

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

HELP TO WAR VICTIMS IN NIGERIA

In our last month's issue we gave an account of ICRC relief work up to the end of October 1968 in Nigeria and the secessionist province Biafra. This clearly brought out the scale and very considerable cost of the mission which will continue for months to come. As the financial situation had reached the crisis stage, the International Committee invited representatives of governments, National Societies and international institutions, able to help it, to a meeting in Geneva, in order to explain the facts which justify not only the massive scale of, but also support for, the Red Cross action. There were in fact three meetings, one of National Societies, the second of representatives of governments and inter-governmental institutions and the third of voluntary agencies.

In response to the invitation of the International Committee, 21 National Societies met on 4 and 5 November 1968. The League of Red Cross Societies was also represented. Chairman of the meeting was ICRC President, Mr. S. A. Gonard. Other speakers, Mr. R. Gallopin, ICRC member and Director General, Mr. A. Lindt, ICRC General Commissioner for West Africa, and Mr. E. Regenass, head of ICRC Administration and Finance, introduced discussions with explanations of various aspects of the situation. These are summarized below.

Since the beginning of the action on both parts of the disputed territory, Mr. Gonard said, 12,000 tons of food and medical supplies had been distributed and a further 10,000 tons were ready. The number of people receiving assistance was about 1,450,000 and

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delegates had observed a noticeable improvement in health and a drop in death rates in all areas reached by the relief supplies. This encouraging result must, however, not obscure the fact that there were shortcomings and that there remained a vast amount of important work to be done.

An operation on such a scale required immense financial backing, for the large donations of food did not permit us to dispense with local purchases. In addition, all donations in kind necessitated cash resources for their forwarding, management and distribution. That was why, while goods in kind received up to the end of October amounted in value to 26 million Swiss francs, the ICRC's expenses rose concomitantly to 15 million Swiss francs, covering local purchases (6 million), urgently required medical supplies (1 million), transport (5.5 million), field personnel (2.5 million).

For future planning, it appeared expedient to look ahead for a period of four months, that is up to the end of February, during which time the ICRC would continue the essential work for the benefit of victims on both sides in the conflict, without any discrimination.¹ But the scale on which the action could be carried out was linked to the financial resources available and, hence, the full co-operation of the international community.

For that forthcoming period of four months we had 10,000 tons of relief goods in stock, 10,000 tons on the way and another 25,000 tons had been promised for December and January. In addition, there were the essential purchases to be made locally and expenses for transport and field personnel for forwarding and distributing. Such expenditure for the four months ahead, including special efforts in November and December, would amount to 42 million Swiss francs. The ICRC had ten million, so that it had still to find 32 million and hoped to be able to get this together with assistance from governments and National Societies.

In areas controlled by the federal authorities, namely the regions of Enugu, Calabar and Port Harcourt, the number of people affected by the conflict might be estimated at 2 million, about half

¹ We shall not revert here to Mr. Gallopin's mission in Lagos — see our November issue.

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of whom were in dire straits. This proportion would vary with the development of the situation.

In those regions as a whole, events had caused the collapse of civil administration. In the Enugu region the population had taken refuge in the bush and was beginning to come out to go to the relief distribution centres. Fewer people had gone into hiding in the Calabar-Port Harcourt region. Nevertheless, displaced persons made up the greater part of the population.

Needs were considerable and the relief action undertaken by the ICRC on territory under federal control included the weekly distribution of about 750 tons among almost 600,000 persons. This action was being carried out by truly international Red Cross teams working smoothly together. The ICRC was endeavouring to co-operate more closely with the Nigeria Red Cross and to include more and more of that Society's members in the relief teams. This trend was reinforced by the appointment, as Co-ordinator, of an experienced man, the former Secretary General of the Nigerian Red Cross.

In addition, a special effort has been made to have more African personnel participate in the ICRC's operation: 600 Africans in Biafra, 200 in Nigeria and 50 at Santa Isabel worked in the ICRC teams during November.

Operations were beset by transport rather than procurement problems. Stocks were adequate for some time forward. However, the Enugu depot could only be reached by a long road detour or by rail and lorry combined, as the railway was useless for a stretch of about 70 miles. From Calabar helicopters supplied by UNICEF were used to convey supplies.

Whilst it was difficult to estimate how many people needed assistance on territory under Biafran control, the number might be put at some 3.5 million.

Delivery of relief to Biafra was carried out by airlift from Fernando Po. By 3 November, 3,700 tons had been transported by this system which had been made possible by the generosity of National Societies. It was hoped that a land corridor could be arranged for the forwarding of larger quantities.

Civil administration was still functioning in Biafra and there was an active local Red Cross. Thanks to the relief network set up

**Under the auspices of the ICRC the relief
action in the secessionist province
of Biafra continues**



Photos CICR — Max Vaterlaus

To respond to this appeal...



Loading, at Santa Isabel, a "Hercules" chartered by the Swedish Red Cross.

Red Cross convoy brings these supplies to Ikot-Umo-Essien refugee camp.





Refugees wait at the Red Cross distribution centre at Udo.



A doctor distributing vitamins in the Nto-Edino refugee camp.

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under ICRC auspices by the Swedish Red Cross, the supplies flown in were rapidly distributed to about 850,000 people. Despite relief work by the Red Cross and other organizations, supply distributions were inadequate.

Plans had to be made also for the ICRC's withdrawal after the conflict. This should be done progressively to avoid any adverse effect detrimental to the welfare of the population and jeopardizing the results achieved. The role of the Nigerian Red Cross would then be more important than ever.

Such was the task before us. It was of unspecified duration, required enormous resources and was a striking challenge which had to be accepted as more than a million people depended on our doing so. To break off the operation would have material and moral consequences for the population and would be of a gravity of which no one was unaware.

* * *

The following resolution was adopted unanimously during the meeting of National Red Cross Societies:

The National Red Cross Societies, meeting today, Monday November 4th, 1968, in Geneva, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, having taken note with interest of the reports presented to them concerning the operations carried out in the recent past and those foreseen for the future in Nigeria on behalf of all victims, on both sides, of the conflict in that country, agreed unanimously with the following statement :

The Societies have noted the necessity of pursuing and developing the said operations, in proportion to the very considerable needs which continue to exist and which may even augment.

The Societies have assumed the responsibility of supporting, by appropriate individual procedures, the approaches which the International Committee of the Red Cross will be making to their Governments with a view to requesting the necessary financial support.

The Societies may also launch any appeal necessary in their countries with a view to covering the inevitable administrative costs involved by these operations.

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The aforementioned Societies urge that gifts in kind should be accompanied by cash contributions since the distribution of relief unavoidably entails operational and logistical expenses.

Finally the Societies thank the International Committee of the Red Cross and all the volunteers in the field for their contribution to date towards the support of this important humanitarian action.

On 8 November, representatives of 34 governments and four major inter-governmental organizations attended an informative meeting organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. The meeting was chaired by ICRC President Mr. Samuel A. Gonard, and addressed by Mr. R. Gallopin and Mr. Lindt.

After reviewing the relief programme on Nigerian and Biafran territory, the ICRC requested the government representatives for strong financial backing to meet the vast expense required to provide the civilian population with relief.

The following press release was issued after the meeting:

With assistance from many National Red Cross Societies, several governments, inter-governmental agencies such as UNICEF, and voluntary organizations such as the World Council of Churches and OXFAM, the ICRC set afoot in July 1968, for the benefit of the victims of the Nigeria/Biafra war, the largest relief action ever undertaken by it since the last World War.

Although the relief food despatched and distributed so far by the ICRC and other relief organizations has not eliminated famine among the civilian population, it has appreciably reduced the infant mortality rate among the 1,450,000 refugees on both sides of the front whom distributions under Red Cross auspices have reached.

Needs, however, are still enormous and even increasing daily at an alarming rate. According to reports reaching Geneva, it is estimated that 4.5 million people will soon be fully dependent on assistance for all or part of their food.

In order to cope with this situation while there is still time, the ICRC has drawn up a relief programme for the next four months which provides for distribution of over 100 million francs worth of food and medical supplies, in addition to the considerable amounts

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of relief goods which will have to be purchased locally. Transport and distribution expenses are high owing to the very nature of the action, so high in fact that the life-saving operation requires 32 million francs immediately if the whole programme is not to collapse.

As the ICRC's resources are now completely depleted, it is essential that it obtain very large financial backing urgently. For that reason it has invited government representatives accredited to the international organizations in Geneva to examine with it ways and means of raising the necessary funds for the continuation of its relief action for the benefit of all the victims of the conflict.

It was heartening to note during this first meeting, attended by representatives of 34 European, American and African governments, that the ICRC's appeal has already been heeded. The government of the USA has promised \$2.5 million, and the United Kingdom and Federal Republic of Germany have also promised substantial financial support. This is, however, only the first step.

Previously, the National Red Cross Societies also met in Geneva and, agreeing on the need to continue and develop the relief operations, undertook to support ICRC approaches to their governments and also to launch public financial appeals in their own countries for funds to cover the inevitable transport and operating expenses entailed by such a large-scale action.

The future of the ICRC's action in Nigeria/Biafra depends on the success or failure of these joint efforts.

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We now give some particulars on the position at the end of November¹:

Relief.—The nutrition experts working for the ICRC in Nigeria/Biafra consider 125 grams of protein-rich food per day to be the absolute minimum for survival.

¹ *Plate.* — Red Cross convoy brings supplies to Ikot-Umo-Essien refugee camps.

Santa Isabel : Loading a " Hercules " chartered by the Swedish Red Cross.

Refugees wait at the Red Cross distribution centre at Udo.

A doctor distributing vitamins in the Nto-Edino refugee camp.

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The cost of forwarding supplies by the airlift between Santa Isabel and Biafra is Sw. fr. 4,000 a ton, and by land, sea or inland waterway in Nigeria Sw. fr. 1,000 a ton, making an average of Sw. fr. 2,600 a ton.

Personnel.—Four medical, four medico-social and two relief teams, totalling 60 persons, are working at present in Biafra under ICRC responsibility.

On federal territory the teams have remained more or less the same, viz: 291 persons in 32 teams of doctors, social workers and technicians.

This network of relief personnel in Nigeria and Biafra was provided by the National Red Cross Societies of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, German Federal Republic, Great Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, USA and Yugoslavia, and by UNICEF, the World Council of Churches, the Save the Children Fund, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Catholic Mission, the International Union for Child Welfare, and the Salvation Army. The Israeli government has made available to the ICRC the services of a team of three doctors for three months.

This impressive list is proof of the international effort in Africa, in response to the ICRC's appeals. Relief operations are carried on in co-operation with the local Red Cross.

At Santa Isabel (Equatorial Guinea) a staff of 48 runs the base from which the ICRC sends relief to Biafra.

Airlift.—The number of aircraft involved in the INALWA operation (International Airlift West Africa) has fluctuated over the last few weeks, mainly due to technical reasons. The Swedish Hercules C-130 had to return to Stockholm for overhaul and will be temporarily replaced by a DC-6, made available to the ICRC by the Swedish Red Cross.

In order to strengthen its fleet and pending the return of the Swedish Hercules heavy aircraft (payload 20 tons), the ICRC has chartered a second DC-6 from Balair of Switzerland. A German "Transall" has also been in the fleet since mid-November.

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Since 11 November the ICRC has had another DC-6 provided by the Netherlands Red Cross. Its services will be available until the 20 December.

In spite of many difficulties, this air fleet has enabled the ICRC to forward an average of 55 tons of relief supplies a day.

General Situation.—The following statistics summarize activities up to the end of November:

Number of flights in November 1968:	137
Total flights since 3. 9. 1968	462
Tonnage transported in November:	1,229 t.
Total tonnage since 3. 9. 1968:	4,357 t.
Persons reached by distributions (children, pregnant and nursing mothers):	850,000
Value of donations in kind, received or promised for the period November 1968- February 1969:	100,000,000 Sw.Fr.
Shortfall according to budget for October 1968-February 1969, drawn up on 28 October 1968:	32,000,000 Sw.Fr.
Shortfall as of 3 December 1968:	13,478,000 Sw.Fr.