

continued

Britain's Wilson: Peace Envoy To a Deadlocked African War

Though Harold Wilson's trip to Nigeria on March 27 is being billed as a "peace mission," there is little hope of an end to that African country's bitter civil war any time soon.

The British Prime Minister's efforts, however, are of vital concern to the United States, Russia and other nations.

U. S. interest centers on:

- Any action that holds down Russian influence in Nigeria.
- Protection of investments there.
- Steps that can lead to stability.

The 21-month-old civil war between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the breakaway state of Biafra seems to be deadlocked—militarily and politically. Diplomatic experts in London and elsewhere said it was unlikely Prime Minister Wilson could produce a formula that would break the deadlock.

Purpose of visit. It was believed Mr. Wilson's main aim in making the trip is to cope with a mounting tide of criticism in Britain of the Labor Government's support for the Nigerian Federation, including arms supply.

London sources said the Prime Minister has three limited objectives:

- To persuade the Nigerian leader, Gen. Yakubu Gowon, to end the bombing of civilian targets in Biafra.
- To expedite and expand relief supplies to avert further widespread starvation in Biafra.
- To demonstrate to critics that he is



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MR. WILSON'S trip to Nigeria could affect U. S., Russia and other countries.

doing his utmost to alleviate suffering in Nigeria and to promote peace.

Mr. Wilson has made it clear that his Government has no intention of acceding to demands that Britain cut off arms supplies to the Federation.

For one thing, the Prime Minister believes victory for Biafra would lead to fragmentation of weak, new states

throughout Africa. Even more important, according to diplomatic experts, is the fear that a British arms embargo will throw the Nigerian Federation deeper into the waiting arms of the Soviet Union—which has already supplied planes, advisers, trucks, bombs, small arms—and has penetrated Nigeria in other ways.

The British say it's France more than any other country that is prolonging the conflict and opening the door to Soviet penetration. President Charles de Gaulle is supplying the Ibo secessionists of Biafra with financial and military aid.

British officials believe President de Gaulle wants a breakup of the biggest, most powerful and potentially richest state in black Africa—with the hope of increasing French influence in Africa.

Biafra not on itinerary. Mr. Wilson made no plans to go to Biafra. This in itself left as remote the possibility he could get talks started.

Besides, Nigeria refuses to negotiate except on the basis of "one Nigeria." Lieut. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Ibo leader, will have no talks unless Biafra's right to secession is acknowledged.

Therefore, Prime Minister Wilson undertakes his "peace mission" with the cards stacked against him.

Observers note, however, that this has not deterred him in the slightest before. They point to his earlier—and fruitless—efforts to settle the Rhodesian controversy and to end the Vietnam war by personal diplomacy.

One thing seemed sure: With the U.S., Russia, France and others so interested, Mr. Wilson would have a big world audience closely watching for any signs of change in the Nigerian tragedy.

A Solution to "Otepka Case"?

Apparently the "Otepka case" is just about settled.

Otto F. Otepka—who has been fighting dismissal from a State Department job since 1963—has been named to a \$36,000-a-year post on the Subversive Activities Control Board.

To the Otepka forces, the appointment by President Nixon was a "vindication." To some others, it seemed more like a compromise.

Mr. Otepka, 53, was suspended from his job as the State Department's chief security evaluator 5½ years ago for giving confidential information to the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.

Hearings were held, and Secretary of



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MR. OTEPKA'S job on Subversive Activities Control Board pays \$36,000 a year.

State Dean Rusk in 1967 reprimanded Mr. Otepka. A demotion followed.

Mr. Otepka appealed to the Civil Service Commission, but Mr. Rusk's order was upheld. The new Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, also declined to reinstate Mr. Otepka—who recently has been on leave without pay.

There were published reports that Senator Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, Senate Republican Leader, suggested the "solution" to the long and bitter case.

If confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Otepka will join an agency which in recent times has not been very active.

The SACB was set up to identify and require registration of subversive individuals and organizations. A ruling by the Supreme Court against such activity left the Board with little to do. It had only seven cases in 2½ years, but its work picked up a bit after new legislation broadened its powers.