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Congo - 1961

(personal)

12 March

Record of discussions with Prime Ministers,  
British Ministers and others in London.

S E C R E T

RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTERS,  
BRITISH MINISTERS AND OTHERS IN LONDON

12th March 1961

THE PRIME MINISTER OF NIGERIA began by asking whether I maintained any contact with the Congolese Government as he had the impression that the UN had been trying to act on its own without consulting the authorities. He wondered how the United Nations could disarm the ANC by force and deplored the role of the Belgians. There had to be a central authority and the UN would have to deal with someone in power and could not function in a vacuum. I gave the usual explanations which he seemed to accept, that there was no question of the UN functioning in a vacuum for we were there to aid the Congolese and not to dictate to them. There had been deliberate misrepresentation of the UN resolution and an anti-UN campaign in Leopoldville and Elisabethville had been inspired. The Prime Minister said that he was worried about incidents involving the Nigerians and thought at one time of withdrawing his troops, but that would not have helped. The ANC problem had to be dealt with and he hoped that it could be done by way of reorganization with the necessary agreement of those concerned. He said he would continue to support the UN effort and thanked me for shouldering my difficult responsibilities.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA listened very attentively to the Congo story and took extensive notes. He had noticed the orchestrated press campaign against me and was surprised to hear of the false rumours spread about Indian aims in the Congo. He was struck by the remark that if the Secretary-General was right, his Representative could not be wrong and that those who are trying to undermine the UN Congo Operation are playing into the hands of those who wish to destroy the UN itself. He asked what further help Canada could give and made a note about our air transport difficulties and need for C-130's. He did not have much of an opinion of the Congolese politicians and thought that Lumumba was a simple and impulsive though not sinister man. He discounted the stories of massive Soviet aid to Stanleyville.

He was convinced that the UN operation must succeed and assured me of his support saying he was glad to have met me as it was easier to understand people and situations by personal talk rather than from reports. His attitude was most sympathetic and encouraging. He repeatedly said that Canada stood firmly behind the UN.

13th March 1961

3. Mr. HEATH, LORD PRIVY SEAL. I gave an account of the Congo problem and our difficulties, emphasizing the need for political support for the implementation of the resolution. I referred to the orchestrated press campaign and pointed out that if the Secretary-General was right, his Representative could not be wrong. The question of eliminating foreign intervention and the Belgian presence in certain forms was vital and the matter needed diplomatic action. Mr: Heath said that although HMG had not liked various parts of the resolution which they thought went too far and had sought to introduce changes, yet they had gone along with it. HMG had fully backed the operation by providing funds, airlifts etc. He thought it was unrealistic to attempt to use force to disarm the ANC. I pointed out that the use of force, if necessary as a last resort, related only to the stoppage of civil war and there was no mention of "disarming" but of "reorganizing" the ANC. Indeed, the President and some other leaders had themselves asked for reorganization of the ANC and the procedures and modalities were matters for negotiation. Mr. Heath said that it was his impression that the reporting by UNOC was somewhat one-sided and while the atrocities committed by one side had been fully reported, those committed by others had not. I refuted this, and commended to his attention the various reports, which of course had to take into account the chronological sequence. Mr. Heath referred to my relations with the Congolese authorities and I pointed out that they were good throughout, except for the moment with President Kasavubu who had himself severed personal relations since the middle of January though not his Cabinet whom I met frequently. Kasavubu's dissatisfaction was caused by the same reason as Lumumba's against the Secretary-General and Dr. Bunche, namely, the refusal of the UN to use its troops to influence the internal conflict on behalf of any one party. Mr. Heath said that the President could not be

equated with any other parties as he was the legal authority. I explained that his position as Chief of State had never been contested but it does not place him above the Constitution. In any case, the Security Council had not taken any position in the matter of the legality or otherwise of his Government and it was not for UNOC to do so. I pointed to the difference between the Continental form of Constitution and the British Parliamentary form where the residuary powers are enjoyed by the Chief of State. About the Belgian presence, Mr. Heath said that he felt the problem had been taken care of, at which I expressed both surprise and satisfaction. About the Matadi affair, Mr. Heath asked what had caused it, and I referred him to the President's broadcast and other incitements to violence against the UN. In answer to his further question, I said that the Secretary-General himself had explained to Kasavubu at great length the Security Council resolution, and I had personally discussed it frequently with the various Ministers. I pointed to the consequences to the Congo, to Africa and to world organization if the Operation failed, for lack of support. I also mentioned the campaign against the Special Representative and India and the fact that the UN reports which came from a large number of civil and military officers of different nationalities, were as objective as was humanly possible. It was clear that Mr. Heath's information was based upon Mr. Scott's reports. The British position appeared to be that after having voted for the resolution, they did not want to see its implementation. This was made clear when Mr. Heath referred to the Madagascar conference whose decisions he thought the UN would have to respect. I told him that I did not know enough about the decisions, but it was clear that one of the main political tendencies had not been represented, and I did not think that any decisions could be imposed by the UN on any part of the country, especially on those who had not participated in the conference. Mr. Heath spoke highly of Tshombe who had managed to preserve order and thought that Bomboko was a reasonable man. I said it was not a question of personalities, but of helping to establish principles and institutions. I was rather disturbed at Mr. Heath's information and views, of which I informed some of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers.

4. PRESIDENT AYUB KHAN thought that the UN would have to assume

responsibility in the Congo for a period of ten years or so as the Congolese were obviously quite incapable of handling their own affairs. He even suggested a U.N. trusteeship! He did not think that the army could or should be disarmed, since an independent country was entitled to have its own army but agreed that it must be disciplined and reorganized. The Foreign Secretary said that Pakistan would continue to support the UN and that it resented the attacks on the Special Representative. Pakistan would consider the supply of combat troops, if asked.

5. My talk with Mr. SELWYN LLOYD was very frank and I made all the points I raised with Mr. Heath. Selwyn Lloyd is an old friend and he appreciated my difficulties. He told me in all frankness that he had the impression that it was thought that I -- or rather the UN -- had adopted a somewhat pro-Lumumba attitude. I immediately refuted this and he said that he personally did not believe it. He promised to speak to his Cabinet colleagues and said that he would give the operation all possible support. He agreed with my general approach to get the politicians together after eliminating the private armies and foreign intervention. He doubted however if HMG could do much with the Belgians as they were not very popular in those quarters.

6. Mr. NOEL BAKER said that Mr. Healey was going to put questions in the Commons on the 15th regarding the Congo and that he had come to find out the facts on behalf of the Labour opposition. He did not think that the Russians wanted to destroy the UN but the action of the Western powers in the Congo seemed to be so directed. He thought that HMG was inspired by ~~the~~ important British and Western financial interests in the Congo. He had noticed the chorus of attack against the Special Representative in a section of the Western press and thought it was inspired. He was critical of the UK envoy who seemed to have misled his Government. He agreed that no one-sided solution was possible and that reconciliation was the only approach. He wondered on which side certain powers were, whether on the side of the UN or of disorder. HMG's attitude was so intransigent because the Labour opposition was in a state of disarray, but he promised that it would do whatever was possible to bring about a change.

7. SIR ROGER STEVENS said he thought when he was in the Congo the situation was becoming easier but felt that his opinion was premature as the position was constantly changing. He wondered what the effect of the Madagascar decisions would be, and how the 21st February resolution would now meet the needs of the situation. I said that the resolution could be implemented if it received the loyal support of those who voted for it as it represented the consensus of UN opinion. I mentioned that those who attacked UNOC, played into the hands of those who are trying to destroy the UN. As Special Representative, I was only the agent of the Secretary-General and was trying to execute the Security Council's policies as handed down to me. A concerted campaign against the Special Representative merely undermined the operation and I mentioned the mischievous Reuter's report of the 10th March that Gizenga was being smuggled out by me and the earlier propaganda story that India was planning to send two million Indians to the Congo. I also mentioned the Commonwealth interest in the success of the operation and the dangers to the UN, to Africa and world peace if it failed. Stevens was smooth and soft and asked questions but tried to avoid answering any. I also mentioned the anti-Indian propaganda to Selwyn Lloyd who expressed surprise and regret.

14th March 1961

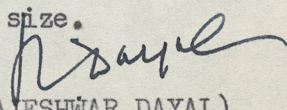
8. THE PRESIDENT OF GHANA began with an optimistic view of his talks in New York and Washington which led him to believe that the operation would receive sufficient political and material support. He said at Casablanca he had to steady the other powers and was hopeful that UAR and others would send back their troops, regretting that they should ~~not~~ have run away from their responsibilities. He thought the military command should be reorganized although he did not insist on an African command. I pointed to the opposition which seemed to be developing in certain quarters against the implementation of the resolution and pressed for a strong diplomatic position on the part of the seven Commonwealth countries which are heavily committed to the operation. He appreciated the point, and spoke of developing a commonwealth approach and even mentioned the possibility of asking for a Commonwealth military command. I pointed to the difficulties in

regard to the latter which would only lead to further compartmentalisation. He pooh-poohed the Madagascar decisions and said they would amount to nothing. He said his troops had been blamed for the withdrawal of the Stanleyville party from Luluabourg. General Alexander who was present, thought that the reorganization of the ANC would need a separate set-up. I told President Nkrumah of my talk with Mr. Heath and Alexander offered to see him. He wondered why the ANC had not been disarmed at the very beginning. Dr. Nkrumah was contemptuous of Mr. Wachuku who he described as "a mad man". He said that in view of the Tananarive decisions, he thought President Kasavubu was no longer entitled to be regarded as President of the Republic.

9. THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYA spoke about developing a Commonwealth approach and said that he would support the operation loyally even to the extent of denuding his country of all its troops. He wondered if a small advisory committee to assist the Special Representative would be a good idea. I said it would be better to have a couple of Deputies.

10. PRIME MINISTER NEHRU said that the British Government was trying to sabotage the resolution and he would take up the matter very forcefully with Mr. Macmillan. He agreed that the seven Commonwealth Prime Ministers had a direct interest in the operation and that they must develop a strong common approach. He wanted to see the resolution strongly implemented and there was no time for cold feet. Otherwise, the operation would be bogged down, the international troops becoming hostages and the prestige of the UN seriously compromised. The operation must succeed as otherwise the Congo would blow up and with it Africa and the UN. The Indian troops were being sent there in active support of the Secretary-General and the operation, but he would not like the Indian Army to be insulted or pushed around. He was disturbed by the fact that light tanks were not required since he felt that the weakness of the UN troops had invited aggression against them. He thought the US position was firmer than that of the British. He had had an encouraging correspondence with President Kennedy regarding the Congo operation. He felt strongly about the Belgian and other foreign intrigues and was convinced that the first step was to deal with them. The politicians must all be cut down to size.

March 16, 1961

  
(RAJESHWAR DAYAL)

Special Representative of the Secretary-General