

ST/DPI  
ORAL  
HISTORY  
(02)/M23

## **Yale-UN Oral History Project**

Ambassador George McGhee  
James S. Sutterlin, Interviewer  
9 May 1990  
New York, New York

### **NOTICE**

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for the United Nations. A draft of this transcript was edited by the interviewee but only minor emendations were made; therefore, the reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

### **RESTRICTIONS**

This oral history transcript may be read, quoted from, cited, and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

(02)  
M23

**NON-CIRCULATING**  
YUN INTERVIEW  
MAY 9, 1990  
AMBASSADOR GEORGE MCGHEE  
THE CARLISLE HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY  
INTERVIEWER: JAMES SUTTERLIN

UN LIBRARY  
NOV 4 1990  
UN/SA COLLECTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Congo Crisis

US policy on the Congo	1-5; 8-11; 24-26
Division of responsibilities in the State Department	5-6
Contact with Spaak	6; 11-13
Development of "U Thant Plan"	7; 14-16
US view of UN efforts	8; 13-14; 26-32
US mission to survey UN military needs	13
McGhee's relations with Tshombe	16-18; 20-21
Contacts with Mobutu	18
Contacts with senators Dodd, George and Nixon	21-23
McGhee's attitude toward Tshombe and Katanga	23-26
The position of Ambassador Gullion	32-33
Assessment of the outcome	33-34



UNITED NATIONS

Dag Hammarskjöld LIBRARY

JS           Ambassador McGhee, first I want to thank you for participating in this Yale Oral History Project, and I'd like to begin, if I might, by asking you to identify the position you were in the State Department, in which you had some responsibility for the conduct of U.S. policy with regard to the Congo.

McGhee       I'm glad to tell you what I can, Jim. I became Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs at the time that Boles resigned as Under-Secretary. In July 1962, President Kennedy assigned me responsibility for coordinating policy in our involvement in the protracted Congo crisis. The need for coordination had arisen because of sharp differences of opinion between the African Bureau of the Department (headed by Assistant Secretary "Soapy" Williams) which was naturally more sympathetic to the Congolese, and the European Bureau which was more sympathetic to Belgium and the Belgian Union Minière who owned the copper mines and facilities in Katanga. For some 10 months, until I left the department in May, 1963 to become Ambassador to West Germany, I devoted a large portion of my time to the Congo problem and the United Nations' peace-keeping efforts there. The climax of these


efforts was the visit I made to the Congo from September 26 to October 19, 1962, during which I met with Congo Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula and spent four days in personal contact with Moise Tshombe, President of Katanga, in Elizabethville. I also visited Coquilhatville, Stanleyville, and Bukavu. The Congo became less of a problem after UN forces took control of Katanga on January 13, 1963 and the Katanga secession was ended by Tshombe's proclamation on January 15. President Kennedy wrote me a warm letter thanking me for my contribution toward what he considered a success in our Congo policy.

JS I'd like to get to that. But before that, I'd like to ask you a little bit about the American policymaking situation in Washington. When the Kennedy administration came in, were you aware of a change in American policy toward the Congo? How would you describe the policy, as you knew it, as it was developed in the White House and the Department toward the Congo and toward the secession of Katanga?

McGhee I had not been directly concerned with the Congo before becoming Under Secretary for Political Affairs. As head of Policy Planning I had followed the matter but, since the Congo had become mostly an operational



matter, had not gotten deeply involved. The policy of President Kennedy toward the Congo problem, as he described it to me when I was placed in charge of it, was very clear. He strongly supported the UN military effort to terminate the Katanga secession pursuant to the Security Council Resolution of February 21, 1961, urging the UN Command in the Congo to use force if necessary and in the last resort to prevent civil war in the Congo. However, the principal point he made in his instructions to me was to avoid if at all possible any outbreak of hostilities.



Later the President supported UN action to secure its military position in Katanga against Tshombe's forces under mercenary leadership. On December 21, 1961 the United States sent an additional 21 cargo planes to support UN forces in the Congo, in the face of opposition by the UK and other European allies. This action was seen widely by Africans as sympathetic to their aspirations to overthrow colonialism. Kennedy feared, however, that if we permitted open hostilities to begin, the Soviets who had been making inroads in areas adjacent to the Congo would come to the help of those opposing UN and US objectives either directly or through surrogates. In this event we and the Soviets might get involved directly in conflict, which could

threaten a world war.

JS Were there contacts in Washington with the Soviets on this subject that you were aware of?

McGhee Not that I was aware of at the time. I had none. The Congo was one of the principal issues in the background for the Vienna Summit between Kennedy and Khrushchev in June 1961. Khrushchev had at the meeting made an impassioned defense of his speech on January 6 pledging support for wars of national liberation. Kennedy had no basis for considering the Soviets anything else than an "enemy" in the Congo.

UNITED NATIONS

JS Now, I'd like, if I could, to go in a little more deeply into the situation within the State Department where you were Under-Secretary. The African Bureau had certain responsibility, the International Organizations Bureau had responsibility, and so did the European Bureau. What were the differences, exactly? Was it centered on support or non-support for Tshombe and Katanga, or not?

McGhee I have described the perhaps inevitable differences in attitudes on Congo issues of the European and African Bureaus of the Department. The International

Organizations Bureau did not have this basic structural difference; however, being responsible for relations with the United Nations, they would better understand and perhaps be more sympathetic with their UN opposite numbers, who were mostly from former colonial possessions.

By the time I became involved the impasse between the European and African Bureaus had become so acute that they found it difficult to reach agreement on most issues. The President and the Secretary asked me to be the intermediary between them and try to reach a balanced United States policy. As a result I met day after day in my office with officers of the Bureaus of the Department involved, working out what later came to be called the U Thant Plan. At the same time we were consulting daily with the United Nations and other countries involved.

All of my work in connection with the Congo was in close cooperation with Belgian Foreign Minister Paul Henri Spaak. I communicated frequently with Spaak through our Embassy in Brussels and visited him a number of times. We were in close agreement on most Congo issues and Spaak was very helpful in achieving the objectives we both sought for the Congo. In the course of my negotiations I met, through arrangements made by Spaak, with the Board of the Union Minière in

Brussels. Being a geologist professionally, I could talk with them about technical mining matters.

The U Thant Plan resulted from President Kennedy's request for an "action plan" based on previous proposals made by Under Secretary George Ball, "Soapy Williams", and US Ambassador to the Congo, Edmund Gullion. A draft of such a plan was presented to President Kennedy in early August calling for a series of sequential and related actions by the two governments involved. These included among others, proposals for a Federal Constitution, 50/50 sharing of tax and Foreign Exchange revenues, reunification of currencies, and reintegration of armies. Penalties and sanctions could be imposed. The end product would be a unified independent Congo. After many drafts and revisions a plan approved by Kennedy and the Belgians (but only partially by the British and not by the French) was presented to Ralph Bunche at the United Nations on August 9. By August 190 Gullion had persuaded Adoula to accept a watered-down version. Tshombe approved it on September 15 as the basis of an "acceptable settlement". The Soviet Union denounced the plan as a "conspiracy hatched by the Western Powers".

JSS

In that connection I wanted to ask was there any



particular attitude toward the United Nations' efforts at that point? Was there criticism of the operation in the Congo or was there general satisfaction on the American side with what was being done there?

McGhee As I recall, the principal worry the Department had was the Indian generals. As the stalemate in the Congo continued, they appeared to be getting restive. We were worried that they would precipitate a war in order to get the impasse over. To avoid this I met with U Thant and told him very clearly the policy of the President and that if the UN created without our approval a war that could be avoided, he could not count on our support. We were determined that there would not be a war. Harlan Cleveland, who headed the International Relations Bureau and was actively involved in Congo affairs, reported to Dean Rusk that U Thant had complained about my being so forceful in my presentation. I have always thought it amusing that we would be criticized - I would be criticized - for being forceful for telling the head of the United Nations in too strong terms that we wouldn't support him if he got the United Nations into a war.

JS So on the American side there was concern that the peace-keeping forces might, in fact, be too aggressive

in taking away the arms and so forth?

McGhee That's correct. This hinged around the Indian generals and whether the United Nations had real control over them.

JS Yes, there was a Gurkha battalion, I believe, which went to Katanga, and which, in fact, more or less, ended the secession.

McGhee In the end Tshombe's troops played into their hands. It was a Saturday night and the soldiers were out on the town in Elizabethville. Their rioting gave the UN troops just enough justification to march on January 2 against Tshombe's redoubt at Sadotville and take it. It was then no effort for the UN, in a few days, to take over Elizabethville and all of Katanga. Although we had opposed the initiation of force, since the UN won we made no issue of it. Had we been represented on the spot at the time we would probably have agreed with the decision of the Indian generals.

JS That's extremely interesting because in many places it's suggested that the United States, along with the Belgians and other Western Europeans, objected to some of the actions of the United Nations and the UN forces



because they were seen as hostile to the Union Minière and to the situation in Katanga.

McGhee This is possible. Although we opposed the position the Union Minière had taken in the Congo, as I told their board, we were being conciliatory toward them because we wanted to use them. We wanted to persuade the company to help get Tshombe back in the Congo and make at least part of the revenues from copper available to the Congo as a whole. As a part of the U Thant Plan, Spaak and I had reached an agreement with the Union Minière to pay royalties directly to the Leopoldville government, before the UN took over Katanga on January 13.

JS I see. The Congo was a very important issue in terms of US policy at that time.

McGhee Extremely important. I believe all of us involved thought that this was the most critical issue our country faced at that time in our confrontation with the Soviet Union; that war could break out between us.

JS And how important in this assessment was the mineral wealth of Katanga, in particular?

McGhee Copper was then in rather plentiful supply, as it is now. Copper production usually resulted in cycles of overproduction. If you shut off Katanga, which was producing about 10% of the world's copper, there would have been a temporary shortage. This would not, however, have resulted in a crisis since other copper production could be increased in the US, USSR, Chile, Canada, and what is now Zambia - all of which produce more than the Congo. And there are many substitutes for copper, particularly aluminum. The aspect that concerned us most was the loss of copper revenues to the Congo. That fact that we chose to try to use the Union Minière to help end Tshombe's secession and resume tax and copper royalty payments directly to the Congo did not mean that we approved their actions. I considered the Union Minière a greedy, narrow-minded group, interested only in holding on to their copper concession for the greatest possible profit. They had been the key factor in supporting the Katanga secession.

JS Could I ask you to elaborate now a little bit on your contacts with Foreign Minister Spaak at that point. How was this carried on and how great was the cooperation between the United States and Belgium?

McGhee First of all, I'd like to say what a great admirer I was of Spaak. I worked very closely with him for a long time and found him absolutely consistent and loyal in carry out his undertakings. This wasn't easy for him because the Union Minière was very powerful in Belgium, and they could very easily have hurt him politically. But this never seemed to worry Spaak. He was always very candid with me and arranged for me to meet with the Union Minière without his being present. He said, "Tell them whatever you want to. "

During this period I felt obligated to keep him informed, and on the average of at least once a month I'd fly to Brussels and spend a day or two with him and his close associates in the foreign office with whom I still keep in contact: Baron Robert Rothschild, who now lives in London, and Count d'Avignon, who later became the head of the Common Market.

I remember in particular one incident. I had heard from an in-flight report on a plane returning from the Macmillan-Kennedy conference in the Bahamas that they had agreed to send a mission to assess the UN military supply needs in the Congo under General Louis Truman (without coordination with the Belgians, the UN, or others concerned). Without waiting for the Secretary to get back, I left word that I was catching the next plane for Brussels. I got to Brussels early

the next morning before Spaak had heard about the mission. I tried to explain to Spaak that it was a surprise to all of us in Washington, something worked out in the Bahamas, but that the mission had to go. I promising to coordinate its activities with him.

JS            Could we go into that mission a little because, if I'm not mistaken, the United Nations had a need for additional military support and equipment, logistics, and General Truman was sent from Washington in order to assess the needs and the efficiency with which the equipment was being used. Was that your impression?

McGhee      Yes, that was my impression. In the end it turned out to be a useful mission in that its existence and the press reports that it was sending a great deal of military material to the Congo gave the UN a great boost there. But by the time the mission was ready to make its report, there was no need for further equipment. It was, however, extremely embarrassing to Spaak to have the world know before he did.

JS            Going again to the United Nations angle, was it the agreed policy of the United States and Belgium as you worked together, to support the efforts of the United Nations in trying to bring about pacification of the



Congo and also ultimately the reintegration of Katanga?  
Were you supporting the United Nations?

McGhee Yes, indeed. The fundamental purpose we had was the same as the United Nations -- to reintegrate Katanga into the Congo. Without the income from the copper production there was no hope that the Congo could ever be a viable nation. I had, by chance, visited Elizabethville when I was Assistant Secretary of State, around 1949, and had inspected the Union Minière facilities and met their managers under the aegis of the local representative of the Belgian colonial government. I fully realized the importance to the Congo of the Katanga copper industry.

JS Well, I'd like to get to the question of Tshombe directly and of his position in Katanga. Could you describe your relations with Tshombe, how you got to know him.

McGhee Well, the purpose of my trip was to meet Tshombe and try to get him to make movement in carrying out the U Thant plan, which he had accepted.

JS This was the U Thant plan, I believe, which had been

approved by the Security Council?

McGhee        The plan had been drafted over many weeks in the Department in consultation with the UN and the other nations involved, particularly Belgium and the UK. Whenever I talked with U Thant about the "U Thant Plan" he would smile and say the "so-called U Thant plan." The plan had been generally acceptable to both the Leopoldville and Elizabethville governments, but little had been done by either to carry it out.

                 It was difficult for Adoula and Tshombe to cooperate in carrying out the plan when they weren't even speaking to each other. Adoula was also having great difficulties with his Parliament. My purpose in making the trip was to make a last effort to try to get Adoula and Tshombe to make a start in carrying out the whole plan. When I arrived there I realized that this was too much to expect all at once. It was a very broad plan, much of which had to be taken in seriatim. In any event, my initial strategy was to try to get action on enough of the plan to provide momentum to create movement on other, and eventually all, aspects of the plan. There was some criticism that the initial concessions that I finally obtained from Tshombe were too limited, and might weaken the acceptance of the whole plan. However, I saw no way to



get agreement by both sides to carrying out the whole plan in one movement. I believe that if Adoula had responded to the concessions I got Tshombe to agree to in Elizabethville, and the result could have been put into effect, it could have led step by step to accomplishment of the whole plan.

JS And what was your impression of Tshombe?

McGhee I'm frank to admit that Tshombe was an engaging and interesting man. I was with him constantly, night and day. He and his nice-looking young Belgian secretary and I drove out one day to visit his farm on the Rhodesian border, which would have been useful in the event he wanted to escape the country. Tshombe and I talked while the secretary took notes. I was impressed with how well his office and files were organized. His staff could always produce the right telegram or memorandum.

We had many meals together. The only crisis came when at a dinner he gave for me he said things critical of Dean Rusk, who was not only the Secretary of State, but an old friend of mine. When I stood up and said that I wasn't going to stay there and hear him slander Dean Rusk, and that if he didn't quit this I was leaving, he quit.

In the end he did, I believe, make a number of important concessions. For example, he gave the Adoula government a \$10,000,000 advance against future payments. He opened up telecommunications between Elizabethville and Leopoldville. He agreed to the opening of the famous Lulibash Bridge, greatly facilitating transportation. It was disappointing that Congo Prime Minister Adoula wouldn't recognize the importance of Tshombe's concessions and cooperate in getting more.

Adoula was under very great political pressure not to make concessions to Tshombe, in lieu of complete acceptance of the plan. Adoula was afraid even to meet with me when I returned to Leopoldville because it might appear that he was making concessions. I finally met with him and Foreign Minister Bomboko, with Gullion present, on October 18, but without success, in getting him to respond to Tshombe's concessions. From my point of view, Tshombe was much more cooperative than Adoula.

I had a subsequent contact with Tshombe during the period I served as Ambassador to Germany. Would you like me to tell about that?

JS

Yes, by all means.

McGhee        It's rather interesting. During the brief period Tshombe was Prime Minister of the Congo he paid an official visit to Bonn and his embassy gave a reception for him. At the reception we had a long discussion about my visit with him in the Congo. He was ingratiatingly flattering and told me that he always remembered everything that I told him and tried to carry it out. It was for me a very pleasant meeting.

Tshombe went on to Berlin. The next day the Department advised me that the Belgians very much wanted to talk to Tshombe about something important, but that he had been diffident. Would I try to persuade him to come to Brussels so he could speak with Spaak? I called Tshombe in Berlin and told him I was sending my plane down to take him to Brussels. I urged him to accept Spaak's invitation, which we considered extremely important. He protested a little, but finally accepted.

When he landed in Brussels Spaak wasn't there because when the arrangement had been initiated, Spaak was in Paris and didn't fly, so he had to come by train. I later heard that Tshombe was quite miffed about this, but the Belgians provided for him to reside in such an attractive palace that Tshombe was mollified until Spaak got there.

JS I wanted to ask you in this connections about another leader of the Congo who has lasted, namely, Mobutu. Did you have any contact, were you aware of his potential importance at that time?

McGhee Yes, I was. We had for some time considered Mobutu (on the basis of his record) a "comer", a man to be watched. He was obviously a strong man, even though then only a colonel. I had several discussions with him when he was in Leopoldville and attended a Sunday morning brunch at his farm near Leopoldville - his usual way of entertaining. I was quite impressed with him. American officials in general had a favorable attitude toward Mobutu and helped, I'm afraid, get him into the position as President.

JS Yes, well I wanted to ask that specific question because Mobutu was more or less identified as the person having US support - perhaps, more than just monetary support. You would tend to confirm that he was picked out.

McGhee That's correct. I don't know when or by whom this decision was made in our government, but I suspect it was influenced greatly by the CIA. From my contacts with him, it was obvious that he was trying hard to



please us. He has, of course, been a great disappointment as sole ruler of Zaire.

JS This was before you were in the Under-Secretary position, but speaking of the CIA, I wondered if it ever came to your attention -- any reliable reports -- that the CIA was involved in the murder of Lumumba?

McGhee No. I've only heard rumors about that. That was before my time and I never went into that.

JS Going back to Tshombe, to what extent do you think he was an independent actor, or was really totally in the control of the Union Minière?

McGhee I think he was independent. I think he was basically a Katanga nationalist. He told me that his father had been an important chieftain there and he had tried to make arrangements for him to be educated outside of the Congo, but the Belgians would never permit it. He always resented this. Obviously, he was playing a game here, but I don't think he was under the control of the Union Minière.

JS Now we can continue on this question of Tshombe and his relationship with the Union Minière. I wanted to go

from that to Tshombe's and Katanga's representation, if you want to call it that, in the United States. Did you have contact with Senator Dodd in this connection and what was your impression there?

McGhee      At the height of criticism of President Kennedy's Congo policy the President asked me to try to placate Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, the influential Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and the future President Richard Nixon. I practically lived with Senator Dodd at this juncture. I visited Dodd often in his home, took him to meals at my club, and attempted to convince him that we were not anti-Tshombe. Dodd was aided and abetted in this effort by Michael Struelens, a journalist who created a lot of attention at that time, who was planting stories in the press and furnishing information to Dodd and others on the Hill while heading up the Katanga Information Service in New York.

The basic point that I was trying to get across to Dodd and Russell was that the President wasn't trying to eliminate Tshombe but to get agreement between Tshombe and Adoula so the Congo could be reunited. We were at the same time attempting to influence the Union Minière in this direction. Dodd always responded quite reasonably. I believe in the end he was helpful.



I flew down to Georgia to meet with Senator George. He had been greatly influenced by missionaries from Georgia who had gotten a favorable attitude toward Tshombe while service in Katanga and were telling Russell that we were attempting to unseat Tshombe. I tried to convince him that we were not and he seemed receptive. I was unable to see Nixon who was in California, but I called him and made the same spiel to him. He was noncommittal. Just after this, I received a call in the Department from President Kennedy who was on a navy cruiser at sea in the Atlantic. He asked me how I thought I'd come out in my conversations. I replied that I thought I'd done well with Dodd and with Russell, and he said, "Well, what about Nixon?" I said, "Nixon gave no indication. I can't say that he said he promised to support us, but he gave no indication that he was against our policy or that he would do anything about it."

Then the next day there appeared in the press a sharp criticism by Nixon against our policy which he had written before our conversation. Nixon had completely deceived me. I assumed that he didn't want to interfere with the impact of his statement which he had made. However, this was embarrassing for me vis-a-vis Kennedy.

JS           What was Nixon's attitude?

McGhee       It's the usual attitude encountered at that time by extreme Conservatives, that we were anti-colonial, that we were too influenced by Adoula, that we weren't giving Tshombe his due. On December 19, 1961, Nixon had attacked the administration's Congo policy as "an incredible mess" which might have the result of liquidating Tshombe, the strongest anti-Communist leader in the Congo. Tshombe had gotten a lot of people on his side because he was such an attractive fellow and he made a very good impression with those visiting him in Elizabethville.

UNITED NATIONS

JS           Yes. I wanted to ask you a personal question, in that respect, because perhaps as a result of your contacts with Senator Dodd and so forth, in some of the literature there are suggestions that you were the element in Washington that was more favorable to Tshombe and Katanga than the White House was.

McGhee       Well, I can understand that. I assure you, however, that everything I did was pursuant to the principal point the President had made to me when he gave me my assignment - avoid war at all costs. There is no question of any of those in the Department dealing with

the Congo problem being prejudiced or under any improper influence. It was a question of what each man honestly considered the best way to achieve the long range best interest of our country.

I had not had any previous important contacts with the countries, individuals, or companies involved on either side. This is probably why I was chosen to arbitrate between the two sides. Pursuant to my instructions from the President I made every effort to avoid the outbreak of hostilities. My strategy was to try to hold the situation together and "play for the breaks", as in a poker game. As long as the antes are low continue to play low cards hoping you will draw high cards. We finally drew the high cards when Tshombe's troops were defeated by the United Nations. By being patient we won without risking a major conflict.

Those who favored using force to overcome Tshombe were never quite able to persuade President Kennedy. Gullion, Williams, and Bowles were generally considered on the side favoring strong action against Tshombe, while Rusk, Harriman and I were opposed to measures that would risk war. The two sides often debated this issue with the result that strong action was always postponed. My visit to the Congo represented the final effort to avoid the use of force. After the Cuban

Missile Crisis, Kennedy drew back further from the use of force against Katanga. On November 6 the whole Congo group, including Harlan Cleveland, approved the UN Congo Military Command's request for two more cargo planes. I also recommended sending two fighter planes, however only as a contingency plan if there was no progress toward a settlement, and after further consultations were held.

At the final meeting of the two sides with the President on December 14, the three activists plus Stevenson voted for almost immediate application of force. I thought I saw a major breakthrough in negotiations plus pressure against Tshombe by Adoula and Gardiner, and acceptance by Tshombe of the Union Minière's willingness to pay taxes to Leopoldville. As a consequence I opposed force in favor of urging Adoula to negotiate on the basis of Tshombe's concessions, being willing only if this failed to a "graduated scale force". Kennedy wisely delayed again making a decision on force, using as a diversion the creation of the Truman Mission. Before the use of force could be considered again, Tshombe had capitulated and the secession was all over. It is Kennedy who deserves credit for this victory. It is interesting that most of those favoring use of force were in general people usually called liberal - including near the end,



Chester Bowles. For this group to be called Hawks has always seemed to me what the Germans call umgekehrt, upside-down.

Also, Adoula, during my visit to the Congo, was not cooperative largely because of the fierce opposition he faced in his parliament over any concessions to Tshombe, while from my point of view, Tshombe was quite cooperative in making concessions. I didn't agree with the attitude of the Union Minière but did not want to attack them publicly nor isolate them and drive them in a corner. We should try to convince them that it was in their long range interest to exert what influence they had on Tshombe to come back to the Congo with a share of taxes and earnings going directly to the Leopoldville government. This, with Spaak's help, we were finally able to do. Many people were at the time accusing me of being anti-Union Minière. One Washington lobbyist friend who thought so wouldn't speak to me.

JS I want, in this connection, to return now to the UN side and U Thant. You indicated earlier that there was cooperation between the American side -- and your office in particular -- and U Thant in developing the plan which ultimately was a successful plan in bringing an end to the secession. What was your impression of

U Thant and how did that function -- that cooperation?

McGhee From my point of view, it functioned extremely well. I met with U Thant several times in New York and was convinced we were trying to achieve the same objectives. I don't recall any great difficulty in getting final agreement on the "U Thant Plan." Of course, you still had these extremists - including many UN staff and country representatives who were against anything that smacked of colonialism. Colonialism had by that time been thoroughly discredited as an institution for future usefulness, particularly by the United States as an ex-colony. The issues that were being raised were mainly how rapidly the remaining vestiges of colonialism could be replaced by the governments of the new states being created. Belgium, a country with what was generally considered to have a bad colonial record, had created a political and educational vacuum when they announced in January 1960 that independence would come to the Congo in 5 months, in June of that year. One of the principal vestiges of the colonial era remaining was the powerful Union Minière with its massive copper installations in the Katanga.

JS At times in Leopoldville, the western representatives,



including the United States, were very distrustful of the UN representatives there. There was a man who, I believe, had left by the time you were Under-Secretary, named Dayal, who was an Indian. Did you find reflection of that in Washington, that is, this distrust of the Secretary General's representatives in Leopoldville?

McGhee There were many cross-currents of distrust between US representatives and the United Nations because the UN effort in the Congo was administered mainly by Indians who were naturally anti-colonial. They only recently emerged from being a colony and couldn't be expected to have a very balanced viewpoint about the Union Minière and the other residual Belgian interests in the Congo. We were ourselves critical of the attitude of the Union Minière but we did not wish to go public with that. One rather embarrassing incident occurred when the Department's Public Affairs Assistant Secretary, without getting approval of the Department, made a speech sharply criticizing the Union Minière at a critical time in my own negotiations with the Union Minière. He had done this without getting approval of the Department. I was having a television appearance the next day and I was instructed by a higher authority to make very clear that this criticism had not been

approved of by the Secretary of State.

JS Now, Adlai Stevenson was the Permanent Representative in New York at this point, and, I wondered, did he play a particular role that you are aware of. What was the relationship between New York and Washington at this time?

McGhee I always considered Adlai a close friend. I had actively supported him for the presidency in 1956 and he visited us in Turkey and at our farm in Virginia. I don't recall that Adlai took many substantive positions on particular Congo matters. Of course he approved the Department's helping to create and carry out the "U Thant plan".

JS I think he was more substantively involved in other issues, particularly the Vietnam issue, which was quite separate but also involved U Thant very much.

McGhee I found U Thant very cooperative. He didn't show me the reaction Harlan Cleveland reported about my protesting against a UN war.

JS What was the overall assessment, at least that you were aware of in Washington, of how the United Nations was

functioning in the Congo? This was at a time, as you well know, when the Soviets had withdrawn their recognition of the Secretary General. The Soviets were totally negative on the UN operation there. The United States had been somewhat negative earlier, but I'm thinking now about the totality, so to speak. What was the overall impression at high levels in Washington of what the United Nations was doing?

McGhee At this juncture the logistics of the military operation in the Congo were pretty much in our hand and raised few problems. I've already referred to the concern we had was the impatience of the Indian generals and our fear that they would take matters into their own hands and start hostilities that would broaden. In the end this worked out quite well. I think we identified individuals whom we thought were too strongly anti-colonial in their attitude, which would have made it very difficult to conduct a negotiation involving the Union Minière and Tshombe and Adoula. But these were only a few individuals. I think, on the whole, we had no serious objections. I didn't, personally.

I happened to be in Leopoldville for quite a while, to some extent waiting for the appropriate time to visit Tshombe, and then trying to see Adoula when he

was trying to avoid me. I was with the UN people a great deal and was impressed with most of them, particularly with the head UN man, Robert Gardiner of Ghana. Gardner had studied in England and later became head of the African Unity Movement. I kept up a friendship with him over the years, seeing him frequently. I admired him very much.

JS Yes, yes. Well, there was a point after Lumumba's death when Ghana actually withdrew its troops from the peacekeeping forces because of that crisis, and some other African countries did too. But Gardner was a UN Secretariat person.

McGhee The overall strategy that I went by in the Congo, as I have told you, was to try to hold things as they were without getting any worse, and "playing for the breaks". When the Katangan soldiers provided the break, those Indian generals were clever enough to take advantage of it. It was all over and within twenty-four hours the principal objectives of the "U Thant Plan" had been achieved.

JS You know that at that point, actually, at least in theory, the Secretary-General, himself, was unaware that the Indian forces were going to move ahead and go



straight to Jadotville. And I think the British representative, at that point, made representations and said "What are you doing? Why are these troops moving that way?"

One final question, again, on the American side. There were several US Ambassadors in Leopoldville during the course of the crisis. I think Ed Gullion was the Ambassador at this period when you were Under-Secretary, is that correct?

McGhee That's right.

JS And, again, were there differences between him in the field and the State Department or the White House as to policy?

McGhee Well, Ed's a close friend and I have a high regard for him. Tshombe, appeared to feel that Ed was against him, and Washington concluded that it would be hard for Ed to negotiate with Tshombe. This doesn't reflect on Ed's ability as an ambassador, which is universally recognized. It is just a result of doing his duty regardless of consequences to himself. This was one of the reasons I was asked to go out and Ed, although naturally he may have resented it, never gave that impression to me. I was his guest at the embassy and

he accepted my mission with good grace and helped me in every way he could.

JS He had been sent there by the Kennedy administration, I believe.

McGhee Yes, he was a favorite of Kennedy's. Kennedy, personally, had selected him.

JS For what was then a very important post.

McGhee In many ways one of our most important. The Congo was the one place where we could, at that time, have had a beginning of a new world war.

JS Looking back, do you think that anything could have been done differently? The outcome in the Congo can be viewed from different perspectives. Did it result in favorable aftermath in terms both of Africa, in terms of US policy, in terms of the United Nations, or do you think, having been so directly involved, that things could have been better handled?

McGhee This is difficult to say. It was such a complex affair. The Congo is a very big country and it is

divided into areas which are quite independent of each other, and with poor communications. We were dealing with the entrenched power of the Union Minière, which produced and marketed all Katangan copper. The personal limitations of the individuals concerned were apparent. If you had read Adoula's history, you would have seen nothing that would justify his selection as prime minister of the Congo. On the other hand, Mobutu, the man that we chose, has not been suitable. The only favorable thing you can say about Mobutu is that he held the Congo together. And one of the great problems we saw in 1962 was that even if it succeeded in uniting the Congo, even though you have a momentary victory -- you got your man in, say Adoula -- and it's a weak country, we might end up with a weak government and country. In that case we wouldn't have accomplished anything. The Communists would still be probing from the north trying to take advantage of the Congo's weakness. Mobutu did hold the country together with a stern hand over a difficult period.

JS Are there any other particular points that you feel are of importance, that you would be willing to put on the record, at this point?

McGhee I really can't think of any specifically. We've

covered it pretty well, I believe. I believe I've given you a broad picture as I can.

JS Fine. Thank you very much.



UNITED NATIONS

Dag Hammarskjöld  
LIBRARY



## INDEX OF NAMES

Adoula, Cyrille	3, 7, 15-17, 21, 23, 25, 26, 30, 34
Ball, George	7
Bomboko, Justin	17
Bowles, Chester	24, 25
Bunche, Ralph	7
Cleveland, Harlan	8, 24, 29
d'Avignon, Etienne	12
Dodd, Thomas	20-23
Gardiner, Robert	25, 31
Gullion, Edmund	7, 17, 24, 32
Kennedy, John	2-5, 7, 12, 21, 22, 24, 25, 33
Lumumba, Patrice	20, 31
Macmillan, Harold	12
Mobutu, Joseph Désiré (Sese Seko)	18, 19, 34
Rothschild, Robert	12
Rusk, Dean	8, 16, 24
Russell, Richard	21, 22
Spaak, Henri	6, 10-13, 18, 26
Stevenson, Adlai	25, 29
Struelens, Michael	21
Thant, U	6-8, 10, 14, 15, 26, 27, 29, 31

Truman, Louis	12, 13, 25
Tshombe, Moise	3-5, 7, 9-11, 14-18, 20-26, 30, 32
Williams, G. Mennen ("Soapy")	2, 7, 24



UNITED NATIONS

Dag Hammarskjöld  
LIBRARY