

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

HELP TO WAR VICTIMS IN NIGERIA

The *International Review* in its last issue published news of the ICRC relief action in Nigeria and in the seceding province (Biafra) during the month of July 1968. We now give some information summarizing the work carried out in August. In this connection, it should be pointed out that several meetings have enabled the directors of various National Societies and voluntary agencies taking part in this action, as well as the general public, through press, radio and television channels, to be in touch with a situation which, moreover, continues to fluctuate.

In fact, the International Committee called a meeting on August 14 in Geneva of representatives of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other large international relief organizations taking part in the ICRC's action for the benefit of the population of Nigeria.

Mr. August R. Lindt, General Commissioner of the ICRC for West Africa in charge of these operations described the situation and the problems involved.

In their turn the representatives of some twenty National Societies and of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Council of Churches, Caritas Internationalis, OXFAM, the International Union for Child Welfare, Save the Children Fund and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies described their own plans and problems.

All assured the ICRC of their full support and expressed the wish to see the international effort intensified for the benefit of the victims of the conflict on both sides. The same day Mr. Lindt held a press conference at which he gave an account of the whole problem.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Several days later, representatives of National Societies of the Red Cross and of UNICEF, the World Council of Churches, the Catholic Relief Organization and the International Union for Child Welfare met at the International Committee's headquarters in Geneva under the chairmanship of Mr. Lindt. The purpose of the meeting was to review the activities carried out in Nigeria and Biafra by the Red Cross Societies and voluntary agencies concerned under the auspices of the ICRC. The participants were informed that two coastal vessels with a loading capacity of over 500 tons each had been chartered for the transport of relief supplies from Lagos to Calabar. Two DC 4 aircraft and a light "Cessna" were operating regular flights carrying an average of 20 tons a day from Lagos to Enugu and Calabar. Two additional aircraft have been ordered. Two socio-medical teams left Geneva on August 20 to join the twelve Red Cross teams presently at work in the territories under the control of the federal troops. Since the previous day, two hospitals in Biafra were being operated by ICRC medical teams, one of them provided by the Yugoslav Red Cross Society. Two more teams sent by "Save the Children Fund" and the Norwegian Red Cross were due to arrive.

The situation in the Biafran held territory was examined with a view to increasing the cooperation and coordination amongst relief agencies in order to take without delay larger supplies to the famished women, children and aged, in conformity with the intentions the ICRC has expressed.

RELIEF ACTIONS

It will be recalled that on April 18, the ICRC launched an appeal on behalf of those suffering as a result of the conflict. This appeal it renewed on April 30, in view of the increasing relief needs. The situation, having continued to deteriorate, it made a further urgent appeal on May 23.

Governments as well as National Societies gave proof of generosity.

As regards stocks accumulated by the ICRC in its emergency depots, their storage position was as follows: *Lagos*: 3,000 tons;

Enugu: 900 tons; *Calabar*: 700 tons; *Agbor*:¹ 160 tons; *Santa Isabel*: 3,800 tons.

By the end of August, 10,000 tons of relief supplies were on their way to Nigeria and 7,500 tons for Biafra.

THE ICRC DELEGATIONS

Before giving an account of the extent of the numbers engaged locally by the ICRC and of the recent work undertaken in very different spheres under the red cross emblem, tribute should be paid to the courage of delegates and members of relief teams who accomplish their tasks in spite of many risks, of which an accident which took place on July 29, brought out the harsh reality. The International Committee then published the following communiqué:

The ICRC regrets to announce the deaths of two British members of a relief team sponsored by the " Save the Children Fund ". They were Father Malarchy Riddle and Mr. Jonathan Ampache. Preliminary reports suggest that the vehicle in which they were travelling, a landrover, was blown up by a mine. A representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross plans to fly to Enugu to make further enquiries. The team, the first to be sent to Nigeria by the " Save the Children Fund ", was operating in the Awgu area.

On August 30, the ICRC reported the departure for Lagos of Mr. Gerhard Schürch, the new head of its mission in Nigeria.

He carried a letter of introduction to Major General Yakubu Gowon, head of the federal military government.

Mr. Schürch, who is the director of the Treasury Department of the city of Berne, was appointed to direct and co-ordinate with the Nigerian Red Cross, under the authority of Mr. Lindt, all activities of the Committee on territory under the control of the federal military government. He is assisted by Mr. Robert Hitz, head delegate in charge of operations.

¹ Fighting having taken place around Asaba, it was decided to set up an emergency depot at Agbor in a more withdrawn area.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

Mr. Schürch was previously in Lagos on a fact-finding mission in the Nigerian Federal Republic.

We now give a general table of the International Committee's delegations and of the teams of mutual aid organizations working under the auspices of the ICRC as on August 30, 1968.

Nigeria

ICRC

One head of delegation (Mr. Gerhard Schürch), one delegate, one head of relief and transport, five assistant delegates, one quartermaster, four secretaries, one accountant.

Medical personnel: one doctor, one male nurse, one pharmacist.

Technical personnel: one radio technician, one cook, one specialist in relief distribution, eleven driver-mechanics.

National Red Cross Society teams

American Red Cross: one specialist in relief work.

Danish Red Cross: three relief specialists, three driver-mechanics.

Netherlands Red Cross: two doctors, three nurses, five relief specialists, one driver-mechanic.

Swedish Red Cross: one doctor, one anaesthetist, one nurse, one male nurse, one administrator, two driver-mechanics.

Swiss Red Cross: two nurses.

Humanitarian organizations

Salvation Army—OXFAM: two nurses, three relief specialists.

World Council of Churches: three doctors, eight nurses, one administrator, two specialists in relief work.

Synod of Lutheran Churches of Missouri: six doctors, one male nurse, five nurses, four technical personnel (one manager, one administrator of supplies, one electrician, one assistant quartermaster).

Save the Children Fund: six doctors, two male nurses, six nurses, two relief specialists, eleven driver-mechanics.

Biafra

ICRC

One head of delegation (Mr. Karl Jaggi), one delegate, three doctors, one male nurse, four specialists in relief.

National Red Cross Societies

Yugoslav Red Cross: two doctor-surgeons, one anaesthetist, one male nurse.

Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Danish Red Cross: These four National Societies have supplied about a hundred specialists in Kwashiorkor (malnutrition disease), as well as aircraft crews who were preparing to leave for Biafra or who were already on their way there at the end of August.

It should be mentioned that each aircraft provided by these Red Cross Societies carried one and sometimes a second take-over crew, in order to ensure the necessary relief of personnel, thus allowing intensive use of the aircraft made available.

Humanitarian organizations

Save the Children Fund: one doctor, two nurses, one relief specialist.

OXFAM: one specialist in relief work.

International Union for Child Welfare: one female dietician.

Santa Isabel

ICRC

Two administrators, one delegate, two clerks, two male nurses, one radio specialist, two senior technicians, six driver-mechanics.

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TO OPEN UP ROUTES

It should be recalled, in the first place, that the ICRC is continuing to carry out in Biafran territory occupied by the Federal forces as well as in Biafra, a work which, whilst not solely consisting in food distribution, is of considerable value. This is the medical teams' activity throughout the country¹; visits to prisoners

¹ *The International Review* described the tasks of these teams in its last number.

of war and interventions on their behalf are also made by the ICRC delegates. We will return to this question, but today, as the civilian population is suffering increasingly from famine, problems of relief have urgent priority. The solution of these problems in fact lies above all in routes which should be opened up extensively to enable the tons of supplies already stored on sites selected by the ICRC to reach the victims.

At the press conference mentioned above, Mr. Lindt stressed the great amount of relief which is required on both sides, the overcrowding in Biafran territory as a result of the influx of refugees, the terrible mortality rate to be observed there and finally, in occupied territory as well as in Biafra, the urgency of finding ways of routing to its destination relief collected through the combined efforts of the ICRC, the National Red Cross Societies, Governments and international and national aid societies. Mr. Lindt recalled that there existed three possibilities: a land corridor, water transport and an air bridge. He considered that the air route would be the more easily realizable if, in Biafra, the ICRC had an airfield entirely available under its control. The action would then expand rapidly, as more numerous flights could be organized from the island of Fernando Poo. Biafra declared itself prepared to accept such a solution.

On August 17, the ICRC published the following declaration:

In view of the increasing famine in Biafra and the consequential rising death rate, the International Committee of the Red Cross has obtained the Biafran authorities' agreement to neutralize a landing strip and to place it under ICRC control for the sole purpose of forwarding relief supplies to be distributed under ICRC supervision. ICRC delegates on the spot state the air-strip is already under their control and will shortly be fit for use.

The federal military government was requested to recognize the air-strip as neutral and to authorize ICRC aircraft to make regular flights by day, but it has stated that it could not give its agreement to the operation.

The ICRC deplores the fact that the federal military government has not accepted this solution to the problem of transporting relief supplies quickly to the victims in Biafran held territory. It hopes the

federal military government will revise its decision. Considering the increasing urgency, the ICRC, in close co-operation with National Red Cross Societies and other relief organizations, will nevertheless assume responsibility for taking every possible step to deliver the most urgently required relief supplies to the famished population.

Needless to say, the ICRC will continue carrying out its mission in territory controlled by the federal forces.

Furthermore, the ICRC appeals to the parties in conflict to come to an agreement soon on the opening up of land and water-way corridors, to permit the transport of large scale relief supplies. Its services are available to the two parties should they desire.

On August 20, the ICRC gave out news as follows:

The ICRC had been informed by its delegates in Biafra that the neutralized airstrip placed under its control according to the agreement signed on August 13 between the ICRC and the Biafran authorities was bombed on August 20 by aircraft of the federal armed forces of Nigeria. ICRC personnel is safe.

The ICRC immediately contacted the Permanent Representative of Nigeria in Geneva and informed him of this development. The ICRC is awaiting an urgent clarification from the Federal Military Government of Nigeria.

Then on August 26 came a further disturbing communication:

According to a report received by the ICRC from its delegates in territory under Biafran control, the airstrip placed by Biafran authority under ICRC control has been bombed for the second time on August 24 by the Federal armed forces of Nigeria. Three bombs were dropped, injuring workers. The representatives of the ICRC on the spot are safe.

The attack had also caused material damage and Mr. K. Jaggi, head of the ICRC delegation in Biafra, making every effort to have the runway repaired, had three large red crosses painted on it each measuring six metres, one at each end and one in the center of the airfield. A second landing strip on which ICRC aircraft landed at night from Santa Isabel was also bombed by the Nigerian air force. Flights had consequently to be suspended for several days.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The ICRC continued to attempt to open up routes extensively for the routing of relief. On August 25, it reported:

Following conversations between Mr. Kurt Furgler, special envoy of the ICRC, and Senor Fernando Maria Castiella, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, the Spanish Government has authorized the ICRC to make increased use of the airport of Santa Isabel, Fernando Poo, for relief supplies, in conformity with article 23 of the IV Geneva Convention, in favour of civilian victims of the conflict in Nigeria. The ICRC is, as from now, permitted to operate five aircraft from Fernando Poo. At present, the ICRC has one DC 6 B in Santa Isabel. Four more aircraft, three DC 6 A and B and one C 130 Hercules, put at the ICRC's exclusive disposal by the National Red Cross Societies of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, are due in Fernando Poo within the next few days.

In Geneva, on August 25, Mr. Lindt met Chief Anthony Enahoro, Nigerian Federal Commissioner of Information and Labour, who was accompanied by the Ambassador of Nigeria in Switzerland. The question of the ICRC relief operations was discussed, as were the negotiations on relief measures then taking place in Addis Ababa, where Mr. Lindt went subsequently.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that very considerable relief supplies continue to be distributed in territories occupied by the Federal forces where the food situation is also of tragic proportions. These are despatched by all possible routes. DC 4 aircraft continuously carry supplies and new methods are employed. As has been said, the ICRC has chartered a freighter of 700 tons and two coasting vessels each of 500 tons for the transporting of relief from Lagos as far as the emergency depot at Calabar.
