

CONGO: BACKGROUND SCENES TO A REVOLUTION*

By

Serge Mukendi

Friends and comrades, before I begin talking and giving you update information on the Congo, concerning the nature of the struggle we are waging and a clear picture of that country in terms of the plight of the Congolese people, I would like to first thank the organisation which has made this event possible, the African Activist Association...

Friends and comrades, once again we come to this part of the country to present our views and to give you our side of the story, because our enemies' side has greatly distorted the image and nature of the struggle in the Congo. The enemies' story does not say why the Congolese people had to stand up for the fifth or sixth time, and take arms to fight for their freedom, for their basic human rights, for their liberation and for socialism. This is because those countries which occupy the Congo militarily today are responsible for the misery of the Congolese people. This situation did not just come into being during the post-colonial period, but it began during the colonial period. We will go into the details of this later. There is, therefore, a continuation from the colonial period into the present period. The Congo has never attained independence. If it did, that was just for three months, when Lumumba was in power, but then that independence was usurped.

THE BIRTH OF A GENDARME

Why are the imperialist forces in the Congo? It is because of the Congo's mineral wealth and also because of the Congo's important geostrategic position in Africa. And of course the Congo also plays the role of the gendarme for the imperialist forces in Africa. I want to briefly touch on that role of the gendarme.

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During the colonial period, the Congolese Army (then called the Force Publique) was sent to Tanzania, which at that time was called Tanganyika, to put down the insurrection of the people there, in Tabora. After independence Belgium continued to control and dominate the Congo in every way, just as the British were in control of Tanganyika, (just to show you the connection between the colonial masters). The two colonial masters put down the struggle of the people in order to maintain colonial domination. It was during the independence period, or what is referred to as independence, that Mobutu came to power. This period marks the beginning of the Congolese gendarme. Thus in 1972 Congolese troops were sent to Burundi and Rwanda to put down the insurrection there, in the interest of international finance capital which today is the cause of misery not only of the Congolese people, but of all the African and other oppressed people throughout the world. This is a fact.

SCENE I: THE CIA

This same army was sent to Chad for the first time to maintain Tombalbay in power, not because there was a threat against the Chadian people, but because the Chadian people said that enough was enough. They demanded the end of the rule by this representative or agent of imperialism. They demanded an end to the exploitation of their labor and demanded an improvement of their living conditions, just legitimate demands. But Mobutu sent his troops there to maintain so-called stability; stability for the realization of high profit for the imperialists. As a result of this situation, the Chadian people killed Tombalbay. However, the Congolese army's role did not limit itself to this intervention in Chad which had begun in 1973. In 1975 Mobutu's army, on instructions from the same masters, the CIA of the United States of America, sent troops to Angola to prevent the Angolan people from freeing themselves. Of course, for Mobutu and his masters the fact that the Angolan people were subjected to harsh misery, to imperialist oppression in Angola did not matter.

Later on, Congolese troops were sent to the Central African Republic to support Emperor Bokassa. Among the victims of that massacre, in the name of the "free world," was a six month old child. Apparently, for the "champions of democracy" in the West, a six month old child is capable of taking up arms and bringing down Bokassa's empire.

This is the kind of rationale you find only in capitalist countries. Today the same army has gone to Chad. This is just to show you the role of gendarme which is presently being played by Mobutu's regime. These troops went to Chad not to maintain stability, since we know that the turmoil in that country today is the the result of capitalist action there. We know that troops were sent there to maintain "order" for the same old masters.

We never see these same countries sending troops to reinforce Angola to fight South Africa. They will not even send troops to fight in Namibia to free the Namibian people, or send troops to South Africa to free the South African people. Never! But they can send troops to Chad. Why to Chad and not to South Africa? This is just to show you how these bourgeois compradors and their interests are tied to the interests of international finance capital. Their interests are antagonistic, not only to the Congolese people, but to all African people. The bourgeois class can not advance the interests of the people. It would be like asking them to commit suicide, to cut their own throats; something they can not do.

So with the geostrategic position of the Congo, flanked as it is by nine countries: the People's Republic of the Congo in the West, the Central African Republic in the North, Sudan to the Northeast, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania to the East, Zambia to the South and Angola to the Southwest, anything happening in the country can have implications in all these other countries. But then it is precisely for that reason that the struggle in the Congo has repeatedly invited intervention from many imperialist countries.

IMPERIALIST INTERVENTIONS

The first intervention took place ten days after independence on July 10, 1960. The second occurred when United Nations troops were used by the United States to destabilize Lumumba's government. Lumumba had come here, to the United States, and had asked the United Nations to aid in putting down the Katanga secession which was led by Moïse Tshombe and was supported by Belgium and other western countries. At that time, Belgium was against the United States' position in the Congo because of conflicting interests between the two imperialist powers. At that time the United States had a so-called "clean image" because it had not directly exploited or colonized any African country. The U.S., therefore, began to play the role of the good samaritan in condemning Belgian colonialism. However, what the U.S. wanted was merely to get Belgium out so it could come in and take over.

While Lumumba embodied the interests and aspirations of the Congolese people, these were not compatible with the interests advocated by the U.S. The U.S. was advocating the repression and exploitation of the Congolese people while at the same time calling this "democracy."

As requested by Lumumba, the U.N. Security Council recommended that U.N. troops be sent to the Congo. These forces were made up of troops from African countries as well as from countries from other continents. But, then when they arrived in the country they began taking over the airfields and other militarily strategic

points in order to undermine Lumumba's government. This was in conformity with U.S. interests. When this happened, all the Lumumbists began moving to the Northeast, to what today is known as Kivu, and Kisangani provinces, and to Northern Shaba province. At the same time, in Kwilu province, Pierre Mulele was leading the people's resistance.

After using U.N. troops to destabilize Lumumba's government, the U.S. used the same troops to quell the secession of Katanga, not in the interests of the Congolese people, but in its own interests and those of its allies. These countries were fighting over our country, over our minerals which they referred to as their national interests. According to the capitalist robbers, international interests are included within their national interests and comprise the sum of their influence.

TSHOMBE: THE ARM OF THE GENDARME

Our national economy was and still is an appendage of the worldwide capitalist economy. The capitalists discovered that the contradictions among themselves were secondary to the contradictions between themselves and the progressive forces. What were they then to do in order to unify the whole capitalist camp? They went to Spain and brought in Tshombe and made him prime minister. They brought him in on condition that he integrate not only his ex-Katanga gendarmes into the national army, but also mercenaries from South Africa and from throughout the western world. This was done. The imperialist camp was unified, so they then turned their guns against the progressive forces, the Lumumbists.

The United States intervened again in 1964, on November 26th using anti-Castro Cuban exiles. The U.S. was not only the first country to introduce mercenaries into Africa, but it was also the first to introduce Cubans on the continent. This is why it is hypocritical for U.S.A. to make allegations about Cuban intervention in Africa, claiming that they are there to destabilize governments in favor of the so-called "Soviet expansion." They have forgotten who first introduced Cubans into Africa. However, the Cubans who were introduced by the U.S. had nothing in common with those who went to help the Angolan people defeat South African invaders. The U.S.-sponsored Cubans and the U.S. troops went to the Congo to secure a new market and to divide up Africa into zones of influence.

What happened next was that the struggle intensified and the progressive forces liberated two-thirds of the country. The U.S. could not cope with the situation on its own, so it invited the Belgians to intervene. Because the government troops, which were there and had been trained by the same countries, could not cope with the offensive of the revolutionary forces, the same

people, the owners of the means of production, the robbers had to intervene themselves. This is what happened and that is how they put down the struggle in the Congo. At that point, all the Lumumbists and Muleleists who were part of CNL (Comité National de Libération), when it was crushed in 1968 crossed the border with many other people and built the FLNC (Congolese National Liberation Front).

SCENE II: EXIT TSHOMBE, ENTER MOBUTU

In the meantime, Tshombe integrated his ex-Katangan gendarmes into the Congolese Army. At that point, the treatment of the soldiers from other provinces got very bad. There was mutiny and rebellion within the Congolese army itself which brought Mobutu into power. Soldiers from Katanga, Kisangani, Kivu, Kasai and Lower Congo, even the mercenaries rebelled, so the OAU and the International Red Cross intervened in order to bring the situation under control. This done, it was suggested that all the mercenaries be sent back to their countries. The Congolese soldiers were to be taken to Mobutu's province, in the western part of the country, where there was a reeducation camp. While on that trip to Mobutu's province, the Congolese were dropped, without parachutes, out of the planes. Twelve Congolese survived to tell this story. This then, brought to an end the problem of the ex-Katangan gendarmes in 1964.

While this was happening, we were based in Angola, working in the fields, farming and building the FLNC and fighting on the side of the MPLA.* After the liberation of Angola, we crossed the border, and re-entered the Congo. We fought there in 1964 when Che Guevara came to help us fight. We attacked Shaba, because the nerve center of the imperialist economy was centered there. If we knocked it out, the imperialist forces' mask would fall. If it did not fall, it would at least suffocate them. Then they would have to reveal their true nature. Their nature was in fact revealed when they intervened militarily. This allowed the Congolese people to learn what imperialism really means. It taught the Congolese people what neo-colonialism means.

During that period we saw the U.S. send in the 82nd airborne and the marine corps. However, this was not the first time we fought against them. They came to the Congo merely to protect their own interests while claiming to be defending the Congo from communism. The French and Chinese were there too. The West Germans were there to defend their missile site. Other reactionary African countries referred to as "moderate" by the U.S., like Egypt, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Togo, Central African Republic, Gabon and Uganda during the time of Idi Amin, were there as well. And there were South Africans and military advisers from Pinochet's Chile, and of course, the Israelis, as usual assisting the Mobutu regime.

*Portuguese language acronym for the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola).

"DEMOCRACY" OF POVERTY

What then are the consequences of this militarisation of Congolese society? One consequence is its impact on the sphere of social life of the Congolese people. What are the social conditions? Before I speak about these conditions, I would like to briefly touch on the United States' application of "democracy" in the Congo. We elected Patrice Lumumba. His was a democratically elected and popular government. It was not imposed on us by foreign powers but we saw the U.S. come in and kill Patrice Lumumba through the C.I.A., and replace Lumumba with a dictator. All this was done in the name of western civilization and western democracy. In your Declaration of Independence, here in the U.S., it is stated that if the people see that their leaders have betrayed their interests, those people have the duty to replace those leaders with those who can protect their interests. If this is good for the U.S., it must be good for us. I do not see why the U.S. should come and kill the leader we have chosen, simply because he was working in the interests of the Congolese people. This, then, as we can see, is the meaning of democracy. It is now all becoming very clear.

In the Congo, as we can see, abject misery has become a daily experience. Let us take some areas of social life. Let us take a look at nutrition for instance. In this sphere the situation looks very bleak because of the lack of medical care and the fact that people eat only once in forty-eight hours. This prevents women from bearing healthy children. As a result, life expectancy has fallen to thirty-two years.

While most people, as stated above, eat only once in forty-eight hours, those who can afford to eat everyday eat only once. However, the oligarchy in power displays and wastes the food which is bought with the sweat of the people. Those in power have so much food at their disposal that they have made a ritual of wasting it. Their mansions and their garbage are visible to everyone. Meanwhile, the people living in abject misery see those leaders, who have been imposed on them by foreign powers, eating well and spending money while the wealth produced socially is not distributed socially. Just imagine the spectacle of a minority of cut-throats enjoying themselves, eating and throwing away the food produced by people who are forced to watch their children pick food out of the garbage. This is the background to armed struggle and the revolution now underway in the Congo. Buying food to eat has become an almost impossible task. For example, a loaf of bread costs two dollars, which is too expensive for the majority of people.

In terms of public health, the situation is equally bad. Since the time the United States placed Mobutu in power, he has never built a single hospital, school or road, not even a dispensary.

As a result, infant mortality is very high. One child in two dies before the age of two. Yet the U.S., pushing its genocidal arrogance further, is promoting Nestlé. We are told that our babies are dying because they are fed their mothers' breast milk. After thousands of years of efficient and healthy breast-feeding, which everyone of us here who has been healthily breast-fed knows, we learn from Nestlé that our mothers' breast milk is deficient!

THE REIGN OF CAPITALIST TYRANNY...

That is why we have to fight. The Congolese people understand this. However, it is not enough to fight Mobutu, we also have to fight the system which he represents. This is the only way to win, because you do not kill tyranny by killing the tyrant. In order to kill tyranny you have to "kill" the system which first gave rise to the tyrant--that is the capitalist system.

As I was saying, infant mortality is very high. Pregnant women, for lack of food and good and decent conditions in the hospitals, have to deliver on the sidewalks. The ones who can afford to go to the hospital are not guaranteed good treatment. When admitted, they have to deliver on the floor because there are no beds for themselves or for their babies. After they have delivered, they have to carry their babies with them and resume farming the next day. I would like to make an analogy for the benefit of the "champions" of human rights; suppose I take Reagan's wife, daughter, cousin, aunt and niece and place them in the same situation as that of the Congolese women? It seems that when we starve, deliver on the sidewalk and have to do farm labor after delivery it does not matter. However, if we were able to do the same to them, if we were to put the capitalist under these conditions, the result would perhaps be a declaration of the Third World War.

This is the situation in the Congo.

Another disturbing element is that between 60% and 70% of our children under the age of five are losing their weight. This you will find documented in various studies made about Nestlé, beautiful, wonderful Nestlé. You will find that 60-70%, sometimes as high as 80% of the Congolese children under five years of age have lost 80% of their weight.

The same situation affects other areas of social life in the Congo. Let us take education. Two systems exist. One is run by the Western embassies based in Kinshasa. The other deals with the poor people. In the Kinshasa system of education, you will find that the quality of education is very high. The schools are well-equipped with furniture, textbooks and all the necessary supplies. Teachers are paid on time and therefore perform their

duties well. Children in this type of school receive breakfast, something which is impossible for the majority of the people to get since a quart of milk costs eight dollars while the average salary is only \$3-\$15 a month.

This is the capitalist democracy.

As you see, this system of education caters only to the oligarchy, to the sons and daughters of the bourgeois compradors. They even have cars and buses to bring them to school. In the system of education meant for the majority of Congolese, there is a shortage of desks, chairs, books and supplies. The limited school supplies which were available have been sold by teachers and administrators who have received no payment for their work in two years. Children are obliged to bring crates to school to use as chairs. However, in order to have a crate you have to be able to afford it. Since monthly salaries are almost non-existent people have to sacrifice an entire week's worth of food in order to buy a crate and its contents. Another alternative is to bring a brick to school to sit on. However, to get a brick, you have to buy it since brickmakers spend their money on cement, clay, chalk and lime in order to produce bricks. If you have no money and you try to steal a brick you might even get killed because even brickmakers have to protect their investment.

This is the situation in the Congo.

Our children have to walk miles and miles to school while the sons and daughters, cousins and other relatives of the U.S.-imposed oligarchy are enjoying the people's wealth, throwing it out of the window.

The result of these conditions is poor quality of education since students are unable to study adequately. Classrooms which were designed for thirty-five students now must accommodate as many as one hundred students. Since the teachers are not paid, in order to survive, they ask their students to pay them because they have families to provide for. They too have children whom they must feed. Meanwhile, they are working and selling their labor which increases the surplus of others, of the robbers.

Now what do our children and students do then at school? They are taught to sing political praise songs to Mobutu, the messiah. While these children are starving, the children of the oligarchy are exported, not sent to study but exported to their masters in Europe. They later return to the Congo, after their studies, and are employed in high positions in order that they might "take care" of the "sub-human" people.

This is the situation in the Congo.

Our school children do not even have slates to write on. The only alternative is to use sand from the ground as writing material. The classroom walls are falling apart, so the sand gets blown away by the wind. I doubt if any expert, even those here at UCLA, can tell me that the sand will remain put, or that the children can collect that sand, take it home and do the assigned homework. This is the kind of democracy which is applied to things, not to human beings. According to the U.S. logic this is what we deserve.

This is the situation in the Congo.

This situation must be changed!

Out of 30 million people, only 1.2 million have jobs. But even for those, life is marginal. And what about the remaining 28.8 million who have no jobs? Salaries are too low for working people to survive. Let us consider the purchasing power of the Congolese workers in a situation where a quart of milk costs eight dollars, one egg three dollars, a loaf of bread two dollars, round trip transportation to work four dollars, a gallon of gas (in Africa we cook with charcoal) from twelve to fourteen dollars, while monthly salaries range from \$3-\$15. Even taking the top salary of \$15 nothing remains. For a new mother a quart of milk costs eight dollars and the baby must eat four or five times a day. Can anyone here at UCLA tell me how much milk a mother should use to feed her baby during a month's time? If this calculation is too difficult, tell me then how many quarts of milk the mother will be able to buy per week. If this is still too difficult, how many will she be able to buy each day on fifteen dollars a month?

The situation in the Congo is made right here in the U.S.A., perhaps in other capitalist countries as well. It was not made in the Soviet Union. It was not made in Cuba or East Germany, but right here in the U.S.A. Our people are occupied and oppressed by the U.S.A. not by the Soviet Union. Any ideology has its roots in the sphere of social life. It is not the Soviet Union which comes to tell us we have to build a socialist society. The conditions and the necessity exist for us to feel compelled to build that society. It is our business to transform the relations of production. This is the only way we can take over our means of production and system of distribution and exchange to eliminate this exploitative system imposed on the Congolese people and to release our potentialities, freeing our labor for more constructive purposes. This is the task which is ahead of us. Our struggle cannot be seen through the prism of east-west relations because we are trapped in the middle. We are victims. You can see this through what is happening in the Congo today.

The capitalists have placed their man in the Congo. The banks: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank etc., have free reign. They are the ones who run the country. We have not only lost our sovereignty nationally and internationally, but we have also lost our monetary sovereignty (the most basic form of sovereignty) because, in running the country, the IMF and other foreign world banks send their own experts there directly to check every penny which comes in. For every penny which they put into the Congo, they make sure to quickly take out much more. This results in exploitation to the core. This is how they control us.

What are the other capitalist countries doing to share the same piece of cake? France has begun to control the finance ministry. Belgium, France and West Germany control customs. The United States and its NATO allies as well as China and Israel control the army, the police and secret police. Transportation is in the hands of the Belgians and the West Germans. Education, as I mentioned earlier consists of parallel systems one for the majority of people the other for those chosen to be trained in the West. Everything is in the hands of the imperialists. In the name of stopping communism, the Congolese people, therefore, must agree to live under these conditions. Meanwhile, the imperialists come to talk about peace. There will be peace only when there is mutual respect for our sovereignty and respect for our respective property. Peace is only possible among equals. There cannot be peace between masters and slaves. There is no basis for peace under these conditions. Besides, the Congolese people, like all oppressed people throughout the world, have never enjoyed imperialist peace because our very existence as a semi-colony is based on imperialist aggression. We have numerous examples to illustrate this. I have only given a brief picture of the situation in the Congo. Since time is running short I would like to just talk a little about the struggle we are waging in the Congo.

...AND THE STATE OF THE STRUGGLE

Since 1977 when the Congolese people launched the armed struggle under the leadership of the FLNC, our revolutionary vanguard and fighting arm of the people, we have never put down our guns. We are now present not only in Shaba province, but also in the other provinces. As a result of this, the imperialist forces are talking about replacing Mobutu with a Mobutu number two. They are talking about Nguza Karl-I-Bond. Nguza is no better than his cousin, Moïse Tshombe. They would like to take Nguza, launder him, hang him out in the sunshine to dry and then present him as the saviour. But for whom or what is he the saviour? Of soaring infant mortality? Of soaring adult mortality? Of starvation? We say that any Mobutu, number two, three, four or eight, will not change anything. Nothing

short of the building of socialism will stop our struggle. This is what the imperialists do not understand. Mobutu, like any of his potential replacements, has no popular support at all. If they replace him with someone who represents the same interests against the interests of the people, he will need NATO forces, the Chinese and others to keep him in power. He cannot do without them because the people will overthrow him.

The armed struggle is growing inside the country giving hope to the people who are defying the state by holding mass protests, like strikes, which are illegal.

Those strikes do not ask for anything more than good living conditions. Students of all ages (because the strikes are collective), from university to high school down to elementary school, are not asking for anything more than the Congolese workers and peasants are. They are asking for better living conditions; yet they are called socialist pawns by Mobutu and his masters in Washington and Paris because they call for Mobutu to step down as the only solution to abolishing the system which he represents.

People are defying this senseless regime. They refuse to participate in it. They have refused to pay taxes. Why pay taxes if that money will only end up in Swiss banks and in other businesses, like Mercedes-Benz, Holiday Inn and Ramada Inn, of which Mobutu is a shareholder? The people's money will end up buying military hardware which will be used in turn to kill them. Their own money will pay for their death. However, people are refusing to pay taxes because any sensible person cannot give his money to tyranny to buy guns which will kill him.

The participation of the Congolese people in the armed struggle is an important and decisive factor because it is a people's war against tyranny. The active participation of the Congolese people is necessary because they are their own liberators. Why are they their own liberators? Because only they can defend the revolution which is taking place in the Congo, they are the decisive factor which can bring victory. This is why, you see, in order to consolidate and build the fighting capacity of the people's war of liberation, we are starting a political campaign and asking people here to provide material aid such as clothes, medicine and money to send to the refugees scattered in Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, the People's Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and the Sudan.

Indeed, we are victims of the "champions" of human rights and democracy. I would like to conclude by saying that Lumumba taught us that "between freedom and slavery there can be no compromise" and that we have to pay the price for freedom. This is the only alternative for the Congolese people. To give meaning

to their life and death, it is necessary to be part of the liberation army because life under domination and exploitation is meaningless.

Question: I'm wondering if you could outline the difference between the FLNC and the numerous other Congolese opposition groups?

Answer: Many opposition groups have been formed both within and outside the Congo. Those which have been formed outside the Congo, in particular, were formed because of the FLNC's actions. Our actions were intended to give hope to the Congolese people, to show them that something could be done and that the only alternative was to take up arms and fight the enemy. However, many small groups were formed whose interests did not differ from what the FLNC was fighting against. Even Mobutu himself has said that he financially supports many of these groups. The leaders of these organisations ask Mobutu for money because they cannot sustain themselves. If you read State Department publications or even the newspapers from August of last year (1981), you will see that they mention the FLNC. They do not mention other groups. The reason, then, that the NATO forces are still in the Congo is because of the FLNC, and not because of any other group. But there is a clear line of demarcation between the progressive force (FLNC) and the reactionary character of these groups.

Q: What are the differences between the FLNC and the group which claims to have evolved out of Lumumba's insurrection in the north. How did the FLNC split from them and what is its current position towards them?

A: As I mentioned earlier, in my talk, we were all in CNL in the beginning. I joined the liberation movement under the leadership of the CNL from Lumumba's youth corps. Then Che Guevera came to help us organise ourselves in 1964. He stayed for about two years, left and was later killed in Bolivia. We struggled under this leadership and succeeded in getting support from all socialist camps, the Chinese included. We also had support from African countries such as Egypt at the time of Nasser, Sudan Guinea (Conakry), Tanzania, the People's Republic of the Congo, and many other countries. In 1968, Mobutu sent his former foreign minister, Bomboko, to the People's Republic of the Congo, where we (CNL) were based. This was when Mulele was the leader of the liberation army. Mulele was asked to cross the border and come and set up a government of national unity. However, when Mulele arrived in the Congo, under pressure from Mobutu's government and its assurances from the People's Republic of the Congo, he was killed. Up to that point, China had been the main source of financial support for the liberation movement in the Congo.

However, after Nixon visited China in 1968, Mobutu did too. This was during the period when Mao was still alive. Mobutu asked the Chinese authorities if they would stop supporting the rebels. The Chinese set up certain conditions. They said they would stop supporting them on condition that Mobutu's government replace all the Taiwanese who were in the Congo with Chinese from the mainland. Mobutu agreed to do this.

China knew, of course, where the position of our forces were located, so when we went to fight we found that we had been set up. The government forces began to kill us like flies. The troops which were in northern Shaba crossed the border to Angola. The troops in Kasai, which also shares a common border with Angola, also crossed into Angola. Those in Kisangani and Bukavu, joined us in Angola. People living in the Angola border area who were fleeing war and repression joined us as well and we all built the FLNC. By that time there were very few people remaining in the PRP (Parti de la Révolution Populaire) which was still tied to China. This is where the split occurred. At the present time, the PRP does not even function within the country. Its members are in Europe and continue to receive support from China. Why then does China continue to support Mobutu? Maybe this is in keeping with the theory of the three worlds which is, frankly, very unprincipled to say the least.

How then can the PRP ally itself with such people? This is why it has lost its popular support. It has no popular base at all now and consists of a mere twenty members. Meanwhile, the Congolese are aware of who is doing what for them. It is the people who decide which group to join because it is they who are, in fact, the leaders.

Q: Can you talk a little about the kidnapping by the PRP in the early 1970's?

A: The PRP kidnapped three Stanford University students who were doing research in Tanzania. That kidnapping was the PRP's last attempt to get money to build itself. But when they got that money, Laurent Kabila, the president of the PRP, used it for personal needs. Since then they have been inactive.

Q: Would you talk a bit about the efforts within the United States to prevent the public, and in particular the Black community from discovering the truth about the U.S. role in killing Lumumba and its military intervention in the Congo?

A: Those who control the media control also the means of production. These are the same people who are the source of problems inside the Congo. When people in the U.S. find out about the conditions in the Congo from these sources, the first question they are bound to ask is: "Isn't there any liberation movement

or any organised opposition in the Congo?" When people start asking this question they avoid telling them about us (FLNC) because this would legitimize our struggle. This is what they are afraid of. If they tell you that we exist then you will ask about what we are doing. And if they begin telling you that we are blowing up some electrical installations, attacking the barracks of Mobutu's army and his masters, then people will try to get more and more information. People will begin to ask the U.S. government why they and NATO's forces are there and why they continue to impose imperialist genocidal policies on the Congolese people. At that moment our struggle will win the support of many people in the U.S. because they are the potential allies in our struggle. At that point, people will begin to draw parallels. They will see that just as they exploit the Congolese people in order to extract minerals, they exploit people here in order that they might buy these minerals. Just as infant mortality is going up in the Congo, the closing of hospitals and cutting of social services here creates the same conditions. Maybe the method they use is different, but the result is still the same. Just as schools are lacking in the Congo, student loans are being cut here which increases the number of drop-outs. Perhaps the drop-out rate here will begin to approach that in the Congo where people do not go to school because of these very same reasons. So when people here begin to draw parallels this creates a danger for the U.S. government. In order to continue to plunder the Congo there must be social stability in the U.S. because they cannot easily fight on two fronts. They must make sure that they have social peace within the U.S. so they unleash the C.I.A. to check on internal opposition. In this way they prevent people from rising up. This, in turn, allows them to continue their dirty work abroad. Otherwise, there will be fighting both within and outside the U.S., like during the Vietnam War, for instance. The example of Vietnam is very clear. If you remember, they began saying that the boys would be home by Christmas, not because they wanted to give them presents, but because they were being defeated in Vietnam. There was also growing disenchantment at home which could have led to a revolution. The objective conditions for revolution were present, only the subjective conditions or revolutionary organisation to lead the revolution were missing.

Q: Are you familiar with the incident in which fifty or so politicians were arrested by Mobutu about a year ago for signing a letter which made some mild criticisms of Mobutu?

A: Yes. Those people were members of parliament. What they wanted was to get Mobutu out so that they could take his place. However, in his place they did not offer any radical change at all. They merely attacked the symptoms rather than the root cause of the problem. If they had attacked the root cause of the problem they would have destroyed the structures which

guarantee their own privilege. This would mean that they would be removing themselves from power and would not be in a position to continue plundering. So by presenting Mobutu as the problem they are able to save face and retain power. Mobutu, of course, is the problem however, not as an individual as much, but because he is the representative of the system which is striving to defend them. The only solution is to change the structures; economic, political, social and cultural. This means that capitalist structures must be replaced by socialist ones. This is the only alternative. Any other would be merely cosmetic. We are not fighting for a piece of bread or crumbs. Of course, people need bread because they are hungry, however bread alone is insufficient. In order to be satisfied we must also have bakeries, the land on which those bakeries are built and what that land contains. Then and only then will people's needs be satisfied. The problem will be solved.

Q: What do you see as the role of progressive people and anti-imperialists within this country?

A: I think they have a very important role to play because the U.S. is the leading imperialist. Many things can be done. You can put pressure on the congressmen you send to Washington to vote against any allocation of funds to be sent to the moribund regime in the Congo and to stop sending soldiers and military hardware there. We also need to build committees which support the struggle in the Congo and disseminate information to the public. We also must build a material aid campaign because any revolution requires material assistance; money, food, medicine, clothing and shipping expenses. School supplies are also necessary because while we are fighting we have to educate our people. We have to build schools, dispensaries, hospitals and clinics. This is part of the struggle because we want to change the system in order to make the future better than what exists now.

Q: White mercenaries were recruited by the C.I.A. and sent to the Congo in 1964. Is there still a mercenary presence there today?

A: They are still there. Only a few have left, but others continue to come. Bufkin and Hoare are the main recruiters in the U.S. who participate in fighting against the Congolese people. However, mercenary recruiters are not only based in the U.S. They are also present in Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and West Germany. So the old circuit is still active. Mobutu needs them because those people are the only ones who can maintain Mobutu in power since they are fighting for money.

Q: I was wondering whether the C.I.A. is cooperating with the Zairian secret police (C.N.D.I.) on an international level?

A: Exactly. There are training camps in California and in Virginia. The reason I'm walking with the aid of a cane today is because of C.I.A./C.N.D.I. attacks. However, this is nothing new. The C.I.A. attacks began with the murder of Lumumba and have continued throughout the post-independence period and have been part of the intervention of the U.S. and its allies in the Congo. Up to today, many people continue to be killed by the C.I.A., not only in the U.S. but in other countries. The C.I.A. continues to be active inside the Congo because Mobutu is still a C.I.A. agent and is still on their payroll. This means that Mobutu's regime in the Congo is an extension of the C.I.A., or an extension of the United States administration. Therefore, it is not a Congolese administration. If you remember, in 1981 we put out a press release publicizing the names of Mobutu's C.N.D.I. who have been sent to the U.S. and to other countries. The C.N.D.I. is doing the same work that the Shah of Iran's SAVAK was doing.

Q: Is there a reason why the FLNC uses the word Congo rather than Zaire?

A: Yes. We prefer to use Congo because it is an historic constituent. The kingdom of the Kongo was not a colonial kingdom. When the Portuguese came to the Congo (in the 15th century) we were calling the Congo River "Nzadi Kongo". Nzadi means "big river," so the Congo river was named "big Congo River." However, the Portuguese mispronounced it and called the Congo River Zaire" which has nothing to do with our tradition. So when Mobutu, through his policy of "authenticity," began to change the European names to their proper African names, he replaced some names with appropriate substitutes, but when it came to changing the name of the country he replaced the real name used by the African people with a neo-colonial one. This, he claimed, was decolonisation. This is why we can not accept the name "Zaire." Mobutu's policy resembles that of "negritude" which was advanced by another neo-colonial leader, from Senegal (Leopold S. Senghor).

Q: I wonder if you could speak a little about your ties with the Angolan government?

A: We have a friendly relationship with the MPLA. This is a relationship between parties which is more important than relationships between parties and governments. While it is true that members of the party (MPLA) are running the government, we are tied to the party and not to the government. The government can take one position and the party can take another. This is what is happening.

Q: I have not heard anything in the U.S. press about the military actions of the FLNC since the last Shaba uprising

in 1978 except that the FLNC had been "disarmed" by the MPLA. Could you say whether the FLNC has set up guerilla cells within the Congo and if so, what are its activities and why don't we hear about it in the press?

A: First of all, you must understand that our revolution is taking place in the Congo, not in Angola. Each time we infiltrate the country we find guns inside there. A revolution requires that we organise people, but we can not organise people from a thousand miles away. In order to organise people we have to live with them, struggle with them, learn from them and they learn from us. This is the role of the vanguard. As I mentioned earlier, there is unity between the FLNC and the Congolese people.

It is true that some of our forces were disarmed, but the bulk of our liberation army is inside the Congo, not in Angola. Our people in Angola are mainly refugees. Some are also in the military. These freedom fighters engage in many activities there, including farming. More than this, I cannot tell you because, frankly, the answer to the question you have asked requires a degree of secrecy. This is why I need not elaborate any further about our activities there. What I can tell you is that we have a good relationship with the MPLA. The reason the MPLA disarmed some of our units was because of the threat of intervention in Angola from NATO's forces based in the Congo. Angola could not fight on four or five fronts: in the north against FLEC (so-called Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda), FNLA and UNITA which were also based in the Congo in the Impala Hotel (Kolwezi). (This is also mentioned in our literature because we fought against them as well)-- NATO's forces stationed along the border in the eastern part of the country, South Africans who were airlifted to the Congo, and Mobutu's army. In addition to fighting on these fronts, the MPLA had to make good on its promise to the Angolan people as well. It had to work towards improving the standard of living and building a socialist state. Meanwhile, Angola was also supporting SWAPO* in the south. We understand this situation quite well, especially since we are in Angola. It is in our interest that Angola continue to exist. The existence of Angola is good for us and good for SWAPO and other liberation movements. I do not know if you understand what I mean by this. It is clear to us that Angola must be consolidated. Our comrades in Angola must continue to be present there. So whatever they need to protect the Angolan revolution is acceptable because the struggle of the consolidation of Angola is the same struggle as that of the Congolese people, the Namibian people and other revolutionary organisations fighting for the liberation of Africa.

Q: Why have we not heard about the guerilla actions of the FLNC in the press in this country?

*South West Africa People's Organisation.

A: That is very simple. Because they can not put it out. As I explained earlier, those who control the means of production also control the dissemination of information. By talking about the guerilla activities of the FLNC they would discourage capitalist investment in the Congo. What they want is to create an illusion of stability in order to convince capitalist investors that everything is fine and that they can go in. Therefore, who will give you reports of our guerilla activities? Whenever the FLNC issues a press release here the newspapers refuse to carry it. This is, for instance, like the coverage of El Salvador. The FMLN* continues to carry out its attacks; however since the "elections" we don't hear about them in the U.S. press. You might hear about it in the left press, but that is because there is much more support among the North American left for the struggle in Central America than there is for the struggle in Africa. This is where the discrepancy lies.

Q: Why doesn't the African press carry this information, for example, Africa News?

A: Africa News covers other things. They have small articles which mention corruption in the Congo. In order to cover our struggle, they have to get in touch with us. However, ever since the FLNC first emerged, we have not allowed anyone to visit our zones of operation because we don't want to be infiltrated. We have a department which puts out press releases. If the press chooses to carry news about our struggle, fine, but if they don't our struggle continues regardless of them. They will start to talk when we exhaust the enemy, like in 1977-1978. The press did not begin to cover our struggle until a month after it had already begun.

Q: Why does the press cover other guerilla activities around the world then?

A: Of course the press covers other guerilla activities, but I think it is very important to understand the differing natures of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It is easier to cover a colonial struggle than a neo-colonial struggle. Understanding the difference between these two concepts is where the difficulty lies. In this country even news about the struggle in Viet Nam was available only later on after the Vietnamese had already started to inflict heavy casualties on the imperialist forces. The same pattern is evident in the Congo, so we hope that you will soon begin to hear more about our struggle. This is why we are here. We are here to raise these questions.

*Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional [Farabundo Marti Front for the National Liberation (of El Salvador)]

Perhaps the press will now begin to talk. You should realize that between 1977 and 1978 the papers said that nothing was happening. It was only after 1978 that they began to say that they recognized there was guerilla activity in the Congo. Of course, it was French President Giscard d'Estaing, at that time, who first talked about it, not the press. This is the same pattern and does not surprise us.

Q: It is known that the U.S. is interested in maintaining Puerto Rico as its colony because of its oil, and the mineral deposits there such as nickel. Does the Congo have strategic minerals such as nickel, and if so which ones?

A: Yes, we also have nickel. We also have chrome, cobalt, copper magnesium and other minerals which many countries are after. Nickel can just be added to the list of other strategic minerals which have invited the robbers inside our country. If the Congo were a poor country, we would be free today, but the fact is that we are a rich country. That is why we are slaves. Perhaps, therefore, we should prefer to be poor.

Q: Are any of the minerals in the Congo used to manufacture nuclear weapons?

A: Yes. We have uranium.

Q: Can you talk a little more about FLEC from Cabinda?

A: FLEC was created and is supported by Mobutu because he wanted to control the oil fields in Cabinda just as the Rockefeller did here. Mobutu is animated by a desire to be the richest man in the world and has almost succeeded. He created FLEC for this reason. If, for instance, Cabinda could be taken out of Angola and fused with "Zaire," Mobutu would then extend his administration there and take over the oil wells. This is the same tactic used by Mobutu in his support for his brother-in-law, Holden Roberto. If Roberto had succeeded in becoming the president of Angola, as he had hoped, Mobutu would have benefited from the oil, diamonds, etc. This would have resulted in the development of another African imperialism there. FLEC is also supported by Gabon as evidenced by the press releases they have issued in Libreville which were supported by Bongo's government in Gabon. Bongo also wished to destabilize Angola for the interests of the same imperialist countries.

Q: What was the relationship of your group to the Portuguese when you first fled into Angola?

A: When we arrived in Angola there were some Congolese working there, on white-owned farms like in South Africa or any other African country during the colonial period, working for the

masters. FLNC had no relations with the Portuguese. Some Congolese were organised by the Portuguese to fight against the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA. At that time, these people were used as bargaining power against Mobutu who was supporting the struggle for the liberation of Angola. The Portuguese could send them back to the Congo under Tshombe's leadership in order to destabilize Mobutu's government. The reason we talk about this issue is because the imperialists have always tried to link us with the ex-Katangan gendarmes, something which we are not, by the very fact that we remained in Angola throughout the liberation struggle fighting side by side with MPLA. This is why we have even taken the trouble to talk about the history of our organisation and about the people we found there and their activities. As I said, we saw some Congolese fighting there. When Tshombe came to power as prime minister, he integrated these people into the national army, as I mentioned in my talk earlier. And, as stated in the conclusion to my talk, the question of the ex-Katangan gendarmes was over. That was in 1964. The FLNC was created on June 19, 1968. Therefore, it was only after a period of four years and after the crushing of CNL, which had been waging the struggle within the Congo, that our organisation was founded in Angola. Our freedom fighters range in age from thirteen to thirty-three years. How old were the ex-Katangan gendarmes in the early sixties? The FLNC has not found a way to make people younger, so we are not and cannot be "ex-Katangan gendarmes."

From July 31 through August 31, 1981, the New York Times printed many articles in which they mentioned the FLNC. See in particular the one dated August 16th which describes the FLNC as "marxist-inspired rebels." This marked the first time in your press that we have been referred to as we are, not in the usual insulting manner used to attempt to discredit us. If they had succeeded, we would not now be enjoying increasing support as we are both inside and outside the country.

In 1977 and 1978 News Week said that the main threat presented by the FNLC was the fact that the whole population was helping us hide our freedom fighters. This contradicts press accounts which claimed we were ex-Katangan gendarmes based only among the Lunda. Even though the Lunda area borders on Angola, if you cross the border and reach a place like Kapanga, you will find that there are at least five different ethnic groups living in that town. In order to get support from all of these groups our organisation has to be made up of members from those groups. It's the same in Kolwezi and in every other cosmopolitan area. Our ideology transcends the ethnic group or "tribe." As we have stated in all of our literature, we are a Marxist-Leninist organisation and we are committed to the building of a socialist and eventually communist society in the Congo. Our membership as well as our executive committee are made up of

individuals from every region of the country, including Mobutu's province. To come and slander us, therefore, does not hold. The people determine our struggle. They are the decisive factor. They are the ones who judge who is on their side and who is not. This is why we are confident that our leaders can never be imposed by outside forces. No matter how sophisticated their arms may be, they can not put down the spirit of the Congolese people, who are determined to free themselves.

Q: How can we be sure the FLNC is a Marxist-Leninist organisation?

A: It is true that some people call themselves Marxist-Leninist when in reality their practice is reactionary. However, when waging a revolutionary struggle, it must be waged at two levels. It must be waged both at the theoretical and at the practical level in order to correct the line. It is also necessary to make a clear distinction between a revolutionary and a reformist line. This means we must fight before, during and after the victory of our revolution. We must replace and strengthen our leadership whenever it begins to make inroads towards capitalism. Marxism-Leninism, first and foremost, belongs to the people not to any particular leaders or countries. The people are the motive force and have chosen the FLNC as their vanguard. If the FLNC does not succeed in satisfying the needs and interests of the people, those people have the right to get rid of the FLNC and build another organisation. Lumumba, who led the independence struggle in the Congo, was killed. Then CNL emerged but did not succeed in liberating the Congo. Now the FLNC is fighting to liberate our country. If the FLNC does not succeed, another organisation will emerge with a higher degree of sophistication and effectiveness which will eventually bring about the liberation of the Congo. This is the nature of struggle. We grow, we get old we die and then new forces emerge. It is very simple.