

*Dear Abbe Tarnstrom - Forwarded to all
concerned in Washington air-mail opened
May 1968
for your help.*

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

United States Catholic Conference, Inc.

350 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10001

MOST REV. EDWARD E. SWANSTROM, D. D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RT. REV. MSGR. ANDREW P. LANDI
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 30, 1968

Telephone:
LW 4-9300
Cable Address
CATHWEL

Mr. William S. Gaud
Administrator
Agency for International Development
Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20523

Dear Mr. Gaud:

Thank you for your letter of October 24th. The fact that you indicate that our government has the relief operations in both Nigeria and secessionist Biafra under constant study and is exploring every means of extending relief efforts to both sides encourages us to believe that our petition for help has not fallen on deaf ears.

I am certain that you know that Catholic Relief Services and Church World Service are cooperating very closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross within Federal Nigeria. Before the ICRC took over this operation we supplemented the staff of our own Lagos office through transfers from our staffs in neighboring countries and, in a determined effort to bulwark indigenous operations, seconded our personnel to the Nigerian Red Cross. Subsequently they, in turn, came under the aegis of the ICRC, a situation which exists to this day.

There is no reluctance therefore, I assure you, on the part of CRS - nor of Church World Service nor the American Jewish Committee - to cooperate fully with the International Red Cross. Only this afternoon the ICRC through UNICEF requested our cooperation in making available from shipments currently enroute to West African countries 500 tons of CSM. We are presently looking into our situation in the hope that we may be able to accede.

The matter of the relationship of the interchurch agencies and the ICRC is simply one of the fact that the ICRC is operating a separate (and, incidentally, more recently organized) airlift of supplies into Biafra and does not wish to become involved in the church airlift which operates from Sao Tome.

The ICRC was recently able to increase its airlift tonnage through the acquisition of several Hercules aircraft which were made available to it by the Canadian Government.

The fact that the Hercules type aircraft can carry as much as twenty-five tons at a time is, of course, the core of the whole matter. Like the interchurch airlift from Sao Tome the ICRC airlift prior to the institution of its Hercules flights was able to carry less than half as much tonnage per flight.

As you know, the relief flights originating in both Sao Tome and Ferdinand Poo use the same airstrip in Biafra. You may not know that everything from the landing lights to the radio communications for the landing strip as well as the ground power units, aluminum landing mats, etc. were supplied by the interchurch group.

As you so well indicate, the problem at the Biafra airstrip is air traffic congestion. This is the key to our request for that kind of plane which will enable us to radically increase supplies for the starving of Biafra without increasing the number of flights. The simple mathematics of the situation are, for instance, that the interchurch airlift successfully completed last Friday night, eleven flights, Saturday night, nine flights, Sunday night, nine flights and Monday night, eleven flights for a total of 390 tons of foods and medicines. Had Hercules been employed in the same number of flights the amount of foods and medicines we would have been able to supply would have been approximately 975 tons!

I am confident you know that all the facilities, stocks of relief supplies, the personnel and communications, etc. of the interchurch group are based on Sao Tome. The ICRC chose to operate from the island of Ferdinand Poo with full knowledge of the fact that the interchurch agencies were operating their relief airlift from Sao Tome. The problem, therefore, is how to successfully implement both airlifts so that the amount of supplies moving into Biafra for the starving civilians can be radically increased. (Incidentally the relief flights from Sao Tome are fully coordinated and intergrated with those from Ferdinand Poo.)

Our appeal for Hercules aircraft is addressed to our government since the possibilities of acquiring this kind of plane in view of the limited number of such craft commercially, and the fact that their peak season for commercial operations is experienced each fall, are both limited and more than ordinarily costly. Consequently the church agencies are requesting that two Hercules be made available for use on Sao Tome with a third in back-up position on a charter basis together with adequate spare parts and maintenance personnel. Operational crews and other operational costs would be borne by the Sao Tome interchurch group. I would like to stress the fact that the terms under which the aircraft may be made available can be readily tailored to fit the needs of our government for as supplicants we do not consider ourselves in a position to dictate the conditions under which our request might be granted.

If the aircraft involved cannot be made available even on our government's own terms then we ask that consideration be given to sharing with us the cost of such aircraft from other sources if planes available, even if not as advantageous as the Hercules, will nevertheless increase substantially the mercy flights from Sao Tome.

We have already had discussions with British principals, namely Trans-meridian Limited of London, which have offered to supply the British built Blackburn Beverly, a slower aircraft than the Hercules, but which also has the same swingtail loading, tailgate unloading and high cargo capacity. We have hesitated to pursue such offers for having already having expended almost completely the funds contributed to us for the starving in Biafra by the American people, we find ourselves in a position of not being able to finance the costs involved. We would estimate that between U. S. and European sources - mainly church groups and religious-orientated organizations - we could, within a matter of a week or so, raise up to a half million dollars and possibly more. If the facts as made known to us about the British aircraft are accurate and they can land and take off successfully on the Biafra airstrip, the money we can generate ourselves would enable us to operate two of such aircraft for a six-weeks period for a maximum of 450 flight hours. However, the problem is the guarantee of a three month's operation so that the assessorial costs involved in the charter can be justified.

Obviously the funds which the volagencies believe can be raised to meet this emergency situation would be immeasurably better utilized if the Hercules aircraft were made available by our government.

As of today's report from our representative on Sao Tome, current relief stocks total 3,560 tons. Such stocks can readily be implemented from U. S. and other sources. In fact, offers abound from other deeply concerned countries to donate additional supplies. The problem, frankly, is how to get the foods and medicines so readily available into the mounting number of hungry mouths.

Monsignor Landi, my assistant, who returned from Biafra to Sao Tome only yesterday has advised me that while we have apparently halted the spread of kwashiokor in Biafra, the rapidly deteriorating local food situation demands that our efforts be increased if we are to prevent a reversal of the situation not only among children but among the adult civilians who are now beginning to feel the shortage of carbohydrates as well as proteins.

I am pleased to assure you that Mr. MacCracken of Church World Service and Rabbi Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee join with me in furthering

this request and I trust that our government will assume the moral leadership necessary to surmount the traditional obstacles involved, and in justice and charity grant this urgent and earnest request.

With every kindest wish, I am

Sincerely yours,

Edward E. Swanstrom,
Executive Director.

Rabbi Marc T.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20523

OFFICE OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR

NOV 7 1968

Bishop Edward Swannstrom
Catholic Relief Services
350 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10001

Dear Bishop Swannstrom:

Thank you for your letter of October 30 and telegram of October 31 concerning possible US Government support for the airlift of relief supplies for victims of the Nigeria/Biafra conflict. I have also been informed of a telegram of October 23 from Representative McCormack, Speaker of the House, to the President which makes a similar request for help.

We appreciate that the costs of the airlift are resulting in a heavy financial burden on the church groups. We are encouraged by the intention of the church groups to do their utmost to mobilize the resources of private Americans in support of the relief effort on both sides of this conflict. Indeed, we believe that you might well take the lead in initiating a general campaign to solicit donations from private Americans at large. I regret that we cannot help by providing US Government Hercules aircraft. The complexities and dangers surrounding the use of U.S. military aircraft in this kind of situation make it inadvisable, as I am sure you can appreciate. Your alternative plan, however, sounds like a good possibility. I feel certain we can work out a way to supplement your own funds for the airlift in conjunction with our assistance to the ICRC. In this regard, I would suggest that you arrange a meeting now with Mr. R. Peter Straus, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Africa of the Agency for International Development, who is prepared to review our ideas with you in detail.

Let me emphasize again that we are deeply sympathetic to the need of the civilian victims on both sides of the Nigeria/Biafra conflict. We have already done a great deal to support the international relief effort mounted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

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Bishop Edward Swanstrom

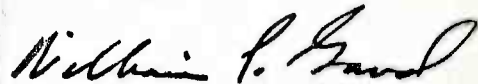
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We expect to do a great deal more in the coming months, or as long as our help is necessary to alleviate human suffering. The US Government is already committed to substantial financial support of the ICRC's effort, including cash donations and most of the relief food provided. Our cash grants have permitted the ICRC to charter aircraft for relief flights, and we expect to announce shortly another sizeable contribution.

As I indicated in my letter of October 24, there are compelling reasons for continuing to channel our assistance through the ICRC and to build on the important support it now enjoys from both sides in the conflict. To do otherwise, would run the risk of placing in jeopardy the entire relief effort now underway on both sides of the lines. Thus, in working out your airlift arrangements, we believe it is necessary that they be closely coordinated with the ICRC. I am pleased to see from your letter that you share this view and are working closely with the ICRC. I have heard from our officials in Lagos of the helpful cooperation of the Church agencies with the ICRC. I am also glad to hear the Sao Tome flights are fully integrated with those from Fernando Poo. This is particularly important in the light of the official Nigerian announcement of October 31 that the FMG now has the capability of intercepting all night flights to Biafra. I am told that only those relief flights sponsored by ICRC would have FMG authorization.

I appreciate very much your recognition of our efforts to do everything we can to bring relief to the needy. We are deeply concerned at the tragic situation involving starving people on both sides of the line. You will appreciate, I am certain, that in our anxiety to help those in Biafra controlled territory, we not do anything which would limit our ability to help the hundreds of thousands of others in similar need who are becoming accessible in increasing numbers in Federal controlled territory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "William S. Gaud". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'W'.

William S. Gaud