

Operation

Biafran

Babies

In English

The war between Nigeria and Biafra took place between July 1967 and January 1970. The number of victims, mostly civilians, is estimated at close to three million.

This book was written in the time period of 1969-1970. It is about the sensational achievements during the Nigeria-Biafra war by the Swedish pilot Count Carl Gustaf von Rosen. During the conflict, a group of small rocket-equipped, single-engine aircrafts, type MFI, were deployed. Alluding both to the planes' small size and to the starving and dying Biafran children this air force was called "Biafran Babies".

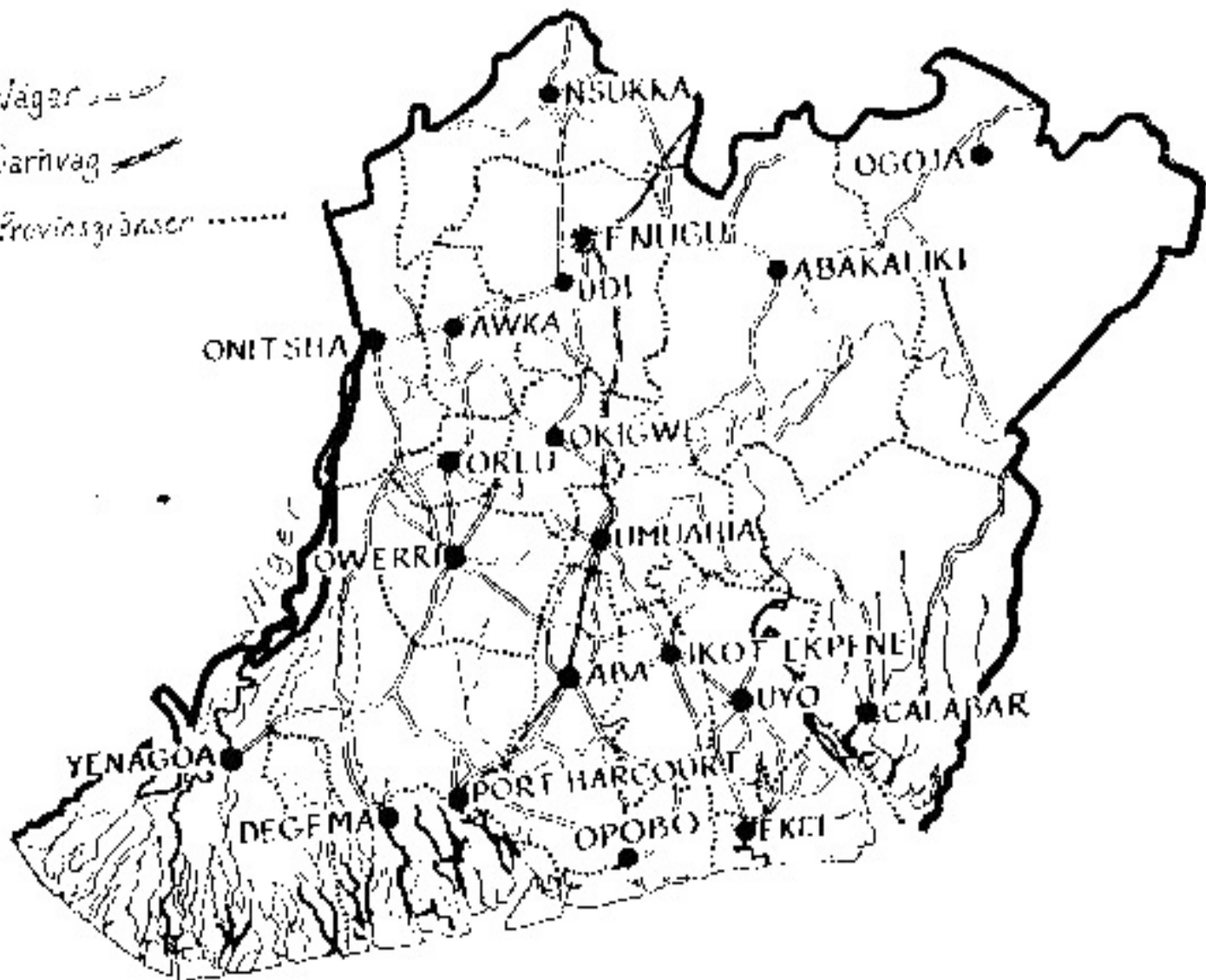
Most of the manuscript was approved by von Rosen, but because it contained certain disclosures about strategy and tactics, which were secret and could have caused problems if they were revealed, the issue of the book was postponed. The war of succession was lost and Biafra was subsequently reabsorbed by the State of Nigeria.

The introductory chapters have been written by the journalist Tord Wallstrom. The remaining

portion of the book was written by the aviator Gunnar Haglund who flew on the same missions with von Rosen. Pilot Haglund published his account in 1988 under the title *Guerrillapilot i Biafra* (in Swedish), based on the same material, but in more detail and also containing a variety of photos. *Operation Biafran Babies* is published only as an e-book on this site.



Vägar ————
 Järnväg ————
 Provinsgränser ······



In the air the Biafran Air Force made a most dramatic re-entry into the war, and in a brilliant series of raids completely paralyzed the Nigerian Air Force. After four days of operation four of the enemy operational warplanes were out, three control towers in Port Harcourt, Enugu and Benin were set on fire, the airport building in Enugu and a large number of artillery stands disrupted. The refinery in Port Harcourt was set on fire. And a recently added power station in Ughelli was halted from operation. The brilliance in this performance, the precision of attacks, the ingenious choice of targets stunned the Nigeria forces and their friends. Another way of looking at this is that the Biafran Air Force in four days destroyed more military targets than the Nigerian Air Force had done in two years - cost wise probably two times more than Nigerian air raids had cost Biafra in military equipment and facilities. The superiority in the Nigerian Air Force's list of achievements is not due to destruction of military targets but rather the destruction of the lives of civilians and their property.

Odumegwu Ojukwu June 1, 1969

THE NEWS TW

Stockholm, May 26, 1969, Reuter

A 59-year-old Count recently led two Biafran air raids against Nigerian airfields, according to reports here today. The newspaper Expressen writes that the attacks were performed by Swedish pilots in single-seat training aircrafts, smuggled out of Sweden. Expressen writes that Count Carl Gustaf von Rosen, who earlier this year made several flights for relief organizations, led the attacks. He took a month's service-leave from his job as a charter pilot in order to implement "Operation Biafran Babies" — a plan to obliterate the Nigerian Air Force in the same way Israel destroyed the Egyptian aircrafts in 1967. Biafran aircraft attacked the Port Harcourt airfield on Thursday and Benin's airfield on Saturday, killed six people and destroyed a federal Nigerian MiG fighter. Expressen claims that von Rosen after several visits to Biafra persuaded General Odumegwu Ojukwu to accept the plan. The newspaper quoted von Rosen: "I have long had the idea that the Nigerian Air Force could be obliterated on the ground. Nigerian aircraft have terrorized the Biafran population. Women and children have been victims of bombs and bullets from the aircrafts, which Soviet Union provided Nigeria with."

The night of May 22, 1969 was one of the most troublesome for aid flights to the Uli-field in Biafra from Sao Tomé and Cotonou. For some time the Nigerian bombing had increased. "The Intruder" the Nigerian night bomber, was constantly above the field. Several planes were forced to turn around.

On the afternoon of May 22 the relief aviators on Sao Tomé prepared for even greater difficulties. They feared that the airlift, if the Nigerian air raids accelerated further, might be forced to cease.

The first approaches every night were most critical. They started at 5 PM so as to be at Uli at dusk. At the same time the Nigerian bombing raids would commence in the same area. I flew in with the second plane that night, a chartered plane from Braathen Airways, commanded by Helge BJORLO, a 42-year old Norwegian and an auxiliary flight veteran. He and his crew had previously experienced several dangerous situations. A Canadian plane a few weeks earlier belly landed at Uli just when BJORLO came in for landing. He discovered the crash-landed plane in the last second and managed to become airborne again. The crash had just occurred and Uli's traffic control with no overview of the field had not received a report about it. The damaged plane was then left in the field and was destroyed in a subsequent Nigerian bomber attack. BJORLO managed to return to Sao Tomé.

Bjørlo and his men had also made an attempt to fly into Biafra in daylight. They were subjected to an intense bombardment, but managed to land on Uli and get out again after unloading. The experiment proved, however, that flying in the daytime was too dangerous.

The pilots were always prepared to fly under hazardous conditions. This night it was, however, quiet in the skies above Uli. It looked as if the relief flights would continue undisturbed the whole night. In the "State House" - a customs and administration building a few miles from Uli's landing path - I got the explanation for this. While I waited for transportation from there I went to sleep on the floor. I was awakened in the middle of the night by a Biafran contact, who announced that the first Biafran attack was completed as planned and that the result exceeded all expectations. According to this first report at least three Nigerian MiG:s and a few anti-aircraft guns had been destroyed at Port Harcourt airfield.

I had been at the airfield in Port Harcourt almost exactly one year earlier. Then fierce land battles were being fought. The front line went straight across the big open field. Shortly thereafter the Biafran troops were forced to retreat and then the Port Harcourt field became one of the major Nigerian bases, which pumped arms and ammunition day and night in to

the area and where the night bombers, which caused so much trouble for the relief aviators, evidently were stationed. Now, it appeared, "The Intruder", as one bomber was called, was eliminated, at least temporarily.

I managed to get ahead in a car to the Biafran Air Force's headquarters in Orlu and spent the rest of the night in an armchair. The following day I went, after having failed to make contact with von Rosen, to Owerri, where life started to come back after the city's reconquest. There was already Lloyd Garrison from the New York Times at the press headquarters. Also he knew what was going on. Late in the afternoon we were picked up by an Air Force car and then waited for the darkness at Air Force headquarters, before we taken on secret jungle paths to the base.

Along Biafra's roads were plenty of check-points. Some of them were manned by female backup police officers in uniform, others by civil defence and the most important ones by the army. It was always pretty exciting driving through the Biafran night, when preparedness was high and the rifles at the ready.

After an hour of driving, we arrived at the air base and were transferred directly into a palm leaf camouflaged house, where some of the pilots had just sat

down at the dinner table. The atmosphere was tense and von Rosen was by now dead tired. I took a few pictures of him and the pilot Auguste Okpe, of course without using the flash.



Lagos radio had on the first attack reported that an "unidentified aircraft" destroyed three planes and killed some soldiers at Port Harcourt. Nigerians were apparently perplexed. It was important to prevent the news of the air strikes from leaking out prematurely. Lloyd Garrison and I agreed not to disclose anything except with von Rosen's permission, but it was clear that there was a leak somewhere and that Expressen, a Stockholm tabloid, by now already had a detailed depiction of the preparations for the first attack. Apparently one of the journalists covering the conflict preferred to sell the story in advance. I informed von Rosen about this and he was almost terrified - a publication could mean catastrophe for continued operations. That same night we sent an express telegram to Expressen as an attempt to halt publication. The news still went out a few days later, but by then an attack on Benin had been executed.

In Biafra only a few people were informed of the plans. The head of the Overseas Press Service - the organization which took care of foreign journalists - knew nothing about what was going on. Biafra's radio was entirely silent on the Biafran attacks. This caused some concern for Lloyd Garrison and me. The press officer understood that we were in possession of news, which he was missing, and he was highly suspicious, especially against Lloyd. He was not informed until Monday, when also Radio Biafra for the first time announced that the Biafran Air Force

had conducted two successful attacks, but of course did not mention von Rosen and the other Swedes.

This news spread very quickly to the villages, where the people also noticed that the Nigerian flight activity had ceased. On Saturday there was a bombing from high altitude over a village near Orlu, but then it was quiet again soon afterwards.

At an intersection I met the the celebrated African writer Cyprian Ekwensi, who in late 1968 had been visiting Sweden. He jubilantly described the success of the surprise Biafran air attacks:

- When you see von Rosen, you should remind him about a conversation we had in a taxi in Gothenburg, he said. He talked about the possibility of attacking Nigerian airfields with small aircraft. Tell him that it is precisely what we do now!

Ekwensi thus had no idea that von Rosen was in Biafra and led the attacks. Nonetheless Ekwensi was in a management position in Information Ministry.

Later I met a Swedish Red Cross team, which had heard on the Voice of America that Swedish pilots led by von Rosen were flying for Biafra. But the Red Cross-men did not take the report seriously, it was too fantastic.

- Of course it is not true, they said.

I made another visit to the air base, this time together with Nonyem Anyaoku, 26-year old guide in the press agency. I had met her at my first visit to Biafra. The evening before she had told me about the past year: a year of cruel war, famine and terror bombings. To really understand her and other Biafrans' reaction, when the news of the Biafran Air Force's successful retaliation came, one must know what the Biafran people had experienced.

We sat at a candle in one of the teachers' houses at Owerri seminary, which was cleaned up and put into use as temporary residence for visiting journalists. Nonyem told about the period before the relief air lift, when thousands of people died every day.

- I'll never forget Ikot Ekpene, she told me. I came into town with a journalist when our troops had retaken it. When we came along a street, we heard a child crying somewhere. It was otherwise silence. We looked for the sound and an officer opened a door that was nailed. Inside we found a dead man and a dead woman and on the floor between them a dead toddler. And next to the bodies sat another small child, crying softly. Nigerians had shot the mother and father and locked the children in and left them to die. Had it not been for the still crying child we would have noticed nothing. But the child died, before we had time to get it to the hospital.

There was another time, when I followed a troop of soldiers along a lonely road near Ikot Ekpene. Then we saw a little boy coming towards us on the way. It rained copiously and the boy kept his hands on his head - it's a sign of deepest despair with us to keep your hands on your head. He was crying and the rain poured down, and he saw nothing, only went there in the mud along the road. All alone, abandoned, heartbroken. That was an image of this war, the lonely crying child. He had nowhere to go. We took him of course up in the car and left him in a child-home, which we knew.

And I was at Oboro sickbay shortly after we had regained Ikot Ekpene. I was there for five hours. During that time eight children died before our eyes. I could not endure it. But these so-called observers! I do not care about the Englishmen, they're in the war. But the Swedes! They were silent. In Umuahia, which was bombed so many times - they claimed that the city had never been bombed! Umuahia, where I counted 51 dead people, mostly women and children, after a single attack. What is it that makes a country - not the possessions and cities and lands, it is people who live there! They are the ones they want to kill. It is the innocent who suffer; and children suffer the most. But they do not believe us. If the Swedish government does not believe us, why not send a delegation here? They can see everything - we have nothing to hide. They can stop anywhere and ask

anybody, Nonyem said.

I think Nonyem's story and her bitterness is typical of what the vast majority of Biafrans had experienced and what they felt. Typically was also her reaction when she was told the news of the Biafran Air Force. In the car out to the air base, I told her about Carl Gustaf von Rosen and the other Swedes. At the base we were treated with dinner and Nonyem listened wide-eyed to von Rosen's and Auguste Okpe's descriptions of the attacks on Port Harcourt, Benin and Enugu where at least ten Nigerian planes had been eliminated.

When we went home that night she was happy:

- Swedes! I love the Swedes! I knew it: Nobody other than Swedes have come to our help. Nobody other than they have understood!

It was futile to try to explain to her that von Rosen and his colleagues did not represent the Swedish government and to remind her that Swedes were also on the Nigerian side of the front. But after Nigeria protested against the Swedish "interference" and the Swedish flag was burned during a "demonstration" in Lagos, Sweden's popularity further heightened in Biafra. When the time was ripe the Biafran government confirmed that Swedish pilots participated in the Biafran Air Force's first attacks.

Despite such a successful start the military value of the Operation Biafran Babies would still be disputed at length. But the psychological effects had great significance. That Biafra now had managed to fight back against the attacker, which for so long had an overall superiority in the air and terrorized the civilian population, increased Biafran resistance, will and optimism and fortified the assurance that luck was about to turn. Owerri had been retaken, Biafran guerrillas operated deep in the Mid West Region, the supply situation seemed to improve, and the Biafran Air Force had resurfaced. After two years of sufferings the Biafrans still strongly believed in victory - a victory that only meant the right to survive in freedom. Certainty of victory was in fact more evident in May 1969 than a year earlier. Biafra had admittedly lost large areas and also the provisional capital, Umuahia, but the war showed signs of turning. Refugees flocked back to Owerri, cleaned up and repaired their houses in the confidence that Nigerians would never come back.

Lloyd Garrison and I were the only journalists who visited the Biafran jungle airbase. Apparently only with difficulty had von Rosen succeeded in obtaining permission for us to visit him. We were only allowed to get there at night. I really had no idea where the base was situated. The night of Wednesday I wrote a report on the visit to the base. It then went by telex to Expressen.

Lloyd Garrison had already flown out on May 27 and his first reportage from the base was published in New York Times May 28, dated Orlu the 26th. Lloyd wrote, inter alia:

"A revived Biafran Air Force flying from a secret base in the jungle and led by Sweden's most celebrated aviator marks a significant military and economic threat to Nigeria's war effort. Neither the Swedes nor Biafrans are imagining that the new Air Force alone will turn over the military balance to Biafra's advantage in that almost two year old civil war. After studying the aerial reconnaissance photos of the damage, which was brought against the Nigerian air force on the ground, the Biafrans are however confident they may damage Nigeria from the air much more than the Nigerians have damaged Biafra. The head of the air force, wing commander George Esiolo, puts it this way: 'There's really no easily identifiable targets remaining in Biafra, which are worth to bomb, except the Uli airfield, where aid flights land at night-time. And after a year of effort, Nigerians are still trying to devastate Uli. Our government is now completely decentralized. Our industries and oil refineries are all well hidden in the bush.' The number of military and strategic targets in Nigeria is however large. By that surprise first strike against a federal airfield the Biafrans are already disturbing even civil air traffic. Federal ports are particularly vulnerable, as are the American and

European oil fields and oil lines in the Middle West region."

I stayed in Biafra a few days longer than Lloyd. The night I went to Uli I bought at a roadblock one of these unique Biafran newspapers, which the entire war was printed on using lined white book leaves. The magazine was called "The Jet" and the triumphant headline over a communiqué on Biafran Babies recent attack was: "BIAFRA'S AIR FORCE BANGED ON AGAIN."

Swedish involvement in the Biafran Air Force was regarded as the year's news in Sweden and publicity in the world press was also extensive. Carl Gustaf von Rosen was already one of the most known Swedes abroad and in 1969 his popularity increased further in Sweden.

How then did the news come out? And did it come out too early? Very few knew about the plans, in Sweden probably only a dozen people - not even the Swedish secret service apparently had a clue of what was going on. But somebody released the news in advance to a newspaper, which for obvious reasons locked it in a safe and whose great problem then was to print it in exactly the right moment. If the news was released too early - before the first attacks had been executed - the attack could have been thwarted and history would have changed: there would simply

not be any news. However, the risk of releasing the news story too late was the same: any other newspaper could also conceivably be in possession of the information.

I myself did not have this problem. Loyalty for Rosen and the other airmen and my commitment to Biafra made it impossible in this case to follow established journalistic principles. I think the same was true for Lloyd Garrison, who otherwise at a much earlier stage could have reported on the first attack.

For the Biafran Air Force it was imperative that the element of surprise be a factor. It meant that Nigeria would not be warned in advance by the media, no matter how well intentioned the leak to the press had been. The Biafran state leadership reacted strongly against any advance publication and von Rosen had a hard job trying to explain it. But the opinion-making power had certainly also great value. Many who previously regarded the famine in Biafra as a kind of natural disaster were now clear as to what it actually was that went on: a cruel war of oppression where terror bombing and starvation were part of the strategy in the war against a civilian people.

BIAFRA (TW)

We owe Africa not to disappoint. Africa needs Biafra. Biafra means that chains exploded. It is not enough to fight the Nigerians and their supporters. We must fight as the initial stage of the African revolution. This is the only black society, which itself can utilize raw materials, produce finished products and sell them on an absolute equal footing on the world market. When this has once been demonstrated it will be found that the foundations of neo-colonialism have been razed.

Odumegwu Ojukwu

The war between Nigeria and Biafra began July 6 1967, when the city of Ogoja in Biafra's North Eastern corner was attacked with artillery and Nigerian troops advanced on two fronts. The intention was to crush Biafran independence in what was called "a police action."

On 30 May the same year The Republic of Biafra had been proclaimed, comprising the Eastern region of the Nigerian Federation. Biafra's Declaration of Independence was the inevitable result of a long evolution towards a breakdown. Shortly thereafter, Nigeria attacked Biafra and its people, in an attempt to end their succession.

Like any other new African nations Nigeria at its liberation from England in 1950 was bound to the borders the colonialists drew up and that largely stemmed from 1884, when colonial powers at a conference in Berlin with the leadership of Bismarck divided the prey between them by drawing up lines on a map. The new nation of Nigeria became one of Africa's largest both in surface area and population. The new nation is roughly the same size as Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland together and the population was 1960 estimated to about 50 million (2013 about 170 million!). The people are divided into several hundred ethnic groups and languages. The largest are the Hausa/Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the Southwest and the Ibo in the East. These people all have their particularities and lack historical and cultural community. Under a foreign colonial power they could be kept together, but after independence tensions increased between the Muslim North, long controlled by feudal emirs, and the largely Christian South and East, which were open to new ideas and where the Nigerian nationalist movement was founded. The politics of the newly independent nation came to be overwhelmed by these tensions. The power-struggle was intensifying, corruption terrible. Nigeria was falling apart.

Such was the situation in the beginning of 1966, when a rebellion broke out. The prime minister and several government unionists were assassinated and

a military government took over. In July of that year there was a bloody mutiny within the army. The army Chief, who led the military government since the January uprising, was killed and instead Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon came to power. The most fateful events of 1966 were, however, the horrific massacres, which in several waves hit the Ibos. This particular ethnic people had since decades back emigrated from their homeland in the Eastern region and earned a good livelihood in other parts of Nigeria. A few million Ibos along with other people from the Eastern region had spread out in the Northern region. They supported themselves with merchandise and were also to a very large extent employees in administration. Despite this extensive emigration from the Eastern region there had, however, never been any closer cultural contact between the migrating Ibos and the original Hausa/Fulani in the Northern region. Ibos and other people from the South and East were referred to living in special "strangers" blocks outside the Muslim walled cities. Violent outbreaks against "foreigners" had previously occurred in the Northern Region, but never to such an extent as in 1966. During two periods, first in May and then in September, veritable horror orgies unfolded when mobs, in some cases aided by both police and military, slaughtered Ibos and other people from the Eastern region. The Easterners fled for their lives to their

home province, harassed by killer mobs. It is estimated that between 20 000 and 30 000 East Nigerians were killed during the massacres. Between one and two million fled to the eastern region, whose population during some weeks increased from estimated 12 million to about 14 million.

The army mutiny in July was a large part also against Ibo soldiers. Several hundreds were murdered.

After the July revolt Lieutenant-Colonel Gowon, supported by emirs, took power in the North Region, Western Region and the Mid West Region, but never in the Eastern region, where Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu was military governor and never recognized Gowon as the federal head of state. In practice Nigeria had now two governments with virtually the same legitimacy. Several attempts to enter into agreements and draw up guidelines for a sustainable constitution were made. The East Nigerian view was that it would reduce the central federal power and increase regional self-government with the goal to progressively overcome discordances. Northern Region and Gowon were opposed to this.

The large number of refugees in the Eastern region exerted strong pressure on Ojukwu. Family ties in this part of Africa are strong. Virtually every family in the East had somehow been affected by the massacres. The aversion towards again trying to

create a Nigerian unity was strong. Still, negotiations continued. The military governors met in early January 1967 in Aburi, Ghana, and made some agreements, which seemed to form the basis for a peaceful solution of the problems. When these agreements were ignored by Gowon the Eastern region gave up the idea of an amicable solution. The possibility of a definitive "secession" from the federation became stronger when Gowon proclaimed a partial blockade of the Eastern region to force it into submission. The starvation blockade therefore was underway even before May 30, 1967, when the Republic of Biafra was declared.

Biafra's area is about one sixth of Sweden but with a population of about 14 million (before the war and including about two million refugees from other parts of Nigeria). It is Africa's most densely populated area. It is also one of the most highly developed.

Biafra is completely within the tropics and differentiating between the rainy season, which culminates in June-September and the dry season, which lasts from November to March. Most of the surface is lowland with some mountain plateaus in the north. The vegetation is very rich and agriculture rewarding. There are also mineral resources. The most important natural resource is oil, which has high quality. The oil fields extend over to Nigeria's

Mid West Region. The major Biafran towns are the port towns of Port Harcourt and Calabar, the market town Onitsha on the Niger, the capital of Enugu and the university town Nsukka in the North and the cities of Aba, Umuahia and Owerri. The road network is one of the best in Africa. A railway connects Port Harcourt with Nigeria's Northern Region.

Immediately after the Declaration of Independence the blockade against Biafra became total and a month later Nigerian troops attacked the new republic. Most observers seemed to be convinced that the war would soon end up in a Biafran breakdown. But the war developed in to one of the greatest human tragedies in Africa's contemporary history. The overwhelming Nigerian superiority in terms of both soldiers and weapons was offset by the outstanding bravery, perseverance and strategic skills of the Biafrans. The Nigerian invading army consisted at the beginning of the war of about 85 000 men and at its end of about 500 000 men with modern weapons. It was equipped with artillery, tanks, jets and virtually unlimited amounts of ammunition by two great world powers, England and the Soviet Union. Against it stood a people's army, equipped with light, partly primitive weapons and with a constant lack of ammunition.

In the initial stages of the war the Nigerians in an attack from the north captured the cities Nsukka and Ogoja, but then stopped. At the end of July 1967 they

attacked Bonny island south of Port Harcourt by land forces, but shortly thereafter the Biafrans made a lightning attack westward over the Niger at Onitsha. Virtually the entire Mid West region was occupied by Biafrans. Most of the Nigerian Army was far from it on other fronts. Biafran troops seemed to be heading towards Lagos and Gowon seemed to be prepared to give up, but changed his mind when the English and American ambassadors intervened.

According to Ojukwu Biafra had no territorial ambitions and no plans of conquest. The purpose of the totally unexpected invasion was "to engage the snake's head", that is, Gowon.

The Biafran commander was Victor Banjo, a Nigerian officer, who by the federal government was convicted of treason for alleged involvement in a coup. He was detained in the Eastern region, but was released by Ojukwu, who in defiance of other military leaders appointed him advisor with the title of Brigadier - one of Ojukwu's worst mistakes. Banjo did not finish the advance towards Lagos and Ibadjan but declared instead the conquered part of the Middle West as " Republic of Benin" and made the Biafran forces to an occupying force , which ruled through martial law and quickly lost most of the the support of the local population .

Meanwhile, the Nigerian army could regroup and easily compel the Biafrans to retreat. The rather

numerous ibo inhabitants in the Middle West were subjected to horrific massacres. Only in the city of Asaba up to a thousand civilians were killed and thrown into mass graves. Similar massacres occurred throughout the war.

Banjo was sentenced to death for treason and shot.

The Nigerians broke through in the North and conquered the Biafran capital of Enugu in early October. After his resignation was rejected by a unanimous council Ojukwu managed to reorganize the army.

During the autumn of 1967 Nigerian troops marched south along the border with Cameroon and conquered Calabar. Biafra was thus completely encircled. Nigerian attempts to cross the Niger at Onitsha, where the retreating Biafrans had blown up the bridge, was however averted.

Nigeria received increasing quantities of weapons and ammunition, while Biafra's supply of ammunition was confined to a few aircraft loads a week. The armoured vehicles, which England supplied the advancing Nigerian army with, caused the defenders enormous problems. A Nigerian force of 20 000 troops attacked from Enugu towards Onitsha. After a gruesome carnage only 2000 reached

Onitsha, where they entrenched themselves and were later reinforced with troops over Niger River. In March 1968 Nigerian troops attacked across Cross River from Calabar and captured several key towns in southern Biafra. Refugees streamed into the central part of Biafra in increasing numbers. A month later, Port Harcourt, Biafra's main seaport, also fell after large numbers of Ibos there had fled the conflict. For a month, fighting continued with a Nigerian offensive on the south front. In spite of a serious shortage of ammunition, the Biafran forces managed to hold on to the important city of Aba but it too fell in September.

After Port Harcourt was lost, Biafra had turned a paved road between Owerri and Onitsha in to an airstrip. Uli airfield as it was now called allowed relief planes and those carrying ammunition and weapons to fly in at night.

In September came another Nigerian attack up the Niger towards Oguta. The objective of this assault was the elimination of the Uli airfield, but under Ojukwu's command the invasion force was stopped. The Biafrans on the southern front, however, had weakened and a Nigerian armoured force managed to break through and conquer Owerri. Of the larger towns now Biafra had only Umuahia, which served as the provisional capital.

From October 1968 Biafra's weapon deliveries increased and the war seemed to turn in Biafra's advantage. On almost all fronts Biafran troops grabbed the initiative. In the early 1969 strong Nigerian armoured units moved south in a wedge against Umuahia, where the offensive stalled again. At this point Biafra managed to expel the Nigerian army, though it had encircled Owerri for a long time. Large areas were reconquered at this point in the conflict by the Biafran counter offensive.

Front lines were relatively unchanged until the end of 1969, when a decisive well armed Nigerian offensive took place. Biafran resistance collapsed in January 1970.

It cannot be understated that Biafra had to struggle not only against Nigeria but against a constellation of great powers, neo-colonialists and oil empires, supporting Nigeria and their own private interests. In this struggle Biafra was virtually alone. Only five states - Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Zambia and, much later, the West Indian state of Haiti - recognized Biafra diplomatically. However, Biafra had no official support from any other country. The influx of weapons and ammunition was just as inadequate as the inflow of food for the starving. Roughly half of the Biafran weapons were produced in Biafra by Biafrans. Towards the end of the war the manufacturing was hampered by the lack of

materials, but the Biafran arsenal included land mines of a very effective design and Landrovers converted to armoured cars. Biafra also built primitive oil refineries. Otherwise weapons were purchased on the black market in Europe, mainly from France and Portugal and even from Czechoslovakia and to a less extent from China via Tanzania. The Anglo-Nigerian propaganda claims of support for Biafra from Rhodesia and South Africa were, however, baseless.

On the other hand, Nigeria received the unequivocal support of England and the Soviet Union, not only with weapons and ammunition but also with Russian technicians, English military "advisers", Egyptian and East German pilots. For the English neo-colonialists an independent Biafra was a dangerous threat - Biafra was the first African country with the resources to take care of their commodity assets without the intervention of foreign monopolies. It was easy to see that if a newly independent Biafra was able to breakup the network of oil companies and financial empires laid over Africa, British hegemony on the continent could be threatened. The English Labour government with the approval of the conservative opposition gave unequivocal support diplomatically and militarily to Nigeria in the war of annihilation against the people of Biafra. The conflict became yet another colonial war by proxy. At stake were the thousands of Biafran children who were left

to starve to death during the war.

Soviet Russia took the opportunity of the war to gain influence in Nigeria, winning at the roulette table of global politics but at the expense of untold amounts of suffering both to soldiers and civilians on both sides of the conflict.

In losing the conflict against so many larger issues and interests, Biafra's dilemma was to replace - once defeated - the war games with her struggle to survive at the whim of the same colonial powers who had conspired to crush her cry for independence.

It became increasingly clear that it was also a battle of importance for the whole of Africa.

Even in losing the conflict, costing the waste of more than a million lives, it was clear that the war from 1967 to 1970 on the African continent was a seismic warning to the conscience of a blind world.

STARVATION BLOCKADE

TW

There are those who claim that only a few thousand Biafrans have died of starvation during the last six months. We now know that an absolute minimum of one million have died during that period. Whether intentional or not genocide is committed in Biafra. Perhaps the best summation of the Biafran crisis today is the shortage of coffins. So many children have died so quickly that they must be buried in mass graves.

Charles E Goodell, U.S. Senator, February 19, 1969

It was neither land war nor air war, which finally broke down Biafran resistance, but the blockade. The conscious intention to isolate the entire population created several million destitute refugees. In Biafra the staple food is root vegetables, yams and cassava, and before the war there was a surplus of palm oil, which was an important export product. But it was necessary to supplement local produce with animal protein, and this came to a great extent from imported Norwegian and Icelandic dried fish and beef from the Northern Region. This supply was cut by the blockade. With an already apparent protein deficiency, the nutrition crisis was soon catastrophic.

The only way to get food in to Biafra was by air. Help

organizations conducted in mid-1968 relief flights but on a very limited scale. They were largely implemented by the U.S. carriers, which also carried the weapons from Europe via Sao Tomé to first Port Harcourt airfield and later to the Uli field. It was not until after Carl Gustaf von Rosen's bold approach on August 12, 1968, that the church airlifts from Sao Tomé were organized.

CG von Rosen had made a charter flight for German Caritas. When it turned out that the American pilots refused to fly the food into Biafra, which they considered too risky, von Rosen in consultation with the other members of the crew decided to venture a try. On August 13 the four-engine Transair plane flew in over Biafra and landed at Uli, where it was received by a cheering and weeping mass of people.

The airlift from Sao Tomé was then organized by the Northchurchaid, an umbrella organization for Scandinavian Christian aid organizations. It had to struggle against great difficulties, and every flight was highly dangerous. The International Red Cross, which periodically flew in from Fernando Poo and Cotonou, ceased using the flights in July 1969, when a Red Cross plane was shot down.

The risk of Nigerian anti-aircraft fire was great. They therefore flew only at night. The Uli field was always threatened by a Nigerian night bomber, who was on

high altitude. A routine "flight report" from an approach from Sao Tomé in May 1969 provides an idea of how it was as good as any night:

"FIRST APPROACH: 1 hour 4 minutes in wait status and 5 missed approaches, intruders disturbed as usual, landing lights were lit too late or extinguished during short final. The intruder released his last bomb, when we were on final and then flew home. When we first got the green light from E3 approach at 2,500 ft, just east of the airport we observed a plane at 1,500 feet altitude between ourselves and airport, it flew southward. At Uli was mentioned that this plane was 'GJU' (New Zealand DC-6 from Cotonou). What he did there and who had given him the green light to go there I know not. Spoke with Ekunro OIC tower who said tower multichannel radio was inoperative. We used another frequency, 1205 - poor communications. We got channels for testing the Uga field. But the risk for collision with 'GJU' very large. If the tower did not know of his presence in standby mode, what was he doing there? Of course, it could have been an intruder.

SECOND WAVE APPROACH: After starting from Uli and 700 feet met machinegun fire from a firing position on the ground about 1 1/2 miles from Uli. Asked tower operator to protest and told Johnny to report to Defence Headquarters to ensure an end to this nonsense. "

The Uli field was bombed continuously for certain periods. but the holes in the runway were quickly filled again and landings increased from dusk to dawn with only one-hour breaks.

In November 1968 one of the church's planes was hit by of a 20-pound fragmentation bomb shortly after landing at Uli with ten tons of fish. Five people were killed by splitter and many were injured, among them a Catholic priest, who led the unloading operation, and two crew members. The co-pilot Jan Erik Ohlsson was injured in the leg and was bleeding heavily. Flight Captain Kjell Backstrom, was badly injured in a leg and an arm. Both airmen were taken to hospital, but their injuries were too severe to be cared for in Biafra. The plane had 50 holes along one side and two of the engines had oil leaks. It was practically impossible to fly. The co-pilot was taken to Fernando Poo with a Red Cross plane. Backstrom decided, however, to try to take the church's plane back to Sao Tomé. A DC-7 previously damaged at Uli had the day before been destroyed by Nigerian bombs and it was likely that Backstrom's plan would suffer the same fate if it remained on the field after dawn. Backstrom was faint and suffered injuries, but was nonetheless preparing to start. Since there was very little oil left, he closed off two engines. When pressure system was inoperative it was necessary to fly at low altitude, which made the flight to Sao Tomé even more dangerous. But

Backstrom survived the flight. After landing on Sao Tomé he was taken to a hospital, where three pieces of metal were surgically removed from an arm and a leg. A splitter was close to an artery. Backstrom was then in the last period Air Bridge Operation Manager at Sao Tomé.

The airmen of many nationalities, who maintained the churches' and the Red Cross airlifts to Biafra, tried with their own lives to save the lives of the millions of Biafrans, who suffered the starvation blockade. Eight crewmen, who flew for the Red Cross, died - in May 1969, when a plane crashed, and in June 1969, when a plane was shot down by Nigerian fighter planes. Joint Church Aid, which ran the airlift without interruption and invested significantly more than the Red Cross, also lost many crew members.

In July 1969 - before the Joint Church Aid was formed - four men were killed when a German plane crashed. On Dec. 7, 1968 a German DC7 crash landed next to Uli and four men were killed. On August 4 the same year a Super Constellation from Canairelief overflew and all four crewmembers were killed. September 26, 1969 five Americans died in a crash. Four aircrafts were completely destroyed without loss of life and two other planes were damaged to the point that they became useless. The accidents occurred at Uli. Most incidents were the result of

aerial bombing. But no planes except the Red Cross plane was shot down in the sky.

The story of the airlift to Biafra is about how individuals, disappointed by the blind ineptitude of politicians and their lack of compassion, donated money to voluntary organizations which in turn, in defiance of Nigeria and the powerful forces that supported Nigeria, successfully implemented an impressive relief effort. But it was clear that "humanitarian" help alone could not save the people of Biafra. The Nigerian terror bombing continued and the pressure at all fronts was intense. What Biafra needed was food *and* ammunition.

THE AIR WAR^{TW/GH}

When Father Raymond Maher, the Irishman who had come down to Umuahia, turn up with the car we passengers know what has happened. He tells the details. He looked at a half-mile range when the bomber came, heard explosions when the bombs exploded and saw how the machine went over and rounded off with automatic guns and rockets. We are ready, tense and fearful when getting out of the car. It is three hours after the attack but still it is tight, tight, tight with dead people on the location.

It is quite inhuman, indescribable. One walks around in a kind of unresolved horror, waiting for one's own reaction, hysteria, nausea, crying, whatever. Nothing happens. You can only see it, note it. Tattered people, bits, some unidentifiable, others just vague, blackened rags. For a while, trying to count the bodies. It is not possible, you can not cope and besides, there is such which can not be counted.

We count the bomb craters instead, over and over again. There are five holes, two down on the actual marketplace, three in a sparse row up on the slope. Women stand hunched over people, crying, screaming in a kind of shrill singing sorrow. Others just standing or sitting frozen in shock and anxiety. The whole time the dead are carried away on stretchers, taken down

doors or in simple straw mats. At nine o'clock we hear the Voice of America, referencing UPI's first telegram telling sixty killed. Meanwhile a statement from the Nigerian government is quoted, saying that the truce has been observed; no airplane has taken off during the day. THAT'S A FUCKING LIE.

MATS LUNDEGARD, Se, March 20, 1969

In the war of annihilation against the women and children of Biafra modern bombers and attack aircraft were deployed. The Nigerian Air Force was given access to an extraordinary array of war machines and platforms, such as Russian MiGs and Ilyushin planes. Egypt sent in about 15 MiGs at the beginning of the conflict. Later six Ilyushin 28:s were delivered by Egypt and Algeria. Moreover twelve L-29 Dolphins came in from Czechoslovakia; two Jet Provosts from Sudan; two Westland Whirlwind helicopters from Austria; and two Whirlwinds and a Fairchild Hiller FH-1100 flew in from England. The planes were in the beginning piloted by Egyptian pilots, but mercenary pilots were later recruited from many other countries, including England, East Germany and South Africa.

Already in 1967 attacks were launched on schools, hospitals and marketplaces. With a few short exceptions bombing and shelling continued throughout

the war. Biafra kept accurate statistics of the attacks, which claimed thousands of lives, many women and children. Virtually all hospitals in Biafra were subjected to attacks one or more times. Apparently the Red Cross marks on their roofs were used as benchmarks by the mercenary pilots. This air terror had no military significance. It did however serve to convince the Biafran civilians that they were the targets in a war of extermination. Ironically, the Biafran resistance was thereby strengthened, not weakened.

In the first months of the war Biafra had, however, the upper hand in the air. The new Biafran Air Force was admittedly inferior in terms of the numbers of aircraft but possessed several skilled pilots, who had previously served the Nigerian Airways and the Nigerian Air Force. A major contribution during the war was made by the German pilot Friedrich Hertz (Freddy), who knew several of the Biafran aviators and in September 1967 went to Biafra by land. He was taken to Enugu and met after a thorough security screening the Biafran Air Force chief, Col. Zeki (who later died or was murdered during a trip to the front).

In Enugu Biafra had two B25:s and a B26, American twin-engined bombers from World War II. The Biafran front north of Enugu was about to break down and it was necessary to arrange a rapid evacuation to Port Harcourt. The B26 caused problems. It

had a brake failure which could not be immediately repaired. Since the plane had two separate braking system it could possible to save it, but the Biafran flight management considered the risk too large and the plane was destroyed while they blew up all the installations at Enugu field before evacuation.

During this critical stage of the war there was an operation on the Niger River. The bridge at Onitsha had been blown up by the retreating Biafran forces. Nigerian troops had taken up positions on the west bank and shelled Onitsha with artillery and machine guns. Biafran troops were on the eastern shore and mounted automatic cannons and ramps for armour-piercing rockets. When firing started the effect was unexpectedly devastating. The Nigerian troops fled headlong. They left all material on the beach. It would have been natural for the Biafrans to cross the river and capture the weapons that the fleeing enemy soldiers surrendered. But there were no boats on hand ...

Both B25:s were flown to Port Harcourt. During October, November and December 1967 a series of attacks were conducted with them, along with a Convair C47 and a DC6, rebuilt as a bomber. The objectives were enemy fortifications and groupings mainly in south-eastern Biafra and the Middle West region. The flight activity delayed the Nigerian advance on the southern front considerably.

On December 2 1967 three Biafran aircrafts made a dramatic night raid in Calabar, which had been captured by Nigerian troops. During the return flight one of the planes, a B25 with Freddy as captain, was attacked by the air defence west of Cross River and the left wing tank was emptied of fuel. On the ground in Port Harcourt one of the other planes was blocking the landing strip after one wheel exploded. Freddy was forced to make a crash landing in the adjacent terrain. The navigator Sammy died as a result.

During 1968 there was no Biafran flight activity. They sought to purchase new aircraft, but several deals were stopped in the last moment, largely because of incompetence or deliberate sabotage by a high official on the Biafran side. In late 1968 plans for a new kind of air war began to take shape. The idea was presented by Carl Gustaf von Rosen. When von Rosen in August 1968 flew the Transair plane to Uli, that was his first contact with Biafra. That same night he met Colonel Lieutenant Ojukwu from whom he received a report on the war and its background. When von Rosen later served as the operational director of the Northchurcaid airlift he spent many days in Biafra, where he was during Christmas 1968.

The situation was in August-September 1968 precarious for the Biafran troops. Many questioned

whether the food flights actually had any value in a situation, when Biafra was threatened by bombs and grenades. To survive, they must be able to defend themselves.

Since gaining firsthand knowledge and personal contact with the growing Biafran tragedy von Rosen on his own started a "diplomatic offensive". He spoke with Prime Minister Tage Erlander and Foreign Minister Torsten Nilsson, visited the Red Cross headquarters in Geneva, went to Addis Ababa and spoke with the emperor who was chairman of the African unity organization's Nigeria Committee. He tried in vain to meet Secretary-General U Thant in New York, made contact with the U.S. State Department, wrote reports and memoranda and made suggestions for how famine could be halted with an infusion of massive assistance, starting with transports up the Niger River. But England and the Soviet Union continued armament shipments to Nigeria. The two superpowers were, it became increasingly clear, involved in a strange battle for the Biafran oil. Human life played no role in world politics. For oil the entire Biafran people could be sacrificed.

What remained? A Swedish newspaper article revealed how it was. It was based on a conversation with the Swedish Foreign Minister, and ended:

"So far only Tanzania and another African state have recognized Biafra. It is clear that a Swedish recognition of the breakaway province hardly would give more than a 'ridiculous echo'. When the Federal Nigeria has an overwhelming military advantage with the air force and heavy artillery, which is missing in Biafra, the Foreign Ministry's assessment is that it is quite unrealistic to recognize a state, when you do not know if it even exists within perhaps only a few months. "

Carl Gustaf von Rosen read this and became upset. As clearly it had not been expressed before, but the official Swedish position - despite all the talk of "humanitarian aid" - did not differ significantly from that of the great powers. The weak have no rights. It is the strong who dictate the terms of engagement: "When the federal Nigeria has an overwhelming advantage ..."

Now this was not entirely true. Nigeria had an overwhelming advantage in terms of weapons and ammunition. Biafra had, on the other hand, an overwhelming advantage in terms of morale and the will to defend. Biafra had engaged in a very skilled defensive warfare, which von Rosen studied closely. It was with the help of home-made weapons, including effective landmines, with pitfalls and roadblocks they were able to halt Nigerian armoured attacks even at times when they had almost run out

of ammunition. They then made encirclement manoeuvres and reconquests. Nigeria mastered some localities and major roads. But in the bush the Biafrans had a significant competitive advantage. Nigeria conquered wilderness areas and evacuated cities. Biafra did not fight for land areas and cities, they fought for their lives.

But politicians took in to account only the material superiority of Nigeria's army and air force. In terms of weapons and ammunition Biafra was in a serious disadvantage. To force Nigeria and its allies to realize the futility of a war of deliberate genocide against her people, a stronger Biafran effort was necessary. As early as the beginning of 1967 the Biafrans realized this. The war had been allowed to last one and a half years. Biafra had naively relied on the world opinion only to find that the world could indeed close its colonial eyes and ears to the horrors. Biafran diplomats, writers and students had travelled around the globe to seek assistance and to spread awareness but with limited success. Those who had seen with their own eyes the tragedy unfold, the cry to stop the war was loud and clear. But the UN and the governments of the world did not listen. England and the Soviets continued to pump arms to Nigeria.

December 7 1968 von Rosen held a lecture on Biafra at an international conference in New York. He described what he had seen in Biafra and how he

arrived at the view that Biafra should be allowed to acquire rocket-armed aircraft in an inequitable conflict:

"The Biafran soldier is by a European yardstick a poor soldier. He is individualistic. He does not accept authority merely because he sees insignias. He is always questioning authority and says: I'll following the right man anywhere, but if he is not superior to me, I don't follow him. He wants an intelligent man in the top. So they are not good soldiers in the usual way. But yet they have done an excellent defence of their people, because every Biafran is a small army in itself. He can operate both at the front and far behind the Nigerian lines in a better manner than any soldier I've met before. Biafrans adapted to weapons and use the weapons in a manner which only very skilled and dedicated men can. They never kill for pleasure of killing, which some people do and therefore get into difficulties. They did not create this war, but they will get the enemy to give it up. When I first came into Biafra, they lost, bled and retreated. They could not stop the English armoured vehicles and they could not withstand artillery shelling because they had not much more than their hands to defend themselves with. And they were attacked from the air with rockets and napalm. I spent a few days in the headquarters, where I never was involved in any attack because it was defended by a few old anti-aircraft guns. But every time I went to Queen

Elizabeth hospital or was among civilians, every time I was far from military targets, I could see the air attacks and how the people were killed. I could see how mothers took care of their dead children. I will never forget a mother with eyes like glass, which did not see anything because there was no head on her still warm baby. I have seen another mother with a screaming baby without arms, and these visions will follow me everywhere no matter what I do in life. I will never stop my attempts to convey to my people and the people of the world what I have seen of this cruelty and injustice. It has surprised me that the Biafrans themselves have little hatred. In the situation as this all the people are united. During long nightly conversations with Ojukwu I heard him never utter a single word against the people who did this to him and his people. Forgive them, for they know not what they do, he said. They might have an excellent education at Sandhurst but nothing more. They can fire their guns and cannons, but they do not know what is happening in reality.

The situation became worse and worse. The Biafrans were totally dependent on ammunition, nevertheless world nations forbid them to get it. From the first day I realized that they asked me to reveal the tactics I used to fly into Biafra. I said that it was no problem at all to come in and that I would tell anyone who flew in food or ammunition, since it is not humanitarian to feed the children and then let them

be killed. In November 1968 Nigeria used 120 tons of ammunition - Biafra five tons. The five tonnes were flown in by Biafran pilots, but they could not increase the deliveries because they had no more planes, only two DC3s from Dublin. Later, they could increase ammunition shipments to 25 tons per day when it was the best. From what I've seen I do not think France officially sells ammunition to Biafra. I think there are private people both in France and Germany and possibly other countries, who are honest enough to want to protect people by providing military aid to Biafra. I hope this continues. The money should be given to Biafra's government because they know better than we do what they need. Through the successful acquirement of ammunition and by the skilful defensive tactics Biafra was able to stop the attacks towards the central Biafra. If Biafra also had some small airplanes and some pilots - if they had two or three - the pilots would at all times destroy fighters and attack bombers on ground - the bombers that Nigeria uses to murder. It is terrible that you can not get money for something so small. "

Carl Gustaf von Rosen was working on a plan. He had indepth interviews with Lt. Col. Ojukwu, aircraft weapons officers and other Biafrans about it. At first they did not believe much of it. But then a member of the government was assigned by Ojukwu to work further on the plan, which gradually began taking

shape. Carl Gustaf von Rosen was impatient and thought many times that it went far too slowly. But the difficulties were also large, mostly concerned with the economy. In the original plan 15 MFIs had been assumed, but number had to be cut down to five. Of course this did not make it easier. If the air planes were destroyed at an early stage the whole campaign would be given up, before even trying seriously.

Since the MFIs were civilian sport aircraft, there was little difficulty in buying then flying them out of Sweden. The transaction of course was perfectly legal.

In May 1969, another attempt to achieve a ceasefire through peace talks failed. Nigeria maintained the perspective that all of Biafra and her people must surrender without conditions. But Biafra deemed it suicidal to surrender at Nigeria's discretion. Continued struggle was their only option. They could not count on anyone else. "Victory" meant the safeguarding of the right to live in freedom, but they had strong hopes that their struggle would force Nigeria to the negotiation table. The refugees returned to the shattered Owerri city, where the Nigerian troops had been driven out. The reconstruction started, the fields were cleared. The felled giant trees that blocked roads leading to the central Biafra were cleared away, the pitfalls filled.

Biafran troops held out on all fronts, large areas were recaptured in the south. Behind the Nigerian lines guerrillas operated. They made thrusts far into the Midwest and disrupted oil production. Such was the situation on May 22, 1969, when Operation Biafran Babies started.

PREPARATIONS_{GH}

The Swedish aircraft type Trainer 9B, built by Malmo Aviation Industry (MFI), which reportedly Swedish aviators use in their attacks on Nigerian airfields, was presented three years ago for military experts from around the world. It was soon found that the plane could easily be changed to a small combat aircraft. It could be the air guerrilla. As the airfield a narrow dirt road was sufficient. The plane is sensational because it measures only 7.4 meters between the wingtips and is yet capable of delivering two robots, twelve rockets, a 50 kg bomb or a machine gun. The aircraft weighs only 340 kg empty and has a Rolls Royce engine. So far, about 300 aircrafts have been manufactured. The minitrainer can also be used for low attacks against troops, vehicles and barracks. It is also considered suitable for helicopter hunting, aerial photography and bombing.

TT May 26, 1969

- It is every man's duty to defend his family. The Biafrans need help in the defence of their wives and their children. They receive help with food now. But what's the use if they are bombed to death in the morning?

Thus commented Carl Gustaf von Rosen, when early in the spring of 1969 I saw him in Stockholm and received a statement of his views on Biafra. He was determined to somehow help the Biafrans. He was discouraged: in vain he had sought to influence the Swedish government to act to end the war. When no one wanted to listen to him a great plan had started to take shape in his mind.

The Biafrans were struggling to survive, said von Rosen. They felt that they had no choice but to fight to the extreme. The only alternative to this was a total annihilation. But what Biafra now needed was a new air force. Pilots were in Biafra, but they had poor experience after a long period of inactivity. They needed aircrafts and they needed instructors. C G von Rosen wanted to help Biafra in organizing their air force. He mentioned that the Swedish MFI-plane could be appropriate. I recollected how well the plane was designed to fly - it's a relatively short single-engine sport aircraft. But I thought as a pilot, even with a Rolls Royce engine, I could not lift up the machine in to the air from small, short fields. It might be possible with a Piper Cub but perhaps not with a 9B Trainer.

I can not be a dummy and just stand idle as a million Biafrans are eradicated while the United Nations and the world governments turn a blind eye and the great powers pump weapons into Nigeria, said von Rosen.

I understood that he wanted me to make some type of a commitment, but he never said it outright. After that meeting I followed the development of Biafra especially carefully. Then a few weeks later when in an airport I met my pilot comrade Martin Lang, a taxi pilot and former pilot in the Swedish Air Force. We came to talk about Biafra. CG von Rosen had spoken also with Martin, who was thinking of travelling to Biafra. None of us knew von Rosen particularly well, but we thought his arguments were convincing. But should Lang voluntarily engage in a war? I thought a lot about this and eventually came to an understanding. If von Rosen's description of the situation in Biafra was real - and it was confirmed, incidentally, by others - I could not just turn my back and say that war is immoral. Also, to not act makes a man partly responsible, and this was obviously the case of a people who were fighting for their lives against immensely superior attackers. Both Martin and I decided to take part., maybe mainly because we wanted to see if Rosen was right. If Biafra was ruled by a "click of power mad rebels" as some writers claimed, or if a united people defended their right to live free.

CG von Rosen did not enlist us. We made contact with him and informed him that we wanted to participate. We then met and discussed the matter. We did not gain anything financially but we wanted assurance that we would be able to travel home from

Biafra, when we ourselves wanted it - this was really our only requirement. Regarding the latter, we took von Rosen's for his word. The economic arrangement was that we would get free travel, food and lodging. The stay in Biafra should not be longer than a month. We could thus use our vacation time and did not take a leave of absence.

Our tasks were not discussed in detail but both Martin and I realized that pure combat flying could be expected. We accepted this.

In May everything was ready for our engagement. On May 11, 1969, we were heading to Africa - Carl Gustaf von Rosen, Martin Lang and I. We sat on various locations in the airliner to not arouse attention. The days before CG - as we now called him - had been interviewed on Swedish television and sharply criticized the Swedish participation in the so-called International Observer Group, which rejected the claim that the Biafrans were subjected to genocide - the observers visited only the Nigerian side of the front and had Nigerian guides. If the press now found out that CG was back on the road to Africa the risk was that our plans would leak.

I sat almost in front of the cabin. We flew very high, and through the window I saw only the black sky full of stars. Down there was only darkness. In the middle of the night we made a stopover at an African

airport. A stifling heat struck us when we left the plane, and I wondered how it would be possible to work in such moisture-laden heat. Martin with his heavy body sweated copiously but was in good mood. CG seemed to be unaffected by the climate. I remember this stopover particularly well, because it was my first encounter with Africa, which began to manifest itself at dawn: first a rain watery runway, then shrubs and trees, and even farther hills and heights, dressed by tropical vegetation. Over this the rain-laden clouds ahead. The humidity rose from the ground and mixed with clouds. I enjoyed the scenery, but the heat this early hour, when the sun had not penetrated through the clouds, astonished me.

After a few hours of flight we arrived at our destination in a West African country. Biafrans met us at the airport and took us quickly to our temporary housing, where we would get a rest after the journey and acclimatize ourselves. I immediately came on good terms with these Biafrans, who during the whole period of preparation were tasked to assist us. They were people with an intensive type of personality, who did things quickly and did not become discouraged when they encountered obstacles. The distance to drive was something far. I became particularly good friends with one of them. He shifted his disposition and mood with unerring accuracy as required. A month later, he invited me to an extraordinarily tasty and spicy meal in his home.

The first few days after arrival, we used for rest and relaxation. CG gave us advice on food, circadian rhythms and how best to handle the heat in Africa. We talked a lot about Biafra. Martin and I had from the beginning made it clear that we would immediately go home if we somehow noticed that Biafra was a police state. We were not willing to risk our lives for some rebels' idea to break out of a federation. CG explained his own position, but wanted us to form an opinion ourselves. We listened to the regular newscasts from Radio Lagos, Radio Biafra, BBC, South African Radio and Voice of America and thus got a good picture of the current state of Biafra, where the Biafrans seemed to have the initiative at the fronts. I took walks in the surrounding area and studied the nature, the terrified lizards, who never knew how fast they would hide, the colourful birds and the incredibly lush vegetation. That was about as I had imagined Africa. I still felt more like a tourist in an exotic country.

While we made ourselves at home others had worked elsewhere with the aircrafts we would use: five MFI aircrafts from Sweden. It felt nice to soon start flying. The third day we helped to prepare the machines. They really looked ridiculously small and inconsiderable. An MFI plane is substantially a square metal box without beams and frames. The wings sit quite high. They are short and have a thin profile. The wings' leading edge reaches the height of the pilot. A

large hood over the centre two places, which are located in width, gives the pilot an excellent visibility to almost all directions above and below the wing, and even backwards. As the bonnet slopes slightly downwards it gives also decent forward visibility downwards. The control lever is located between the pilot and passenger seat - MFI differ in this case from most other sport aircrafts, which have a longer lever forward. The lever is split at the top. The plane is very easy to operate and reads rudder movements quickly. The speed is about 100 knots (180 kph). But the engine power is not particularly impressive: 100 horsepowers.

Would this little machine really be able to fly with an external load? Could it handle a dive assault while shooting off rockets against ground targets - all the time perhaps the victim of fire from the ground?

The first flight was an experience. When the plane was airborne I swung out over the jungle, flew close over the trees, followed bayous, saw ibises lift in a dignified hover over the marsh plants. I flew between giant trees, played with the little sport plane and finished the flight with a tight turn towards the runway, before I pulled the gas and finally rolled back on track.

We were now flying every day. We also flew with the two Biafran pilots, Auguste and Willy, who arrived.

It was a very sweaty job, the sun burned through the cabin hood. The other Swedes who were to participate in the preparations showed up eventually. It was the sergeant - or "Doc," as we called him because he looked like a doctor - reliable and stable. He and CG were the "old" in group. And then there were the others - each with vast knowledge in their particular area and all now set to perform the same task: quickly train the Biafran pilots, find out how the MFI planes did in combat, and teach the ground staff about the care of aircraft and its weapons. It was a foregone conclusion that the sergeant would stay and care for the planes, when our operation had moved on to its next stage and the attacks started, while the other Swedes would travel home when machines were cleared to fly.

We flew as much as we could. Gradually, all planes were ready and each pilot could take over his own machine. We kept a high pace during exercises and initially it was not easy for the Biafrans to keep up. Both Martin and I had high standards. CG also flew to get used to the plane. He was used to flying four engine heavy machines. But he also had many other things to do: organize the work, keep in touch with the Biafrans and make sure that everything worked.

The MFI's ability was surprising. It is extremely agile in air. Although it is of fragile construction - only two thin bolts holding each wing in place - it is approved

for aerobatics. Since the lever is located between the seats, the pilot can spread a map across his knees without being hindered by the lever. On the instrument panel, which is made of black painted steel, are the most common instruments: airspeed, altimeter, magnetic compass, air speed, heading and engine instruments. The plane also has an electrically operated valve and on the panel is an instrument with a needle, which shows the flap position. The throttle is sitting up on one side. With the elbow on the boards you can comfortably reach the throttle with the hand. The joystick you keep in the right hand. At takeoff and landing you usually use both the engine and the rudder. But when we flew at low altitude we relied extensively on the throttle, pulling back on the downhill into valleys and fully open to get us up and over the heights. The biggest problem was the heat: it was like a cheese dish in the hood. The small ventilators were not enough to give proper ventilation, but by sticking out our fingers we could at least control a flow of air to our faces. In the beginning, we flew in a kind of white officers' uniforms, but I soon changed to a camouflage shirt. Later we got complete camouflage dresses and used them. They were considered more appropriate in the event we were forced down in the Nigerian area. On the upper arm was a BAF badge and Biafra's rising sun.

CG now showed his ability to coordinate everyone's

experience into a whole and transform all ideas into something workable. In the evenings, we discussed how the operation would be. The aim was primarily to try to stop the terror bombings Biafra was subjected to almost daily. Even if we were unable to completely stop the terrorist bombing, we argued that we could at the very least provide temporary relief to give Biafrans breathing space. CG's idea was that we would attack the larger airports in Nigeria and focus on making maximum damage there. We knew where Nigerian MiG and Ilyushin planes were stationed. On the ground they were very vulnerable. We discussed the details of the assaults. We totally agreed that the only chance to avoid being shot down was to fly as low as possible. Even when it came to the formation during approach and flight home routes and other things we came up with solutions which everyone accepted completely. The Biafran pilots gave information on local conditions, such as how the terrain looked in different areas.

It was during one of these evenings the MFI planes were finally dubbed the "Biafran Babies". CG had used the name before, maybe more as a joke. Now we discovered the symbolism in it. It was not just that the MFI planes were "babies" in comparison with the huge jet monsters we planned to attack. It was also true that it was the Biafran kids we wanted to protect against starvation and terror. Each plan was designated "BB" and a number. Later we also painted

a rising sun in red, Biafra's national emblem.

The camouflage painting of the aircrafts took quite long. It was made by hand, using large brushes. We mixed colours as we wished, so that they would be consistent with jungle colours. The various nuances became a topic of lively discussions. We stuck to the tried mottled camouflage painting with green, greenish-brown, olive-green, brown and black. We really had a hard time in the sun. Martin was taciturn, painting while the sweat ran. He resembled an enraged bear. The rest of us were not particularly talkative during these strenuous hours. We diluted the paint so that it barely covered the old, bright colour. But in the heat it became again thick. CG went around and looked at the painting as if he were at an art salon. Now and then he suggested changes. He also painted alongside of us and worked hard. When my machine was yet unpainted CG got the idea that we should try something new in camouflage. The last machine was painted in only two shades: front half in one colour, rear half in another. The idea brought no great enthusiasm, but anyway we did as CG suggested. Because it was the plane that I should have during our flights, I was especially critical of his experiment resulting in a "half" airplane. If it was on the ground, maybe it would work, because the outline of the aircraft would not be perceived. But how would it look when it was up in air with the bright colour of the

abdomen against a dark green background? Then I went a couple of hundred meters away and watched. The other machines disappeared almost entirely against the green background, but my plane appeared vividly - almost better than without camouflage. I imagined the worst outcome for my sitting duck. I had no desire to be the guinea pig - I went to CG and asked if he maintained that it was successful. - Paint the wagon how the fuck you want, only you will be satisfied! he said. Thus, all the machines were painted in the same way with the difference that mine was painted twice. Martin did not say what he was thinking, neither did Auguste or Willy

We all had green and brown paint under our nails for several weeks afterwards. Now also the rocket pods and rockets had arrived. We helped to assemble the capsules, one under each wing. Each capsule contained six rockets. They looked pretty awesome and we wondered how effective the rockets would be. When an aircraft had been fitted we took turns to test fly it. I must tell about CG's demonstration of strong faith and the airplane's good qualities. He once made a breakneck flight. He wanted to try the planes' lifting capacity, filled the main tank, mounted rockets and had Auguste sit beside him. It was +30 C and midday. He started without flaps and had not gotten the plane up, when the track was finished, but continued accelerating over the grass straight into the woods. Then there was silence.

Martin and I were terrified and after ten minutes we started to walk towards our planes to fly out and see what happened. Then CG came approximately 400 feet above the treetops and came in for a landing. He had managed to climb up through the forest, but what really happened I still do not understand.

We also used some time to look at different runways and plan for the longer term. During travels around in Biafra, we saw much that made us despondent, but still the situations encouraged our own effort and contribution. An experience, which involved Martin and I, happened when we visited Uli airport. After that, we realized CG's purposefulness better.

This night the flights were in full swing. One aircraft after the other landed. We stood and looked at the four-engine machines, which appeared still mightier now in the dark. Landing lights were turned on just before landing, engines were pulled off and the planes rolled across the track and landing lights were turned off again. The precious cargo was unloaded by frantically working Biafrans using light from flashlights. Then the engines started up again, the giants taxied out to the end of the runway, lifted with a deafening roar and disappeared into the night.

The darkness was compact. Almost no light there; only an occasional flashlight flashed. They were apparently afraid of Nigerian bombing. Yet there

were plenty of people on the field. I was always about to collide with Biafrans. I stopped at a truck to not get in the way unnecessarily. Martin and CG were missing. After a while, I came to think about why the truck was where it was - it did not seem to be included in the queue of cars, which fetched food from airplanes. When Martin turned up in the dark, he had a flashlight and we peered in the slats of the truck bed. We saw about fifty small children on the platform. They were in the most miserable state. Some had swollen bellies and finger thick legs, others seemed completely dehydrated. They were between a half and seven years old. The older children were standing, the younger sat or lay. Many of the small children showed no signs of life at all. Their breathing was so weak that it was not visible. Everyone was completely silent.

We agreed that if we could do something for these children, we would do it. If we could destroy the Nigerian aircrafts which prevented help flying in at daylight, then we would not hesitate. Both Martin and I thought of our own children. We felt sorrow and pity over what we saw on the truck bed. And we thought about all the other Biafran children. We no longer had any thought of pulling out of the game and going home. We had already experienced enough: we knew that CG was right - that Biafra fighting for her life against an overwhelming assault. Since we had seen the misery up close, we would not

have peace in our consciences without doing all we were able to do to complete Operation Biafran Babies. We were later told that the children in the truck if possible would be flown out of Biafra for care in another country. But we asked ourselves how many of them would survive: And how many of the survivors would be injured for life by starvation?

At the base we continued to fly, test shoot rockets and fly again. Evenings were used for joint planning. We again established that our goal would be purely military. We wanted to spare Nigerian children the fate which so many Biafran children endured, when marketplaces were attacked by the Nigerian jet aircrafts. In the first instance we would attack airports, and we decided to start with Port Harcourt. We were now formally enrolled in Biafra's defence forces and had received our insignias in BAF, Biafran Air Force. CG became Wing Commander, a rank he earlier had in the Ethiopian Air Force. Martin became Flight Lieutenant. I myself, Sergeant and the mechanics became Flying Officers.

One day CG said:

- Tomorrow we will make the first attack.

We studied the maps further during the rest of the day and went through our equipment. We had amongst other equipment with us some things that would be needed if we were forced to make an

emergency landing. But the idea of that did not amuse us particularly...

Auguste and Willy were attentive to everything and participated in preparations with great interest. To begin with, they had probably not thought over the risk of attacking airbases in Nigeria with small sport aircraft, but they were captivated by our interest and were now equally enthusiastic as we were. Sergeant got a final walk-through of how canisters would be loaded and rockets aimed. All of this he carefully memorised. He did not speak English and there was no instruction manual translated into Swedish. I never saw him record anything.

This last evening, before we parted from the other Swedes, who were to return home, we ate really good and had a nice evening. Our extra mechanic, who helped us to get the machines completely in order, explained some additional details for Sergeant. It was pleasant to see them together: the old veteran Sergeant listened attentively to the young skilled technician. We went late to bed and fell asleep as usual listening to the cicadas' almost deafening concert.

PORT HARCOURT GH

The war now tends to become a guerrilla war with the result that attack targets become more inaccessible, that it for the Nigerian Air Force will be harder to do air attacks and that the effect is questionable. Consistent with this, the Nigerian Air Force's fairly prestigious albeit outdated equipment will be of no great value except as an expensive luxury. Curiously, it has been the venerable DC-3, which has been one of the Nigerian Air Force's most effective offensive aircraft, while on the other hand a handful of light planes, Swedish-built Malmo MFI-9B, actually gave the war another twist in the air.

Keith Sissons in Flying Review.

On the morning of Thursday, May 22, we checked the aircraft over very carefully. Each of the aviators had selected his machine before and knew its special features, such as rocket-sight's setting. The rocket pods were controlled; they had only been fired a few times. The mechanics looked at the planes one last time, which gave us pilots a sense of security. There had been excellent cooperation between pilots and mechanics, which is absolutely necessary. These mechanics would often poke around the planes and discover errors, which a pilot might not have noticed

until it was too late. The planes were now fully tanked and fully loaded. We put bottles of water in the cabins for the long flight.

The machines would be heavy in the air, something we anticipated. It was 35 degrees C and the jungle steamed with the heat. Light white clouds slowly moved across the sky. The launch took place at 11.00. CG would fly number one, and came first in the air. While Martin rolled out on the primitive runway I started the engine .Then Auguste and Willy. When everyone was in the air, we gathered in a broad formation over the jungle. CG and Martin were in front of me and when I turned around I saw that Auguste and Willy were with us.

As soon as the aircraft wheels left the ground, I was completely calm and relaxed. This is something that pilots often experience, and it was especially true during our flying into Biafra. Before each task, when the outcome is uncertain, one focuses and becomes annoyed at all that can interfere with the concentration. There is much to be learned by heart, courses, heights and otherwise. But as soon as one comes up in the air the irritation stops and instead one is gripped by a calm, that's focussed and calculating. The other air men confirmed that they always had the same feeling.

Now we flew above the treetops with our MFI-

planes, heavily laden with deadly rockets. We felt well-knit, three Swedes and two Biafrans. We were in great shape.

In our approach for the first attack the idea was to surprise the Nigerians with our itinerary, in case our plans would have leaked. We thus flew out over the water and away from the coast. Soon we lost sight of land and only saw the waves and water. The flight became monotonous. The only thing we had to do was to keep formation just above the waves and occasionally check the course. To pass the time I lined up biscuits next to me and I decided to eat a biscuit every quarter. At the eighth biscuit we should pass into the coast south of Port Harcourt - it was basically a two hour flight to get there. I took check bearings on the sun and on the island of Sao Tomé, which seemed far away in a distant haze. I estimated drift and tried to determine our location - found that we were right. Once in flight CG made a change of course to compensate drift wind force, which he judged by the waves. CG also sometimes gave another order to change our course. We flew very low to avoid interception of our radio traffic. Martin and I gave CG statements in Swedish; then I forwarded the same in English to Auguste and Willy, who were behind me but now had pulled so far back that I no longer saw them.

One thing annoyed me: Willy, who apparently had

problems orientating himself, talked on the radio. He asked Auguste of course, complaining that his machine was so slow and it was heard on our radios that he felt abandoned. Auguste tried to be quiet, but had to respond to Willy's calls. It was obviously a big mistake by Willy to break radio silence unnecessarily. I imagined that our conversations were picked up and that they in Nigeria were now warned of the attack: perhaps orders were given for high alert and perhaps MiG:s started from Port Harcourt to search for us. But I still could not get mad at Willy, who had fallen behind. His flying experience was less than our mission required and it was with hesitation he had been chosen for the first attack. If I had been put into Willy's situation, just received my private pilot license and had amateur flying skills, I might have been as nervous as he obviously was.

Below us rippled waves of south-westerly winds. The weather was brilliant but it was almost unbearably hot in the cabin. I floated in sweat - had the shirt unbuttoned and saw drops of sweat run down my chest.

During the last hour, when we flew against the coast south of Port Harcourt, we encountered a small but very intense rain front. It rained so hard that in the distance it looked like a gray wall. We changed course just before the rain front and followed it to a place where it did not rain so heavily. We lit our

lanterns and flew in tight formation in the rain. It truly was a real downpour. The altimeter showed that we were 50 feet above the water, but still I did not see a glimpse of it. Everything was gray in the rain. After five minutes we turned back into the sun shine. It was now a glorious weather with small white wads of clouds against a blue sky. In the cabin the thermometer was on 32 degrees C.

Auguste and Willy shouted over the radio about the rain front, which they now faced. CG gave them hints on where they would get through and how wide the rain front was. They were apparently about five minutes after us. That they had been delayed was in fact not important. In this way the attack could only be more confusing.

Martin flew up beside me and motioned to me that he wanted to swap. He showed to me that he disliked the talk on the radio behind us. Behind the backs of CG we exchanged in formation a few times. CG flew determinedly straight ahead, a little too high, I thought. But closer to the coast he lowered his altitude more and more and soon we flew all three just a few feet above the waves. We passed west of two large freighters. They were far away and I don't think they saw us. So we saw the coast as a narrow line on the horizon. Soon I could discern a deserted sandy beach and inside the palm trees and jungle. No life at all was seen along the endless beach and no boats.

I took the last biscuit and noticed that the water-bottle was nearly empty. CG increased his altitude to orient and then dropped again, before we went up the beach and trees. The first bayou we passed inside the country seemed to match the map and I was sure that we were on the right track. It could in each case differ by less than a few hundred meters from the route we had planned. At the next river branch, I saw some huts and clearly heard the sound of heavy gunfire. I followed CG and Martin in heels tightly over the treetops and sometimes between giant trees. We came to a river and saw the fishermen in canoes. They looked up to us, and we saw how they followed us with their eyes. Without further reflection, I followed the river along one shore. I could thus be very low and was completely hidden below the horizon. But I suddenly discovered that I had lost my peers. The camouflage painting made it very hard to see them at such a low altitude. It felt baffled as we had flown together for hours. I did a quick estimate of what course I should keep to cut in to the others track. After five minutes, I found them and put myself back on the far right of the group, which we had decided was my place. After a few more minutes CG announced in the radio that the airport was right in front of us.

We now flew on a westerly course. In a moment I saw the windsock in Port Harcourt field. CG and Martin had now increased tspeed slightly and I came

after about 30 meters. CG disappeared from view, but Martin was right in front of me and began to dive towards the landing path but did not shoot. Instead, I saw little white smoke puffs from the end of the runway on the ground and realized that an anti-aircraft gun had fired at Martin. I impatiently waited for him to turn away, so that I could shoot. When he finally did I let loose my first salvo. It missed, but the next hit right next to the air defence and the third penetrated battlements. I was now very close and saw how the battlements lifted slightly by the explosion. The next second I was in a left turn away from the path and out amongst bushes at the side of the field. Some soldiers with guns in their hands stood among palm trees at some barracks. They looked up to the plane. When I banked they threw themselves headlong in all directions.

CG was talking on the radio. I saw one of our planes closely over the trees and then the other.

- Now we take the traffic control tower, said CG. Martin and I chirped. We came this time in almost in tight formation and shot from a very advantageous angle. The rockets, which missed the traffic control tower, would continue into the hangar behind. I did think it might be seen as repulsive to shoot at a traffic control tower. But those who possibly had been in the tower should by now have understood what was going on and taken cover in the shelter.

And it was in any case a military target.

I hit the tower and swung slightly to shoot the two MiG:s on the apron. But the rockets were finished and then I turned away. In the corner of my eye, I saw Martin's plane. Through rapid ascent in a turn I managed to avoid colliding with him - it was a right daredevil manoeuvre and could easily have gone wrong. Martin withheld the shooting, but when I was above him, he continued to fire the rockets. Had he not restrained himself and kept back in the right moment, he could have hit me. When I turned away, I saw only smoke after explosions.

It was now time to fly home as quickly as possible. We went out on our courses and followed the terrain map. After a while we found each other and fell in to the same formation as before - CG, Martin and me. But of Auguste and Willy we saw nothing. We passed a burning battleground south of Owerri. It appeared from the air that battles were going on. Hand grenades exploded and we heard the shots of heavy weapons, but saw no soldiers. When we were well inside Biafra it became completely calm. There were now more people on the roads than on the Nigerian side and many waved at us.

We had radio contact with Auguste and heard to our joy that he had survived his attack and was now on the way home. But Willy we did not hear from.

The time for CG, Martins and my attacks was 14:05-14:15. Auguste attacked 14:20-14:25. Four hours after inception, we landed on one of the jungle bases. The planes were quickly camouflaged. The ground staff really hustled. I kept time: two minutes after my landing both the air track and aircraft were entirely camouflaged. I sat there in the plane under the shadow of palm leaves and camouflage. I discovered the water bottle on the cabin floor and cursed myself because I had not placed it in the appropriate place during the attack, but still felt rather pleased to have flown so good that it was still standing upright. Biafrans were around the plane laughing and beaming. They asked how it went and I replied that everything seemed good, but that everyone still had not returned. When CG, Martin and I were on our way to our bungalow, we heard the faint drone of an MFI plane. It was Auguste, who came into a turn and landed. After a minute the track was again completely camouflaged. Willy was still missing. Auguste told me that neither he had seen Willy before the attack. We felt all worried about Willy - the kind Willy, who always did the best he could without saying so much. We were hoping that he landed on some other field in Biafra.

I had hit the tower and the hangar. The two MiG fighters, which I had discovered when my rockets were already out, instead both CG, Martin and Auguste had shot at. We could thus note two

Nigerian planes likely destroyed. CG thought he had seen a camouflaged Ilyushin or Canberra bomber on the edge of the field, but then were also his rockets out. Martin had never discovered the anti aircraft cannon - this was the reason that he never shot. While we sat and talked a message arrived: Willy had landed safely on another strip. We toasted him with beer. Willy had come on behind already when we were over the sea. He then flew astray but had found his way to a spare field in Biafra, where he landed.

We wrote a report on the first attack and took up only two Nigerian planes, probably destroyed. The news we later heard from BBC and Radio Lagos corresponded well with our report, but we had also destroyed an Ilyushin-bomber which stood inside the hangar. Dusk came and in the tropical darkness the cicadas' intensive concert began anew. We stayed up late and talked.

BENIN GH

Benin, Nigeria, May 25 - Reuter. Biafran aircrafts bombed yesterday Benin aerospace field, killing six people, injured eight and interfered with a federal MiG on the ground. This was the second surprise raid by Biafran planes against federal airfields in 42 hours.

The Times, 26 May 1969.

Friday was hot and humid. CG had gone to Air Force headquarters. The rest of us lazed around in the morning and waited for news about next target for attack. We had originally wanted to do three attacks the first day, but CG had another view. He wanted to space the attacks correctly he said. Plan carefully and be sure to succeed.

In the afternoon CG came back with the news that we would do our next attack the next day. In the evening we began to plan by the light of kerosene lamps. We pulled up the transit lines on the maps and discussed tactics. An attack at dawn would be appropriate, we thought. The first attack took place shortly after noon. Now we chose the early morning hours. The Nigerian radio had not yet reported anything and we assumed that we could again surprise the enemy.

The airport at Benin in Mid West Region was

designated as the target. We knew there were Nigerian planes there and most likely the particular plane which was used during the nights to bomb the Uli field and to disturb aid flights. We would start in the dark to arrive just at dawn. As soon as the preparations were done, we went straight to bed.

At three o'clock I was awakened by a Biafran, who shook life in to me. Hot water was available for morning coffee. Scattered sound was heard from the other parts of the bungalow, when the others began to wake up. Willy would stand down this time. We four others went together along the narrow path to the planes. We were all really tired and a little grumpy, but it still felt good to start at a time of the day when the Nigerians certainly would not expect an attack. The camouflage was removed and the planes were parked by the runway with rocket pods loaded. The darkness was compact. Everyone did their routine flight checks - checked lighting, sight, fuel quantity, and other instruments. CG started first; I was number two; and last Martin and Auguste. CG wanted to lead the group in each attack - felt it was his duty to do so because he was in charge. The rest of us were doubtful and thought we could take turns, but CG got it as he wanted.

My plane was positioned at the end of the runway where I adjusted the throttle control among the bushes. As soon as CG had disappeared I drove

directly to the track, guided by a soldier with a flashlight, and opened up the gas. The plane accelerated very slowly. At the end of the runway, there was a bush, which we had asked the ground crew to cut away. But it had not been done. I now saw CG's white stern lanterns swing left and I came narrowly over bush, which flashed in the spotlight. The wheels almost touched it. At this moment the fuse for the lights went out and everything became black. I held the lever perfectly still with one hand and fumbled frantically with the other after a flashlight, which I knew that the sergeant had put into the cabin. To my unspeakable relief I found it and could put it between my knees with the beam on the instruments. But my position lights on the wings and the tail were also extinguished and Auguste and Martin, who would follow me, could not see me in the dark. I therefore rose to 2500 feet, which was 500 feet above the agreed height, not to risk that the subsequent plane would collide with me. I was just under a heavy cloud cover and saw the others come up as tiny points of light under me and connect to CG. No one said anything on the radio. The others wondered perhaps why one was missing, but as agreed nothing was said. Each one would fend for himself. If someone failed at the start, the whole mission could not be cancelled. But when the others had gone into the formation and saw each other's silhouettes they put out their position lights. I lost

them completely. For half an hour I flew on the particular course and then asked Martin to turn on his lights for one second. He did not answer, just lit. His stern lights flashed. The others were just to my left and below. I had not expected that they would be so close and it was a happy surprise to find them again.

In the east was now dawn light and I did not need my torch anymore. I could now distinguish the instruments. But the other machines were not in the vicinity and I swung and fell to a height of 500 meters. They should then appear in the sky above me. I searched for them against the brighter sky, but first did not see them. I had not thought of the speed gain on the dive - I had come ahead of them. After a while I saw them coming diagonally behind me and let them go by. They looked small and unassuming, the three planes. But the rocket pods' silhouettes appeared at the forefront of their wings. This small deviation showed that they were not some common sport planes. I flew as low as I dared. Under me loomed sparse forest and the occasional hut. Mists rose up from the bush. It gradually brightened so much that the trees could be seen clearly. The others flew still on row and I enjoyed the sight. They descended and when it was bright enough I went up to the side of Auguste and Martin, who eased past me. I took second place after CG as we had agreed.

The last fifteen minutes of homing daylight was bright, even though the sun had not risen above the horizon. We passed villages and roads. From some huts came newly awakened people who looked at us. We waved at them. Maybe it was ridiculous, but we were so completely set to not harm civilians that we waved to show that we had friendly intentions. We flew so low that when we tipped our wings slightly, they could see our faces and hands. The last village we passed, however, proved to consist of a variety of military barracks. No children or women came out and looked up, only half dressed soldiers. CG climbed, made left turn and went into in a long diving. I followed him and now saw the city of Benin to the right. Before me lay the airport with lanes, traffic control tower and a MiG fighter half-hidden by the terminal building. CG's mission was to destroy an antiaircraft battery, from the direction we attacked on the right of terminal building. He turned now towards the target. I saw white puffs of smoke beating up and heard artillery. I shot my first rocket against the MiG and to my surprise I saw the shot go in right at the wing-root. The plane was turned into a big ball of fire and black smoke billowing up. I shot my other rockets straight into the buildings and towards the centre of the course, where I hoped to destroy lighting. I lay in a slight left turn, went directly over in a right turn and passed over the MiG. My light plane bounced on the heat pillow from the

burning MiG. The whole time air defence shot. It was heard as a muffled thumping through my plexiglas hood. CG should have attacked the air defence, but apparently it was not neutralized. I dived over the field and saw at the last moment some telephone wires. I managed to hoist up the plane and flew out outside shooting range for air defence. Then I again passed over the military camp west of the airfield. People came out - they had heard the explosions and wondered what was going on. I asked on the radio if everyone was with us and got the answer by CG that he did not yet know. But apparently he had not been hit during his daredevil diving on air defence.

The time was 6:35. The attack had lasted five minutes. The sun was above the horizon. I found the other three. We headed home in the backlight. It was a very awkward flight. During the night and in dawn the plexiglas hood had been covered with dead insects. I had the sun right in my eyes, I saw almost nothing without opening a small gap at the side of the driver's seat and look through it. We kept tightly over the lush vegetation and knew we were incredibly difficult to detect against the background. The reason we almost always lost track of each other after an attack was partly this, partly also the rule that everyone would get home on their own potential without expecting to be joined. If someone needed help at such as an emergency landing, it was

obviously different.

Several times I turned around and saw a black column of smoke from the burning MiG plane at Benin airport. The smoke billowed into the sky. I tried to imagine how our offense was experienced from the ground. It was probably only an explosion and then silence. Just crackling from the fires, maybe cries from soldiers as one and another shot a salvo against us. Before we disappeared we had heard the sounds of shots: a short whining sound and a very hard bang.

I did not know how many rockets I fired. Maybe I had some left. When we passed a power line with high poles, I aimed for a pole and pulled the trigger. But the rocket canisters were empty. It would otherwise have been nice to shoot down a pylon - would have taken a long time for the Nigerians to isolate the problem and fix it. Among all the plans we discussed was an idea that Sergeant proposed: to bring wire and cranking out over the power lines. It would cause a short circuit and it would be a simple but effective way to cause confusion for the oil companies on the Nigerian side.

We passed the front west of Niger and saw grenade explosions and scattered battles. We passed Niger in broad daylight and came in shortly north of Onitsha but changed course and followed the western Niger

beach south. We crossed the road between Onitsha and Benin and then went across the river further down. We flew most of the time on the clock and compass, which means that one lays out a course on the map and then calculates the time taken to fly a given stretch. Now it seemed that the CG had done a navigation error. He began to circle and talked on the radio with Martin. It was always Martin and CG who conversed in radio, while Auguste and I kept quiet. CG felt that we were home. I was almost convinced that he was wrong, but said nothing.

My extra tank showed empty and I shifted over to the main tank. We never knew exactly how much fuel we had. At the base, where we started, we had normal gasoline drums hidden among the trees. When a plane should be filled we rolled one drum up and opened it, after which the fuel was pumped by hand through a rubber hose and a chamois funnel into the tank. The amount was read at the gas gauge on the plane. Before a flight, we asked for half or three-quarter or full tank. How many litres then came in the tank was different, depending on the transmitter failure. It could perhaps differentiate between 10 and 15 litres.

We lay and circled for almost 20 minutes and it was right annoying. Just when I was in a turn over a small village, I stalled. I shifted back over to extra tank and tried to simultaneously turn over a small road, where

I was ready to topple down. But the engine was running. Then I only had a few feet left to the ground. It was full of people down there. But the extra tank showed empty. I had not much fuel left but wanted to get down at any price. I braced myself to land on any road anywhere. There were plenty of wide, paved roads in the central Biafra. But they were always cluttered with tree roots and logs for protection against Nigerian air landing. With my little plan I anticipated landing at the side of the road blocks. Just then I caught sight of Martin, who was in a turn and went down on a narrow road. It was always easy to recognize Martin's plane, because it had a hood of green plexiglas while our hoods were unstained. He flew a few hundred meters in front of me and fell to the road. Now, I also saw that a short stretch was without logs and it would do well to land on. Martin sank all the time on the road and when his flaps were precipitated, I understood that he would land. He rolled out of the way after putting the wheels in ground. I passed over some bushes in my turn, straightened up the plane and pulled off the gas. I crept down on the dry, narrow road while I saw Martin go away behind some high trees.

Some Biafrans stood by the roadside and watched the plane. I discovered the other planes, which stood hidden under the giant trees. There were already a couple of soldiers on guard at each plane and wings and fuselage were camouflaged with large palm

leaves. We thus had landed at an airbase. CG had probably not found the route at once, or the blocks placed had not been removed in time. I felt somewhat baffled and thought we could have been informed where we would land before the start, so I would not have been horrified when I discovered that the fuel was over. It proved to be only ten litres left in the tank. We did not take it easy for long however since we spotted an unexpected danger: the giant trees, which we parked under, turned out to be bread fruit trees. 20-30 feet above us hung the big bread-fruits - a hit of this type would crush a plane. We quickly got the planes to a safer location.

All of CG's all rockets remained in their capsules - it was why air defence at Benin had not been silenced. He had sought in vain to fire them when he was nose diving towards the goal, but nothing happened. He dived again towards the goal, constantly twisting buttons in vain attempts to return fire from anti-aircraft defence, which fired incessantly. Finally, he was so close that he was forced to stop and turn back. We never found the fault. It may have been a temporary short circuit.

In the morning, we sat at a small house and went through the attack on Benin, while some women took care of a large brood and roasted corn over an open fire. The contrast between this peace and the hellish noise and the black smoke of Benin airfield a few

hours earlier was total. We ate mangos and drank coconut milk from some large nuts. Sergeant and the mechanic Aldo came after they, together with the Biafran ground staff, had taken care of the aircrafts. Sergeant was always calm and sullen and did not show much of his feelings, but after our comeback he could not hide his dissatisfaction. He was leaning on one elbow and smoked while he listened. The mechanic was a restless soul who had a heavy responsibility. He would attend to deliveries and simultaneously teach the Biafrans how the carts should be handled. He was constantly distracted and left the room where we were sitting to get back after a while.

It was found that Auguste had shot three or four rockets straight through a night bomber, which stood on the tarmac. He and Martin flew in from the west and Auguste immediately observed the bomber, which was obscured from the direction I flew in. He saw the rockets go into the target and we were pleased to report a bomber severely injured. Martin attacked an air defence cannon in the eastern part of the field and he also shot some rockets into the tower.

CG was very concerned by his failure to fire his rockets. It must have been incredibly unnerving diving straight for the air defence while trying unsuccessfully to shoot rockets. That he still did not

immediately break off the dive suggests his self-control.

Willy came after a while and congratulated us on the result. Auguste disappeared in a car to get gasoline since there was none at the base. We enjoyed the coolness under the trees after several hours in the cabin. Outside lizards were running around in the scorching sun and the odd butterfly fluttered over the grass. People went past and it was very peaceful.

As we talked we heard the faint sound of a jet aircraft. We went out in the sun and looked up. High up there, just below the thin clouds, flew a Ilyushin bomber. The Biafran air defence shot some salvos. The bomber disappeared eastwards in a turn.

Director of Legal Affairs Carl Gunnar Lidbom at the Swedish Department of Justice says apropos the last reports on Captain von Rosen:

- The political aspects of Captain von Rosen's private warfare - assuming that the information is correct - are extraordinarily serious. We must remember that there is formally no war in Biafra. If the news reports are telling the truth the involved Swedes must be investigated in light of the Swedish penal code.

Two professors of international law, Hilding Eek, Stockholm, and Lars Hjerner, Uppsala, have a little different views.

- The issue if Captain von Rosen's alleged bomb patrol is guilty of breach of Swedish law becomes a question of how a court would assess what is actually happening in Biafra. Will the assessment be that it is a case of an actual war applies the laws of war and not the Swedish penal code. The Swedish aircrafts alleged bombing raids then is not actionable. In a legal assessment of the situation in Biafra outside states would have to assume that a regular war occurs or that Biafra at least has position as an outright rebellion party.

On Sunday we took it easy. We listened to Radio Lagos and the BBC, which first reported our attack. Radio Biafra had still said nothing. According to the BBC our first two attacks succeeded better than we had thought. Later we learned that a BBC reporter remained in Benin the morning we attacked. He had probably seen the column of smoke from the burning MiG plane.

We discussed which target we would select the next time and decided Enugu. There was an airfield, from which the Nigerian planes probably started their attacks against Biafra. Also this day we saw an Ilyushin bomber flying back and forth at high altitude. It was accompanied by two MiG:s, which dived towards some target far away. We clearly heard the rattle of their guns and even single shots from Biafran anti-aircraft.

We decided to start the next attack late in the afternoon next day. We would attack at dusk and fly home in the dark. Thus it would be an attack every other day: Thursday, Saturday and Monday. According to reports from Radio Lagos and the BBC they were prepared in Nigeria - our attacks should be expected and all defensive measures taken.

In my diary I wrote on May 25 at 17:00:

"Martin and I have only gone and slackened half asleep in the room and discussed our new target. We

draw up the main lines, but want to give each other opportunities to vary as much as possible. This time we will enter in two squads. The first raises the air defence with a long shot at any aircraft. If we find out where the anti-aircraft fire comes from, we concentrate on him directly. This time the cannon will be silenced. We are going west, slipping down the mountain slope in the shade, get good overview of the airfield and then open fire. After shooting we go in opposite directions, one of us northward over the bush, and the other southward over hills. The second squad is told which targets are left and come in as soon as we have stopped our attack. Then attack from the north and from the south or from west again. Home on the low along the mountain slope or the mountain. Higher when the darkness comes, night navigation home and dark landing."

But it did not turn out quite the way we had planned...

At about 16:00 on Monday we started from the base, where we had landed after the Benin-attack. We flew out over the jungle, closely over the trees and sometimes between them. Martin was superior in low flying: his machine was well below us others. Every now and then I lost him. Auguste had fun too, but he was certainly not down under the palm canopy as often as Martin. CG flew higher and kept a straight course. There was always something

stubbornly consistent about flight path. I liked flying best about halfway between Martin and CG. I enjoyed the view from those otherwise puny aircraft. We followed a hillside north. The terrain was here quite hilly: small hills with palm trees and some giant trees, the occasional cultivation and winding back roads. I flew on the left side behind CG and followed him closely, for he was hard to see. Martin was straight out to the right of me further down the slope - he glimpsed occasionally between the treetops. Auguste flew behind Martin and was almost impossible for me to discover.

The engine purred like a cat and oil temperature kept a very good value - a reading higher than at home in our cold climate, but constant. We used the throttle to a large extent during low flying: reduced downhill and increased when we went over a hill or a tall tree. Admittedly the engine burnt slightly more fuel but we had enough fuel. The main thing was that we flew low and did not show ourselves.

Above us rose the uprights to a power line and I immediately thought of CG, as he flew first. We used to warn each other by pressing the transmit button twice. I did so and got answer. I was sure that CG had seen the posts. As we got closer I expected that he would rise slightly to pass over. To my horror he continued in his stubborn way straight towards the power wires which hung treacherous one meter

above the canopy. It was too late to warn again and I waited for the machine to do a somersault over the wires and disappear into the greenery. To my surprise and relief the machine seemingly went straight through the power line wires. I could hardly believe my eyes. Myself, I must rise about five feet and I saw how Martin and Auguste did the same. I do not know how CG was able to avoid colliding with the power lines. Perhaps he had flown between them - seemed to be most likely. Or perhaps he had passed over with the wheels almost on the wires.

The terrain turned increasingly to plains. We flew over the small villages, but saw no roads, only single huts with cultivated plots. I inclined the plane sometimes and waved when I saw someone standing and watch. To my delight they often waved back. The terrain shifted constantly: forest, hills, cultivated areas, villages. We had now become accustomed to the heat. In our equipment was no longer a water bottle. I had my camouflage shirt and my own watch, my well walked-in shoes and the now crumpled maps. I felt at home with the aircraft. But sometimes it was really terribly hot in the cabin.

We flew in formation across a broad front. I heard some shots, but did not see any people. There were, however, burnt huts and holes in the earth after grenades. And also smoke from small fires in the grass. This was the combat area north of the road

between Onitsha and Enugu. Then the same happened as under the attack on Port Harcourt: I lost the others amongst the trees. It was easily done. Flying too high the others disappeared against the green background. Flying lower one was forced to pay more attention to avoiding obstacles rather than keeping an outlook for the others. And suddenly, when I was not prepared, they were gone! I continued on my own and followed the process line on the map. In the afternoon big thundercloud had grown up, and the occasional rain arrived. But now, almost evening, cloud giants dissolved and the sun shone through and gave the landscape colour. Small paths and roads winding their way along the slopes, but hardly anyone in sight. It was different in Biafra, where there was no road without people. Millions of people were huddled in to a small area - and subjected to almost daily attacks by MiG planes.

20 minutes passed and I looked in vain for the others. I prepared on making the attack on my own and without interaction with the others. But I decided to still attack the part of the airport, which was detailed for me. I would lie in fourth place far right, in the second squad and attack the right side of the airport from the direction we came, west. The terrain was hilly and now I flew in the valleys between high hills. Everything seemed deserted. After having passed the mountain west of Enugu, I followed a long downhill and the speed increased. Far below the

slope would lie, according to the map, the city of Enugu and the airport. I passed burned-out homes and burnt ground. The fighting must have been hard, when Nigerian troops took the city. On a hill was a large palatial house, which looked undamaged. I now saw the city, which was very beautiful in the shadow of the mountain range I had passed. The evening sun shone on the mountain tops and the sky shifted in yellow. I continued towards the target, which I still did not see but should see in about a minute. I was now completely down in the valley shadow and glided over low vegetation. Here and there an unoccupied house. During the very last part of approach I saw the other planes. They lay to the left of me and behind. I did not think more about it, because just above the low trees I saw a MiG plane running on the ground. It was a mile to get there. I made my lowest charge until then - climbed nothing but shot almost all rockets in a long succession against the MiG plane. None of my rockets hit directly, but they struck just off the plane, which disappeared in smoke and shrapnel. I saw how the plane stopped and stood still. If it had had time to come in the air, it would certainly have troubled us during our return flight.

Then I turned to the left, as we had determined just before the start, and the other MFI-planes were in line behind me and would start shooting. For not hindering them I dived so low I dared to come under

their rocket orbits. Just above me were streaks of smoke from the rockets. In the moment my right wing hit a treetop. True, it was only a small tree, but the leaves and smoke and the impact on the plane made me scared. For a second, I thought I would crash-land. But in the next second I found that the plane was still fully manoeuvrable. I continued to zigzag between bushes and decided to keep better supervision in the future. I passed the corner of the field, and over a fuming Canberra bomber, continued into the bush back and away from the airport.

Only then did I notice how quiet it was: apparently they had been shooting firmly against us. What had happened to the others I did not know at all. They talked a while on the radio, but I could not understand who was who. The moisture had not been useful for our radios - sometimes voices just scratched in them. When I was in the safety of the bush and above the burned houses I thought about how many rockets I had shot and thought I should have some left. I circled around the bushes until it seemed to be quiet away at the airport and stole then back on the field, raised my muzzle and struck a long shot at the terminal building. I saw the rocket go in as an arc that ended in the building. The time was 18:40, when I then turned away and began to navigate homeward in the dusk. I heard CG and Auguste talk to each other, but kept silent myself. It seemed to be a dent on the wing after the collision with the tree

top, but the rudders felt like before.

Twilight fell very quickly now, as it does in the tropics. The sun shone on thunder clouds to the west. The hills and trees lay in a gray-green gloom under me. I flew now on the instruments, maybe 50 meters above the ground. When darkness became compact I got up in the protective night. The stars were lit and the last light disappeared in the west. Towards the very weak light, which was still left in the west, I discovered two silhouettes - like two huge black flies. It was CG and Auguste, who made company after the attack. Although they had flown another way away from the target and despite several course changes during the hour that had passed since the attack our itineraries happened to coincide. I joined them and half an hour later we landed in the dark on the primitive path. A soldier ran in front with a torch and led the way to the machine's location under the trees. I asked for Martin. To my surprise he came walking in the dark and asked if all was well.

As usual, we gathered in our bungalow and drank a beer. CG, who was significantly relieved, also drank beer and smoked a cigarette - he smoked otherwise extremely rarely. Auguste was in great spirits. Sergeant and the mechanic sat as usual and listened and commented now and then. So Martin told his own amazing story about what happened to him in the attack on Enugu.

He had followed me into the attack, but because of my left turn, he was restrained, held back to shoot a short while and then directed a volley against what looked to be gasoline stockpiles at the terminal building. At the end of this salvo, when he himself was at the very edge of the tall shrubs and trees, that grew in the south-western edge of the field, his plane was hit in the abdomen by gunfire from the ground.

- I dived, when I noticed this, said Martin, but was so low that the nose went in the top branches on the last tree in the field. Leaves flew around the hood and some got stuck in the air intake. The engine speed dropped while I turned right and continued in a long left turn around the airport. I made desperate attempts to get up and increase speed. In this wide turn I passed around the MiGs, which stood still after the shelling, then over the buildings on the city's north side, further behind the terminal building, past some large radio antennas and back into the airport. I saw the MiGs in front of the terminal building, but could not swing so narrow that I could shoot. I saw the other MFIs disappear over the treetops to the north. I hesitated between trying to get away immediately or just continue to shoot at aircrafts. I continued along the path on the lowest speed. Stall warning sounded throughout.

The course at Enugu's airport is in east-west and is over 1,000 feet long. Martin flew along the course

with half of the rockets remaining. In the western part of the course were four or five Canberra bombers with the noses towards the tree he and I both collided with, and in the distance a Heron.

- I was surprised that nobody shot, told Martin. Maybe it was because I flew so low, all the time only a few feet above the asphalt on runway 09-27. Shooters in the bushes would have shot at each other. About 500 yards from the line of camouflage painted aircrafts I shot the rest of my rockets and think I hit one of bombers and surely the Heron plane. The plane's weight decreased when the rockets were fired, and I managed to barely rise above bushes in the end of the runway and disappear over the bush. Martin went over the mountain, but had to do make four or five flights back and forth along the slope to gain altitude and finally be able to jump down in a valley. Dusk fell. Martin swung south earlier than us to get home as quickly as possible since the motor was in bad shape. He flew straight across the front between Awka and Onitsha. There he was again shot at, this time in the plane's stabilizer. It was almost totally dark and Martin dived down towards the darkness of the jungle, flew as low as he dared, and escaped again firing from the ground.

- My body can not tolerate long walks, Martin said. I was forced to fly home

He was relieved and satisfied, drank his beer, and repeated several times that it had been extremely mischievously having to land on Enugu. While we sat and talked the Air Force chief came in and congratulated us on the outcome. He held a small ceremony, reading an ancient congratulations poem on Ibo language and treated us then with whiskey. For the first time in Africa, I drank a sip of real whiskey and it did not taste bad. The cicadas played as usual with all their might. CG allowed for once that we used his radio to listen to music. There were no spare batteries, and he was therefore very careful with the radio. The radio news was our only contact with the world outside Biafra.

After each attack each of us wrote a report. These were sent to the Air Force chief, who compared and summed them up. They then compared them with the reports that came in the radio broadcast from the BBC and Radio Nigeria.

Radio Nigeria had made a change in reporting our attacks: they never mentioned the number of killed soldiers but spoke instead of killed civilians. It sounded better...

Later, some boys played guitar and sang for us. We sat outside in the moonlight, enjoying their rhythmic African songs. Somebody had made several bottles of palm wine for us, but it was appreciated only by me -

Martin did not like it at all. It was late before we got into bed that night. We lost track of time and enjoyed the African night. All those, who had worked at getting our small planes to function, were also there. CG's soft diplomacy and tactical skills had given the result we all had hoped for but perhaps not wholeheartedly dared to believe in: after three attacks we knew now that Operation Biafran Babies was a success.

The day after the Enugu-attack we finally slept properly. I then took a long walk along with CG to a post office, where we bought some stamps. We were invited to palm wine gatherings and talked to villagers. They seemed to be noticeably relieved: it had now been three nights without bombing of the Uli field. After dinner we listened to a lengthy report on the Voice of America. The attack against Enugu had destroyed two MiGs, two Canberra bombers and an airliner, said the commentator, who also stated that there was concern in Lagos and that the attacks could push Nigeria to peace negotiations. It was remarkable that the Canberra bombers were mentioned. England had always intensely denied that they were used in the war. We rejoiced that the Voice of America suggested the possibility of peace negotiations. It was precisely the response both we and Biafra sought.

THE BIAFRANS GH

This is the first African revolution. It is a struggle against economic imperialism, as it has always been found in Africa. I have been to 40 countries and spoken to revolutionaries in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. But I have rarely met such a fighting spirit as in Biafra.

Herman Lindqvist, Aftonbladet, 21 September 1969

One evening I met a very young soldier, who was home in his village on leave. I invited him to a cigarette and we talked about the war and Biafra. I asked bluntly what he thought about Ojukwu.

- Ojukwu is our leader, he said.

- Do you believe in him? I asked.

- We go to death for him! replied the young Biafran and I saw that he was serious. In the dusk gleamed no smile, just a couple of lightning eyes. I left the topic. Instead I asked the young soldier of life at the front.

- We infiltrate villages deep in the Nigerian area on the other side of the front, he told me. Front line is very fluid. Many Biafran guerrilla soldiers have got

friends and family in the occupied areas and can move there without difficulty. But Nigerian infiltration in Biafra occurs not at all, he said.

He cursed the lack of ammunition:

- Did we just have as much ammunition as we needed we would win every attack, he said. But we must always hold back.

He had been at the front for a full year, but his fighting spirit was unbroken. It appeared that he almost longed to return. He was determined to continue the fight. I managed to get a beer from our house and gave it to him. He opened it, but took it with him when he went. The other Biafrans were laughing and thought it was a good gift.

One of our base chiefs was a veteran from the front - a little man with a big beard, big belly and a very big and hearty laugh. He presented Martin and me to one of his comrades from the front. The world's greatest fighter, he called him. And the "world's greatest fighter" was also unusually big. We started talking about our offensive and our tactics. The guerrilla warrior beamed with enthusiasm and laughed at our jokes. In two years he had constantly been at front - this was his first furlough. He must have experienced terrible hardships, and he had seen peers die, he had seen the devastated villages, massacred civilians. All this gruesome violence had still not marked him.

Now, he enjoyed hearing our stories. Sometimes he laughed like a child to our joke, this colossal Biafran warrior. But when we asked him about something, he was deadly serious and responded instantly with words, by arm movements, gestures or by drawing on a paper.

Once CG brought us to an army headquarter out in the jungle. Five young captains in the guerrilla forces reported the current situation and how they thought it would develop. Their description was factual and they spoke almost perfect English. None of them was over 30 and many were much younger. They made a strong impression on us.

Many times I heard Biafran soldiers tell about how they outsmarted the Nigerians. It amused them to describe such events, which of course helped to spur the morale and resist the hardship. I heard, for example, how they "stole" food from a Nigerian force, which was surrounded on the southern front - it was probably during the Biafran siege of Owerri. Nigerian flights dropped supplies to the encircled force, which fired green signal shots to show where they were. But the next time the plane came the Biafrans also fired green signal shots: the pilot became irresolute and let the whole load on the Biafran side. In that way the Biafrans got both food and weapons. The soldier, who told me, laughed and was proud of the coup - it was he who was in

command over the Biafran siege force and invented the trick.

The overall impression of the Biafran army was impressive skill, strong dedication and high morality. Of course we also met exceptions.

- But give them time, give them just the time, CG said. Before you know it, they are faster than you are.

The Biafran base personnel did their utmost so that everything would work. Discipline was very good. Most had no training but worked very efficiently. A hundred men had the role to camouflage the track, turn the lights on and so on. They did it with great enthusiasm - just one minute after landing the strip was covered in palm leaves. Night time the runway was lit by oil lamps - there was a man at each lamp to light and extinguish it. Also this worked perfectly. Labour shortage did not exist in Biafra.

Between the flights we had the opportunity to see the surroundings. We were moving freely and I often took walks to the villages and met Biafrans. In the early days they did not really know who I or the other Swedes were, but soon learned of the Biafran Air Force's attacks. The roads were always full of people in Biafra. There were the young women with burdens on their heads and maybe also a child in a bundle on the back - they moved with graceful elegance. And there were the older men, often on

bicycle and sometimes in colourful clothes. And all the kids ...

The road was reddish brown and hard because of all the traffic. Palms and other tall trees let its greenery hang over the roadway, where it was shady and comfortable. Our skin colour never brought any attention: that was something that first surprised me a little. An African on a street in a Swedish provincial town raised much greater attention than a European in a Biafran village. And yet very few Europeans were in the country, except us aviators only missionaries and aid workers. We met no other Europeans.

One day when I was out walking on my own I entered a palm wine bar and sat down on a bench. The barkeeper smiled and I enjoyed watching his large brood. His wife sat on the floor with the smallest child on the knee. Another mother came in and they talked vividly in Ibo without taking any particular notice of me. I felt welcome. I drank a quart of palm wine and the bar owner wanted to supply for free, but I insisted on paying - payment was yet only a fraction of what you pay for a beer in Sweden. I experienced many such peaceful moments in Biafra. Their composure surprised me. They lived on in spite of the constant threat of extinction. Never did I notice hate against Nigeria or England. Children and young people were remarkably open and natural. Sometimes they looked at us with big

eyes - that was before the fame of what we did in Biafra had spread. But if they got a smile they gave immediately a blazing smile back. For this to the exterior so peaceful environment one might be led to believe that the war hardly affected civilian population. And all the cultivated fields around the villages, mango trees, coconut trees and oil palm trees around the villages, where there were plenty of chickens and goats, might have been an indication that the lack of food was not very high.

The reality was different. Several million people were crammed onto a small area - maybe six, maybe 12 million: no one could appreciate the crowds. When I saw this human swarm, I wondered how they actually spent the nights - many families of course lived in the same house, but many also slept outdoors. And no matter how they worked to cultivate every spare square meter food could not be sufficient. Particularly distressing was to see children with swollen bellies and scrawny arms - they were in each village.

Many, many were refugees. They told me that they escaped from Enugu, Onitsha, Port Harcourt and other places, which were captured by the Nigerians. Our walks were real weight loss cures in the heat. The shadow under a bamboo roof became a rescue when the sweat flowed in the heat.

But it was always rewarding and interesting. We met a touching hospitality. A little kid could come to us with a barrel of mangoes - sent by his family, who crowded into a hut by the road. Often we had such simple gifts from the people. Gradually they also learned what we did in Biafra. The sort of wondering glances turned into friendly smiles and greetings.

One evening after a violent tropical storm Auguste, Martin and I went out in the moonlight. We had heard that there would be music near the base. We came to a large stone building with a single large room. There was an orchestra of drums and guitars and even a speaker system. Lots of people had gathered and closest to the orchestra there were officers with their wives. The orchestra had already begun to play simple, rhythmic pop music and one of the musicians sang in English. Out in the dark there were still more people. They hung in the windows and the doors. As the night proceeded the music became more and more intense. The melodies returned, because the repertoire was not that great, but the sound became different. They began to dance. Soon all in the crowd danced - the crowd in the room became compact and the atmosphere was extremely suggestive. I watched a little boy, maybe twelve, and how he followed the rhythm perfectly, he was one with the crowd, which filled the entire room and had turned into a rhythmic drive. It was a fantastic evening. The night was black, the air was

nice - war and hunger seemed to be far away.

We had, when we undertook the mission, not been convinced of the justice of Biafra's struggle - we had doubted what the truth was. Now we doubted it no more. The enthusiasm the Biafrans showed through, their relentless will to defend themselves, which was consistent with everyone we met, surprised us. We came to identify us with the Biafrans. At home certain politicians and debaters sought to ridicule us. In Nigerian propaganda we were called "vacation warriors".

This is my vacation, also said CG once. This is my relaxation. Now I feel that I am doing something more than if I would fly drunken tourists to Majorca or the Canary Islands. For the first time in many years I feel I'm doing well.

But one morning CG was obviously in a bad mood. He came out of his room unusually early and passed quickly by the morning bath, which consisted of pouring two buckets of cold water over the body. At morning coffee he complained that the whole thing, the whole Minicoïn system functioned worse than it should. We agreed with him. (Minicoïn - "Miniature-Counter-Insurrection"- was another name for MFI9B). From some senior officers in Biafra we had encountered some complaints which originated in the lack of knowledge and aversion to new ideas. No

one could negate that the effects of our first attacks had been more than satisfactory. But in order to develop the system and make it even more effective, we needed more from the Biafrans. There were plans to attack targets in Nigeria with other methods and other tactics. A group in the lead supported that plan. The Minicoïn-system risked being pushed aside for the wrong reasons .

Now CG was very annoyed and decided to seek General Ojukwu that same afternoon to try to sort out the difficulties. After breakfast he disappeared into a car and left only a dust-cloud behind in the dry sand. Auguste, Martin and I lazed around in the shade and waited for the CG to come back and report the results of the deliberations. After several hours he came back from the headquarters. Now he was in a completely different mood than in the morning.

CG first had been waiting outside Ojukwu's place in the secret headquarters, while the escorting officer was inside with the general. After a while the officer returned and announced that Ojukwu did not have time to see them both. CG cursed and wrote a message, which was submitted to Ojukwu. Subsequently, both the officer and CG came in.

- When someone tries so hard to meet me it must be important, said Ojukwu.

CG, who was moderately angry, did not mince

words. He stressed that the Minicoins system to function needs to be fully supported. The small aircraft had proved its efficiency - not to admit that fact would be downright irresponsible.

Ojukwu's gaze became blacker and blacker and CG's escort officer said afterwards that the general apparently had been furious. The conversation ended with Ojukwu promising all the assistance CG wanted and he said it in a way that showed that he was serious - that he would not tolerate his orders not being obeyed to the letter.

CG smiled when he was talked about the officer, who was the object of Ojukwu's silent anger. But this officer, who CG almost scolded in front of Ojukwu, later put his pride aside and did everything to help CG improve the Minicoins system.

Many times CG had to fight against the bureaucracy, which thrived in Biafra, but he stressed it was a legacy of the colonial period, which Africa was slowly doing away with. Of course Operation Biafran Babies could have achieved even better results, if no obstacle at all had been erected. But arrogance, hungry soldiers, corrupt politicians and hardened bureaucrats exist in all countries. Biafra was no exception. Still, I think it would be possible to locate a lot worse examples of the mentioned phenomenon in Sweden than I met in Biafra.

UGHELLI GH

A lonely Biafran aircraft swept out of sunset here last night and fired rockets, which put a power station on fire. The lights of the city and the surrounding suburbs quenched, when a rocket went through a wall, destroyed the turbines and set fire to the power station. Workers fled in panic from their homes, but no injuries were reported.

Ughelli, Nigeria, May 30 – Reuters

Whichever way you look at it: this man is deadly! So are also the Swedish pilots, flying his plane. The threat from them is now known and the case for the Nigerian Air Force is to immediately search out and destroy von Rosen and his planes wherever they may be.

Sunday Observer (Nigeria) on 1 June 1969.

The result of our first three attacks was that for the first time in many years the Biafran sky was free from terror bombers and hunting MiGs. Red Cross and Church Aid flights were also reported to occur undisturbed. But one day, while CG, Martin and I sat and drank coffee, we heard the sound of the jets. We

went out and saw a bomber at high altitude, escorted by two MiG fighters.

Suddenly a MiG jet swung around and dived. Seconds afterwards shells started exploding. We threw ourselves down in the shelter and then during more than ten minutes heard howling, cannon fire and explosions. The sound of the guns was tough and hard and came irregularly. After each dive, it would be quiet for a few seconds, while the aircraft swung to access back in a new offense. Their manoeuvres in the air were not particularly impressive and the bouts were not made with any finesse. But the guns demanded respect. I felt like a bug, where I lay. Martin swore that he didn't have a jet plane at his disposal so that he could go up against the MiG planes. CG was fully convinced that they had English-speaking mercenary pilots - he said he had even spoken to them via radio at one point. One of them was called Mike. These pilots never took unnecessary risks careful to attack only those places where there was no Biafran air defence. That they now accidentally found us could be due to some negligence in the camouflage. Or perhaps we had been careless when we went out and chased after them while they circled around up there. They might have seen our white faces.

CG tried to calm Martin:

- Wait, he said. Soon we are back in the air with our planes, which are much smaller, but just as effective, though they do not make as much noise.

Just as suddenly as the attack had come, it was over. We heard the cry that a fire had broken out and hurried out. Several of the base cars were dotted with bullet holes, where they were under the palm leaf roofs, and one of them burned. A man had been killed and nine injured. Several houses were shot through by heavy calibre 37-millimeter shrapnel ammunition and 22-millimeter gunfire. We found some duds and noticed that they were Russian grenades, by all accounts several years old. We saved the cartridge cases we found. We observed that the Nigerian Air Force actually for once had attacked a military target. Previously, we had seen several burnt marketplaces and once we had crossed a road, where a MiG just before fired on a civilian crowd and many had been injured.

Sergeant came along and blood poured from a wound in the forehead.

- How are you? I asked.

- Yes, it flew a little scrap in the air just now, he replied.

After a while also the mechanic turned up and was found to be in one piece. But nervous strain had been

hard on him and this MiG attack amused him not at all. The base chief, who reared ducks, had a duck mom with 17 kids, which he was very proud of. During the attack the ducks were as usual out picking behind the house. Afterwards we went out and counted them. They were 17 still alive and the chief exhaled.

On a later occasion Martin and I saw in the distance how a MiG attacked a military target. The plane flew back and forth and we saw clearly how it shot bullets and fire from the nose of the aircraft. With a seconds' delay the sound reached us - a sharp crackling. An officer, who came in a car, stopped and asked if we wanted to see what had happened at the target area, if the attack caused injuries. When we came all was quiet. The sentries stood in their places and straightened up, when the officer came along with Martin and me in tow. On the ground there were traces of large calibre bullets. The soldiers came forward with undamaged bullets and the officer noted that there were Russian 22-millimeter and 37-millimeter ammunition. Up on the balcony of an empty, windowless and abandoned two-story house was a machine-gun post. We went up the stairs and through a dilapidated door to the balcony on the upper bottom. There stood the shooter at attention. He could not be more than 17 years old. Another boy, who handled the cartridge belt, was approximately the same age. Both were proud and happy. The MiG-

plane had fired at the house and there were bullet holes everywhere. The boy reported that he responded the fire as best he could and that he also believed there had been a hit. Other soldiers later confirmed this: they saw a plate fly from the MiG plane. Keeping nerves and return fire from attacking jets with an old machine gun, which also lacked a proper foundation - for that a great deal of courage is needed. The officer ordered the shooter to move his machine gun to another place, for it could have been detected.

On the same day as our base was attacked by Nigerian planes we launched our fourth attack. Two planes took off from the base, the other two would start later from another base and we would all meet in the air over a small village not far from the Niger River. Before the start we listened as usual for the sound of jets, but everything seemed fine. The sun was obscured by clouds, but the visibility was good. After about an hour a short twilight commenced and then it would be totally dark. That's why we started so late. The darkness was our friend and our protection.

We were heading westward far into the Nigerian area. Our goal was the turbine power station in Ughelli. If we could put it out of play, almost all oil pumps in Western Nigeria would stop. Only by striking effectively at their supply of export oil, the

politicians supported by the oil companies in Nigeria would realize that they in the long term could not gain from a prolonged war. It was a gamble worth considering. If we could stop oil export perhaps the war would be halted.

In the bush Biafran guerrilla forces were on the move. Now we attacked from the air.

We flew again low over the treetops in a beautiful area of rolling forest. We had crossed the Niger and its water landscape with all bayous. We listed on the map the roads we passed and we saw several oil pumping stations in the jungle - the workers looked up at us, a few white faces, some dark. I waved a few times, but the greeting was not answered. They just followed the planes with their eyes. We flew as usual in wide formation at the right distance so as not to hinder each other. Sometimes the others disappeared, but I had gotten used to that by now. After a while they showed up again. And if we would lost touch with each other, it was nothing to worry about. I knew the way - we could all find the target on our own. It was now not far away. We got into a long line, CG first as always. It was about 18:45. So we saw the target to the left of us, a big gray building. Inside the concrete walls was the power plant. The building was really huge, where it rose from the low bush.

We continued west, past the power plant. Initially we

had intended that CG and Martin would attack from one direction, while Auguste and I would attack from the other such that the building would be fired from two directions. For some reason however Auguste did not come to the point, where we would meet. I had to decide whether I would join up with CG and Martin or circle around the building and by myself attack from the other direction. We spotted a power line. CG swung around and we followed the line back towards the power plant.

The gray building reappeared in front of us and I decided to follow the others. CG's and Martin's machines stood out like silhouettes against the facade at dusk. You have time to think a lot during these compressed seconds and you have time to observe much: environment, nature, weather, where the sun is, how the other planes behave, how the target looks in detail. CG was now very close to the house - too close, it seemed, but the building was very large and in the dusk I was probably the victim of an illusion. CG's machine rose slightly and sank again. His rockets shot off towards the facade. Blue and white flashes struck out from the power station wall - it was apparently a whole series of short circuits.

That CG shot entire series of rockets irritated Martin - he was at an appropriate shooting distance and thought CG remained too long in his flight path.

Move it the fuck up! Martin said on the radio. CG swung to the left and Martin's salvoes flashed off with several explosions in the building as a consequence.

As soon as Martin turned away, it was my turn. I pressed the release button, felt the shock of the plane and heard the hissing when the rockets set off. But they did not go quite as I had expected. One of them disappeared over the roof of the building - where will it hit, I had time to think. Perhaps some others may lose their lives because of my error. I held back a few seconds and then managed from very close range and by stepping on the plane in firing position with the rudder to put two rockets through the windows on the facade. I neither saw nor heard the explosions, just saw how the rockets disappeared into the building. Then I turned and flew away over the trees. After a while I found the others in the twilight.

During this flight we passed over the areas west of the Niger, which Biafra held. Nigeria denied that the Biafrans were on that side of river. The battles were seen clearly from the air. It was burning here and there in the glades and there were little black spots after grenade explosions. However, the fires and explosions were not as tight as in other front sections.

On a couple of occasions we heard the shots, when

we flew. But we did not see soldiers, which was a sign that battles were going on - behind fronts moving troops were fully visible and farther away we also saw civilians.

It was quite dark when we again passed Niger. The river arms glistened in the delta landscape. The night was clear and the stars shone so strongly that we saw each others' silhouettes. When we got over the Biafran area low light twinkled at us from the villages - in some way the lights made me feel at home.

On May 30, Biafra's national holiday, when Ojukwu held a long and substantial speech on the radio, we set out our last mission.

Biafran army forces had halted south of Owerri, and attacked hoping to recapture this fertile area to the coast and Port Harcourt. Nigerian troops held a road and a village. The Biafrans had managed to intercept them there, but the encircled force had dug themselves in and had supplies and ammunition for a long battle. The intention was that we now for the first time would assist the army in the land war, which it was assumed would have a major psychological impact.

We started in the morning. The idea was that we would fly above the road and slip along it as a reference marker. We would then also shoot up the village, where the Nigerian ammunition storage was.

CG and Martin started first, with me and Auguste after them. It proved to be very difficult to locate the target. The maps we used were anything but precise, and we realized that the risk of error was very great. We did however reach a village just adjacent to the front and then thought we knew where we were. But we were all doubtful. The villages looked almost the same everywhere. Small roads joined them and we found no real point of orientation.

While Auguste and I put us on standby CG and Martin flew in over the front. They discussed all the time on the radio. CG's radio malfunctioned. Auguste and I could see the other two, who remained at dangerously high altitudes and maybe all the time were shot at. Martin became irritated and said that we were in the right place, but CG was unsure and none of them fired their rockets.

After ten minutes CG decided that it was best to return. We knew with 75 percent certainty where the target was, but we had to have 100 percent security and CGs decision not to risk shelling Biafran troops was correct. We landed at the base with the rockets still in the capsules. We later in the day were told that we really had been in the right place. From the ground we had been observed and they heard how Nigerians fired wildly towards CG and Martin, as they circled around. They had fired artillery, bazooka, machine guns, assault rifles ... all they had.

That was rather a miracle that CG and Martin had escaped. We noted this attack as a reconnaissance. There was no time to do it again. Our civil works and our families waited for us in Sweden. We needed to return home. The very next afternoon CG announced that we would get ready - we could follow a plane out of Biafra in the evening. We had made many friends in Biafra, but we had not time to say goodbye. Personally, I would have liked to stay, but I had no choice. Of course, I also had homesickness: I had not seen my daughter in over one month. And if we did not return we now risked losing our jobs at home. It would probably still be difficult to explain what we had been doing - we realized that, but did not know of the reaction our involvement in Biafra had caused at home in Sverige.

That afternoon we went to the headquarters and met Biafra's Air Force chief one last time. I remember well his office. On the wall hung a photograph, where the air force chief and other Biafrans held up the hood of a shot down MiG. We had a long talk and the Air Force chief thanked us. Just when we were to leave he glanced at my camouflage shirt and asked if I would not change to civilian clothes. But my own shirt had disappeared during our movements . I got a white shirt from him, but tucked away the camouflage shirt as a souvenir.

In the dark we went along the pitch-black roads

towards the airport. We got a puncture and stood in the middle of bush, but managed to stop another car, which took us on and we got in time to the field. There we waited. The atmosphere was a little tense: a MiG had attacked the field just after dusk and they were prepared for bombings. I sat beside a Biafran army officer at the back in the DC which started without incidents. It was an unusual feeling to sit in the large fuselage and listen to the engine's smooth buzz. It was time for thinking. On the raids we've done. On the fate that helped us so many times. On all the times, where it had been real close for one of us to die. On Biafra's people - all the dead and dying children, all women, all the soldiers. May this abominable war end!

For our part, the task was completed. But Operation Biafran Babies had just started. Would it achieve the objective they had: armistice and peace negotiations?

At midnight we landed in a country outside Biafra. During the return journey news reached us that a Red Cross plane had been shot down by Nigerian planes and the crew seemed to have died. The second pilot, Stig Karlsson, was a good friend of mine.

We expected that this conscious assault on a Red Cross plan would cause quite a stir: that the politicians would finally understand Nigeria's real intentions. But nothing happened. That our attacks

against purely military targets could cause such an uproar even within the Swedish government, while a brutal shooting down of an unarmed Red Cross plane did not cause any protests - that is something I still can not really understand.

HOMECOMING GH

Owing to reports of Swedish citizens' involvement in an air force, participating in the battles of Nigeria on Biafra's side, ambassador Swarts in Lagos has been instructed to explain to the federal Nigerian government that the Swedish government takes firm distance from actions of the military kind. The government has always argued that constant Swedish efforts in connection with the conflict in Nigeria shall be made through humanitarian aid to those in need in the war-affected areas. We want to abstain from initiatives of another type except if such can contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Measures have been taken to investigate whether acts contrary to Swedish law have been committed. It is known that we for many years do not permit the export of arms to countries in Africa.

Swedish Foreign Department 27 May 1969

In Sweden we came to face an ordeal, as was nearly worse than that we experienced during the air attacks. CG took the first impact from the press and TV. I myself had explain the situation with my employer. We were all interrogated by the police, who were forced to make an investigation after allegations were made against CG of recruiting

Swedes for war in a foreign country, something which is not allowed. CG was acquitted. His critics did apparently not believe that anyone in his entourage could share his own view about Biafra's fight.

When they could not get at CG in that way they tried other means. The most uneasy in this context was MP Torsten Hansson's actions. He was one of the two Swedish parliamentarians, who had the benefit of visiting both Biafra and Nigeria during the war, and it is difficult to imagine that he would not have been influenced by the misery he witnessed. Both he and other Swedish politicians had had plenty of time to do something in "their" way, but had not done anything significant. Now Mr. Hansson apparently panicked over the fact there was a Swedish non-politician, who went from words to action. Hansson tried with phrases such as "the von Rosen vacation war" to incite the mood against CG and stated that "the solid goodwill our neutrality and our developing relief would have given, seems to have been wiped out with a stroke." That the Biafran people were being obliterated apparently was of minor importance. Torsten Hansson asked: "Should we not have an opportunity to prevent individuals from wilfully affecting our country's foreign policy relationship and jeopardize the political course, which we have decided democratically". This astounding line of thought was later completed in a social-democratic motion in the parliament, which

stated that "individual Swedes' behaviour in military conflicts in remote parts of the world can lead to serious misunderstandings about Sweden's foreign policy" and questioned if restrictions on exports of military equipment could apply to "Swedish staff involvement in a conflict."

That the government had distanced itself from Operation Biafran Babies was all right - it had after all absolutely nothing to do with it. But to try to prevent individuals acting on their conscience would mean a tremendous restriction of the freedom of opinion. Torsten Hansson was certainly not representative of the majority of the Swedish people, when he devoted himself to try to enact such laws, but his parliamentary motion was a good example of the strange impacts our enrolment in the Biafran Air force had at home.

The Nigerian shooting down of the Red Cross plane, however, had much more serious consequences: after the incident the Red Cross stopped the airlift. The federal government had on several occasions showed its irritation over the flights which they regarded as illegal. On 6 June, two MiG17- planes with mercenary pilots in twilight discovered a Red Cross-marked DC6 east of Port Harcourt, heading for Uli. According to the Nigerians the DC was ordered to land in Port Harcourt or Calabar, but when the Red Cross-plane's captain, an American, refused one of

the MiGs opened fire. The DC6's right wing began to burn and soon after the plane exploded in the air. The remains of the four-engine machine ended up in a swamp area near Eket, west of Calabar. All on board perished.

It was certainly a stark contrast between this drama and the idyllic scene a few days later experienced on the island of Oland - and yet both events were closely linked. Major Olof Stroh, Secretary General in the Swedish Red Cross, was celebrating his holidays. To get a statement from him about the sudden stop in the relief flights, the Swedish TV people had to travel to Oland. The wind blew and light summer clouds swept over a blue sky. It air smelled of Swedish summer. The TV men met major Stroh and he was concerned where such TV filming preferably should be done. He wanted to protect his privacy:

- Admittedly, we could go to my own summer house, but as you can imagine, I do not want to involve my personal life in this, said the major.

The interview was done at the sea shore, far away from his safeguarded privacy, which could not be disturbed. It became a rather successful interview. That evening, as it was aired, many Biafran mothers wept... their children had starved to death during the day.

I was wondering what attitude the Swedish government really had - I rang Prime Minister Tage Erlander and asked to meet him. That went well - he was interested in getting some of my impressions. I met him and went directly to the subject.

- Do you see Biafra as a democratically governed state? asked the Prime Minister.

I could certainly say yes. A representative government delegation should go there and obtain the data, I suggested. I showed the Russian ammunition Nigeria used and I told him about the people's willingness to defend themselves and about people's devotion and courage despite all the suffering.

Afterwards I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister: "My opinion is that something very cruel is unfolding in Biafra. In this time of anxiety, suspicion and profit-thinking I would be extremely grateful to notice something of fair thinking and actions. Only that can save those involved from shame. And involved we all are in some way".

I wrote several letters to Prime Minister Tage Erlander, Olof Palme and Torsten Nilsson, the Foreign Minister, but never got any answers. And any results - but that I had of course never expected. Meanwhile, political manoeuvring continued. Nigeria ran out the Red Cross indefinitely. Nigerian

war leaders declared that starvation is a "permissible weapon of war." Everything apparently followed the Anglo-Nigerian blueprint: Red Cross stopped the relief airlifts. Schisms broke out within the aid organizations. International Red Cross-director Auguste Lindth was declared undesirable and the Red Cross was blocked from coordinating relief efforts. But when the Nigerian war leaders, raving about this heroic victory over the Red Cross, began talking too frankly (both Finance Minister Awolowo and the Commander in Chief Katsina explained that they would not allow any aid shipments to Biafra) Prime Minister Wilson apparently became anxious about world opinion. He staged what is called "airliner diplomacy". This kind of scheming involves sending some higher diplomat on a commercial aircraft to the appropriate location. Then you can mute criticism with suggestions of "negotiations", "related agreements" and such. Wilson sent a man to Geneva to speak to the Red Cross, after which the Nigerian Minister Arikpo, who already was in Europe, was called to London. There appeared also to be a representative of the Red Cross present. The British Foreign Secretary Stewart assured all sides that the Red Cross and Nigeria (thanks to the English intervention) had made peace and that aid flights could start again anytime. All now hung on co-operation from Biafra's General Ojukwu.

The Red Cross was clearly annoyed by the English

involvement. They denied an agreement was reached. But "routine diplomacy" had already achieved its purpose. Wilson and Stewart had been able to reassure public opinion - that this was accomplished by deceiving the media would not be revealed until later.

It was the glorious summer of 1969, when the Swedish people relaxed on the beaches.

21 ATTACKS GH

The federal government of Nigeria conceded on Saturday that Biafran aircrafts had destroyed one of Gulf's most important oil installations and thereby successfully damaged the foreign oil interests in Nigeria. It is the first direct concession of the Lagos government that Biafra has success in its current campaign to suspend oil production in Nigeria. Statistics published in Lagos on Friday showed that the larger of the oil producers in Nigeria, Shell-BP, had cut down its production by more than 40,000 barrels per day in July.

Lagos August 16, 1969, AP

So this was the end of our involvement with the Biafran Air Force. But the five MFIs remained in Biafra. There was also Auguste Okpe. The Biafran Air Force was not the "Swedish Air Force" or even "von Rosen's private air force" as some supporters of the Nigerian military junta wanted to plead. The Biafran Air Force still existed even if Operation Biafran Babies was all but over. What we participated in was only the beginning.

The prevailing propaganda did not match Biafra's battle plans. Now, however, an Iron Curtain was

pulled down: the hundreds of journalists who raced madly off to Sao Tomé, Libreville or Cotonou, got no further than there. They knew precious little about the continued activity of the Biafran Air Force.

But after a few weeks, the brief telegrams from Nigeria indicated that the MFI planes once again had been in air, although CG evidently had not returned to Biafra.

In July 1969 the Biafran Air Force had only two pilots in service: Auguste Okpe, who could not do everything on his own, and a very fearless and talented Swedish aviator, who wished to remain anonymous. We identified him as Nils but that of course was not his real name.

The third day after his arrival, Nils met Ojukwu along with the Air Force Commander and CG. He relates about this meeting:

- Ojukwu was serious and made a lasting impression. He looked steadily at the person he spoke with. His manner was very sympathetic, he radiated calm and concentration. He communicated great confidence.

During a month's service in Biafran Air Force Nils made a total of 21 attacks, some together with Auguste but mostly on his own. Nils made several attacks along the front lines against purely military targets. These attacks were strategically coordinated

with the army's actions. He flew both on the northern front north of Onitsha and the southern front south of Owerri. The problem with the battle lines was always orientation. The pilot had to be know where the front line was and where the Biafran and the enemy forces were along those front lines.

Now Biafra developed a method to facilitate orientation: the Biafran forces deployed metal plates, clearly visible to the pilot. Where the last panel was the pilot knew that was where the front was: beyond that plate were hostile troops. Additionally Biafran forces shot signals to guide the pilot.

Auguste and Nils attacked on the front lines, where we previously had to concede since CG and Martin had problems with the orientation. Now they followed the road with the guidance of the plates and then attacked, Auguste from the left and Nils from the right towards the village held by Nigerians. This was Nils' first offense and he noted that the rockets went lower than he expected. He saw soldiers running in the village and he was aiming for buildings.

During the flight Nils observed how Auguste just north of Owerri was shot at by his own artillery. Black puffs of smoke beat up behind and next to Auguste's machine. First Nils did not understand what it was. He believed that the plane had caught

fire or that the engine was on fire. Then it occurred to him that it must be anti-aircraft shells. They had already passed, and the target was near. When Nils afterwards told of bombardment Auguste became terrified - he had not noticed anything. The Air Force had, as usual, informed air defence of the flight, but the message had never reached the battery. Whoever was guilty of this was arrested. So it was an extremely close call Auguste and Nils might well have been shot down by Biafran air defence during this attack. Owerri had days before been subjected to several attacks by Nigerian MiG planes, which made air defence troops nervous.

After landing Nils wanted to return immediately to the front section for a new attack, but this was postponed until the next day. Both Auguste and Nils started then, but encountered heavy rain and turned back. On the ground there was CG, who had returned to Biafra, and Nils asked to go off by himself. CG said that nothing prevented this and Nils started immediately again.

He came in from the south towards the village as the day before and was looking for a "green house", where the Biafrans believed there was a Nigerian ammunition storage. He went straight across the front line, shot in the middle of the village, turned - and saw the green house. After another turn, he flew straight for the house. He got a couple of hits and the

result was an extremely powerful explosion. Parts of the house flew up into the air and above the aircraft and Nils came close to having the whole mess hit him in the air.

After these Biafran air strikes, the land forces attacked and captured parts of the village.

Nils then made a reconnaissance for the navy at a target south of Uli. He followed the Niger at low altitude over small bushes and reeds on the beaches. This is a maze of bayous, but Nils found his target, the village Kigani, and noticed that it was completely evacuated. He continued along the river to possibly find some Nigerian gunboats, withdrew eastwards and was according to the map in hostile territory south of Ogota. He followed a totally blocked road and crossed above a pickup, which fired on the plane. This strengthened his belief that he was on hostile area and he fired with bad hit results on a couple of trucks. The last rockets he fired against a house, which he took for taken by the Nigerians. It was subsequently established to have been a Biafran pickup, but this sad statement was not out until just before Nils left Biafra.

Along with Auguste, Nils went against Asaba and Onitsha to disturb the Nigerian ferry route over the Niger at the blasted Onitsha Bridge. They shot at some houses and a car, but were subjected to very

heavy bombardment of air defence, which was heard by Biafran troops nearby. When Nils in later attacks passed this place he always went on the rise to briefly awaken the air defence, which then shot frantically. He claimed to be of some use even in this way: the Nigerians wasted the ammunition to no advantage.

On his own Nils one day did two attacks against Nigerian headquarters in Onitsha. He crossed the front line, which in this section was seen very clearly, and had no difficulty finding the target: a hospital, which according to the Biafran intelligence service was used as a Nigerian headquarter. He came in from the north and sent rockets against various places in the house. They went in through the walls, but outside the house there were no obvious signs of devastation. Nigerian newspapers subsequently reported that a hospital had been attacked and ten civilians injured. Nils recognize that it may have once been a hospital, but deems this not likely because the Biafran intelligence service had always proved to be very effective and provided accurate data.

Nils flew back to base, landed and started then directly with a new plane, which was ready. He went exactly the same route back to Onitsha and found without difficulty his second goal, a few buildings, according to intelligence also used as headquarters

and barracks for soldiers. Nils had a very detailed map to orient by, and he saw the Biafran lines with bunkers and trenches and the houses he would shoot at standing in northern outskirts of Onitsha. The map was exact and the listed buildings appeared behind some trees. The houses came in sight, a couple of corrections and the rockets were fired again, this time from quite a short shooting distance. As he lay in a turn away from the target he saw a Nigerian soldier rocked by explosions with his arms over the head and the gun beside him.

The base from which Nils and Auguste started had a double warning system. If Nigerian aircrafts were sighted warning came both via radio and visually: if the sentries were at the barracks it was clear for landing. Were they not seen danger lurked. When Nils now came back the sentinels were gone. He did an extra lap around but went in the end still in for a landing. Then came the warning signal on the radio, but he was now just over the runway at low speed and then rolling on the dust against the tree, where he would park, and swung at good speed into the shelter. He jumped out of the plane and listened, but the only sound that could be heard was the birds and the wind rustling in the leaves. It turned out that a pair of MiGs for five minutes had remained above the base but then apparently disappeared.

- When I left there, it seemed as if people over at least

a mile radius already knew what had happened, says Nils. They stood by the roadside and applauded, cheered and waved. Kids, women, men ... all. They were very happy that it went well. I do not know how they knew that. It was inconceivable how quickly rumours of attacks spread.

The next attack was very carefully planned. Nils and Auguste would go to Warri in the Middle West region to assault a cannon boat shipyard. They had taken courses and counted with a flight time of 48 minutes over a certain threshold to the target. Auguste was from the outset out of shape and unwilling to start. He had flown a long time and his malaise was fully understandable: he was simply fly-tired. Yet it was Auguste's turn to lead the attack. They flew in treetop height and tried to go outside of the villages, where they were sometimes subjected to bombardment. After 43 minutes flight they were met by a moderate rain and Auguste suddenly turned. Nils was surprised and looked for MiGs, but discovered nothing. Auguste turned to counter-course and Nils knew how it was: Auguste took the first best reason to discontinue their flight. Nils flew up to the side of him near the wingtip and tried to sign to Auguste to go back. But Auguste shook his head and pointed towards the base.

Nils had seen a flame that he assumed came from an oil derrick. He now got the idea to look at the flame -

had no desire to return to base with rockets left in the capsules. CG and he had previously discussed opportunities to attack oil installations at night, when one could easily find the flames. Nils rose slightly and could see the flame from afar. He went back down to the lowest altitude and flew in the direction against this improvised target. Once there he flew first on the side to warn the people, who could be on the premises. He then turned left and rose and fell in a shallow diving on the site. During this long diving, he noted that there was something which resembled a pressure tank, on whose sides two pipes arose. From the pipes upper ends burned the flame. There was also a building. He sent two rockets, which went straight into the building. Nothing happened. He continued, aimed and fired two rockets more, but still nothing happened. He began to doubt that it was any oil installation, but shot two more rockets, which resulted in an explosion and a jet of flame at the pressure tank. He then tried to cut the line, that went between the flames, but could not go close enough because the risk of explosion. Instead he shot the remaining rockets into the building and returned home.

Nils wrote, as usual, a report on the attack. Late in the evening the head of the secret service came and asked Nils to pinpoint the target exactly on a map. As Auguste had navigated Nils had difficulty to provide information, but when he put out his courses and

times for his flights home he could do it.

The officer immediately recognized that Nils shot down one of the Nigerian oil production's heart points. To this installation oil was pumped from several different sources further out to the coast. After this attack Nigerian oil exports, which were largely financing the war, sank considerably. This attack - the creation of a chance - showed perhaps more clearly than any other attack the Minicoinsystem's effectiveness against military-economic objectives. Nigeria and England now understood that the oil production was at serious risk not only in Biafra but also in Nigeria. The export numbers were later made secret.

The purpose of any attacks that were made west of the Niger River, was to disrupt the Nigerian advance's support lines. Nils talks about one of these raids:

- I took the opportunity, as usual, to irritate the Nigerian roadblock in Uku Amara, a small village from which Nigerians always struck violently. I gained height and pulled on the gas, so that it would be heard: they shot horribly. The machine felt nothing but the shooting had been heard by the Biafran troops on the other side of Niger. I followed the road towards Benin and saw a Land Rover behind a large truck. I attacked from the north, shot and hit a

palm crown, which turned into a jet of flame. There must have been a lot of shrapnel in the car. I missed with two rockets, but then got a hit on the Landrover when it was at full speed. It drove burning into the ditch. I spotted another Land Rover – the soldiers stopped the car and jumped out. The car stopped so abruptly that it overturned and lay empty on the side of ditch. Some trees obscured the view, and I swung back.

On the return flight I followed another way, and passed over a sentry point. The cannon thunder was heard over the engine noise, as I passed. I often flew straight across the front lines and saw the trenches. First I thought that there were no people, but later I learned that there were lots of soldiers in trenches and fox holes, although they were difficult to detect from the air.

During some attacks on this front Auguste Okpe took part. It included an attack at Asaba, where Nils shot against a Nigerian headquarter. The Biafran intelligence always gave information about the targets and CG emphasized that only military targets and nothing else would be attacked. During this attack on Asaba Nils lost contact with Auguste and stayed for five minutes on hold on low height. He was convinced that Auguste had been shot down, but it turned out that Auguste already had returned to the base, when he had shot his rockets.

Nils ate lunch and went in the late afternoon up again to attack Asaba. Intelligence had again provided him with very good maps and he knew exactly which houses he would attack and had no difficulty finding them.

There was then a few days break in attacks. Nils was resting and did tours around the base. By now Biafra had become protective of their pilots: Nils had bodyguards with him to protect against possible infiltrators.

Late one night Nils and Auguste were awakened by the Air Force chief, who while Nils listened gave Auguste a substantial rebuke:

- Here come the Swedes freely and help us, but your interest is just to rest and have a good time!

Nils had then implemented 12 attacks, Auguste during the same time only three or four. Auguste had previously received the cross of war for his efforts and they had perhaps unnecessarily foisted large expectations on him. The Air Force chief also said that Nigerians now attacked on the front south of Enugu. Troop transport aircraft had landed at Enugus airport with supplies and soldiers from Lagos. Several DC8s were reported to have landed at night. With knowledge of their flight plans it would have been possible to attack and shoot down at least one of them.

The Nigerians advanced from Abagana against Okugbo and a Biafran pocket north of the Enugu-Onitsha-road was threatened. They asked for the help of the Air Force and Nils was ready. He first went straight over the Onitsha front and wrecked a truck north of Abagana and some other trucks and an artillery position further north. He was subjected to heavy fire, but survived and returned to base, where another MFI-plane was clear. He switched to this machine and immediately launched a second mission to attack a village which the Nigerians had just taken in the vicinity of a river, which meandered through the jungle north of the front in the area, which Biafra still held. Across the river was a bridge and to the north lay the village. Nigerian soldiers were reported to have penetrated it. Biafran forces were to be located just north of the village along a road. Nils oriented himself without problems and crossed the bridge. He saw the trucks and jeeps with artillery pieces on a trailer headed north. He arrived to the village from the south and saw a lot of soldiers in what appeared to be a school. He passed east of the village, turned out of sight, climbed and then went into the attack on the building, which he completely destroyed with six hits.

Nils was convinced that it was a Nigerian head-quarter he had attacked. Not until the day before his departure from Biafra it was revealed that this particular attack caused widespread Biafran losses: the

headquarter was Biafran. The error was not Nils' but the intelligence service's. The contact had not worked between the troops and the headquarter. Biafran troops had retaken the village from the Nigerians just before Nils attacked. Seven Biafran officers and between 20 and 30 Biafran soldiers were killed in and adjacent to the building, which was totally gutted by the rockets. Nigerians took the village shortly afterwards and it is possible that this unfortunate air attack strongly contributed to Biafra's retreat from this area.

The two related attacks, which caused Biafra own losses, were the only occasions when unfortunate circumstances prevented the rapid communication between the front and the pilot of the Minicoin-plane.

The same day, after lunch, Nils managed to get Auguste with him on a raid against the area north of Onitsha. They sought after some artillery pieces, which Nils before had seen in a village, but found them not. Along a road Nils observed a van and went to attack. At that moment he let loose the first salvo, he saw the Red Cross badges on the car. The rockets missed and Nils stopped the attack. Nils next day made a reconnaissance flight and shot at some Nigerian cars. On the way he was shelled with rockets from Nigerian standings in Onitsha, but fared across the front by going down to the lowest

level. No more Minicoïn-attacks were then made in this area.

Nils also made an attack on the eastern front, where the intention was to destroy the Nigerian armoured cars, Saladins and Ferrets, which had been contracted at the railway between Port Harcourt and Enugu. He had difficulties with orientation and went up in 1500 feet, but could not get the map to jive. He found no armoured cars, as these probably were well camouflaged. He found some other vehicles instead and shot at them. At least one car was completely destroyed.

Before Nils left Biafra he had the intention to make an attack on oil installations in Esocavoe in Nigeria's Middle West Region. Auguste, who had now come over his flight fatigue, would lead the attack. Nils wanted to go on compass heading directly to the target, which they had detailed maps of. August preferred instead to follow the road out to the coast. It was a clear day and they followed the coast northward at fairly high altitude, but failed to find the target. After three and a half hours they were back at the base without having fired the rockets - Auguste had not reckoned on that it blew gently and was therefore a certain drift from the estimated rate. They made a new attempt a few days later. It was Nils' last attack and also the most interesting. Nils says:

- The idea was that we would be flying on the same course to the coast, and that we, if the calculations correct, would then be at the target. We flew over plains with all bayous and the lush jungle. Weather was changing. Sometimes the sun shone out between clouds, full of rain. Bursts hung like white veils from these clouds. We kept exactly the same course and headed southwest towards the coast, Auguste first, I after him, and both of us on the lowest height. The closer we came to the coast, the denser became the clouds and finally it rained continuously. Auguste hung on and we continued, although the visibility deteriorated more and more. Clearly Auguste did not intend to cancel this time, the last attack we would do together.

At the time calculated the coast showed up just in front of us. Visibility was now less than a kilometre and we could not recognize it on the map. Either we had come too far south or too far north. It was the wrong bay in front of us, not the one with oil storage tanks at the beach. We agreed on the radio to go south. In the turn I flew beside Auguste and we continued like that. Visibility deteriorated further. It was certainly not more than 400 meters - it was the heaviest rain I experienced.

The beach suddenly turned left and a cove appeared through the misty hood. In the innermost gulf loomed cisterns and we turned now to reverse

bearing onto a large oil tank, which would be one kilometre from the shore out in the water. I looked backward, Auguste was with me. The visibility seemed worse now than before with no coastline to stick to. The altimeter showed 10 metres. After a few minutes I did not dare continue longer. In this haze and poor visibility the cistern would probably pop up quickly so that we would not have time to get in a shooting position. Moreover, there was a radio tower next to the cistern in the water. A risky trap, which was difficult to avoid, since we did not know the mast's exact location in relation to the cistern. We thus swung back towards the gulf. A few more minutes, we flew in the pouring rain with extremely low visibility. We came into the bay's interior and followed the north shore. At very close range I shot two rockets, which disappeared into a cistern. I then made a left turn into the woods and saw how black oil sprayed in a wide beam to the ground. The next second the oil was burning.

Auguste was close behind me and we swung both around the place in a right turn to shoot from another direction. In turn we found both to our surprise a short runway. At the far end, not far from the tanks, stood three helicopters and we shot at both of them. The rockets never met directly but we assumed nonetheless that the helicopters were hit with shrapnel; which must have whirled around them. The impacts were only one metre from them. In the

haze appeared also a building, perhaps a station building, but our rockets were over and we flew home on compass. We rose slightly and flew over the terrain for a good while, before the weather got better and we could go low again. When we landed at the base the sun was shining.

THE GUERRILLA FLIGHT SCHOOL GH

If an attempt of any kind is made to apply the regular war command methods in guerrilla warfare, its great agility is inevitably limited and its vitality sapped. A highly centralized command is in direct opposition to guerrilla warfare's great agility and may not apply there.

MAO TSE-TUNG in Military Political Writings.

The Swedish involvement in Biafra's air force was always intended to be of a temporary nature. For CG it applied in the first instance to prove the MFI-plane's efficiency. This had now been done. Had Biafra wanted to enrol more foreign pilots - Swedes or others - this would certainly not have met any difficulties. But unlike the Nigerians, who had almost entirely mercenary pilots in MiG and Ilyushin planes Biafra wanted to levy their war themselves. The handful of mercenaries, who for a period fought on the Biafran side, had now long since gone home and the Biafrans wanted to make the Air Force a purely Biafran force. This was fully in line with CG's principles. He undertook now to train Biafran pilots, but did himself no more attacks.

When Nils went home Auguste was left as the solo pilot. He made, however, only a few attacks. He had inadequate training in instrument-flight - was in the untenable situation that the flight and navigation for him was more frightening than shelling during the attacks. He was more afraid of his own lack of experience in instrument flight than he was for the Nigerian air defence. Auguste had, however, later a thorough training and learned to fly with a hundred percent accuracy both day and night. He learned to master also instrument flying and night landing.

In CG's management pilot-training began in August 1969. The pupils were taken in two stages to the so called Camp One, where they were given a crash course in flying VFR and some IFR flight training so that they could make rocket attacks in daylight and passably cope in instrument flying and low flying. Navigation at low altitude, which is very difficult, was also trained. The pilots then took part in the war for a few weeks, after which the program continued with instrument flying and night flying. In this way Biafra built in the middle of the war a new Air Force. From August 1969 to the collapse in January 1970 the Swedish pilot Chris Christensen served as a flying instructor, but never participated himself in any attacks.

Christensen's first group consisted of Auguste, who of course needed additional training, Goody, Willy

and a fourth, who was not acceptable. In subsequent courses a few additional groups were trained.

Christensen gives some of his students the following rating:

Goody - absolutely the best. Independent, quick-witted, an aviator of the top class. Should have had a leading position in the Air Force.

Johnny - also a very fine pilot. Very keen and fast learner.

Auguste - wanted first of all to survive. But a strong-willed man, who never hesitated, when he went out on the attack, but was grateful when he came back unscathed.

Willy - also a good pilot, but faint hearted. He was at first afraid of aerobatics, but after two passes suddenly said: Should we not make a looping today? He had the sense of flight and would with further training have been excellent.

No serious accidents occurred during flight training. But once it was extremely close: One of the pilots got the idea that he would land without turning on the landing lights. The result was that he dusted down on the path abruptly. The nose gear broke off and the plane began to track sideways. With full throttle he got up to ten meters and then flew with full rudder around the track. Rudder is coupled to the nose

wheel and because the nose gear was broken he must skew as much as possible. He managed to get around and get down again. It turned out that one propeller blade was bent at 90 degrees outside at the head and the other at 45 degrees inside at the root! That this landing ended happily was a miracle.

Technical manager in Biafra Air Force from August 1969 until the collapse in January 1970 was the Swedish flight engineer Karl Bruno Ljungberg. He led the repair work and had a very skilful Biafran assistant. They had now several MFI-planes, first used for flight training and then added to the attacks. The planes often had gunshot wounds when they returned from the fronts. On one machine eleven bullet holes were counted, when it had landed at the base. Another machine had a fuel pipe blown off and during an attack a rudder line was damaged. Two fuel tanks were welded after receiving gunshot holes. They did virtually everything that belongs to aviation services at war. They also repaired indicators, voltmeters and other instruments. A Biafran mechanic, who previously worked for the Nigerian Airlines, worked virtually around the clock with an engine overhaul. Despite the primitive conditions with moisture and sand the planes functioned fine all the time. The only thing, which caused real problems, was radio devices. A Swedish radio-technician was at a time inside Biafra, and instructed the Biafrans, but lack of spare parts meant

that the radio links were often broken.

On Ljungberg's request major efforts were made to retrieve a plane that crashed on Biafran territory. There were some irreplaceable parts that were needed. However salvaging failed.

When Ljungberg first came to Biafra he was greeted immediately with a number of problems. The Biafran, who then stood as a technical manager, proved totally unfit for the task. He was fired and Ljungberg was helped by another man. Ljungberg was particularly impressed by the Biafran's skill.

Ljungberg did not leave Biafra until on January 9, a few days before the collapse. He experienced war on a first hand and painful basis, bearing witness to the result of a terror bombing against a marketplace south of Ihiala, where over 30 civilians were killed.

- They had fired shrapnel rockets, he said. Body parts were hanging in the trees. Small children sat and wept at the bloody bodies and packs of cloth. It was mostly mothers and children who were killed. He tells of another unpleasant experience;

- This was before I had time to get used to the situation. There came a Red cross-truck with dried fish. It did not run especially fast, the truck was in poor condition. Then two men jumped up on the back of the truck and grabbed the fish, but there

were guards in the back and they threw the men off. They fell into the roadway and one was badly injured. The guards were armed. They got hold of one man and snatched the stolen fish from him. His hip was completely shattered. He was desperate - he was supposed to get food for their children. The other man was warned that if he just stayed away, they would not shoot him - it was the death penalty for theft attempts. He was instructed to seek out a first-aid station instead. But the man managed to get up to the lorry and when they tried to run away he ran to the front of the car. They had to choose between stopping or running over him. They stopped and walked out with their arms again and pushed him away. He ran into the bush and came out with a large stick which he tried to smash the car with. The guards restrained themselves so much that they did not shoot after him, but it was a very close call. Yes, of course the poor people could do anything, when they were starved, even sacrifice their life for a single stockfish.

Ljungberg made several trips in and out of Biafra with the Biafran airlift. Once he was passenger in a four-engined machine, loaded with 15 tons of trinitrotoluene. The navigation system knocked off. CG was also there. The pilot returned to the coast and then followed Imo River across the country, as CG stood in the cockpit and directed him. The last lap they flew to the clock and compass and CG gave the

pilot guidance like:

- Hey, I think you should pull back and rise now; you are flying at only 750 feet and the adjacent mountains are at 795 feet.

Several times the plane was shot at by Nigerian air cannons.

CG participated in pilot training and often stressed that Operation Biafran Babies was a type of guerrilla warfare and that one must keep this in mind when tactics were decided. In guerrilla warfare, according to CG, each one is more or less his own general. You can not give orders - pilots have to think for themselves. It is not at all certain that everything is correct as agreed upon with your arrival at the target. The enemy is constantly changing tactics, so that all your manoeuvres might by necessity be reversed in the last moment. Then there must be no seniority or some sort of antiquated military iron clad discipline that prevents pilots from acting on their own initiative. When the Biafran flight offensive was underway later it proved many times that CG's theories on an air guerrilla war were perfectly correct.

AIR OFFENSIVE - 1 GH

Biafra's air force destroyed on Tuesday an oil supply, a factory, two ships and a military convoy, said the Biafran Defence Ministry in a communiqué on Wednesday. The attack was directed against the harbour town of Sapele. Meanwhile, a Nigerian military spokesman in Lagos said that the Nigerian troops prevented an attack by three Biafran planes against oil installations at Oghare in western Nigeria. A man was said to have been killed in the attack.

Dagens Nyheter, October 16, 1969 (TT and UPI)

In the autumn of 1969 nine active pilots served in Biafran Air Force. Freddy Hertz, who had been involved since the beginning of the war, had now joined Operation Biafran Babies and flew Minicoin missions without difficulty. He was the only foreigner in the Air Force. The other pilots were Auguste Okpe, the only pilot who had been in continuous activity since Biafran Babies' first attack of 22 May; Ibi Brown and Alex, who both later died; Shooky, Goody, Sammy, Larry, who served as the Operation Commander; and Willy, standing as a reserve. That Freddy at all got to be in this otherwise singular Biafran pilot group was due to his good fighting mood and his insistence.

They had a secret number of aircrafts. In the press the number in some cases was said to be 15-20, which however was an exaggeration. For the assessment of the Biafran Air Force's efforts during the final months the exact number of planes had little importance. The number of trained pilots made it anyways impossible to fly with more than nine planes simultaneously. In practice normally only two or three planes attacked each time.

In October the Biafran air activity intensified. New pilots were trained in instrument and night operations. The focus was now to try to stop the bombing of the Uli field and to disturb the Nigerian oil exports. But in addition to this numerous attacks were made on the fronts, where Nigerian armour and artillery were destroyed.

One of the most dangerous but also most successful attacks was made against Benin airport on October 10. The Biafran intelligence had established that the bomber which almost every night disrupted relief- and ammunition-transports to Uli, was stationed in Benin. They knew that England had sent several "counsellors" to Benin and that the Nigerian air defence was probably reinforced with automatic cannons and perhaps even anti-aircraft missiles. Despite this, it was decided to attack.

The weather was sunny and visibility good. It was

decided to attack in the afternoon. Ibi Brown knew Benin very well, because it was his home region. He would fly as number one pilot. The rest of the group was Alex, Sammy and Freddy. The planes had been refuelled and loaded, engines started and the planes took off, while the ground staff stood and looked at how the small machines with some effort rose up over the low trees at the runway's end. It was only possible to start in one direction on this path. Start in the opposite direction was made impossible by tall trees at the end. The planes climbed very badly when they were loaded with rockets.

After more than one hour's flight Ibi Brown saw the houses in Benin City poking above the tree tops. The group turned to the north and made a wide turn, after which all turned south again and attacked the airport from the north. All planes flew very low and were largely in line with each other. The time was 17:30.

Freddy saw the night bomber and knew what it meant for aid flights. He called out to the others:

- Do not touch the bomber, none of you, leave it to me! Turn in opposite directions and come in and attack from both sides after me!

Freddy's first salvo hit too low, in front of the bomber. By pure chance however, this stray rocket struck a small power plant or a transformer, which gave power to the radio beacons on the airport. The

lights went out. Freddy's second salvo hit the bomber. He swung away and the others came in and attacked from the sides.

Freddy did note that people walked between the aircraft and the terminal building, carrying boxes. The doors on the plane were open: it appeared that the night bomber was being loaded. Freddy was now out over the bush again and came back for another attack. The night bomber burned and minor explosions shook it. Holes from rockets showed that also the others had made hits. Freddy fired a volley at the station building. While the rocket was in flight through the air Freddy saw how a group of seven or eight khaki-clad men rushed out of the entrance door. Next second the rocket exploded in the middle of the group and all of them literally disappeared. Freddy shot multiple rockets at the building and then turned away again.

This attack against Benin was one of Biafran Babies' most successful. The results were verified by intercepted radio messages between Nigerian units and reports from Biafran spies, who had been at Benin airport. The night bomber had burned up completely. A hangar had also been burned and inside this hangar a Russian Super MiG was destroyed. This plane had been delivered to Nigeria to be used as an escort aircraft. An anti-aircraft gun had been silenced and 10-15 cars destroyed. Nigerian

radio messages, which were deciphered, showed moreover that the Nigerian Air Force Chief been one of them, who rushed out of the station building just as a rocket salvo exploded there. He died instantly. His death was later confirmed in Nigerian press, but he was said to have been killed in a plane crash.

The results of the Benin-attack spurred significantly increased activity for the Biafran Babies towards the end of 1969. During the rest of October the following attacks were carried out:

11: Two Minicoins did front line assaults.

16: Two Minicoins start from the Uga field and attack at the front lines.

13: Sammy and Freddy attack targets in the Midwest.

14: Sammy, Ibi Brown, Johnny and Freddy attack an oil facility in Segele, Midwest region. Additionally they bombard two ships. On the flight home Freddy finds a military column which he attacks. Johnny, makes a turn to search for targets, flying over an oil installation in Oghare. After this attack Ilyushin bombers make retaliatory attacks to Owerri for two days.

17: Ibi Brown and Freddy attack between 10:25 and 12:45 refineries in the Middle West region.

18: Ibi Brown and Freddy attack the 13th Nigerian the

division's headquarters at Omeko. It is overcast, visibility is only about one kilometre. The result is very good. Several buildings are destroyed and some ammunition dumps explode. The plane Brown flies, BB 909, has several bullet holes.

21: After three test flights with BB909 Freddy accepts the plane for future use. During the last test flight he makes a loop with rocket pods mounted.

22: Alex, Freddy, and Brown make a raid on a vessel of about 8,000 tons, which is in the dock at Warri. On the same day they attack a factory in Sapele. The attack is started fifteen minutes after that the last worker is estimated to have left the facility, which is put on fire.

25: Freddy asks the Air Force chief to make an attack on an enemy radio station, which for a long time has interfered with transmissions between Minicoin-planes. It is known that the station is in Mbiama west of Port Harcourt. Two planes manage to find the station and destroy it. After that there is no problem with radio interference.

27: Three attacks on the same day on the front at Okigwe. Two Saladin armoured cars are destroyed. Saladin carriages were very difficult to detect. As soon as the warning came about Mincoin-planes they hid in the bush, were camouflaged and were impossible to detect from the air. The two Saladin

now shot were discovered by sheer coincidence. The other tanks in the battle zone turned and the Biafran troops which were beleaguered on the front section, had the opportunity to gain ground.

28: Front line attacks.

30: Ibi Brown, Sammy and Freddy attack underground oil tanks in Forcados. The rockets have little effect as the tanks are protected by cement blocks. Sammy then interrupts the attack, and flies out towards the coast to try to find the big oil tank, which had been located out in the water and which Nils previously had been looking for but had not found. The weather is better this time and Sammy finds the target. Beside the cistern are an oil tanker and two gunboats. The gunboats leave their anchorage, as they have apparently been advised of an attack. They shoot for the full duration but Sammy is able to cope and manages to hit the oil tank and one of the gunboats. Sammy had not obeyed his orders but on his own initiative interrupted the attack on the underground protected tanks against which the rockets were ineffective. The result of the entire mission was now successful.

AIR OFFENSIVE - 2 GH

Biafran airstrikes have prompted oil companies Shell and BP to suspend operations at their facilities in Nigeria between 10 and 15 o'clock and in some cases work has completely halted, according to people in Lagos related to the oil industry. Shell BP refuses to give any details, but the informant explains that according to reports from the port and industrial city of Warri in the Middle West state contractors working for the oil companies have laid off thousands of employees. Most of the Biafran air strikes are never mentioned in Lagos, but according to the informant Shell-BP and Gulf now count on the possibility that the oil export may be stopped.

Lagos November 10, 1969 (AFP).

On November 1st bombing of the Uli-field was resumed by a Nigerian "intruder", which operated at night. Eight bombs were dropped that night against a DC:6. Biafra had previously bought 12 T6:s, single engine American planes from World War II, but only four were in such condition that they were considered suitable to be deployed in the war. They would be flown in at night. Through a mistake, however, runway lights on the Uga-field were lit too

late and head of the group continued past the base and into the Nigerian area, where he crash landed and was captured. Plane number two turned and went back. Only the third and fourth landed. These two T6 machines were used during some attacks. Maintenance, however, was many times harder to cope with than when it came to the significantly less complicated MFI-planes. The T6s also consumed much more fuel than the MFIs and were therefore used sparingly.

ATTACKS IN NOVEMBER

4: Jimmy, Alex and Freddy start for an attack on Calabar. The weather is very bad. Jimmy announces after a moment that his hood is vibrating heavily and that he intends to fly back home. Shortly thereafter Alex notifies that the oil temperature in his aircraft is high and that he also wants to break formation and return to base. The entire mission is interrupted and Freddy also turns back. That the attack was interrupted meant that three Ilyushin-bombers, which were in Calabar for repair, escaped the threat of being shot to pieces.

8: The two T6s start at 06.00 for attacks against the Okigwe front. The planes are in the air just 36 minutes. Through a mistake they bombed and fired on their own troops.

Nov. 10: T6s perform a new attack against the

Okigwe front, where the enemy targets can be found and destroyed.

12: Two T6s and two MFI-planes attack aircrafts in Port Harcourt. The result is very good: one DC8 and three MiG-17 or MiG-10 destroyed or damaged. Also several cars. On the same day Escavaros is attacked by Minicoins. A DC3, a Do 27 and two other planes in a hangar destroyed.

14: Warri in the Middle West region attacked at 13.10.

18: Front attack. One MFI gets five bullet holes in fuselage.

22-23: Front attacks.

25: A school building in Omoko, used as an accommodation for Nigerian soldiers, and four other buildings destroyed in an MFI attack. When the planes returned to the base the Biafran headquarters had already intercepted Nigerian radio messages, which suggested that the enemy suffered heavy losses.

26: The whole village of Obrikon is destroyed in an attack by three MFI planes, conducted by Alex, Sammy and Fred. During the attack Alex notice that the enemy has started shooting and Freddy discovers anti-aircraft guns just to the right. He swings left and dives, followed by Sammy. Alex has turned right and goes on a north-westerly course for home. Sammy

asks Freddy to follow Alex to see if his plane has been hit. Both follow him for a minute but then decide to go back and fire the rockets. Alex does not respond to radio. Freddy guesses he has engine failure.

Sammy and Freddy attack the target. They note powerful explosions in the front houses. Throughout the attack they are exposed to hostile fire. In the Biafran headquarter is intercepted a radio call from Obrikon to Port Harcourt:

- Send help, send MiGs, the enemy are overhead and they drop stones which are very very hot.

On returning to base, Sammy finds five bullet holes in his machine, Freddy nothing. Alex has not returned. They wait for him, but time passes and they note that his fuel must have been exhausted. They send messages to the navy and army to look out for the plane in the area where Alex can be assumed to have gone down. The whole time there are MiGs in the air.

29: A reconnaissance-flight starts at 6.40 in the hope of finding Alex, but the search gives no result. Later in the morning there is a new attack against Obrikon. Destroyed houses are seen in the village but no fire. They are not subjected to bombardment, but the enemy is apparently prepared for an attack from Minicoïn. The Biafrans have again intercepted

Nigerian request messages for help. Port Harcourt replies:

- You will have MiGs in three minutes.

Sammy and Freddy have no radio contact with the base and therefore do not know about the MiG alarm. Nor do they see any enemy aircraft during the return trip to base. They do a formation landing. When Sammy lands and Freddy is about to put the wheels in the ground they hear on the radio:

- Yankee! Yankee!

This is the code word for enemy aircraft over the field. Freddy, rolling on the track, get the instant look of a MiG17 coming over the treetops towards him. Instead of rolling into the shelter Sammy continues straight ahead to in that way give Freddy a chance to taxi into the single taxiway, leading to protection under the big breadfruit trees. The MiG-plane has swung back and Freddy looks inside the trees how Sammy stops, jumps out, closes the hood and runs a few yards from the plane, when the first volley from the jet digs closer. The small machine, which stands empty with the hood closed, explodes. Sammy is then only ten feet away, but escapes without injury. Freddy is sweaty with fear. He throws himself out of his plane and takes cover behind tree trunks. Another MiG is now on track. Both planes make about ten attacks with 22- and 37-millimeter

automatic cannons. Between the attacks Sammy and Freddy pull further away in the shelter of the trees, but see a MiG only 80 feet above themselves. Freddy sees the face of a white-skinned pilot.

Freddy's plane is hit. A piece of the wing is torn completely off. A rocket pod is destroyed and the entire right-hand side has been hit by shrapnel. That Freddy's plane was ready to go in the air again after only ten days was one of the largest mechanical achievements during the air war. They fixed a new wing and changed all the side plates on the right side. The work took place under a tree and in very primitive conditions, without mechanical equipment and without electricity. Incredibly skilled Biafran tinsmiths did a precision job, which the Swedish chief engineer described as outstanding. Two Biafrans with 20 years experience led the work. Between 10 and 14 men worked all day on the plane, riveting by hand. They took the plates from a wrecked plane. The machine, which had been in such a bad condition that it was discussed if it was at all worth repairing, flew equally well after the repair as before.

In the afternoon, when the pilots had left the base in the car, a MiG and an Ilyushin showed up. The air field was destroyed by bombs and rockets. The many civilians, who lived right next to the track and each day had seen Minicoïn-planes launch and land,

coped however surprisingly good. Only one boy got minor injuries. A Minicoon, that was completely intact, was flown by Goody over to another base.

30: The Biafran Airforce's first regiment, comprised of very young boys, has been ordered to send a search party in the area where it is assumed that Alex landed. One of the boys reports that he believes he has seen a wing stick up out of the water in one of Niger's tributaries just north of the village Obiofu. He has tried to get out in the river but had to turn around because of the mud and sledge. The navy is prepared to deploy marines for an expedition to the area. Ibi Brown, Larry and Goody travel there. They are fully armed, as the location is very close to the front. They find the machine, which probably has collided with treetops and then ended up in the shallows. One wing is torn off and the engine is found in the water 25 yards away. Alex remains in the cabin, which has been completely submerged. A small calibre bullet has entered his neck from the right and continued out through the head. The entire right side of the body is badly burned. The rockets, which Alex never fired, have exploded on impact with the water.

DECEMBER

1: A man who lives right next to the river, reports that at the time of the crash or shortly thereafter he heard

loud shouts. However, it could not have been Alex, who cried. He must have been killed instantly by the bullet through the head. Alex' body is brought to the headquarters and placed in a coffin.

2: Goody, Jimmy, Sammy, Willy and Freddy carry at 2:00 Alex's to a grave. Salute is shot with twelve guns.

Alex's death is a very hard blow. He was a timid young man, who had shown great fearlessness and skill, especially in instrument flying. He belonged to the group that made most of the bouts and achieved the best results.

3: CG arrives after a time at another base and gets an account of the past events. On the same day convoys in Port Harcourt are assaulted with two Minicoins and the two T6s. One T6 comes home with 12 bullet holes and a Minicoins with four bullet holes.

5: Two raids on Opobo, both with Minicoins, the first at 7:30 to 09:00 a.m. and the other at 5:50 p.m. to 20:00.

6. Front line attack by two Minicoins and a T6. In the afternoon the same target is attacked with four Minicoins.

10. Test flights. The planes are in pretty bad shape. Oil pressure gauge, cylinder temperature gauge and other instruments have failed.

13. Night attack towards the front. On the way home

Freddy finds neither Uga- nor Uli-fields. All radio contact is broken. In dim moonlight he flies along the Niger to Onitsha and goes from there on course 120 degrees for eleven minutes to find the narrow base, which MiG planes attacked at an earlier time. The terrain under the plane is absolutely black and he has no opportunity to orient himself. After a few turns around the place where he expects the base he sees a green signal light down in the darkness. After a few minutes three flashlights are added out in a row to mark the trail. The fuel is almost out and Freddy swings immediately towards the lights, succeeds in finding out on which side of them he shall land and puts down the plane without mishap.

14: A night attack against Warri with three Minicoins was postponed due to very bad weather with thunderstorms and heavy rain.

15. Auguste and Freddy starts at 18.15 against targets near Ughelli. It is precisely at dusk. A crescent moon rises on the horizon and gives light enough to be able to orient direction. Auguste flying first, Freddy behind him and slightly higher. In the vicinity of the target, some troop concentrations, Auguste makes the mistake of giving a short signal with lanterns. They happen to be above enemy troops and Freddy, who comes after, gets into a hail of bullets from the ground. Freddy goes immediately as low as he dares in the moonlight and sees Auguste fly in zigzag away

over the trees. The engine speed of Freddy's plane drops to 1,750 rpm, and the whole plane vibrates with hits from bullets. Auguste fires the rockets completely unaware of what Freddy is experiencing. The result of the rockets is a powerful explosion on the ground, where a fire breaks out. Freddy, who staggers forward after Auguste, observes people running in the firelight, but can not shoot. He struggles to keep the aircraft in the air, moving the pitch slightly and heads home with all rockets left in the canisters. The oil pressure is on zero and the engine is running so poorly that he expects it to stop any second. As he approaches the Biafra area Freddy calls the Uli field on the radio and gets the green light for landing there instead of at the base. Aid aircraft, which have just begun to arrive for the night, get temporarily banned on landing and one of these planes, already at final, is ordered to pull the gas again and rise and wait. Traffic controllers succeed in solving a difficult problem: one of the auxiliary aircrafts have the same code signal as Freddy's plane. Freddy finds Uli's runway. Runway lights are on. The time is 22:30. At touchdown the plane swings sharply to the left. Freddy pulls in as much gas as possible and remains just over the tarmac. He tries again to put down the plane. He downs the right wheel first, then releases the nose gear, turning off the engine completely and suddenly brakes. The plane ends up standing in a 90 degree angle in the

middle of the track. All of the high-explosive rockets remain. People come up to Freddy in the dark and remove the Minicoïn plane from the runway and put it next to a swamp, where numerous frogs serenade the night. The relief aircrafts start to land, their large wings passing over the Minicoïn plane.

The Minicoïn plane has a magneto shot to pieces, an oil pipeline shot off, eight bullet holes in the fuselage and the left wheel is shot away. The motor has not been hurt in spite of an approximately 25 minutes flight with almost with no oil. This is to Bruno's merit since he has provided oil with anti-friction properties of a special kind, specifically intended for situations such as this. The plane is pulled away and camouflaged. Repair work begins and at 06.00 Freddy flies to the base.

THE COLLAPSE

The first week of January the Nigerian troops in a fast manoeuvre took control over the last areas, where we had an opportunity to obtain foods. In quick succession demoralization set in with threat of national dissolution and chaos and exodus in its wake. As a people, we have endured what only giants endure. We have fought like heroes. We have dared what only gods dare. We are disillusioned of the world's insensitivity to our people's sufferings. But because our cause is just we do not believe that we lost the war, only the battlefield has shifted. We are convinced that Biafra will survive. Biafra can not be destroyed only by force of arms.

Odumegwu Ojukwu 15 January 1970.

In December 1969 the terror bombing against Biafra increased sharply. Ilyushin bombers attacked Biafran villages. They operated from a height beyond the reach of air defence. It appeared that the bomber's crews were only interested in their pay and really did not care about where the bombs fell, the only objectives to return without bombs no matter where they fell, yet reporting their assignment as completed and signing off for the payment. But the result was that countless more men, women and children were

killed or maimed in the remaining Biafran area, where millions of people were squeezed together. For the most part so-called antipersonnel bombs of 20 kg were dropped. When they exploded they spread a large cluster of splitter bits which with great power penetrated into all that was nearby.

Some Biafran pilots passed on the way to the base a little house by the road. Shortly before the house had been destroyed by a bomb, falling from a high flying Ilyushin bomber. In the house was an older woman and a girl aged 17. The pilots rushed in among the remains of the house and carried out the injured. The older woman had her whole right side torn open and was unconscious. The young girl had her arm torn off, and the blood gushed from shoulder. She was still in full consciousness. The injured were carried into the car and they drove around for two hours to find help. When they finally reached a hospital, which had resources, the older woman was dead and the younger had lost consciousness. The pilots continued to the base.

Experiences like this contributed to the strong pressure from both the military and civilians on the Biafran Air Force to respond with retaliatory actions against Nigerian civilian targets. On December 17 there was a meeting about this in the Air Force's headquarters. Several Biafran army officers advocated actions of retaliation, but the BA's pilots

agreed that such raids had no military significance but could have a negative impact on world opinion and weaken Biafra's cause. Goody, Sammy and Freddy had ten minutes at their disposal to clarify their position for the other officers. Freddy talked for three minutes and explained in short, that those who wanted to attack civilian targets in Nigeria must do so themselves: none of the active pilots would perform those tasks.

BAF thus continued to attack only purely military or military economic targets. Despite the constant Nigerian terror bombing of hospitals, refugee camps and marketplaces throughout the war there was not a single Biafran retaliatory attack against civilian targets in Nigeria. It appeared that this also had support from a majority of the people despite all the sufferings they endured.

In Nigerian areas people always waved at the Minicoin planes. This began during the first attacks in May and became more common during the autumn of 1969.

The day after the meeting at the headquarters two planes started for a reconnaissance flight to a region at Imo River, where a concentration of Nigerian troops was reported. They found a bridge, above which it could be expected that the troops would move, but saw no soldiers and no vehicles. The MFIs

turned north and followed the river alongside the trees and tightly over the jungle. Further north soldiers waded in the river with weapons and equipment on their heads. The roads on both sides of the river were full of trucks and troops. A strong hostile upload was in progress. The Minicoins planes attacked instantly against both troops in the water and along the beaches. Biafran spies in the area later reported that killed soldiers floated down the river and that abandoned equipment was found on the beaches.

On December 19 two attacks were made in moonlight against enemy troops at Imo River. During the last week of 1969 attacks were mainly against enemy targets at fronts, where a Nigerian offensive had started. The assaults had great military significance. On several occasions Nigerian troops, especially armour and truck convoys were pushed back. A dangerous attack against the Uli field was averted. Nigerian troops were now in greater concentrations in the north, south and east. BAF continued raids with two or three planes each time.

On January 4, when a group of Minicoins was returning from an attack at the front, they flew straight over an enemy troop concentration. All the planes were hit. Ibi Brown's machine exploded in the air. It plunged burning down in an area between Biafran and Nigerian troops. The machine burned up totally.

During an advance Nigerian troops reached what was left of it.

On January 11 Biafra's defence collapsed. A Biafran soldier tells of the final stage:

- It started with the twelfth division, which operated at the Aba-front, commanded by Brigadier Eze. The enemy broke through along the roads Aba-Ikot Ekpene, Aba-Umuahia and Aba-Owerri. Many brigades and divisions were cut off. Aircraft were used to drop food and ammunition for them. But the morale of the fighting troops faltered. It was as if Biafra's spine had been broken. Civilians in Ngua demonstrated and demanded that brigadier Eze be replaced with a more capable officer. Eze was later removed but became army chief of staff instead of getting arrested. This made the second in command officers upset. Fourteenth Division around Port Harcourt was still there and held the position as did the Eleventh Division at Onitsha, the Fifteenth Division at Okigwe and the commando troops near Sapele in the Mid-West. But the men in the trenches were very tired. No food was found, no camouflage and no medicine. Many soldiers suffered kwashiorkor, a disease resulting from starvation. On 14 December it was announced that the situation was getting out of hand and assistance was requested from BAs' flight troops. All BAFs' crews were sent to the front, most to the Okigwe section to prevent the

enemy from reaching Uga field.

The twelfth division was completely dissolved and was without command. The enemy marched steadily forward without meeting any resistance from our people. The enemy troops consisted largely of white mercenaries and soldiers from various African countries, for all had the OAU (Organization of African Unity) badge on their uniforms.

Around January 8 the enemy captured Owerri. Civilians were moving en masse from one location to the other. Enemy soldiers mingled with refugees and hid their weapons. Some white mercenaries entered the Awomane hospital a few miles from Uli under the pretence that they were Red cross-men. When they came into the hospital, they started shooting and panic broke out, because people did not think the enemy was in this area. Our troops still held a large area all the way to Elele near Port Harcourt.

On January 9 the fourteenth division was ordered to retreat to avoid being cut off. Our troops withdrew back through Oguta and the enemy came to a point about 15 miles from Uli.

On January 10, the head of state Ojukwu left the country after giving a radio address in which he left governmental power to Colonel Effiong. That night the enemy fired into Abi with artillery. There was great confusion and all pulled towards Uga field.

Around 18.00 the next day Effiong gave orders to the soldiers to lay down their arms and surrender to the enemy. The soldiers ridiculed the officers, who now tried to go to Uga field. They surrounded the field so that nobody would be able to embark on an airplane and leave. At about 9:00 two aircrafts circled over Uga. One went off, but the second landed and parked with engines running. While the food was unloaded a terrible gun fight began from all angles of the field. The plane started off again and lifted.

The pilot on the DC6 from Church Aid, which did this last dramatic approach in Biafra, was the Icelandic flight captain Thorstein Jonsson, who participated in the Battle of Britain during the Second World War. The intention was to evacuate stranded missionaries. Uga, lying 27 km north east of Uli, was Biafra's secret airfield and had mostly been used for the planes which transported arms and ammunition. Jonsson had never landed there. He had two tons of dry fish on board and it was during unloading that the plane was exposed to gunfire. Whether this came from Nigerian or Biafran troops is not clear. Both Jonsson and his crew were hit by bullets and one shot hit the throttle. Jonsson turned and pulled the engines. A Canadian aircraft circled over the field and a different plane from the Church Help was prepared outside the Nigerian coast to fly in if captain Jonsson needed help. Two French Red Cross planes were trying in vain to land at Uli but

were forced to return to Gabon.

Forty five refugees, including women and children, but no missionaries, were rescued by Captain Jonsson's plane. Some passengers were injured during the bombardment.

The 14, 15 and 16 January, a relief aircraft from Sao Tomé tried to get direct radio contact with the Nigerian military commander in Port Harcourt. The call was answered but when the Nigerians heard from whence it came they broke contact completely. The radio in Kano, northern Nigeria, answered the call and offered to try to get contact with the commander in Port Harcourt and the front with a request for permission to proceed with the Aid Flights as without them tens of thousands of people would die of starvation. Kano vowed to return with information the next day.

The next day Kano radio announced:

REQUESTS FOR PERMISSION TO LAND MUST BE MADE BY MAIL THROUGH NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.



A peaceful version of the Minicoïn system, where the rockets were replaced with bags of grain dropped from the air was implemented by CG von Rosen in the starvation stricken Ethiopia in 1975-77. CG was killed in 1977 in a guerrilla attack in Ogaden. Also Gunnar Haglund took part in the "food bombings" in Ethiopia. He died 1991.

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