

Africa

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I. OPERATIONS

Africa

The first event of note in Africa in 1970 was the end of the conflict in Nigeria and next the opening of two permanent ICRC regional delegations, on which the ICRC decided, on 9 April, in Yaoundé, for West Africa, and in Addis Ababa, for East Africa. Questions relating to North Africa, southern Africa and Portuguese territories in Africa, continue to be dealt with from Geneva.

WEST AFRICA

END OF ICRC MISSION IN NIGERIA

Following the events of 10 and 11 January 1970, which resulted in the cessation of fighting in Nigeria, the ICRC took the following measures:

On 11 January it sent Dr. Edwin Spirgi to Libreville and on the same day its medical teams in the secessionist areas of Nigeria were transferred to Libreville and São Tomé. Only one medical team, made available by the French Red Cross, continued to tend the sick in the Awo Omamma Hospital until the end of the month.

The head of the ICRC delegation in Lagos asked the Federal Military Government to apply the 1949 Geneva Conventions and to ensure the protection of the civilian population.

On 12 January, the ICRC convened in Geneva a meeting of representatives of the ICRC, the League of Red Cross Societies, the churches, the International Union for Child Welfare and UNICEF. After that meeting, the ICRC and the League jointly cabled an offer of assistance to the Government and the Red Cross of Nigeria. The ICRC planned, in particular, to forward to Nigeria the 6,000 tons of stores in Cotonou, Dahomey. A further 5,000 tons of foodstuffs stored in its godowns in Port Harcourt, Enugu, Aba, Uyo, Lagos, Koko and Calabar were also available for distribution.

The following day, Mr. Enrico Bignami, the ICRC President's Special Representative to the Nigerian authorities, and Mr. Georg Hoff-

mann, ICRC Delegate-General for Africa, flew to Lagos. They suggested to the Nigerian authorities an airlift between Cotonou and Uli, or Cotonou and Obilago, or Cotonou and Ilohia. This would have enabled relief to be forwarded rapidly to the stricken areas. The ICRC had at Cotonou two C97 aircraft lent by the Government of the USA and one Transall lent by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, ready to resume, if authorized, the airlift which had been interrupted in June 1969.

However, few flights occurred between Cotonou and Lagos, and Lagos and Enugu, between 19 and 25 January, to take food and emergency medical supplies. In addition, on 18 and 19 January, two aircraft on charter to the ICRC left Switzerland for Lagos with some 17 tons of medical supplies.

Before returning to Geneva on 4 February, Mr. Hoffmann obtained authorization to visit the stricken areas. One of the places he visited was the Awo Omamma Hospital where a Swiss Red Cross team had taken over from the French.

On 5 February, in plenary session, the ICRC decided to put an end to its relief work in Nigeria. This decision was communicated to the press as follows :

“ The civil war in Nigeria is now ended. That does not mean, however, that this gloomy page of African history has been turned. The secessionist zone enclave being cut off from the outside world, the effect of the war on the civilian population was particularly deadly and time will not quickly obliterate the suffering of the victims of this terrible drama.

From the outset both parties recognized the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary and assured it of their determination to respect the Geneva Conventions. For the first time in Africa, the Federal Military Government drew up and issued to the troops a code of conduct based on the principles of those Conventions.

As early as July 1967 and throughout the conflict the ICRC worked in the territories of both parties to the war to carry out the duties incumbent on it under the Geneva Conventions: prisoners of war were visited; hundreds of personal messages were forwarded from one side of the front to the other through the Central Tracing Agency; the wounded and sick on both sides were given medical care.

Concomitantly, going beyond the normal scope of its duties under the Geneva Conventions, the ICRC set up one of the largest relief organizations in Red Cross history. This was made necessary by the growing needs in food and medical supplies of the civilian populations. The operations developed in spite of difficulties, thanks to the assistance of governments, National Red Cross Societies, governmental and private agencies and a great number of individual

donations. In this respect the ICRC makes a point of expressing its gratitude to all who co-operated in its action, and of paying tribute to the delegates and pilots who lost their lives whilst on operations.

No less than 120,000 tons of foodstuffs and medical supplies were provided by the ICRC; 91,000 tons in Federal territory—particularly in those regions near the fighting areas where refugees and war victims were numerous—and 29,000 tons in the former secessionist area. The relief consisted of foodstuffs, medical supplies and equipment to a value of almost 500 million Swiss francs. Expenses for personnel—delegates, doctors, specialists, local employees and labourers, numbering at one time as many as 1,820—amounted to almost 50 million francs.

This personnel was essential for the forwarding and distribution of supplies, for the smooth operation of the ICRC's medical programme and for the running of hospitals set up by the International Committee in the stricken region and which continued their work throughout.

These efforts as a whole provided daily assistance to almost a million people in federal territory and almost a million and a half in the secessionist area through 909 distribution centres dispersed throughout the territory.

To carry out the medical programme, consistent with the First Geneva Convention, the ICRC, as early as the summer of 1967, sent surgical teams to both sides of the front. By the end of June 1969 it was co-ordinating the work of 45 medical teams on loan from various charitable agencies and National Red Cross Societies. It set up five hospitals, an orthopaedic workshop and 53 sickbays. With assistance from local Red Cross sections, its vaccination campaign had, by the beginning of 1970, enabled 2,524,411 persons to be inoculated against smallpox, 893,131 against measles and 246,586 against tuberculosis.

In June 1969, for reasons which it is not for the ICRC to judge, the Federal Military Government's attitude changed. Following the shooting down of a Swedish aircraft on a mercy flight under ICRC control and responsibility, and when the Nigerian Government no longer tolerated night flights to the former secessionist area, the International Committee decided to discontinue its night airlift.

Being bound by the Geneva Conventions and as it was also working in Nigeria for the benefit of the population in occupied territory, the ICRC had no alternative but to negotiate with both parties to try to reach an agreement on an airlift during daylight. Unfortunately the belligerents could not agree on practical arrangements for such flights.

On 30 June 1969 the Federal Military Government decided to transfer from the ICRC to the Nigerian Red Cross the role of co-ordinator for relief actions in federal territory. Thanks to large scale technical assistance which had been provided for several years by Scandinavian Red Cross Societies, the Nigerian Red Cross was able to work throughout the whole territory.

At the request of the Nigerian authorities, however, the transfer took place only on 30 September 1969. The ICRC then handed over to the Nigerian Red Cross almost 20,000 tons of equipment and stores stocked near the front, *inter alia* at Enugu, Calabar, Port Harcourt and Koko. It also handed over medical supplies and loaned 98 vehicles, ships, inflatable warehouses and a fully equipped radio network.

During the transitional period from 30 June to 30 September 1969, and even beyond that date, the ICRC drew on its reserves to assume the financing

of relief actions which had fallen to the Nigerian Red Cross which had practically no funds of its own. Thanks to these transfers and the technical and financial assistance given the Nigerian Red Cross during the transitional period, the National Society was not without resources during the final months of the war and when the resistance of the former secessionist zone collapsed.

The Red Cross in the secessionist area, moreover, was reintegrated into the National Society, and this lightened the task.

When the collapse came, the ICRC, thanks to the aircraft it had kept operational for that purpose, was ready to forward to the stricken region some 6,000 tons of foodstuffs and medical supplies stocked at Cotonou. This final operation seemed the more essential as it had to alleviate the suffering of victims during the hiatus between the breakdown of organized relief distribution in the former secessionist area as a result of its collapse and the arrival of emergency relief after hostilities.

The Federal Military Government having decreed that all relief and reconstruction operations should be in Nigerian hands and, in particular, co-ordinated by the Ministry of Economic Development, the ICRC's further efforts came up against various obstacles which the Federal Military Government agreed to remove only for a few flights to take medical supplies and foodstuffs and, in one flight, to evacuate some serious casualties to Kaduna. It should be pointed out that, jointly with the League of Red Cross Societies, the ICRC had, the day following the end of hostilities, submitted to the Nigerian authorities and Red Cross an offer of assistance and co-operation and of ICRC transport potential.

However, simultaneously with its new proposals, the ICRC placed on record that the cessation of hostilities should be followed by its gradual withdrawal as a neutral organization within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions, as its presence would no longer be required.

This fact and the observation that its intervention was no longer considered indispensable led the International Committee of the Red Cross to decide to withdraw. It is now for the Nigerian authorities and Red Cross to complete the work of assistance to the tens of thousands of people still in need."

Thereupon, the ICRC made arrangements for the withdrawal of its six-member Lagos delegation by the end of March. Messages were sent to all donors in order to enquire about the wishes concerning the disposal of the relief supplies they had made available to the ICRC. Delegates were sent to Libreville, Santa Isabel and Cotonou in order to make arrangements for the transfer of the goods, by ship to Lagos for the Nigerian Red Cross.

The ICRC base at Cotonou, which had been reinforced at the end of the war with a view to possible resumption of the airlift to the stricken areas, was maintained until 20 May.

Mr. Philippe Zuger, ICRC delegate, was in Lagos from 16 June to 3 July in order to settle with the Nigerian Red Cross questions still in abeyance and relating to the disposal of the equipment. Under the agreement signed on 18 June by the ICRC representative and Mr.

Mohammed, Chief Administrator of the Nigerian Red Cross, the ICRC handed over to that society some 20 tons of food and medical supplies, about 100 vehicles, boats for inland waterways, two inflatable hangars and a radio station, valued in all at about 1.5 million Swiss Francs.

The ICRC engaged the services of an internationally reputed firm of public accountants, Messrs. Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co., to audit the accounts of its work in Nigeria. The auditors concluded that in the difficult conditions in which the operations took place, the ICRC delegates endeavoured to exercise supervision as effectively as possible over the use made of the supplies and that ICRC control grew firmer with the development of operations.

During the weeks following the cessation of hostilities, the ICRC continued to concern itself for the welfare of prisoners of war, visiting detention places and enquiring into conditions for the release of the prisoners. In February, its delegates saw 1,200 prisoners of war interned at Port Harcourt, to whom they distributed comforts.

On 14 May, the ICRC received official confirmation from the Nigerian Ministry of Defence that all prisoners of war had been released.

ICRC REGIONAL DELEGATION IN WEST AFRICA

After obtaining agreement from the Cameroon authorities—which Mr. Hoffmann had obtained when he was in Yaoundé for that purpose from 12 to 17 April 1970—the ICRC opened a regional delegation for West Africa in Yaoundé on 8 May 1970. Mr. André Tschiffeli was appointed head of the delegation which, on 30 June, was reinforced by a second delegate from Geneva, Mr. Ulrich Bédert.

During the first months of its activity, the new delegation was primarily occupied with establishing or maintaining contacts with West African governments and National Societies. The two delegates went, for instance, to the following sixteen countries: Central African Republic, Chad, Dahomey, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, People's Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Togo and Upper Volta. In Nigeria, Mr. Tschiffeli was introduced to the authorities and the National Society by Mr. Hoffmann in November. In each country visited, the ICRC delegates drew attention to the ICRC mission and the

importance of disseminating knowledge of the Geneva Conventions among the armed forces and youth.

During these visits the regional delegation undertook various special activities, as mentioned below.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Tschiffeli was in Kinshasa from 6 to 12 July for contact with the Congolese authorities and with the Revolutionary Government of Angola in Exile (GRAE) on the subject of the six Portuguese servicemen in the hands of that movement. He obtained authorization to visit these prisoners in a military camp on 9 July. A second visit was made on 1 December. There were then another two prisoners in the camp. As customary, reports on these visits were sent by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

In addition, the GRAE informed the ICRC that it had in its custody two little Portuguese girls whom it wished to hand over to the ICRC. The ICRC immediately informed its Yaoundé delegation and a delegate went to Kinshasa to take charge of the two children, who were repatriated on 15 August. The ICRC delegate accompanied the two girls to Geneva, where they were handed over to the Permanent Mission of Portugal which took them to Lisbon.

In compliance with a request from the GRAE, the ICRC repatriated a seriously wounded Portuguese military prisoner. A doctor-delegate which it sent to Kinshasa on 8 December escorted the prisoner to Lisbon.

People's Republic of the Congo

The ICRC delegate was twice in Brazzaville, in July and in November. He talked with the Congolese civilian and military authorities and with the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and took steps to obtain permission to visit three Portuguese military prisoners held by the Congolese authorities since June 1969, when they had been captured following the skyjacking of a Portuguese aircraft to Brazzaville.

The delegate visited the three men during his second trip, on 20 and 26 November 1970. As usual, the reports on the visit were sent by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

Equatorial Guinea

Mr. Tschiffeli was in Equatorial Guinea from 28 November to 6 December in order to intervene, at the request of the Spanish Government, for the benefit of two interned Spanish nationals.

OTHER ICRC ACTION IN WEST AFRICA

Ivory Coast

After the cessation of hostilities in Nigeria, some donors continued to send to the ICRC funds for the benefit of victims among the secessionists. With their agreement, the ICRC used the money for Ibo children refugees in the Ivory Coast. For that purpose it sent the local Red Cross blankets, sheets, clothing, toys, sugar, and 5 tons of milk powder, the total value being in excess of 89,000 francs.

Republic of Guinea

The ICRC Delegate-General for Africa was in Conakry from 1 to 4 June in order to contact the Guinean authorities and the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde). The discussions did not, however, achieve the results hoped for, particularly concerning the Portuguese military prisoners held by the PAIGC.

Chad

In Chad, where the ICRC delegates for West Africa stayed twice in 1970, from 27 July to 1 August and from 28 October to 11 November, the ICRC delivered several consignments of relief supplies for the civilian population. In March, its aircraft based at Cotonou flew three times to Fort Lamy carrying approximately 38 tons of victuals, medical supplies and blankets. Two further consignments, totalling 3 ½ tons of goods, were sent from Geneva.

EAST AFRICA

ICRC DELEGATION FOR EAST AFRICA

Following a mission by Mr. Hoffmann to Addis Ababa from 30 April to 4 May 1970, the Ethiopian Government gave its agreement to the opening of an ICRC regional delegation for East Africa in Addis Ababa. The delegation was opened on 5 August, on the arrival in the Ethiopian capital of the regional delegate Mr. Roger Santschy, and his assistant Mr. René Weber.

During their first five months of activity, the delegates visited, apart from Ethiopia, nine countries, namely Burundi, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia. In five countries—Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan and Zambia—they were introduced to Government and National Society officials by the ICRC Delegate-General for Africa.

In addition to these various contacts, the regional delegation undertook various activities:

Sudan

The ICRC Delegate-General for Africa was in Khartoum from 4 to 8 May 1970, for discussions with the Sudanese Government and the Red Crescent on the possibilities of helping the civilian population, particularly persons displaced by the disturbances in the south of the country.

Following that mission, the ICRC sent by sea to Port Sudan ten tons of milk powder donated by the Swiss Government. A second consignment of 500 tons of cereals made available to the ICRC by the European Economic Community was shipped in October.

The ICRC delegate in Addis Ababa, who had been introduced to Sudanese Government and Red Crescent officials in September, returned to Khartoum where he stayed from 18 to 23 October. In co-operation with the Sudanese Red Crescent, he devised a programme for the distribution of the food supplies mentioned above among needy children in Khartoum, Khartoum North and Ondurman, and displaced persons in the three southern provinces of Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr-el-Ghazal.

Zambia

At the request of UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), which was conveyed to the ICRC by the Zambian Red Cross, the ICRC regional delegates went several times to Lusaka to organize repatriation of a Portuguese woman and young girl who had been captured by UNITA and taken to Zambia. They left Lusaka on 18 December and arrived the following day in Lisbon, as planned by the ICRC which had informed the Portuguese authorities and Red Cross in Lisbon.

OTHER ICRC ACTION IN EAST AFRICA

Lesotho

Mr. Hoffmann was in Lesotho from 21 to 24 April for contacts with the Government and the National Society in connection with the January 1970 events in that country. He obtained authorization to visit the Maseru central prison where he saw some 140 political detainees¹. A second visit to the same place of detention was made on 23 December. As customary, reports on the visits were sent by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES IN AFRICA

South Africa

In August and September, Mr. Hoffmann went to Pretoria in order to examine with the authorities the problem of political detainees in South Africa. The authorities agreed to allow ICRC delegates to visit sentenced political detainees twice a year. On the other hand, they did not authorize visits to persons detained under the " Terrorism Act ".

As a result, from 18 November to 15 December, an ICRC delegate and doctor-delegate had access to four prisons—Pretoria Central Prison, Robben Island, Victor Vorster and Barbeton—where they saw some 560 sentenced political detainees. As customary, reports on the visits were sent by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

¹ For brevity, the expression " political detainees " in this report means not only persons sentenced or detained for their political ideas, but also those detained for offences motivated by political or ideological beliefs.

Rhodesia

The ICRC Delegate-General for Africa went to Salisbury in August, September and November, to discuss the question of political detainees in Rhodesia. He obtained authorization to visit twice a year persons detained under the emergency regulations. The authorities refused, however, to allow the ICRC to visit sentenced detainees.

Portuguese territories in Africa

The ICRC Delegate-General for Africa went to Lisbon in March and in October. During his first trip, when he was accompanied by Mr. Melchior Borsinger, ICRC Delegate-General for Europe and North America, he visited the National Society and was received by the Portuguese authorities, with whom he discussed the question of political detainees in the Portuguese territories of Africa. In October, he obtained authorization to visit the places of detention in Angola.

Angola

Mr. Hoffmann went to Luanda to introduce to the Portuguese authorities the delegate and doctor-delegate who, from 1 to 17 November, visited two prisons, a military hospital and a "rehabilitation camp", where they saw nearly 1,340 political detainees. Reports on the visits were sent by the ICRC to the detaining authorities.

Latin America

Continuing the action which began in 1969, four further missions, each of several months' duration, took place in Latin America in 1970; two by the ICRC Delegate-General for that part of the world, Mr. Serge Nessi, and two by Mr. Eddi Leemann, delegate. They went to the following eighteen countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. In each country, the ICRC delegates contacted the government authorities and the National Red Cross Societies. In eleven, namely, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador,