



*Part of the Canadian response to problems of world food comes in the form of emergency relief. Here a shipment of emergency relief supplies is being unloaded from a Canadian Forces plane in Pakistan. But the world food problem runs deeper than relief measures, as the accompanying article points out.*

In view of these developments and of future estimates, it is being suggested that a new instrument of international power politics has emerged — U.S. monopoly over food. It may be noted that the U.S., with Canada, today controls a larger share of the world's exportable supplies of grains than the Middle East of its oil supplies. U.S. monopoly over food is being compared to U.S. nuclear power immediately following the atomic holocaust in Hiroshima. It has been suggested that the "petropower" of the Arab states could be counterbalanced by the new food power. Not only is there talk of food power, but prominent people are also proposing a new basis for food allocation among the world's hungry — triage and "lifeboat ethics".

### **Triage**

The word "triage" comes from the French verb "trier", meaning sorting out, categorizing or dividing into groups. The notion came into use in military medicine during the First World War as a means of assigning priority of treatment to the wounded on the battlefield. According to triage, the wounded are grouped into three categories: those who cannot be saved

with or without medicinal help; those who will survive without any medical treatment; and those who can be saved with immediate medical assistance. It is only the last category that would receive medical attention.

Paul and William Paddock, in their book *Famine 1975*, for the first time proposed the use of triage in the allocation of food aid. They argued that it was a sheer waste to provide food aid to countries where the population growth had already outstripped their agricultural potential. Nations that had adequate agricultural resources or had the capacity to buy food from the international market and that possessed small populations should also be left to their own devices (resources). Food aid should only be given to nations with a manageable gap between their population growth and their agricultural resources. Food aid would help these countries to buy time for implementing effective agricultural and population-control policies.

Complementing triage-thinking is "lifeboat ethics" whose chief advocate is biologist Garret Hardin. He compares rich nations like the U.S. or Canada to lifeboats in an ocean surrounded by less-

*First proposed use of triage in allocation of food aid*