



Father Dermot Doran, C.S.Sp. (standing, center), inspects a shipment of medicine on board a plane bound for Biafra from the Portuguese island of Sao Tome. The Irish missionary, who has been coordinating relief airlifts to Biafra, believes that civilian deaths there in December will be "the greatest catastrophe of the century." (RNS)

Biafra: Worst Is Yet to Come

By JOHN R. SULLIVAN
(NC News Service)

Umuahia, Biafra — In a land already familiar with the specter of starvation, the people are preparing for a famine which could make the country's gruesome past look like the "good old days."

They are resigned, because they know that new hunger is inevitable, that many more thousands will die.

They are hopeful that the world's relief agencies — U.S. Catholic Relief Services, Vatican-based Caritas Internationalis, the World Council of Churches, and the Red Cross — will be able, somehow, to stave off the coming threat.

They know that the agencies — which now pour some 150 tons of protein-rich food into Biafra each night — have helped in the past, and that the help has stemmed the tide of infant deaths among the nation's two million refugees.

But they know now that the aid must be doubled, perhaps quadrupled, if a new wave of starvation death is not to sweep Biafra in the coming months.

If in the spirit of Thanksgiving for our land of plenty you wish to contribute funds to help Biafrans they may be sent to Bishop Swannstrom, Catholic Relief Services, U.S. Catholic Conference, 350 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y., 10001.

The problems are these:

- Kwashiorkor, the often-fatal protein deficiency which has its most disastrous effects on children, is now being seen in adults.

- Yams and garri, Biafra's staple foods which give bulk and starch to

Schweitzer Hospital To Serve Biafrans

New York — (RNS) — The hospital at Lambarene, Gabon, founded by the late Dr. Albert Schweitzer is being opened to children from Biafra, the daughter of the famed missionary said here.

Mrs. Rhena Eckert-Schweitzer, administrator of the hospital, here seeking financial aid for young victims of the war involving federal Nigeria and Biafra, estimated that 1,500 children had arrived, and held that needs were enormous. In addition to preparing the hospital to receive the children, Mrs. Eckert-Schweitzer said her home, near the medical facility, would be used for the young refugees.

Funds for the work were to be channeled through the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, a New York agency which seeks support for the hospital, founded in the early years of the century. The hospital's normal capacity for patients is 400.

U.S. Urges U.N. Act On Natural Disasters

United Nations — (RNS) — The United States, with an eye to easing the horror of natural disasters, has proposed an agenda for action on an international scale to the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

Instead of relying on emergency relief as heretofore, the U.S. would have the U.N. place emphasis on "co-ordinative arrangements" to give maximum effectiveness to combined international relief efforts of the U.N., individual governments and pertinent voluntary organizations.

The U.N. budgetary allowance for natural disasters stands at \$100,000 a year.

The United States has allocated for the same purpose abroad \$211 million over the last four years.

Walter M. Kotschnig, the U.S. delegate to the Economic and Social Council, offered the following picture of recorded natural disasters and the agenda for action:

The responsibilities and the potential of the U.N. system of organiza-

tion, the people's diets, are in short supply — and running shorter. Seed yams, which normally would mature next March, are being eaten now. Garri, a grain from which a rough gruel is made, has risen 300 per cent in price in the past three months—from nine Biafran pounds per bag to 25 pounds and more in some places.

If the threat of new famine is going to be stopped, more protein-rich foods must be imported, and some substitute for native bulk foods must be found outside the country.

Deaths have been particularly high among the refugees, who fled first from the pogroms against Ibo tribesmen in other parts of Nigeria in 1966, and later from the advance of federal troops into Biafran territory after independence was declared in May, 1967.

The effect of the aid on the health of refugees has been remarkable, according to those working in the centers.

"We are now able to divide them into groups — the bad, the not so bad, and the fair," said Father James McNulty, C.S.Sp., of Holy Ghost seminary in Ihalia.

He and the other priests at the seminary — classes are now suspended, except for second-year students, who returned to class Nov. 4 — operate 23 feeding centers for some 17,000 persons within the sound of Nigerian and Biafran artillery fire.

"They were all bad a few months ago," he said.

Sister Aquin, who works in St. Mary's Hospital in Amaigbo had the same comments — then added an ominous warning:

"The number of adult kwashiorkor cases is growing every day," she said. "They are not the refugees, but local people."

"When the feeding centers were started, these people had a couple of chickens and a goat and a patch of yams which could get them through. But the war has continued, and their chickens and goats are gone.

"Now they are getting sick."

Six miles from the federal lines near Okigwi, Dr. Arne Seymour, an English woman who heads a team of four other Caritas doctors and nurses who care for more than 40,000 refugees, told the same story of the growth of kwashiorkor among local people.

"Recently," she said, "a child was brought into one of our clinics. He was immediately sent to a hospital ward, give blood transfusions and protein and vitamin injections.

"But a few hours later he died."

Dr. Seymour, too, is fearful of the next two months. "We have only two hopes," she said. "Either the Biafran

army pushes north into the yam-producing areas (from which, despite federal control, a considerable number of yams still come) or the relief agencies begin shipping substitutes."

The alternatives to yams are fortified rice and beans, or a fortified corn meal called CSM which is used extensively in Catholic Relief Services overseas relief programs.

They can provide both protein and bulk, and the arithmetic is a little better. They are available: Msgr. Andrew Landel, assistant director of CRS, said after a brief inspection trip to Biafra that he could see thousands of tons of CSM to Sao Tome within days.

But the problem remains: How do you get these supplies into a country under siege?

Father Byrne had this answer: "The war must end," he said simply.

Churchmen Deyr Famine 'Overcome'

New York — (RNS) — The need for emergency relief supplies for civilian war victims in Biafra has not lessened and may be increasing, according to church officials here, in Europe and in the war zone.

In reporting on aid airlifted under church auspices, both Roman Catholic and World Council of Churches spokesmen disagreed with reports on improved conditions attributed to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Bishop Edward J. Swannstrom of New York, executive director of Catholic Relief Services, said his information indicated that the crisis was still grave.

At the United Nations, Dr. William C. Shephard, a physician who has headed distribution of supplies for the World Council of Churches in Biafra, strongly disagreed with the Red Cross report.

Sarnel A. Gonard, president of the ICRC and earlier in Geneva that the famine was "more or less overcome."

A Red Cross press release said that "visible progress toward relieving the still desperate situation of Biafra was revealed . . ."

Dr. Herman Middlekoop, World Council relief director in Biafra, recently stated that the September death rate of 12,000 persons per day had not increased in October but unless there is an immediate cease fire, "it might climb to 25,000 per day in December."

Food and medical supplies totaling 430 tons have been flown into Biafra by religious agencies since the beginning of the crisis there, according to World Council statistics.

Work under religious auspices is coordinated by a joint international agency. Primarily involved are the World Council and International Caritas, the Roman Catholic organization.

OLDEST BISHOP DIES

San Sebastian, Spain — (NC) — The world's oldest bishop, retired Bishop Mateo Mugica y Urrestarazu of Vitoria, died in nearby Zarauz at 98.

His death makes retired Bishop John B. MacGinley, 97, of Monterey, Fresno the world's oldest bishop.

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