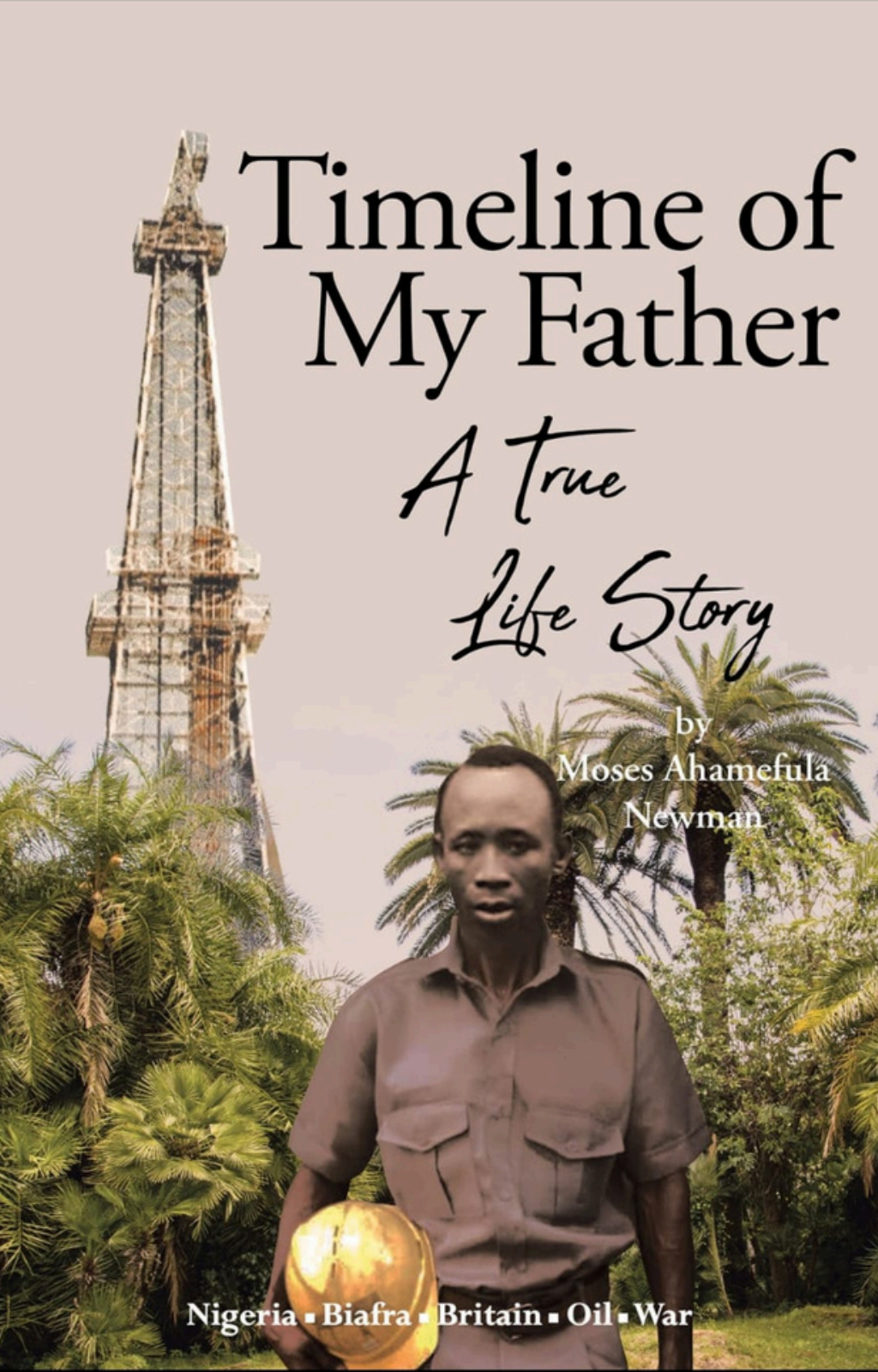




Timeline of My Father

A True Life Story

by
Moses Ahamefula
Newman

Nigeria ■ Biafra ■ Britain ■ Oil ■ War

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Dedication

August Harvey Martin (August
31, 1919–July 30, 1968)

Bruce Baruch Mayrock (May
6, 1949–May 30, 1969)

The American-Biafran Martyrs

Prologue

I would never have been born if the Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-17 jet aircraft presented to the Nigerian air force by the communist Russians to propagate the war against the Biafrans in 1967–1970 Nigerian-Biafran civil war had succeeded in killing my parents. The Nigerian air force did not have a combat capability prior to that war. The Nigerian Air Force was barely three years (April 18th, 1964) when the war started (May 27, 1967). Also, some of the elite military personnel were from the breakaway Southeastern part of Nigeria, they then seceded to form the new Biafran Republic. The Nigerian Air Force was formed and commanded by a German named Col. Gerhard Khatz of the German Air Force. The attack on my father's house took place in late 1968 at the peak of that war. The Russian-made bombers were flown by the Egyptian and Czech pilots. They were used to indiscriminately bomb military and civilian targets (weponsandwarfare.com, December 10, 2015). My parents were victims of that war. But as fate would have it, they survived.

My mother was pregnant with my elder brother and had fallen belly flat when the devastation was carried out on our house. Her survival was an act of God.

Then, growing up as a child in a dilapidated and badly damaged house and not understanding why it was so, I started to ask questions. The startling revelation from my father on what happened still shocks me today. That house and the stories cast a sordid picture of what the war was like. His answers led to the writing of this book which also showed not just what my family suffered but what a people—the Christian-Igbo people in the Southeastern part of Nigeria—went through for thirty months and are still going through even today under British amalgamated Nigeria.

The irony of it was that apart from countries like France and other small African countries that clandestinely supported Biafra, other world powers were either on the side of Nigeria or remained neutral as the well-funded Nigerian army backed by the British government and other major powers indiscriminately killed over three million people, including women and children who died through mas-

sive bombing and orchestrated starvation. Thanks to the Joint Aid Church and other global charity organizations that provided relief and humanitarian aid to the starving Biafran children and women in what was described as the largest relief airlift after the Second World War's Berlin massive relief program. The Joint Aid Church which was later renamed Jesus Airline flew relief materials including food into the Biafran territory despite the deadly air blockade imposed by the Nigerian government and her allies, an act considered to be a war crime. In one of these critical mercy missions, August Harvey Martin, the first African American licensed commercial airline pilot, and a World War II veteran pilot, died. He died in an air crash with his wife, actress Gladys Frank Riddle Martin, and I have dedicated this book to his memory.

There was strong support and sentiment for the Biafrans from within the United States of America. In fact, a twenty-year-old student from Manhattan, New York, by the name Bruce Baruch Mayrock, who was at the time attending the University of Columbia ardently embraced the cause of denouncing what was widely recognized

as a grave act of genocide going on in Biafra, Southeastern part of Nigeria. Driven by an unwavering sense of purpose, Bruce set himself ablaze in front of the United Nations building to attract the attention of world leaders to act and stop that genocide. This book is also dedicated to his memory.

However, the US was faced with a protracted conflict in the Vietnam War. As a result, successive governments then could not garner sufficient political and administrative support to get involved in that war to assist the Biafrans who had so much looked up to them for help.

President Richard Nixon, the thirty-seventh President of the United States of America, a Republican, during his presidential campaign aptly described the war as genocide with a promise to intervene. However, he could not do anything to help when he finally won the election. The United States so needed the support of Britain in her own war and therefore saw the Nigerian War as a British affair that they could not meddle with. Britain was the arrowhead in that war as it was constantly supplying sophisticated arms and ammunition to Northern-dominated Nigeria's military which they

used in decimating the Biafrans in the name of uniting Nigeria.

Today, almost over fifty-three years after that ill-fated war, the future of Nigeria as a nation still remains undefined. There is so much insecurity and maladministration because of the lack of will of the component nations and politicians that make up the Nigerian polity to work for the unity of the country and for the benefit of all Nigerians. One would then ask if there is a justification for the loss of over three million lives in a war of cohesion by the Nigerian State.

One thing is certain, Nigeria will never become a united or stable nation if justice, equity, and fairness are not enshrined in its governance in principle and in practice, and if the component nations that make it up are not given the opportunity to define their destiny as a people.

Let us understand that each of the major ethnic nationalities or groups that make up the Nigerian state has the capacity to exist independently and chart her course for prosperity and peace—peace for her people and peace for the larger global community.

We don't need to fight another war to unite or fight another time to separate.

My Father's House

A look around the old gigantic cemented mud house would convince you. Although the walls of the building were finished with cement covering, you could see the inner red mud of which the house was made as most of the outer cemented coverings had either detached from the wall or were hanging in lumps like they were ready to fall out any moment. The walls and floors bore the marks of time, decorated with cracks and potholes. These fissures, wide enough to grant passage to any unwelcome critter or scurrying rodent, created a network of hidden pathways. The moon's radiant beams cascaded through the gaps within the dimly lit room, casting a silvery glow upon the shadows untouched by the feeble paraffin lamp resting on an aged wooden table at the center. The moonlight penetrated the corrugated iron sheet that served as the rooftop, escaping through a myriad of holes, each one unique in its size and shape. In the midst of this ethereal illumination, a young girl sat on a wooden chair, her slight frame leaning against the sturdy center table. Engrossed in her studies,