

Modern History Sourcebook:

U Thant: The Congo Problem, 1962

Comments by Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, August 20, 1962

Since in press and corridor recently there has been much comment and speculation about certain "proposals" which I am said to have in mind, some clarifying words from me on this subject would seem appropriate. . . .I am instructing my representative in Leopoldville, Mr. Robert Gardiner, to present a programme of measures to Mr. Adoula, the Prime Minister, and, with his agreement, to Mr. Tshombé, the Provincial President of Katanga. These measures have my full support. The main elements of the programme are set forth in the following paragraphs.

A constitution for a federal system of government in the Congo is now in preparation and all provincial governments and interested political groups have been invited to submit their views. The United Nations, on request of the Government of the Congo, is assisting this process by making available international experts in federal constitutional law. It is my hope that work on a draft constitution will be completed in thirty days.

A new law is needed to establish definitive arrangements for the division of revenues between the Central Government and the provincial governments, as well as regulations and procedures for the utilization of foreign exchange. The Central Government should submit such new law to Parliament only after consultations with provincial governments. Until that process is completed, the Central Government and the Provincial authorities of Katanga should agree: (a) to share on a fifty-fifty basis revenues from all taxes or duties on exports and imports and all royalties from mining concessions; (b) to pay to the Monetary Council or institution designated by it, which is acceptable to the parties concerned, all foreign exchange earned by any part of the Congo. The Monetary Council should control the utilization of all foreign exchange and make available for the essential needs of Katanga at least 50 per cent of the foreign exchange generated in that province.

The Central Government should request assistance from the International Monetary Fund in working out a national plan of currency unification, and put such a plan into effect in the shortest possible time.

Rapid integration and unification of the entire Congolese army is essential. A three-member commission of representatives from the Central Government, Katanga Province and the United Nations, should prepare within thirty days a

plan to bring this about. Two months thereafter should be adequate to put the plan into effect.

Only the Central Government should maintain government offices or representation abroad. As an essential aspect of national reconciliation, the Central Government should be reconstituted to provide representation for all political and provincial groups. It is noted that Mr. Adoula, the Prime Minister, has already made certain specific offers in this regard. Reconciliation should be served by a general amnesty for political prisoners. In addition, all Congolese authorities, national, state, and local, should co-operate fully with the United Nations in its task of carrying out United Nations resolutions.

The proposed steps toward national reconciliation are fully in accord with the statement made on 29 July by Mr. Adoula. They likewise should be acceptable to Katanga and all other provinces of the Congo, judging from recent statements of Congolese leaders. Mr. Tshomb6, therefore, should be able to indicate his acceptance promptly. The United Nations, of course, stands ready to give all possible assistance in their implementation. I urge Member Governments to support these approaches by urging Congolese of all sectors and views to accept them forthwith. While consultations on these approaches are going on I would hope that no actions will be taken to distract from this new effort to achieve agreement. At the same time certain actions are required by the Central Government, by the Provincial authorities of Katanga and by neighbouring States, both to begin putting the proposals into effect, and to prevent any distracting incidents from any quarter. All Member States of the United Nations should take the necessary measures to assure that there are no unauthorized movements to the Congo of mercenaries, arms, war material or any kind of equipment capable of military use.

I believe that the Katanga authorities must consider these proposals and respond to them affirmatively within a quite brief period so that concrete steps can begin, according to a time-table which Mr. Gardiner is authorized to propose. If, however, after this period Katangese agreement is not forthcoming, I will emphatically renew an appeal to all governments of Member States of the United Nations to take immediate measures to ensure that their relations with the Congo will be in conformity with laws and regulations of the Government of the Congo.

Further, failing such agreement, as I indicated in my statement of 31 July: "I have in mind economic pressure upon the Katangese authorities of a kind that will bring home to them the realities of their situation and the fact that Katanga is not a sovereign State and is not recognized by any Government in the world as such . . . this could justifiably go to the extent of barring all trade and financial relations." In pursuance of this, a firm request would be made by me to all

Member Governments to apply such a ban especially to Katangese copper and cobalt.

Source:from United Nations, *Security Council, Official Records, Seventeenth year, Supplement for July, August, and September 1962, Document S/5053/Add.11, pp. 15-18.*

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