

NEWS COMMITTEE

FROM THE

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, PLaza 1-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

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New York, October 12. . . The Jewish people who have themselves suffered so greatly in the past are today seeking to alleviate the sufferings of others, a prominent rabbi said today in describing Jewish efforts on behalf of Nigerian-Biafran relief.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, director of the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, speaking on radio station WINS, stated that "Out of the holocaust, the Jewish people have salvaged one permanent lesson. There must never again be silence in the face of atrocities and human suffering."

Rabbi Tanenbaum said that "in an unparalleled gesture," American Jews quickly raised about \$350,000 and distributed more than 1,000 tons of materials to victims on both sides in the Nigerian civil war with the help of Catholic and Protestant groups. But, he added, "over the past year and a half, more than two million people - many of them children - died in Biafra and Nigeria, and literally millions more will die of starvation and disease within months."

The American Jewish Emergency Effort for Nigerian-Biafran Relief, organized in August, 1968, by 21 national Jewish groups, is faced with a persisting crisis, Rabbi Tanenbaum said. "The struggle to bring life and hope to the victims of the war goes on," with an estimated five to six thousand children dying each week, he added.

Rabbi Tanenbaum's brief discussion is heard every Sunday over WINS within the broadcast hours starting at 8 a.m., 12 noon, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.

(copy of statement follows)

Just some 25 years ago, the Jewish people suffered a catastrophe in the ruthless murder of a third of their community - the six million men, women, and children of Europe, the import of which has permanently impaired our image of God, man, and the moral order. The most traumatic effect of all was the feeling of abandonment, the agony of being surrounded by an ocean of silence.

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Out of the holocaust, the Jewish people have salvaged one permanent lesson. There must never again be silence in the face of atrocities and human suffering.

Over the past year-and-a half, more than two million people - many of them children - died in Biafra and Nigeria, and literally millions more will die of starvation and disease within months. In August of last year, 21 national Jewish groups organized an unprecedented American Jewish Emergency Effort for Nigerian-Biafran Relief. Jews from all parts of America pitched in with eagerness. Together, young and old in the American Jewish community raised in a relatively brief period of months about three hundred and fifty thousand dollars and distributed more than 1,000 tons of food, medicines, and clothing for victims on both sides of this conflict. In an unparalleled gesture, the Jewish relief group turned over their money and supplies to the Catholic Relief Services and the Protestant Church World Service whose feeding and distribution centers in Nigeria and Biafra assured that the relief supplies would reach the people. Not the smallest of the rewards of this campaign was the spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding that developed between Christians and Jews.

But today the crisis persists. The struggle to bring life and hope to the victims of the war goes on.

The moral issue is starkly clear. Human beings by the countless thousands are crying out for help. An estimated five to six thousand children are dying as each week passes. The Jewish people, who feel that cry in their viscera, must continue to answer that call. Jewish tradition declares that "He who saves one life is regarded as if he saved an entire world." There are worlds of human lives still to be saved in that tragic land, and the Jewish Emergency Effort for Nigerian-Biafran Relief continues to count on the generous and humanitarian responses of the Jewish people and of all men of sensitive conscience everywhere.

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