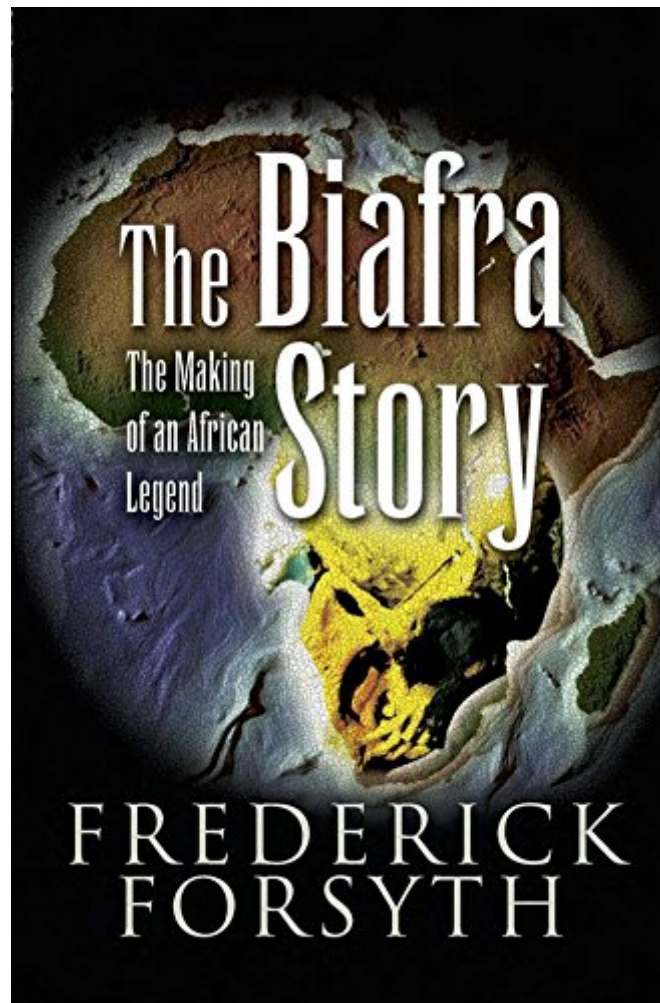


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The Biafra Story: The Making Of An African Legend



Synopsis

The Nigerian civil war of the late 1960s was one of the first occasions when Western consciences were awakened and deeply affronted by the level of the suffering and the scale of atrocity being played out in the African continent. This was thanks not just to advances in communication technology but to the courage and journalistic skills of correspondents such as Frederick Forsyth, who had already earned an enviable reputation for tenacity and accuracy working for Reuters and the BBC. In *The Biafra Story*, his first book, the Author took a strongly Biafran stance, revealing the depth of the British Government's active involvement which many would have far preferred to remain secret. Genocide is not a pretty word but there is no other way to describe General Gowon's treatment of the Biafran people, facilitated by a ready supply of British arms and advice. That Forsyth had the courage to take on The Establishment surprised none who knew him then; today his robust common-sense views strike a cord with those who tire of political correctness. Still relevant in terms of the lessons that it offers, many of which are, tragically, still unlearned, this powerful book is also significant as it launched Frederick Forsyth on his hugely successful literary career by providing him with the background material for *Dogs of War*. The combination of dramatic events and shocking exposures combined with the author's forthright and perceptive style makes *The Biafra Story* as compelling a read today as when it was first written.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am very sad to say I was growing up when the years of this Biafra history were happening. I was also a resident in U.K. and actually living in the Constituency that Prime Minister Harold Wilson represented in Parliament before he became Prime Minister. That we as a country and particularly many who were concerned citizens at the time, were lied to so deeply and so often regarding this tragic time, has only come to my attention through this great book. The solid shame that must be heaped upon so many of those in our Government at the time, be they ministers, ambassadors, civil servants and the like, especially when they were in elected positions supposedly representing the people of Britain, is almost more than I can comprehend. I struggled initially to understand the logistics of this whole country as the map was only at the beginning of my Kindle downloaded book, so had no reference after I had started to read, of the area and the names of the towns. I would have wished for a paper copy of the map, which would have aided my reading. No matter, after several chapters in, I was able to figure it out and my horror began. I lived in Africa for a few years with my Engineer husband, so the pronunciation of many of the towns and cities was not too difficult, but there were so many names that were similar, no fault of the author I must hasten to add. The arrogance, the condescension and total disregard for human life recorded in this book is appalling and quite an eye opener. However, the shining light of human compassion once the true stories were reported from the likes of Frederick Forsyth and other correspondents, reporters and journalists, along with eye witnesses, could not be ignored. This gives me hope for the human race, albeit a small one.

I cannot claim to be a scholar of African history, but from the works I have read on the Biafran conflict I find this certainly one of the most readable. It has the benefit of being a contemporary account by a then journalist on the scene, and one who knew the chief protagonist, General Chukwuemeka Ojukwu. Studies compiled over the years largely bear out Forsyth's understanding of the conflict, its causes, and the outcome for Nigeria. This is a fraught subject for Nigeria and Africa in general. Unfortunately, for Nigeria, the One Nigeria policy of General Gowon, which General Ojukwu had supported, until well after the beginning of the pogroms of the Hausa-Fulani against the Igbo people residing in the North, led to the consolidation of a state that remains ethnically fractious. This remains true today for many states in Africa, and beyond. Some attribute the rise of Boko

Haram to the unremitting of hostility of some in the Muslim North to the progressive entrepreneurial spirit shown by the Igbo and their Eastern ethnic allies encapsulated in what was the Republic of Biafra. That the Easterners were largely Christian converts merely reflects the benefits these people derived from an education in initially missionary schools, but that flourished as Easterners proceeded to establish schools themselves and promote the values of a Western system of education and progress. The spread of a system of Western education, and the skills and values among the Easterners led to their promotion within the colonial Nigerian state bureaucracy, business and intellectual structures. The pogroms of 1966-67 led to Ojukwu's acceptance the decision of the Eastern Region's Consultative Assembly to opt out of the One Nigeria program, and establish the Republic of Biafra.

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