PRESS STATEMENT: 29th September, 1960.

RUSSIA AND THE BELGIAN CONGO.

I apologise for the length of the statement, but in view of extensive Russian propaganda and publicity which has appeared throughout the world in recent weeks, I wanted to make every effort to have the true picture as regards events in the Congo circulated as widely as possible.

I would appreciate it very much if you could give some publicity to this statement.

Some time ago, I issued a statement about the Belgian Congo. I indicated then that I thought that what had been achieved by the Secretary-General, Mr. Hammarskjöld, represented the United Nations’ greatest triumph.

In one respect at least I spoke a little early, because I was not prepared, as perhaps I should have been, for the ruthless, irresponsible and dangerous manner in which the Russians have tried to ferment trouble in the Congo.

While originally supporting the Security Council resolutions which gave Mr. Hammarskjöld authority to act in the Congo, the Russians then decided to act upon their own behalf, and it has already been shown that arms from Poland had been made available to certain elements in the Congo, and the Russians themselves, in the Congo, ferried the ex-Prime Minister Lumumba’s troops about from point to point in Russian trucks and in Russian ‘planes.

All this made possible much of the massacre that has occurred in the Congo in the tribal warfare that has taken place.

When I last spoke of this subject, Mr. Hammarskjöld had just achieved a Congo-wide United Nations garrisoning of the country. The difficulty began when Prime Minister Lumumba demanded that United Nations troops be used to suppress the dissident elements and the dissident troops and to force Katanga Province to bow down to his authority.
Mr. Hammarskjöld at that time correctly interpreted this as being outside his United Nations brief. The internal form of the government in the Congo, the relationship with the different Provinces to the Central Government - these were matters for the Congolese to settle themselves if they could. However, since the Prime Minister Lumumba could not compel Mr. Hammarskjöld and the United Nations forces to help in these matters he turned to the Russians for aid.

The United Nations forces, under the Secretary-General's orders, had sealed off the radio stations and, for a time, the airports. The Russians, in their trucks and in their 'planes, apparently disregarded these instructions.

The action of the Russians alone has, as I have said, made much of the massacre and tribal warfare of the Congo possible.

While this was happening, things looked pretty black from the democratic point of view. It looked very much as though the Russians would get a permanent stronghold in Africa - a stronghold from which it would be all too easy to spread dissension and subversive activities. However, at this stage, an Army Colonel felt that the Congo had had enough of politicians who patently did not know what responsibility meant and who had neither the will nor the desire nor the ability to maintain a responsible and stable government. Colonel Mobutu gained control of the country. He has established what could be called an executive college picked from leading people throughout the country to do the basic work of government. As I understand it, these people have been appointed until the end of this year. Colonel Mobutu's strength and determination seems now to offer some chance that there will be some stability in the Congo. One of his first actions was to order the Russian and Czechoslovakian Embassy officials to leave the Congo. He gave them about 48 hours to comply with his command. This was done.

The Colonel clearly saw the dangers of having the Russians in the Congo and of having a government or a Prime Minister who was becoming so dependent upon them for his own position.
This action seems to have been supported in general by most of the other African leaders who were also showing clearly that they were not happy about the extent of Russian infiltration in the Congo. Furthermore, there have since been resolutions by the United Nations, including leaders of African States, making it quite clear that they want no individual power to interfere in their independent countries of Africa and that any action that needs to be taken must be taken through the United Nations. This is the view that Western countries have tried to maintain against a background of Russian provocation in the Congo.

The Russians have clearly suffered serious setbacks in Africa and for that we can be thankful. The Russian action in the Congo shows, I believe, more clearly than anything they have done for a long time, the nature of their designs and basic objectives. That is because so far as their intervention was concerned the matter was clear cut. The United Nations was managing things well. There was no need for the Russians to do anything of their own initiative. Any aid they wanted to bring forward could and should have been brought forward through the United Nations. However, the very success of the United Nations in this field was directly opposed to Russia’s interests which are to gain a foothold for Communism in Africa. Success for the United Nations would leave Russia without a base for further disruptive operations. There is no doubt that, as opportunity permits, the Russians will mount a major offensive in Africa to try and gain control of the 200,000,000 people in that country.

It is worth noting that when the Russians begin manoeuvres of this kind they don’t do it in the name of international Communism which is, of course, their basic objective. They do it in the name of the nationalism of peoples concerned. They realise that Communism as such has no appeal but they dress up their own motives in a form which they think will appeal to the people concerned. In so doing, they do what they can to hide their own particular objectives. They are great artists at preaching loudly against Imperialism while, at the same time, they practice the
worst forms of Imperialism that the world has known. If any of us
had thought that the Russians might be prepared to accept peaceful
co-existence - to live and let live - what they have done in the
Congo should remind us that they are still Communists.

The Russians are now trying to disguise their defeat at
this stage in the Congo by an attack on Mr. Hammarskjöeld and by an
attack on the present organisation of the United Nations. The
United Nations has so far vigorously supported its Secretary-General
and even Mr. Nehru, who no-one would regard as a partisan in the
sphere of world conflict, has said that Mr. Khrushchev's proposals
on re-organisation of the United Nations would not work. However,
this is a typical Russian or Communist tactic. If they suffer a
defeat of any kind in one sphere, they will try to divert attention
and change or cloud the issue. It is because Mr. Hammarskjöeld has
so far been most successful in the Congo despite everything that
Russia can and has been able to do that the Russians now want to
destroy him.

The situation in the Congo is still far from settled and
will clearly remain unsettled for a long time until it can be
shown conclusively that Russia's influence has been completely
and absolutely broken. The only chance of maintaining this position
lies through the United Nations and its continued support of
Mr. Hammarskjöeld.