

C O P Y

December 15, 1961

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you urgently about the crisis in the Congo. A turning point has obviously been reached; U.S. Government reaction is of critical importance. We fully endorse the position which our Government has been taking the last few weeks in strongly supporting the Central Congo Government and working towards an end to the secession of Katanga. We support a cease-fire between United Nations and Katanga forces, but on the basis of Katanga's being fully incorporated into a unified Congo, whether on the basis of a strong federal arrangement or a part of a unitary state in line with decisions made at the Lovanium conference held last August. In our opinion the problem cannot be solved on the basis of the loose confederation arrangements which grew out of the Tananarive conference.

The real issue is not, of course, the outward shape of political unification. The question to be settled is: who is to receive the revenues from the Katanga mines? Will a numerically small number of businessmen and settlers dictate the fate of an entire African nation? The answer is yes if Katanga becomes a sovereign state. A New York Times correspondent recently reported that settlers were now forming the backbone of resistance: "They are a strange, make-shift outfit -- men fighting for an African state's independence who have little regard for the Africans.... When the United Nations forces meet resistance these days, it is invariably from whites, backed up by Africans... 'Without us there would be no resistance,' one East European said."

If the Katanga secession is not ended, thus strengthening the Congo Central Government, the following tragic developments will almost inevitably result:

1. The Central Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula may fall. Two-thirds of the wealth of the Congo comes from Katanga. The central government will be left heading an underdeveloped, impoverished agricultural area, incapable of financing its own development, jealously eyeing the wealthy southern highlands.

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President John F. Kennedy
The White House
Washington, D.C.

2. The Stanleyville regime will undoubtedly formalize its split with the Central Government. Furthermore, the northern half of Katanga, bitterly opposed to and in fact free from the control of Tshombe, will secede from Elizabethville.

3. The cold war will re-enter the Congo in the heart of Africa, an eventuality which the United States Government has been trying to avoid. Not only will the Katanga province continue to receive its aid from former colonial Western powers, and the Stanleyville regime turn without restraint to the East for support, but what is left of the Central Government in Leopoldville in order to survive, and feeling it has been deserted by the West, will also look elsewhere for aid. The die will consequently have been cast for the East-West conflict to center in the Congo.

4. The United States policy of supporting the African countries in their right of independence from direct involvement in the East-West conflict will suffer an almost irreparable defeat. Most African and Asian countries will feel they have been deserted by the West in their common desire to see Congo unity achieved and a split in the Congo along cold war lines averted.

5. The United Nations will suffer a defeat in its pursuit of peace in the Congo from which it may not recover.

We see the question of self-determination of Katanga as a false issue. This regime, headed by Moise Tshombe has never controlled the whole of Katanga province. It has found its support by feeding on historic inter-tribal suspicions on the one hand and foreign economic and military assistance on the other.

Furthermore, it is fantastic to think that the small area of Katanga effectively controlled by Tshombe will be enabled to stand for very long as an isolated area supported primarily by foreign interests, but surrounded by African states hostile to it. With the inevitable changes to take place in Angola and the Rhodesias in the not too distant future, where will Katanga be able to turn, except to foreign support?

We believe that your administration will not be influenced by a tightly organized group of American ultra-conservatives who seem quite suddenly to have decided to champion the principle of self-determination. They have rejected this principle in other troubled areas of Africa such as Angola. Their appeal to the right of self-determination for Katanga can only be looked upon as a cynical argument meant to protect foreign economic interests in the wealthiest area of the Congo.

We therefore urge upon you continued strong support for the UN operation in the Congo, and for the creation of a strong and unified Central Government, Only in this policy can an international conflict between extreme left and extreme right be avoided in Africa.

Respectfully yours,

(signed)

George M. Houser
Executive Director

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