

NSC BRIEFING

7 January 1959

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BELGIAN CONGO

- I. The sweep of African nationalism affected another dependent area when bloody, three-day riots erupted in Leopoldville, capital of the formerly placid Belgian Congo.
- A. These riots underlined the Congo's latent racial tension and followed other less spectacular manifestations of nationalism.
1. Riot at Leopoldville in June 1957 following soccer game.
 2. Growing African assertiveness in speeches and publications in Leopoldville and mineral-rich Katanga.
- B. Belgian government has not been able insulate Congo from African nationalism and Leopoldville, just across river from Brazzaville in French Equatorial Africa, particularly vulnerable in view of rapid African political evolution there in last few years.
- II. Rioting began because of police action to break up African political meeting held by nationalist leader Arthur Pinzi (mayor of a Leopoldville suburb and union leader) who had just returned from Accra conference.
- A. Several in crowd began to shout "independence." Police (colored, with white officers) became alarmed, intervened with gunfire and mob action resulted.
- B. Mob--numbering 20,000--attacked Europeans and private property.
- III. Contributory cause was serious unemployment among city's African population.

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- A. Belgians declared state of emergency, reinforced security forces. Have regained control by use of force, including grenades. Native police loyal.
 - 1. Casualties number over 100 Africans and Europeans, including at least 30, and perhaps 50, African deaths.
 - 2. We know of no Communist connections with the riots or Pinzi.
- IV. Present explosive situation likely to persist to at least 13 January when Brussels has been planning to make public new policy statement regarding dependent areas.
 - A. Although new program unlikely to satisfy independence-seeking African nationalists, Belgian security forces will be able retain control.
 - B. General atmosphere will, however, remain disturbed for some time to come, with sporadic outbreaks probable.
- V. Recent stimulus to Congolese nationalism furnished by All African Peoples' Conference held at Accra 8-13 December and attended by several Congolese.
 - A. While conference relatively moderate, called for rapid emancipation of all colonial peoples.
 - B. Although Nkrumah and moderates retained control and put emphasis on peaceful agitation such as civil disobedience and economic boycotts, they did agree on call for violence if "democratic means" not available which UAR and Communists promoted.
 - C. Despite failure of the more violent line of UAR on Communists to control conference, both Cairo and Moscow will continue efforts to influence and gain control of African nationalist movements.

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