

1964

Statement on the Congo

A combination of developments since June 30th have seemed to complicate the already confused situation in the Republic of the Congo:

- For financial reasons, the UN forces in the Congo have departed;
- the loi fondamentale, which has served as the only Constitution since 1960, is no longer in effect and a new Constitution was promulgated August 1st;
- the Congolese army was revealed in its essential weakness in the face of scattered rebel attacks;
- the Adoula government had fallen and Moise Tshombe has become the new premier.

All of these heighten the fact that stability, economic and political, have not been achieved, and that the dangers of disunity in the heart of Africa are more obvious than ever.

Although it does not help to solve the present difficulty by reminding ourselves of the high degree of Belgian responsibility for the current state of affairs, it is nevertheless important to bear in mind. Under Belgian rule, Congolese leaders were not permitted to form political parties or to engage in any legitimate form of political activity. Thus, when Congo independence came quite suddenly four years ago, there was no infra-structure of unified political organization among the people. Given the size of the Congo, it was almost inevitable that divisions would lead to massive problems.

The Congo's ills stem almost completely from the fact of a political power vacuum. In spite of great difficulties, UN involvement in the Congo kept the country from falling to pieces. Contending Congolese elements, including foremost the efforts of Tshombe in Katanga, were brought under Central Government supervision. Differences of approach by some of the African independent states, were neutralized. Machinations of contending powers in the cold war were kept at a minimum. With the withdrawal of the UN some of these forces have free play again.

Because the factors which have led to the present confusion are so many, it cannot be assumed that a solution will be found easily or soon. It is for this reason that the Congo problem is fraught with great dangers and can allow mischievous elements to play their role of bringing about even greater disunity and disintegration.

The approach of ACOA to the Congo is guided by certain principles:

1. A solution must be found in Congolese terms with a minimum of outside involvement. The interests of the powerful companies with huge investments in the Congo are not essentially those of the Congolese people. The interests of the great powers concerned only with constructing a regime sympathetic to their own ideological outlook, are different than those of the majority of the people.
2. The cold war must be kept out of a decisive influence in Congo affairs.
3. The OAU has the most important role to play and the biggest stake in bringing order to the Congo.

These principles lead us inevitably to the conclusion that the U.S. has made a grave error in sending military equipment and armed personnel into the Congo.

We call upon our government to withdraw its military personnel from the Congo. To do otherwise will lead only to further involvement of other world powers including the Chinese, and will win the condemnation by most African independent states.

We further call on the U.S. government to make publicly known our support of the OAN as a peacemaker in the Congo and lastly, we favor U.S. aid in supplying food or medicine to afflicted areas of the Congo, but urge this be done through appropriate UN channels.