CHAPTER-IV

CRISIS IN CONGO

Belgian Domination

The territory of Congo had been created by two men, king Leopold II of Belgium and by an English explorer named Henry Morton Stanley in the area south of the Congo river in equatorial Africa. With relentless ambitions, full of energies as well as fixity of purposes both these personalities had accomplished the objectives of colonizing the African territory. In course of time king Leopold was able to impose his personal rule over the African colony and had got it ratified by the European powers at the Congress of Berlin in July 1885. The Belgian parliament on 15 November, 1908 had terminated the personal rule of the Belgian king due to constant criticisms from foreign quarters and especially from the governments in England, US and Germany that the ruler had perpetrated severe atrocities on the native population and also that he had granted sweeping concessions to foreign companies in the

1. For details see, Parker Thownas Moon, Imperialism and World Policies (New York, 1926) pp.79-80.
Colonel. The status of the Belgian Congo, however, remained as such till it received its independence on 30 June 1960.

The Belgian policy towards the Congo had been described as "Paternalism". This denoted the fact that all the Congolese population, except for those belonging to the administration had been shut out completely from getting any information about their country. The Belgian had followed a highly centralized policy and had been averse to the idea of providing higher education to the Congolose, because of the year of demand for independence. Their overall objective had been aimed at insulating the Congolese from the "Wars of national liberation" and the "winds" of change" that had taken place in various parts of Africa.

At the same time the colonial government had concentrated its efforts towards economic development and social upliftment of native people.

because of their belief that the Conglase would only crave for higher economic standards and not for their intellectual development as well as political participation. With this perspective in mind they had sought for the exploitation of Congo's vast natural resources. The Belgians had encouraged foreign private investment, by providing them with special protections, incentives and concessions in this regard. As a result of this policy large scale investment by Belgian and other outside corporations had been established, such as the societe Generate de Belgique (The Societe Generate), the Union Miniere de Hanut Katanga (Union Miniere), The Tanganyika concessions (TANKS), Societe Internationale Forestiere Miniere de Congo (For miniere) the Compagnie Contonneira congolese (Contonco) as well as the American Congo Company.

In the social sphere, the Belgians had adopted a cautious but step-by-step approach to

acquaint the native people with modern standards of western civilization. To facilitate this process they had encouraged the migration of rural population urban centres and especially to mining and industrial areas. This, however, had resulted in an increase in social tension as well as a breakdown in the traditional African life. The colonial government had further entrusted the Catholic missions with the task of providing primary as well as technical education to the huge Congolose population. In the process the Congo had been able to reach almost a saturation point with regard to primary and technical education. The country, however, had to face several shortages in the areas of trained political leaders, civil servants, industrial managers as well as professionals. The hallmark of Belgium policy had, thus been to create a prosperous native-working class in the Congo which would be content with prosperity rather than with votes.

The reality of the Congo is that it is located at the strategic and geographic heart of Africa and is richly endowed by nature. For instance, it produces 7 per cent of world's copper, 67 per cent of cobalt and one third of world's industrial diamonds, besides large quantities of cadmium, gold, silver, zinc, iron, tungsten, cassiterite, manganese, uranium and radium. The geo-political situation, as well as richness of the country had prompted a competition between the cold war antagonists for the control of region. It has, therefore, been aptly remarked that "the Congo is a bride everybody wants." 

8. G. Mennen Williams, Africa for the Africans (Michigan, 1969) p. 86, Menon Williams was Assistant Secretary of State For African Affairs from 1961 to 1966.
A second Congolese reality is the divisive factor of tribalism. In a country comprising more than 200 tribes who spoke some 200 principal languages and dialects, tribal loyalties as well as ancient enmities had formed characteristics features of Congolese societies as elsewhere in Africa which however, had impeded and thwarted the growth of national unity in the country.9

The tragedy of the Congo episode, however, had revolved around the main fact that the Belgians had proved themselves to the totally "unfit" to shoulder their responsibilities as a colonial power. They had not only refused to address themselves seriously to the question of decolonization, but had also failed to initiate measures of political reforms on the pattern of other European colonial powers.

Details of the Congo tragedy are beyond the scope of this study. However one may portray some of the historical developments in the Congo that eventually provides the factual setting for the United Nations intervention and the United States involvement.

Congo had been a vast territory possessed by a Belgian company which established trade stations on the lower Congo between 1879 to 1884, and had formally given it over to the Belgian government Congress of Berlin recognized it as a "Congo Free State".

This so called "Free state" remained under the Belgian colonialism from November 1908 to 1960. Until 1908, for more than four centuries the Congo had been subject to ruthless exploitation of

African labour. Approximately more than thirty million people were made slaves and traded abroad under Belgian sovereignty. The barbarious personal rule of the Belgian king who had taken

12. So heavy were the levies of rubber that the natives had no time to cultivate their patches of grain, famine found its victims and infant mortality, always high, became appalling; many a prosperous village fell into decay and some parts of the crown domains (travellers tell) became deserted wilderness, where the silence of the forest "broken only by occasional trampling of the elephant and buffalo, the chatter of whilemaned monkeys, the screams of the grey parrot", see, Peter Thomas Moon, Imperialism and world polities, New York 1926.

over the control of the land from Portugal in the last quarter of the 18th century, aroused widespread public outcry in Europe and eventually forced the Belgian government to assure full colonial responsibility for the Congo in 1908. The kind of the rule that followed did introduce some humanitarianism like the establishment of some hospitals and schools.

The Belgian Colonial system had its own sophistication. In one sense, the Congo was the most developed colony and was administered by a bureaucracy of 10,1000. Belgian Officers, who established a highly developed system of economic exploitation involving international cooperation and enormous investments (and profits) with complex rail, water and transport systems. But on the other hand, the Belgian approach to colonial management was merely a policy of paternalism, after brutal

15. Ibid.
traditions under the earlier personal regime of leopoldville. The difference between the new and old government may be illustrated by one instance. In 1912, a Congo official was arbitrarily executing seven native men, for women and a child. In old days such executions would have passed without notice. But humanitarianism of the new type was less profitable than Leopoldian methods. Throwing the colony open to international trade, abolishing of forced labour, relinquishing the profitable leopoldian monopolies and assuming the debts of the Free State, left the Belgian government with a colony whose revenues were inadequate to defray the administrations expenditure. Its approach to colonialism was to short sighted that it did not anticipate the fast growing advancement of African nationalism and established a very different kind of relationship between coloniser and the colony. No attempt was made to provide for participation or

even association of the Congolese people with the administration of the country. By 1950, more than 10,000 Belgians held all unparelal positions in highly advanced bureaucratic structure and not a single doctor or engineer was congolese. Only 17 Congolese were graduates at the time of independence and there were only two universities in the whole of the Congo. Administration was highly centralised and administered by Belgian Officers.

The resources of the Congo were exploited by the Union Miniere a company, formed in 1906, jointly by the British and Belgian governments, which enjoyed exclusively mining rights over Katanga by agreement with Belgian government until 1990. The sudden decision to give independnece to the Congo in 1960 disturbed the earlier agreements

17. This Union Miniere was formed in 1906 as a stock company with the million fromes capital, half Belgian and half British and obtained the right to exploit all copper mines in a zone about half large as Belgium until the year 1990 as well as to built railways and roads and to exploit coal mica, iron and gold mica. For details see, Peter Thomas More, n.l p.9 .
and provoked a strong reaction. The Belgium and British finance was closely involved in mining in Katanga. Soon after the independence of the Congo katanga seceded from the Congo Republican with the packing of Western colonial powers and became a complicated problem for the United Nations Peace Keeping Operation.

Being extremely rich economically the Congolose were politically backward. They were divided into various tribal groups. Political parties and their leaders emerging after the independence were purely based on tribal loyalty. The tribal structure was highly complex which led to disunity and wide differences between two regions. No single group was dominant in the whole country. Some important tribal groups which became powerful at local level because of their numerical strength or strategic situation or their
tradition and political culture. The Ba-Katanga, Ba-Mongo, Ba-lunda, and Ba-Luba. The Ba-Kongo dominated the narrow strip of land between Leopoldville and the sea, and were also found in adjacent areas of free Congo and Angora covering nearly fifty percent of African population of Leopoldville. Joseph Kasavubu belonged to the group. The Ba-Mongo group was found in the Northern part of the old province of leopoldville and the southern part of the Congo river, Ba-Luba was in the Northern province of Katanga, whereas the Ba-Lunda acquired strength in North. Moise Thomba belonged to Ba-Lund group.

The traditional conflicts were common before the advent of the Europeans and were put down during Belgian administration. But the lack of

18. The Prefix "Ba" or "Bena" when added to some tribal name means "people". It is often omitted. Quoted from B.Charavasty, Congo Operation (Ministry of Defence, Govt of India, 1976) p.5.
Concidence between ethnic and administrative boundaries often led to popular conflicts within ethnic groups themselves.

**Declaration of Independence**

Since the 1950s, a political awareness was sweeping across the whole Africa, including the Congo. In December 1955, Professors van Bislen's thirty year plan for the political emancipation of Africa caught the imagination of some educated Congolese in the form of published manifesto in an African paper of Leopoldville, "La conscience Africaine". This manifesto became the ideological basis for a tribal group called Ba-Kongo, which mostly constituted Abako party led by Kasavubu. The manifesto was called "to all type of discrimination and establishment of a democratic government based on equality of man. After a year of this manifesto's publications the municipal elections were held for the first time in the history of Congo in three main cities. Elizabethville, Leopoldville, and Jodotville, which gave rise to political parties and strengthened the demand for interim autonomy, and self rule. Otherwise until 1957 Congolese did not know about "election".

Most of the Congolese parties were based mainly on tribal affinity. The Abako party
represented the Ba-Kongo of lower congo region, the conkat party of Tshome was supported by the Batunda of Southern Katanga. Albert Kalonji's branch of MNC represented the Batunda of South Kasai and Jeson Sendues Balubakat party was explicitly based on bribe of northern Katnaga. Patrice Lumumba founded a national centrist party, unique in cutting across tribal and regional lines. His Movement National Congolose obtained wider support from people, although it was strong in province of Kasai, and in Stanleyville in the orientale province. All four Cyrille Aeloula, Joseph, Ileo and Joseph Mobutu including Lumumba who became Prime Minister belonged to this party. MNC was only radical party regarded uncomfortable for Belgian authority. Another important party was formed when Neo opposed Lumumba in 1957 and formed MNC (K) with the support of Albert Kalongi; the President of Kasai branch of MNC. Anoine Gizenga led the separatist party ie Party Solidaire African (PSA).

The interactions among emerging political party leaders to strengthen the demand for autonomy
and independence came through many events like speech of President General de Gaulle, delivered at Brazzaville on August 24, 1958 and Pan Africa Conference held in Accra in December 1958 which was attended by Patric Lumumba. After his return to the Congo, he raised the Accra Conference call for immediate independence for the whole of Africa. Untill 1957 no significant political activity by African leaders had been permitted in the Belgian Congo and the very idea of independence was hardly discussed.

The first serious anti-colonial activity occurred during the first week of January 1959, when riots at mass scale broken out the leopoldville. The interest in riots were first responded by suppressive measures when more than a hundred of the Congolese national demonstrators

19. He also established contact with Nkrmah and Nassar who saw in him a champion of left-wing anticolonialism.

were killed and many of its leaders arrested. A Commission of Enquiry was set up by the Belgian government which found that discrimination, unemployment and changing international environment were responsible for war and violence. No longer could the Congo be isolated from world happenings and especially from neighbouring countries. As early as January 1959, king Baudoin announced that it was the Belgian policy to prepare the Congo for independence. But congolese politicians, suspicious of Belgian intentions began to build political support for the future. During April 7-12, 1950, Lumumba organised a meeting in Luluabourg to demand self-government by January, 1961 and to determine the date for independence of the Congo. It was followed by meeting in

21. From 1950 to mid 1960s events moved at hectic phase in the whole colonial Africa. The Belgians were facing a flood. By mid 1060s more than 15 African colonose already had or were scheduled for independence in time for admission to United Nations in the General Assembly session Sept; 1960.
Leopoldville in June which also called fresh negotiation, with political leaders. In early November 1959 street rioting broke out in Stanleyville which was again suppressed at the cost of many Congolese lives and with arrest of Lumumba. When elections were held in December many political leaders boycotted them. During the course of these happenings, at last King Baudoin visited the Congo in the month of December. Immediately after his visit, invitations to a Round Table Conference. Leaders who attended a conference were Kasavuba (Abako) Gizenga (PSA), Kalonji (MNC-K) and Lumumba (MNC). At the end of conference, independence was announced to be in effect by the end of the six months since conference. The Conference also worked out for a constitution system. In the absence of long term preparations for independence of the Congo much hope was placed on a Treaty of Friendship and
Cooperation which was never ratified by the Congolese legislature after independence. According to the term of the treaty, the Belgian Administration officers and technical personnel were to stay back in the Congo after independence. The Law and order was to be in the hands of the "force publique" which required the officers (all Belgians) to stay for sometime.

All this showed that the independence to the Congo control to be still exercised by Belgium. This was soon realised by Congo after independence. The dream of the Congolese for a happy and prosperous Congo after independence. The dream of the Congolese for a happy and prosperous Congo after independence was dashed, thanks to their administrative experience, inter tribal and personal rivalries and international involvement leading to recession. No one in Congo was prepared either emotionally or otherwise for such
consequences of independence. There were widespread chaos, fear and mutual recrimination of few political leaders expected to hold the reigns of governmental were without experience of public life, all of them too young and inexperienced and many of them short-sighted and parochial in perspective. During Belgian administration the position held by Congolese were only of clerical nature.

Belgium officers continued to occupy the same positions which they had held before independence, thus the whole administration was run by Belgians. There were no changes in the administrative structure except the new positions of the Prime Minister and the President. If Belgium officers were to leave their respective ports, it would have created a vacum in the country because there were no educated and administratively trained man power to fill the vacum after Belgian

22. Patric Lumumba born in 1925 spent most of his youth in Stanleyville, where he became Contd...
departure. The history of Congolese independence was too short, in absence of any pre-arrangement for administrative training by one previous government although the history of brutal exploitation was too old. Belgian colonial intentions left the Congo in a state of chaos, conflict and fear, where no one except the expatriates were expected or equipped to exercise any control.

Similarly, the newly born Congo did not have its own armed forces for its protection. Even the Chief Commander was a Belgian national. The same conditions remained even after two or three years of independence.

The Congolese army mutinied within a week after the declaration of independence, the reason being that the soldiers were not getting increase

became Prime Minister. Kasavabu who was President at the age of 42 years was a government clerk. Tshombe educated at the American Methodist Mission was grocer before associating himself with Union, Miniere of Katanga. The dangerous of all Colonel Mobotu born in 1930, served as NCO in Belgian colonial army and became Chief of Staff of Force Publique (was supported by US and Belgium). He created problem for Lumumba as well as the Republic of Congo.
in emoluments in Leopoldville and saw little chance of getting officer's rank. The mutiny also underscored the attitude of the Congolese nationals who found it difficult to continue to be commanded even after independence by the same officers as before independence. In the mutiny the Congolese soldiers captured the means of communication and terrorized the Europeans to the street at gun point. The situation was beyond control, since maintenance of law and order was under Belgian Officers who themselves were the targets. Thus the whole administration became paralysed.

Soon after the incident, at the suggestion of the United States Ambassador Timberlake, the Congolese Government appeared to the United Nations for UN Technical and Military Assistance, including military advisors, experts and technicians to assist in developing a national army for the Congo to maintain national security and law and order. But before UN could reach to help the Congo, more than 300 troops of Belgian army landed at
Elizabethville airport in Katanga, admittedly to protect the Belgian lives and property, occupied military camps. The brutal fighting and counterattack by Congolese mutineers aggravated the situation. By July 13, the Belgium troops expelled the Congolese forces and occupied the European areas of Leopoldville where parliament situated. Lumumba, the Prime Minister of Congo reacted very angrily at the violation of the Treaty of Friendship between Belgium and Congo. Moïs Tshombe soon declared the secession of Katanga from Congo and when President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba visited Katanga, they were not allowed to land in Elizabethville on the airport was controlled by Belgium troops. Tshombe was supported by the Belgium and this was anticipated by the Congolese government. Thus the Congolese national integrity was threatened by an external aggression in this situation Congo government.


24. Ibid.
changed their original appeal from technical assistance in military field to maintain law and order, protection of territory of the Congo from Belgian aggression. While appealing for United Nations intervention against the external aggression, Prime Minister Lumumba also warned that if the UN assistance failed to come immediately the Congo would be obliged to seek assistance from other sources.

Thus the Congo crisis as then developed with the breakdown of law and order because of the absence of Congo's own force to control the situation and presence of Belgian troops in Congo at very large scale after independence, the threat to territorial integrity of the Congo because of Tshombo's proclamation of independence of Katanga and the impending danger of involvement by a third power which was likely to pose a threat to the UN capability to deal with the situation. To meet this deteriorating situation as noted already, Kasavuhu and Lumumba first appealed to the UN for technical
assistance of a military nature including technicians, experts and advisors to assist its own government in developing and strengthening its national army, for twin purposes; a) national security and b) the maintenance of law and order. Strangely enough they also appealed to the US for assistance on July 12 (The appeal was made by Gizenga, the Deputy PM of the Congo). Subsequently enough they also appealed for assistance of military rather than technical assistance of a military nature and they would be obliged to seek assistance from Bandung Powers if the aid was not forthcoming immediately. The essential purpose of the request for military was to protect the nationalist territory of the Congo external.


Belgian para troops expelled Congolese troops by force from the main airport a Leopoldville and occupied the European area of the town in which the government and parliament buildings were situated. Lumumba informed Ralph Runche, that Ghana had been asked for military aid pending arrival of UN Force.