

of safety for daylight flights. I am able to reveal as well that it was as a result of the visit of my representative to Nigeria in June of this year that the two essential elements of any daylight arrangement were identified and agreed to. These are the identification of the aircraft involved and the inspection of the cargo.

Canadian efforts since that time have been directed to a means of assisting in this identification and this inspection. We have taken the position that it is not for us to assess whether the military fears of one side or the other are reasonable or responsible. Rather, we have sought to produce a formula that would meet those fears, a formula which would assure the Nigerians that relief aircraft were in fact relief aircraft, that relief cargos were in fact relief cargos — in short, a formula that would assure to the Biafrans that the aircraft were not disguised bombers or troop-carriers, that food parcels were not tampered with, that daylight flights could not be used as a cover for a hostile military operation.

The negotiations conducted this summer by the International Committee of the Red Cross were based upon these principles.

That is why I think it is slightly unfair to suggest that the Red Cross has been bogged down and caught up in outmoded concepts. This is not the aspect which has deterred the Red Cross from attempting to bring its mercy flights to the Biafrans. That operation stopped...after a Red Cross aircraft was shot down in the middle of the night.

Even though it may have been clearly marked, it was shot down in conditions of poor visibility — entre chien et loup. It was following that that the Red Cross stopped flying. It did so not because problems of sovereignty were raised but because it realized, as I think we realized prior to that, that it would be infinitely better to reach agreement to fly by day. The reasons that agreement has not been reached, as I shall show in a moment, are not because of outmoded concepts of sovereignty but because both parties have been unable to come to an agreement as to the conditions under which the Red Cross could pursue its mercy flights during the daytime. Therefore it is not a legal technicality -- it is a question of whether the Red Cross is permitted to make its mercy flights during the daytime.

When the Ojukwu regime balked at the implementation of the proposed agreement because of fear of military disadvantage, Canada was disappointed but it made no public entreaties or complaints. We thought that the Biafran fears were unfortunate and, indeed, that they were unjustified, but we nevertheless attempted to meet them. We consulted with United States officials, and in particular with Ambassador Clyde Ferguson, who is President Nixon's relief co-ordinator and whose exhaustive trips into the area and discussions abroad have made him probably the most knowledgeable and qualified person in the world on this question. A formula of assurances was devised which we sincerely thought met every one of the Biafran military objections.

The Government was shocked when that offer of assurances was turned down out of hand by Colonel Ojukwu. It was even more shocked when Canadian officials were informed by Biafran representatives that military assurances were not enough, that fear of military disadvantage was not the main reason for Biafran rejection of daylight flights, that desire for political advantage was the reason.