the war, the occupation forces subjected the people to harrowing experiences. As a conquered territory, Nsukka was under the conquistadors for the 30-

months duration of the civil war. Their sordid experiences would be carefully scrutinized subsequently.

The Overrunning of Nsukka

The declaration of the Republic of Biafra was performed with fanfare and publicized to the world by the young head of state, Lt. Col.Ojukwu. The Biafran flag, baggies, army uniform, anthem were all displayed. It was full of bluster and propaganda. The nitty-gritty of acquisition of tanks, heavy artillery in the face of threat of invasion by the Nigerian government was drowned in propaganda and unnecessary tantrums. The border towns of Biafra were not fortified, manned and reinforced with necessary weapons, trenches to deter enemy advance. Thus, when the Nigerian army struck on July 6, 1967, the Biafran resistance army was collapsing like a pack of cards and retreating in disarray from one town to the other.

The federal forces advanced through the North via Okwutu and Enugu-Ezike. On both sides, the enemy was shelling massively and advancing with armoured vehicles despite all attempts by the Biafran troops to halt them¹. From Okwutu they pounded their way through the town to Okpuje while on the Enugu-Ezike axis, the federal troops passed or by-passed most of the obstacles with armoured vehicles and were already in control of Ete which was about four kilometers from Enugu Ezike town². Informants in Enugu –Ezike said the town was invaded through Okpo or Ofante and finally the Nigerian troops set up a camp at Ogurute. The Enugu-Ezike front offered little resistance as the federal troops had passed most of the obstacles with armoured cars. An informant mentioned that the federal troops by July 10, 1967 had thoroughly shelled Enugu-Ezike. After two days, they moved to Ibagwa and Nsukka.³ This confirmed what Ben Gbulie

wrote that the invasion of Nsukka province happened in the early morning, just as dawn was breaking.

The troops of Nigeria's 1 Division started bombarding our troops position at Okpo near Enugu-Ezike in Igboeze District. Pounding our forward locations with malevolent savagery, the whole place was alive with flying lead. The Nigerians, it seemed to me, were bent on cracking a mere nut with a sledge hammer⁴.

The idea of cracking a nut with a sledge hammer may be due to the powerful propaganda of the Biafran government which instilled fear in the invading forces. Ojukwu had earlier mentioned severally that no power in the world could defeat Biafra. The Nigeria army could be said to have invaded Nsukka with jittery and trepidation which may be attributed to their use of superior fire power.

Indeed, the war was between two unequal combatants. Another detachment of the federal forces invaded Nsukka through Obollo-afor and within two weeks were in the vicinity of the strategic Opi junction. As Mark Odo observed that, ‘‘had it been that the federal government knew the true condition of Biafran preparations for the war, they would have made it to Enugu in less than twelve hours. Instead, they attacked with fears because they expected a formidable resistance equal to Biafran propaganda’’⁵ The Biafran forces were out-gunned, ill-prepared for the conventional warfare of the Nigerian army. Rather than devise other methods to quickly counter the overwhelming and ample weapons at the disposal of the federal troops, Ojukwu stuck to the conventional warfare till the end of the war. Youths of Nsukka area had quickly volunteered for the Biafran army. Some of them assumed the war would be in the nature of local skirmishes between neighbouring communities which hardly lasted more than a few days. According to G.C. Ugwuanyi, some of the people thought that the war would be in the semblance of pre-

colonial warfare in which the weapons of war were usually spears, arrows, dane guns and war charms⁶. Unfortunately, the war took a different shape: sophisticated weapons such as armoured vehicles, heavy artillery, jet-fighters and well-trained and officered troops. Biafran army recruits lacked the basic weapons to confront the enemy. As Madam Josephine Attama observed that many Nsukka people thought that they would be able to drive back Northern army with bare catapult shots at Obollo-Afor.⁷ This turned out to be wishful thinking as the federal bombardment appeared unprecedented and ferocious. Many people from the Nsukka zone quickly learnt to dig bunkers to escape the incessant air raids by the Nigerian Air force.

At this juncture, it is alleged that Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu in the face of superior fire power of the federal forces devised the method of placing machine guns on tree tops to slow down the federal advance into Enugu, the Biafran capital. Overwhelmed by this tactic the federal troops embarked on uprooting trees on their path.⁸ Major Nzeogwu's presence at any frontline, was a tonic for motivation of the poorly clad and poorly fed troops of the Biafrans. Despite the handicap faced by the Biafran forces, they put up stiff resistance against the better armed federal forces. This accounted for the prolongation of the war and the human carnage both sides bore in the course of the war.

Plate 2: Ebonyi Bridge in Ehamufu destroyed during the civil war



Source: M.O.Odo, "Nigerian Civil War: Its Aftermath in Nsukka Division"

Plate 3: Ugbo-Egbunike bridge in Uzo-uwani farm settlement



Source: Photo taken by L.I Okoh.

Nsukka was the first theatre of the civil war in Igboland. The people passed through a harrowing experience. The most painful was to be dubbed by fellow Biafrans as saboteurs and cowards as they sought refuge in other parts of Igboland. Nsukka people were accused albeit falsely of “opening their doors” to the federal forces. At times, they were denied succour, shelter and empathy in other Igbo towns they had run to. An informant noted how they were disembarked from continuing their journey at 9th Mile Corner, Ngwo, Udi Division and all adult males in the vehicle from Nsukka were humiliated and accused of betraying Biafra. However, my informant was later released because he had lived at Onitsha and spoken Onitsha dialect fluently⁹. What happened to the rest of fleeing Nsukka men disembarked at 9th Mile Corner, Ngwo, would remain a moot point. The attitude of local vigilantes towards refugees among the Igbo contributed immensely to the loss of many Igbo evading federal forces. Dr Edmund Itanyi also lamented how the family that fled Ukehe, Nsukka, to Uburuihejiofo, was mocked and branded saboteurs unjustly by fellow Biafrans¹⁰. The Biafran government appeared to encourage this kind of mindset of denigrating refugees fleeing major war theatres during the civil war. Branding fellow citizens saboteurs could alienate them further from contributing in the overall war effort. This was impolitic and counterproductive to the realization of the Biafran dream.

The Biafrans did not learn or profit from the scorched-earth policy of the Russians when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Moscow in 1812. The Russians evacuated Moscow, removed all the roofs of the buildings, thus exposing the French troops to the horrible Russian winter that virtually decimated Napoleon’s forces¹¹. Biafran leadership felt that retreating and evacuating a town meant defeat. Retreating and re-strategizing are decoys to lure an enemy into ambush and swiftly launch a counter attack. Thus, Nsukka town and indeed, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka were abandoned to the enemy without evacuation. It is lamentable that the University of

Nigeria, Nsukka could not be relocated into Igbo heartland with its research library and laboratories which eventually fell into enemy hands.

Opi junction was one of the military objectives of the Nigerian army as it desperately pushed to pick its first major prize: Enugu, the Biafran capital. Opi junction is a vital artery that leads from Northern Nigeria to the Igbo heartland. The federal troops desired it as it would secure their route for both troops and other war material reinforcement from the North. The Biafran military high command also realized its strategic importance as it is less than an hour's drive to Enugu. The Biafran government threw in all they had to hold Opi junction. The people made supreme sacrifices in the face of a yawning disparity in weapons available to both sides. An informant James Ogili observed that Biafran troops held Opi for three months. General Emeka Ojukwu visited the troops at Opi junction a number of times to boost their morale¹². Ben Odogwu commented on the strategic importance of Opi thus:

Biafran efforts at the Nsukka-sector to clear Nsukka took a reverse turn, and instead of clearing the town, we lost so much ground that the federal forces, with their rear cutting tactics, suddenly appeared at Opi and took the vital junction which meant that the advancing federal troops could now pick and choose their route for the final assault of the Biafran capital, Enugu. The loss of Opi junction caused so much panic that many on hearing the news deserted Enugu¹³.

If indeed Biafra held Opi junction for three months, it did not redound to its credit. Three months was long enough time for Biafran government to evacuate Enugu to Umuahia or Owerri. It did not take any such option that would have enabled it to continue the war on a stronger note. Rather it fed the Biafran populace with propaganda of invincibility that Enugu government house was not evacuated even to the chagrin of all-right-thinking men

and women. The tape recording of Ojukwu-Awolowo conversation before the war recorded at the government house was left behind until the federal troops meticulously combed the place. Enugu was abandoned by the retreating Biafran forces with goods in all the markets, super markets, banks, petrol stations and virtually all the households' properties to the invading federal forces. What booty to the Nigerian government! Enugu was systematically looted by the conquering federal troops. Little wonder Nigeria did not borrow a dime to prosecute the war. This was a great scandalous military blunder by Ojukwu.

The loss of Opi junction marked a serious reversal in the fortunes of Biafra. It was at Opi junction or rather at the Nsukka sector that Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and the poet Christopher Okigbo perished. These two personages meant so much to the Biafran cause. To the average Biafrans, Major Nzeogwu was an embodiment of heroism. Many dreamt of Biafra on the wings of Major Nzeogwu. For the rising class of intellectuals, Christopher Okigbo was an idol, not just an arm-chair critic, but a revolutionary who led by example. Yet both the deaths of Nzeogwu and Okigbo's had been shrouded in secrecy. Their untimely deaths were a big blow to the Biafran project. Many enthusiasts were demoralized and had their faith rudely shaken. Some of my informants were of the opinion that the Biafran leadership orchestrated the deaths of Major Nzeogwu and Chrisopher Okigbo. An informant, Chinweuba Ugwu, disputed the account that Major Nzeogwu died while on a recce. According to him, a major could not have gone on a recce alone as officialdom attributed to his demise¹⁴. Another informant, Augustina Ugwu, was of the view that "Ndigbo" betrayed Nzeogwu. According to her, Biafra would not have lost the war if Nzeogwu was not betrayed and Enugu may not have fallen into

the enemy hands had he remained alive¹⁵. The death of Major Nzeogwu was demoralizing and many young volunteers in the Biafran army panicked while some deserted the army as a result of the sudden death of a mythic figure which Nzeogwu personified.

The controversy that trailed the sudden death of Major Nzeogwu in 1967 may never be resolved. Nzeogwu was not just popular; he was deified and adored by the Biafran masses. This mass following which Nzeogwu commanded would attract envy in the inner circle of Biafran government. His views on the crisis following the January 15, 1966 coup differed to a large extent from that of Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, the Biafran leader. Major Nzeogwu did not subscribe to the balkanization of Nigeria; whereas Lt. Col. Ojukwu saw the crisis as an opportunity to carve out an empire. Indeed, Ojukwu never gave Nzeogwu any army command despite his talent and skill. Yet, when Nigeria invaded Biafra, Nzeogwu mobilized to the frontline. For the young Biafran leader, Emeka Ojukwu, this may be tantamount to defying his authority. Again, allowing such a popular competitor and rival could endanger his fragile position. To Ojukwu, what could happen if Major Nzeogwu scored a major military upset against Nigerian military invaders? The possibility of Ojukwu trying to eliminate a potential rival might be there. However, Ojukwu had been dismissive of this line of thought. But few would believe him. According to Ojukwu:

Nzeogwu was certainly popular when he came to the east. The picture that stuck in people's memory was that of a gallant soldier in plaster of Paris (one of the pictures taken after the storming of Government House, Kaduna). He cut the picture of a hero. I also admire him because I appreciated his qualities. I have heard it alleged that I was jealous of him. That is nonsense. I was already

*governor at the time, my position wasn't threatened. I couldn't have been jealous of him*¹⁶.

He further gave reasons for not incorporating such a sound and refined military intelligence officer into the Biafran army. In his words, "the reason why he wasn't incorporated into the Biafran Army was simple, the senior officers were afraid of him, especially those under whose area of command he would have operated. There was actually a senior officer who handed me his letter of resignation because of his fear of operating in the same area"¹⁷. Few people would believe Ojukwu. But a little could be gleaned from Obasanjo-Nzeogwu correspondence. Nzeogwu averred that: "he is worried about my popularity among his own people. I was to be put back in prison, but he was afraid of repercussions. Right now, I am not allowed contact with troops nor am I permitted to operate on the staff"¹⁸. He later became an itinerant officer and lost his life in a manner shrouded in conspiracy and secrecy. Nzeogwu as a military intelligence officer ought to be an asset to Biafra. As Achebe lamented that although Gowon lacked an Oxford certificate in History he compensated by surrounding himself with the best brains. In Biafra, the reverse was the case as mistrust rocked the Biafran hierarchy. Ojukwu plotted alone while the officers who survived the revenge coup spent their time in Enugu Sports Club. If Ojukwu had trusted them enough, maybe the Igbo would have engaged in the war better prepared or exact a better concession from Nigeria. Nsukka would not have fallen so easily and the civilians especially women and children would have been spared the horrors of occupation forces. Those officers would have known the armoury situation in Biafra and advised Ojukwu properly than the civilian sycophants who surrounded him.

However, all the communities had fallen to the federal forces by 1967 and 1968. They had taken the University town of Nsukka and under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Garuba, captured village by village and town by town until every nook and cranny was effectively occupied.

Plate 4: NAF 102 JET BOMBER used by the federal troops



Source: Photo taken by Dr. Chijioke Onuorah in Umuahia War Museum

The Looting of The University of Nigeria, Nsukka Campus

Nsukka fell so early in the war into the hands of the federal forces. The conquistadors had the inclination that the University was the cradle of secession and moved with so much energy and force to destroy the University. Nsukka was invaded through four different areas: Amalla-Enugu-Ezike-Okwutu-Adani. By the end of July 1967, University of Nigeria was firmly in the hands of the victorious soldiers who were mainly recruits and never understood the sacredness of a citadel of learning. Because of the hurry in the evacuation of Nsukka and the failure of the Biafran Government to sensitize the people properly on the situation of Biafra, many in the

University community left their personal effects, books, documents, research papers, souvenirs, precious gifts and other items not knowing it would take them 30 months to return to their former residence.

The loss of Nsukka resulted in the loss of all these valuables including University equipment, books, buildings and records. The federal soldiers could not spare the University Library as they cast the fattest books in the library into the fire and watch them burst into flame, having been made to believe that it was “too much bukuru” that precipitated the war¹⁹. No wonder, Emma Okocha²⁰ referred to them as “gwodogwodo illiterates”. This episode of University of Nigeria history was also vividly captured by Chimamanda Adichie that, books were heaped together and burnt and not only that people were killed but painstaking researches of academics were destroyed by the illiterate Nigerian army. She narrated how Ugwu at the end of the war went to Freedom Square to see the mound of blackened books that the vandals had emptied out of the library and set on fire. She further wrote that even after the war, the Nigerian soldiers were still arresting intellectuals in the University campus²¹. Dr. Bede. N. Okigbo, Dean of faculty of Agriculture was said to have obtained help from the Biafran army to evacuate some of the special breed of cattle which had taken years and pains to breed. He took special care of the cattle throughout the war years moving them from one location to the other as the war progressed. At the end of the war, a Federal army officer saw the well-nourished cows as part of his war booty²². The cows were eventually lost to the officer. The years of painstaking research to grow these special cows were gone.

The extent of destruction suffered by the University during the war was aptly articulated by the Planning and Management Committee in a comprehensive report and submitted to the Administrator of East Central State on February 2, 1970. Many of the buildings were so

devastated that they required major repairs or replacements. Some of these buildings were: Continuing Education Centre (C.E.C), an architectural piece donated to the University by the United States Agency for International Development(USAID). Other major buildings that suffered the same fate were Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Russwurm Building (housing faculty of social sciences), the X-Ray building at the University Medical Centre, Agbebi building of faculty of Engineering, Home Economics building, Farm Houses of faculty of Agriculture and the main block of the Enugu Campus²³. Those buildings that were not destroyed were in such state of disrepair and misuse that they became an eyesore and required huge sums of money before they could be habitable. The report stated further that, 'the overall condition of the campus was such that health authorities had to inspect the total environment and make recommendations before general return of staff and students could commence'²⁴. Buildings like St. Peter's Catholic Church, the University Library, Margaret Ekpo Refectory, some staff quarters and some students' hostels that were not destroyed were occupied by Nigeria army officers. Thus, churches were desecrated by the Nigerian soldiers who turned them into living quarters, kitchen and toilets.

The most extensive and glaring damage, destruction and looting was done in the area of furniture and equipment. As stated earlier that the vandals will first strafe a particular area before looting valuables including zinc, doors, windows and wedding portraits. At the end of the war, staff quarters and public quarters were looted dry, louvre blades and door glasses were completely stolen. Thousands of chairs and tables in all buildings in both campuses were carted away. Even the one-thousand or so beautiful, fixed, retractable plywood seats which were part of the glory of Princess Alexandra Auditorium were all wrenched out. Not a single one was left out of the ten thousand or so spring beds and mattresses that had been distributed to the students' halls of

residence and staff quarters, electrical installations were either removed or smashed. Electric wires, floor tiles and toilet floats were removed. In every residential room and office, books were either removed or torn into shreds and piled up into huge heaps all over the floor. Steel cabinets that could not be carted away were smashed; their contents spilt over or burnt. Hundreds of refrigerators, cookers, office machines of all categories, microscopes, movable laboratory equipment of all kinds were stolen. Where science or other equipment was fixed, it was smashed beyond repair. An example was the Carver Building (science Block) where every laboratory was one extensive field of broken glass²⁵. As stated earlier, Nsukka fell early into the hands of the federal troops; therefore, the looting took place over a long period of time throughout the 30 months civil war. This explains the magnitude of destruction and looting in this area.

In the Faculty of Engineering, the structures were virtually devastated. All the departments of this faculty lost sensitive parts of most heavy installations. They were either smashed or rendered inoperative. All the electrical wirings were torn off. The Metallurgy laboratory was badly damaged and the photo elastic bench was smashed. Heavy electric motors, generators and motorcycle test unit were removed: variable compression engine unit was damaged: the tool-store was completely looted: the air compressor unit was removed and the bearing lubrication unit damaged to name just a few²⁶. It could be said that the rest of Nigeria came into this war not only to permanently silence the Igbo but also render them incapacitated physically, psychologically, economically and emotionally. It is just a miracle how the people quickly overcame the horrors of this war fought with so much venom and hate. Despite the magnitude of destruction and devastation, by 21 March 1970, students returned back to the institution.

The dominant question remains the rationale behind such wanton destruction of the University of Nigeria. The Gestapo mien with which the federal troops rendered the university desolate begs

for answers if it was actually an official assignment. An informant recalled that Pre-Civil War Princess Alexandra Auditorium was a piece of great architectural design not seen anywhere in Nigeria. He rhetorically questioned the essence of the destruction when the troops led by Captain Wushishi occupied the University despite the fact that they met no resistance as the University had been deserted while the Biafran soldiers had retreated to Opi²⁷. Indeed, the looting of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and other schools within the zone was done with the intention to punish the Biafrans by impoverishing them just as foreign forces did a conquered territory. They vandalized public schools and government offices and burnt invaluable document. Individual homes were not spared their penchant for brutality and brigandage.

Plate 5: Cinema hall, Ziks flat bombed during the war



Source: M.O. Odo, "Nigerian CivilWar:Its Aftermath in Nsukka Division"

Harrowing Tales of Occupation of Nsukka

Occupation by a victorious power over the vanquished in the world over has always left bitter memories. Japanese occupation of its Asian neighbours left a traumatic experience on their victims especially the women regarded as ‘comfort women.’ Occupation at the end of every armed conflict has always been waited upon with the greatest trepidation and jittery among the populace. Japanese occupation of Korea was akin to a reign of terror. The Japanese secret police committed numerous atrocities against the common people. They introduced the system of *Sook Ching* in Chinese language which means ‘purge through purification/cleansing’ or *Dai Kensho* in Japanese language meaning “great inspection.” This was aimed at exterminating those deemed anti-Japanese. The *Sook Ching* massacre claimed the lives of between 25000 to 50,000 ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaya²⁷. These men were rounded up and taken to deserted spots around the island and killed systematically. The Japanese patrolled the streets and commoners had to bow to them when they passed by. Those who failed to do so would be slapped or beaten and some taken away. The Japanese set up schools and forced people to learn their language. Textbooks were printed in Japanese. Every morning, children had to stand facing the direction of Japan and sing Japanese anthem. Japanese movies and propaganda films were shown in the cinemas. Going to the cinema also has its attendant risk as the Japanese might appear and take away the young men to work on the Death Railway²⁸. Sometimes, they planted themselves secretly in the cinemas and would listen secretly to conversation hoping to overhear anti-Japanese remarks. Radio stations were controlled by the Japanese. Those caught listening to foreign broadcasting stations especially British or American radio broadcasts were stuck with chopstick into the ears. In Burma, it was the same story and also in Hong Kong they deported the people to China because of scarcity of food thereby depleting the population of Hong Kong from 1.6 million in 1941 to 600,000 in 1945²⁹. Life indeed was hard under the Japanese rule.

The Koreans had never forgotten how horrible the Japanese were towards them especially the ‘comfort women’ (in effect, sexual slaves for the Japanese soldiers) whom they ravished at will. The Japanese from 1910-1932 had over 50% of the Korean entire arable land. They were the landlords while the Korean became tenants paying half of their produce to the Japanese landlords, those who could not afford the rent payment had to send their children either to work in the factories or into prostitution³⁰. Little wonder the Japanese were on tenterhooks after the Second World War. They sensitized their populace on what could befall them following the occupation by the Allied powers. The newspapers printed advice that only brought more terror. The admonitions went thus: “When in danger of being raped, women were warned, “Show the most dignified attitudes. Don’t yield; cry for help, factories issued poison capsules to women workers. And girls were instructed to wear their bulkiest *mompei* or cut their hair and pretend to be boys”³¹. The end of World War II brought such trepidation to the Japanese but fortunately for the Japanese, the Allied forces led by America were a benevolent occupation power, providence did not allow them to taste their bitter pill.

Nsukka was behind the enemy line for the entire duration of the 30 months civil war. They had horrible experiences under the suzerainty of the Nigerian army. Looting, rape, forced marriages, bombing of markets, summary executions, impositions of sarikis (Hausa name for a chief) were some of the woes experienced by the people within this epoch. The violence, humiliation, rape and summary executions were unanticipated considering that they were once people of the same country. The next subheading will consider, in detail, some of these inquisitions during the period of occupation by Nigerian soldiers.

Rape and Conjugal Slavery or Forced Marriage

Rape was a common feature of the Nigerian Army occupation of Igboland. It became so endemic that the people had to devise a means of protecting their young wives and children from being violated by the Nigerian Army. This did not mean that the Biafran soldiers were innocent of this crime but informants shudder when they recollect this menace by the Nigerian soldiers. The atrocities tilted heavily against the occupation power. The Nigerian soldiers, it was alleged, forcefully appropriated peoples' wives and when husbands protested, they were killed. Some young women kidnapped never returned while some ran to their camp because of hardship. Nwaffia Elizabeth recalled that, she was once taken forcefully despite the fact that she was pregnant. She stated further that the young girls and women from Lejja were taken by the soldiers to either of their camps in Aku or Ikwo Awka Obimo. Kidnapping of young women was rife and they devised the means of hiding in the bush early in the morning to avoid being taken by the Nigerian soldiers. Madam Elizabeth Nwaffia was lucky to have escaped the ravenous soldiers but Pa Basil's wife was not as lucky as she was raped by them. My informant further stated that Josephine Ogbuebule was not lucky too. She was already married with a baby; she was taken away and never returned even after the war. In other words, being married with children was not a guarantee a woman would avoid being taken away or ravished by the Nigerian soldiers³². This sort of story dotted everywhere in Nsukka area. An informant from Enugu-Ezike lamented how they forcefully took people's wives and young girls. In Imufu one Wilifred Idoko lost his wife to the Nigerian soldiers. Madam Ossai further lamented that raping was a common thing among the Hausa soldiers. Those women whom they appropriated by force or those who ran after them were never absorbed in the society after the war³³.

Ugwu Christiana confirmed that they ran into the bush but the pangs of hunger drove some women into taking the risk of going back home to look for food. However, some of the women

were unlucky as they were caught by the soldiers in their homes who took pleasure in using such women to satisfy their sexual orgy³⁴. Indeed, one of the jingles in the Radio Kaduna aptly justifies their dastardly mission thus: “let us go and crush them. We will pillage their property, rape their womenfolk, kill their menfolk and leave them uselessly weeping; we will complete the pogrom of 1966”³⁵. This confirms what Ojiakor lamented that:

in every war, women are always at the receiving end of abuse. Women especially young girls, became war booties. Young and beautiful girls were intimidated and raped by officers of the Federal troops, especially in Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Owerri and Umuahia. The soldiers, especially the senior officers abducted and intimidated them into marriage only to abandon those months later after putting them in the family way. Young married women were not spared. There were stories of men beaten to a state of stupor each time they refused to surrender their wives at the soldiers' requests³⁶.

The harassment and molestation continued unabated.

As Forsyth noted, they actually carried out their threat of ravishing Igbo women whether married and unmarried; even pregnant women were not spared. In Orba, women were also raped at will that some either ran into the bush or decided to fraternize with them to avoid the dehumanizing act of rape. This scenario was vividly captured in the character of Nnesinachi in *Half of a Yellow Sun*³⁷ who lived with a Hausa soldier. These group of women, according to Victor Ukaogo were women who could not endure but chose the option of cohabitation with the victorious soldiers as wives and mistresses. Many, he continued, willingly took this option while others were forcefully inherited as ‘spoils of war’ by the members of the victorious army. Those women in Bende –Ozuiem area were regarded as ‘yakambaya’³⁸.

It is important to note that” it may be suffering associated with the war that led to the rise of immorality amongst the women, but the unethical mannerism of the women clearly

demonstrated the very bad side of the war fought with starvation and hunger as a punitive strategy to elicit surrender. Some married ones among them had already dispensed of their husbands by abandoning their homes and felt free to mingle with the soldiers out of their free will³⁹. Another account by Ahazeum, Emezue and Axel vividly remembered one Yoruba soldier who was generally known as “kpaberekpe,” whose major preoccupation was waylaying women either on their way to stream or farm and raping them openly. There were others too who beat up husbands and took their wives away. They went further to state that sometimes, women in the federal held areas consented to marry soldiers to avoid violence against them. There were cases of Igbo men killed trying to defend women from harassment by soldiers⁴⁰. In Opi a man from Odinanso in Idi-Village group lost his life as he attempted resisting the Nigerian soldiers from taking his wife⁴¹. In the *Blood on the Niger*, Emma Okocha recalled the death of Chuks Momah a sales man from Enugu who had returned to Umuezei quarters, Asaba, and was well known to soldiers in both armies. A federal platoon had arrived at his one-story building and steered clear. An officer however, apprehended his wife. Chuks Momah regarded his wife as a sacred cow. The beautiful woman should never be contaminated. For the love of his wife and with bare hands, Chuks Momah fought off the invaders. A few bursts of the sub machine gun mortally fell him⁴². This kind of scenario was also vividly captured by Adichie⁴³ about the rape of Ugwu’s sister Anulika in Opi. Anulika was raped by five Nigerian soldiers. In the process of her resistance, she was nearly beaten to death. This was the plight of women in Federal held areas. Similarly, a victim in Port Hacourt, Ojiakor recorded her experience thus:

They ordered me to take off my clothes. I refused but they threatened me with a gun and tore my clothes off me. One by one,

they raped me on the floor. There were always two soldiers holding me down. When the fourth came; I asked him how would you feel if someone treated your mother, sister, wife or daughter like this? I passed out and later saw myself in the hospital⁴⁴.

On the other hand, most of the women forced into conjugal slaves were taken to their camp at Nsukka to satisfy their sexual needs. In this whole imbroglio, it was the pregnant women that suffered most. At a point during the flight from the invading forces, they were in most cases abandoned by their relatives as they could not walk fast. Those captured faced two horrible options: either the Nigerian soldiers had mercy on them which was rare or they were violated not minding the condition of such unfortunate women⁴⁵. It was said that at the end of the war the *Onyishi Umuada* (the oldest of the married daughters of any village group, who by the virtue of her age assumes leadership position in the association) of different village groups embarked on purification rites on the entire women folk. The women were made to confess their sexual escapades to the leaders of *Umuada* and *Ndiyyom* (women married in a particular village group) of which they were purified but many were never accepted back into their husbands' household. They became stigmatized and segregated against. Some of the women who were not so lucky and were never accepted back by their kith and kin for instance were; Regina Ugwuoke, Sophia Eke and Virginia Erigbo all from Ibagwa-Agu⁴⁶. The effect was enormous as it not only destroyed relationships as most married women were not fully accepted again by their husbands after undergoing purification rituals.

Among Nsukka Igbo, it was a taboo for a married woman to have extra-marital affair even in cases where the husband was late; the woman must undergo series of rituals for the ancestors to spare her and her first son especially. Those whose husbands were alive were forbidden from cooking for the man or continued to engage in conjugal bliss with him unless the husband was not aware of the wife's sexual infidelity. If he was aware and hid it, he would court the wrath of

the ancestors and would eventually lose his life and his wife unless certain propitiations were done to appease the gods. Therefore, after the war, purification rites were carried out among the various villages both for women who willingly and unwillingly followed the Nigerian soldiers. Some were not accepted back by the husbands while there was preponderance of young girls who were never married again.

Nonetheless, Nsukka women did devise means of escaping from conjugal slavery and rape. All the informants recalled that the young girls would rub charcoal mixed with palm oil on their body to make them appear old and ugly. In Okwutu, Lejja and Obimo, the girls and young married women disguised themselves by this method and wore old clothes to make them appear very old and sickly sitting by the fireside. In Opi, young girls and women wore local beads signifying that they were married. In Udenu, it was alleged that the young women whenever they suddenly encounter the soldiers pulled their cloths and held their breasts with two hands muttering *e jim nwa n'aka* (I am a nursing mother), *e nwerem di e nwerem di* (I am married). With time, the soldiers were alleged to have understood the game and were equally telling the women captured that they also had wives⁴⁷. An Ukehe Informant who sojourned at Orlu in Imo State during the war as a refugee mentioned that his mother used uncooked cassava (*akpu oyi*), mixed with palm oil and rub the sisters to avoid rape and forced marriage by the federal forces. This was to make them appear sickly and unattractive⁴⁸. However, the predominate method of avoidance of sexual molestation among the Nsukka Igbo was through rubbing of charcoal mixed with palm oil for one to appear unattractive to the randy men in Nigerian army uniform. Even as the women hid from the Nigerian soldiers, they realized later that people hid in the bush, this made them to invade those bushes in search of beautiful women. Beautiful women suffered the worst nightmares because they were the targets at the bushes and markets. War is indeed a

harbinger of woes. But the most traumatic appeared to be violated and turned into sex slaves by heartless enemy soldiers. War torn countries across the world had such tales of woes from Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Korea, Liberia, and Uganda among others. Rape and conjugal slavery abound. In Uganda, men were anally raped by the Lord's Resistance Army, unfortunate parents were forced to make love while their children watched. They tortured people by cutting off their ears, lips, fingers among other inhuman atrocities. In Yemen, Syria and Iraq, the wars in these countries and the human sufferings are disheartening. In Yemen, the suffering of the children there reminds one of those Biafran children looking bony and sick with no hope of feeding each passing day.

Occupation "Babies"

The end of the war saw a preponderance of occupation "babies" in Nsukka area. Most of the soldier husbands were muslims whose tradition allows polygyny and were free to live in concubinage with their captive wives. These women had children for them and at the end of the war, some soldier husbands forcefully took the children away while their mothers were left traumatized and helpless. In Obollo-Afor, an informant disclosed that a woman named Okike had children who were forcefully taken away by the Nigerian soldier who fathered them while their mother was callously abandoned⁴⁹. For any mother, this kind of emotional torture is disorientating and cruel. In Lejja, a woman left her husband and married a Hausa soldier. She had children named Aisha, Lawal, Usuman. She followed him to the North but later returned with her children. They were grown men and women⁵⁰. Many Igbo girls who got entrapped into such relationships continued to grieve until they passed away miserably.

The cultural gap between the average Hausa soldier and an Igbo girl is too wide. The religious difference of a muslim husband and a Christian in most cases could not be bridged. Some of these non-commissioned officers (NCO) were beastly, uncaring and only interested in breeding children that have constituted urchins in most northern cities. In Nsukka central, an informant noted that he knew more than ten occupation babies who were now grown men and women. Some are even employees of the University of Nigeria. Some were taken to the north and they later returned to Nsukka⁵¹ either because they were not accepted by their in-laws or they could not adapt in a hostile environment where they had earlier in 1966 vented their frustrations on the Igbo. There was the possibility of Northern women being hostile to the Igbo wives and their children and regarded them with suspicion as usurpers who took their fathers and husbands away from them. Again, another reason may be the religious differences as non-muslims were regarded as infidels. Another victim was Madam Monica from Ede-Oballa who was married to an Okwutu man. She was forcefully taken by a Nigerian soldier. She had two children for him but the soldier abandoned her and the children⁵². She suddenly became a single mother, breadwinner and had to toil to raise the children under a climate similar to an outcast.

Although cleansing rituals were performed on the women after the war, it left a deep scare in the lives of the affected victims. Some unmarried young girls at the end of the war found themselves with “babies.” Their lives were completely ruined because it meant they would never be married again. Besides, the end of the war saw a total desolation of Igboland. It was difficult for people to stand on their feet. Not only were people rendered homeless because of the constant air raids but their sources of livelihood were destroyed. Markets were burnt after looting. Things left in the stalls were totally looted and the remnant burnt. Valuables were carted away. In such state of disillusionment, the agonies of single mothers were deep. Their “war” husbands left them with no support and they were not fully integrated in their various

communities. Although informants mentioned that they were integrated but when asked if they were married again, they answered in the negative. Their integration or total acceptance in the society should have been through marriages but the populace saw them through the prism of outcasts and were not allowed into families to maintain the sanctity of such families. During the war, women who fraternized with the federal forces were generally viewed as prostitutes. The case in Nsukka was that some girls who could not endure the hardships of the time actually engaged in prostitution. They were alleged to have rented houses in Amaogbo and near the present Ogige market where they engaged in servicing the Nigerian soldiers who were better empowered than the Biafran soldiers⁵³.

One of the negative impacts of the war on Nsukka area was that it destroyed the moral tenets so dear to the people. After the war, stealing became rife as well as prostitution. Those taboos that people held sacrosanct because of the fear of the gods were violated. Many also converted to Christianity as they were aggrieved that the gods of the land never lifted a hand to save them from the rampaging Nigerian soldiers.

Abandoned Children

There were incidences of women who abandoned their children. This was aside from those women who abandoned their husbands and children and got married to the soldiers in a bid to have a good life. This type of women was represented by Tony Ubesie in his seminal Igbo novel *Isi Akwu dara N' Ala*. In the novel, Chike the major character had a wife named Ada who abandoned the husband and children and fraternized with the Nigerian soldiers. She later had a child for one of the soldiers but was abandoned at the end of the war. She went back to the husband with the child but Chike the husband did not accept her back⁵⁴. Many women in Nsukka area were abandoned by the Nigerian soldiers at the end of the war. Some who went back to the

North with them later returned because of the disparity in culture and religion. Their northern in-laws never incorporated them and more so, the men had wives and children before the war. Those whom the Northerners performed their marriage rites had not returned till today and were as good as dead⁵⁵. Omada Eze from Olofin Odo abandoned her children and husband and followed a Nigerian army while Caroline Odo also followed suit. It was alleged that Omada Eze saw her husband during the war and told the Nigerian soldiers to kill him. Unfortunately for her, none of the soldiers took her to their homes after the war. She later came back to the husband's house. Her death few years later was treated with so much contempt as the husband's relative never attended her burial nor buried her in their compound. They held her responsible for the death of their brother⁵⁶.

In Opi, a woman named Sarah Agbode followed the soldiers and nobody heard about her thereafter. Gladys Ugwuezugwu and Agujio Ezema were also some of the women that fraternized with the soldiers and were never married in Opi⁵⁷. Ukaogo captured the plight of one Madam Manasseh whose plight was worsened when at the end of the war, the relations of her war husband in Kano flatly rejected her perhaps on account of her refusal to be guided by the Islamic tenets of the people⁵⁸. He further stated that the emotional torture to the women, their families and children became benumbing stigmas that alienated them in their respective communities⁵⁹.

Nevertheless, the women who abandoned their children in this context were nursing mothers who in the course of their flight had to throw away crying babies to avoid detection by the Nigerian soldiers. Many of the informants attested that they witnessed where mothers were encouraged to throw away their little helpless babies for the safety of the adults who were scared of the conquistadors. This was another harrowing experience of the war on women. The

psychological trauma of the mother maybe difficult to overcome. No wonder all the informants, mostly women, shudder at the mention of war or 'Biafra.' Many prayed that God should rather take their lives than for them to witness another war in their lifetime. Regina Ossai confirmed this when she narrated that sometimes, people were not always lucky especially women with babies and toddlers. The children often cried out in hunger or tiredness. Their cries often gave the mother and others away. She further stated that she watched as mothers threw their babies away because of incessant cries. Even the men hiding with them encouraged the mothers to throw their babies away⁶⁰.

Again, in his book, *Surviving in Biafra*; Alfred Uzokwe recounted the experience of his brother Emmanuel Uzokwe who was a Biafran Soldier. He narrated that their troop was cut off at Uzuakoli by the federal troops; they embarked on Operation Open Corridor, fighting their way out of the blockade and taking an untold number of casualties. Many Biafran women who had come to buy food behind enemy lines perished in that conflict. Some had infants who were either abandoned on the war front when things got very bad or who were killed. The federal troops were enveloping their location and they were trying very hard to avoid detection by crawling on their stomachs. Meanwhile, bullets were whizzing by, coming from snipers stationed all around them. Just as their commander called for absolute silence from all, an infant that one of the women on *afia attack* (trade behind the enemy to procure those scarce commodities in Biafran enclave) was carrying suddenly started crying. The lady was warned to get the infant to stop crying. The more she tried, the more the baby cried. The soldiers got hold of the baby and crushed it. Instant silence ensued⁶¹. Although this incidence happened in Uzuakoli but similar cases abound all over Biafra. In Nsukka, because of the brutality of the Nigerian soldiers, the people had to run deeper into the thick forests where they, according to Ukaogo became co-

occupants with dangerous animals and reptiles⁶². Even the dense forests were not spared the venom of bombing as an informant from Lejja recalled that the town was not bombed but rather the thick forest that separated them from Obimo was bombed. Maybe they thought that people would be hiding in the thick forest⁶³. It could also mean that they felt that the people might be trading in the thick forest as virtually every community left their market places and relocated to different areas which in most cases were in the thick forest to avoid detection.

Looting

Looting was another terrible experience felt by Nsukka people. Many of the informants agreed that they hurriedly left their homes when the war engulfed their communities. Some said they were eating when the enemy advanced and hastily left their houses without locking them up, and when they sneaked back in search of food, they had been looted or people from other communities had occupied their house. This group of people blamed the Biafran hierarchy for no information or proper sensitization. People's livestock, household furniture, windows, doors, in fact anything of importance were all carted away. Again, according to Madiebo⁶⁴, before their last attempt to defend Eha-Amufu, they watched as Northern soldiers and civilians removed doors, windows, roofs and furniture from all the buildings, for evacuation to the Northern Region. The Nigerian forces went on a looting spree after they had strafed a particular area. As Mark Odo lamented that the most psychological aspect of the war is that such properties like zinc, doors, windows and other valuables of Obollo-Eke were being used by the civilians of Idoma origin who looted them during the war. Today, you may visit an Idoma man only to find out his personal doors, windows or frames are those of your own carted away during the war⁶⁵. Residents of Okwutu lamented same as their Igala neighbours looted them and even their crops and often waylaid those who engaged in attack trade. An Enugu- Ezike informant who wedded

barely few weeks to the commencement of armed confrontation said that the Nigerian soldiers looted every valuable gift given to the wife during their wedding including their wedding portrait⁶⁶. The proximity of Nsukka with Idoma and Igala ethnic groups made them take advantage of the situation by looting their age-long neighbours. Again, most of the army officers of the advancing army were from the Middle belt. Invariably those were the booties of war. They stole all the valuable properties of their Igbo neighbours who had retreated as the Nigerian soldiers advanced into their villages and communities.

Mrs Mercy Ugwu recounted how the federal troops came to the husband's compound on the 17th August 1967 and burnt the entire buildings. She recalled that the husband was accused of aiding the Biafran soldiers. She said their enemies informed the Nigerian soldiers that they were aiding the Biafran war effort. Many old enemies blackmailed each other by labeling them Biafran sympathizers to settle old scores. Rich men were greatly affected through this way. Many lost their buildings and other valuables. In the case of Madam Mercy Ugwu, their five buildings were razed down including five barns of yam. She lamented that they escaped death by the whiskers. She recalled that they first of all looted the buildings, carted away all the valuables before burning the houses⁶⁷. Livestock were carted away without the consent of the owners.

In Lejja, they commandered people's cows. In fact, one of the collaborators Stephen Omeke who spoke fluent Hausa language constituted a menace to people's livestock. Not only that Stephen Omeke wanted them to eliminate all the rich and prominent men in Lejja, he helped them to commandeer people's livestock and up wine. The story has it that Stephen Omeke would take them to villages noted for cow rearing where the Nigerian soldiers would slaughter the cows and feast at his house which became like a permanent residence for the soldiers. Omeke equally helped them to conscript young girls whom they ravished at will in his house. As a result, many

left Lejja because of the atrocities of the Nigerian soldiers and their collaborator Stephen Omeke.⁶⁸ They looted livestock very much as one informant noted that they never joked with it. They carted them away first before they burnt houses. This was the same story everywhere in Biafra as Achebe recalled his experience in Okporo where they sought refuge. He wrote that:

one day the Nigerian soldiers came to the compound, and we hid our daughter Chinelo who was eight. I was making bread in the earth oven that we had designed. I watched the soldiers from kitchen window for a while as they pranced around the compound and demanded that its owner hand over a large black and white spotted goat that was tied to the fence in a corner near the building that served as the storage area. The goat had sentimental importance to the wife of the owner of the residence, we learned from her pleas. It had been a gift from her father so she refused to hand over the animal to the soldiers. I talked to the soldiers for awhile, overwhelmed by the strong smell of kai kai, a local gin on their breath and in Igbo persuaded the wife of our host to give the soldiers the animal or be willing to lose her life and ours in the process. At this point the soldiers were showing off, pointing their rifles in our faces. As they marched off they instructed the animal's owner to take care of the goat for them in their absence, because they were still on duty. If the goat was not there when they came; they warned, "You will be responsible"⁶⁹.

This was the same story in Biafra as Nigeria soldiers were synonymous with looting and rape.

In Nsukka area, those who left their properties hurriedly owing to the ferocity of the invasion never recovered them. Rose Obetta recalled that they occupied her father's house and removed the ceiling to cook with their female companions. They killed people's domestic animals and you dare not challenge them or else you were shot⁷⁰. Another pathetic story in Ukehe happened in Pa Itanyi's compound. Pa Mathias Itanyi was a rich business man before the war. He dealt on illicit gin. He travelled to Midwest Region to buy his wares in large quantities and for storage. He would then supply to his other retailers in the neighbourhood. Pa Itanyi met his untimely death in 1967 when the Nigerian forces shelled Ukehe from Opi. He refused to run for safety, calculating

the enormous wealth in his house. Pa Mathias Itanyi was said to have a store room full of gin stored in drums and another room filled with kolanuts stored by his wife. He could not abandon such wealth and run to the unknown. He was killed while trying to stay behind to protect what he had labored for years. His house was occupied by one of the senior army officers because it was one of the few buildings with corrugated iron sheet. The soldiers emptied the entire stock before the end of the war. It was alleged that the gin and kolanuts were rationed to soldiers at their camp in Ikpogwu Ukehe⁷¹. An informant from Okwutu also recalled that they confiscated people's boxes of clothes and their female companions would pick the ones they liked. Because of the good life they offered to the women, even married women refused to come home to their family even after giving the soldiers kegs of palm wine. Ahazeum, Emezue and Axel recorded the experience of one of their informants in the hands of the Nigerian soldiers. She said that:

at road blocks our boxes and other loads were thoroughly searched, and valuable belongings forcefully removed. They collected my valuable wrappers, dresses and jewelleries. The items confiscated were given to their girlfriends, mistresses and concubines right there in our presence. This was most frustrating aspect of this exercise. To watch while your hard-earned property is given away to women of easy virtue and there was nothing you could do about it for fear of being beaten, detained or even killed⁷².

Madam Cecilia Achiugo the narrator was lucky she was able to even save her boxes of clothes but it was a different ball game in Nsukka area as people left their belongings in a hurry and were never able to recover them.

The kind of wealth wasted by the Nigerian soldiers during their occupation is heart wrenching. They came for total the annihilation the people. Many rich men could not survive the peace because they had nothing to hold on to after the war. Many lost their property while the money

left in the bank were converted to only twenty pounds. Surviving the peace was difficult for them and many became disillusioned and died shortly after the war.

The soldiers' effort at spoiling their women friends, wives and mistresses could be described as the after effect of the army occupation as Emerah Obigaeli observed among Ukpok women. She mentioned that the war led to moral decadence on Ukpok women. According to her, "many women especially married ones could not bear the hardship experienced at that time abandoned their families for the Nigerian soldiers. The attraction was the prospect of the good life which it was believed contact with the soldiers held. In addition, there was the possibility of the possession of important personal items which included bathroom slippers, toilet soap, towel and body cream"⁷³. On the other hand, Ojiakor opined that hunger and starvation made many girls to actually go in search of Nigerian soldiers who supplied them with money, relief materials such as rice, beans, stockfish, etc to feed their families. Some families even encouraged their daughters to befriend the Nigerian soldiers and in the process got married to them⁷⁴.

From the foregoing, one can safely say that the war can best be described as war of attrition. The end of the war rendered the people not only homeless as they had problem of accommodation but also property less. It also destroyed most moral tenets held dear by the Igbo as people engaged in all sort of shoddy activities to make ends meet. It was no longer *ezi afa ka ego* (good name is better than riches) rather the reverse became the case. As mentioned earlier, the end of the war saw the proliferation of vices like prostitution and armed robbery which were very rare in pre-Civil War Igboland. Also, several houses in Nsukka were razed down by the Nigerian soldiers. The houses that remained were only those they inhabited. This quickly reminds one of Japan after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as captured by Toland:

the road wound down into the plain between yokohama and Tokyo. What had once been a fifteen mile stretch of houses and factories was now flattened debris, a wilderness of rubble. All that rose from the flatlands, like crude memorials to the dead, were the tall, gaunt chimneys of bath houses, charred metal poles, and a few remnants of stone buildings. Of the wood and paper houses only ash remained⁷⁵.

Many informants corroborated the fact that the Nigerian soldiers inhabited any good houses and at the end of their stay burnt those houses. One could imagine the accommodation crises faced by the Nsukka people at the cessation of hostility. Therefore, people had to live in already burnt schools and churches. They used grasses to cover the roof of these buildings until they were able to acquire make-shifts houses for their families.

Uzo-Uwani Farm settlement witnessed the theft of her structures like the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus. Uzo-Uwani Farm Settlement was established by the Eastern Regional Government under M.I Okpara in late 1961. This farm settlement was abandoned as the federal forces occupied Adani area. As the University of Nigeria was at one point a target by the invading forces, so also was Uzo-Uwani Farm Settlement. The Biafran army tried to defend the farm settlement by destroying two bridges leading to the farm but the invading forces were able to use their Jet Bomber to destroy the farm that by 1968, Adani area was firmly in their grip⁷⁶. Iduagaba Cosmas opined that the Nigeria Army targeted the farm settlement especially where the silo was located. This according to him was with the belief that Ojukwu hid arms and ammunition in the silo. The day they invaded Uzo-Uwani, was a market day. They first bombed the market killing many before they dumped the remaining bomb at the farm settlement.

The magnitude of destruction on the farm was recorded because the Nigerian fighter jets visited the farm severally and bombed it until nothing was left.⁷⁷ Anthony Eze was of the view that; ‘the Nigerian army was interested in the farm settlement because they knew that it contained lots of

government property and they wanted to make sure that the people were left with nothing if they eventually secede⁷⁸. The idea for the destruction of Uzo-Uwani farm settlement maybe attributed to Awolowo's ignominious policy of 'All is fair in war and starvation is a legitimate weapon of war. I don't see why we should feed our enemies fat, only to fight us harder'. This policy was scrupulously followed by Gowon and Awolowo not minding the millions of children both born and unborn that they denied the chances of living and surviving the war. The bombing of the farm settlement was another ploy to further weaken secession. The federal government led by Gowon had already blockaded the people so any internal arrangement to procure food by the Igbo was totally unacceptable to the conquistadors.

At the end of the war in 1970, it was discovered that many of the infrastructure set up by the government were vandalized by the federal troops while the crops planted were uprooted prematurely and eaten by the Biafran soldiers. The settlement had these infrastructures before the war: buildings for settlers, health center, primary school, stores, shops, market, processing mills, prototype cultivator, prototype disc harrow, ploughing machines, churches, police station, post office, machinery pool, workshops, poultry and distributing center, sports field and playground⁷⁹. Up until now, Uzo-Uwani Farm settlement has not adequately been resuscitated. As the saying goes, it is easier to destroy than to build. Even today as the country is mono economy, nothing has been done to bring the farm settlement to its feet even as starvation stares one in the face. One wonders if it is actually part of marginalization of the Igbo. The farmers need the farm settlement as they affirmed that the settlement has not witnessed serious intervention since the end of the civil war. Farm settlement resuscitation has always been used as a bait to garner votes during elections but the successive governments never kept their promises

of its revitalization. Yet, this is one of the food basket areas that would guarantee food security in the country.

Summary Executions

Summary executions were also part of the harrowing tales of the Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka area. There were cases of people tricked into believing that they were Biafran soldiers only for the community to realize their mistake when they were executed. As what happened in Asaba when all the males from the ages of ten were summarily executed, cases of that nature were also recorded in Nsukka area. Some villages were sacked because the Biafran soldiers attacked the Nigerian soldiers' camp and as a result, they unleashed their venom on the harmless villagers. That in most cases accounted for the reason the people hid in the bush throughout the duration of the conflict. For instance, in Nsukka area when the soldiers effectively occupied villages by villages, it became very hard to get to the farmlands and homes to get food. Some men who took the risk were shot by the Nigerian soldiers while women were serially raped. Some men were taken as war prisoners while some were forced to divulge the location of other villages. An informant from Ohodo recalled how on some occasions the Nigerian army captured some people around Ohodo and Opi and they were executed. Also in Nsukka some civilians were taken from Central School Nsukka where they were kept as refugees and executed⁸⁰.

In Okwutu, the federal troops stationed at Ugwunwoye pretended to be Biafran soldiers and encouraged the people to bring food and in such way summarily executed those who came out. In Okwutu, towards the tail end of the war, an informant recalled that more than thirty civilians captured by the Nigerian soldiers were taken to Uzo anuka and executed. This execution happened that the next day, the war ended⁸¹. Pa Fredrick Odo noted that in Ozalla Ezimo, they

summarily executed people both men and women. They even carted some to the North including their late chief who was able to escape and return home. One of the captives, Chukwuma Ugwu Attam starved himself to death and Ogbodo Odo escaped from captivity⁸². Those Prisoners of war (POW) were believed by the villagers to have been taken to the North. Madam Roseline Eya⁸³ also mentioned that towards the tail end of the war, the Federal troops were burying people alive and her statement was also corroborated in Enugu –Ezike. Another informant from Amaechalla Enugu-Ezike recalled that they took people hostage and those who tried to escape from their clutches were shot. He mentioned that of all those captured, only Hyacinth Urama and Hyacinth Ameyi later returned⁸⁴. Madam Mercy Ugwu mentioned that her brothers' in-law Alexander Ugwu and Ifeanyi Ugwu were also captured and killed⁸⁵. As mentioned earlier, the attack by the Biafran soldiers on the federal troops at Opi led to the death of many in Opi and Ohodo. Some young men who were captured were alleged to have been taken to Ukehe and executed. This was their camp stationed at Ukehe but because those abducted never returned even after cessation of hostility, it had been interpreted to mean that they were executed at Ukehe. Not only that people's properties were looted and women serially raped or school wooden desks and windows used for cooking but also innocent civilians were summarily executed because they had been unfortunately quarantined in Agemben state of exception.

The ferocity of their killings could be adduced to mean that after the 1966 massacre, no single person was brought to trial, many of which were conducted by contingents of the Nigerian army, and it may well be that these soldiers felt that their behaviour was acceptable. The horrors of the killings at Nsukka were aptly captured by Cervenka thus:

In Nsukka sector, catholic priests who fled the area with their parishioners told ghastly tales of mass shooting and indiscriminate bloodletting, whole families were bundled into

*their thatch-roof houses; the houses were then set ablaze. Those who struggled to escape were shot or else captured and forced to undergo the ordeal in another thatch-roof hut*⁸⁶.

Also, Auberon Waugh and Suzanne Cronje recorded that” refugees from Nsukka- where in the days after its capture, all male Biafrans were said to have been executed”⁸⁷. The residents of Okwutu, Alor-uno and Nsukka central suffered most from this method of execution and their horrible experiences remains indelible in their memory. In Nsukka, after the night of shelling, the people still thought that they were Biafran soldiers test running their latest equipment. The next morning, the elders and some young men took some foodstuffs to plead with them to inform them in advance when next they wanted to test their weapons; unknowingly, they walked into the hands of Nigerian army. Those who lost their lives were Mathew Ozioko, Pa Ona and Wilifred Eze among others⁸⁸. In Okwutu, those who were remembered today to have lost their lives in that disguised encounter were Vincent Ugwunyi, Emmanuel Ede and Jacob Umeai among others. Again, Umuida in Enugu-Ezike was razed in 1968⁸⁹. It was said that the entire village was burnt down. It was also alleged that they decimated people and animals while captured women later served as their wives and cooks.

In Alor-uno the people came out with goods to meet the soldiers, but were all rounded up and executed. In Isiuja it was also alleged that many people were killed at the house of Mr. Innocent Ugwanyi. Mr Ugwanyi was a teacher and owned a gramophone. Men usually converged at his home to listen to the radio. One day, they were taken unawares by the Nigeria soldiers and executed⁹⁰. The people were so bombarded, to borrow the words of Ben Odogwu, that there was ‘no place to hide.’ The civilians would equally sneak out of their hiding with the hope that the Biafran soldiers had dislodged the Nigerian soldiers only for the unlucky ones to be executed. Biafra was indeed a human tragedy; at least the super powers for a time shelved their cold war

impasse to support Nigeria throughout the war with sophisticated weapons of mass destruction. As Auberon Waugh and Suzanne Cronje recorded that” when history adds up the sins of omission and commission committed in the name of such concepts as ‘unity,’ ‘sovereignty’ and ‘territorial integrity’- legalistic monstrosities when applied to Nigeria-then this war will come to epitomize the inhumanity of our age. One day the world will look into the eyes of Biafra and recoil at the reflection of its own image”⁹¹. Nigeria has since the war lived in denial of the atrocities committed during this epoch.

Bombing of markets

Bombing of markets was one of the targets of the Nigeria army. Evidences abound on this particular menace by the federal forces. Markets which at this period were the exclusive preserve of women became their targets. After each raid, many were left dead. Many markets were relocated to avoid noise that would attract the invaders. Adani axis was invaded on a market day which left many dead and injured. Prominent among those who died on that day was a cloth seller Eze Nwa Madu who was described as the richest man in Adani then.⁹² In Udenu Local Government, the popular *Orie Orba* Market was not bombed but rather informants mentioned that the Nigerian soldiers encouraged people to come out from hiding and trade in the market but under the condition that the market should change from *Orie Orba* to *Orie Kaduna*, likewise *Afor Obollo* was renamed *Afor Jos* while *Eke Amufie* in Enugu-Ezike became *Eke Kano*. It was alleged that because of that change in name, many people steered clear from the market though not for so long because the pangs of hunger drove women out of the thick forests to fend for their families.

As the soldiers kept on harassing people plying the market, most women decided to trade in other village markets till the end of the war⁹³. In Opi, the popular *Aho* market was relocated from its present site to *Nkwo Igba* farther inside the village. Due to the menace of the Nigerian soldiers in the market, only children could transact tobacco, cigarette and palm wine to the Nigerian soldiers. Young women were not safe nor the young men who were in most cases shot at sight or accused of being Ojukwu boys⁹⁴. Many markets were relocated to avoid detection and yet the civilians could not escape air raids even in the secluded areas. The trade was normally done before dawn such that by 5am people were almost through with their transactions. This situation was also captured by Achebe when he mentioned that, ‘finding food in Ezinifite was a difficult proposition. The women had to wake up very early in the morning-about 4am- to attend the daily markets to procure food. When the Nigerians found out where the open markets were and started bombing them, the women moved their commercial activities into dense forests’⁹⁵. He stated further how the Nigerian army later found and bombed the new location. According to him, “the bombardment from the Nigerian Air force on this day was particularly heavy, as if the pilots had been upset at not discovering the market sooner. Most of the bombs fell before dawn. In the morning, we discovered the most harrowing of sights. One image still haunts me till today: that of a pregnant woman split in two by the Nigerian blitz”⁹⁶.

Madam Nwaffia from Lejja mentioned how they bombed the dense forest between their boundaries with Obimo. It may be inferred from their action that the Nigerians felt that the people hid in the forest as was the norm in Nsukka area or that a market was located there. In Lejja, the people traded in a small square at *Dunoka*. In 1969, the Nigerian soldiers were said to have surrounded *Eke Amushi* threatening to kill everybody in the market but for the pleadings of sarikis, (Sariki is the hausa word for chief.) such calamity was averted. *Orie Amara*

Umuogbuagu was also burnt by the Nigerian soldiers. In these markets, transactions took place early in the morning by 5am and as quickly as possible⁹⁷. Bush paths were followed to ply these markets; no one dared use the roads. Madam Christiana Ugwu⁹⁸ also recalled that Aho Opi was burnt and when people relocated to a new site, the Nigerian army also discovered the new place and burnt it again. On the day they burnt the market, they first of all forcefully captured some women. As a result, the people therefore, traded mostly between 4am and 5am when the Federal forces stationed at Opi might have gone to sleep.

The idea of bombing markets by the Nigerian soldiers despite the blockade imposed by Gowon to starve and weaken Igbo resistance could only mean the completion of the pogrom. Those who engaged in attack trade did so at a great personal risk because if they were unlucky to meet the Nigerian army along the way, it meant death. The traders had to use bush paths to avoid detection and in most cases spent close to five days in the bush. As men were shot on sight, women were saddled with the responsibility of fending for their families. The trade according to Ojiakor⁹⁹ was all female affairs. The traders travelled in convoy or in a fleet of canoes. The women of Atani she mentioned specifically plied their trade from Atani to Midwest. They were mostly married women. A young girl had to disguise herself as an old woman to join. This was to avoid the risk of being raped by the soldiers.

The horrific realization in post-war Nigeria is the lack of remorsefulness on the atrocities committed against the Igbo. The common resentment against the Igbo as espoused by Achebe had quadrupled. Today, cry for marginalization against the Igbo has been viewed with much contempt by other ethnic groups. Despite the surprised recovery of the Igbo after the war as against Gowon's oppressive policies as assisted by Awolowo, the Igbo bounced back with nothing. Today no one believes it had been a theatre of war with the most horrifying

bombardment of modern warfare. Therefore, the other ethnic groups were always on guard to ensure that the Igbo were subtly and perpetually out of power in Nigeria. At this juncture, one can safely say that the physical war had been over but the emotional war is still ongoing in the Nigerian polity.

Plate 6: NAF 624 BOMBER used by the federal troops



Source: Umuahia War Museum taken by Dr. Chijioke Onuorah

Plate 7: St. Patrick's College Obollo Afor destroyed during the civil war.



Source: M.O. Odo, "Nigerian Civil War: Its Aftermath in Nsukka Division"

Installation of Sarikis (war chiefs)

Sariki is the Hausa word for chief. Therefore, for effective occupation of Nsukka and to ensure the subjugation of the civilians, the conquistadors appointed *sarikis* to help in ensuring compliance or deference to the occupied power by the civilians. These men were in most cases regarded as collaborators who in the main acted as guides to the federal troops into other villages. Some exhibited highhandedness that they were quickly eliminated by the BOFF (Biafran Organisation of Freedom Fighters). In most cases some of them were appointed because of their ability to converse in Hausa language fluently. As mentioned earlier, some of the *sarikis* exhibited sheer highhandedness over the people. It was alleged that anybody any *sariki* wants dead was easily eliminated by the Nigerian soldiers. They would gather people's livestock and crops for the Nigerian soldiers. Aside edibles, young girls were commandeered by the *sarikis* for use by the Nigerian soldiers.

The war started during the harvest season therefore peoples' crops like yam, maize, cassava, akidi (local beans) as well as livestock like sheep, dogs, cows, pigs, fowls were all consumed by the Nigerian soldiers and the *sariki*. The people hated them and they became the targets of BOFF. Some of the *sarikis* were Shaibu Omee from Umuida Enugu-Ezike, Jerome Onu from Aji was later executed by the Nigerian army. He was accused of recruiting people into Biafran army¹⁰⁰. Audu Omee from Olido was also killed by the BOFF at Umeano junction for working with the Nigerian army. In Ekwegbe, Basil Ugwu was the *sariki*. In Opi, Augustine Aji was the *sariki* Court (this is where Opi Customary court is situated) who was later killed with his pregnant wife by members of BOFF. Goddy Aji from Opi was eliminated also after the war. He survived the war but could not survive the peace. It was alleged that Augustine Aji almost elevated himself to a demi-god. One could not hold any ceremony be it marriage, naming

ceremony or burial without his express permission. He would take the soldiers to *Orie Onuama* where the people traded to avoid detection by the Nigerian soldiers¹⁰¹. It has been recorded that the soldiers exhibited highhandedness by taking beautiful women and anything they desired in the markets. Indeed, the people of Nsukka zone passed through harrowing experiences in the hands of Nigerian soldiers who debased the women, pillaged and looted the area with impunity and murdered so many young men.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE FALL OF ENUGU AND THE FEDERAL OCCUPATION OF ITS ENVIRONS: 1967-1978

Enugu served as the capital of Southern Protectorate until Sir Bernard Bourdillion in 1939 split the Southern Protectorate into two: Western and Eastern Provinces. This left the country in a tripartite division of Northern, Western and Eastern Provinces. Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu were the capitals of each region respectively. However, in 1963 the Midwestern Region was carved out of Western region. Nigeria had four regions until 27 May, 1967 when Gen. Yakubu Gowon, the then military head of state, created 12 states for two major reasons: first, was to make secession impossible for the Igbo people in Eastern Region as the oil discovered in the 1950s was within the enclaves of the minorities who had been yearning for statehood. Second, was to weaken the powers of the regions and make it impossible for any state to dream of secession. However, on May 30, 1967, Col. Ojukwu the military governor of Eastern region bluffed Gowon's state creation by declaring the Republic of Biafra following the advice of Eastern elders and leaders of thought. Indeed, since July 29, 1966 counter coup and subsequent genocide against the Igbo, the clamour for secession had been deafening. Enugu thus became the capital of the nascent Republic of Biafra. This chapter interrogates the various issues such as: the activities of Biafran partisans and the imposition of pass law, collaborators, saboteurs and attempted annihilation of freeborn in Nkanu, the 'butcher' at Agbani, traumas and sorrows of Chiene Nnaji, and finally, the passive resistance within and around Enugu environs.

The overrunning of Nsukka Division and the capture of the strategic Opi junction exposed the vulnerability of Enugu, the Biafran capital. Enugu was within the shooting range of the federal

forces and the subsequent bombardment was terrifying. Despite the propaganda of the Biafran government of its ability to defend Enugu, the people were thrown into panic. The Biafran leader, Lt. Col. Ojukwu did not embark on systematic retreat of Enugu until it was too late. Rather Ojukwu heartlessly sent to the war front, Biafran recruits armed with matches to confront armoured personnel carriers and well-armed, better fed and motivated federal troops. Many inexperienced Biafran combatants perished at the war front. As earlier observed, retreat is strategic: to lure unwary opponent into an ambush. Yet, Biafran regime refused to retreat and evacuate important stocks that could have sustained the war for a year. Enugu was abandoned with all its markets and resources for the federal troops to loot. This was myopic and disheartening.

On the 27th September 1967, the federal forces were within the periphery of Enugu, the Biafra capital. Yet, Enugu was not evacuated. The next day, on the 28th September, the federal troops were within five miles of Enugu and were massively shelling the town. Like the University town of Nsukka, the people began to evacuate in a hurry leaving behind valuables and government movable properties. Col. Ojukwu had left Enugu on the 26th barely 48 hours before the federal forces entered Enugu¹. The morning of that 28th September, Enugu was pounded by the federal forces. The Biafran troops left behind to defend the capital had neither food nor ammunition to halt the onslaught. It was alleged that the Government House was abandoned while the food Directorate stacked with enough food, crates of drinks and cigarettes were all left behind.

The none evacuation of Enugu would remain a grave military and political judgement on the part of the Biafran leadership. Besides handing the advanced Nigerian army choice accommodation, valuable goods and movable property were abandoned to the enemy to the chagrin of reasonable

Biafrans. Ojukwu could not draw a line between propaganda and reality. What a waste to shoot self on the foot bearing in mind the food crisis that plagued Biafra later on. As an army officer, he would have adopted even the old tactics of scorched-earth policy rather than allowing the opponents to be within radius of the capital before running out of Enugu. Nsukka should have been a pointer in this case.

At this point, it was dangerous getting out of Enugu due to the intensity of artillery bombardment. By 29th September 1967, Enugu was firmly in the hands of the federal troops. The sudden forfeiture of Enugu according to Ben Gbulie had shaken the very foundation of our much-cherished new sovereignty- “humbling our pride in the eyes of many nations of the world from which we had, up until then, expected diplomatic recognitions and with some luck, strong military backing”². The fall of Enugu was traumatic to the civilian population. The whole lot of them, natives and refugees alike, sent fleeing, panic-stricken, out of the invaded town without a chance of evacuating anything even remotely approaching a significant portion of their valuable personal effects³. The general feeling among the populace was again vividly captured by Madiebo thus:

To the majority of civilians and some members of the armed forces, that was really the end of the war. Morale was so low throughout the nation that an announcement ending the war was expected by many. Disorganization of civil and military administration was complete and for a fairly longtime, what was left of the army had to devise its own way of administering itself until the civilians got themselves reorganized. During this difficult period, we were lucky the enemy rather than advance to exploit his success, settled down for weeks to a methodical and thorough looting of Enugu. This gave us the opportunity to find our feet again to face him once more when he was ready to move⁴.

It is still a miracle how the Republic held on for more than two years even as the capital became a government on the wheel. It changed locations severally. At this juncture one wonders if the Biafran government should have ended the war, sued for peace because it was obvious that Biafran forces could not stand their ground. Looking back at the events of that period, one could only concur that things should have been done differently to avert hunger and starvation that nearly exterminated many people especially with the Nigerian blockade and the policy of starvation as a legitimate weapon of war.

In a nutshell, the fall of Nsukka and Enugu were the completion of the first phase out of the initial five phases strategy employed by the federal government. The federal strategy in what was described as a “police action” was the encirclement and isolation of Biafra through the imposition of an effective blockade. The target of the federal troops according to Zdenek Cervanka was the early capture of Nsukka and Enugu, which they hoped would have such a demoralizing effect that would bring about the sudden collapse of Biafra’s resistance. At first, all went according to plan that on July 12; Lagos Radio reported the capture of Ogoja and on July 16, the fall of the University town of Nsukka. The next day, July 17, the oil terminal at Bonny near Port Harcourt was captured⁵. Nsukka and Enugu fell as planned but later events had shown that Gowon’s hope was shattered as the demoralizing effect of the fall of these two key towns never led to early Biafran capitulation thereby bringing to the fore the doggedness of the Biafrans.

Plate 8: A storey building occupied by the federal forces during the civil war in Ozalla.



Source: K.J Nnamani, "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972"22.

Plate 9: Ogui Police station – A military base of the federal forces.



Source: K.J Nnamani, "Nigerian Military Occupation of Nkanuland 1967-1972"23.

Activities of Biafran Partisans and the Imposition of Pass Laws

The horrors experienced by the Igbo domiciled in the North were the issues that precipitated the Civil War. As the railway linking Enugu to North brought home Igbo refugees with tales of woes, the people were irked. The people wanted peaceful parting of ways through break up of Nigeria or outright war to achieve Biafran independence. Unfortunately, nobody envisaged the magnitude of modern warfare. The fall of Enugu on the 29th September 1967 invariably led to its occupation. The Nigerian army quickly distributed itself to all parts of Enugu and its environs for effective policing and occupation. An informant observed that the people hated the Nigerian army occupation but could not express it openly. The reason adduced was that the people witnessed the offloading of the bodies of those who were killed during the pogrom in the North and as such regarded the Nigerian army as an enemy force, which had come to complete the pogrom and not as liberators⁶. By November 1967 they overran and occupied some parts of Awkunanaw but owing to Biafran stiff resistance, Enugu environs after wide-spread shelling and strafing capitulated finally by January 1968 in which the last resistance by Biafran BOFF(Biafran Organisation for Freedom, Fighters) and Rangers in Akegbe-Ugwu were consequently crushed. The heavy shelling witnessed by the people resulted in the desertion of some to places farther inland.

Biafran partisans who were sympathetic to Biafran cause contributed in no small measure to keep the war raging in the face of excruciating difficulties and pains that befell the Biafrans cause. These die-hard Biafrans were found among BOFF, Militia and Rangers. The BOFF were young boys who could not be enlisted in the army but were trained to penetrate the enemy line and carry out guerilla attacks while the functions of the Rangers were also to carry out sabotage operations against the federal forces. They resorted to guerrilla attack against the Federal forces.

They engaged in the conscription of civilians into Biafran army and would eliminate anybody fraternizing with the enemy forces. In Nkanu, Nwankwo Ani of Ogui Nike, Titus Nweke and Nwanu Okoroafor of Amurri⁷ were a few of those killed by BOFF.

Some wealthy chiefs who were Biafran sympathizers supported the cause not only with their wealth but also recruited young boys to be trained as Biafran soldiers. It should be noted that the war dragged on so long for the sole purpose of self-preservation. Igwe Ogbanna recalled that the driving forces in Biafrans wanting to fight back were: first in defence of their fatherland to maintain Biafran sovereignty; to prevent the impending genocide and finally to maintain the territorial integrity of Igboland. The Biafran propaganda kept on recounting the woes of Igbo massacred in the North claiming that the war was for total annihilation of the Igbo. The people had to employ the old instinct of self-preservation by fighting in the face of grave difficulties. Therefore, the people hated the federal forces even in cases where they had shown kind overtures following their effective occupation. The people were always suspicious of their motives. The invasion of the federal army was generally met with hostility by the people. There were occasional attempts to poison their palm wine in Ozalla and Agbani. Barriers were created along the paths of the Federal army through cutting down trees, digging trenches to impede the movement of the federal forces. In extreme cases, some federal soldiers who lost their ways were ambushed and killed. According to Igwe Edwin Ogbonna:

our people's immediate reaction was to join the Biafran army. Our people reacted further by cutting down trees which fell across the road, thus creating a barrier to the military penetration of the villages. These include, major roads such as Ugbawka-Amodu roads. They went further in their resistance, by digging trenches to hinder their vehicular movements on the major roads. Our people ambushed and killed them in their attempt to covering the trenches and removal of the obstacles along the roads. This helped in delaying them in their attempt to

penetrate major communities. Many villages laid ambushes on numerous track roads, waiting for stray federal soldiers. Our people also joined Rangers. These Rangers helped the Biafran troops in their campaign to prevent the federal troops from occupying an area or help in recapturing of lost areas⁸.

In Enugu area, Nkanuland proved difficult to be controlled by the invading forces. The civilians posed a stiff wall of resistance. They were mainly employers of railway station. They witnessed the horrors of September-October massacre that saw the influx of dead and traumatized Igbo from the North. As a warlike group in pre-colonial Igboland, they awaited with eagerness the invasion of the Nigerian army but unfortunately, the Nigerian side fought with armoured cars and ferret while they relied on machetes and borrowed dane guns from their wealthy folks. Those who sympathized with the Biafran cause or fought on their side were tortured, punished or killed while the older ones were detained.

The occupation of Enugu and environs was marked with brutalities. Women were forced into marriages or raped, valuables were looted whereas any good house got burnt. One of the hallmarks of the occupation was the imposition of pass laws. In a war situation, passbooks were generally issued to monitor the infiltration of the liberated areas. This was because cross-border infiltration to the federal camps by young Biafrans was common. Part of Ojukwu's stratagem was the setting up of the Biafran Organisation for Freedom Fighters(BOFF). Within this organization, young boys were encouraged to take part in military training and form an effective boys' guerilla movement working behind enemy lines. The Nigerian soldiers were attacked. They lost some of their members through guerilla attacks by BOFF or Rangers. It was alleged that their food, water and palmwine were in most cases poisoned by the civilians. This happened in Udi, Ozalla and Agbani. In Nsukka area, young innocent boys were trained to infiltrate their camps appearing vulnerable. The Nigerian soldiers recruited those boys not knowing they were

spies. They usually stayed for few weeks and then disappeared into thin air. Thus, revealing their posts and in most cases the plans of the invaders. It took time before the Nigerian soldiers discovered that those stray, hungry looking kids were “Ojukwu boys” and started shooting them on sight. The Federal soldiers would interrogate those “boys” soldiers captured and had their mouths slit open and returned to the Biafran side as a deterrent for other recruits⁹.

The “boy soldiers” had their reasons for joining the BOFF or Rangers. Many witnessed the loss of their loved ones while others saw how their sisters were defiled by randy soldiers in Nigerian army uniforms. Many women also joined the Militia and BOFF for different reasons. One said that she joined the Militia to avenge her rape by Hausa soldiers when Nsukka fell to the federal forces. Another joined because some men in the bush raped her and her sister when they were 18 and 14 respectively during the pogrom in the North¹⁰. Similarly, Ben Okafor was thirteen years when he joined the Biafran army. He recounted how he was a witness to mass rape by Federal soldiers. According to him: “The Federal soldiers took over the town where I was living (probably a refugee town) with my sister and proceeded to round up all the women. I saw women being abused in a most horrible fashion. My sister was lucky to escape”¹¹. At the end of the war Ben went back to his home town of Onitsha but when he inquired of some of his boyhood friends, he was told about one particular boy, who, in a group, had been rounded up by Federal troops and taken to Fegee, a suburb of Onitsha. There, the older and taller boys were singled out and shot¹². One can imagine the fear and horror in the faces of those innocent children who, in most cases, literally did not understand what they were doing or the dangers posed by their actions not only to themselves but to the Biafran civilians. The Commander of BOFF was Colonel Ebenezer Aghanya. BOFF was formed immediately after the fall of Port Harcourt. It was designed to engage in guerrilla activities against the Federal troops. BOFF was composed of

a group of dedicated Biafran youths who were tasked to operate in enemy held territories without pay or accommodation. They could find shelter in their areas of operation. They functioned independently of the army and were under the direct control of the Head of State¹³. Young girls, especially the pretty ones were recruited into BOFF and trained in espionage activities.¹⁴ Their hard work and their success contributed in no small measure to the Biafran war effort.

The surprised attacks and loss of men and ammunition by BOFF and Rangers provoked the Nigerian army to slaughter Biafran partisans like goats. Although, Militia was dismantled because of their nefarious activities while, BOFF and Rangers endured till the end of the war. To safeguard the so-called liberated areas, movement passes were issued to civilians. Because of the casualties suffered, the Nigerian army had to screen and fish out these die-hard Biafrans. Pass was imposed for security reasons. The pass law stipulated that every male child within the age of seven years must possess a pass with attached passport photograph. This pass must have the details of the bearer. It was first issued to males but later adult females possessed it. According to Chief Anthony Nwobodo Agbo, who was appointed the sariki or war chief of Amechi Awkwunanau by Lt. T.Y Danjuma, he used to issue this movement pass to enable the people move freely to Enugu town and also to enable the people to access the relief materials¹⁵. In Yenagoa, present Bayelsa State, Harnet-Sievers, Ahazeum and Emezue observed about Federal occupation thus:

they did not allow you to move freely, the moment they saw you, they made you to paddle your canoe to wherever they pleased and later dropped you very far away from your destination and while you are returning that had so many checkpoints and without a pass, you found it very difficult to get home. The pass was like a card, with your date of birth, hometown, then your chief will sign and any army officer that controls that area will sign too. If you were captured without the pass, you were called a saboteur. But if you had no pass and you can speak your language very well they will bring an army

to interview you, he will ask where you come from, in short, if you speak your language fluently¹⁶.

It is a trite that the idea of issuance of pass was to flush out Biafran partisans and sympathizers in the so-called liberated areas but how does one justify the issuance of ID cards to Igbo resident in Lagos during the civil war? This according to Emma Okocha was to hold the civilians responsible for the acts of the Biafran army and therefore routinely dehumanized them at any pretext¹⁷. Passbook as is known in history of Africa was associated with apartheid regime in South Africa where the white minority at the helm of affairs issued passes to the majority Blacks and non-Caucasians. It came to symbolize racism and discrimination in that country. It was meant to restrict the movement or influx of Blacks in the so-called white reserved areas. To checkmate the influx, passes were issued containing the bearer's details. This pass was also a kind of work permit which grants job seekers six days to find work in the urban areas. At its expiration, the bearer would have to return to their designated reserves. Police conducted regular raids to fish out those with expired passes, arrest and extradite them to their reserves if they escaped imprisonment in South Africa.

The Nkanu Igbo in Enugu environs were issued with such passes to aid their movement and secure jobs with the Red Cross. Chief Anthony Agbo is praised today for saving a lot of lives and helped people secure a living with the Red Cross through issuance of passes. Those issued with passes were safe from Federal forces harassment and could move anywhere within the 'liberated areas' without molestation. Nevertheless, the imposition of passes gravely restricted people's movement. This became a scourge on its own. It contributed to the scourge of starvation because without a pass, those farther inland could not easily scavenge for food nor had access to relief materials. A pass therefore was a paper issued to an individual as an attestation of his/her

loyalty to the federal authority. The pass system endured even after cessation of hostility under the strict scrutiny of the victorious federal forces¹⁸. To obtain the pass, people had to be subjected to rigours. The individual in need of a pass had to subject him/herself to clearance by the Sariki. This quickly brings to mind the difficulties subjected the black South Africans during the apartheid epoch. Ezekiel Mphahlele, a University educated teacher born in Pretoria described his experience thus:

I first had my photograph taken at the pass office after being regimented by a man with a very red face with lines round the neck like a rhino's. The next thing was to present a slip of paper at the first official's desk in a long line. The paper came from Orlando superintendent, certifying that I was a registered tenant of his location. The clerk then gave me a reference book-the pass- and struck one photograph to a page¹⁹.

The process continued till he was given a permit to search for a job in Johannesburg. It is trite the civil war did not share the same historical circumstances with black South Africans, the fact remains that the issuance of pass by blacks to blacks before they could freely move in their domains was not only atrocious but demeaning and dehumanizing for whatever purpose it was meant.

Again, being conversant with the heinous activities of some of these war chiefs saddled with the power to issue those passes could only mean that it was definitely meant for their cronies. As Chief Edward Onu posited, "movements were restricted and only supporters of the federal cause who had passes were allowed to have food and medical aids"²⁰. Majority of the people who moved farther into the hinterland because of fear of possible genocide could not possess those passes thereby adding to the grave difficulties on ground within the period.

However, the activities of Biafran partisans aided in espionage against the federal troops, created barriers on the paths of the invaders to overrun Biafran quickly. Nonetheless, to ensure effective policing of the conquered areas, the federal forces through the medium of their war chiefs issued passes to the people. This grants the bearer free movement as well as access to medical care and relief materials.

Collaborators, Saboteurs and Attempted Annihilation of Freeborn in Nkanu

The fall of Enugu meant the fall of Nkanuland. Enugu and Nkanu are intertwined as Nkanuland constituted more than 85% of Enugu metropolis. Thus, the entire outskirts of Enugu belong to Nkanu Igbo. The collapse of Enugu invariably put Nkanuland at risk. The people became the first victims of the occupation forces. Their daughters and wives became easy prey of the Nigerian soldiers. Later on, their food and livestock were commandeered by the victorious forces. Indeed, some Nkanu people had reasons to support the upsetting of the social order as they were on the margin and treated as second class citizens. This easily placed Nkanu people in a dilemma: whether to support the Biafran cause or collaborate with the invaders.

The occupation of Nkanu area invariably meant the effective occupation of Enugu. They set up their camp at the present 82 Division then known as 1st Battalion of Nigerian army and headquarters of 1 Division of the Nigerian army. The idea of military occupation according to Ben Gbulie was for intimidation and exercise power over the conquered territory and Gowon's government excelled in this aspect²¹. The army of occupation was not known to observe conventional rules. Women were raped, they turned the girls into sex slaves and some made to marry them to avoid such indignity. People were killed randomly while others suspected of being Biafran sympathizers were detained. Even some of the Federal soldiers who abducted and later

got married to the Igbo women viewed such women as part of their war booty. As Ben Gbulie further noted that at the end of the war, a northern officer colleague with whom he operated with in Kaduna gleefully informed him that at least they had conquered their girls²². Indeed, for some of the Nigerian soldiers, it was an opportunity to sleep with beautiful Igbo girls which they gloated over.

The instinct to survive especially during a war could lead to betrayals. Wives betraying husbands while kinsmen betray their kith and kin. During this period of intense difficulties, there were no shortage of saboteurs, cowards and turn-coats. This group of people acted as collaborators and saboteurs against their people. They were regarded as traitors who when faced with difficulties sabotaged their people. In Nsukka as well as in Enugu environs, they capitalized on their interaction with the occupation forces to settle old scores. The collaborators it was alleged helped troops as guides and led them through the various communities. Some of these collaborators were later appointed war chiefs and most of them spoke Hausa language fluently. Because they were villains, they undermined their people, abused their powers and committed heinous crimes. In order to please their pay masters, they blackmailed previously well to do Nkanu people before the Nigerian soldiers as Biafran sympathizers. Chief Ani Christian noted that:

they were mainly miscreants and common men who shared booties with the Nigerian soldiers. Some were hitherto excommunicated and thus seized the new-found opportunity to unleash serious harm on the people. They lured women to the federal forces. Consequently, so many women came back after the war with children. Most of them are still living but they are not recognized today in Agbani. The repercussion of what they did estranged them from the people. In terms of acquisition of political power, they were nobody²³.

These quislings gained the confidence of the occupied forces and were made war chiefs/Sariki thereby displacing the real chiefs. Some notable collaborators were Peter Mba-Egbo, Daha-Egbo from Amurri, Ogbuebo from Amankazi, Boniface Nwobodo and Simon Ugwu from Umuigbo Amurri. They gave lists of their enemies to the Nigerian military men accusing them falsely of being Biafran soldiers²⁴. Pa Joseph Eze the pre-war chief of Amurri was accused of aiding the Biafran troops. The Nigerian military men duly eliminated him. Prominent men suffered most during this epoch. It was difficult for them to escape both sides. A rich man could be accused by his enemies as a Biafran sympathizer and got killed by the Nigerian side or viewed as collaborators and killed by the Biafran BOFF. Titus Nweke and Ambrose Nnaji fell in the bad books of the 130 Battallion of Biafran troops stationed in Agbani. Titus Nweke tried to curtail the excesses of the Biafran soldiers. His enemies concocted stories of his aiding and abetting the Nigerian army and was beheaded at Eke Ogbaku²⁴ by the Biafran troop.

These collaborators served as war chiefs thereby displacing the pre-war political structure of the people. As some of the men were mischievous, there were others who were praised today for working assiduously for the good of the people. Elder Jack Nnamani and Chief Anthony Agbo wrote their names in the sands of time as they protected their people's property during the occupation. They were said to have effected the release of people incarcerated by the occupation army. They always questioned the rationale behind their detention. It was alleged that elder Jack Nnamani usually blackmailed the occupation forces that they promised the people that no harm would befall them if they return home. It should be recalled that the dislodgement of Biafran forces and the ferocity of Nigerian Air Force bombardment made the people scampered for safety in dense forests. These places were called *agu* (uninhabited farmlands which were not motorable). People hid in such places to escape executions, rape and forced marriages.

As each community was liberated by the federal forces, they appointed war chiefs with the express order to cajole people out of their hidings to embrace the ‘liberators.’ In Enugu and its environs, the people viewed such gestures with utmost suspicion. It was an irony that those who later mustered the courage to return from hiding were always harassed at every turn. Young men were executed and labeled” Ajukwu boys” while women were raped or forced into marriages, houses were burnt, stalls were looted, tobacco was a prized booty, store buildings were surrounded with dynamites to name a few. All wealthy men who sought refuge in Biafran controlled zone were Biafran sympathizers and therefore, their buildings were destroyed. It was equally alleged that other people were humiliated thoroughly by given a mixture of urine and garri to drink.

The collaborator in Oruku Nkanu East L.G.A was alleged to have presided over the elimination of over thirty young men from that community²⁵. Oruku community witnessed a massive execution on the day the Nigerian army entered the town. This was similar to what happened at Aba where the Nigerian Soldiers massacred more than two thousand civilians²⁶. Those young men were labeled as Biafran collaborators by the federal informants. In the words of Kanayo Nnamani” our people were the major cause of the death of most of the people”²⁷. In Amurri, Dawa Nwegbo, Ogbuebo and Peter Nwegbo excelled in directing the federal troops into the community and saw to the elimination of Chigbo-Ogbu a Biafran Ranger from Amankazi Eziokwe Amurri²⁸. They worked with the Nigerian soldiers, collected bribes and gave them information on young girls and newly married women in hiding. An informant narrated a story of a young girl of about 18years from Umuigbo Amurri whom the Nigerian soldiers forcefully took away from her parents. Her mother wept bitterly that they leave her daughter who was her only child. The Nigerian soldiers insisted on forcefully taking the girl. Peter Nwegbo an accomplice

threatened the poor woman that he was going to kill her if she refused her daughter being taken away; after all, they were not interested in the mother but the daughter. The embittered mother was lucky because in the midst of the fracas, a more senior federal officer appeared on the scene and inquired over the reason for the commotion. The woman tearfully narrated the problem to him. The soldier was enraged and asked Peter Nwegbo and his Nigerian soldier accomplice if that was what they usually do. He lambasted them that instead of searching for young men, they were busy conscripting young girls who were the only hope of their aged mother. Consequently, he ordered that the erring soldier be punished²⁹. The poor mother in the story had the blessings of motherluck on that fateful day. Again, the story depicts that not all the Nigerian soldiers were rapists. Most of the officers conducted themselves well but the rank and file were despicable.

Peter Nwegbo also used his position to seek revenge on all his pre-war enemies who were Biafran soldiers. His atrocities were remembered today with shudder. In Ozalla there were no local collaborators rather Moses Ogbodo was appointed as a Sariki because he could communicate in Hausa language. In Nomeh it was a different ball game as the collaborators not only led them to the villages but also used them to eliminate their enemies. These people who acted as guides helped the Nigerian army to effectively occupy Nkanuland and its environs. All recognized chiefs in Nkanu area ran away because they supported the Biafran cause and were afraid of being killed. They were Igwe Chukwuani of Ozalla. Igwe Ofor Nnaji of Obe, Igwe Nnamani of Agbani among others. They were never in support of the Nigerian cause. Hence, they left their duty posts and in its stead, collaborators and saboteurs were appointed war chiefs or Sariki. However, some of the Sarikis acted in good faith by protecting their various community, encouraged them to come out of their hidings, arbitrated between their people and

federal forces in case of misunderstandings among many other good deeds. The good ones were actually in the minority.

Sariki Ogbuebo and Dawa brought Nigerian soldiers into Amurri where they burnt houses. Ogbuebo accused Joseph Eze of being a Biafran soldier. He ordered his death after he had been discharged from Okigwe and asked the Nigerian troops stationed in Agbani to kill him for fear of retaliation. Joseph Eze's house and Nwafor Ani Nwoko of Amakenkazi Eziokwu's house were burnt based on this accusation. This was alleged to be the handiwork of Ogbuebo in connivance with Peter Nwegbo his boss and traitor in -chief. Ogbuebo³⁰ was killed during the war by Biafran soldiers who saw the Sarikis as saboteurs and collaborators. His wife Maggie ran to a Hausa soldier after his demise. They ravished her and later abandoned her at the end of the war. She was lucky as Okpolo Amankanu of Amurri later remarried her.

Amechi Awkwunanaw was invaded in November 1967. The invaders set up a camp and launched attacks from there. People fled Amechi Awkwunanaw. It was alleged that their invasion of Amechi Awkwunanaw led to the burning of buildings of prominent men such as Nnaji Nwobodo, Nwankwo Ugwu Aniede, Chief Mba among others. Chief Mba was accused of being a Biafran supporter while his compound was a secret meeting point of Biafrans. It was alleged that he fled to Nومه and later died in 1971, shortly after the war. He could not survive the loss of his wealth. Any household whereby the family head was not present when the Nigeria soldiers visited, became a Biafran sympathizer. At times the Nigerian soldiers would leave a message requesting the owner of the compound to report to the Nigerian army camp at Former Methodist primary school Eke-Out (now Community Primary School). If after few days the

owner failed to surrender to the army of occupation, the army would eventually plant dynamites around the building and demolish it.

The day they invaded Amechi, it was only Chief Jonah Agbo's one storey building that was spared. Chief Jonah Agbo was neither a Nigerian collaborator nor saboteur. But he was smeared and blackmailed by a descendant of slaves, Nwanyani; that he (Chief Jonah Agbo) was a Biafran sympathizer. Nwanyani and his fellow collaborators were on a vengeful mission to eliminate all prominent Amadi (freeborn) in Amechi Awkwunanaw through branding them as Biafran partisans. Nwanyani alleged that Biafran troops stock-piled weapons and met regularly at Chief Jonah Agbo's house. This descendant of slaves, Nwanyani, wanted Chief Jonah Agbo's house demolished on false allegation of aiding and abetting Biafran war efforts. However, after the Nigerian troops had planted dynamites around the building, a curious officer wanted to search the building for the alleged weapons but stumbled on a wall picture in the living room in which Chief Jonah Agbo had taken with the emir of Zaria. The officer brought the picture down and took a closer look and discovered that it was the Emir of Zaria that was seated and further inquired whether the owner of the building about to be demolished was in the picture and they pointed at a young man squatting in front of the Emir. He ordered his men to remove the dynamites from around Chief Jonah Agbo's house. That picture spared the building and most likely those associated with the owner of the building. But because they had forcefully broken into the building, the door was left ajar and people looted every conceivable item in the house³¹. Chief Jonah Agbo was lucky but other prominent men of Nkanu who deserted their houses were not lucky. His stint with the Emir of Zaria during his stay in the North saved his property.

On the other hand, people lost years of painstaking acquisitions. All the informants blamed the descendants of slaves for such betrayal. They accused all prominent men of being Biafran partisans and sympathizers or that they harboured Biafran weapons. They gave false information against all the wealthy men and their perceived enemies. On the whole, they burnt fourteen houses on that fateful day. They equally engaged in a killing spree and subjected those who survived to various kinds of punishments. As Achebe opined that Nigeria had not succeeded in crushing the spirit of the Igbo people, but it had left them indigent, stripped and stranded in the wilderness³². Every society has its own cleavages and issues yet these issues should be submerged during a natural catastrophe like Biafran-Nigerian Civil War. Unfortunately, some people felt that they should capitalize on the differences existing in Nkanuland and punish their former overlords. This was exactly what the descendants of slaves did during the civil war. They thought that joining forces with the Northern soldiers would liberate them. Indeed, they were mistaken. The Hausa/ Fulani society was a stratified society where the nobles lord it over the serfs mercilessly.

According to Chief Christian Achi Nnaji of Agbani³³, the Nigerian army entered Nkanuland through the ex-slaves of Nkanu origin who had lived in the North and spoke Hausa language fluently. They manipulated the Nigerian army of occupation into fighting the *Amadi*(freeborn). One of the ex-slaves, Nwonovo Obunne, of Umuowo Agbani took the invading troops to Agbani Beach where the soldiers looted palm oil and palm kernel. Nwonovo Obunne used the opportunity of the war to ignite the crisis of freeborn-slave in Nkanu. He alleged that all *Amadi* were Biafran partisans and accordingly blackmailed them before the Nigerian army. All prominent *Amadi* were alleged to be against the Nigerian army and most of them were eliminated based on false accusations by the ex-slaves.

The planned annihilation of prominent *Amadi* men taking refuge at Akpufu was aborted by BOFF. Those earmarked for execution included: Ezekeil Nnamokoh, First Nkanu LGA Secretary, Chief Fidelis Nwatu (FECO) Igwe of Ihuokpara, Chief Emmanuel Nnaji (Ancoto), Igwe of Amagunze and Chief John Igwesi, Igwe of Obuoffia Awkwunanaw. Others to be killed included: Chief Nnamani Nwatu, Customary Court Judge, Nnamani Nwonoekwe, Igwe of Akpufu. Nnam Nwannamani and Nwatu Nwa Judge. Indeed, when the ex-slaves plot to eliminate the *Amadi* failed, the Nigerian army's anger turned against them. The federal troops killed Ogonnia Ogbodo of Akpufu and Mike Nwede Onovo Obunne of Umuowo Agbani. These ex-slaves were butchered by the Nigerian army for attempting to betray them to the Biafran army. The total number of Nkanu people butchered by the Nigerian army occupation at Agbani was not less than eighty (80) persons³⁴. These people were not killed but "slaughtered" like goats by bloodthirsty federal troops for allegedly aiding a national Igbo cause. This heinous crime and massacre of Nkanu Igbo remain a big dent on world conscience. The Nkanu Igbo were powerless to confront and demand for justice from the Nigerian government. Yet this was a crime against humanity and all those who abused their position should be made to account for it now or posthumously by the World Crimes Tribunal. Besides, the brutalities against Nkanu men, the women were turned into sex slaves, many of them raped both married and unmarried young girls. Some were forcefully taken to the North by the Nigerian army occupation after the war. Some women willingly followed the Nigerian soldiers to northern Nigeria. A ready example was Esther Nnamani of Akpugo who abandoned her family and journeyed to Northern Nigeria with her soldier lover.

However, at this juncture, it should be noted that the struggle between freeborn and slaves in Nkanu predated the Nigerian Civil War. In traditional Nkanu settings, there were two distinct

groups of people-freeborn(Amadi) and domestic slaves(Ohu). As an agrarian enclave, the wealthy farmers owned a large number of slaves who constituted the labour force. The relationship between the domestic slaves and their freeborn overlords was generally symbiotic. The domestic slaves performed some feudal services to their masters as a token of appreciation for the land granted to them. They therefore, devoted two of the four-day Igbo week to work for their masters among other obligations³⁵.

However, the imposition of colonial rule altered this relationship that had spanned over the years. The colonial authority abolished the status of slavery in Southern Nigeria in 1916. This according to Paul Obi-Ani was sudden, autocratic and vague. There was no consultation with the slave owners on the modalities of the abolition, for instance, as to whether compensation would be paid or not and the status of the slaves in their various communities. The colonial authorities did little to educate the people on the need for liberation of their slaves and their reintegration into the larger society³⁶. What the colonial authorities did in Igboland was to compound the problem of slavery instead of solving same. The foundation of Enugu in 1908 and the discovery of coal led to the construction of Railway line that transverse Enugu to Port Harcourt harbor for onward shipment to Europe. Many descendants of slaves enlisted for labour in the railway construction where they were indoctrinated on the equality of all men. They also realized that there was a colonial decree abolishing the status of slavery in 1916.They were therefore, tacitly encouraged to end all allegiance to their masters. This created a bloody ruckus that led to the resettlement of slaves in Akwuke and Ugwuaji. The two groups never intermarried, as their marriage was a taboo in Nkanu. It was not a surprise that during the civil war, these former slaves presented themselves as friends of the 'liberators' guiding them into the villages, blackmailing their former masters as Biafran sympathizers and tacitly using the Nigerian soldiers

to fight their war against the freeborn(Amadi). Thus, in Nkanu the ex-slaves and their descendants constituted a stumbling block to Biafran War effort. They saw an opportunity to overthrow the old order and avenge their second-class status by collaborating with the enemy-the Nigerian army. Wealthy and influential *Amadi* in Nkanu were special targets. As they hid from invading Nigerian army, they also scamper for cover from vengeful ex-slaves who saw an opportunity to exert a pound of flesh from their former masters- the *Amadi*. The war was nightmarish for the *Amadi* of Nkanu.

The ‘Butcher’ at Agbani

Wars bring the worst in man. All the bestialities come to the fore in men. The aggressive instincts in man are resurrected. Wars turn men into cannibals, brutes and psychopaths. Suddenly an easy-going man becomes a monster overnight. All the repressed prejudices, hatred and violence are awakened among combatants at war fronts. The Jews were hounded, gassed and over six million of them eliminated in the great holocaust orchestrated by Adolph Hitler during the Second World War. In 1994 the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi faced genocidal attacks from their neighbours, the Hutu. The Nigerian-Biafran Civil War enthroned such monstrous human beings like Sergeant Yilda. His atrocities had been mystified among the Nkanu Igbo where he reigned as a tyrant that tormented the people during the civil war. Most informants characterized Sergeant Yilda as a bloodthirsty monster, lacking human compassion and most likely devoid of good education or any at all.

Yilda was a victim of his own beastly nature. In a polarized society such as Nkanu, some ex-slaves capitalized on their closeness to the army of occupation to falsely accuse their former masters of being Biafran sympathizers. Without any credible evidence, Sergeant Yilda

condemned these men to death. It was the nature of execution that petrified Nkanu people. Sergeant Yilda subjected his victims to horrifying death. He slaughtered his victims through the slashing of throat or by cutting the private part at a public square³⁷. In short, he terrorized Nkanu people through his callous, crude and dastardly method of using sharp knife to kill his victims. Nobody brought to Yilda's torture chambers survived or escaped his brutal death method. Hundreds perished at Yilda's hands. It is the general consensus of Nkanu Igbo that Sergeant Yilda and his accomplices and their superiors that allowed such a reign of terror should face the International Criminal Court.

The battle to defend Enugu became a national obligation for the indigenes of Enugu environs as the Biafran forces were not equipped to avert the bombing of Enugu the republic's capital. The civilians posed a formidable wall of resistance against the Nigeria invasion. They were determined to defend their communities to halt the purported completion of genocide in Igbo heartland. Informants mentioned that they witnessed mangled bodies of Igbo people living in the North transported to Enugu by trains. Able-bodied men enrolled in the Biafran army and with the help of the civilians created obstacles that halted the invaders. This move irked the invaders and prompted them to unleash such magnitude of terror against the civilians. Like every conquered territory, the people were subjected to horrifying treatment. Women were serially and forcefully raped in which late Col. Dimka excelled among his peers. Good houses were burnt, people were detained, wealthy men were killed, and in fact there was mass killing of Biafran sympathizers. Miscreants were imposed on the people as war chiefs (Sariki) while the traditional chiefs were either in hiding or killed among other evils. The Nigerian soldiers in most cases exhibited highhandedness. As Gbulie³⁸ noted, "the unprovoked excesses of the federal troops

who in reaping the harvest of victory had apparently become adept at using their military muscle as an apparatus of oppression:

Sgt. Yilda was infamously designated *ogbummadu*(butcher) because of the number of people he terminated their lives. Most of his victims were said to be those he coveted their wives. He was a sadist whose activities during the occupation of Enugu remained the most horrifying experience of the people in the hands of the occupation forces. He killed many with machete alone that was why he was nicknamed *ogbummadu*. He forcefully snatched people's wives at gun point³⁹. He was not the only soldier who killed spouses to take their wives but his excesses were out of the way. Any young man was a Biafran soldier and deserved to be shot on sight. He never spared women and children. Yilda and his fellow soldiers confiscated wares in the markets especially palm wine. The Nigerian soldiers extremely added to the starvation of the people. They looted people's houses before burning them; they took away wares from people's stalls in the market before destroying them, livestock were one of their most prized booty. They used those things to entice the women who willingly followed them in the face of excruciating difficulties. Informants gave instances of how they located the markets tucked into dense forests, assemble all the beautiful women and took them to their camps. They were hostile and crude to the people. It was also alleged that the Nigerian soldiers mixed garri with urine and forced it down the throat of the old and sick abandoned by their relatives in a hurry to escape to safety. Sergeant. Yilda slaughtered people as if they were goats. Chief Francis Ujam described him as a gallant soldier but very stupid and bereft of any intelligence⁴⁰. Through his lopsided judgments, he eliminated scores of people. It was alleged that he issued execution judgments on the people suspected to be Biafran spies. He became a useful tool in the hands of the collaborators. Sgt. Yilda seems to have a kind of Hitler prejudice against the Nkanu Igbo that his exploits in the area were part of the

horrors of the war. He concentrated his activities farther inland of Nkanu like Agbani., Amagunze, Ugbawka, Nara among other towns.

Yilda was last heard among the Dimka led coup that eliminated Murtala Mohammed, then successor of Gowon. He escaped being captured and prosecuted by the military tribunal that executed fellow coup plotters. Whichever way he ended, soldiers like Sgt. Yilda committed war crimes and should be prosecuted. Some alleged that he prefers machete to the use of gun in his killing spree. Men who protested against his forceful commandeering of their wives were mortally murdered with his machete. The trauma he left behind should be investigated, the relations of the victims compensated by the Federal government while those of his ilk dead should be tried posthumously for war crimes. This should serve as a deterrent to others but like their earlier colleagues who committed varying degrees of crimes especially during the massacres in the north, scarcely a single person was brought to justice.

Traumas and Sorrows of Chiene Nnaji

The tragedy that befell the family of late Chief Chiene Nnaji of Amechi Awkwunanaw Enugu deserves a special mention. It is a story that defines the futility of war. A war fought on the basis of unity but witnessed wanton destruction and left behind trails of tragedies, traumas and sorrows in its wake. This can also be compared to the Sudanese civil war (1983-2005) where Peter Adwok Nyaba lamented that the war was immensely destructive, more than two and half million people were killed as a result of military action or war-related causes like disease, famine, property lost or destroyed, while four to five million people displaced internally and across International borders⁴¹. Sharing almost the same historical circumstance with Biafra, the people of Southern Sudan had always raised the slogan of secession from the rest of the Sudan not only

because of the social, religious, linguistic and cultural differences but also because of the arrogance, bigotry and refusal of the Arab minority clique in Khartoum to share power⁴². The Biafran story was that they were forced out of the union under a terrible conspiracy to subtly annihilate an entire race. The oil discovered in the Eastern Region accounted all of a sudden for the war against the balkanization of Nigeria. It was muted in many quarters both inside and outside the country that Eastern Nigeria will secede with the oil wealth of Nigeria. In condemnation of those countries supplying arms for the war, the then president of the Red Cross opined that, “all the oil in Nigeria would not provide detergent enough to wash the blood from their hands”⁴³. However, many dreams were shattered, people lost their breadwinners, and children dropped out of schools while wealthy men like Chiene Nnaji witnessed their hard-earned wealth went up in flames found no meaning in existence.

What happened to late Chiene Nnaji was a typical example of betrayal, malice, jealousy, vindictiveness and callousness -the summation of the evil vices that characterized human beings. It was an example of man’s inhumanity to fellow man even though it happened under a war situation. During the Biafran war, people betrayed their enemies to settle old scores. What an antagonist had to do was to falsely accuse his enemy as a Biafran sympathizer or point at his house as a ware house of Biafran weapons and that would mark the end of the accused. The ex-slaves of Nkanu origin excelled in this venture as they not only abused a horrible situation but also acted as guides of the Nigerian soldiers.

Chief Chiene Nnaji was a victim of circumstance. He was the richest man in pre-civil war Nkanu. Chiene before 1966 had acquired enormous wealth as a government contractor. He built three different storey buildings in his vast compound although the third one was near completion

before the commencement of the civil war at a time when many people could not afford iron corrugated bungalow. He was a philanthropist as he rendered financial assistance to many of his people. Prominent among the people he enriched was late Chief Jonah Agbo of Amechi Awkwunanaw. Chief Chiene Nnaji was synonymous with wealth. Among the Awkwunanaw of Nkanu, Chiene was mystified that up until now, no one had amassed wealth comparable to him. He was generous, a philanthropist and a social crusader who sponsored and encouraged people to go to school.

As Igbo people were notable for business entrepreneurship, it amazed the people that a man of such wealth had no known business anywhere. Many people could not understand the import of being a government contractor and how it spins money. His wealth was mystified. People believed a fairy bestowed wealth on Chiene. His “mythical” wealth has been embedded in the people’s adage that today if one claim to be wealthy in Nkanu area, people would ask if the person is as wealthy as Chiene Nnaji. His wealth, it is still believed, had not been surpassed by anybody in Nkanu till date.

As mentioned earlier, Chiene had three storey buildings before the war. One was his ‘obi’, another was for his wives and the last one on the verge of completion was meant for his children. Chiene Nnaji had three wives. In a patriarchal society like Igboland, a man of Chiene’s status could marry as many wives as possible because he was endowed with enormous wealth. Such men were coveted as in-laws. People could be willing to give out their daughters to such wealthy men. Unfortunately, during the war, Chiene was one of the wealthy Igbo men who never survived the peace. His antagonists pointed at his large compound and alleged that it was a Biafran camp stockpiled with weapons. The Nigerian soldiers like they did

to most of the good houses in that area, planted dynamite around the buildings and subsequently demolished the two completed buildings in his compound⁴⁴. What was worse, he lost his two wives to the Nigerian soldiers. The first and third wives willingly followed the Nigerian soldiers. The first wife named Comfort was reputed to be a very beautiful and charming woman with a fair skin. She had the first son and first daughter for Chiene which was a thing of honour for a woman in Igbo polygamous setting. She was alleged to have abandoned the husband and children and followed the Nigerian soldiers to *Eke- Otu* camp. It was further alleged that Chiene had to live in hiding from the Nigerian soldiers anywhere he encountered them with any of his wives for fear of being killed. It was ironical, that his wife Comfort could not live up to her name. She failed to provide succor and comfort for her husband. Such fair-weather wives abound in Igboland during this period. As Nwagwu Vivianne opined that:

some of the women put up with the soldiers as concubines and derisively looked down on their husbands by saying 'digbakwaoku' or to hell with husbands. The women began to see their families as secondary to their survival likewise every other family member. This neglect of family life saw the breakdown of the extended family system⁴⁵.

Chiene's first and last wives duly abandoned him and their children. It was only the second wife named Kate from Akegbe-Ugwu that stood behind him. The thrust of the matter was that Chiene Nnaji lived in trauma and sorrow during this epoch as many other unfortunate wealthy men of Igboland. He succumbed shortly after the war to the cold hands of death due to high blood pressure. He lived in his boys' quarter throughout the war. It has been postulated in many quarters that what led to his demise was not actually the loss of his properties but the shame of abandonment by his two wives⁴⁶. In Igbo society, it was a slap on a man's dignity for another man to lure another's wife out of his home whether willingly or forcefully. The

aggrieved man would go to any extent to redress the shame. But the civil war scenario was different. Chiene's rivals were armed with guns; therefore, it would have been a match of unequal competitors. He could neither fight back nor resisted the soldiers who took his wives. He resigned to fate and bemoaned his tragedy. He died a broken man.

Nature they said has a way of paying back a man's deeds both good and evil. The wives of Chiene Nnaji only lived in concubinage with the Nigerian soldiers. None was married to them. It was alleged that karma visited the unfortunate women and their children. It was equally mentioned that the third wife later had posthumous children for him⁴⁷. Over the years, nemesis caught up with both wives. Igboland being an overly religious people, it was believed that the gods of the land had taken Chiene's revenge against his two promiscuous wives. The only son of the first wife died before his mother. He had mental illness, indulged in smoking cannabis and died in the 1980s. The third wife also buried all her children. The sons and daughters died mysteriously. They all died within an interval of two to three years and were all within the age bracket of 20 years⁴⁸. The calamities that befall the two women were seen and interpreted as the justice of the gods. It was the second wife and her children who survived the calamity and inherited Chiene's compound. Indeed, the children of the second wife are doing well and carrying Chiene's name as far afield.

Ugwuonu Okporoko- the Sad End of a Saboteur and Collaborator

Ugwuonu Okporoko was a saboteur personified. His surname was not okporoko(stockfish) but it overshadowed his surname because he was a notable trader in stockfish before the war. People now end his name with okporoko to identify him. Ugwuonu was one of those Nkanu indigene who fraternized with the Nigeria soldiers only to feed from the crumbs that fell from

their tables. He befriended the enemy forces, blackmailing people. It was alleged that anyone he pointed at was shot immediately. He behaved like a manic to the extent that it was alleged he even pointed at his son to be killed by the Nigerian soldiers⁴⁹. The Biafran commando targeted and monitored him like many of his likes. On July 1969 during the festival of Ani Akegbe, he was kidnapped, killed and his body displayed to the public. He was later buried in a shallow grave.

Passive Resistance in Udi

Udi then comprised of the present Udi and Ezeagu Local Government Areas of Enugu State. The fall of Nsukka invariably led to the capture of Udi which is a midway between Nsukka and Enugu. The capture and occupation of Udi made easier the bombing of Enugu town. The people of Udi had their own tales of woes in the hands of the invaders. The magnitude of wreckage by federal forces made them to be known all through Biafra as vandals. This was because there was no difference between their activities and that of the vandals who crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Morocco in 429AD and from there penetrated and conquered Carthage and the entire Roman Africa. The Vandals by 455 AD had conquered Rome and for fifteen days plundered Rome, stole its treasures and carried over thirty thousand citizens away to be sold into slavery⁵⁰. Today, 'vandalism' remains synonymous with wanton destruction.

The wanton destruction in Udi carried out by both the Nigerian soldiers and Air Force can also be equated with the activities of the vandals of old. The only difference is that the people of Udi were not sold into slavery but a situation where people were shot on sight, looted of their life time treasure, waylaid and raped, traumatized beyond human comprehension is tantamount to slavery. The Nigerian army occupied Udi effectively in October 1967 after the Biafrans had

kept them busy for a long time. They were able to have absolute control of Udi after they were able to push out the Biafran soldiers. Then, the war was still at the early stage as Nsukka just fell into the hands of the Federal forces. Both sides were attacking each other. Igwe Njeze⁵¹ who was a Brigade Major in Biafran army narrated that as they were dislodged from Udi, he was posted to Obodo Nike where people crossing over to the farms used to report certain maltreatment on them. They killed people's goats and chickens. In Abor, they shot people on sight while in Umulumgbe, it was alleged that they invaded the community at night and burnt houses while people were asleep⁵². In Ngwo also, they invaded on a market day at the height of trading and bombed *Nkwo Amaohia Agu* and *Eke Obunagu*. It was alleged that the Nigerian army hid at the base of Milken hill and there they captured passers-by especially beautiful women.

The Biafran Rangers and BOFF with the help of the civilians also wrecked havoc on the invaders. They went behind the enemy line, killed some Nigerian soldiers through poison. Thereafter, the Nigerian soldiers avenged the killing of their colleagues and intensified their hostility and aggression against Biafran civilians. As Emma Okocha reiterated, the civilian population was held responsible for the acts of the Biafran soldiers and therefore routinely dehumanized at any pretext⁵³. Again, in Eke Ngwo, the palm wine sellers pretended to be friendly to the Nigerian soldiers and gave them poisoned wine. They lost some of their colleagues through this way. The next day, the Nigerian soldiers invaded the market and killed some unfortunate traders⁵⁴. It was alleged that before the massacre, the people were told to bring more palm wine to the market and there, they rounded them off and killed. The possibility of the Biafran civilians giving poisoned palm wine to the Nigerian soldiers remained high because all the informants in Nsukka and Enugu attested to the fact that aside their quest for livestock

especially goats and chicken, their next covetous item was palmwine. In fact, whenever they saw palm wine tappers, they forced them to part with their palm wine without payment, thus, adding to the already economic hardship of the people.

In Udi also, it was recorded that the Nigerian soldiers impregnated women and at the end of the war, abandoned such women to fend for themselves and their children. Some of the soldiers took the children born to them while departing Biafra. One informant said that her aunt had never recovered from the shock of losing her children to her war husband. Unfortunately, she never married again and her mental health deteriorated. In Ezeagu, it was the same story of forceful conscription of women as sex slaves who they kept at their camp in Nsude. It was alleged that the Ezeagu women were sexually abused while some were converted to domestic servants⁵⁵. The soldiers did not set up a camp at Ezeagu but only came there to scout for women. The way Nigerian soldiers coveted women irrespective of their marital status caused families to leave market transactions in the hands of their male folks. This was true as informants in Nsukka affirmed that small boys were the ones allowed to trade in the markets because the Nigerian army never saw women twice. This method though did not effectively work in Ezeagu because the men were either shot on sight by the Nigerian soldiers or conscripted into the army by the Biafran soldiers. Men had to live in hiding exposing their female folks to the ravenous eyes of the occupation army. It was further alleged that it was the women and children who suffered more during this period. At some point, when it became extremely hard to survive, some women out of their own volition followed the Nigerian soldiers and lived in their camps. They lived in concubinage with them while others became prostitutes in order to make ends meet. As a result, some of the women were infected with sexually transmitted diseases⁵⁶. Some of the women also abandoned their children and sought comfort in

the arms of their war lovers. After the war, those who were forcefully taken returned home while those who willingly co-habited with them remained with their war husbands.

In Ezeagu, the Nigerian soldiers were known to invade markets where they confiscated goods against the will of their owners. However, it was said that after the initial aggressive response of the Nigerian soldiers, they at some point became friendly to the civilians but never stopped their illicit romance with the women.

Invasion of Oji River, Awgu Area

The Nigerian army came into Oji River in 1968. Before then, the youths had already being prepared militarily for the combat but the kind of bombardment the people witnessed was much more than what their rudimentary military training could handle. Like every other part of Igboland, the occupation army was remembered today for their wanton destruction and havoc wrecked. Many informants attested that looting, burning of houses, rapes were their major handiwork. In Oji, they bombed the town that many suffered from shell-shock and became deaf. The Inyi people sought refuge in their various shrines like Ajana Inyi, Oji Akpu and Oha trees. The various sacred grooves of the people were desecrated and destroyed by the invaders. In Umuome Inyi for instance, the dead were not buried at homes and village square but they forced people to do so. At the end of the war, the community invited dwarfs who came for ritual cleansing because there where corpses everywhere⁵⁷. They equally looted all the effigies in the shrines⁵⁸.

The popular *Nkwo Inyi* market at *Umuome Inyi* was burnt including houses except Pa Jason Umesie, Pa Ofia's storey building at *Alum Inyi*, Alphoncus Egwu's, Remigius Agba⁵⁹ among

other good buildings where they inhabited. Like everywhere in Nsukka and Enugu areas, they only spared those buildings they used. Sometimes, they even burnt some of the buildings they previously occupied/habited when they left that particular area, thus adding to the accommodation problem faced by the people immediately after the war. As Boniface Orji lamented, after the war, people were only able to locate their previous homes through the evidence of remains of the foundations of the destroyed homes. Schools burnt were: community primary school Enugu Inyi, Primary School Agbarji, community primary school Umuagu Inyi, Central school Alum Inyi Central School Umuome Inyi, Holy Trinity Anglican church among others⁶⁰. People lived in the primary schools and some stayed in the churches which were bombed thereby contributing to the educational crises of the period. As Achebe pointed out, most if not all secondary schools were so occupied, prolonging the educational crisis⁶¹. The resultant effect was that for the thirty-month duration of the conflict, children of educational age were out of schools as their half-burnt schools became refugee camps.

Again, the magistrate court at Enugu Inyi was burnt and cottage hospital located at Umome Inyi was also burnt with almost all the houses within the vicinity. As Achebe recorded that the Nigerian bombings affected adversely civilian targets such as; markets, churches and hospitals. He specifically mentioned the Nigerian army invasion of Oji-River Hospital where fourteen nurses and the patients in the Hospital were murdered⁶². Madam Florence Azor narrated that at the end of the war when people returned home; the community was like a desert because they (Nigerian soldiers) burnt all the houses except few they inhabited⁶³. This wanton destruction was recorded because it was alleged that from Oji Urban, the Nigerian Airforce used jet bombers to drop their missiles in the villages killing a lot of people. This reminds one of 1946 Japan following her occupation. Japan was devastated not only by fire bombings but operation

starvation, which was designed to bring starvation to seven million people by the spring of 1946 as the occupation army was duly instructed to show those miserable people (Japanese) the evils of their past ways and led them to salvation via the western version of democracy⁶⁴. In Biafra case, the recalcitrant Igbo must return into the Nigerian fold. Any tendencies inside Nigeria that might be viewed as harmful to the market were to be discouraged and Biafra's desire for partition from the rest of the country fall squarely into that category⁶⁵. Thus, through bombings and air raids, every community became flattened debris, a wilderness of rubbles because every building was burnt by the soldiers.

Rape was another of their preoccupation although some young girls and married women voluntarily abandoned their families for the good life the Nigerian soldiers could offer them. In Achi, it was alleged that they raped women to their satisfaction. It was argued among other communities in Oji River that the rape of women was most profound in Achi because they collaborated with the invading forces and eventually became their servants and slaves⁶⁶. In the long run, the Nigerian soldiers were able to sow their wild oaths in Oji River. It was difficult to get the names of some of these grown occupation adults because the informants were afraid to mention their names. In Inyi only a woman named Leye was mentioned to have had children for the soldiers. Others could not be mentioned by informants because of fear. This happens in occupied areas after any war. For instance, after the Second World War, there was a growing fraternization between Japanese girls and the G. I's. Like a Japanese informed one of the GI's during the occupation thus: "you Americans only want the girls for one thing and by the end of the year, we are going to have a big crop of occupation babies and then, the GI's will go home to their own women"⁶⁷. This was exactly what happened in Igboland where the soldiers left behind occupation babies without any recourse on how the mothers would survive in a hopeless

and devastated environment. At the end of the war, many women came back with babies fathered by the Nigerian soldiers. There were also those women who later came back with their war husbands to perform some traditional marriage rites and followed them back to their various localities. Those who were not traditionally married stayed back with their children.

During the air raids in Oji River, some little children lost their parents while some could not locate their parents in the frenzy for safety. Some of these children lost their lives for lack of care while others wandered aimlessly. Those children were later picked by the Caritas and taken to Gabon where they were rehabilitated.

War is a harbinger of the bad and the ugly. The Nigerian army occupation of Enugu environs was reminiscent of the evils of war. The soldiers rampaged the area thoroughly, raping women with impunity and looting life time treasures of the people. The civil population became willing tools in the hands of the occupation army. The Nkanu Igbo blackmailed perceived enemies before the federal troops who wasted no time in executing many people on trumped up charges of supporting Biafran war effort. To some of these Igbo turn coats, the federal occupation would never end. The likes of Sergeant Yilda became cruelty personified. The little power some of the federal troops wielded was overtly abused to the detriment of the hapless civilians. The war created monsters like Yilda who slashed the throats of his Nkanu victims with relish. To many Igbo the war stole the humanity of the Nigerian soldiers and set many families more than half a century back.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE EFFECTS OF THE OCCUPATION OF NSUKKA AND ENUGU AREAS OF BIAFRA, 1970-1979

War is usually a measure of last resort. War is detestable owing to the destruction and havoc associated with it. The civil wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone among others, have deleterious effects on the environment and indeed civil population. People lost their loved ones; children lost parents, wives their husbands and other relations. Often those who perish in wars are breadwinners and their off springs endure excruciating hardships thereafter. Both public and private buildings are reduced to rubble in the course of war.

In a war situation, it is usually easy to destroy than to rebuild. Even reconstruction can never bring back what had been damaged. Many magnificent edifices are lost forever. An informant lamented that the former Princess Alexandria Auditorium destroyed at University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus was an architectural masterpiece that he had not seen again in Nigeria. The destruction of Nsukka Campus and its looting made the University to lose some of her imported equipment, machineries and the destruction of science laboratories while the entire books in the Nnamdi Azikiwe library were burnt by the Nigerian soldiers. Scholars lost important manuscripts and researches while many students never came back to the institution either due to death or lose of sponsorship. The economic pauperization of the Igbo people through the various obnoxious and subtle decrees of Gowon made it impossible for some students to continue with their education. The recovery became difficult for a good number of people. Shelter became the most paramount because no building was left standing except the ones occupied by the federal forces. The ravages of the war lingered on for years in various hues and guises such as social

stigma, economic pauperization of the people, breakdown of communal cohesion, in political limbo and women liberation and other issues. It is pertinent to note that since the end of the war, Igboland has become synonymous with marginalization by the federal government of Nigeria while some policies are enacted to retard them both economically, politically and otherwise.

The Nigerian-Biafran War was brutal in all ramifications. The youthful combatants (Gowon and Ojukwu) toyed with the lives of millions of Biafrans. The protagonists of Biafra, the Igbo were justified in seeking separate statehood after the Nigerian state employed state apparatus to massacre them and consign them to state of exception where their murder was not a crime before the law. However, Ojukwu was too brash to profit from the state of anomie Nigeria had slipped. Rather than harp on ethnic cleansing of the Igbo, he started contesting the limelight with world leaders and bragging that no power in black Africa could defeat Biafra. Victory does not always go to the just in a “dog eat dog” world of diplomacy. Indeed, Biafra won in defeat as not a single issue of nationhood has ever been resolved in Nigeria. The eruptions in Niger Delta for resource control, the terrorist upheaval of the Boko Haram and the murderous Fulani herdsmen justify the Biafran struggle for separate existence. The war as Gbulie lamented was a tragic drama, a classic macabre orgy of violence and death characterized the tempestuous thirty months old shooting war, was in the long run played out in Nigeria’s favour, whereas Biafrans long tortured struggle for both separate existence and true nationhood simply went up in smoke¹. The victims are still alive. Wounded soldiers camp in Oji River was and still is a constant reminder of a war fought with nothing and little international support.

The end result of the Nigerian civil war was that it left the ordinary people traumatized, disillusioned, starved and above of all dehumanized. To this effect, Isichei lamented that the

victims are still with us, those who lost their livelihood, the youths who permanently lost their chances of education, the orphaned and the widows, the war-blind, the amputees, the children whom malnutrition has permanently harmed². The conclusion was that the Igbo started again from the scratch as Gowon's 3RS (Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation) became a charade to deceive the international community, the frenzy for survival by hook or crook emerged among the Igbo. This introduced different vices hitherto unknown in pre-war Igboland. Some of the effects of the war on the people of Nsukka and Enugu areas of Biafra are discussed in detail herein.

Social Stigma

The social stigma suffered by the Igbo after the war came in different forms. Many Igbo who left their places of domicile were not accepted back after the war and their property confiscated by the so-called indigenes. This was glaring in the abandoned property saga that took place in the South South and South West of Nigeria. This became the last straw to the recovery of many Igbo. Many men committed suicide and lost all hope in human existence. Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun* complained about the father's house in Port Harcourt thus:

imagine the man making as if he owned our house. Imagine forging ownership papers and everything and saying we should be happy he was not asking for much, on top of that he took the furniture³.

In this historical novel by Adichie, the character in question confiscated a building he never erected and forged the house document he never sweated for. In this way those properties were never recovered. The Gowon's vaunted reconciliation and rehabilitation was a mere subterfuge

to calm the international community while every effort was made to retard the Igbo recovery in post-civil war Nigeria.

In Port Harcourt, the Igbo were barred from entering or living there. Dr. Obi Wali an Ikwere Igbo man who was then the state commissioner for Rehabilitation justified the state action by claiming that: “if Igbo house owners were allowed to come back to Port Harcourt and were to embark on the eviction of the occupants of their houses that that could lead to breakdown of law and order. He stressed that the people who had seized the Igbo houses were the victims of the civil war. Most of them, he argued, had their houses destroyed by ‘rebel’ Biafran troops”⁴. The above statement was not only preposterous but smacks of absurdity. He forgot that the so-called ‘rebels’ had no jet bombers during the war. They (the Igbo) never unleashed any form of destruction on their own enclave. Indeed, the Igbo would not have selectively destroyed the buildings of their Ikwerre kith and kin while leaving their own property in Port Harcourt unaffected. It was unfair of Dr Obi Wali to rationalize the greed of his people to acquire Igbo property simply because they lost the war. In this Paul Obi-Ani further opined that:

it was quite unfortunate that the people of Rivers State were fed with this distorted version of what happened during the war. The Igbo people sacrificed their lives in their thousands in defence of the entire territory of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria against the Federal onslaught. For anyone to assert that the Igbo were the destructive side during the war would be missing the point entirely. The Igbo people had much to lose through a deliberate scorched earth policy as they had investments in every part of the old Eastern Region⁵.

It is a common saying that defeat is an orphan. The Igbo lost the war and as such were disowned by their neighbours and discriminated upon. The Igbo would have recovered quickly than they did if their investments outside Igbo heartland were left intact. Many former landlords died of

heart attacks while others indulged in various nefarious activities to make money. It was quite unfortunate that other ethnic groups in former Eastern Region found it prudent not to blame the federal troops for their atrocities during the war. Rather, the federal troops were lauded as liberators while the Igbo became the villains⁶. As the Igbo lost the war, their immediate neighbours disowned them and embraced those who massacred their kith and kin during the pogrom of 1966, raped their women during the war and summarily executed their male folks during the invasion of their various communities. An example will suffice here. Elechi Amadi's book *Sunset in Biafra* smirks of loathsomeness towards the Biafran cause. Elechi Amadi's views captured the Eastern minority neighbour's disenchantment with Biafra while extolling the federal forces. However, in as much as he tried to justify Gowon's regime's position, he observed that, "some Nigerian soldiers established a grim reign of terror. Private soldiers and civilians alike were beaten up, locked up and shaved at the least excuse, sometimes for the sheer pleasure of it. Women who fell into their hands had sorry tales to tell afterwards"⁷. Elechi Amadi further stated that:

in Ahoda, I visited a refugee camp one morning and found the place in a terrible uproar. Women and girls were wailing, the men's faces were set and grim. On inquiry I was told that a party of drunken soldiers had descended on them at night and carried off a number of women and girls. They had returned them just before the first light. The day before, I had assured the victims of security and all the rest of it. What had I to say? The men were really very furious. They said they would rather get back to the rebel enclave than stay to face such humiliation⁸.

These were the people in Port Harcourt that Obi Wali claimed were victims of the 'rebel' Biafran troops and therefore had to be compensated with Igbo properties in their midst. The Igbo were thus demonized, denied the right to their life investments after the war and portrayed as

troublesome. Thus, they were reluctantly welcomed back to Nigeria and at every point treated as second class citizens. This Paul Obi-Ani rightly pointed out that:

it is even most unacceptable to establish the tradition that those whose homes had been destroyed during a war should seize the properties of the citizens of their opponents in their states rather than asking for war reparation. The point is that most indigenes of Rivers and Cross River States used the abandoned property ruse to reap where they had not sown⁹.

The truth was that the Igbo became social outcasts, stigmatized and dehumanized in Nigeria even though the thirty months old war was fought under the pretext and disguise of unity. The idea was squarely to make rehabilitation difficult for the Igbo and if possible sow seed of discord among the ethnic groups of former Eastern Region which became Gowon's divide and rule tactics or Machiavellism. The shortlived Murtala Muhammed regime final nailed the coffin in the abandoned property saga leaving Igbo people with no other option than to rebuild their battered homeland.

Social stigmatization was more pronounced among the women. They were mainly women both married and unmarried who voluntarily interacted with the occupation army. These women were treated with repulsion after the war. Life was never the same for such unfortunate women. They were never remarried. In fact, they became outright outcasts. They were regarded as prostitutes. Many of them that came home after the war with children were never accepted. These women who fraternized and became lovers of the federal troops did so out of hardship. One of the negative effects of the war was that morality dwindled to its lowest ebb. The young girls and married women ran after them for what they could provide for them.

The soldiers roamed around the conquered communities issuing orders to the civilians, using their allowances and what they looted to seduce and entice the women. On this issue, Obiora Uzokwe recounted that:

At this time, a development that I found very ironic was accruing throughout Eastern Nigeria. Some of our young girls had started getting married to the federal soldiers. The girls were referred to as "ndi gbaso ndi awusa" (people who went with Hausa). This infuriated many Igbos. We saw the girls as sellouts who would even marry people whose hands were soiled by the blood of their kinsmen. It became clear that they went after the soldiers because they needed money. I never thought of the fact that they were trying to survive, money was scarce in East Central State and the soldiers seemed to have it in abundance. The girls therefore felt that one way to get some of the money was by getting married to the soldiers. For their own part, some of the soldiers treasured being married to the Igbo girls and treated them like "queens". Many of the marriages did not last very long; the villages started to stigmatize the families of the errant girls, so some of them had a change of heart and returned to their homes. The stigma never really went away for those families¹⁰.

In the excerpt above, the idea that those women were treated as "queens" by their soldier husbands remained largely farcical. The treatments of these women in the army camps were actually disheartening. Many of the women complained that there was no tenderness in their husbands. According to Emezue, Nwannefuru Opia said she was just a sex object of her husband; he just wanted her to satisfy his sexual urge. He made love to her any time without her consent. Chioma Nwoha also recalls that her husband comes in every night in a drunken stupor and pounces on her all in the name of lovemaking and sleeps off and wakes up again to pounce on her again. She also claims that soldiers frequently swapped wives at night while cases of rape were rampant in the barracks. Soldiers usually went on a drinking spree on pay day only to come home late in the night to beat-up their wives¹¹. They beat the women and rape them at will after

smoking cannabis especially Indian hemp. No wonder many of the marriages crashed and fizzled out at the end of the war because some of the women forced into the union were glad that it was over. In Nsukka area, many of the marriages never outlived the war. Some war husbands/lovers abandoned their women while some subjugated the women to heartache by taking away those children from their mothers. Madam Monica from Okwutu was taken forcefully by a federal soldier and she had two children for him. At the end of the war, the soldier wanted to take his kids which the woman hid from him with the help of her neighbours. The soldier inquired from neighbours about the whereabouts of Monica and the children but none divulged their hiding place to him. He later left Okwutu and Monica came out of her hiding and took the children to her pre-war husband. This was possible because in Okwutu tradition, the children belonged to her legitimate husband¹². Monica was lucky as many were not gifted with such instinct to do what she did.

Some of the few marriages contracted during the period survived and the women followed their husbands to the Northern Nigeria but most returned later when they failed to adapt to their new culture and environment. An environment where there was obvious disparity in religion and custom. The above women were not really absorbed in the society either through marriages or otherwise. In Oji River, such women were seen as outcasts who committed sacrilege. They were generally seen as sellouts. In Nsukka area, married women who abandoned their homes for their war husbands were never accepted back by their pre-war husbands. Those women who were into relationship with the army of occupation and those who returned after the war were made to undergo ritual purification ceremonies. They confessed to Umuada and Umuinyom after which the *Onyishi Umuada* (eldest daughter) ritually purified them¹³. Despite that these women subjected themselves to ritual cleansing; their husbands still sent them away. The prodigal wives were

derogatorily referred as ('agaracha must come back') runaway women must return home to their real husbands where they were derided and scorned in their communities¹⁴. The derision with which these women suffered was based on age-long tradition of Igboland that accords no respect to a woman who was never properly married in traditional tenets. This was done by series of palm wine carrying and the final payment of dowry which validates the union. Those women cut in this web, felt it better to leave with their war husbands rather than stayed back to subject themselves and their children to humiliation. Those who left to the North were mostly those with children. The irony is that some of them later came back with their children when adaptation proved a herculean task in their new environment.

In Nsukka, even as the war ended, it was alleged that later Nigerian soldiers that arrived newly kept on harassing and molesting young girls. As mentioned in chapter three that Nsukka people devised different methods to avoid sexual molestations, they continued with this disguise at the end of the war. The end of the war did not stop rape and abuse of women by the Nigerian soldiers. In Orba, the girls kept on disguising themselves as old women and ugly to avoid rape and sexual harassment. This could also be captured in incidents in Awommamma and Afikpo where young girls who refused the advances of the Nigerian soldiers were killed. In the above scenario, one was set on fire while the other was fatally shot. Those who willingly followed them at the peak of occupation when starvation and hunger were gnawing at Biafrans agreed to marry and followed their war husbands after the war. It was alleged that these unfortunate ones had no choice but to opt for marriage because they could not afford the humiliation that awaited them since everyone knew what they did and how they had children for the invaders¹⁵.

Madam Nwaka Omayya was and still is an example of stigmatization. At the peak of the war, Madam Nwaka Omayya and her family sought refuge in Egu Orba. As the war continued unabated and pangs of hunger and suffering crept in, gnawing at the entire people of Nsukka, she came out of hiding to start a small business close to Orié Orba market then renamed Orié Kaduna by the Nigerian army. In her restaurant, the soldiers were her major customers but the people thought otherwise. As the war ended, she had to close her business because of the evacuation of her major customers. Madam Nwaka resorted to banana trade which she bought from Obollo-Afor and sold at Orié Orba. One day, she was on her journey to buy her wares at Obollo-Afor and coincidentally saw her soldier customers returning back to the North, and these soldiers offered her lift to her destination. People who saw her alleged she had followed the Hausa soldiers.

The rumour spread like a wild fire to every corner of Orba community. Unfortunately for Madam Nwaka, the banana vehicle did not arrive Obolla-Afor as she envisaged as she spent four days above her normal stay which further gave credibility to the rumour. It became worse when after four days she came back empty handed without her banana wares because the banana lorry did not arrive Obollo-Afor as speculated. By the time she returned, it was already late to salvage her battered integrity. The villagers had composed a song with her name and even the young and old could recite it off hand. Since then, people had said unprintable things about her. Women sang with her name. At a point, she fought the women but they claimed it was not her own Nwaka but she knew better. As if that was not enough punishment, her husband rejected her when he returned home after the war; he heard about her alleged romance with the occupation forces and had ignored her since then¹⁶. There were people like Madam Nwaka in both areas of Biafra which made some women opt to follow the strangers than to face humiliation from their people. They were often blamed for accepting the Northerners as partners in the first place and even had

children for them but people failed to realize that most of the women were victims of circumstance. They were forced into the union, some even lost husbands and relatives before they were captured and turned into sex slaves against their will. Those were purely involuntary unions; those women were forced into conjugal slavery. Again, these women were mere pawns of fate whose husbands were powerless to protect and shield them from abuse by the victorious federal forces. However, some women exhibited great integrity under the grim situation of war through disguises to protect their womanhood.

Economic Pauperization of the People

The economic pauperization of the Igbo started with Gowon's blockade through his attempt at land locking the majority Igbo in the Igbo heartland. As the war began, the Nigerian Air force piloted by Egyptians dropped their bombs anyhow and anywhere. In the long run, it was only the civilians who suffered most in those air raids. Homes, market stalls among many other things were razed to dust. Madam Susan Nnadi recollected that as the war raged on, they hid in the thick bush where they were exposed to all forms of dangers. It was then a thing of joy and happiness when they heard of the cessation of hostility. The war had prolonged more than anticipated and people died daily not through the barrel of guns or shellings but through hunger and starvation. The end of the war was welcomed with the greatest relief. Madam Susan Nnadi¹⁷ recalled that her happiness was short-lived when she returned home and beheld the magnitude of destruction wrecked by the occupation force.

At the end of the war, the Biafran legal tender was declared invalid by the federal government. Starting life afresh for the average Igbo man was grim. Those in business lacked the cash to start anew. Credit facilities hardly to come by. It was sheer will to survive that drove many to travel

back to Northern Nigeria where they had been butchered few years back. Gradually some met their pre-war business partners who gave them credit to start business anew.

The change of Biafran legal tender came as a rude shock to the people. The people who sold wares refused to collect the old Biafran money. The petty traders were left in the lurch because if they refused to accept the money from their customers, they would not sell and on the other hand, if they went to the bank to change the money, the bank would issue them only twenty pounds no matter the amount¹⁸. This economic injustice was contained in the Banking Obligation (Eastern States) Decree of 1970. This decree cancelled all bank deposits operated in the old Eastern Region except Calabar between May 31, 1967 and January 12, 1970. Calabar was excluded because it was the first town to be occupied by the Federal forces immediately the war began¹⁹. One could also have assumed that Nsukka area to say the least should have been captured under this clause that protected Calabar from that obnoxious banking policy. Nsukka was also attacked the same day as Ogoja and capitulated almost the same time. Maybe because Nsukka was mainly peopled by the Igbo whom the vindictive federal government of Nigeria wanted to pauperize and stagnate.

People in both areas found it difficult to survive because they could not transact immediately after the war thereby prolonging the economic crisis. Informants mentioned that markets stopped functioning for a while because they could neither sell nor buy. According to Odoh Mark, "it took General Gowon's regime five months to decide on what to do with the illegal Biafran currency. Gowon later decided that the Igbo people be given a paltry sum of twenty pounds irrespective of the amount individuals deposited"²⁰. Trade only started again when a group of people known as money traders came and collected the old money in exchange for the new money though at a reduced percentage. They exchanged the money at a rate of 17 pounds instead of 20 pounds

stipulated by the federal government²¹. The fact that the money traders took commission from people that had already been pauperized by the government policy only helped to further impoverish them. One can only imagine the despair among the people as they had no option than to accept what they offered. The whole exercise brought to the federal coffer up to four million pounds. This according to Paul Obi-Ani was a subtle way of exacting war indemnity from the Igbo people after the collapse of the Republic of Biafra. The resultant effect was that the recovery of Igbo economy from the ravages of war was further prolonged. Business men who had hoped to use their deposits as take-off money in rebuilding their shattered business remained disappointed²². Those who could not afford to start any business engaged in menial jobs like bush clearing, firewood gathering, among other things to survive the harsh economic policy of Gowon's regime. Those in big cities became apprentices to their established colleagues. The trauma is still better imagined than experienced.

Another way the Igbo people were pauperized economically was through the ban immediately after the war, on importation of second hand clothes and stock fish that were the trading life line of Onitsha, Aba and Nnewi markets in pre-war Igboland. These burgeoning markets needed the two items to re-emerge but the fear of Igbo economic recovery contributed to the ban on importation of both items. This fear according to Achebe was that these communities, fully reconstituted, would then serve as a conduit pipe for the reconstruction of the Igbo²³. It was preposterous that the federal government rather favoured the importation of brandy, whisky, gambling and gaming machines and beer over stockfish and second-hand clothing. The people whose belongings were razed down or looted found it difficult to cloth themselves after the war. This singular act of Gowon further plunged the Igbo into economic debris. The ban was indeed according to Paul Obi-Ani²⁴ uncalled for and mischievous.

Again, the destruction and looting of Uzo Uwani Farm settlement added more to the economic hardship of the people of these areas. The farm settlement was one of the programmes of the M.I Okpara's administration of post-independence Eastern Region. The destruction and looting of the farm settlement halted every agricultural activity both during and after the war. This created unemployment for people of these areas. Efforts to revamp the farm settlement went up in smoke with the oil boom. The Gowon's government further neglected all the farm settlements in Nigeria and shifted his attention to the black gold. This up till today had plunged Nigeria into a mono-economy and the largest importer of food across the globe.

The magnitude of havoc wrecked by the Nigerian Air force on the farm settlement made its revival difficult. The infrastructure was looted and destroyed while a large chunk of the machines was bombed and destroyed beyond repair. Post-War administrators of Igboland never shared in M.I Okpara's vision of Igbo self-sufficiency in agriculture. Sad as it was, the oil boom of the early 1970s finally nailed every opportunity at reviving and revamping the farm settlement. Today, agriculture is neglected not only with regard to funding but also in respect to the provision of basic social infrastructure and modern inputs²⁵. The growth in the oil sector was accompanied by a significant sectoral transformation. This reflected not simply a growth in non-farm activities but a stagnant agrarian economy. Investment in agriculture fell from 7% of the budget in 1971 to 4% in 1981 owing to the accruing revenue from oil. The rural population was frustrated as the government abandoned agriculture. Peasant production and dependency on agriculture went into serious decline.²⁶ Petroleum became the major revenue earner of the country and the leaders were berefted of intelligence to invest in other sectors especially agriculture. The Uzo Uwani farm settlement according to Chief John Utazi died a natural death²⁷ owing to the fact that Gowon's reconstruction never had a tinge of impact on agriculture. The Farm settlement remained a

shadow of its former self and barely functional since the end of the war. This further impoverished the people of Nsukka Igbo after the war.

Plate11: NNS BONNY ASSAULT BOAT used by the federal troops



Source: Umuahia War Museum by Dr. Chijioke Onuorah

Breakdown of Communal Cohesion

The events of 1966 witnessed the massive return of the Igbo in diaspora into the Igbo heartland. Some of them had lived all their lives in their places of sojourn. Many prominent Igbo like Nnamdi Azikiwe, General Aguiyi Ironsi, Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu among many others had their early life in the North. Sad as it may be, when the argument of the first coup was mooted as an Igbo agenda to dominate Nigeria, evidence had confirmed that Nzeogwu the leader of the coup was more of a Hausa man than Igbo. It was alleged that all through his existence, he only visited

Okpanam in Delta his ancestral home only a few times and did not know his way around it. He had Hausa neighbours, friends and was popular among the Hausa soldiers. After the coup, he was distrustful of everybody and only ate the food prepared by his Northern cook and treated by Dr Rimi his Northern doctor²⁸. Suffice it to say that many Easterners adapted to other parts of the country where they made substantial investments in their places of domicile. Many of the Igbo in diaspora had houses scattered all over Nigeria and were even landlords but sadly had no accommodation in their hometowns before the 1966 crises.

The impasse of 1966 made many to return home with their families whose children never visited their home lands. These children interacted in other languages fluently than their Igbo mother tongue. The genocide in the North prompted such massive exodus from other parts of Nigeria to Igbo enclave adding pressure to the already populated Igbo heart land. Unfortunately, the massive returns of the Igbo in diaspora were in most cases met with severe hostilities by their so-called kith and kin. Some of them had stayed away from home too long and many had not visited there in decades. So, in their haste to escape the pogrom caused by the Northern mutineers, they came home penniless. In most cases, their own share of the family lands had been over their years of absence from home held in trust by their relatives. Unfortunately, the greedy extended relatives were reluctant to relinquish those lands. This bred animosity. This hostility could be better appreciated in two forms as pointed by Emezue, Ahazeum and Axiel. One was based on the ignorance on the part of the relatives in Igboland. It seemed they lacked understanding of the events of 1966-67 massacres. The Diasporas found it difficult to elicit adequate sympathy from their kinsmen. The extended family system which often had always been a succor to a member in times of difficulties failed in these periods of emergencies. Their kinsmen displayed outright hostility because they were afraid that they had come to compete with them in the exploitation of

their common resources especially cash crops, farmlands and homesteads. Many of these had hitherto been exploited and enjoyed exclusively by people at home²⁹. The second cause of hostility was shortage of accommodation. Many of the diasporas although owned houses in urban centers within and outside Biafra scarcely had a room at home. On their return, many such persons became instant burdens and sources of irritation to their home-based kinsmen³⁰. This scenario is vividly captured by Ojiakor when she mentioned that:

Throughout this period, dispute were rampant between the returnees and those at home in most communities such as Onitsha, Obosi, Udi, Achi, Afikpo and Owerri. The returnees came back without the bulk of their belongings. As their stay at home became prolonged and uncertain, a subtle rivalry ensued between the home-dwellers and returnees over the resources in the rural areas. The home dwellers were not willing to share family lands and other meager resources for an extended period of time³¹.

She went further to state that, " widows who returned with their children were mostly affected as their brothers-in-law held fast to the family property and refused to let the former share part of it"³².

This aggravated enmity among families and ill feelings became rife and seriously undermined family solidarity and replaced it with hatred. The rate of acrimony among family members had quadrupled since the end of the civil war.

An informant recalled a story told him by his father Chief Joseph Ani about the accommodation crisis he had during this epoch. His father, before the war had four buildings in Enugu metropolis but had none in the village. As Enugu fell into the hands of the invaders, the father relocated them to the village into the home of one of his in-laws. There he was humiliated. This was a man who was revered by the in-law because of his wealth but when there was a change in fortune, the in-law and even his wife derided him because he squatted with them. When he could no longer tolerate the insults from the in-law, he was forced to search for an alternative accommodation among his mother's relatives where one of the mother's relative who still saw him as a rich man

in the antebellum vacated his bungalow for his father and his retinue of wives and children. It was actually that experience that compelled the father to start his own homestead shortly after the war so as not inconvenience others. He molded a mud house with raffia roof that leaks from all points whenever there was a downpour³³. It was humbling for a man that had buildings in Enugu urban to be struggling to protect his children and wives from the elements in his ramshackled home in the villages.

Another informant of Emezue, Ahazeum and Axiel captured his experience thus: “the second problem I had was that of accommodation. I had not built a house at home then and so found it almost impossible to find a place to stay. I had to rush the building of a small mud and thatch house. In all these travails relatives did not offer much help. I was surprised that even people whom I helped earlier appeared indifferent to my plight”³⁴. The experiences of the two men discussed above were not peculiar to them alone. Like Chief Joseph Ani, S.A Atuoji has rendered financial assistance to his relatives but change in fortune altered the status quo and people whom they have helped earlier felt they were now better off due to the ravages of war. One still wonders whether such relationship remained the same afterwards.

The reversal of roles during the war also affected communal cohesion. Women became visible in the scheme of things. Some women became wealthy, proud and arrogant and many derided their husbands. This led to break-up of many families. The common language among the prodigal wives was “digbakwa oku” (to hell with husbands or husbands should go to hell). This scenario as mentioned in earlier chapter three was well articulated by Tony Ubesie in his seminal Igbo Novel *Isi Akwu Dara n’ ala*³⁵. The general believe was that *digbakwa oku* connotes derision over husbands due to the fact that women became the breadwinners during the war. They

engaged in *afia* attack (attack trade) that is trade behind the enemy line. The blockade of Igboland and continual shrinking of Igbo enclave led to shortage of essential goods in Igboland. Hunger and starvation made women to look for external means of livelihood to sustain their families. The business was very risky as it led to deaths of the traders. The traders may run into the hands of both the Nigerian or Biafran soldiers or get caught in the cross fire. Some women had to fraternize with both soldiers of the divide for their safety and easy passage to the enemy lines. This led to moral decadence on the path of the women as many disrespected their husbands for being unable to provide for the family. Some of the women mocked their husbands' incapacitation. In Ezeagu, when women were sexually abused and molested by the occupation forces, the men decided to fend for the family but this could not assuage the problem because men were either shot on sight by the Nigerian soldiers or forcefully conscripted into the army by the Biafra soldiers. The above scenario made some women realized that they could survive without the help of their husbands.

Another angle or dimension to this expression *Digbakwa oku* meant not only an expression of new found wealth among the women but the rampancy and frequency of divorce in addition to the fact that most young men were conscripted into the Biafran army, might have made some women reluctant to get married. The phrase could be said to express anger and hopelessness in the situation experienced by most wives during the war³⁶. Women began to doubt the rationality in marrying today and wido

wed tomorrow'

PLATE 10: Biafran Red Devil Armoured Car Built and Used by The Biafran Forces

Source: Umuahia war Museum. Photo taken by Dr. Chijioke Onuora.

Women Liberation and Other Issues

“The war spoilt our women. They began to think of themselves as equal to men” that was the common saying among many male informants. Women after the war began to assert themselves more radically than before the war. They came to the realization that they could do what men could do. At the peak of the war, men were usually executed by the Nigeria army or conscripted by the Biafran army. Men were virtually incapacitated and were living in hiding for fear. It was even alluded that men who did not go to the war were careful of their wives because they could even expose where the men were hiding for onward conscription into the army though not all wives were this vicious. Women became the bread winners subjecting themselves to all sorts of difficulties to provide for their families. This is because majority of women in pre-war Igboland

depended on their men for existence but the war reversed the gender roles between men and women. Some women even took the risk of engaging in trade behind the enemy line popularly called attack trade (afia attack or attakie). Women became the providers to ensure the survival of their families while others engaged in illicit relationship with the occupation forces because of the better life they offered. This brought about promiscuity among women that even after the war many continued with this life style. Many informants still lament that the war spoilt women and also Igboland in general as vices which were hitherto unheard of became conspicuous and preponderant.

The new-found boldness in women made them enroll their children both male and females in schools, with or without the consent of their husbands. Some women even enrolled themselves into adult education centers to be enlightened and also to enable them secure white-collar jobs. This new-found liberty among the women folk positioned them to challenge some of the traditional statutes regarding them.

Madam Agnes Omeje narrated how she and her co-wives after the war gained economic independence from their husband.

We did not know what to do until the money changers gave us money with interest. Others who could not trade farmed or did menial jobs for others. It was not easy for us but we managed to take care of our children and husbands that just came out of hiding or the battle fronts. My co-wives and I wanted to join other entrepreneurial works like every other Orba women struggling to have economic empowerment to face the post war challenges. We decided on garri making business but our husband kicked against it on the premise that he had enough farmlands to keep us busy. We refused and told him how much we suffered during the war because we depended on him and his farm produce. During the war, we did not know what to do to survive except doing menial

jobs for people and begging. Our husband and his farm produce were nowhere to be found. The war has ended and we were determined not to be like we were before. The war taught us to participate and contribute to the social, political and economic life of our community³⁷.

The war indeed changed the perception of women about their being and existence. The men from both areas of study saw this change in women as stubborn, proud and arrogant but for the women it was a change for the better as they began to take active interest in happenings around them.

Another change in Nsukka and Enugu areas of Biafra after the war and the occupation was that it led to promiscuity among the women folk. Many of the unmarried girls willingly lived with the Nigerian soldiers as wives and lovers without dowry paid on them. It was alleged that mothers were handicapped as they were unable to dissuade their daughters from such union. Prostitution by young girls and old women for survival became rife. In Nsukka, those women rented rooms around Amaogbo, *Ashu ogige* (Ogige Market) to ply their trade of servicing the occupation troops³⁸. It is a trite that the devastating condition of Igboland after the war could only be attributed to these changes in some women's behavior. Mark Odoh posited that "during this period of hardship, some women abandoned their marital homes and ran to the soldiers in army barracks where relief materials were relatively easier to obtain. Most of such women remained sex workers while some have established genuine businesses especially hotel business in urban centers in Nsukka Division such as Nsukka town and New road Oboollo-afor³⁹.

Though preposterous but informants believed that promiscuity among women made them to engage in inter-ethnic marriages to Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani and Igala soldiers. The women gave birth to children for these soldiers. A lady from Amechi was alleged to have married a Yoruba soldier after giving birth to a son for him⁴⁰. An informant mentioned that late Col. Dimka had

kids littered all over Nkanu land. In Nsukka war children abound. According to Caroline Ugwueje,” some of these children are today living in psychological tortures because such women and children are hardly welcomed in their husband’s families⁴¹”. The children assumed the status of ‘bats’ that are neither birds or animals having been rejected by the two sides⁴². However, this did not obliterate the fact that child bearing and motherhood were disregarded as abortions and infanticide rose to its peak. Some women abandoned the homes and children in search of relief materials and attack trade. The abandoned children were left to fend for themselves exposing the children to dangers⁴³. The girls among the abandoned children slept with soldiers and in some cases relatives. This made an informant to lament that one of the vices that crept in Igbo cultural life was the evil of incest⁴⁴. Incest it was alleged became more pronounced in Igboland after the occupation.

The reversal of gendered roles between men and women during the war gave the women who were previously relegated to the background in the society to a suddenly acquired edge over the men. Many women lost respect for their men. This neglect of family life led to the breakdown of family ties. Igbo people cherish family ties and had in their various proverbs extolled the unity of family. The civil war affected these ties as many women chose their war lovers over their families.

After the occupation, the cultural set up of old Nsukka and old Enugu zone was altered. Many vices that were hitherto unknown became rife. An informant lamented that” we don’t know what is theft, armed robbery but pilferers and not stealing with guns.” He further opined that most of the Igbo cultural values had been dropped and desecrated⁴⁵. This further confirmed the opinion of Prof. Brown Enyi who mentioned that” what was in existence was simple robbery of which

weapons included knives, machetes, bows and arrows and clubs. In short, robbery incidents were few and isolated and therefore did not constitute a problem requiring special intervention measures as was the case in post-war Igboland⁴⁶. In Akpugo Nkanu, a group of gangs emerged who engaged in robbery of war returnees. The war brought robbery to an unprecedented level never witnessed before. This was because cessation of hostility saw many ex-Biafran soldiers throw away their guns. They were not properly demobilized. These guns were later recovered in the forests and sold out to people in these areas after the war⁴⁷. This accounts for the beginning of the proliferation of small arms in Igboland. The guns went into the wrong hands as they used them to terrorize the people. Stealing and armed robbery destroyed family cohesion as families stole from one another to survive especially land and cash crops which generated strife and quarrels among kinsmen. To win, some resorted to voodoo to eliminate rivals and potential rivals. As Isichei aptly observed that "sensitive observers sometimes detect a change in the caliber of Igbo life-a greater materialism, a greater cynicism, a greater hedonism"⁴⁸.

Another effect of the occupation on the moral life of the Igbo was that it introduced and heightened the smoking of cannabis like marijuana and Indian hemp. It also brought sexually transmitted diseases in Igboland. Youths began the intake of these dangerous drugs and it has not abated in Igboland. In Udi, Nsukka, and Enugu area, people remarked that sexually transmitted diseases became rampant after the occupation. A writer observed especially the one called "Bonny special"⁴⁹. One wonders if this was also another ploy by the victorious federal forces to bring the Igbo on their knees. This could be likened to the event during the Rwandan crisis where the Hutu soldiers aside from sexual violence against the beautiful Tutsi women, deliberately infected them with the AIDS virus. The aim, it is alleged, was to cause the death of many Tutsi as possible through AIDS thus maintaining the numerical advantage the Hutu had over the Tutsi⁵⁰.

This mindset to forcefully infect a group with a dangerous virus like AIDS is abominable. This could not be attributed to war by other means but wickedness and outrage against the Tutsi.

Indeed, the effects of the occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas may take years to heal. The psychological effects of those raped, forced into marriages, cold-bloodedly murdered and the families that collapsed as a result of the war may take time to rebuild. Many Igbo remain pauperized due to the abandoned property issue and several economic policies deliberately targeted at them to make their recovery painful and slow. Politically, the Igbo have remained on the margin as every other ethnic group appears to conspire to frustrate the Igbo aspiration to the highest political office in the land. The Igbo are not helping matters as outsiders even encourage disunity among them. The Igbo must exhibit political sagacity before outsiders can entrust them with political power. They must strive to overcome this brutal civil war by supporting one another in their various endeavours.

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu areas of the defunct Biafran Republic was swift, devastating and shocking for the people and indeed deflected the Biafran leadership boast of its invincibility. Within a month of the commencement of hostilities in July 1967, Nsukka, the northern border of Biafra had been overrun and occupied. Enugu, the Biafran capital was within shelling range of the advancing federal forces. The unpreparedness of Biafran enterprise was too glaring: inadequate military hardware, poor strategy and tactics, a leadership that could not match its propaganda of unassailability when the chips were down. The Biafran Head of State, Emeka Ojukwu, had boasted that "no country in black Africa could defeat Biafra by land, air or sea" to the people's delight¹. However, the enthusiastic volunteers for conscription into Biafran army were neither trained nor issued with corresponding weapons to confront well-armed Nigerian forces. Rather, Ojukwu encouraged his army commanders to issue these volunteers with machetes against a ferocious enemy armed with armoured cars and machine guns. According to Alexander Madiebo:

Frankly, I had little hope about this operation succeeding because I was quite sure those young men, most of whom had never heard the sound of machine gunfire, would run as soon as that happened, or worse still if the enemy shelled. It was futile trying to match determination and machetes against a ruthless enemy using artillery, armour and machine guns.²

The Biafran recruits were needlessly driven into suicidal mission by an uncaring Biafran leadership. The Biafran Leader, Ojukwu, handicapped as he was by lack of sophisticated weapons ought not to have embarked on conventional warfare. A better strategy would have

been a guerrilla warfare to wear down the Nigerian advances and frustrate every goal of occupying any Biafran town.

Many Nsukka communities were still in their pristine state when the war broke out. In some of these communities, it was a taboo for a married woman to engage in extra-marital affairs and young maidens to have sex before marriage. Unfortunately, the invasion of Nsukka by the Nigerian army desecrated this hallowed tradition of the people. The Nigerian soldiers behaving like the vandals of yore, defiled their women, abducted young girls, raped and murdered those who dared to resist them. The people were in shock at this strange behavior of the Nigerian troops. Indeed, Nsukka people were the first set of the Igbo to suffer the brutalities, rape, murder and looting of their properties from the Nigerian troops. Ojukwu, their young leader, could not protect them or offer useful advice on how to cope in the face of naked brute force unleashed against them. The atrocities committed by the Nigerian troops were unprecedented. Families that tried to lock themselves up in their thatched houses were simply set ablaze by these brutes in Nigerian army uniform. Many families were wiped out by this callous behavior of Nigerian troops. Strangely, this wanton behaviour by Nigerian soldiers had not received official condemnation or apology.

War is usually a measure of last resort. The Igbo People were pushed to the wall. The pogrom against the Igbo living in the Northern Nigeria received official Nigerian government backing. The massacres reached genocidal proportion. However, the major powers of the world felt that it was one of those barbarous behaviours of the African and offered only platitudes. Unfortunately, the Biafran leadership did not think through or got firm recognition from any major world power on sources of arms, medication and food supply. Thus, starvation killed more people than the

actual war. Statehood does not begin or end with designing of a flag or cobbling a national anthem. A foremost indicator of statehood includes the ability to defend the territorial integrity, and being able to do business with other nations unhindered. The war was badly managed and a major setback to the Igbo people. In the words of Madiebo, “the Biafran soldiers therefore fought for almost three years naked, hungry and without ammunition. All he had was his will to survive and a genuine determination to realize this aim”³. It sounds like a fairy-tale that Biafran soldiers at the war front went on for days without food, boots, clothing, occasionally scavenging for raw root crops to eat and suffering from pneumonia. Such display of dedication, sacrifice and heroism are rare among men. Yet, it remains a moot point whether Biafran leadership reciprocated this passionate quest for Biafran survival as did the ordinary people.

To proclaim the war a setback for the Igbo was an understatement. The war was a calamity that affected virtually every Igbo family in diverse ways. Within the duration of the war, social and economic activities came to a halt in Nsukka and Enugu areas of Biafra. Schools, hospitals and businesses were crippled. The invading soldiers took joy in looting and vandalizing public schools and hospitals. A sad case was the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The Biafran leadership naively refused to evacuate the institution. Thus, the Nigerian army burnt down entire library collections of the University and looted the research equipment in the laboratories. Many magnificent edifices such as Princess Alexandra Auditorium were burnt down. Some of the heady undergraduates of the institution perished in the war. At the Nsukka sector, the poet Christopher Okigbo and Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu met their untimely deaths. With the death of the charismatic Nzeogwu, the zeal and enthusiasm of many young men of Biafra began to wane.

Wars create monstrous situations. The worst in man unfolds. Soldiers at the heat of battle may have become mentally deranged without their superiors taking note of their health deterioration. As long as their aggressive tendencies are directed at the opposing forces, little or no action is taken until it is too late. Those scenarios resonated during the Nigerian-Biafran civil war. Many soldiers particularly from the Nigerian occupation forces behaved outrageously towards the Biafran partisans and civil population without any official reprimand. The Nkanu Igbo were brutalized, tortured, most alleged Biafran partisans slaughtered in the most barbaric form by Sergeant Yilda. These victims of occupation army have not received justice almost fifty years after cessation of hostilities.

The victorious Nigerian army received accolades at the end of the war in January 1970 while some of their Biafran counterparts were detained in solitary confinement for more than a decade for alleged sadistic behavior. Despite General Yakubu Gowon's diplomatic posturing of "no victor no vanquished" proclamation and the supposedly effusion of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction, the Nkanu Igbo had a raw deal after the war. The "butcher" at Agbani, Sergeant Yilda continued to serve in the Nigerian army as if nothing happened. There was no military board of inquiry on the atrocious behavior of Nigerian soldiers. The Nkanu Igbo had no platform to ventilate their grievances and seek for justice. The Gowon regime did not apologize for the horrendous havoc perpetrated by his soldiers. Nearly fifty years after, the Nkanu Igbo are still awaiting justice.

The so-called 3Rs (reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction) of public utilities like schools, hospitals, postal offices and private properties never received federal or state government attention in Nsukka and Enugu areas. It was through the people's self-help efforts

and doggedness that schools were rehabilitated and hospitals restored in the area. The Agbani railway beach the Nigerian army looted the palm oil and palm kernel holdings, did not receive any compensation after the war. How the owners picked up the pieces of their lives did not worry the Gowon military government? After all, the Igbo had been vanquished. The looting of Enugu, that halted the military campaign against Biafra for over a month, deserves official query. Who were the beneficiaries of the loot? Did the Gowon military government uncover those behind the looting of Enugu, and what punishment did he mete out to them? In the words of Madiebo:

During this difficult period, we were very lucky in that the enemy, rather than advance to exploit his success, settled down for a couple of weeks to a methodical and thorough looting of Enugu. This gave us the opportunity to find our feet again to face him once more when he was ready to move⁴.

This scandalous halting of military operation prolonged the war. The Nigerian army officers involved should have been court-marshalled or dismissed. In the spirit of reconciliation, the military regime ought to have paid compensation. Unfortunately, the vanquished Nsukka and Enugu people did not receive any compensation to restart their vandalized businesses, their destroyed homes and psychological traumas they passed through at the hands of occupation forces. It is not late to atone for such criminal negligence by a government that boasted of not knowing what to do with petro dollars. Compensation could be in form of monuments, industries to assuage the people that suffered from the deliberate government policies to stagnate and retard them at the end of the war.

What about war crimes committed against Nkanu Igbo? The Nigerian government should set up a panel of inquiry to investigate the alleged barbaric slashing of throat and private parts of

Biafran partisans by Sergeant Yilda at Agbani during the war. The nature of the killing of over eighty (80) able-bodied Nkanu Igbo on alleged sympathy for Biafra was horrendous, wicked and inhuman. Those involved in this crime should be unraveled, and punished if they are still alive or condemned posthumously. An inquiry should be able to account one by one names of the victims of this heinous crime and a cenotaph built with their names inscribed on it. The Nigerian army and government should tender an apology to the families of the victims of naked brute power exercised by its officials. Reconciliation would remain a smokescreen unless effort is made for genuine atonement.

The current wave of agitation for actualization of Biafra is an indictment on the hollow nature of post-war reconciliation in Nigeria. The Igbo have been discriminated against in employment into the civil service, armed forces and public corporations since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war. The policy of quota system has been used to deny them admission into colleges and universities. As many Igbo people drifted into the private sector of the Nigerian economy, their businesses are target of incessant vandalisation and riots outside their region of origin. Politically, the rest of Nigerians are afraid of entrusting them with the highest political office in Nigeria, not because they lack the competence but fear of Igbo retribution. This fear is germane due to years of discrimination against the Igbo. But this fear can only be allayed by entrusting and abolishing discriminatory practices in public institutions. Nigeria cannot progress unless merit is the watchword and justice seen to be done at all points. The injustice of occupation forces in Nkanu Igbo should be the starting point. Let us start with apology and monuments recognizing the various atrocities across the length and breadth of Igboland as a token of reconciliation.

War is a harbinger of the bad and the ugly. The Nigerian army occupation of Nsukka and Enugu environs was reminiscent of the evils of war. The soldiers rampaged the area thoroughly, raping women with impunity and looting life time treasures of the people. The civil population became willing tools in the hands of the occupation army. The Nkanu Igbo blackmailed perceived enemies before the federal troops who wasted no time in executing many people on trumped up charges of supporting Biafran war effort. To some of these Igbo turn coats, the federal occupation would never end. The likes of Sergeant Yilda became cruelty personified. The little power some of the federal troops wielded was overtly abused to the detriment of the hapless civilians. The war created monsters like Yilda who slashed the throats of his Nkanu victims with relish. To many Nkanu Igbo the war stole the humanity of the Nigerian soldiers and set many families more than half a century back.

Indeed, the clamour for restructuring of the Nigerian polity should be seized upon and genuine reforms effected in the governance of the country. Nations that are attuned to reforms are spared of insurgency such as the Boko Haram, militancy in the Niger Delta or the demand for secession by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, IPOB. Failure to reform or restructure a country leads to revolution of an unprecedented upheaval. The Bourbons of France resisted reforms until the 1789 revolution swept them out of power. The Czarist Russia also buried its head in the sand like the ostrich until the Bolsheviks struck in 1917 and ended their reign. Nigeria is ripe for restructuring to release the competitive spirit among the diverse ethnic nationalities. Agitations for secession and insurgency are signs of structural defects which timely restructuring can easily salvage. Nigeria's size is a huge advantage if we leverage on it to develop our inert strength. However, it would be a huge burden if we continue to stagnate or parrot the indivisibility of Nigeria when unemployment is choking our youths, we cannot

guarantee twenty-four-hour electricity supply and when we continue to import refined petroleum products due to our inability to fix our refineries. Nigeria would thrive when we develop the spirit of supporting help while giving room for every group to develop at their own pace. Nature has bound us together and as Abraham Lincoln aptly stated:

physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other, but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face, and intercourse either amicable or hostile, must continue between them⁵.

Plate 12: Ogbunigwe Launcher built and used by the Biafran troops.



Umuahia War Museum. Photo taken by Dr. Chijioke Onuorah

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