

*Sir R. Campbell to Viscount Halifax.— (Received March 12, 1940.)*

(No. 41.)

(Telegraphic.) *En clair.*

*Paris, March 12.*

M. DALADIER made a statement in the Chamber this afternoon in reply to the interpellations regarding French aid to Finland. After describing the material assistance which France had given Finland, and the various expressions of thanks which had been received from the Finnish Government, he continued as follows :—

" 'Will you also send men?' I was asked during the Secret Session. I replied : 'Yes.' The decision was taken at the Supreme War Council of 5th February. As far as France is concerned, since 26th February French troops have been organised, specially equipped and assembled, and transports have been ready in two great ports on the Channel and the Atlantic. We were therefore ready to give assistance in men. The British Government, who were to be responsible for the greater part of the assistance in men and for the naval protection of the Expeditionary Force, have on their side shown the greatest activity. As regards diplomatic action, we have worked night and day with neutral and friendly Governments in favour of Finland.

" But military intervention in Finland is only possible if Finland appeals to the Allies. It may be possible to maintain a contrary view on the platform, but I declare that I do not consider that military assistance in the form of thousands of men is possible if Finland does not address a public appeal to France and the United Kingdom. To this day France and the United Kingdom have received no direct appeal for assistance from the Finnish Government. Why is an appeal of this nature necessary? Because the Swedish and Norwegian Governments are vigorously opposing any passage of Allied troops through their territory. An appeal is also necessary for reasons of international law, for even in the midst of war I do not wish my country to trample on international law.

"This appeal, in spite of our insistence, has not yet been addressed to us. On the 7th March I handed to the Finnish Minister in Paris a note saying in substance : ' For some days we have only been waiting for an appeal from Finland in order to come to her assistance with every means We find it difficult to understand why this appeal is still postponed. We are indeed, aware of the pressure exerted by Sweden to bring you to make peace but do you not fear that Russia, who dreads the intervention of the Allies' is tricking you in order to destroy you later? Aeroplanes and an Expeditionary Force are ready to start, but if Finland does not now appeal to the Allies, the latter will be unable at the end of the campaign to assume the slightest responsibility for the final territorial status of Finland. I would ask you to let us know your decision as a matter of extreme urgency.'

" M. Tanner has informed me that a final reply in one sense or the other will be sent us this very day. If an appeal is addressed to the Allies to-day or to-morrow, they will go to the help of Finland with all the forces they promised some weeks ago."

2. M. Daladier's statement was applauded by the Left and Centre, but received in silence by the Right.

3. M. Daladier then asked the Chamber to agree to the postponement of the debate until 19th March. After short statements by the various interpellators, this was put to the vote and the Government's proposal was accepted with only two dissentient votes.