

Supply—External Affairs

now and was there with the hon. member for Red Deer, associated with him in an attempt to bring whatever influence they could to bear, through acquaintances in Africa on those authorities in the Congo and in the organization of African states for the release of these hostages. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre asked a proper question: What is the situation now? The central government forces have made some progress in the Congo in the last few days. They have been gradually surrounding the rebels in the Hante province in the Congo of which Stanleyville is the capital. In some instances the central government forces have come as close as 80 miles to the city. This has been paralleled by a disintegration of authority in the rebel areas. These events suggest that the dangers for the captive civilian population affected are now reaching a very critical point.

In mid October the government of Canada—and we have no representative in Kenya, nor in Stanleyville—appealed on behalf of our people in the Congo to the governments represented on the conciliation commission and the organization of African unity, and notably to its chairman, Mr. Kenyatta, the president of Kenya. This appeal was based on the four conventions signed in Geneva in 1949 with regard to the treatment of civilian populations. I regret that this appeal and the appeal of other governments has not proven to be effective.

As I first informed the house on November 5, the hon. member for Red Deer knows Africa and has spent a lot of time there. In spite of the criticism which has been made of him he has, to paraphrase the statement made by United States authorities, rendered valuable service in circumstances which are causing concern to the government of the United States as well as to Canada. He was asked to make an appeal, with a number of friendly governments and certain African leaders he knows. More specifically, because of the fact that he had acted in a governmental capacity in Ethiopia for over 18 years, serving the emperor; and because the emperor was the first president of the organization for African unity, we asked the hon. member for Red Deer, with whatever authority and support he could receive from the emperor, to deliver a message to Mr. Kenyatta as chairman of the O.A.U. conciliation commission, expressing the concern of the Canadian government for its nationals who are in the Stanleyville area and of whom

we have not had any direct information since midsummer.

Mr. Kenyatta assured the hon. member for Red Deer that in response to the appeal of Canada and other countries he had taken what immediate action he could to request all authorities in the Congo to respect the human rights of civilians and also to facilitate the work of the international committee of the Red Cross. He indicated that the Stanleyville authorities had assured him that the foreign civilians in Stanleyville were not in danger. I hope that continues to be the situation, although the news that we have now is anything but encouraging.

Like Mr. Kenyatta the Emperor of Ethiopia, largely through the efforts of the hon. member for Red Deer, made known his grave concern over the safety of the Canadians and other foreigners in the affected area. The hon. member for Red Deer was in constant touch, in the course of the four or five days during which he travelled back and forth between Addis Ababa and Nairobi, with certain diplomats and officials in both capitals. He consulted with the Ethiopian minister of foreign affairs, with the Kenyan minister of state Mr. Murumbi and also was in touch with the director of the organization most concerned in this matter, Mr. Diallo Telli, the secretary general of the organization of African unity.

Mr. Churchill: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): May I just finish this statement.

Mr. Churchill: We are very interested in the statement but we are getting a little weary of the big build-up of the hon. member for Red Deer. Keep to the facts of the situation.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): That is what I am doing. The point I am making is I want to indicate in fairness to the hon. gentleman that he did undertake to do something which the government of Canada thought was worth doing. He did it well, and I am sure that on analysis of all that is involved here it will be recognized that it was wise to have him go to Africa for this and other purposes. He has discharged his function as well as anyone could in these very difficult circumstances.

Mr. Woolliams: Why did you not tell us that when we first asked the question?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I did.

Mr. Woolliams: No, you did not.