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Interview with George Orick

- Consultant to UNICEF on Nigeria-Biafra relief -

by Dan Jacobs, on 29 July 1983

Orick: I just want to say and I want it specifically understood that I do not want any writers to have access to this material for a period of, say, ten years from this date, 29 July 1983. For academic purposes, for purposes within UNICEF, the United Nations, guidance of others, perfectly O.K., but some of the material in here I may want to use myself.

Jacobs: This is an interview with George Orick, who was a consultant to UNICEF from July until early December 1968 and who had special knowledge of the situation in Nigeria-Biafra because he lived for six years in Nigeria as a businessman before he joined UNICEF as a consultant.

George, I would like to ask you first about the earlier period at the end of 1967 when you were working with UNICEF briefly as a consultant. I know you had a conversation with E.J.R.Heyward, the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, about Nigeria and the situation that was developing in Biafra. Do you recall that?

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Orick: Yes, I do. I think that was probably in November or December of 1967. Heyward was surprised that I was not as angry as he might have expected me to be about the situation. He encouraged me, in fact, to write an article for the New Leader which I did and at the time he also talked about UNICEF making, I think, a shipment or two of medical supplies from Geneva, I recall; I was not involved in the logistical sense, even as a consultant, but rather just as somebody talking with Dick.

Jacobs: But you got a sense of his own sense of urgency about the situation at that time?

Orick: Yes, I was certainly surprised that Dick, among most of the people I met at UNICEF, was passionately interested in what happened to the kids in Biafra.

Jacobs: The next time you really got involved, I believe, was at the beginning of July 1968. You had come back to UNICEF to do some work, starvation had become really grave in Biafra and there was news reporting for the first time which brought it to the attention of the public. Do you want to recall some of the early involvement in July '68?

Orick: Going back to the 'Fall of 1967, I was working as a consultant to Bill Wilson on what I considered to be a spurious film project for UNICEF. I eventually left that and began to consult with Dick on the problem of the Christmas cards - it seemed that the Canadians and the people in Kansas wanted Santa Claus on the Christmas

cards. Also on the high protein and milk plants in different parts of the world. Before I could do anything, I had to take a leave of absence to work on Robert Kennedy's campaign in 1968 and when I came back from that - that ended badly, as you know, with Kennedy's death - I was distraught and didn't know what to do. I went to Dick and said I would like to borrow an office for the summer and maybe I would like to write something. He said, "Fine, take an office and you can have Xerox privileges" (which was very important then). One day in July of '68 I was sitting in the office occupied by Jack Ling when Dick came in and said, "Would you give us some time on Biafra?", which meant I suppose "Would you consult?". So I agreed to do that. We set a fee and I went to work on it. At that time, I think there was a great preoccupation with the need - the population at risk, who they were, how much food they would need. I do recall that sometime during that summer I thought 'this is going to be much bigger than we can possibly handle ourselves'. In fact you, Dan, had planted that idea in my head; you kept talking about a relief czar would be necessary in the whole thing. I took Dick to see the people at Church World Service, Jim McCraken and others and at the Catholic Relief Services, Jim Norris and Monseignor Landi and then a week later I called them and said, "O.K. we went to your office" (and as it happened this was the first time Dick had been to their offices - in fact I think the first time that UNICEF had co-operated with these agencies in a long time, if ever) "now we would like you to come to a meeting at our office". At that meeting many things were discussed, including the rudimentary form of an airlift which was just then forming. I don't know if Count von Rosen had made his first flight in then or not.

Jacobs: That meeting was at the end of July, Count von Rosen flew in in the middle of August.

Orick: O.K. And there weren't plans, but there were just discussions of an airlift and how to finance it and so on were done at that meeting. The American Jewish Committee got involved because Herman Stein, the consultant to UNICEF, said "What about the Jews?", "You've forgotten the Jews". So I went to see Bert Gold and, I think, Rabbi Mark Tenenbaum. They would not come in on a logistical basis or an operational basis but they certainly would give money they said. And they became part of the triumvirate of the religious groups involved in the thing from then on.

One day, I think probably in late July or early August, Dick called me over to his office and said, "I've decided to make an object lesson to the other relief agencies - they aren't doing enough. We're making a big shipment of food to Biafra". I said, "How big?". He said, "Five hundred tons - what do you think of that?". I said, "Peanuts - what you need is a ship you can charter so that its destination is totally controlled by you. You don't want ships that are going to be tied up in Takerade or any other place for a month on the way in. But five hundred tons is nothing, according to your own figures of the known need". "What do you suggest?", he said. I said, "Five thousand tons minimum". "How do we get that?", he said. I said, "Ask for it". So he called in Joe Parenti who called AID I believe.....

Jacobs: This would have been earlier, George, because that request was made July 8 for five thousand tons from AID.

Orick: Fine - you keep the dates straight.....Joe came back from his office in Supply and said, "They gave it to us" and Dick said, "What do we do now?" and I said, "Order another five thousand tons", so he did and they were granted.

Jacobs: I should intervene and say that the second request wasn't granted immediately. It was forty five days before the State Department agreed to the second request. The first came within four days - they responded favourably.

Orick: They told Joe on the 'phone "Yes" at the first request. When the paperwork came, I don't know, but he came back to the office within minutes and said, "Yes". I do recall that. Of course the State Department then dragged its feet and nothing moved for a long time so I went to see Senator McGovern and he said "I can't be publicly identified with this because I'm identified with hunger in America, but use my staff", and I did freely and they did a great deal to expedite the movement of that CSM, CMS, whichever it was, down the Mississippi to, I believe, Houston. There it was put on the ship to be chartered - a Greek ship. Next question?

Jacobs: What other kinds of activities did you participate in during July and August, 1968? I know you helped to get the helicopter operation going, for example.

Orick: We did several things. We got a helicopter thing going - Robert Robards from up-State New York was recruited and pilots came in from all over. A time, space salesmen from The New Yorker

magazine a fellow named Spink, some of the other names I have forgotton. Let's go back a minute, when all of this began, when Heyward asked me would I give them some time on Biafra, I looked around UNICEF and I saw there a splendid mechanism for emergency relief that hadn't been used in a long time. There were the financial people, there were the cargo procurement officers if you will, there was a bank of nutritionists. And I figured 'this was an outfit ready to go - all it needs is to be activated somehow' and I also knew that because of the Nigerians, because of the natural reluctance of bureaucrats to move anything and because of a kind of personal antagonism that I have always aroused when I've done anything of an inflammatory nature, which this certainly would be, I had only so many months of a kind of emotional credit or goodwill that would be dissipated, not so gradually, but it would certainly be dissipated over a period of time. In other words I figured I had three or four months to get the thing done before everybody hated me and I had to get out of there. And that in fact is about the way it worked out.

My practice was to get things started, to catalyze, to goad, to nudge, to be raucous, to be mean, to be helpful, to be suggestive - any technique I could use to get and keep things moving. And then, I couldn't say 'hand them over' because they weren't mine to hand over, but to help them into the hands of other people who could execute them.

There was another advantage in my being a consultant. That first thing that I have just mentioned certainly was an advantage - I

didn't have to do anything. The second was that as a consultant to UNICEF I could establish liaison with the Biafra representatives in the United States, two of whom were in New York. I could also act directly as an informal link with the U.S.State Department. Having been in Nigeria for six years before that I knew virtually all the people on the Nigerian desk because they had been lower level diplomats in Lagos when I was there and now had been promoted. I knew who felt guilty, I knew who felt obdurate, I knew who felt passive and so on, and I could play on that and I certainly did during that time; that was a very useful tool. Had I been a member of the staff of UNICEF I could not have gone through those people without going through some sort of channel in Washington, but as a consultant I could call them directly on the phone.

What do you need to know next?

Jacobs: You also had an important role to play in that you knew about Nigeria, you knew first-hand what the Ibos were like, what the Yorubas and the Hausa were like; the sense of the life, the antagonisms, the politics, and even what the Ibos liked to eat. I think that was one of the things that you brought into the discussions with Mr. Heyward, Sasha Bacic and others - a first-hand feel for the situation which might not have been available at Headquarters. Does that recall anything to you?

Orick: "Think Beans", I used to say. Do you remember that? Beans. They love beans. Also rice; corn directly, not so much, cause

they ate corn. Milk - I think milk as such was not high in their diet. They didn't have any cows, they were in the tse-tse fly belt - couldn't have cows. Stock fish had to be imported, they were then among the primary importers of stock fish from Norway and Iceland.

Yes, I knew something about their food preferences. I also knew something about their urge to live and when the reports of starvation began to come in, I did not see this as a suicidal thing as many people did. But they were passionately interested in economic parity in the world and were willing to do almost anything to get it. They felt also because of the massacres in Nigeria in which thousands of people had been murdered by Moslems in the north, that their lives were in danger, and I think they were probably quite right. I myself was never in favour of the secession. I thought it was a disastrous mistake in a world where larger and larger regional groupings are the key to economic success of a nation, but I felt that they had no choice and anyway it was up to us to help them live, anyway.

Jacobs: Do you have any other comments about the July and August period while you were working in New York?

Orick: Well I recall the meetings of the Nigbi Committee, the Nigeria/Biafra Committee at 9 o'clock every morning. I recall during those days we did pretty much a day's work in that day. We planned it that day and did it.

Jacobs: In the East-Side Conference Room every morning, Mr.Heyward presiding?

Orick: Yes, and Charles Egger and all of the others in and out. I also became aware after a while that virtually everything I talked about and did was somehow being communicated to Nigerians through a fellow whose name I have forgotten - he was a lobbyist for the plastic pipe industry. He turned out to be somebody who was apparently going through my desk at night.

Jacobs: He was not part of UNICEF?

Orick: No.

Jacobs: He was a man who came in and sat in your office and listened to what you were saying?

Orick: Yes. He had also tried to interest UNICEF in a kind of airlift and the Nigerians used him, they took him to Nigeria and he was completely seduced by them and so on. But I didn't really care about that. I was concerned that the Nigerian Government not make representations that could be damaging to what I was trying to do but that was all carried on at a level .....

Jacobs: I think you instructed the Security Guards to keep him out of the building?

Orick: Yes, I did.

Jacobs: That was at the end of July - early August?

Orick: Yes.

Jacobs: I believe in early September Mr. Heyward asked you to go to Biafra. Was that the way it happened?

Orick: Well, there were machinations behind the scenes. Sasha Bacic, a superb Eastern European diplomat with a very subtle mind, thought that I should go and I think he probably had a great deal to do with it. I was told that a man named Willy Meyer had been there but had died before he could make a report, so Sasha thought I should go. Dick agreed, whether Harry Labouisse ever agreed I don't know. I was issued a U.N. certificate - whether that's the same as a U.N. passport I don't know - describing me as a consultant, with my picture and so on, and an air travel card (which at the time was most unusual at the U.N) and extra insurance was obtained and off I went to Paris. I kept away from Geneva because Harry Labouisse was there and it was thought that I shouldn't be in the same city. In Paris I located by telephone some people connected with Count von Rosen who were in Malmo Sweden. A plane of von Rosen's was back there for servicing, or was being serviced prior to leaving, so I went to Malmo and spent a couple of nights before joining that flight, with von Rosen aboard as a matter of fact - that's when I met him along with a Swedish General named Berg who seemed to have some connection with him.

Jacob: He was President of Nord Churchaide, titular head of the Scandinavian airline church relief airlift.

Orick: He knew nothing, obviously, about Africa. Von Rosen knew quite a bit because he had a plantation in Ethiopia. We went to Amsterdam, picked up David Robison(?) who was doing some stringer work for Newsweek, went to Sardinia and took on a lot of water melons and grapes and a compass, went to Niger overnight and then took of for Sao Tome where there was a long wait for clearance to go to Biafra. My U.N. certificate didn't mean very much there. The Biafrans were then deep into paranoia, very suspicious.

By the time I got there, in September of '68, the airlift had been remarkably organized. I was always struck by the ad hoc ecumenical nature of the thing, the marvellous way it worked. Father Anthony Byrne who always wore a white cassock and carried a Vatican passport was, I think, probably the central figure in it. Von Rosen was the operations chief, certainly most experienced from the standpoint of air operations. Christoph Jaeger, a Protestant from Germany, was very instrumental and he seemed to have a lot of money to buy fuel which was purchased each morning at a cafe over breakfast. The Geronimo Hotel was the centre of the thing. You could almost never get a room there. I could count on sleeping there at night until the pilots came back from the airlift in the morning and they wanted their beds back.

Jacobs: What was the mission you were sent to perform when Mr.Heyward or Sasha Bacic sent you off to Biafra? What were you supposed to do there?

Orick: I never really knew. I was given an oral brief, as it was called, to find out the nature of conditions, to do what I could to

expedite the airlift and even before I went I knew that a big goal was to do what could be done by anybody to get the capacity increased by making it possible for each plane to fly three flights a night rather than two. They were at the point by now in the operation of the airlift where they could get two flights a night instead of one and this had come a long way from one flight every two weeks, to one flight a night, to several flights a night, to one by each plane, then two flights a night by each plane, then three flights a night by each plane. The big jump was from two to three flights - if you could get to three flights you could increase the capacity of the airlift by 50%.

It is important to understand that the capacity of an airstrip is measured not by the length of the runway or the width of it, nor by the light or anything else - it is measured by the parking area, the hardstand area in which you can have planes standing while they are being offloaded and loaded. And in that respect Uli was not too adequate, and we did a lot of things to try to enlarge the airstrip. There was a laterite mine the Biafrans were operating a couple of miles south of the airstrip - they were widening, widening, widening, always putting down asphalt. There was a Russian there, I don't know who he was, but he had the idea of cutting trees lengthwise and using the logs as hardstand. Whether that came to anything I don't know. We tried to devise ways of interlocking the planes, wing-to-wing and wing inside wing and so on. Planes were stacked up on the ends of runways and other planes landing and taking off had to clear them, of course, which was a hazzard. All this we figured with a stopwatch. I timed

the operation of offloading the planes, bags of this, bags of that, sliding down boards greased with palm oil into the backs of trucks. All in the dark, of course - seconds here, half a minute there, a minute there, five minutes there. The cumulative total of that I think had something to do with the increase in the airlift.

Also the division of trucks. One night all trucks were World Council trucks - we called the Protestant trucks World Council trucks. One night they were all Caritas trucks which was the name for the Catholics. Instead of 'This is a Caritas truck for this load, 'This is a World Council truck for this load', we just decided arbritarily that Mondays, say, would be World Council night, Tuesdays Caritas night. That speeded everything up by an hour. You didn't have to fight anymore for positions.

The biggest drawback to the efficiency of the airlift was the lack of ground handling equipment at Uli, no forklifts, nothing that would do anything like that. In my earlier days, I had thought of starting a malting tower for breweries to make malt on the spot I abandoned it as a businessman in Nigeria because it soon developed that breweries liked to shop the world for malt and that's what makes the different taste in beer. So a malting tower was impractical but in the course of that investigation I had met a man named Eric Ulbiwho was the managing director of The Golden Guinea Company in what became Biafra. So I went to see him - he was in his office with his staff still working, but they weren't making any beer. He remembered me, so I said, "I want to take some stuff

out of your factory" and he said "Take what you need". So he got welders for me and we dissembled the conveyer belt system - a marvellous trim and high precision ballbearing conveyer belt system on which they moved their cases of beer - and we took sections of those to Uli and that worked for a while, until other aluminium conveyers were brought in to stay in the plane, provided these were used on the ground. So you could move things a lot faster on that than you could on the greased board.

I don't know if I did any good or not, but several of us were working on these problems through the night at Uli and I think the cumulative total of our work had a fair amount to do with increasing the capacity of the airlift, but we could never even approach the known need which Dick had figured out at twelve or fifteen hundred tons a night. I don't think we ever got the darned thing to more than four hundred and fifty tons a night.

Jacobs: During the time you were going in and out of Biafra, flying out to Sao Tome, I think at one point you flew over to Fernando Po and while you were there you met Ambassador August Lindt who had been appointed High Commissioner by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Is that right?

Orick: Yes. In Biafra I lived in the room at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital - it had airconditioning there because of the X-ray equipment which had to be kept cold. In my room, space was limited by the fact that piled round my bed were death certificates (a nice room to be in). I would go out of Biafra very often in

the early morning to spend the day in Sao Tome, trying to get things done and to get a good meal, and I would go back in at night, almost every night, to find peace because Biafra was -- in spite of all -- the place where there was peace. I did go with the shipment of stockfish - stockfish was being sent from Sao Tome to the Red Cross airlift on Fernando Po - DC-6 I think or T-46 -- I've forgotten, full of stockfish -- and we had lunch at a restaurant with a big veranda and Lindt came in and everybody there stood up as though he were royalty or the president or something. I remember he had very sharp blue eyes and he was the kind of man people stood up too, obviously. After a while, I introduced myself to him. He took very little notice of me and I said that our ship was offshore, the Greek ship, off Sao Tome, and my plan was to offload, I think two thousand tons was the plan. This was the first shipment .....

Jacobs: ...that UNICEF had received from the U.S.Government? The initial five thousand tons that you mentioned before?

Orick. Yes. And we were going to take two thousand tons off at Sao Tome and three thousand tons at Lagos. So I asked Lindt and said, "My estimate is that more food should come off than two thousand tons at Sao Tome, maybe three thousand tons. What is the situation in Lagos? Do they need the food?". He said, "Yes, they need it very badly, don't take off more than two thousand tons". Lindt had lied to me, as a matter of fact. There was plenty of food in Lagos. I'll never know why he did that. I can't even speculate and I don't care but the man just right out lied to me. From then

I was quite mistrustful of anything he said. The Red Cross position at the time was 'Biafra is going to fall any day now' and I have in mind a vision of Lindt as a man who saw the Biafrans all lined up and the relief tents all in rows ready to be spoonfed, waiting for his beneficence. It didn't work that way. I knew the Nigerians, I knew the Biafrans and those of us who had contact with them knew very well that it wasn't going to work that way. These people were prepared to die.

Jacobs: I think you came back and made a statement that when you were in there you felt that they had already accepted the inevitability of their death and therefore they were resigned to it and were somehow living and laughing as much as ever. You found this attitude quite startling, a kind of fatalism that you had never seen before?

Orick: It wasn't so much fatalism as a kind of euphoria. They had gone through death in their minds and come out the other side in a euphoric state. They had their own nation and nobody could hurt them now. I think in that state they were very dangerous to deal with because they were not going to collapse and Lindt's vision was totally at odds with the reality of the situation.

Jacobs: We were.

Orick: In Biafra, I was there off and on, I guess, for nearly a month, I don't know how many days, I made it a point every fifth or sixth trip in to go to what they call State House at Uli, which was the immigration office and have my passport stamped. Not only is it

kind of a .... you gesture to UNICEF and the United Nations that there was a Biafran visa but also because even though they didn't ask me to do this, they knew me every night when I came in, I felt it was a kind of thing I would like to do for them. Put myself on the record.

Jacobs: Do you want to tell us a little more about what the flight into Uli was like. What it was like for the pilots who had to fly the foods and medicines in to the air strip inside Biafra?

Orick: Well any flight to Uli had to begin at a precise time from Sao Tomé and all the planes took off -- first wave -- at about the same time so that they would arrive over the southern coast of Nigeria after dusk. This of course was easy to figure out because on the equator sunset and sunrise are always about the same time and dusk was only a ten or fifteen minute period. If they didn't, if they got there before dark, they'd be shot down by the MIGs. As it was, we were shot at often by gun fire some place in the delta. Once in a while you would see something hot and white or red go arching up past the plane, and you'd see these flashes on the ground. You knew you were under fire. I don't know that any planes were ever hit by the anti-aircraft fire. There was certainly a possible danger. Flying into Uli there was a traffic pattern. You had to hold very often because the field was often under attack by planes. We didn't really know who they were. They were people with South African accents or English accents flying for the Nigerians. And they would be in the holding pattern some place. You never knew where they

were and there was always the danger of mid-air collisions. The ground control at Uli was usually a girl -- young woman -- with a very cool, clear voice. It was always good to hear that, because she seemed to know what she was doing and she talked the planes in and talked them down at the various altitudes and eventually on the ground. At Uli, when it was in full use, there were electric landing lights. When it was in partial use, when the field was threatened or they'd taken the landing lights away because they thought the field might be captured, the field would be lit by kerosene pots with big cloth wicks -- and they did light those.

Jacobs: Wasn't that the field at Obilagu which you first flew into?

Orick: Well, that was lighted that way too. Uli occasionally had pots when they would dismantle the lights. The field at Uli was, I guess, 8,000 feet long; a pretty good size strip, but it wasn't very wide. As I recall, the Superconstellation coming in there had clearance of only 35 feet on either side to land. That plane couldn't veer very much or you'd go off into the bush and hook on the trees.

Jacobs: The lights would only come on for ...

Orick: For the landing, then off again. You landed in the dark. Once the plane was on the ground, off went those lights. It was a noisy field, you could never shut the engine off completely on the airplanes because there was no ground power unit and you had to leave one engine going to get the others started. Every so often

somebody would walk into a propeller in the dark. Minor inconvenience. The trucks moved in the dark. The trucks moved along the taxi-way which was used for the arms aircraft, that was the only way they could go. I'm aware that if you're going to get people to give nickels and dimes in churches all over the world, you don't talk about arms and food being on the same plane. They were not on the same plane, but they sure as hell used the same airstrip. They landed and took off on the same strip and sometimes taxied on the same strip past each other. You saw the arms planes, they're dark with people moving things on and off them.

That brings up another point. One of the other obstacles to efficient cargo movement, whether arms or food, was the fact that the Biafrans were never able to get airplanes with wide doors. You were always limited by that narrow passenger door, it was usually in the front of the airplane. The cargo plane would have doors in the middle - big doors and so on. For their arms movement, they could never get heavy artillery pieces in and out because they could never get them in and out of the doors, and, for food movements, you were always moving stuff from the tail of the plane to the front. It took a long time very often and the planes empty were always nose heavy. That's a characteristic of aircraft I never knew. But an empty plane is nose heavy, and a single nose wheel was always digging into the tarmac, which wasn't of the best quality anyway, leaving big ridges and grooves which always had to be repaired.

Jacobs: I think UNICEF sent General William Tunner out at that time (had been Commander of the Berlin airlift and was a world-leading

authority on airlifts) to assess the situation. Did you run into him in Biafra or Sao Tome or Fernando Po?

Orick: I met him in Biafra on the air strip one night. The man was completely confounded and raged in a state of extreme confusion because the Berlin airlift which he had directed, I think, ran 700 flights a day into and out of a major world airport with total control, radio, radar, lights, whether day or night, on a schedule. They were not being shot at - even though the Russians were threatening. They had elaborate ground handling equipment, trucks - everything they needed and that was simply a question of logistical efficiency. Here was Tunner down there looking at this thing in the dark where he couldn't see anything and all he could hear was engines running and people shouting.

Jacobs: About how many planes were flying at that time, do you remember? How many planes did each airlift have approximately?

Orick: I think we had 8 in the airlift in Sao Tomé, something like that, and the Red Cross had a couple. There were 3 plus the C-130, which we could never get. A Swedish aircraft. When I met Tunner, I was introduced to him, I was standing on a barrel with my hand up inside the wing of an airplane opening a petcock. You could reach up and release the valve which would open another valve and the gasoline would come flowing down out of the wing into a big funnel into barrels, then you'd shut it off until the barrels were changed. This was the way we got gasoline for the trucks. This was the holding fuel, if an aircraft wasn't harassed and could land

relatively quickly you could get a couple of thousand gallons of gasoline out of that airplane until it took off again. This gasoline, of course, was of prime importance because you couldn't move gasoline in there instead of food and the planes would have to carry the holding fuel anyway. So there was cargo of gasoline that of course had to go on the aircraft, that was yours if if didn't hold. Tunner never understood this. He said that's very dangerous. The whole thing could blow up and I said: We know that but there is no other choice. Well, multiply that by a hundred ad hoc solutions to problems and you have Tunner's confusion. I mean I really liked him, but he was in a confusionary state, I thought, by the time he left there. I never read his recommendations. I don't really think that anything practical could have been recommended to run that thing.

Jacobs: Do you have something to say about the MIGs that were strafing Biafra on the Ilysion bombers that were bombing at that time?

Orick: Well all the time that U Thant and others were talking about military targets and the Nigerians were saying these were military targets, we were under air attack daily by MIGs in the daytime flown by Egyptian pilots, who attacked market places, any places in which the Biafrans would be congregated in large numbers. This occurred almost daily. In Umuahia, one day, we were having lunch at the home of Herman and Cora Middelkoop when the MIGs came over. There was no warning. And they made a couple of runs on the market and hit some houses and so on. And I remember afterwards von Rosen and I went over there and there was a pathetic site. There was a

women dead and she was clutching in one hand a number of cassava planting -- seedlings -- that she was going to plant to get food, and there she was dead, killed by a MIG bomb. So we had to get out of there because a bomb that had not exploded was in a house, a concrete house, and it might go off any time. So we left there, but that was a very poignant example of the humanitarianism of the Nigerians.

Jacobs: Hank Warton had been flying the planes for the Church Relief as well as earlier for the International Committee for the Red Cross. He stopped flying at about that time. You talked with him at that point, I believe?

Orick: Yes, Hank ...

Jacobs: ... He was the air charter operator.

Orick: He had a lock for a long time on the landing codes at Uli, and when von Rosen came in they shared with him. And Hank flew relief flights alternately with arms flights because the churches had given him airplanes to replace - planes he'd lost in crashes and so on. And the churches had given him planes with the understanding that he would pay for them by flying food at reduced flights, at cost. And so he was operating both.

Jacobs: Both arms flights and humanitarian ...

Orick: Yes, never on the same flight. It was very important this not happen. And one day word went around that Hank was quitting, that

he wasn't going to fly anything anymore - arms or food. And I saw him and we met in Room 1 at the Geronimo Hotel -- which I later found out was the room that was bugged.

Jacobs: By whom?

Orick: I guess the Portuguese. They were always passionately interested in everything we did.

Jacobs: It was a Portuguese colony at the time.

Orick: Yes. Hank was there, Count von Rosen was there, I was there, David Robison was there, and Hank was sitting on a ...

Jacobs: David Robison was a correspondent.

Orick: Yes, he was a stringer for Newsweek and The New York Times. And Hank said that they owed him -- the Biafrans owed him -- 1.5 million or a 1.6 million dollars -- something like that and they weren't paying him. He was just gesticulating. He had his books with him, his ledger. I said: "let me see your books Hank". I looked at them quickly and I said: "I only see 600,000 dollars here that's owed to you". "A lot more than that, a lot more than that", he said. And I said: "Why don't you fly?" If they fall in what happened, at that particular time, the Biafrans were down in ammunition so that the press at least were reporting that they had one round per man per day in the lines. And there was a French ship off-loading in the surf at Libreville in Gabon, it was

approaching Gabon, and it would take some time for those arms on that ship to get into Biafra. They had their own planes in Libreville. Hank, meantime, was the crippling factor in Biafra, he held the cards. There was no question about it, and he was refusing to fly. So I said: "Why don't you fly them Hank. You've got two loads of arms on the field covered with canvas, 9 tons each," I estimated, and he wouldn't touch them. He said "Here's why," and he took out a new passport. I looked at it and it had been issued in Libson the month before, or that month, I think this was September '68. A brand new passport. His passport had been lifted by the State Department earlier and was very important to him. He said so, this is very important to me. So I figured the State Department bought him off by giving him a new passport, because this war would be over after a while and he could fly arms someplace else as an American citizen. That's the only explanation he ever gave. And that was a Saturday, I think -- I'm vague on this.

Well, Joe Gallano, of the Catholic Relief Service (we read each others cables) of course, there was money coming in, 20,000 dollars or something for him, cabled. It didn't come - he couldn't find it. I went to Farther Byrne and others and so did von Rosen, and we tried to work something out -- this was the next day after being with Hank -- to get those arms in. Nobody had any money to pay for the shipment. One charter company - Fred Olsen, I think (they're Norwegians) -- could, according to their arrangements, fly arms. They had a C-46, I believe, which would hold 8 or 9 tons - 5 tons - something like that. I think they had another plane, I'm not sure,

these details I've forgotten. We failed. Farther Byrne - I shouldn't be telling you this - was amenable to any plan that would get money in the hands of the Olsen people to fly the arms in. I think Gallano's money had come by then but Farther Byrne had a German secretary who opposed the whole thing and whose signature was necessary on the check, and she wouldn't sign it.

Jacobs: Because it was a church relief plane?

Orick: That's right.

Jacobs: And she was a representative of a church agency.

Orick: And it was plain to anybody on Sao Tomé that arms and food were inseparable. You could fly them on separate planes but one without the other wasn't worth a damn, because, if they fell in, the Biafrans would be overrun and killed anyway, and, if they didn't have food, they couldn't continue to exist. So, you couldn't separate the two. So I went to sleep, I was discouraged as hell. I went to the Geronimo and I got into some pilot's bed, I don't know where he was, and I went to sleep. Along about 5 o'clock, von Rosen came in and shook me awake and said: "we did it, we worked it out. Let's go". So we got in his car and went out to the air strip and, by God, the Olsen people were throwing bags of Irish powdered-milk off the airplane onto the ground.

Jacobs: That's powdered-milk from Ireland, George, right? Powdered milk paid for by the Irish Relief Service.

Orick: It was from Ireland, it had a big shamrock on the bag. Green. And they put the arms on and that plane took off and then another one took off. There were two of them with arms that night going into Biafra. I never got it straight how that deal worked. I think what happened was, they were going to pay the Olsen people extra money on top of the relief flight money for the next few weeks or something to accommodate that. It wasn't a very complicated deal, but I was so relieved that it worked that I didn't pay any attention to how it worked.

Jacobs: There were a lot of journalists in Sao Tomé waiting to get into Biafra, having trouble getting passports or visas, so they got wind of these flight I take it? They started questioning Von Rosen - he met the journalists each day around noon for a briefing. He was Chief of Operations then.

Orick: Yes. People kept phoning us all the time. We used to meet regularly in Father Byrne's office which was on the second floor of the building in Sao Tomè, across from the church, and we came down the back stairs out through a garden wall and they would be waiting there for us and we could never tell them anything because how could we explain to anybody the complications of how this thing worked? Journalists, particularly, I find are not quantitative minded - they don't know the difference between a ton and ten pounds and they spoke of "piles of food rotting in the sun". Well of course if you are off-loading ships in the surf with these little lighters, these little blue wooden barges, and taking the food into warehouses on land, it just piles up. A ship will carry

five thousand tons of food or two thousand tons of food and that gets piled up because the ships is off-loaded in two or three days. Planes moving that food in the night were eating into those piles gradually and it would last for a week/two weeks, so there was going to be a time when there was quite a pile of food there and these journalists would be looking at this and they would say "this thing is all inefficient and there's food piled up and rotting there". Well it wasn't rotting at all, it was just waiting to be taken off on the airlift, that's all. And I had very little respect for journalists in general after that operation. I always questioned what they wrote. There were television journalists there, and I found among the best of them to be the Finns - they could get a story straight for some reason. Well anyway, there was this press conference at which Von Rosen said that arms and food were inseparable and that one without the other was no good. This, I guess, got widely reported in the press of the world and Viggo Mollerup and his wife Mona -

Jacobs: They were the operational heads of Nordchurchaide -- the basis for the church relief airlift at that time.

Orick: Yes. They were either in Sao Tomé at the time or they came there quickly, and they fired Von Rosen as Chief of the airlift and he was stunned.

Jacobs: They took the position that an airlift supported by church relief agencies could not fly arms, and Von Rosen did not accept that. Is that right?

Orick: I don't know. I think they objected to his saying anything about it. The Olson plane could fly arms and did. Von Rosen by that time was so worked up about the situation - don't forget we estimated eight to ten thousand kids a day dying of starvation in Biafra at that time and it was a very bad scene.

Jacobs: I take it none of the people at UNICEF knew that you had any involvement in something like this - you never talked with them about it? You were there as a representative of UNICEF - you and Father Byrne who represented CARITAS, felt you had to do whatever you could to keep the airlift going, but this also included the arms flights which was outside your role as a UNICEF representative.

Orick: Everything I did was outside my role as a UNICEF representative, because I had no brief.

Jacobs: You didn't feel any particular compunction about anything like that.

Orick: I did nothing illegal or even immoral, or unethical. I didn't advocate moving arms and food on the same flights at all. When they threw the Irish milk off, arms went on but -

Jacobs: You didn't arrange that, you just happened to see it, you witnessed it?

Orick: Yes, but so what? The Olson people were entitled by their rules to carry arms if they wanted to. They could do both, there was nothing even unethical about it. I can understand how it would

look bad. But no, I wasn't party to any direct arrangements of that type - but I was damned glad to see it happen, I can tell you.

Jacobs: You were in Biafra - I think you met for the first time with the delegate of the Red Cross, Heinrich Jaggi, one evening?

Orick: I stayed away from Jaggi for a month.

Jacobs: Why? Since UNICEF and the Red Cross were working very closely together throughout.

Orick: I didn't see that they were working together. I saw that the Red Cross had one plan which was to subdue the Biafrans and put them all in tents, with open mouths to be fed, as I have said - that was their vision of Africans receiving relief. If only they would stop fighting, they would help them. It's like telling a wife "don't make so much noise - he's beating you but if you will just be quiet we'll will be sympathetic with you". Wonderful. So, who was UNICEF? Dick Heyward, I thought, was a very good guy and had his head screwed on right - some of the others I had my doubts about, so there was division even there. Officially, informally, because of some awful mistake, the ICRC was appointed as co-ordinating agency for world relief even though they had no facilities whatsoever and certainly no expertise.

Jacobs: You never knew who appointed them?

Orick: No, I never knew. That's what we had to work with. So, anyway, I knew this about Jaggi that he had been in Nigeria for twelve years,

I think, before the war. That he had been with the Union Trading Company which was a good company - a fairly knowledgeable guy - and I wanted to see for myself what was going on. I didn't want to meet him until I was about ready to leave, because I didn't want to be bottled up by the Red Cross. After having met Lindt, and having him lie to me like that, I was naturally sceptical about the Red Cross. So, I was going to leave on -- I guess, Wednesday or Thursday, or Tuesday -- I don't know, or Sunday, and I walked across the street from Middelkoop's house to Jaggi's house - they were about 85 feet apart - and introduced myself. He said, "I've been expecting you sooner or later", and he was a very friendly guy, and he said, "Let's have a drink". I said, "Come on down to my place, I've got an air-conditioned room". So he got a bottle of whisky and brought it down and we sat there talking about the whole situation for hours. A very good guy - he knew the score. And I imagine Lindt had a lot of trouble with him, at least I hope he did. While we were there, Alida de Jaeger came in -

Jacobs: She was the nutritionist who UNICEF was paying for, though she went in under the auspices of the International Union of Child Welfare. She was, in fact, a UNICEF-sponsored nutritionist in Biafra.

Orick: I liked her - she had a lot of guts. A good, straight-forward person. She came in and said that the Nigerians were about to take Okigwi, and that all that was left in Okigwi now was a corpse, the village idiot and the Red Cross - that's what she said. So Jaggi and I looked at each other and said, "Let's go!". So we got

into his car and drove to Okigwi which was about 20 miles north. As we got there, we had to cross a low bridge of concrete and timber and the Biafran troops were mining it, preparing to blow it up. We asked them how long we had and they asked us how long did we need, and we said until maybe two o'clock in the morning. They had to blow it up by dawn because the Nigerians were going to come in by then, they felt. So we said we would be back and "Don't blow it up without us". The reason we went there was because Jaggi had had orders from, I suppose Lindt. They had a unique plan and they were going to let their Red Cross offices be rolled over by the Nigerian troops...

Jacobs: It was standard Red Cross procedure.

Orick: ...so that they would then come up on the other side and give relief to the people who were then displaced - the Biafrans who had suddenly become Nigerians in the night.

Jacobs: Actually the Red Cross is supposed to treat military wounded - a regular mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross is to care for military wounded on the battle field, so they allow the battle to pass around them and treat the wounded of both sides impartially

Orick: Oh. Nevertheless, I had the feeling from Jaggi this had distinctly to do with civilians because it was well known that the Nigerians weren't feeding any of these people because they had been Biafrans and they were just as happy to let them die. The

military wounded is another matter but I don't think that was involved in this. So, we found the village idiot, it was dark and there was a candle in a depression in the roadside and this guy was sitting there. The corpse was in the hospital, he was an Ibo soldier. We found the Red Cross in a one-story concrete school with an overhang from which hung huge Red Cross flags which had been shot to hell by the MIGs aiming at them directly. We went in and introduced ourselves - Jaggi knew the Red Cross people - and he very carefully explained this new wrinkle. There were two Red Cross doctors, a slender guy and a fat guy. The slender guy sat there listening to the whole thing carefully, asked a few questions. The fat one rolled over on his side, took a rosary, and plumped into an up-ended 40 millimetre shell with a crucifix hanging over the edge, and went to sleep. He was killed the next day of course.

Then we went to another part of the school, maybe it was part of the hospital, I don't know.

Jacobs: Did one of the Jugoslav surgeons ask ...

Orick: Yes, that's it. We went down to

Jacobs: That was later.

Orick: Well, the same evening. We went from the Swedes to the Yugoslavs, or to Yugoslav, one was a young guy and one was slightly older and getting bald, with a deep voice, and Jaggi explained the whole

thing to them again and one translated to the other and I was introduced as a consultant to UNICEF. The older guy turned to me and said, "I would be interested to know what the consultant thinks." And I said, "I understand that General Gowon in Lagos knows of this arrangement, but if I were you I would be far less interested in whether he knows it or whether the field commander up that hill knows it." I'd gone out to urinate between coming from the Swedes to the Yugoslavs and up the hill in the dark I could hear the Nigerians clinking and talking the way people do in the night getting ready for battle, and they weren't more than 200 yards away up the hill. So this guy talked with his friends and then he gave Jaggi his answer, "Okay, we stay", he said. And they were killed too, one or both of them. Along with a missionary couple that must have come in the night, named Savory, I think the name was, I read about them too being killed. We left there and went back to the bridge and they were holding of course and the Biafran troops carried the car over to the place where they planted the explosives at both ends of the bridge, not totally, but it reaches up enough so that it was very light, and you know, floating over the thing. We went back to Ummahia to talk some more, and I didn't find out until a couple of days later that these people had been killed. The Nigerian commander -- whether Gowon had known about it or not -- he didn't give a damn and killed them. So, not knowing they had been killed, I left the next night I guess. And I stayed in So Tomé. The next day I went to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, with Father Byrne and Jaeger to see about the evacuation of Biafran kids. People were talking about getting kids out and I figured that you had to get a million more, maybe 2 million kids out of

there, or they were going to die. We had gone earlier to Libreville to talk with the people there and saw a lot of kids. They had plasters on their foreheads with their names, five-year-old kids and so on. They were okay, there weren't too many of them.

Tape 2, Side 1

The Gabonese position was: "Look, we have nation of 400,000 people; create here another Israel if you want to, but don't bring out more than 400,000 kids." That seemed quite reasonable. We talked to the Governor of South Tomée, who said, "Yes, fine, use the return empty flights of airlift to bring out children. Two conditions: you must move them off the island the next day or as quickly thereafter as you can. No child must die on this island." All that meant to us was that we would get the corpses in the plane and if that was what we were going to do, then move them off so he wouldn't know. And then he said this strange thing, he said, "And no Indians, no Indians." I said, "Why no Indians." "Remember Goa", he said. Remember that little chunk of land in India called Goa that the Portuguese owned and the Indians took it back in 1948 or something. He'd been rankled over that ever since.

Jacobs: Did he think there were Indians in Biafra?

Orick: Well, no Indian pilots, no Indian personnel, no Indians on his island. Maybe Indian doctors for all we know.

Jacobs: Maybe he'd come from Goa.

Orick: I think so. Probably. A lot about that guy. And so on the day that I left Biafra, I left at night, I came to Sao Tomé and spent the night in a place that stank of crepe rubber because it was a warehouse for rubber creping. Next day Byrne and Jaeger and I took a DC-6, I guess, maybe it was a -7, to Abidjan, and I registered at the Ivoire Hotel and we had lunch there by the pool. I saw people I hadn't seen in years and I felt very strange because they were all swimming in the pool. And Jaeger and Byrne went off to see the authorities, whoever they might be, about bringing out kids and and billeting them in the Ivory Coast. I couldn't go because I wasn't really a representative of anybody. Coming out of the pool, a girl, a very attractive young French girl ran over to me and through her arms around me and said, "George". She was soaking wet. I was wearing a wash-and-wear suit and I was growing a moustache. It was Sylvia Taton who had acted as an interpreter for me in some business arrangements in Ivory Coast a couple of years before. She was still living there.

Jacobs: Is this relevant to UNICEF, George?

Orick: No. Well, yes, it is. Because she insisted I come by with her to have a drink with Albert Bugball who was a Moroccon Jewish Frenchman who was in the Ivory Coast setting up ballet schools and music schools and cultural things and I hadn't seen him either for a couple of years. So we went by his place for a drink and he seemed glad to see me. But there was another man there who was the

UNICEF Representative, who would not talk to me, would not shake my hands, would not acknowledge my presence in any way, and to this day I don't know why.

Jacobs: You don't recall his name?

Orick: I do not. Bugball had told him I'd just come from Biafra, you see and ...

Jacobs: And you were a UNICEF representative.

Orick: Well, I wasn't, I had a UNICEF passport, I was a UNICEF certificate, I was a consultant to UNICEF.

Jacobs: Yes, but you were working with UNICEF.

Orick: Yes. But it was a strange meeting and

I assumed that this man didn't want to have anything to do with me because he had no brief from New York, and he was a superb bureaucrat, no doubt. Maybe Jaeger and Byrne had already seen him during the day to talk about the status of these kids as refugees. Once they were out they would be refugees and UNICEF would have to take care of them. I don't know why. Maybe he didn't believe me. But anyway, he had nothing to do with me. So I spent the night there and next morning took a plane to Paris, arrived about dawn I guess, a little after, it wasn't very late. Then went to Geneva where I met Gertrude Lutz. I had never met her before. I was

astonished at her competence and scope. Very, very good. She, I believe, was to arrange for me to go to the central headquarters of the ICRC, and there I met them. The patriarchs. In their marble home. Huge wood table, magnificent wood. Patricians. Had no idea yet what was going on in Biafra. Questioned me closely about the airlift. "We've heard reports", one of them said, "that arms and food are coming into the same airport." "You have, have you?" Of course they were. And I made a diagram of the airport for them, the taxiways, the revetments, the hard stand for the arms planes, the hard stand for the food planes, so there would be no misunderstanding about any of that. I was very tired and I was very..

Jacobs: Were these people you were meeting with, were they officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross, or were they members of the Committee of the Red Cross?

Orick: Some of them were members of the Committee.

Jacobs: Because it sounds as though you're describing members of the Committee, who wouldn't have been so well-informed.

Orick: Yes.

Jacobs: Presumably the officials did know that there were arms coming in. That's just what I wanted to clarify who they were.

Orick: Well, these people knew that, they knew from reports.

Jacobs: Yes, they presumably were not people actually working with the Red Cross Committee office, rather they were the patricians, as you put it, on the Committee.

Orick: Yes. There were probably 8 or 10 in the room so I imagine some were Committee members...

Jacobs: It must have been the weekly meeting or something.

Orick: Maybe, I don't know what it was. But there were 8 or 10 people there and some looked like staff people and some looked like Committee members. So I briefed them on everything I could think of that would help. I told them about the coming protein starvation, or the starch starvation, and what I felt would happen. And I talked to them about the incident at Okigwe.

Jacobs: Their people were killed. Red Cross Society doctors were killed.

Orick: I think I knew about it by then, I think I knew about it in Paris. I gave them my estimate of Jaggi -- a very high estimate. And I think that was about it. As I say, I was very tired. And it wasn't that I was depressed, but I was in kind of an upset frame of mind over the whole thing.

Jacobs: Somewhat a state of shock from all you'd seen in Biafra.

Orick: Not shock. Anger, anger.

Jacobs: From four weeks of a dismaying experience.

Orick: Anger more than anything else. And then I went to New York.

Jacobs: You alluded before to the carbohydrate shortage that was coming. Would you go into that more fully. You made an assessment upon leaving Biafra. You wrote some reports to UNICEF which then became widely disseminated, and they predicted that there would be a carbohydrate shortage that would lead to carbohydrate starvation. Whereas until that time there had been principally protein starvation that affects children, there was going to be perhaps carbohydrate starvation that affects the entire population by the end of the year, I think you predicted.

Orick: Yes, that's what I expected. The Biafrans were eating there seed yams, and several Biafrans took me into their kind of a corral like a round place where they stored their seeds for the next year. And the seed yams varied in size from, I would say, 2-1/2--3 inches in diameter down to 1/2 inch in diameter and they'd eaten the bigger ones and all they had left were the little ones. I didn't think they were going to be able to produce much of a crop because they didn't have the seeds. Cassava cuttings, I guess, I don't know whether they were saving enough root to plant new cassavas or not. But the yam thing disturbed me a great deal. And Middelkoop was upset about this, and so was Jaggi. This was kind of a general thing we all perceived there; it was nothing I originated. I felt it was going to be a terrible disaster. We had to get a lot of kids out because they wouldn't get anything to eat in a competitive situation

Jacobs: You wrote reports to UNICEF about this.

Orick: Yes, I wrote a report to UNICEF which was considered too hysterical to distribute and so Dick Heyward in his calm manner asked me if I would revise it. He said, "Imagine that you're writing it to Lord Carrington", I think, "Write it in such a way that you would read it". This was the name of the man who was the British representative to the U.N., I think.

Jacobs: No, Lord Caradon.

Orick: Caradon. That was it.

Jacobs: Carrington later went in on behalf of the Conservative Party to assess the situation. He was Shadow cabinet foreign minister.

Orick: Yes, this was Caradon. So I rewrote it with that in mind and I think it was quite a reasonable report and I prefaced it by a two-page, almost syllogistic analysis of the situation which I think speaks for itself. If you have a copy of that why don't you put it in. Shall I read it?

Jacobs: Well, no. We can append it to the transcript. I think at that point when you had written that report you at the same time went to Washington and met with U.S. Government officials and made the same report to them, verbally. Is that right?

Orick: Yes. When I came back I think I got a good night's sleep and went to the office and said hello to people and I called George Sherry

who was at the time the head of the Nigerian Desk at State and told him "I've just come back from Biafra, and I want to come down to see you guys". And he said, "What do you want now?" And I said, "I want three things: I want you people to reimburse UNICEF for all of the money they have spent chartering ships; I want you to find rules in your own rule book so you can pick up the check book for the entire airlift because the food ain't anyplace until it's in Biafra and all you're doing is paying $45 a ton to get it from the States to Sao Tomé and the other $350 a ton to airlift it in you're not paying, and you've got to pay that; and I want you to work out a plan to subsidize the economy of Icelands?". "Okay", he said, "Come on down." So I went down the next day and met with him and Ray Wank, Bob Smith, some other guy, and he said, by the way, on the phone when I made that first call, he said, "Do you mind if our friends from across the river sit in?" And I said, "I don't mind if they sit in, but who are they?" "You know", he said. And I said, "I don't know who they are". "CIA", he said. "They'll debrief you." "No", I said, "They won't debrief me, George, I'll brief them." It was always important to me in dealing with people like him and the CIA and so on, that I had the initiative. That they would not debrief me.

Jacobs: Well, it wasn't their option.

Orick: It was my option.

Jacobs: You were also representing UNICEF.

Orick: Yes.

Jacobs: You couldn't be debriefed, as a UNICEF person.

Orick: To me it's a question of verbs. I brief, they don't debrief, I brief, the initiative is with me. I felt that way about it very strongly. So when I got there, finally, I talked with George and the others, and I was taken into a small room that had been freshly painted and echoed terribly. There were two men in there. One whose name was Shurtleff and the other whose name I've forgotten. And Sherry..

Jacobs: Leonard Shurtleff was the State Department Intelligence and Research man, not CIA.

Orick: Yes. That's the way he was introduced.

Jacobs: He was INR.

Orick: Yes, right. But what I'm trying to say is that it was explained to me that of the other agents who would be there, one's grandmother had died and the other was busy, so there was only State Department intelligence people who were there. So I told them what I could and told them pretty much all that I told you and more, the details. Well, the reimbursement to UNICEF I don't think was any problem. The plan to have the U.S. State Department or U.S. Government pay for the airlifting, that was a unique one, and as it happened, I had already worked it out with the Governor of Sao Tomé, the plan, and with Byrne that the United States food, American food, would be carried on flights going in that left Sao Tomé after midnight, and at extraordinarily high, some might think

exorbitant, air charges would be levied on those planes and the planes before midnight would carry nominal charges. This was a device...

Jacobs: The charges at the airport at Sao Tomé

Orick: Yes. And I think I had in mind that these airport charges would be subsidized by the State Department, or something. I'm not sure how the plan would work in my own mind. I talked to the people in Washington about it and then I put it out of mind as I always did on these things. Whether or not they ever picked up the check for the flights or not, I don't know. Maybe you know. The third item, the subsidization of the economy of Iceland, stockfish was a staple protein food in the Ibo diet -- protein short area -- they had become the biggest importers of stockfish. And of course, being in a state of seige they weren't getting any stockfish. Norway could afford to give stockfish to the airlift because Norway had other markets for it. The Icelanders principal market for the stockfish was Biafra, or the Ibos of Nigeria, the southern Nigerians. I guess 95% or something of their stockfish crop, as you will, went there. Indeed, in the days when I lived in Nigeria, I knew Ullie Sjolborg, the big silver-haired man who was the Icelandic Consul to Nigeria, and his principle business was selling stockfish. So the Icelanders could not sell their stockfish. They hadn't developed markets and their stockfish were piling up on the docks, I suppose, and they were going broke. The economy was down, the currency had been devalued, I think 23%, I don't know where I got that figure, but I figured we had to find a way to help them so they could

afford to give the stockfish to the airlift. Dick Heyward took that forward and I think I heard 2 or 3 months later that he had accomplished it, that he brought it off, that it was done and Icelandic stockfish began to flow into the airlift. It always struck me as strange that an arctic country was so deeply affected by an equatorial war and had so much to do with it finally. Some of the airplanes in von Rosen's airlift had little steel plates in them; Iceland airlines, you know, they were from Iceland, too.

Jacobs: I think you wanted to bring large numbers of children out of Biafra at that time. What was UNICEF's attitude toward that.

Orick: I thought rather positive, I think I talked to Dick about it and I think I talked to Charles Egger, I'm not sure. Most of my conversations at UNICEF were with Dick Heyward. His attitude, he said, "I think we cannot help them anymore than we are now in Biafra", and they were operating under a mandate which covered children and lactating mothers, I believe, and pregnant women, mothers. They couldn't bring them out, they couldn't finance it, they couldn't help. But he said, "Once they're out, they're refugees and then we can enter that picture." And this is why the talk of putting them in Gabon and Ivory Coast. This as far as I know never really got tested, maybe on a small scale, but certainly not on a large scale, because our plans all collapsed and the hundreds of thousands and millions of kids that we talked about were never brought out, so that all came to nought.

Jacobs: I think this was one of the things that led to your leaving UNICEF. You left UNICEF in early December, 1968, and it was partly

that you wanted to undertake a project apart from UNICEF to organize a way of getting the children out. Is that right, that was your reason for departing from UNICEF?

Orick: I, yeah.

Jacobs: 1968, with Norman Cousins, organizing that ...

Orick: There were three reasons why I left UNICEF. That was the stimulus for it and this appeared quite important, the Norman Cousins thing, and I had a lot to do with Norman expanding his plans from bringing out a few token kids to making a big thing about it and the IBM people were involved in the planning, Katzenbach, and everybody else. And another reason was that I felt there wasn't much more I could do with UNICEF on this. And a third reason is an indefinable but nevertheless very powerful one. Remember I spoke at the beginning of this interview about feeling I had a few months emotional credit and goodwill with the people of UNICEF that I would consciously and knowingly chip away and dissipate with almost everything I did, because virtually everything I suggested or tried to do there, not only because of the normally abrasive personality that I have but also because I was running into -- even in the best of organizations like UNICEF -- a bureaucracy that hadn't really done a hell of a lot in a long time. And I felt I'd used it all up and I had to go.

Jacobs: I think you told me one time that you had heard also that the Nigerian Mission to the U.N. had been speaking to UNICEF and wanted to get you fired. Is that right?

Orick I had heard this, yes. I've never been able to prove it nor have I been particularly interested in proving it, but I heard this. I've forgotten where I heard it. Somebody at UNICEF. Do you have any information on this, by the way?

Jacobs No, I was asking you about it.

Orick: It wouldn't surprise me because I knew the score and from this guy -- the plastic pipe specialist -- I'm sure they knew a great deal about what I was doing. We had some things going at UNICEF, you know, that we probably shouldn't talk about here. As I say, I think in the end my emotional credit was pretty well used up. I'll tell you one thing, I have never had a lot of use for the United Nations. I felt it's an impossible dream almost. And you try to make a thing like that work in the world and it's very difficult. I notice its fourteenth-rate diplomats who go there, and I've always resented that the concentration of news coverage and attention is to the political side which is a small portion of what the U.N. does because most of the work is by the specialized agencies. But it occurred to me during the Biafran experience and observations that I've made since, that UNICEF is the only, and I repeat only, the only agency with any guts at the United Nations. It was gutless in a lot of ways, UNCIEF was, but in that situation in Biafra, it extended itself in a way that I would not have expected a United Nations agency to do. A guy like Dick Heyward, I don't know if he bent the rules or how he did it, but he was a superb bureaucrat and he got a lot of things done. I think that many of the people he was answerable to, whoever they were, were

not quite as enthusiastic as he about them. But the organization did move on that crisis and I think insofar as I had anything to do about that we probably saved some lives. Not enough, as it turned out.

Jacobs: Do you have any thoughts on what UNICEF should have been doing, or could have done that it didn't do?

Orick: I don't know, short of acts of war I don't know what could have been done. I think in an evacuation maybe they could have reached in a little deeper, you know, and helped the kids out, or set up something. But almost everything UNICEF did in effect was violating the territory of a sovereign nation -- Nigeria. And they had to be not only evenhanded but very circumspect in the way they did things. So I think a lot of rules were bent there, and I don't know any other agency of the U.N. that did that. World Health Organization, gutless bastards, did nothing whatever. FAO, nothing. "Food" is right in their title. "Food". Nothing. UNICEF, I've got a lot of time for.

Jacobs: Any other thoughts, George? Anything that should be learned from this experience that UNICEF should know about and think of in the future?

Orick: No, I don't have any recommendations. I don't think that way. I'm not a big planner. I wonder if Dick Heyward has ever cut his necktie off again though.

Jacobs: He didn't do that during the Biafran situation.

Orick: He didn't.

Jacobs: No, some other time.

Orick: In retrospect, I want to recall something that happened early in this, in July of 1968. I began to become very upset about the situation in Biafra and I made a couple of telephone calls and one of them was to a girl called Maggie Howard who was a secretary to Ralph Bunche, who was then alive and operating at the UN. And I said I'd like to make an appointment to talk to Mr. Bunche about the Biafran situation. I knew Maggie because I knew her family. "I lived in Nigeria a long time, and I know a lot about it, and I think sp,etjomg sjpiñd be dpme. amd I think the U.N. should get off its ass and do something." So, she said she would pass this on to him. I never heard from her again, I never heard from Bunche. Instead, the next day Dick Heyward called me into his office and said, "I've just had a telephone call from Rolz Bennett, who was an Under-Secretary, and he said to me", Heyward said, "I understand you have a consultant named Orick who is becoming exercised about Biafra. We would suggest you tell him to cool it." After the whole thing was over, I had a long lunch with Brian Urquhart whom I knew because of the same connection, he was Maggie Howard's stepfather or something, I forget the connection now. Anyway I like that guy, a very funny man, too. We sat at the Delegates Dining Room at the U.N. and we talked for three hours, I think the place was empty except for us talking. He said, (we talked about

Biafra a lot), he said, "You know, come to think of it, I've spent all of my working career at the United Nations cleaning up the mess left by the British Empire. I seem to be a specialist in that", he said. And I said, "Well, here we are again, aren't we." "Yes", he said. And that was the end of that conversation. All the time we were working on this, we were puny people trying to do something in the face of forces which we could scarcely understand and certainly not deal with, nations. And that's the real weakness of the United Nations. When it was all over, all over, Ray Wank called me from Washington.

Jacobs: He was in the State Department

Orick Yes.

Jacobs: Bureau of African Affairs.

Orick: And he said, with tears in his voice, "George, I want you to know that we never meant to kill all those kids." He was one of the good guys, and he wanted me to know that. I don't know if I helped anybody or not. I don't know if I did any good in that situation. If anything I did had anything to do with keeping evenone kid alive, I'm grateful. And that's all I've got to say.