

# INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

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## HELP TO WAR VICTIMS IN NIGERIA

*We give below our monthly report on the ICRC relief action in Nigeria and the secessionist province of Biafra. The information given portrays the situation at the end of October 1968.*

### DEATH OF TWO DELEGATES

On October 2 the International Committee regretfully had to announce the death in Biafra of two of its delegates, Dr. Dragan Herćog, born in 1936, member of the Yugoslav surgical team, and Mr. Robert Carlsson, born 1936, member of a Swedish distribution team.

On October 4 the ICRC issued the following press release:

Following the inquiry conducted by the head of its mission in Nigeria, the International Committee is now able to give details of the circumstances in which two of its delegates and two members of the World Council of Churches met their deaths on 30 September at the Okigwi hospital, during fighting for that town, South-East of Enugu.

As the fighting approached Okigwi, the Yugoslav surgical team running the Okigwi State Hospital ordered the removal of some 200 patients from the hospital. The hospital area, about a hundred yards from the federal forces' main line of attack, was immediately declared a neutral zone. Red Cross notices were placed along the roads leading to the hospital, which clearly displayed the red cross on the roof and doors.

The Yugoslav doctors and Swedish relief workers who had withdrawn to the hospital as the fighting drew near, improvised two shelters and decided to stay put. They were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Savory, of the World Council of Churches.

In the afternoon of 30th September, the ICRC delegates, hearing no further fighting, waved a small red cross flag outside their shelter. A Nigerian officer ordered: "Come all out International Red Cross".

The delegates left their shelter with raised arms. They were surrounded by soldiers. One of them punched Yugoslav doctor Vucinic

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and Swedish delegate Renstroehm. The other soldiers searched everyone, confiscating everything in their pockets. A Nigerian officer tried to intervene, striking his soldiers with a stick. It was then that Dr. Vucinic, head of the Yugoslav surgical team, saw that the soldier who had struck him was loading his weapon. He threw himself to the ground, and all the delegates did the same. There was a volley of shots. A few minutes later Dr. Vucinic stood up and saw that two of the ICRC delegates and Mr. and Mrs. Savory were dead.

The officer commanding the Nigerian battalion in the Okigwi region was immediately informed and sent his Land Rover to convey the bodies and survivors to the command field headquarters. The ICRC base at Lagos was informed. The ICRC delegates spent the night in camp, exposed to the whim of threatening Nigerians who called them "mercenaries" and "Biafran rebels".

It was not until the following day, 1st October, that the whole team was escorted to Enugu by a lieutenant.

ICRC Commissioner-General August Lindt has protested strongly to the federal military government, demanding an enquiry, the punishment of those responsible and, above all, the tightening up of orders to Nigerian front-line troops to ensure the safety of Red Cross personnel.

### MISSION TO LAGOS

Mr. Roger Gallopin, Member and Director-General of the ICRC was in Lagos from October 12 to 19. Accompanied by Mr. August Lindt, Commissioner-General of the ICRC for West Africa, he was received by Major-General Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Military Government of the Federation of Nigeria, in the company of various ministers.

Mr. Gallopin informed the head of the government that the ICRC was prepared, with the support of the federal authorities, to pursue its assistance to all the victims of the conflict and to seek increased contributions which are now proving to be necessary. General Gowon replied that the aid provided by the ICRC would continue to be welcome and that he appreciated the efforts which the ICRC proposed continuing to make with potential donors. The ICRC representative stated that the extent of the action would be conditioned by that of the donation received.

Mr. Gallopin also spoke with Sir Adetokunbo Ademola and Chief Ade S. Ojo, respectively President and Chairman of the

Nigerian Red Cross. It was agreed that the National Red Cross Society would continue to be closely associated with the relief action in Nigeria so that it would be in a position to assume it itself as soon as possible. It will also benefit from the assistance of the League of Red Cross Societies which, at the International Committee's request has sent a delegate to Nigeria.

In addition, Mr. Gallopin met Chief E. O. Enahoro, Permanent Assistant Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as diplomatic representatives of governments which have contributed to the relief action in Nigeria and whom he informed of his talks with the Nigerian leaders.

Mr. Gallopin also mentioned the conditions in which two ICRC team members lost their lives on September 30 at Okigwi and asked to be informed of the Government's conclusions. He was told an inquiry had been arranged and a report would be communicated to the ICRC on the subject.

#### RELIEF

**Distribution.** — During this time the distributing teams continued their work in the field.<sup>1</sup>

On the Nigerian side, relief stocks amount to nearly 9,000 tons viz: 5,098 tons in Lagos, 1,224 tons in Enugu, 1,572 tons in Calabar, 408 tons in Uyo, 624 tons in Asbor.

Most of these stocks consist of dried fish, powdered milk, meat preserves and clothing.

In Santa Isabel (Equatorial Guinea), stocks earmarked for Biafra amount to 2,827 tons.

In Biafra itself in which, according to estimates, there are from 6 to 7 million persons, the ICRC teams have set up some 400 distribution centres which feed 650,000 women and children. They have also supplied a food centre for about 250,000 other children.

Thus, the action undertaken has made it possible to avoid a further deterioration of the food situation. At the end of September, the mortality rate appreciably fell in the camps and villages. A few cases of small-pox and dysentery have been reported, but there does not appear to be an epidemic at present.

<sup>1</sup> *Plate.* — Each week the refugees gather for the food distribution.

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**The airlift.** — In order to ensure the good running of these centres, it is important that the airlift between Santa Isabel and Biafra functions intensively. Five aircraft, one Swiss, one Swedish, one Finnish, one Norwegian and one Netherlands are carrying out this operation.

**Personnel.** — The total personnel, whose work is co-ordinated by the ICRC, amounted on October 22 to 459 persons, namely 261 in Nigeria, 107 in Biafra and 91 in Santa Isabel. Of this total there were 127 ICRC delegates.

This action, organized under the aegis of the ICRC, comprises National Red Cross Societies belonging to eleven different countries. These are Denmark, Finland, France, the German Federal Republic, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, USA and Yugoslavia. The " Magen David Adom " (Israel) has also sent a medical team and the following mutual aid organizations are contributing to this effort: Catholic Relief Services, World Council of Churches, Adventist Church, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Oxford Famine Relief Committee, Roman Catholic Church Mission, Save the Children Fund, Society of Friends (Quakers) and the International Union for Child Welfare.

**General situation.** — At the end of October this was as follows:

*Donations received.*—These amounted to 12 million Swiss francs. The ICRC supplemented them with a 3 million franc loan from its own funds. Gifts in kind (food and medicines) were estimated at 28 million francs.

*Utilisation.*—A total of 12,000 tons of food had been distributed on both sides. Stocks were estimated at 10,000 tons.

Medical supplies distributed amounted to about 2 million francs.

ICRC purchases with funds made available to it amounted to 6 million francs for foodstuffs and one million for medical supplies.

*Operating expenses.*—Seven million francs, whereof 5½ million for all transport and 1½ million for purchase of equipment (vehicles, etc.)