



A priest talks with a group of Biafran refugees at a camp near Aba, a town held by Biafra in the war with Federal Nigeria. While thousands of refugees and millions of Biafrans faced starvation, shipments of relief supplies were held up in political and military entanglements. (CRS Photo)

Biafra

Nigerian Criticizes Vatican Aid

Rome—(RNS)—Nigeria's ambassador to Italy, John Garba, told Pope Paul during a 45-minute audience that the Vatican's "secret" aid to Biafra is provoking protest demonstrations among Catholics throughout Nigeria.

Describing his audience to the press here, the ambassador said he had also delivered a reply from General Yakubu Gowon, Nigerian head of state, to a message sent him by the Pope on July 15.

The exchange of messages had dealt with the Nigerian-Biafran war and particularly with the disease and starvation facing the Biafran refugees.

Appealing for peace, the Pope had offered his services as a mediator. He had also said that aid for the starving Biafrans is needed immediately.

In his reply, Gen. Gowon repeated his willingness to let supplies go into Biafra after being inspected by Nigeria. He said, however, that Nigeria would continue to shoot at aircraft flying into Biafra on the suspicion that such planes might be carrying arms. He said that he had done everything possible to avoid the war.

Gen. Gowon also thanked the Pope for his interest in the conflict and asked him for continued prayers.

In his conversation with the Pope, Garba reported, he had said that demonstrations in Nigeria were inspired by the Pope's July 21 statement on Catholic aid to Biafra and particularly by a passage describing his own visit to the area before he became Pope.

The Pope had described "the beautiful Eastern Region of Nigeria,

which we had the good fortune to visit some years ago, meeting people awakened to civilization, in full civil, cultural and religious development."

This phrase, he told the Pope, was interpreted by many Nigerians as implying that their level of civilization, culture and religious development was lower than that of the Biafrans.

On the participation of Catholic agencies in flights to Biafra, Garba said the Pope told him that the Vatican believed Nigeria had not forbidden such flights but simply said it could not be held responsible for their safety.

The Pope added that Caritas, the international Catholic relief agency, had decided to risk the dangers involved to help the suffering Biafran population.

WCC Sends New Relief Team

Geneva—(RNS)—The World Council of Churches dispatched from here a second medical-relief team to work on behalf of victims of the war between Nigeria and Biafra, Nigeria's former eastern region, which broke away over a year ago.

A doctor, three nurses and two specialized relief workers, all from Denmark, left Geneva for Lagos where they will be attached to the Christian Council of Nigeria and related to the International Red Cross. The World Council has stressed that it is concerned for the civilians suffering on both sides in the war.

Members of the second group were recruited in Denmark by Pastor Vig-

go Moseerut, secretary of Danish Inter-Church Aid. Arrangements for the 6-months duty were made and coordinated by the WCC's Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service. The division is attempting to place three more teams in the war zones.

In addition to furnishing medical and relief personnel in the conflict which threatens to starve millions, the WCC said it was attempting to expand its supply lines to those suffering.

So far, the world service division has arranged 10 airlifts of more than 100 tons of dried milk, powdered

eggs, baby food and medicine. It has also sent three shiploads of high protein dried fish totaling 1,400 tons.

More fish will be sent as soon as channels can be found, the WCC said. The great barrier to relief efforts has been the inaccessibility of many regions where the need is most urgent. Political and military maneuvers on both the federal Nigerian and the Biafran side have hampered humanitarian work.

At its Fourth Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, during July, the WCC authorized an appeal to its 235 member Churches for \$3 million in cash for relief in the war.

U.N. Holds Prayer Service

United Nations, N.Y.—(NC)—Three children stood as symbols of the starving children of Biafra at a prayer service before the United Nations last Sunday.

The 1,000 persons attending the service pleaded with the U.N. member nations to intervene in the struggle between Nigeria and its former

Eastern region, secessionist Biafra, in order to move relief supplies into Biafra. The children—all Biafrans—reside in New York with their parents. Dr. and Mrs. Odinikpamodu Udooh, Dr. Udooh has recently completed a residency at Bellevue Hospital here and is waiting for an opportunity to return to Biafra.

Services were held throughout New York City to protest the suffering in

Biafra. At St. Patrick's cathedral, Archbishop Terence J. Cooke celebrated a pontifical Mass at which Bishop Edward E. Swannstrom of the Catholic Relief Services preached a sermon calling for a cease-fire immediately. After the Mass, Archbishop Cooke gave Bishop Swannstrom a \$10,000 check from the people of the New York archdiocese for the suffering people of Biafra.

Paper Offers Settlement in Grape Issue

Fresno, Calif.—(RNS)—The Central California Register has offered a four-point program which it claims might lead to a break in the long-standing impasse which exists between the grape pickers and growers in the San Joaquin Valley.

In a by-line story which appeared in the diocesan newspaper's Aug. 15 issue, Gerard E. Sherry, editor, said:

"We have constantly emphasized that justice must be applied to all parties in this dispute and we think that given good will the problem can be solved. But as long as one side or the other insists on imposing its will (irrespective of the merits of the other party), this cancerous sore of civic strife will spread all the more and may destroy the economic well-being of the valley. And if this happens there are no winners, only desolation."

Sherry made the following suggestions:

- The United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) and the South Central Farmers Committee should jointly ask the state or federal government for the service of a mediator who would examine the demands of both sides.

- The UFWOC should call off its boycott of non-union picked grapes currently being encouraged in the eastern states.

- The farmers committee should recognize the UFWOC as the "de facto" organization that represents many of their workers and accordingly refrain from providing services to individuals or splinter groups that exist or operate for the selfish purpose of thwarting farm workers organizations."

- The UFWOC and the farmers committee should both take steps to have the farm workers brought under the National Labor Relations Act.



Music for the Lord

Deep in the South American jungles, missionaries have brought musical instruments and Christian hymns to an ancient tribe of people. Here two Indians furnish the brass for a rendition of a hymn at a Sunday morning service.

4 Voluntary Agencies Help Cuban Refugees

Miami—(RNS)—Four voluntary agencies have helped resettle 290,949 Cuban refugees registered since January 1961, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare reported here.

Largest of the resettlement agencies is the U.S. Catholic Conference, which during the period registered 196,949 Cubans and helped 120,541 find new homes in various parts of the U.S.

Church World Service, relief arm of the National Council of Churches, has found new homes for 28,950 of the 30,865 it registered. The United Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Service registered 4,119 and resettled 2,638 since 1961.

Daily airlifts from Havana, begun by the U.S. Cuban Refugee Program to reunite families separated as a result of the Castro revolution, have flown 114,895 persons to Miami. Of these airlift arrivals, 64 per cent are children, students or housewives.

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