



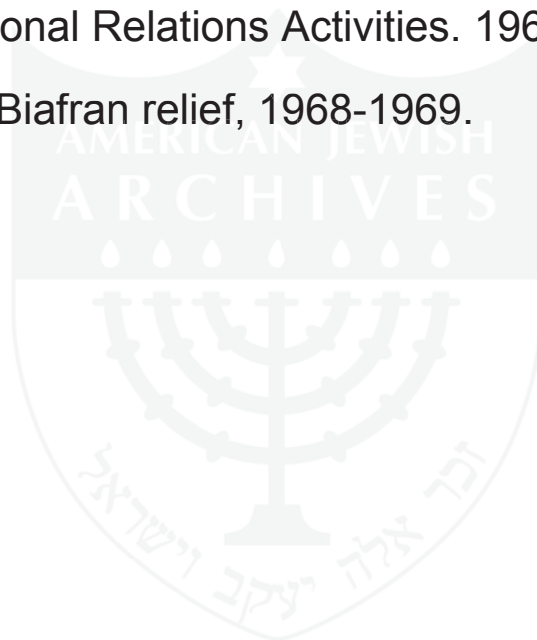
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 56, Folder 1, Biafran relief, 1968-1969.



DRAFT

July 8, 1969

MEMO: Bert Gold

FROM: Rabbi A. James Rudin

**Annual Report of the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief**

Plans for an ad hoc Jewish relief committee to help prevent starvation in Biafra was first announced on July 19th, 1968 by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director of the Interreligious Affairs Department, of the American Jewish Committee, when he spoke at Marquette University. The Rabbi said, "The ghastly reports and photographs of men, women and children reduced to skeletons or dying in the thousands triggers off a flood of nightmarish memories and stirs such profound emotion of identification with this community of suffering mankind that it has now become intolerable and immoral to remain silent spectators."

In late July and early August, the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief was formed and is made up of twenty-two national Jewish organizations. The initial meetings took place at the American Jewish Committee and were convened by Morris B. Abram, then President of the AJC. Constituent organizations of the Emergency Effort include

American Jewish Committee  
American Jewish Congress  
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee  
American ORT Federation  
B'nai B'rith  
B'nai B'rith Women  
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Theological Seminary of America  
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.  
National Community Relations Advisory Council  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Young Israel  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Rabbinical Council of America  
Synagogue Council of America  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America  
United Synagogue of America  
World Jewish Congress - American Section  
World Jewish Congress - Governing Council

A full page ad appeared in the New York Times and announced the Effort's formation and appealed for funds to purchase foods and medicines for the civilian population of Biafra. The ad appeared in

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other American cities including Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and Newark. The response was heartwarming and nearly \$50,000.00 was contributed in the first two weeks.

In addition to an appeal for funds, members of the Emergency Effort joined with other religious leaders, both Catholic and Protestant, in sending a cable to His Majesty Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. The Emperor had called together both Nigerian and Biafran delegations for peace talks in Addis Ababa. The cable was signed by many outstanding communal and religious leaders including Morris B. Abram, President of the American Jewish Committee, Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Rabbi Jacob P. Rudin, President of the Synagogue Council of America. The cable called upon the Emperor to use all possible influence to bring about peace in the Nigerian Civil War and the signatories pledged "the strongest efforts to secure massive relief supplies" for Biafra.

At the same time an urgent telegram was sent to President Lyndon B. Johnson calling upon the United States Government to provide the means for relief deliveries into Biafra. Mr. Abram and Rabbi Rudin signed the telegram along with Catholic and Protestant leaders.

Not content with merely collecting money for relief, representatives of the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief held two meetings during the summer of 1968 in Washington, D. C. with Secretary of State, Dean Rusk. Once again it was a tri-faith effort with Mr. Abram, Rabbi Rudin and Bertram H. Gold, Executive Vice President of the American Jewish Committee, joining with their counterparts of Catholic and Protestant communities. At both meetings the religious leaders explored steps to implement relief to the civilian population of Biafra and they urged that the United States use all of its political and moral strength to achieve a peace settlement and to provide for an immediate massive airlift of relief supplies.

In September, 1968, the Emergency Effort made its first allocation of \$20,000.00 to the Catholic Relief Services and \$18,000.00 to the Church World Service. These sums purchased critically needed foods and medicines in the Fall of 1968 which were flown in from the island of Sao Tome by a precarious airlift made up of Christian relief agency aircraft.

During the Fall of 1968 many synagogues and Jewish community centers throughout America sponsored drives for Biafran relief. Contributions came in from Temple Youth Groups, Fraternal lodges, religious school and public school classes. Many special benefit activities were held throughout the country to raise funds for the

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(Addition from previous page - This allocation made possible the shipment of twenty flights of food, amounting to 200 tons, and one flight of medical supplies that was flown from Portugal to Biafra.)

continued from page 2 - American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief. Some of these took place in Honolulu, Boston, Denver, Dallas and St. Louis. At the same time many Jewish leaders spoke before Jewish audiences about the critical need for relief in Biafra. The genocidal nature of the tragedy in Biafra had a profound effect upon the American Jewish community, and the creation of the Emergency Effort was in itself unprecedented and indeed historic. It was the first time that the entire Jewish community volunteered to join with Catholics and Protestants on an interreligious humanitarian endeavor, to serve people who are not Jewish and who would not likely ever become Jewish.

The leaders of the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief worked on a day to day basis with officials of both Catholic Relief Services and Church World Service for these two relief agencies were the only ones actually flying food and drugs into Biafra during the Autumn and Winter of 1968-1969. The fact was that the Catholic and Protestant Relief Agencies had the best and most effective distribution centers in Biafra which assured that the supplies actually reached the people in need.

In September, 1968, a large rally was held at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza near the United Nations in New York City. Speakers from all walks of American life protested against the starvation in Biafra and urged the American people to support all relief efforts to alleviate suffering. Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum was one of the featured speakers and he said that Americans must do two things. First, the slaughter must be stopped and there must be an end to the "cruel starvation", and he concluded by stating "While we must march on Washington and turn the light of world public opinion on the State Department and those responsible for its ignominious policy of neutrality, we must not relax for a moment our drives to raise money to provide food, drugs and medicines."

In October, 1968, an interfaith service for Biafran relief was held at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Representatives of the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant communities spoke at this service and it merely gave tangible evidence to the close cooperation among the three groups. At that rally Rabbi A. James Rudin, Assistant Director of the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, said that Jews "who have been the victims of Nazi mass murder would not remain silent while the threat of genocide hovered over the heads of Biafran civilians."

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On December 15, 1968, the first joint Jewish, Catholic, Protestant direct chartered emergency airlift for Biafra left Kennedy International Airport carrying 40 tons of food and medicine including 100,000 doses of urgently needed measles vaccine. The American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief paid the entire cost of the chartered flight, nearly \$40,000.00, while Catholic Relief Services and Church World Service contributed the foods and medicines that were on board the plane. UNICEF donated the measles vaccine.

With the new year the situation in Biafra deteriorated on the political and health fronts. To meet this new crisis, representatives of the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief met with leaders of the Catholic Relief Services and Church World Service and formed the Joint Church Aid-US. JCA then chartered four C97-G cargo aircraft from the United States Government and began the feverish search to provide crews for the airplanes. The C97-Gs carry a much larger payload than the Constellations and DC-6s that were used earlier on the Sao Tome-Biafra airbridge. The C97-Gs began making daily flights into the Uli Airstrip in early March, 1969, and were flown by American crews. A tremendous increase in tonnage was evident as soon as the new planes arrived, and for a time starvation was checked among the civilians of Biafra. As the Biafran enclave became smaller and smaller, the night relief flights from Sao Tome took on even greater importance for they provided one of the few outside links that Biafra had with the rest of the world. Despite pressures upon world governments it was the religious community of both Europe and North America that provided daily relief flights into Biafra.

Shortly after assuming the office of the Presidency, Richard Nixon appointed Professor Clyde Ferguson as a special coordinator for Nigerian-Biafran relief. Representatives of Joint Church Aid and the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief had several meetings with Professor Ferguson, and at each occasion Jewish leaders urged him to expedite vast relief supplies for Biafran relief.

Jewish representatives met with leaders from the State Department and the Department of Defense on a regular basis in Washington. These meetings provided critically needed information for relief officials, and at the same time the Government was repeatedly urged to take all necessary steps to prevent mass starvation.

By March, 1969, over 1200 emergency flights had been completed from Sao Tome. With the arrival of the C 97-G Strato freighters approximately 15 flights a night were flying into Biafra carrying approximately 135 tons of food and medicine. The allocations of the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief supplied medicine in the following categories: multiple vitamins, iron composition pills, sulphur drugs,

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anti-biotics, medicine for skin diseases and anti-dysentery drugs.

Contributions continued to come in from all over the country during the Spring of 1969, and although the relief flights from Sao Tome were being harassed by Nigerian aircraft, yet the fragile air-bridge continued.

Professor Ferguson reported to representatives of Joint Church Aid that the problem in the Spring of 1969 was not so much starvation but tuberculosis, anemia and the shortage of drugs. He praised the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant relief efforts and noted that the death rate in Biafra had gone down steadily in the early months of 1969. In May and June Bertram Gold, James MacCracken, Executive Director of Church World Service and Bishop Edward E. Swanstrom, the Director of Catholic Relief Services, sent urgent telegrams to President Nixon calling upon him to prevent harassment of relief aircraft and urging him further to implement a new surface route for increasing relief supplies for Biafra. The telegram mentioned that three million innocent civilians are "totally dependent" upon the combined mercy airbridge, and they urged the United States Government to take "the strongest possible action" to insure completion of relief flights into Biafra.

In June, 1969, the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief made its third allocation. This gift totaled \$50,000.00 and was sent to Joint Church Aid-US. The money was used to keep the C 97-Gs operating into the Uli airstrip. These cargo planes are in constant need of repair, maintenance and spare parts, but without the C 97-Gs the starvation rate in Biafra would have been much higher.

In the year ending June 30, 1969, Church World Service had flown in 8,200,000 pounds of foods and medicines into Biafra while Catholic Relief Services shipped in over 10,000,000 pounds of vitally needed relief supplies.

As the second summer of relief efforts began, the fragile airbridge was still flying on an irregular basis beset by political and military problems. The American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief is continuing its close coordination with Church World Service and Catholic Relief Services and stands ready to carry on its program of providing relief for starving Biafran civilians.

The role of the American Jewish community in the Relief Effort drew praise from many quarters. Senator Edward M. Kennedy said, "I am

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keenly aware of the substantial contribution that the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief has made in alerting our citizens to support such an effort", while James MacCracken, Executive Director of Church World Service noted "How very proud we are to have the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief participate in Joint Church Aid and to make our efforts to alleviate atrocious starvation in Biafra a truly tri-faith American response." Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher of Seton Hall University noted in a major address in October, 1968, that Jewish aid to Biafra is a "history making event". Msgr. Oesterreicher wrote "Many individual Jews have been stirred to their depths and sought to help Biafrans." The Monsignor concluded by saying that Jewish participation in Biafran relief "reminds Jews and Christians that they are stewards of God's world and hence are meant to be co-workers."

Nearly \$200,000.00 was raised in the first year of operation of the Relief Effort. The Emergency Effort, convened primarily as a relief activity also mounted a campaign of political pressure upon the U.S. Government to expedite a large emergency airlift for starving civilians. As Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum said, "The last word that the Catholic, Protestant and Jews have committed themselves to is to keep in touch and to work together until we are all able to see the light at the end of the long dark Biafran tunnel."

AJR:FM

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH EMERGENCY EFFORT FOR BIAFRAN  
RELIEF**

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In late July of 1968 the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief was formed consisting of the following 21 national Jewish organizations:

American Jewish Committee  
American Jewish Congress  
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee  
American ORT Federation  
B'nai B'rith  
B'nai B'rith Women  
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Jewish Labor Committee  
Jewish Theological Seminary of America  
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.  
National Community Relations Advisory Council  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Council of Young Israel  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Rabbinical Council of America  
Synagogue Council of America  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America  
United Synagogue of America  
World Jewish Congress - American Section  
World Jewish Congress - Governing Council

After several meetings, the Emergency Effort clarified its policy of (1) confining its activities to humanitarian relief efforts; (2) allocating whatever funds it raised to the existing private relief organizations rather than attempting to provide direct relief services itself, and; (3) sharing the costs of fund raising and administration amongst the constituent groups so that all of the monies raised would be made available for relief purposes.



Early in the fall, the Committee placed a full page ad in the New York Times announcing the formation of the Emergency Effort and appealing for funds to purchase food and medicine for the civilian population of Nigeria and Biafra. A similar ad appeared in other American cities including Chicago, Atlanta and Newark. The response was heartwarming, and almost \$50,000.00 was contributed in the first two weeks. As of June 30, 1969 a total of \$185,000.00 has been contributed. (See appendix A).

In addition to the funds received directly by the American Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief, many Jewish organizations throughout the country, stimulated by this activity, sponsored drives for Biafran relief in which contributions, both in food and cash, were secured. No exact figures are available as to the amounts raised by these sources and that were sent directly to Biafran relief agencies. A conservative estimate would place the value of this separate fund raising as at least equal to that raised directly through the Jewish Emergency Effort.

With the receipt of its first funds the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief appointed a small Allocations Committee consisting of representatives from half-a-dozen of the constituent organizations. This Allocation Committee was given authority to distribute the funds as they were received and needed.

In September, 1968, the Emergency Effort made its first allocation of \$20,000.00 to the Catholic Relief Service and

\$18,000.00 to the Church World Service. These sums purchased critically needed food and medicine in the fall of 1968, which were flown in from the Island of Sao Tome by a precarious airlift made up of Christian relief agency aircraft. This allocation made possible the shipment of 20 flights of food, amounting to 200 tons, and one flight of medical supplies that was flown from Portugal to Biafra.

In the fall of 1968 B'nai B'rith made a special allocation of approximately \$15,000.00 to provide foods and medicines on an emergency relief flight to Sao Tome.

On December 15, 1968, a joint Jewish-Catholic-Protestant direct chartered emergency airlift for Biafra left Kennedy International Airport carrying 40 tons of food and medicine, including 100,000 doses of urgently needed measles vaccine. The American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief paid the entire cost of the chartered flight, nearly \$40,000.00 while Catholic Relief Services and Church World Service contributed the foods and medicines that were on board the plane. UNICEF donated the measles vaccine.

In June, 1969, the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief made its third allocation. This gift totaled \$50,000.00 and was sent to Joint Church Aid-US. The money was used to keep C 97-G cargo aircraft, flown by Joint Church Aid, operating into the Uli airstrip.

Joint Church Aid-US represents the combined efforts of the Catholic Relief Service and the Church World Service, with representation from the American Jewish Emergency Effort via the American Jewish Committee. Joint Church Aid-US was organized at the request of the American government so that it could be the recipient of four C97-G aircraft which carry a much larger cargo than the Constellations and DC-6s that were used earlier on the Sao Tome-Biafra airbridge.

At the present time the Biafra relief situation is most confused. The airlift is closely dependent upon the military and political situation which changes almost daily in that troubled part of West Africa. However, the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief continues to work closely with other relief agencies on a day to day basis. Whatever the outcome of the war, it is clear that continued humanitarian efforts will be needed for some time to come and the American Jewish Emergency Effort for Biafran Relief stands ready to take any further action that may be needed to relieve the human suffering in Biafra.

DRAFT

APPENDIX A

April 1, 1968 - June 30, 1969

Participating Organizations	\$ 166,000.00
Recipient Organizations (Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service & UNICEF)	19,000.00
Total Contributions Received	185,000.00
Less Contributions to Recipient Organizations	19,000.00
Contributions Retained & Distributed by B'nai B'rith	<u>15,000.00</u>
	34,000.00
Contributions available for Distribution	151,000.00
Contributions Distributed	130,000.00
Balance June 30, 1969	21,000.00

