

*External Aid*

Cross and Nigeria with regard to the use of the ground corridors, and although one can understand their military concern, one can certainly question the merits of such priorities. As the food supplies decrease, it becomes obvious that even the most efficient and best organized airlift will not be sufficient. Ground transportation therefore remains the only adequate solution. And this requires the approval of Colonel Ojukwu.

With regard to air transport, let us look first at the fact that the Red Cross asked us for Hercules aircraft, because of their exceptional capacity and other features which made them particularly suitable for that type of work. Now, that request involved the use of Canadian armed forces airplanes and consequently, we had to get beforehand the authorization of the Nigerian authorities. Such authorization was required not only for the flights over rebel territory, since these territories were under Nigerian sovereignty. It was then that Nigeria made it clear that any flights over rebel territory not previously authorized by it would be considered as "acts of hostility". As a friendly and responsible government, we were not going to ignore that warning. Therefore, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) attempted to get from the Nigerian government, permission to fly over the rebel territory. Through painstaking and persevering efforts, such permission was granted on October 8. The sole condition stipulated by the Nigerian authorities was that Canadian airplanes should operate their mission under the auspices of the Red Cross. We were also advised that this permission would not continue if transport operations were made under the auspices of other organizations, such as the churches for instance. Therefore, it was with the authorization of the Nigerian government that our Hercules airplanes went to Lagos last summer.

• (3:40 p.m.)

[English]

I should like to pause briefly at this juncture to recall what I said a moment ago about the inviolability of territory and about the principles of international law which support non-intervention. Much as we may argue that in this instance or that such principles may or should be bent, we must remember that we cannot take unto ourselves such a decision. To do so means that we are setting ourselves above the law, as judges in our own cause. Rules of international conduct are not perfect

[Mr. Trudeau.]

but they are designed to ensure order. Breaking these rules because we think it is right only leads to chaos.

Following the agreement reached between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Nigerian Commissioner General for External Affairs, a Canadian Hercules aircraft did operate on the Red Cross night airlift from Fernando Po into the rebel area for some days. During that period it made a most significant contribution to the effort, carrying 20 tons of food each trip. Our experience quickly showed, however, that daylight flights by relief aircraft would be better; more flights could be made more safely, and much greater quantities of food could be delivered to those in need. We could see no reason why the rebel authorities should refuse to allow daylight flights if they were really interested in receiving food for their people in the quantities required.

It was about this time that I decided, in constant consultation with the Secretary of State for External Affairs and based on the continuous stream of information available to the government from its missions in Africa and elsewhere, that it would be appropriate to send to Lagos a personal representative of the Prime Minister of Canada to discuss with the Nigerian head of state the Canadian interest in an early settlement of the war. Accordingly I asked my legislative assistant, Professor Ivan Head, who had previously been in Nigeria, to fly to Lagos and speak on my behalf to General Gowon. This initiative was taken not because we thought that Canada possessed any wisdom not available to the Nigerians nor because we possessed some magic key which could solve the deadlock. I sent Mr. Head with instructions to explore the most effective avenues of Canadian relief assistance. And I sent him to assure General Gowon of our interest in a conclusion of hostilities in Nigeria and the establishment of a federal structure on terms which would guarantee the political and economic security of all minorities in Nigeria.

That initiative was successful. It was during Professor Head's discussion with General Gowon that it emerged that the Nigerians would have no objection to daylight relief flights by the Red Cross. I regard this statement as one of the most meaningful to date in this entire sequence of events, and one which is evidence of the good faith of the federal military government in Lagos.

I therefore issued my appeal on November 4 to the rebel authorities to permit these