

FILMS UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES



"THE LAST CASE"

16mm, color, 7 minutes

Narration Script

<u>IMAGE</u>	<u>FOOTAGE</u>	<u>SOUND</u>
WOMEN	004	On a quiet edge of East Africa, women from the town of Merka follow a tradition that began before Roman times.
MERKA	017	Merka is an ancient port and the chief town of the region of lower Shabelli in Somalia, in the part of the world known as the horn of Africa.
MARKET	024	Villagers and nomads mingle in the traditional exchange of banter and goods. People go about their business innocent of the danger which threatens the entire community... smallpox!

ALI WALKING

033

This young man is a victim of one of the most devastating diseases in human history... Ali Maow Maalin, latest of over 3000 known cases in the 1977 epidemic in Southern Somalia. It is the last region in the world where smallpox is known to exist. And Ali Maalin could become the last case of endemic smallpox in Somalia, and in the world.

ALI CU

043

To make sure, Ali's contacts must be traced and their safety assured by vaccination. And it must be done quickly.

NIGHT

068

Operations begin that night. The aim - to seal off the possible outbreak that now threatens the city. Twenty-three special teams have been assigned to cover every section of town in the emergency drive. Starting at the outskirts of the city, they methodically work their way to the centre. Everyone in Merka - a town of 40,000 - must be checked. The virus must not escape.

The essence of a successful smallpox campaign is to quickly find outbreaks of the disease and contain them.

House to house night searches prove to be the best time to find people at home. Anyone with a vaccination scar - a recent one - is safe.

ROADBLOCK 096

All traffic is halted going into town or coming out. On the spot vaccination for everyone guarantees that the virus will not slip through the net.

Within eight days over 20,000 people in Merka are vaccinated. Experts call this the containment technique. Well proven during years of field experience in other countries, the method isolates the virus behind a solid wall of vaccination.

AIRPORT 117

The international community and the World Health Organization are helping Somalia fight the epidemic, not only in Merka but throughout this vast land.

LANDROVER 127

Three quarters of its people are nomads, scattered thinly over a huge territory.

NOMADS ... 135 ... The nomads follow the rains looking for fresh pastures for their livestock. They never stay in one place for more than two or three weeks at a time.

Understandably, smallpox surveillance among these wanderers is much more difficult than establishing surveillance in settled

CAMELS ... 143 ... communities. The camps shift and re-form like mirages.

ERADICATION TEAM TALKING WITH NOMADS ... 156 ... The specific movement of nomad bands cannot be anticipated. But they do migrate in a general pattern according to the rains. The search teams start with the waterholes where the herds must pass.

For the smallpox eradication team, time is precious. Every day a smallpox outbreak remains undetected means more spread, more cases... and more deaths.

MOGADISHU

174

Like any capital, Mogadishu has a large transient population. At this time of year, Moslem pilgrims travelling to Mecca in Saudi Arabia present a particular threat and must be checked very carefully.

Inadvertently the celebration of a universal religion could start an international epidemic.

Here as in the bush and the villages, the search is mounted systematically. In every market, teashop, waterhole and school, a recognition card is shown. But case reports are steadily falling. Final victory over the epidemic is achieved through relentless attention to detail. In encounter after encounter - with villager and nomad, the teams keep up the pursuit.

MONTAGE OF WORKERS
SHOWING PICTURES 189

They show the picture over and over - seeking a flash of recognition, a clue.

POSTER	220	WANTED: smallpox reports 200 shilling reward News of the reward spreads quickly and it helps the searchers. In the three weeks since Ali fell ill, no more cases have been found in Merka or anywhere else in the country.
LS MERKA	231	WHO launched its smallpox zero campaign in 1967. The disease then menaced about one billion people. Step by step it has been wiped off the face of the earth, isolated to one country , - Somalia - to one area - Merka - and to one
ALI	249	man - Ali - who may be the last case ever.
LAST FRAME	252	