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Memorandum

THE POLITICAL SITUATION
AND PROSPECTS IN THE CONGO

20 February 1964

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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20 February 1964

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
MEMORANDUM:

SUMMARY

The Congo seems destined for continued crisis. The terrorist excesses in Kwilu Province show how close to the surface the conditions of instability are throughout the countryside. The Congolese Army is still undisciplined, and its loyalties are transitory. The authority of the divided Leopoldville government does not extend much beyond the city limits.

Half-hearted efforts to devise an acceptable constitution and to form a government party are faltering, and there is already talk of delaying the national elections scheduled for mid-year. Moreover, the benefits of the recent currency devaluation are being frittered away amid gradually rising urban discontent. The Secretary General is determined to close out the UN's costly military operation by 1 July.

No firm leadership is in the offing, and time is running out on the drifting Adoula regime, which commands scant backing. Its ouster is likely to be followed by greater radicalism and violence throughout much of the country.

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The Political Situation
And Prospects in the Congo

I. Background and Current Situation:

1. Like Spanish moss, the present Congo Government has its roots in the air, not in the Congolese hinterland. Prime Minister Adoula has no personal political following, although he is not entirely without influence. It is the men around him--the so-called "Binza Group"*--who really control such power as resides in the capital. By and large, however, the conspicuous weakening of links between Leopoldville and the provinces since the end of colonial rule in 1960 has meant that the exercise of power at the center is largely unrelated to the course of events in the hinterland. Leopoldville remains far too weak to impose its authority, and must depend on the occasional and precarious cooperation of the officials in the 21 provinces. The maladministered provinces themselves exhibit a wide variety of secessionist, radical and traditionalist attitudes, together with ethnic and tribal rivalries. All demand a high degree of local autonomy.

2. Thus, Adoula and his colleagues have been forced to accept their lack of power in the provinces. They have frequently avoided or played down repeated challenges from the regions, not only because they lack enforcement powers but also because some of them are beholden to parochial interests. They have relied on the demonstrated support of the UN and the financial and diplomatic backing of the US to support them in the most crucial instances,

* Binza is the section of Leopoldville where most of these officials live. The "Binza Group" includes Army Commander Mobutu, Sureté Chief Nendaka, Justice Minister Bomboko (who has the loyalty of the important Mongo tribe), Interior Ministry Secretary General Damien Kondolo, and Albert Ndele, head of the National Bank. Occasional or "associate" members include Interior Minister Maboti (representing the Abako Party of the powerful Bakongo tribe) and Defense Minister Anany. Adoula is not a member of the group, but is close to it. All of these individuals have been consistently anti-Communist [REDACTED]

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e.g., Katanga. They have also relied on the important political leverage that control of the capital affords. More specifically, Leopoldville has used heavy financial subventions to retain some semblance of provincial loyalty. Transfers to the provinces account for more than half of the government's enormous expenditures; much of this is lost to corrupt local politicians.

3. Whatever power Leopoldville does hold over the countryside also rests to a large degree on the 30,000-man Congolese Army (ANC). This is useful as a kind of constabulary force, and a few officers of some ability have emerged. Yet the ANC is still far from a reliable force responsive to General Mobutu, or anyone else. Indeed, the ANC's brutality in its sporadic pillaging forays gives rise to widespread resentment against the central government. Moreover, the ANC lacks sufficient training and confidence in itself to cope with even primitively organized terrorist bands or Tshombe's bedraggled Katangan gendarmes. The extremely slow progress of the Belgian retraining program strongly suggests that the ANC, consuming a fifth of Leopoldville's total domestic expenditures, will continue to be an expensive and virtually autonomous body, whose loyalty may shift rapidly as a result of essentially trivial matters.*

4. Despite seemingly ephemeral internal support, the present government has weathered political harassment, sporadic scheming within its ranks to oust Adoula, and its own generally indecisive and unimpressive performance. Probably its main achievement--certainly Adoula's--is political survival. Its principal foes have not flourished. Tshombe, probably the regime's wildest antagonist, went into self-imposed exile. Gizenga has been isolated, and the leadership and organization of Lumumba's Mouvement Nationale Congolais (MNC/L), the only party with a

* Despite the ANC's size and the UN military presence, such elements as tribes, political youth groups, or former gendarmes are maintaining significant turbulence in at least 12 of the provinces: Kwilu, Moyen Congo, Haut Congo, Maniema, Kivu Central, Katanga Oriental, Nord-Katanga, Lualaba, Sankuru, Sud-Kasai, Kasai Central, and Unite Kasaienne.

substantial claim to national support, has fragmented. Its extremists now have taken exile in Brazzaville, where they have established a Committee of National Liberation (CNL). The CNL is itself badly split, however, and its efforts to obtain Soviet (and Chinese) funds and arms have been hampered by Leopoldville's expulsion of the Soviet diplomats with whom the CNL maintained contacts. The CNL apparently has some arms, enjoys freedom of movement in the ex-French Congo. It is attempting to exploit discontent within the ANC as well as troubles stirred up by radical youth and terrorist bands in Stanleyville, in Kwilu, and elsewhere.

5. Except for the Katanga secession, the current upheaval in Kwilu province is the most serious and effectively organized disturbance since the end of Belgian rule. Its origins are obscure, and the aims of its leaders unclear. Kwilu has long been known as an area given to religious fanaticisms, hostility to white men, and tribal violence; clearly, these factors play an important part in the present outbreak. It is virtually certain, however, that forces are at work which are more than local. The purported leader of the outbreak, Mulele, has links with anti-Adoula exiles in Brazzaville as well as with Communists. Restoration of some semblance of order will at best be a long and difficult process, and will probably be beyond the capabilities of the Leopoldville government. Even so, the violence and indiscipline of Kwilu is only a few degrees greater than that of some other provinces.

6. Despite the high degree of political turmoil, most of the modern sector of the economy still functions at pre-independence levels. The large European-owned and operated mining enterprises and agricultural plantations are self-sufficient and, transportation problems apart, have remained largely unaffected by widespread strife. They provide most of the Congo's badly needed foreign exchange, and they can probably continue to operate short of physical takeover by the Congolese or a total breakdown of order. The bulk of the Congolese people are dependent upon subsistence farming, hunting, and fishing, and are largely unaffected by wider economic considerations. They are totally unconcerned with national politics, and are affected by events outside their villages only occasionally when they become participants in, or victims of, violent tribal and ethnic conflicts.

II. Trends and Prospects

7. Angered by parliament's obstructionist tactics and threatened by a general strike, President Kasavubu last September suddenly closed the assembly. He followed by announcing the establishment of a constitutional commission, its work to be completed within 100 days and then to be submitted to a national referendum. Apart from providing time and elbow room for the government, the objective was finally to replace the complex Loi Fundamentale with a new constitution along federal lines to enhance Leopoldville's powers. In an inept follow-up, however, Leopoldville named a commission composed predominantly of provincial representatives, most of whom seek a large degree of local autonomy. The commission continues to meet, but its work will probably end in stalemate and acrimony.

8. Several efforts by individuals in the Binza Group and others to organize a national party have made little headway. The Rassemblement Democratique Congolais party (RADECO),* designed mainly to provide Adoula with an effective vehicle for the upcoming election campaign, has failed to attract any significant group. Adoula has not committed himself firmly to the national party project (although he views the scheme as one he would lead). The lack of progress in creating this party, together with the unsatisfactory performance of the constitutional commission, make it increasingly unlikely that the June election timetable will be observed.

9. Given the Congo's political immaturity, an election postponement or continued quarrels over complicated constitutional issues will not necessarily create much trouble. Indeed, an electoral campaign might itself produce a serious security problem in many areas. However, postponement and attendant difficulties will probably come to a head at about the time the UN military operation finally pulls up stakes next July. The 4,500-man UN mission, although now almost totally ineffective in military terms, is still an important psychological barrier against large-scale disorders, at least in Katanga. Should its departure coincide with a politically charged atmosphere, there is a good chance of trouble on a significant scale.

* Sureté Chief Nendaka is the chief architect of RADECO.

Among other things, this might result in an exodus of the skilled European managerial and technical work force in Katanga or new outbreaks like that in Kwilu.

10. Even assuming that rough standards of security can be maintained for a time, it is difficult to see any satisfactory solution for the West in the Congo, even with heavy Western financial contributions and strong Western diplomatic backing of the central government. Some plausible eventualities and some speculation about the future are sketched in the following paragraphs.

11. Although time is probably running out on Adoula, he has about an even chance to hang on for a few months more. He can take some comfort from the prospect of greater revenues due to substantially improved copper prices, and also from the prospect that--in one way or another--he will probably obtain most of the \$175 million in external assistance which the Congo requires to stumble along. Binza support for him appears to be lessening, however, and he seems politically shopworn. Much will depend upon the source and timing of any new threat to him. For example, he might squeeze through another parliamentary crisis, but he would be much less likely to survive another concentrated attack from labor, which has been increasingly effective in articulating the widespread resentment of the privileges of the politician "class".

12. Chances are slim that the present leaders can develop an effective national party, i.e., one which can assure an electoral victory for the government. The provincial leaders, largely tribally oriented and favoring local autonomy, retain most of the trump cards, since they stand astride the lines of political communication with the largely primitive electorate.* Although Leopoldville could probably buy the temporary allegiance of some of these leaders from time to time, we believe the

* In 15 of the 21 provinces there is a single dominant political party, and in many the party has a strong ethnic identity. Traditional tribal structures are significant in 11 provinces.

arrangement would lead only to a revival of earlier ineffectual bickering between the parliament and the government.

13. In such circumstances some Congolese would probably demand that a strong man take over the government, while others would call for even greater provincial autonomy, and the ANC might attempt to take power. An attempt by the ANC would be likely to fail, partly because of the army's lack of leadership even by African standards, partly because of its diffuse loyalties and its preoccupation with basic needs like food and beer. There are, however, a few fairly able potential "strong men" outside the army, such as Defense Minister Anany or to a lesser degree Minister of Plans Kamitatu. One or another of these might be able to gain the support of a sizable number of the ANC troops, at least long enough to install himself in office.

14. If the Binza Group clings to power in Leopoldville, it may attempt to forestall an ANC takeover and at the same time pacify regional attitudes by bringing Tshombé into an influential position in the central government. Tshombé has made it clear that his objective is power at the national level. He remains the dominant political figure in the Katanga region, and his "gendarmes" in Angola could provide a potential force to pressure Leopoldville. His policies of regional autonomy (minus the taint of European backing) now are supported throughout the Congo. Although his return would anger labor and some other elements, Tshombé would probably be able to work with many of the Congolese radicals, at least for a time (he now is talking of a "national" government including Lumumbists). If Tshombé were to assume a major role on the national scene, Leopoldville's relations with the provinces would probably improve somewhat, although its power over them would be likely to decline.

15. Whether or not such a development as this occurs first, a labor-radical government is likely to emerge sometime during the next year or so. This could be brought about by a combination of labor, radical nationalist, and discontented urban elements capitalizing on a planned strike, a demonstration, or some spontaneous event. In a confused situation,

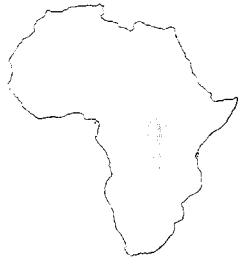
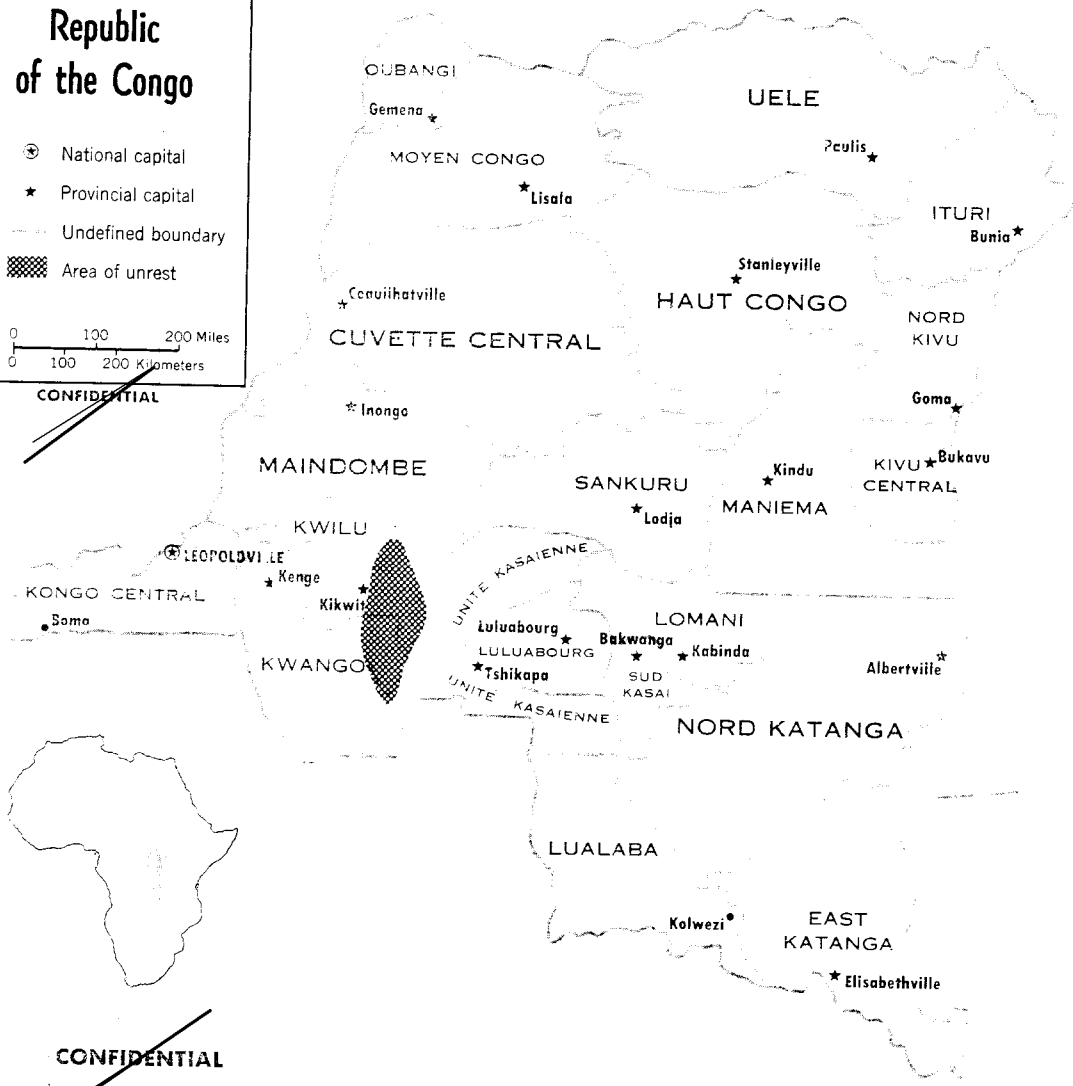
the fragile loyalty of the ANC could easily crack, with some units opposing the central government and some supporting it. Once installed, a labor-radical regime would still be no better able than the present one to set its stamp on the regions, and it would in turn be subject to removal by successively more radical and extremist figures. There is little prospect of establishing a central government of any type which will have a high degree of authority throughout the country. Over the next year or so, it will be a considerable achievement if chaos is avoided.

Republic of the Congo

- ⊙ National capital
- ★ Provincial capital
- - - Undefined boundary
- ▨ Area of unrest

0 100 200 Miles
0 100 200 Kilometers

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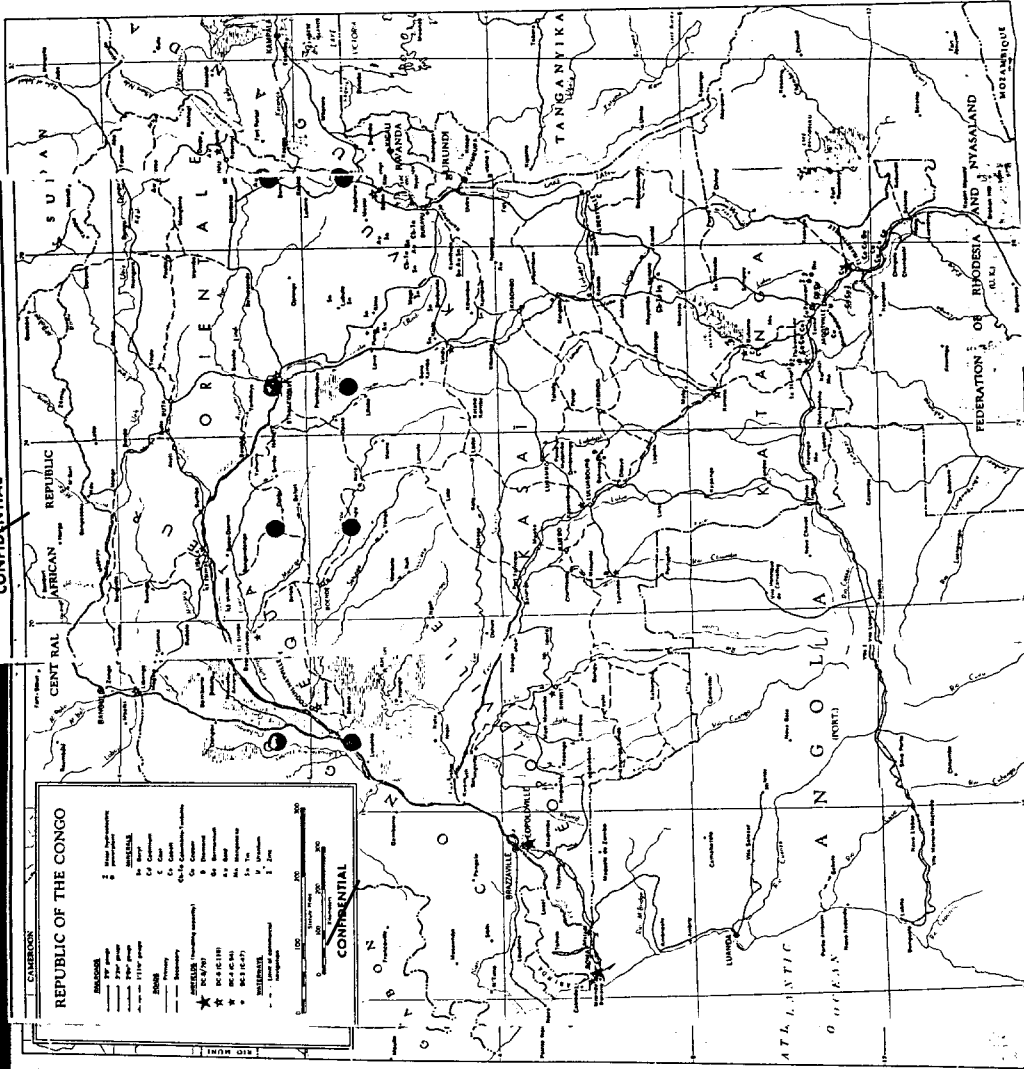


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Boundaries have been interpolated from existing maps and intelligence reports, and are not definitive.

31 JANUARY 1964
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REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

LEGEND

BOUNDARIES

- International
- Province
- City
- Town
- Village
- Hamlet
- Island
- Islet
- Small Island
- Small Islet
- Small Hamlet
- Small Village
- Small Town
- Small City

POPULATION

- 100,000 and over
- 50,000 - 99,999
- 10,000 - 49,999
- 1,000 - 9,999
- 100 - 999
- 10 - 99
- 1 - 9

RELIGION

- Other
- Other Protestant
- Other Catholic
- Other Muslim
- Other Buddhist
- Other Hindu
- Other Jain
- Other Sikh
- Other Other

ETHNIC GROUPS

- Other
- Other African
- Other European
- Other Asian
- Other Other

PHYSICAL FEATURES

- Other
- Other Mountain
- Other Hill
- Other Plain
- Other Plateau
- Other Desert
- Other Tundra
- Other Other

CLIMATE

- Other
- Other Tropical
- Other Subtropical
- Other Temperate
- Other Continental
- Other Other

TIME ZONES

- Other
- Other Atlantic
- Other African
- Other European
- Other Asian
- Other Other

MAP INFORMATION

Scale: 1:1,000,000

Projection: Mercator

Source: CIA World Factbook

