

# CONGO AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

Idris Cox

**T**HERE seems to be no end to the butchery, torture and bloodshed of African peoples in the former Belgian Congo. Many thousands of Africans have been slaughtered in recent months in the offensive launched by foreign mercenaries hired by Tshombe to stop the advance of the Congolese Liberation Army. There was no outcry in the capitalist newspapers of the United States, Britain, and Western Europe. But when in the midst of the turmoil less than one thousand Europeans were held as hostages, the imperialist hypocrites responsible for this situation, raised their hands in horror. Not only did they raise their hands. The United States provided the planes,

# PATRICE LUMUMBA

*Hero of African Liberation*



In January 1961, Patrice Lumumba, then Premier of the Congo, was murdered by puppets of imperialism acting under the auspices of the U.N. Mission. Above is one of the last pictures taken of him on his way in chains from Leopoldville to Elizabethville. The memory of this fine hero of the people, faithful to death, unyielding before violence and outrage, lives on as inspiration to the Congolese Liberation Army.

the Labour Government in Britain provided the base on Ascension Island, and Belgium sent the paratroopers to rescue the hostages.

All this was a great 'humanitarian' expedition. The Belgian paratroopers arrived (strangely enough) just at the time that Tshombe's 'Congolese National Army', led by foreign mercenaries, were within striking distance of Stanleyville. The Belgian paratroopers and the mercenaries slaughtered thousands more Africans. But no tears were shed for these victims. Even the *Daily Telegraph* (foremost in its support of the 'humanitarian' expedition) gave this account from John Ridley, its staff correspondent in Leopoldville:

During the past few days, about 12,000 Africans suspected of rebel sympathies have been screened in Stanleyville by Congolese Government military police.

'Trials' were held in the stadium. When a man's name was called out and the watching crowd booed he was immediately condemned to death, taken beside the river, and shot. (December 7, 1964.)

This new offensive has aroused deep indignation and overwhelming opposition throughout Africa, and indeed in all the civilised world. At the time of writing, the independent African states are taking steps to persuade the General Assembly of the United Nations (meeting in New York on December 8) to resist this fresh slaughter. Bearing in mind its earlier record, it is significant that there is little African confidence in the United Nations, and that African Heads of State will meet on December 18 *after* the General Assembly to consider the Congo situation.

After the collapse of the Katanga régime early in 1961, Tshombe went into 'voluntary exile', most of the time in Fascist Spain, but maintained close relations with Belgian ruling circles, and actually came to London last April and was presented as the only leader who could bring about 'national reconciliation' in the Congo. With the departure of the United Nations 'peace keeping' forces in the Congo on June 30 last year, it was clear that American and Belgian ruling circles—despite differences between them—were determined to find new forces to maintain their grip. American big business was rapidly supplanting the foremost position of Belgian monopoly in the Congo. Until 1961, between 30 and 35 per cent of Congo's imports were from Belgium. By the end of 1962 its share had dropped to 15 per cent. Today nearly 80 per cent of all current foreign capital investments in the Congo are from the United States. Until December 6, two-thirds of the country's mineral royalties were already being paid to Tshombe's 'Government'. The remaining third has now been taken over, out of the coffers of the Belgian monopoly,

the *Compagnie due Katanga*. This step was intended to present Tshombe as being equally progressive as Dr. Kaunda in ending the British South Africa Company royalty rights in Zambia, but clearly is an expression of Tshombe's preference for his American paymasters.

Despite this, the advance of the Congolese Liberation Army convinced American ruling circles of the necessity of keeping Belgium as an ally. Early last January the liberation forces, led by Pierre Mulele, took the province of Kwilu, and soon after, those led by Gaston Sumialot captured the province of Kivu and advanced to take over North Katanga. By August they had taken over Stanleyville, capital of the Eastern Province. Its former Premier, Antoine Gizenga, first released by Tshombe, was again placed under 'house arrest' in Leopoldville, as a retaliation for Stanleyville, and because of Gizenga's continued opposition to Tshombe.

It was in this situation that 'it became evident that only a military solution could prevent the rebellion eventually reaching Leopoldville. The United States decided to give military support to the Congo, as it had to South Vietnam . . .' (*Financial Times*, November 26, 1964). In respect of the landing of the Belgian paratroopers it made the point that:

Although the motive was humanitarian, its effect . . . whether intended or not . . . may be to facilitate the capture of Stanleyville by the advancing forces of Mr. Moïse Tshombe, the Congolese Prime Minister.

Why did the United States, Belgium, and the Labour Government in Britain take the serious risk of alienating all the independent states of Africa? It is most unlikely they were concerned only with the internal situation in the Congo. From the standpoint of imperialism and its neo-colonialist strategy, this was serious enough. It seems obvious they were also concerned with the advance of the African liberation movement in the countries on or near the borders of the Congo.

Early in November there was a mighty upsurge in the Sudan which overthrew the military dictatorship of General Abboud. In its place there emerged a government of the National Front, restoring democratic and civil rights, and including popular leaders of the former illegal Communist Party. In the Portuguese colony of Mozambique the heroic struggle for liberation was advancing. The original hope that the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar would retard the revolutionary advance to Zanzibar was dashed to the ground. Instead of Tanganyika swallowing Zanzibar, the political

impact of revolutionary Zanzibar was making its mark in the new state of Tanzania.

What seems fairly clear is that the desperate military measures in the Congo are not being taken in isolation. It is one important aspect of a *new counter-revolutionary offensive* being waged against the independent African states to maintain the grip of imperialism. This is not always expressed in open military struggle (though, if not resisted, it may ultimately take this form). It is closely linked with the imperialist plot against Tanzania (recently exposed by President Nyerere), and with the plans of Mr. Ian Smith to link up Rhodesia with Fascist Spain and Fascist South Africa.

United States imperialism is the pace-maker in this new counter-revolution. In the first of his series of articles (*Sunday Telegraph* December 6, 1964) 'Mad' Mike Hoare, South African leader of the mercenaries, describes how the American Consulate in Stanleyville was handed over to him as his headquarters after his arrival there. United States military aid to the Congo during the past year has exceeded £3.3 million, and its 'economic aid' in the past two years to no less than £123 million. Because it fears the victory of national liberation would seriously undermine its domination, United States ruling circles are prepared to pay any price, and to engage in all kinds of manoeuvres, trickery and deceit (as well as unlimited bloodshed) to resist its advance.

If it was not clear before, all that has happened since serves to confirm that the landing of Belgian paratroopers used the plight of European hostages merely as a pretext to demonstrate the military strength of the imperialist powers should they find it necessary and opportune to launch a full-scale military invasion of the Congo—and also a warning to other independent states like Tanzania against breaking off the remnants of the imperialist grip in their countries.

The taking of Europeans as hostages was a mild retaliation for the most despicable torture and bloodshed inflicted by mercenary officers and troops from South Africa, Rhodesia, Belgium, Spain, Britain, United States (sending 'Cuban exiles') upon the Congolese people. It is possible that many of the European hostages were not directly involved in the massacre and torture of Africans in the Congo. But neither does it appear that any of them made any effort to criticise or stop the wanton slaughter. In any case, their lives were not in danger until the American planes brought in the Belgian paratroopers. Long before they arrived Christophe Gbenye (Stanleyville liberation leader and former colleague of Lumumba) had made it clear he was in favour of negotiations to save the lives of the

European hostages. John Bulloch, *Daily Telegraph* Staff Correspondent in Leopoldville, made the position clear in this despatch:

Gbenye's efforts to force negotiations are embarrassing and worrying the American Government which, in theory, has no control over military operations by the Congolese Government. (November 20, 1964.)

In answer to an appeal by the International Red Cross for Dr. Carlson's life (accused of being an American spy), Gbenye retorted:

Before making any proposals, I suggest you should bring back to life all the Congolese massacred by the Americans. We have guaranteed the safety of lives and property, but this does not mean tolerating crime.

(*Daily Telegraph*, November 20, 1964.)

The truth is that the American and Belgian ruling circles did *not* want to save the European hostages by peaceful means. Mr. Jomo Kenyatta, appointed as Chairman of the 'Reconciliation Commission' set up by the Organisation of African Unity, declared that Mr. William Attwood, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, was against continuing the negotiations for their release and 'stood for force' (*The Times*, November 28, 1964).

The attitude of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) is made clear in their seven point programme, adopted in Nairobi on November 29:

1. Withdrawal of all foreign mercenaries.
2. A cease-fire among all combatants.
3. Immediate end to foreign intervention.
4. General amnesty for all those involved in the Stanleyville massacres.
5. A round-table conference of all Congolese leaders.
6. Free elections throughout the Congo.
7. O.A.U. fact-finding missions to the Congo and its neighbours.

Mr. Tshombe did not hesitate to reject these proposals as soon as they were made. The U.S. State Department refused to consider them. Nor would the Belgian Government. Even in face of this, the Labour Government in Britain made available the Ascension Island for sending Belgian paratroopers to the Congo.

A big responsibility rests on the organised labour movement to exercise the maximum pressure upon the Wilson Government to disassociate itself from the shameful actions of the governments of the United States and Belgium.

The struggle for freedom and unity in the Congo is inseparable from the struggle for a free and united Africa, and this is equally in the interests of the British people. That is why the demands of the O.A.U. is the platform in Britain for all those who support African freedom.