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THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Note verbale dated 16 December 1960 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations, addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations presents his compliments to the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations and has the honour to request that the
..... attached text of a broadcast talk by Osagyefo, the President of the Republic of Ghana, on 15 December 1960, regarding the situation in the Republic of the Congo, may be circulated as an Assembly document.

Text of a broadcast talk on the Congo situation by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of the Republic of Ghana on Thursday the 15th of December, 1960.

Good Evening,

The situation existing in our sister nation, the Congo, has now become so critical that I consider it my duty to speak to you tonight to remind you of the facts which led up to this crisis, to warn you of the dangers that to-day face not only the Congo but Africa and, indeed, the whole world, and to suggest to you the only possible measures that I believe can be taken to avoid these dangers.

As we all know, independence was formally handed over by the Belgians on the 1st of July this year to the legally constituted Government of the Republic of the Congo with Mr. Kasavubu as its President and Mr. Patrice Lumumba as its Prime Minister, duly elected by the Congolese people.

On the 13th July, barely twelve days later, mutiny broke out within the Congolese Army, acts of violence spread throughout the country and the machinery of Government was brought to a standstill. Then, Mr. Lumumba, on behalf of his Government, appealed to Ghana and to other independent African States for military assistance to help restore law and order. An appeal was at the same time made to the United Nations.

In response to this appeal, a Ghana military contingent was flown to Leopoldville forthwith, followed shortly afterwards by units of the Tunisian Army. The United Nations military command was established some days later, and took over control of military operations.

Within a few weeks of our arrival in the Congo, it became apparent that the Belgians were infiltrating back into the country and were re-arming the Congolese troops for an attack upon the Government, and every effort was being made by them to paralyse the United Nations command. I personally warned the Secretary-General of the United Nations about this and pointed out to him that the only possibility of getting the country back to normal hinged on the re-training and re-disciplining of the Force Publique, a force of some twenty-five thousand men stationed in various parts of the Congo. After my Chief of Defence staff had made an on-the-spot study of the situation, I further

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requested the Secretary-General to consider urgent measures for re-organizing the United Nations Command in the Congo so that it might become more effective in its all-important role, and stated that if the Ghanaian troops in Leopoldville could count on the full support from the United Nations, I was certain that they could bring the Force Publique in Leopoldville under effective control in one week.

Nothing was done. Instead the Force Publique was allowed a free rein to run riot, to be financed and maintained by those with vested interests and by colonialist and imperialist powers, to prevent the due process of Parliamentary democracy and, finally to arrest the Head and other members of the legitimate central Government and Parliament of the Congo.

Proposals were then made to transfer the Ghanaian troops from Leopoldville to other parts of the Congo. I made it clear that I did not consider this a wise move at all, since Leopoldville is the capital of the country and I considered that if law and order were firmly established there, it would serve as an example for the rest of the Congo.

Regardless of my advice once more, the move was carried out. A few days later, Mobutu and his armed band, morally and physically supported and directed by the Belgians, challenged the authority of the United Nations forces in Leopoldville, attacked our Embassy in Leopoldville (against all diplomatic practice), waged verbal war against Ghana and other Independent African States who had come to the aid of the legitimate Government of the Congo, put the legally elected Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba under house arrest, and finally ran him to earth, arrested him like a criminal, publicly humiliated him, locked him up and severely manhandled and maltreated him.

Reiterating Ghana's position in the Congo situation, I have now requested the Secretary-General to consolidate and reinforce the power and authority of the United Nations in accordance with the Security Council resolutions on the Congo, and suggested to him that to do this effectively, the legal Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, must be immediately and unconditionally released from prison, all Belgians who have infiltrated back into the Congo to sabotage the independence of that country must be sacked forthwith and all colonialists who are seeking to control and dominate the Congo must be eliminated. Unless these conditions are fulfilled and the normal processes of Parliamentary democracy thereby restored, the tragic mess which will result in the Congo will be the inescapable responsibility of the United Nations Organization. What is happening in the Congo is a test case for the United Nations. If they fail in their mission there, who will feel able to place their faith and confidence in the United Nations in the future?

In short, there must be immediate United Nations intervention in the Congo to forcibly restore law and order.

I have many times declared that the only hope for world peace lies in the United Nations. Throughout this whole Congo crisis, Ghana and all other independent African countries, in spite of their first-hand knowledge of the evils of colonialist and imperialist intrigues and the way to deal most effectively with them, have stood loyally by the United Nations command. They have had to stand as silent witnesses to imperialist intervention in the internal affairs of the Congo, forced to turn a blind eye because their orders forbade them to do otherwise, watching the ground being carefully removed from under the feet of the Head of the Government who had invited them to the Congo and whom they are supposed to be protecting.

It pains me to say that the United Nations has been a bitter disappointment and has far from justified our hopes. For one reason or another, it has talked, vacillated, hesitated and delayed until its whole presence and action in the Congo have been reduced to a farce - and a very expensive farce, at that. At the moment several States which have contributed to the military personnel of the United Nations operation in the Congo are so deeply disillusioned by the United Nations inability to take any constructive action in the Congo, that they have decided to

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withdraw their forces. Whilst Ghana sympathizes with these nations as far as their disappointment in the United Nations is concerned, I nevertheless appeal to them to reconsider their decision to withdraw their forces from the Congo. Ghana believes sincerely that the withdrawal of the troops will spell immediate doom to the Congo and will precipitate the anarchy which all well-meaning countries are anxious to prevent.

If the United Nations troops are withdrawn from, or forced out of the Congo, there will be an imminent risk of civil war, of the Spanish type, which could last for many years and would put the Congo back a century or more. If civil war broke out, those countries that have vested interests in the country will vie for power by supplying arms and ammunition to the various factions taking part, and this can eventually transform the inapparent cold war into a terrifying hot war.

It is obvious that none of the States whose troops are now serving in the Congo is desirous of pursuing any independent action calculated to worsen the present situation in the Congo. That is why some of them have intimated that they are prepared to reconsider their proposals to withdraw their troops, but only on condition that the United Nations command will cease to be a mere passive onlooker to the acts of rampant lawlessness perpetrated by Mobutu and his gang.

The impotence of the United Nations command in the Congo is not deliberate. It has been imposed upon it by the exigencies of those with vested interests in the country and by colonialist and imperialist intrigues and sabotage. From the very beginning of the Congo crisis, I have warned against the infiltration of the cold war into Africa via the Congo or elsewhere. With our declared foreign policy of positive neutralism and non-alignment, I have regarded with increasing suspicion the sincerity of foreign intervention in the Congo. I warned the Secretary-General of the United Nations of my fears in this connexion in early September, saying that I believed the situation had been caused by the fact that the United Nations was not in a position to enforce law and order which we had always understood to mean the existing law and constitution. I urged him to ensure that the Security Council should reconsider the position so that the territorial integrity of the Congo could be preserved without the intervention of any countries other than those contributing to the United Nations Force.

Many people would like to make excuses for the United Nations. Others would prefer to mince their words to please the ears of their economic patronisers. Neither of these platitudes are of any help to this great world organization which was created by men of goodwill and foresight to prevent tribulation to mankind. I believe that only genuine and constructive criticism of its action, whether it be in the Congo or elsewhere, can make any valuable contribution to the strength and purpose of the United Nations. Only by this means can it realize its mistakes and profit by them. I do not doubt the fact that the United Nations has had many difficulties to face in the Congo. But I believe most emphatically that these difficulties only became unsurmountable because the United Nations has refused to surmount them or has delayed for so long that other things have stepped in to prevent it doing so.

The United Nations has failed to maintain law and order in the Congo because while it has been standing by rigidly adhering to its principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the country, the Belgians have, under the very nose of the United Nations Command, acquired stooges and quislings to carry out a flagrant and brazen sabotage of Congolese Independence, aided and abetted by those whose Chief and only interest in mankind is exploitation and profit, and who hope to share the Congo booty.

But has the United Nations strictly observed this non-intervention attitude throughout? It is clear that it has not. It was the United Nations in fact, which prevented Patrice Lumumba the legal Prime Minister of the Congo Republic, from entering and using his own radio station. It was the United Nations which stood by while a rebel, put up as a leader by the Belgians, took it upon himself to put that Head of Government under house arrest.

Had the United Nations forgotten completely that it went into the Congo to help the central Government, at the request of the Head of that Government, to maintain law and order and to uphold the territorial integrity of the country in the face of foreign intervention? If the United Nations has become confused about

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the origin of its mission to the Congo, how much more must public opinion be confused, egged on by the agents of colonialism and imperialism until it is beginning to believe that the tragedy of the Congo is essentially a domestic dispute between rival leaders.

Too much over-simplification is being brought to bear on the interpretation of Article 2 (7) of the Charter of the United Nations which prohibits interference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of Member-States.

The very presence of the United Nations command in the Congo suggests some degree of interference to which the lawful Government of the Congo headed by Mr. Lumumba consented before inviting the United Nations into the Congo. Having already interfered, therefore, in securing the arbitrary arrest of the legitimate Prime Minister and the neutralization of the Central Government, how can the United Nations now decide to remain inactive? Must one be led to the conclusion then, that the United Nations entered the Congo merely to change the existing Government in defiance of every conceivable electoral principle?

The same Article 2 (7), under which the United Nations is seeking to justify its inaction, ends by stipulating: "But this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII." Chapter VII points out that whenever the attention of the Security Council is called to the existence of a "threat to peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression", the Security Council can have recourse of measures of compulsion, despite the fact that the matter is within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.

Now, the question arises: who should call the attention of the Security Council to such a threat to peace? In addition to Member States of the Organization, the Secretary-General is empowered to play the role of an informant. Article 99 says: "The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security".

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If the Secretary-General really believes that the continued detention of Mr. Patrice Lumumba constitutes a threat to peace, in that it can lead to civil war which, in turn, could bring about a world war, then it is for him to recommend to the Security Council that such necessary measures should be taken to settle the disputes in the Congo. This should be done immediately to salvage United Nations prestige, despite rivalries, subterfuges, colonialist and imperialist intrigues and manoeuvres.

This, in my opinion, is the only method of restoring law and order in the Congo. For to permit the Belgians with their Imperialist and colonialist allies to continue to support and re-arm Mobutu against Lumumba and his supporters (and be assured that he has many) is to defy constitutional authority, to allow Belgian power to creep back and to invite the disaster of civil war.

It is because of this viewpoint that I am being charged with officious intervention in, and meddling with affairs in the Congo. How can Ghana pursue an isolationist policy in African affairs, when she is committed to a policy of African unity?

Why, in fact, did we go to the Congo? Why have we sent our men to distant lands far away from their families?

We are in the Congo because the freedom and independence of our co-patriots are at stake. We remember only too well the price we paid to secure our own freedom and independence. We know, too, that freedom is not worth having if it has to be surrendered to foreign domination and control. Whatever form it takes.

You will recall, also, that when Ghana became independent in 1957, I proclaimed that our independence would be meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of Africa. As long as there is a single vestige of colonialism on African soil, we must remember that we ourselves cannot claim to be free. What the colonialists and imperialists succeed in doing to our Brothers and Sisters in the Congo by using stooges and quislings who are prepared and willing to sell their country for a mess of potage, they will not hesitate to repeat in Ghana and in other parts of Africa.

That is why we are exerting every means in our power, denying ourselves every comfort if necessary and counting no cost too great, to assist our brothers in the Congo. The stand that we have taken, and will continue to take in the Congo situation can only be understood in the light of our unflinching determination to fight all forms of colonialism in Africa.

Fellow Countrymen:

In order to resolve the present unfortunate impasse in the Congo, I recommend with all the sincerity and urgency at my command, that the United Nations should take the following actions, and to do so without a moment's delay:

1. To completely disarm the Mobutu gang and all other non-United Nations Forces, and to eliminate them from politics.
2. To arrange for the immediate and unconditional release of the legal Prime Minister, Mr. Patrice Lumumba, and of all other members of his Government as well as the Members of the legally constituted Parliament, who are also under arrest.
3. To restore the normal functioning of the legitimate Government and the elected Parliament of the Republic of the Congo - in other words, the Parliament which made Lumumba the Prime Minister, and Kasavubu the President, should be made to reconvene and function normally.
4. To enforce the immediate evacuation of all Belgian Military Personnel and Officials from the Congo.
5. To assume authority, as a temporary measure, for the internal affairs of the Congo, to enable law and order to be restored.
6. To arrange that the United Nations command in the Congo is assigned to an experienced soldier who can take firm action.
7. To form a United Nations Committee composed of Afro-Asian countries to investigate the sources that are financing and supplying arms and ammunition to Mobutu and his gang.

Countrymen: In the event of the United Nations failure to comply with these proposals in conformity with the provisions of the United Nations Charter, it will be my bounden duty to secure, with the assistance of the other African States, the establishment of an African High Command to take immediate action to restore law and order so that the legal Government, headed by Premier Lumumba, can operate.

Goodnight.