

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CONGO?

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NO analysis of recent events in the Congo is possible unless one takes into account all the main protagonists in this life and death struggle. On one side stand the people of the Congo, yearning and struggling for their long-awaited goal of real independence. Against them is arrayed the imperialist might of the western powers. But this imperialist grouping is itself divided, primarily between the United States on the one hand, and the Anglo-Belgian block on the other, allied with Sir Roy Welensky and the Northern Rhodesian copper companies. And at the heart of the struggle stands the wealth of Katanga, still firmly in the grip of *Union Minière*, in which the Belgian Société Générale and the British Tanganyika Concessions, holding jointly 30 per cent of the shares, have the decisive control. The other largest share is in the hands of the 'State', which in practice has meant the Belgian Government and the puppet, Tshombe.

It was to keep this wealth that the imperialists brought about the murder of Patrice Lumumba and his colleagues and suppressed the legal parliament. But these actions of the imperialists, though a set-back for the people, solved nothing. In fact they only served to heighten the understanding of the Congolese people and strengthen their resolve to complete their battle for independence. Thus in Stanleyville, under Gizenga's leadership, the legal government continued, a living expression of that national upsurge which had led to the independence declaration of June 30, 1960.

Throughout this period, the United States worked to destroy the legal government at Stanleyville, trying on every trick known to imperialism. But it continued to live and work and, when necessary, to fight. Meanwhile the demand for recalling the Congolese Parliament—which, in the context of the situation prevailing, was a demand for reasserting the Congolese people's sovereignty—mounted until it became impossible to resist. And when on July 26, 1961, the Congolese Parliament met again for the first time since Mobutu's illegal action, it was soon obvious that the genuine forces of the national movement, despite the loss of several leaders through brutal murder, were the strongest force. This had to be recognised by Kasavubu and those around him, as well as by the imperialists.

Clearly a new stage had been reached. It was significant that Mobutu, who a year previously had boasted that Parliament would 'never meet again', had to stand silently by while it reassembled and proceeded to elect leaders of the national movement to key posts both there and in the Senate. Arising from this recall, agreement was reached early in August to form a new Central Government. The mistrusted Ileo, who had been 'premier' in Leopoldville, had to step aside, and the premiership went to Adoula, a man who was evidently acceptable to both sides. The new government had to include many patriotic representatives of the national movement, with Gizenga as one vice-premier and Jason Sendve, leader of the Balubakat Cartel (main opposition to Tshombe's Conakat in Katanga) as the other. The Ministry of the Interior went to another firm supporter of Lumumba's patriotic policy, Gbenye. Altogether, ten of the ministers held the same posts under Lumumba. At the same time Kasavubu remained President, the discredited Bomboko retained the Foreign Ministry, which is reported to be honeycombed with agents of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the French Sûreté and the Belgian secret police; and Ileo became Minister of Information. Moreover, Mobutu remained as Commander-in-Chief.

Clearly the new Central Government is the outcome of a compromise and further conflict between the two trends it has brought together will, in the long run, be inevitable. It came into being partly in consequence of two conflicting tendencies. The U.S. wanted a united central government, dominated by its own supporters, as a step to taking over Katanga and wresting the wealth away from Anglo-Belgian rivals, as well as keeping it out of the hands of the Congolese people. The genuine national forces in the Congo also wanted a united central government, but one led by Congolese patriots, in order to settle with Tshombe, end Katanga's secession, strengthen national unity and so uphold Congolese sovereignty. Thus two opposing forces—U.S. imperialism and the Congolese national movement—were both seeking outwardly similar aims for different purposes. In this situation, moreover, the strength of the national movement made it difficult for the U.S. to prevent the emergence of the new Central Government, backed as it is by both Congolese Houses of Parliament. It lost little time in declaring against the Katanga separatists and announcing its intention to march on Katanga and re-establish Congolese unity. Before it could move, however, the United Nations forces in the Congo, acting quite apart, clashed with the European-officered forces of Tshombe, and

thus set in train the new sequence of events which were to lead to the death of Hammarskjöld.

Why did the U.N. forces take action against Tshombe? First, because the U.S. rulers (in practice, the U.N. executives on the spot), did not fully trust the new Central Government. Its inclusion of many patriotic leaders, its declared intention to sweep away the Tshombe régime, its appointment of Davidson Boshele, a leader of the newly organised united party, the Lumumba National Party, as commissioner-general for Katanga, Premier Adoula's threats to nationalise the mineral wealth of the Katanga—all these were sufficient to make the U.S. apprehensive that the overthrow of Tshombe by Central Government forces could mean the loss of Katanga to all imperialist powers. Secondly, the U.S. felt that if it could bring Tshombe to heel, it would be in a stronger position to safeguard imperialist influence in Katanga, to dictate terms to the Central Government and thus to ensure a dominant position for U.S. influence. Thirdly, it was thought that by giving the Tshombe régime a jolt, it could be made 'to see reason', to send its representatives to the Congolese Parliament, perhaps secure posts in the Government, and thus, in general, give added strength to the compromising elements in Leopoldville. Fourthly, the demands for the U.N. to take action against the European mercenaries had become so insistent, especially by independent African states, that some show of action had to be put up.

But having initiated the action against Tshombe, why did the U.N. call its forces to a halt so quickly? And then agree to such a humiliating cease-fire agreement with Tshombe? One moreover, which has allowed Tshombe to retain his mercenaries, get back key buildings seized by U.N. forces during the action, and use airfields; and an agreement, which, by its very nature, has once again given him the status of a legal ruler of an independent State despite U.N. formal protests that it does not recognise such a State.

One must appreciate the forces that stand behind Tshombe. These are the real 'ultras' in the present situation. Within Tshombe's armed forces, in fact leading them, are French 'paras' like Roger Trinquier ('Say I am a fascist'), Belgian officers, British, South African and Rhodesian soldiers of fortune, and German veterans of wars against the peoples of Vietnam and Algeria. But behind these is the real power, the Anglo-Belgian imperialists, the unholy alliance of Société Générale, Tanganyika Concessions, the Northern Rhodesian copper companies, the British Tory leaders and Sir Roy

Welensky. French imperialist reaction, operating through Abbé Youlou, Premier of former French Congo across the river at Brazzaville, and Portuguese fascism, facing critical days in neighbouring Angola, are also deeply involved; and West Germany is in it up to the hilt, too. The Anglo-Belgian group, above all, are determined that the wealth of Katanga should not go to the people of the Congo, nor if they can help it, into the hands of Wall Street. Hence their stubborn defence of Tshombe and their open opposition to the U.N. action against their puppet. The intensity of the Anglo-U.S. conflict was strikingly revealed in the British press at the time of the U.N. action. The *Liverpool Post* denounced it as 'outrageous' and stated that there were 'strong reasons' for thinking that the U.N. had become 'the tool of American copper cupidity'.

But the moves to oppose the U.N. action in Katanga were not limited to articles and newspaper editorials. Lord Home flew to Washington to make the British Government's protest. Sir Roy Welensky moved troops up to the Northern Rhodesian frontier with Katanga. And Lord Lansdowne, British Under-Secretary of State, flew to Ndola. And it was in flying there for discussions with Lord Lansdowne and Tshombe—at Britain's request—that Hammarskjold returning to the scene of his crime, was killed by the forces that murdered Lumumba. To keep this rendezvous Hammarskjold had to fly over a thousand miles in open skies, from Leopoldville to Northern Rhodesia, at a time when Tshombe's European-piloted jets were freely shooting at U.N. planes. (Hammarskjold's own plane had only recently been damaged by Tshombe's pilots.) He asked for an escort of three jet-fighters from the Ethiopian government; but there was inexplicable delay in obtaining permission for these to fly over British territory, either over Uganda or Northern Rhodesia. So Hammarskjold journeyed without an escort, although it is reported that Tshombe, for his journey to Ndola, was given an escort by Welensky's government. On nearing Ndola airport, Hammarskjold (perhaps scenting treachery) ordered his pilot not to land: It was too late. The plane exploded (a planted bomb? or bullets from an attacking jet?), and Hammarskjold met his death. It may never be discovered who planted the bomb or fired the bullets. But there can be little doubt that the imperialist forces who were responsible for Lumumba's murder are equally responsible for Hammarskjold's death. The fate of the two men shows the lengths to which these forces will go to protect their stranglehold on the wealth of Katanga.

It is therefore understandable that the U.N. operation went off at half-cock. A British United Press Correspondent, Ray Maloney, says that 'violent reaction overseas' to the U.N. attack in Katanga reached such a pitch that U.N. headquarters . . . ordered a halt to the plans while the whole situation was reviewed. The same U.N. officers claimed that the public statements of Sir Roy Welensky . . . and the support he received from both Britain and France, did much to force the U.N. to release the stranglehold which it had imposed on Katanga.

(*Guardian*, September 27, 1961.)

But quite apart from this stubborn opposition, the U.N.'s main pre-occupation was not to sweep the whole Tshombe edifice away, but to bring it into line; even to preserve it as a U.S. puppet instead of an Anglo-Belgian one. Hence U.N. representative Khiari's statement that the United Nations was 'not seeking to depose Mr. Tshombe' (*Daily Telegraph*, October 17, 1961). The U.N. forces in the Congo were compelled, partly by world pressure, partly by the Congolese people's movement, and partly through the influence of U.S. imperialism, to take some hesitant steps against Tshombe. Yet this action can in no sense be regarded as a last-minute act of conscience and honesty in the U.N. executive, nor as a genuine attempt to assist the Congolese people.

How then is the Congo crisis to be resolved? Tshombe's forces, largely the European 'ultras', are heavily armed. The Katanga air force has at its disposal nine Fouga jets, five Sabres, DC4 transports, five Dorniers (bought in Western Germany and transported via Brussels and Brazzaville or Northern Rhodesia according to press reports), and has a further 55 planes on order. The Central Government has no air force under its own control.

Here we come to the crux. From the beginning the situation has been bedevilled because the U.N. executive in the Congo has consistently refused to act in support of the legal Central Government, but insists on its own independent status in the Congo and tries to settle things in its own (*i.e.*, U.S.) interests. Just as the U.N. started the operation against Katanga on August 28 on its own, so after its cease-fire, it left the armed forces of the Central Government to attack on their own, without U.N. assistance, and especially without U.N. air support. The Central Government, meanwhile, was denied the right to acquire aircraft because of the insistence that all military materials for the Congo must come through the U.N.; yet Tshombe and his backers continue to build up their military might with impunity, in defiance of the cease-fire agreement.

Manoeuvres over the U.S. resolutions at the U.N. not least on

whether the Central Government should be allowed an air force and how the U.S. proposed to keep a grip on it, were characteristic of the whole situation—and brought Anglo-American conflict right into the open.

The Congolese people have many bitter struggles ahead. But the experience of the past eighteen months shows that any imperialist hopes of imposing a neo-colonialist solution on the Congo are doomed, in the long run, to failure. The instability of the Congo since 1960 is precisely a measure of imperialist failure, of its inability to have things its own way. In the past two years the Congolese people have suffered terrible set-backs. But they were never defeated. These courageous and determined people will yet have the final say and the unity and independence of the Congo, for which Lumumba sacrificed his life, will yet be achieved.
