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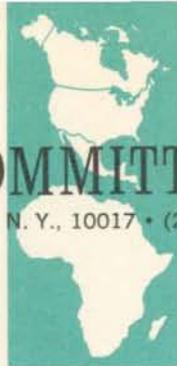
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November 27, 1964

The Honorable Dean Rusk  
Secretary of State  
State Department  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write you urgently at this time to make a proposal on the Congo crisis. It is obvious that the events of the last few days constitute a crisis not only for the Congo and for Africa, but for U. S. policy in relation to Africa. Because of the events in Stanleyville, a new chapter will be opened in Congo history, although it may not necessarily be one any less violent nor more stable than the history of the last few years. This should be a time for the United States to re-assess its future relation to the Congo.

The proposal we wish to present briefly has the following points as background:

1. The U. S. is now inextricably bound up with internal Congo affairs, and indeed, with the welfare of the Central Government headed by Prime Minister Moise Tshombe. This was true before the landing of the Belgian paratroopers by American planes in Stanleyville, through the presence of American military advisors and the use made of U. S. aircraft in transporting Congolese troops. But the operation at Stanleyville emphasized the depth of U. S. involvement.

It is impossible to understand the combined American-Belgian operation at Stanleyville simply as a "humanitarian" action. Although a humanitarian aspect cannot be denied, it cannot be seen in isolation from the military-political offensive of the Central Government and the Congolese troops. A calculated risk was taken with the lives of the European hostages in Stanleyville at stake. The decision was made not to halt the advance of the Congolese Army and the mercenaries on Stanleyville, but, in conjunction with the attack, to try to save the lives of the hostages by dropping the paratroopers in a surprise action. The alternative, which would not necessarily have assured saving the lives of all hostages, would have been to have halted the march on Stanleyville and to have permitted the negotiations, in which the Organization of African Unity was involved, to have continued

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in Nairobi. Who knows what the outcome of this might have been? The point is that the rescue operation was made in the light of a political-military decision. The victory of the Congolese Central Government forces is dependent essentially on outside power and a key part of this is American.

We should like to make it clear that we deplore the use of European hostages by the Congolese rebels to blackmail the Central Government. This desperate action should be condemned by all fair-minded people. We similarly deplore all other killings occurring in the Congo such as that in Lisala recently where the International Red Cross discovered 800 civilian corpses, largely victims of the Congolese National Army. Certainly no single force in the Congo can be exclusively blamed or absolved from murder.

The point we wish to stress here is that the U. S.-Belgian initiative at Stanleyville was only an extension of the already significant American involvement in supporting the Tshombe government in its objectives in the Congo.

2. The fundamental question to be faced now is: what is the future of American involvement in the Congo? Is it an indefinite commitment to support the Central Government in any challenge which comes to it? It cannot be assumed that with the fall of Stanleyville, rebel activity has been smashed or that stability has been achieved. To the contrary, guerilla warfare with varying effectiveness might go on for years. Is it the responsibility of the U. S. to help supply the power to maintain the Central Government? If this is the case, the many African states who see the present Tshombe government essentially as an extension of American power, and of the force of white mercenary adventurers from Southern Africa, will be correct. The U. S. will be blamed for all the mistakes of the Tshombe regime, and indeed, for maintaining in power a Prime Minister who, because of his past, is looked upon with suspicion and distaste by most African countries.

It is right for the U. S. to want to see a stable central government in the Congo. But is it the American responsibility to become involved further in the internal politics of a country in the heart of Africa when at least a large number of African states interpret U. S. involvement as interference for essentially cold war objectives.

3. Without doubt a central motivating factor for U. S. policy in the Congo has been fear that Communist influence would be able to gain a foothold because of the existing power vacuum there. This fear exists in spite of the fact that various governmental spokesmen, including the Under Secretary of State and the U. S. Consul in Stanleyville, have said that the rebels are not ideologists, they are not Communists.

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Chinese involvement has been apparently limited to propaganda and a small supply of arms and money. There seems to have been no recent Russian involvement at all. Communist involvement has been more potent than real.

If the rebels should become the government of the Congo, they would be oriented toward the Communist world not for ideological reasons, but for the practical reason of having secured support from the East and opposition from the West.

The over-all objective of U. S. policy should be to allow stability to come to the Congo in African terms and without outside interference. Certainly the cold war conflict should be kept out. The African states dread an East-West conflict on African soil more than anything else.

Our proposal is that the U. S. take the initiative in calling for an international pact of non-interference in the Congo. This agreement could be worked out at a meeting under the auspices of either the Secretary General of the United Nations or the Secretary General of the Organization of African Unity. A first step of American and Belgian good faith would be an immediate withdrawal of the paratroopers now in Stanleyville. The agreement could be policed by a small international force to be worked out by the powers involved, the United Nations, and the Organization of African Unity.

This plan has relevance because a new stage has been reached in Congo history. There are obviously risks involved. But the alternative is not necessarily the establishment of a stable Central Government backed by Western powers. Rebel activity may continue through guerilla warfare with even greater support from Communist powers. Under these circumstances, the U. S. could suffer even greater criticism for helping to maintain a Central Government whose Prime Minister is ostracized by many African states.

We feel sure, Mr. Secretary, that American initiated neutralization proposals would be a welcome move which could make Western disengagement from Congo affairs possible with honor.

Sincerely,

George M. Houser  
Executive Director

GMH/jkb

cc: W. Averell Harriman, Under-Secretary of State  
G. Mennen Williams, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa  
Adlai Stevenson, Permanent Representative of the United States  
to the United Nations