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THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Letter dated 7 December 1960 from the President of Ghana
addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that I am greatly disturbed by continued worsening of the situation in the Congo and the extent to which everything seems to be getting out of hand. From its inception, I have always considered the situation in the Congo not only as a vital issue to international peace but also as a challenge to the United Nations demanding the co-operation and support of all its Members. In full realization of this, Ghana decided to act in concert with the United Nations and placed her armed forces at her disposal in the hope that it was only through that organization that the threatened anarchy and chaos could be prevented.

Your Excellency may recall that since the beginning of the incidents in the Congo, I have always placed my advice at your disposal. On my instruction, my Chief of Defence Staff made an on-the-spot study of the situation and in a personal report to you on 21 July stated that "the immediate and also the long term possibility of getting the country back to normal hinges on the re-training and the re-disciplining of the Force Publique. One of our first tasks must be to bring the Force Publique under proper control. Everything must be done to persuade the Cabinet to co-operate in the action taken to retain and reform this Army, but whether or not the co-operation can be obtained, United Nations must do its duty." Subsequent events have proved how right the Chief of Defence Staff was in his assessment.

In my reply of 19 August to your message of 18 August, I reiterated an important point in my General's observations as follows:

"In regard to the more general issue you will note the General's view which I fully support that if the Ghanaian troops in Leopoldville had the type of full support from the United Nations which he suggests, the Ghanaian Army are certain they could bring the Force Publique in Leopoldville under effective control in one week."

Today, this Force Publique whose potential for exacerbating the situation was so clearly realized at the outset is being used by interested Powers which finance and maintain it, to prevent the due process of parliamentary democracy and to arrest the head and other members of the legitimate central government.

Dr. Bunche in his reply to a memorandum by my Chief of Defence Staff on 21 August 1960 stated: "I agree, of course, that the re-organized and re-disciplined Congolese National Army is the most, perhaps the most, vital problem." Yet little or nothing has been done to solve this problem.

In your telegram to me dated 27 August, Your Excellency referred to the "extremely dangerous factor constituted by the undisciplined and leaderless soldiers remaining over from what was once the Force Publique. These troops if stirred up and turned against the United Nations will obviously make any constructive action by the Organization impossible". Today, the Force Publique has not only been stirred up but it is advised, organized and financed by Belgium and other financial, imperialist and colonialist interests to oppose the United Nations and the last vestiges of legality in the new Republic.

I am firmly of the opinion that the course of events in the Congo would have been different if the diagnosis I outlined to Your Excellency in my communication of 6 September had been followed. In this message I stated that "this situation has been caused by the facts that the United Nations are not in a position to enforce law and order which we always thought to mean existing law and constitution". I went on to state further that: "The essential thing now is for the Security Council to reconsider the position so that the territorial integrity of the Congo can be preserved without intervention of any countries other than those contributing to the United Nations Forces. Ghana is in favour of a solution on the basis of the first resolution of the Security Council which will exclude intervention from outside."

Had a solution on this basis been pursued we would not be in the present position of forgetting almost completely that the United Nations went into the Congo to help the Central Government, at its own request, to maintain law and order and uphold the territorial integrity of the country in the face of foreign intervention. The warning was not heeded and today world public opinion has been confused by the agents of imperialism into accepting the thesis that the tragedy of the Congo is essentially a domestic dispute between rival leaders.

With sinister methodical efficiency, the agents proceeded to discredit certain Members of the United Nations who have contributed Forces to the Congo operations. Official and unofficial propaganda was aimed at the removal of Ghanaian and other Forces and creating an anti-United Nations feeling so that at the moment any United Nations official is liable to be arrested, searched and subjected to other indignities. When it was decided to remove the Ghanaian Forces from Leopoldville, I stated in my message to you through my Permanent Representative on 17 October that "quite apart from the political objections to move at the present time there will undoubtedly be serious security repercussions in Leopoldville".

This warning was reiterated in my telegram No. GN.622 dated 27 October. In this telegram I referred to various grave incidents which had occurred in Leopoldville including the arrest of 176 supporters of Lumumba and the disarming and detention of soldiers known to support Lumumba. I stated that the civilian population including foreign traders were frightened because of the constant rumour that they would be attacked as soon as Ghanaian troops left Leopoldville. In the light of these incidents I informed you that I could not share your confidence that the disorders in Leopoldville were not in any way related to the projected move of Ghana troops.

You disagreed with me on important points in your telegram of 31 October, but on 20 November I was forced by events to inform you that:

"Reports reaching me clearly indicate that the situation in Leopoldville is deteriorating since Ghana troops left Leopoldville. As you yourself may be aware hundreds of Belgians are returning to the Congo daily and are indulging in intrigues of all kinds calculated to hamper United Nations operations in the Congo and to enable them to restore their influence and control in the Congo. There is sufficient evidence of reprehensible Belgian activities to discredit the United Nations troops, and create disaffection amongst sections of the Congolese people against units serving under United Nations Command in the Congo.

Since the removal of the Ghanaian troops from Leopoldville, there have been, as I foresaw, ample evidence of acts of violence and lawlessness."

I have frequently advocated a strong and effective military command for the United Nations Forces in the Congo. The ineffectiveness of this Command has been clearly demonstrated by the trend of events, and by the fact that, in spite of the original intention to restore law and order in the Congo, the United Nations has slowly but surely lost the initiative in its task, and we see the United Nations Secretariat tamely acquiescing in this position. In Leopoldville, at least, the Organization is now being dictated to and pushed around by Mobutu's band which is actively maintained by the Belgians and other foreign agents, although it is itself incapable of controlling its own troops. I therefore urge most strongly that the military leadership of United Nations Forces be changed immediately and is taken over by Commanders who have sufficient experience and judgement to re-establish dignity and confidence in the higher direction of the United Nations military affairs.

It can, of course, be argued that acts similar to those being committed at present by Mobutu's men were earlier committed by the old Force Publique.

As you are well aware I have frequently argued that the influence of the so-called Congolese Army should be eliminated from politics and I did my best to persuade Lumumba to use restraint in this direction.

I would not object, nor I feel sure would my African colleagues, to a firm statement that United Nations Command will ensure that the A.N.C. is eliminated from the political argument. But to effect this now will require much greater firmness than has hitherto been shown by the United Nations military command in the Congo. Nor can I imagine that Premier Lumumba would now dispute the right of the United Nations to re-establish proper law and order. This could not be construed as interference with the internal affairs of the Congo: it has now been amply demonstrated that internal affairs cannot function at all under existing conditions.

I am also distressed by the fact that United Kingdom Royal Air Force aircraft flying in support of the Ghana contingent at present in Kasai have not been allowed to land at Leopoldville. Surely the whole authority and purpose of United Nations efforts to restore peace in the Congo cannot be allowed to suffer from the

irresponsible acts of individuals. These aircraft are used solely for the support of the Ghana troops, which have done so much to restore peace in Kasai, and there can be no possible excuse for obstructing their work. It is absurd that in circumstances such as this the United Nations Command in the Congo should find itself incapable of eliminating unwarranted interference with aircraft carrying out their normal duties under the auspices of the United Nations.

The intrigue and activities of the colonialists and imperialists against the independence of a young African State are carried on with such effrontery and cynicism that those who went to see cannot be deceived. Mr. Dayal's report came in time to give adequate warning to the dangers facing our sister your African State in the return of Belgians obsessed with revenge, spite and utter contempt for African aspirations. Unfortunately, powerful States came to the defence of their imperialist friends and statements were issued challenging the accuracy and objectivity of Mr. Dayal's report. Needless to add that these very detractors were at one time so keen on saving the United Nations that they considered the slightest criticism of United Nations action in the Congo as treason.

Now we see the legal Prime Minister of the Congo in chains with the sovereign Parliament of his country surrounded by arms and men undoubtedly maintained by foreign interests. The fact that the Government and Parliament which invited the United Nations to assist with the restoration of law and order have been forced to the wall by the systematic use of violence before the very eyes of the United Nations High Command.

How can we the small nations within the United Nations maintain confidence in this Organization when we witness situations which remind us so vividly today of the fate of the League of Nations? It seems quite clear that your own position as Secretary-General is seriously compromised and undermined by the apparent inability of your military representatives in the Congo to carry out faithfully and effectively the resolutions of the Security Council.

I have made these points in a genuine effort to call a serious warning against a situation which might lead to grave consequences for the future peace of the world. Timely action is therefore necessary. I, on my part, must confess that I am utterly dismayed at the prospect of the United Nations finding itself in opposition to the attitude and policies of the Government which invited this

Organization to the Congo to give it much needed assistance for the restoration of law and order. Can anyone genuinely say that a so-called administration which attempts to function by means of violence and disregard for all the principles of international relations can be considered legal authority for the day-to-day running of the affairs of a new independent State?

Now, Your Excellency, I would like to ask a few simple questions. How are the A.N.C. being paid? Who is paying them? Where is the money coming from? Who supplies the Kalonjinists with their arms?

The United Nations claim that it is in the Congo to maintain law and order could at least make some meaning if the claim were established on the side of the legitimate Government, but I am now appalled to see that a band of armed men which has prevented the functioning of the elected Parliament of the Congo is being loudly applauded from the roof tops of the Western World as an organization which can be relied upon to bring about peace and security in a confused State. Your Excellency, the United Nations Organization is the last bulwark of peace and the hope of the new independent sovereign States of Africa. I am therefore concerned that nothing should happen to disparage its efforts and reputation in the eyes of the world.

In the Congo today the United Nations is facing its first real challenge since its establishment, and I am most anxious that you, as its chief agent, should have full opportunity to consolidate and reinforce its power and authority in accordance with the Security Council resolutions on the Congo. This must be done effectively by the immediate and unconditional release of the legal Prime Minister, Mr. Patrice Lumumba, the clearing out of the Belgian saboteurs of Congolese independence who have infiltrated back into the Congo, and by eliminating the connivance of the colonialists seeking to perpetuate their control and domination in the Congo. Unless everything is done quickly to re-establish this political status quo, namely, the release forthwith of the legitimate Prime Minister with those members of his Government now under arrest, and the restoration of the normal process of parliamentary democracy, there will be left a tragic mess in the Congo for which the United Nations cannot, I fear, escape responsibility.

(Signed) Kwame NKRUMAH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA