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My Biafran Eyes

My first glimpse into the horror and beauty that lurk uneasily in the human heart came in the late 1960s courtesy of the Biafran War. Biafra was the name assumed by the seceding southern section of Nigeria. The war was preceded - in some ways precipitated - by the massacre of southeastern (mostly Christian) Igbo living in the predominantly northern parts of Nigeria.

Thinking back, I am amazed that war's terrifying images have since taken on a somewhat muted quality. It requires sustained effort to recall the dread, the pangs of hunger, the crackle of gunfire that once made my heart pound. It all now seems an unthreatening fog.

As Nigeria hurtled towards war, my parents faced a difficult decision: to flee, or stay put. We lived in Yola, a sleepy, dusty town whose streets teemed with Muslims in flowing white babariga gowns. My father was then a postal clerk; my mother a teacher. In the end, my father insisted that my mother take us, their 4 children, and escape to safety in Amawbia, my father's natal town. Mother pleaded with him to come away as well, but he would not budge. He was a federal civil servant, and the federal government had ordered all its employees to remain at their posts.

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From MJoTA Publisher

In May 2005 I started gathering stories about Africa and African communities. I was for 18 months an enthusiastic attender of Nigerian Christ Apostolic Church congregations in Maryland and Philadelphia, for 18 months I lived on and off in the apartment of the publisher of the short-lived *New York Echo* newspaper, and I traveled to Nigeria 5 times. When I saw Dr Okey Ndibe's story of his family during the 3 years of the Biafran War, I asked him if I could republish it in *MJoTA*. His story is important because it shows the collateral damage of war: a family caught in the middle of a political standoff. His story reminds us that when all communication breaks down and war is inevitable, try again. And keep trying. And keep trying. Because no matter how bad things are, war is hell.

I was a teenager in Australia in 1967 when I heard about the Biafran War through images of starving children. I had never thought about Nigeria, although I should have, Australia is still a British colony. For girls wearing Sydney Girls High School brown uniforms, we were completely disconnected from understanding anything about Africa and the struggles of Africans. The starving children images I interpreted as meaning that African independence was a bad idea, and what Africa needed was conversion to Christianity. That is what I learned about Africa, that Christian missionaries were desperately needed.

The Biafran War was an epic tragedy for Nigeria, for Biafran-Nigerians and Nigerians outside Biafra. It cut a deep wound right through the heart of Nigeria, right through the heart of Africa. Nigeria had only been independent for 6 years, its economy was strong, the railways were working, and enormous efforts had been made to prevent Biafran secession. The Biafran War broke Nigeria's heart.

Biafran declaration of independence was made in May 1967, after unrest and murders of thousands of Igbos, Nigeria's prime minister and other prominent politicians. Nigeria declared war on Biafra July 1967.

The United States was not paying attention, the country was deeply engaged at home in human rights struggles for descendants of Africa, and in Vietnam, in a war. In April 1967, Martin Luther King jr delivered his Riverside speech in New York in which he called for withdrawal of all United States troops from Vietnam.

In the same month as Biafran secession, Australians voted in a referendum that asked whether Australian aborigines should be accepted as citizens of Australia. Australians voted yes. What appalled me then and now, was that the question was asked at all. Those were the times when the whiteness of colonial skin so blinded the rulers that laws firmly placed descendants of Africa as something less than human.

The Biafran secession, its bloody resolution, and the refusal of superpowers to prevent bloodshed on both sides was caused by such a mindset. According to Wikipedia, Biafra was recognized by Gabon, Haiti, Cote D'Ivoire, Tanzania, and Zambia, and economic support was received from Israel, Rhodesia, Portugal, France, South Africa and Vatican City and several church charities, predominantly Roman Catholic. Was it good or bad that Biafra was not recognized by major powers? That is not for me to answer, however, I know that many died, which was a tragedy for everyone. Biafra was blockaded, food or medical supplies through to Biafra and more than 1 million Nigerians inside Biafra died, a majority from starvation. All economic activity ceased, Nigeria changed its currency, universities closed, and lives were put on hold. This war was a staggering blow to a new democracy. After the was ended, more states were created, with autonomous governments, and a federal government. The police and army are both federally run to this day.

I cringe when I hear educated Nigerians in New York talk about how Nigeria is a failed state, how money is mismanaged, how the only thing that will save Nigeria is a war. In the light of history and reason, I know absolutely that the only thing that will destroy Nigeria is a war. Nigeria has an infrastructure that is working: from the minute I fly into Lagos and am processed through immigration and customs I am aware of the infrastructure. Nigeria has a functional judiciary, a functional police force, functional democratic institutions, functional educational institutions. But Nigeria is like a cathedral made of lace and plywood; its pillars and balustrades need to be strengthened, but the structures are in place.

I see these pillars and balustrades being strengthened in meeting places in New York, in Washington, all around the United States and Europe. Every time a group of educated, hard-working, brilliant Nigerians get together to discuss how things are working and what they can do to improve Nigeria, Nigeria is better off. Good people are working to report and analyze events in *Sahara Reporters*, where Dr Ndibe writes a weekly column. Organizations such as the Nigerian Peoples Parliament in the Diaspora work to change policies that choke. These include handing over the majority of the gross domestic product to civil servants and politicians whose appointments were made arbitrarily by election officers rather than count votes cast.

The first time I went to Nigeria in July 2007 I was stuck in traffic jams so severe that a short drive of 10 miles took 2 hours. In my last visit to Nigeria, in September 2010, I was the guest in the home of the Police Commissioner of Lagos, and I saw traffic moving along Apapa Road, Ikeja Road, through Surulere, across to Victoria Island to Ikoyi. The traffic is moving. Changes have started. God bless Nigerians, every one.

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My mother didn't cope well in Amawbia. In the absence of my father, she was a wispy and wilted figure. She despaired of ever seeing her husband alive again. Our relatives made gallant efforts to shield her, but news about the indiscriminate killings in the north filtered to her. She lost her appetite. Day and night, she lay in bed in listless, paralyzing grief. She was given to bouts of impulsive, silent weeping.

Then one blazing afternoon, unheralded, my father materialized in Amawbia, stole back into our lives as if from the land of death itself.

"Eliza o! Eliza o!" a relative sang. "Get up! Your husband is back!"

At first, my mother feared that the returnee was some ghost come to mock her anguish. But, raising her head, she glimpsed a man who - for all the unaccustomed gauntness of his physique - was unquestionably the man she'd married. With a swiftness and energy that belied her enervation, she bolted up and dashed for him.

We would learn that my father's decision to stay in Yola nearly cost him his life. He was at work when one day a mob arrived. Armed with cudgels, machetes and guns, they sang songs that curdled the blood. My father and his colleagues—many of them Igbo Christians—shut themselves inside the office. Huddled in a corner, they shook uncontrollably, reduced to frenzied prayers. One determined push and their assailants would have breached the barricades, poached and minced them, and made a bonfire of their bodies.

The Lamido of Adamawa, the area's Muslim leader, arrived at the spot just in the nick of time. A man uninfected by the malignant thirst for blood, he vowed that no innocent person would be dealt death on his watch. He scolded the mob and shooed them away. Then he guided my father and his cowering colleagues into waiting vehicles and spirited them to the safety of his palace. In a couple of weeks, the wave of killings cooled off and the Lamido secured my father and the other quarry on the last ship to leave for the southeast.

Air raids became a terrifying staple of our lives. Nigerian military jets stole into our air space, then strafed with abandon. They flew low and at a furious speed. The ramp of their engines shook buildings and made the very earth quake.

"Cover! Everybody take cover!" the adults shouted and we'd scurry towards a huddle of banana trees or the nearest brush and lay face down.

Sometimes the jets dumped their deadly explosives on markets as surprised buyers and sellers dashed higgledy-piggledy. Sometimes the bombs detonated in houses. Sometimes it was cars trapped in traffic

Above, Dr Okey Ndibe is the baby on the ground at the celebration of the second birthday of is brother John (in jacket next to cake) at Yola in 1960. That year, on October 1st, Nigeria became independent of Great Britain. Top, Dr Okey Ndibe in New York, chairing the fall sessions of the Nigerian Peoples Parliament in the Diaspora, http://nppid.org.

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that were sprayed. In the aftermath, the cars became mangled metal, singed beyond recognition, the people in them charred to a horrid blackness. From our hiding spots, frozen with fright, we watched as the bombs tumbled from the sky, hideous metallic eggs shat by mammoth mindless birds.

One day, my siblings and I were out fetching firewood when an air strike began. We threw down our bundles of wood and cowered on the ground, gaping up. The jets tipped in the direction of our home and released a load. The awful boom of explosives deafened us. My stomach heaved; I was certain that our home had been hit. I pictured my parents in the rumble of smashed concrete and steel. We lay still until the staccato gunfire of Biafran soldiers startled the air, a futile gesture to repel the jets. Then we walked home in a daze, my legs rubbery, and found that the bombs had missed our home, but only narrowly. They had detonated at a nearby school.

At each temporary place of refuge, my parents tried to secure a small farmland. They sowed yam and cocoyam and also grew a variety of vegetables. We, the children, scrounged around for anything that was edible, relishing foods that in less stressful times would have made us retch.

One of my older cousins was good at making catapults, which we used to hunt lizards. We roasted them over fires of wood and dried brush and savored their soft meat. My cousin also set traps for rats. When his traps caught a squirrel or a rabbit, we felt providentially favored. Occasionally he would kill a tiny bird or more, and we would all stake out a claim on a piece of meat.

While my family was constantly beset by hunger, we knew many others who had it worse. Biafra teemed with malnourished kids afflicted with kwashiorkor that gave them the forlorn air of the walking dead. Their hair was thin and discolored, heads big, eyes

The Iroko Has Fallen

Nov 26, 2011. http://www.vanguardngr.com.

"The family statement.. was signed by his son, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu.

Entitled, "We thank God for Ikemba Ojukwu's productive life on earth: Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu is dead", the statement read: "After a protracted and brave fight against stroke, the People's General, Ikemba Nnewi, Dikedioranma Ndigbo, Odenigbo Ngwo, Ezeigbo Gburugburu, Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu died in the early hours of today (yesterday) in London.

"We thank all those that showed concern in our period of difficulties, starting from the President of the country, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, GCFR. We thank, in a special way, the Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi who went above and beyond the call of duty to look after him. Besides paying the hospital bills, he visited London on a monthly basis to see him. He was there yesterday and only came back this morning to receive the news, whereupon he entered the next available flight back to London. He even had to fly Economy Class since other classes were fully booked. We thank him for the sacrifices.

"We thank all Nigerians for their solidarity, especially those that continued to pray for him..."

Dr Okey Ndibe's family. Second from right is his father Christopher Chidebe Ndibe. Fifthy from right is his mother Elizabeth Ndibe. The others are all civil servants in their town.

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The Biafran flag which flew from 1967-1970. On May 30, 1967, Colonel Odumegwu-Ojukwu declared Eastern Nigeria a sovereign state to be known as BIAFRA. The full statement is on page 66.

Nigeria declared war on Biafra in July 1967, and the 30-month Biafran War started. Colonel Ojukwu gave speeches during the war, some are on YouTube. He was President of Biafra until Jan 1970. In Feb 2011 Nigerian news sources and Wikipedia reported that was receiving a Nigerian military pension. On Nov 26, 2011, the death of Colonel Ojukwu was reported from London.

sunken, necks thin and scrawny, their skin wrinkly and sallow, stomachs distended, legs spindly.

Like other Biafrans, we depended on food and medicines donated by such international agencies as Catholic Relief and the Red Cross. Sometimes I accompanied my parents on trips to relief centers. The food queues, which snaked for what seemed like miles - a crush of men, women, children - offered less food than frustration as there was never enough to go round. One day, I saw a man crumble to the ground. Other men surrounded his limp body. As they removed him, my parents blocked my sight, an effete attempt to shield me from a tragedy I had already fully witnessed.

Some unscrupulous officers of the beleaguered Biafra diverted food to their homes. Bags of rice, beans and other foods, marked with a donor agency's insignia, were not uncommon in markets. The betrayal pained my father. He railed by signing and distributing a petition against the Biafran officials who hoarded relief food or sold it for profit.

The petition drew the ire of the censured officials; the signatories were categorized as saboteurs. To be tagged a saboteur in Biafra was to be branded with a capital crime. A roundup was ordered. One afternoon, some grave-looking men arrived at our home. They snooped all over the house. They turned things over. They pulled out papers and pored over them, brows crinkled half in consternation, half in concentration. As they ransacked the house, they kept my father closely in view. Then they took him away.

Father was detained for several weeks. I don't remember that our mother ever explained his absence. It was as if my father had died. And yet, since his disappearance was unspoken, it was as if he hadn't.

Then one day, as quietly as he had exited, my father returned. For the first - and I believe last - time, I saw my father with a hirsute face. A man of steady habits, he shaved everyday of his adult life. His beard both fascinated and frightened me. It was as if my real father had been taken away and a different man had returned to us.

The author and teacher Dr Okey Ndibe, right, with his older brother John Ndibe, in 1962 in Yola, Nigeria. John Ndibe has had a long career as a physician.

This image of my father so haunted me that, for many years afterwards, I flirted with the idea that I had dreamed it. It was only 10 years ago, shortlly after my father's death, that I broached the subject with my mother. Yes, she confirmed, my father had been arrested during the war. And, yes, he'd come back wearing an unaccustomed beard.

Father owned a small transistor radio. It became the link between our war-torn space and the rest of the world. Every morning, as he shaved, my father

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State	Previous name before statehood
States created on May 27, 1967 (3 days before Biafra seceeded from Nigeria)	
1. Cross River State	*Eastern Region; South-Eastern State 1967 to 1976.*
2. Kaduna State	*Northern Region; North-Central State 1967 to 1976.*
3. Kano State	*Northern Region*
4. Kwara State	*Northern Region; West Central State 1967 to 1976.*
5. Lagos State	*Federal Territory of Lagos and Colony Province*
6. Rivers State	*Eastern Region*
States created on Feb 3, 1976 (6 years after Biafra returned to Nigerian rule)	
7. Abuja Federal Capital Territory	*Benue-Plateau, North-Central, & North-Western States*
8. Bauchi State	*North-Eastern State*
9. Benue State	*Benue-Plateau State*
10. Borno State	*North-Eastern State*
11. Imo State	*East Central State*
12. Niger State	*North-Western State*
13. Ogun State	*Western State*
14. Ondo State	*Western State*
15. Oyo State	*Western State*
16. Plateau State	*Benue-Plateau State*
17. Sokoto State	*North-Western State*
States created on Sep 23, 1987	
18. Akwa Ibom State	*Cross River State*
19. Katsina State	*Kaduna State*
States created on Aug 27, 1991	
20. Jigawa State	*Kano State*
21. Kebbi State	*Sokoto State*
22. Kogi State	*Kwara State; Benue State*
23. Anambra State	*(old) Anambra State*
24. Abia State	*Imo State*
25. Adamawa State	*Gongola State*
26. Delta State	*Bendel State*
27. Edo State	*Bendel State*
28. Enugu State	*(old) Anambra State*
29. Osun State	*Oyo State*
30. Taraba State	*Gongola State*
31. Yobe State	*Borno State*
States created on Oct 1, 1996	
32. Nasarawa State	*Plateau State*
33. Bayelsa State	*Rivers State*
34. Ebonyi State	*Enugu State and Abia State*
35. Zamfara State	*Sokoto State*
36. Ekiti State	*Ondo State*
37. Gombe State	*Bauchi State*

Nigeria was a British colony until Oct 1, 1960, when Nigeria became an independent nation with a Governor-General of Nigeria acting as the representative of the Queen. On Oct 1, 1963, Nigeria became a republic, removing Britain from any involvement in Nigerian rule.

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New York, Aug 2011. Educator and HIV/AIDS activist, Dr Ada Okika, right, convened the Igbo Women's Conference at the Nigerian Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Center, Ms Ngozi Ugoh RN publishes from Toronto the print newspaper Nigerian Canadian News, nigeriancanadiannews.com.

tuned the radio to the British Broadcasting Corporation, which gave a more or less objective account of Biafra's dwindling fortunes. It reported Biafra's reverses, lost strongholds and captured soldiers as well as interviews with gloating Nigerian officials. Sometimes a Biafran official came on to refute accounts of lost ground and vow the Biafrans' resolve to fight to the finish.

Feigning obliviousness, I always planted myself within earshot, then monitored my father's face, hungry to gauge his response, the key to decoding the news. But his countenance remained inscrutable. Because he monitored the BBC while shaving, it was impossible to tell whether winces or tightening were from the scrape of a blade or the turn of the war.

At the end of the BBC broadcasts, my father twisted the knob to Radio Biafra, and then his emotions came on full display. Between interludes of martial music and heady war songs, the official mouthpiece gave exaggerated reports of the exploits of Biafran forces. They spoke about enemy soldiers "flushed out" or "wiped out" by gallant Biafran troops, of Nigerian soldiers surrendering. When an African country granted diplomatic recognition to Biafra, the development was described in superlative terms, sold as the beginning of a welter of such recognitions from powerful nations around the globe. "Yes! Yes!" my father would exclaim, buoyed by the diet of propaganda. How he must have detested it when the BBC disabused him, painted a patina of grey over Radio Biafra's glossy canvas.

In January 1970, after enduring the 30-month siege, which claimed close to 2 million lives on both sides, Biafra buckled. We had emerged as part of the lucky, the undead. But though the war was over, I could intuit from my parents' mien that the future was forbidden. It looked every bit as uncertain and ghastly as the past.

Our last refugee camp abutted a makeshift barrack for the victorious Nigerian army. Once each day, Nigerian soldiers distributed relief material—used clothes and blankets, tinned food, powdery milk, flour, oats, beans, rice, such like. There was never enough food or clothing to go around, which meant that brawn and grit decided who got food and who starved. Knuckles and elbows were thrown. Children, the elderly, the feeble did not fare well in the food scuffles. My father was the sole member of our family who stood a chance. On good days, he squeaked out a few supplies; on bad days, he returned empty handed. On foodless nights, we found it impossible to work up enthusiasm about the cessation of war. Then, the cry of "Happy survival!" with which refugees greeted one another sounded hollow, a cruel joke.

Despite the hazards, we, the children, daily thronged the food lines. We operated around the edges hoping that our doleful expressions would invite pity. Too young to grasp the bleakness, we did not know that pity, like sympathy, was a scarce commodity when people were famished.

One day I ventured to the food queue and stood a safe distance away watching the mayhem, silently praying that somebody might stir with pity and invite me to sneak into the front. As I daydreamed, a woman beckoned to me. I shyly went to her. She was beautiful and her face held a wide, warm smile.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Okey," I volunteered, averting my eyes.

"Look at me," she said gently. I looked up, shivering. "I like your eyes." She paused, and I looked away again. "Will you be my husband?"

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Almost 10 at the time, I was aware of the woman's beauty, and also of a vague stirring inside me. Seized by a mixture of flattery, shame and shyness, I used bare toes to scratch patterns on the ground.

"Do you want some food?" she asked.

I answered with the sheerest of nods.

"Wait here."

She went off. My heart pounded as I awaited her return, at once expectant and afraid. Back in a few minutes, she handed me a plastic bag filled with beans and a few canned tomatoes. I wanted to say my thanks, but my voice was choked. "Here," she said. "Open your hand." She dropped 10 shillings onto my palm.

I ran to our tent, flush with exhilaration. As I handed the food and coin to my astonished parents, I breathlessly told them about my strange benefactor, though I never said a word about her comments on my eyes or her playful marriage proposal. The woman had given us enough food to last for 2 or 3 days. The 10 shillings was the first post-war Nigerian coin my family owned. In a way, we'd taken a step towards becoming once again "Nigerian." She'd also made me aware that my eyes were beautiful, despite their having seen so much ugliness.

Each day, streams of men set out and trekked many miles to their hometowns. They were reconnoiterers, eager to assess the state of life to which they and their families would eventually return. They returned with blistered feet and harrowing stories.

Amawbia was less than 40 miles away. By bus, the trip was easy, but there were few buses and my parents couldn't afford the fare anyway. One day a man who'd traveled there came to our tent to share what he'd seen. His was a narrative of woes, except in one detail: My parents' home, the man reported, was intact. He believed that an officer of the Nigerian army had used my parents' home as his private lodgings. My parents' joy was checked only by their informer's account of his own misfortunes. He'd found his own home destroyed. Eavesdropping on his report, I imagined our home as a mythical island of order and wholesomeness ringed by overgrown copse and shattered houses.

The next day my father trekked home. He wanted to confirm what he'd heard and to arrange for our return. But when he got back, my mother let out a shriek then shook her head in quiet sobs. My father arrived in Amawbia to a shocking sight. Our house had been razed; the fire still smoldered, a testament to its recentness. As my father stood and gazed in stupefaction, the truth dawned on him: Some envious returnee, no doubt intent on equalizing misery, had torched it. War had brought out the worst in someone.

My parents had absorbed the shock of other losses. There was the death of a beloved grandaunt to sickness and of a distant cousin to gunshot in the battlefield. There was the impairment of another cousin who lost a hand. There was the loss of irreplaceable photographs, among them the images of my grandparents and of my father as a soldier in Burma during WWII. There was the loss of documents, including copies of my father's letters (a man of compulsive fastidiousness, my father had a life-long habit of keeping copies of every letter he wrote). But this loss of our home cut to the quick because it was inflicted not by the detested Nigerian soldier but by one of our own. By somebody who would remain anonymous but who might come around later to exchange pleasantries with us, even to bemoan with us the scars left by war.

At war's end, the Nigerian government offered 20 pounds to each Biafran adult. We used part of the sum to pay the fare for our trip home. I was shaken at the sight of our house: The concrete walls stood sturdily, covered with soot, but the collapsed roof left a gaping hole. Blackened zinc lay all about the floor. We squatted for a few days at the makeshift abode of my father's cousins. Helped by several relatives, my father nailed back some of the zinc over half of the roof. Then we moved in.

The roof leaked whenever it rained. At night, rain fell on our mats, compelling us to move from one spot to another. In the day, shafts of sunlight pierced through the holes. But it was in that disheveled home that we began to piece our lives together again. We began to put behind us the terrors we had just emerged from. We started learning what it means to repair an inhuman wound, what it takes to go from here to there.

In time, my father was absorbed back into the postal service. My mother returned to teaching. We went back to school. The school building had taken a direct hit, so classes were kept in the open air. Even so, our desire to learn remained strong. At the teacher's prompting, we rent the air, shouted the alphabet and yelled multiplication tables.

By Okey Ndibe PhD

Dr Okey Ndibe was a journalist in Nigeria. He teaches fiction and literature at Trinity College in Connecticut, and formerly taught at Connecticut College. He was for a year on the editorial board of the Hartford Courant and was from 2001-2002 a Fulbright professor at the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

News and news analysis from Nigerian communities all around the world, http://saharareporters.com. Read the weekly column by Dr Okey Ndibe.

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The Declaration of Independence Tuesday, May 30, 1967

Fellow countrymen and women, YOU, the people of Eastern Nigeria:

CONSCIOUS of the supreme authority of Almighty God over all mankind, of your duty to yourselves and prosperity;

AWARE that you can no longer be protected in your lives and in your property by any Government based outside eastern Nigeria;

BELIEVING that you are born free and have certain inalienable rights which can best be preserved by yourselves;

UNWILLING to be unfree partners in any association of a political or economic nature;

REJECTING the authority of any person or persons other than the Military Government of eastern Nigeria to make any imposition of whatever kind or nature upon you;

DETERMINED to dissolve all political and other ties between you and the former Federal Republic of Nigeria;

PREPARED to enter into such association, treaty or alliance with any sovereign state within the former Federal Republic of Nigeria and elsewhere on such terms and conditions as best to subserve your common good;

AFFIRMING your trust and confidence in ME;

HAVING mandated ME to proclaim on your behalf, and in your name the Eastern Nigeria be a sovereign independent Republic,

NOW THEREFORE I, Lieutenant-Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, by virtue of the authority, and pursuant to the principles recited above, do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria together with her continental shelf and territorial waters shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name and title of THE REPUBLIC OF BIAFRA.

AND I DO DECLARE THAT:

(i) All political ties between us and the Federal Republic of Nigeria are hereby totally dissolved.

(ii) All subsisting contractual obligations entered into by the Government of the federal republic of Nigeria or by any person, authority, organization or government acting on its behalf, with any person, authority or organization operating, or relating to any matter or thing, within the Republic of Biafra, shall henceforth be deemed to be entered into with the Military Governor of the Republic of Biafra for and on behalf of the Government and people of of the Republic of Biafra, and the covenants thereof shall, subject to this Declaration, be performed by the parties according to their tenor;

(iii) All subsisting international treaties and obligations made on behalf of Eastern Nigeria by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be honored and respected;

(iv) Eastern Nigeria's due share of all subsisting international debts and obligations entered into by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be honored and respected;

(v) Steps will be taken to to open discussions on the question of Eastern Nigeria's due share of the assets of the Federation of Nigeria and personal properties of the citizens of Biafra throughout the Federation of Nigeria.

(vi) The rights, privileges, pensions, etc., of all personnel of the Public Services, the Armed Forces and the Police now serving in any capacity within the Republic of Biafra are hereby guaranteed;

(vii) We shall keep the door open for association with, and would welcome, any sovereign unit or units in the former Federation of Nigeria or any other parts of Africa desirous of association with us for the purposes of running a common services organization and for the establishment of economic ties;

(viii) We shall protect the lives and property of all foreigners residing in Biafra, we shall extend the hand of friendship to those nations who respect our sovereignty, and shall repel any interference in our internal affairs;

(ix) We shall faithfully adhere to the charter of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations Organization;

(x) It is our intention to remain a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations in our right as a sovereign, independent nation.

Long live the Republic of Biafra!

And may God protect all those who live in her.