

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Nigeria

It is by now well known that on 1 August 1969 the ICRC submitted a plan to the authorities in Lagos and in the secessionist territory. On 15 August it received their agreement. Mr. Bignami, the ICRC President's personal representative in Lagos, kept in touch with the Nigerian Government whose reply reached Geneva somewhat later.

The International Committee of the Red Cross noted with satisfaction that the parties to the Nigeria conflict gave their agreement in principle to day flights, to enable the relief action in aid of the war victims to be resumed. It therefore gave its instructions on the spot to enable its plan to be put into effect without delay.

It expressed the firm hope that the belligerents would maintain their favorable attitude as regards execution.

Unfortunately, further difficulties arose and on 16 September the ICRC published the following press release:

The International Committee of the Red Cross has just been informed of the position of the Biafran authorities. These consider that the agreement on day flights made by their representatives and the ICRC is not compatible with that drawn up by the ICRC with the Federal Military Government of Nigeria.

The ICRC considers that as regards methods of execution there exists no incompatibility between these two bilateral

agreements. It is re-examining the situation with the Biafran representatives starting from the point of agreement already reached.

Meanwhile the ICRC states that it has taken the following decisions:

- As regards territory under Federal Army control, the ICRC is continuing its action, in accordance with agreements made with the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, in the spirit of the joint press release of 12 July 1969, and following the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.
- In connection with relief stocks at Santa Isabel and Cotonou, the ICRC will examine with the donors the necessary measures to be taken for their future use.

At the end of September the ICRC was still negotiating with Biafra for the resumption of relief flights to that territory. Food stocks for that purpose then amounted to 10,000 tons in Cotonou and 6,500 in Santa Isabel. The ICRC had, incidentally, requested donors to state how they wished the relief food to be disposed of if the air-lift did not get off the ground soon.

The transfer to the Nigerian Red Cross Society of the ICRC's mission of co-ordinating relief in Nigerian controlled territory was effected in September.¹

As mentioned in a previous issue, the ICRC, on 7 August 1969, wrote to National Red Cross Societies asking them how they proposed disposing of the resources engaged by them in the Nigerian action. As regards personnel, most of these have declared themselves willing to leave them on the spot until the expiry of contracts. Equipment will be handed over, either to the ICRC which will dispose of it as it sees fit, or else to the Nigerian Red Cross.

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¹ In last month's *International Review* we mentioned the meeting in Lagos on 5 August 1969, convened by the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, for discussion of ICRC relief operations in the Nigerian conflict. It was attended by representatives of the ICRC and of the main donor countries, including Great Britain.

Health problems in Biafra

The situation regarding epidemics appeared satisfactory in September. There were isolated cases of whooping-cough and measles; no recent cases of smallpox, poliomyelitis or yellow fever were reported.

The BCG vaccination campaign against tuberculosis had begun: Dr. Nicole Grasset of the ICRC, accompanied by Professor Ma and Dr. Vigouroux, arrived on 22 August 1969 in Biafra, bringing 500,000 vaccine doses provided by UNICEF.

The major problem in this action is that of treating considerable numbers of endemic cases, since it will be necessary to have the appropriate means available for detection and long-term therapy.

Saudi Arabia

After taking part in the work of the XXI International Conference of the Red Cross, Mr. Marcel A. Naville, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, paid an official visit to Saudi Arabia where he was received by King Faisal with whom he discussed at length the various aspects of the ICRC's mission in the Arab countries.

Accompanied by his personal assistant, Mr. Raymond Courvoisier and Mr. André Rochat, Delegate-General of the ICRC in the Arabian Peninsula, Mr. Naville also had talks with several members of the Saudi Arabian Government.

The ICRC President's stay was organized by leading members of the Saudi Arabian Red Crescent Society who assisted him throughout his visit.

Middle East

Reuniting of families at Gaza.—At the beginning of August 1969, the ICRC delegation at Amman organized the repatriation to Gaza territory of a certain number of families which had been separated as a result of the June 1967 conflict. Thanks to the ICRC, these persons were thus able to rejoin their relatives, after having lived for over two years in Amman.

Visit to a prisoner of war.—The ICRC delegation in Israel has obtained permission to visit an Egyptian pilot, captured at the beginning of August by Israeli forces. Lightly wounded on his capture, the pilot is at present in good health.

People's Republic of South Yemen

Assistance to detainees and their families.—During their visit to Mansura prison the International Committee of the Red Cross delegates handed parcels containing clothing, cigarettes, tooth-brushes and tooth-paste to the detainees.

In addition the delegation's doctors give home care and medical treatment to detainees families.

Milk distribution.—As already announced, the ICRC delegation in Aden has started its campaign of food assistance with the valuable and effective aid of the National Red Crescent Society.

Two distribution centres of prepared milk were opened this summer: the first at Mansura, which enabled 250 families to receive their ration of milk powder in early July and the other at Crater where 150 families are being assisted. Two further distribution centres are in the process of installation in the Maalla and Sheikh Othman districts.

Assistance to the disabled.—Eleven pairs of crutches and several invalid chairs have been given to the disabled in the Aden hospital, through the ICRC mission. International Committee delegates also distributed 4 pairs of crutches and invalid chairs to the sick in Mukallah.

The ICRC surgical teams which assume the entire responsibility for the operating services of the Al Gamhouriah hospital in Aden and the hospital at Mukallah, capital of the Hadhramaut, are continuing the arduous work involved.

Syria

On 29 August 1969 an aircraft of a United States airline on its way to Tel Aviv was diverted to Damascus.

The International Committee at once intervened through its delegation in Damascus, on behalf of 6 Israeli passengers regarded as being protected persons within the meaning of the Fourth Geneva Convention. On 1 September three Israeli women and a daughter of one of them were released by Syria and handed over to the ICRC delegation to be taken on to Athens.

The ICRC delegation in Damascus obtained permission to visit the two Israeli civilians held there, and did so on 8 September 1969.

Switzerland

On 19 September 1969, the 3 Palestinians detained in Zurich for their attack on an El Al aircraft at Kloten airport last February were visited by delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross for the third time. They were visited previously on 13 May and 9 July 1969, as mentioned in our August issue.

Once again the ICRC delegates, François Payot and Dr. Reinhold Wepf, accompanied by a translator, talked in private with the detainees, noting their requests and enquiring thoroughly into detention conditions, regardless of the reasons for their arrest. Dr. Wepf examined the detainees.

As usual, the ICRC reported to the Detaining Power.

IN GENEVA

A German publication

The ICRC in 1967 published a brief work of some sixty pages entitled *The Principles of International Humanitarian Law*, which fills a gap, as can be seen, both as regards international public law and in the Red Cross world. It is in fact a synthesis of fundamental notions, often referred to but rarely defined, the proper under-