

which we must recognize in the present agonizing dilemma over relief delivery. This is the abundantly-tested and sadly-demonstrated fact that the Ojukwu regime so far is not disposed to accept more effective relief delivery arrangements unless it thereby achieves political advantage.

If we failed to face up to this distasteful conclusion, we should not only be doing less than justice to all those who have striven to overcome the obstacles to a freer flow of relief; we should also be deluding ourselves as to what are the real prospects for achieving our urgent objective of getting more relief to the suffering. Perhaps, most important, by ignoring the essence of this relief delivery problem we should only further prejudice the chances of yet breaking this impasse over expansion of aid to the hungry and undernourished.

This Government bears the Ojukwu regime no ill will, but we have much goodwill and compassion for the people who are suffering in the territory which that regime controls. And when it is clear that Colonel Ojukwu's policies are directly instrumental in denying them the relief we are trying to provide, we must be frank in declaring where our essential concern lies. Tireless efforts have been made over a long period to get a larger flow of relief into the Biafran area. The Prime Minister reminded the House earlier this week that these efforts date from last year. They have been stepped up steadily in recent months and weeks. After the successful airlift operation last spring had to be stopped, the Red Cross determined to negotiate a firm arrangement which would allow a large, steady flow of relief supplies. They decided to press for daylight flights which the Nigerian authorities had indicated they might accept. I should like to point out that all observers, including Joint Church Aid and Canairelief, agree that daylight flights would be better and more effective than the hazardous night flights.

On July 10, the Secretary of State for External Affairs informed the House of his offer to supply inspectors who would control the relief shipments. It was then obvious that the Ojukwu regime would not accept flights from Nigeria and therefore we had expressed the opinion that this kind of shipment inspection would make it possible for the Nigerian Government to accept flights from elsewhere. Our proposal was well received, and we think that it prompted the Government to agree to another mode of inspection so that it could recognize direct flights from outside Nigeria into the secessionist area.

Early in August, the International Committee of the Red Cross proposed to both sides to set up day flights in the secessionist territory. By the middle of August, both sides had agreed in principle to these proposals; however, the Biafran answer stipulated that the Ojukwu regime would keep on using the Uli airport for its own operations. It is important to remember this point because, obviously, it has sometimes been forgotten when appraising subsequent events. There is no indication that the Ojukwu regime was then or later prepared to meet the only condition laid down by the Nigerian Government to the effect that there should be no shipment of military supplies during the day as long as the proposed relief flights would last.

Although no agreement was then signed, the Red Cross felt encouraged to have these arrangements confirmed, which was done on September 13 by the Nigerian Government. In so doing, the Nigerian authorities were making major concessions — namely the following, which is the most important: relief flights would not necessarily have to leave from Nigeria but could reach the secessionist region from Dahomey, the neighboring state.