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HISTORY WORKSHOP

THE DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN ZAIRE
1956-1994

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AFRICANA

HWS 316

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by

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June 1994

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A MAJOR incident marred our country's independence ceremony on June 30, 1960. It involved two radically different readings of the evolution of the Belgian Congo from colonialism to independent statehood. In a patronising and basically insulting speech, King Baudouin I, the Belgian monarch, stated that the Congo's independence was the culmination of the civilising mission begun by his grandfather, King Leopold II, in 1885. Shocked by the King's paternalism and President Joseph Kasa-Vubu's apparent acquiescence in his distorted reading of history, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba made history with an unscheduled but brilliant speech to set the record straight. He proceeded to show that the independence being celebrated was a major victory in the struggle for freedom by our people. His insistence on a politically correct reading of history as well as on underlying the people's role as its makers, was eventually going to cost him his life.[1]

This paper attempts to show the crucial role that ordinary men, women and young people have played in the democracy movemen in Zaire, formerly the Congo, from the days of Belgian colonialism to the present time. Although the initiative for political action came from outside the popular classes, it is always the latter's resistance that has sustained the movement and enabled it to weaken the enemy. The popular character of the struggle for democracy is manifested through its reliance on memories of earlier resistance to oppression and on the ideas and values of popular culture, which are basically expressed through a religious discourse.[2]

The democracy movement in Zaire is a struggle for political freedom and economic prosperity. That these two go hand in hand has never been in doubt there, given the character of Belgian rule as a colonial trinity of the state, the Catholic Church and large companies as well as the continuation of economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression under neo-colonialism. Thus, the independence struggle of the

1950s, the popular insurrections for a "second independence" in the 1960s and the current struggle for multi-party democracy have, as a common denominator, the demand for expanded rights politically and for a better life socially and economically.

The paper will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the democracy movement in each of its major phases: the independence struggle, from 1956 to 1960; the "second independence" movement, from 1963 to 1968; and the ongoing struggle for multi-party democracy, since 1980. My working hypothesis is that each phase has failed to fulfill the people's aspirations because the masses have been incapable of making their own revolution. They have placed too much confidence in a political leadership whose class interests and political culture are in contradiction with popular aspirations for democracy and economic development.[3]

BELGIAN COLONIALISM AND THE ANTECEDENTS TO THE ZAIREAN DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT

During the post-war years of political awakening in colonial Africa, the situation remained relatively calm in Zaire until 1959. The Belgian Congo was known during that time as a "model colony", the colony that works and where "the natives have happy smiles". Trains were clean and ran on time, with black conductors and engineers. But black passengers were segregated in simple fourth and third class cars while whites enjoyed the luxury of second and first class cars. A network of well-built albeit dirt roads connected all corners of the vast country, which could be reached without trouble by motor vehicle. And under the Belgian policy of paternalism and urban stabilisation, workers and their families received housing, food rations and other social services to compensate for low salaries.

This was especially true for company towns in or outside major urban centres. In addition to owning bicycles, phonographs and radios, urban residents could enjoy wonderful entertainment each weekend in bars/dancing halls or at soccer matches.

Travel between provinces required a pass, and visits to relatives in mining areas were strictly controlled, with visitors allowed no more than three weeks in most instances and required to report to company police upon arrival and to show the pass anytime upon request.

The rural areas were less tightly controlled but did not escape the vigilant eye of the Belgian territorial administrators and their allies (missionaries, company officials, European settlers) and subordinates — the African chiefs. General purpose administrators *(Commissaires de district, Administrateurs de territoire* and *Chefs de poste)* could also rely on the support of their colleagues from the departments of agricultural, education and public health. Thus, even if the traditional land tenure system was not greatly disturbed, the rural society felt the heavy weight of colonial economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression through the compulsory cultivation of certain cash crops; heavy taxation; forced labour on public projects such as road maintenance and the construction and maintenance of guest houses for itinerant administrators; and the enforcement of numerous regulations on economic, social and cultural matters. From time to time, and just to frighten people into submission, a *promenade militaire* of a week or so was undertaken in entire districts by the *Force Publique*, the colonial army. For areas where disturbances had occurred or were expected, the *promenade* was replaced by actual military occupation.

Thus did the Belgians manage to keep "happy smiles" on the faces of "their natives", in both urban and rural areas. It takes little imagination to understand how such a system was greatly resented by the African population. It is no doubt because of this resentment and the resistance it entailed that military exercises were deemed necessary in many rural districts. As Frantz Fanon has suggested for Africa as a whole, resistance to colonial rule remained strong in rural Belgian Congo.[4] And, consistent with Terence Ranger's thesis on connections between primary resistance and modern mass nationalism,[5] it was strongest in those areas that had known precedents such as armed resistance to the colonial conquest. For it is precisely in such areas that mothers could,

with ease, "croon in their children's ears songs to which the warriors marched when they went out to fight the conquerers.[6] But a culture of political struggle would also arise in areas where prophetic religious movements and peasant resistance to colonialism were strongest, as in the case of the regions of Lower Zaire (formerly Lower Congo) and Bandundu (Kwango-Kwilu), respectively.[7]

It was in Lower Zaire, the central region of the pre-colonial Kongo Kingdom, now split between Congo, Zaire and Angola, that the first significant event in modern Zairean nationalism took place. In 1921, a Baptist catechist and a palm oil company worker in Kinshasa (formerly Leopoldville) began a prophetic ministry that went on to influence the course of events leading to independence nearly 40 years later. The man was Simon Kimbangu, founder of what his sons and followers would later call *l'Eglise de Jesus Christ sur la Terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu* (EJCSK, or the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by the Prophet Simon Kimbangu). Today, Kimbanguism is the third major religious community in Zaire after Catholicism and Protestantism. In addition to its wide appeal in Congo and Angola, it has established missions in several countries in Central and Southern Africa.

Why is Simon Kimbangu a nationalist hero and how did his message reflect the people's aspirations for freedom as well as influence the independence struggle in Zaire. According to Kimbangu's own testimony, God had appeared to him in a vision and asked him to leave his work for the white man, fight against sorcery and other negative customs, and lead his people to their liberation from white rule.

There is some evidence that Kimbangu was influenced by what he learned in Kinshasa from a small circle of people with a reading knowledge of English about articles in Marcus Garvey's paper, *The Negro World.* The "Back-to-Africa" idea caught the imagination of people like Kimbangu, who held popular notions of *mputu* or the white world (Europe and America) as the place where Bakongo go when they die. Now these very powerful relatives were about to return home to help free their people from white

rule. For Kimbangu and his followers, the realisation of the Pan-Africanist ideal of "Africa for the Africans" was indeed God's will.

Back in his village, now rebaptised as "Nkamba-Jerusalem", Kimbangu started his ministry with this radical message, in addition to performing miracles and speaking in strange tongues. As a result, thousands of workers abandoned their jobs in government agencies, private companies and white households to see and hear the new prophet at Nkamba-Jerusalem. As one would expect, the colonial trinity reacted quickly and vigorously. Kimbangu was arrested, tried and condemned to death for sedition. By royal decree, the sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. He was sent to the infamous Kasapa Prison at Lubumbashi (formerly Elisabethville). He died there 30 years later in 1951.

One of the little known facts of Belgian colonial rule in Africa concerns the inhuman and brutal treatment inflicted on the followers of the Prophet Kimbangu between 1921 and 1959, when Belgium finally stopped the persecution of Kimbanguists and granted legal recognition to their church.[8] Before this momentous event, thousands of Kimbanguists languished in relegation camps, built in the remotest areas of the country. Ironically, these detention centres served to spread the messianic message of liberation to all political prisoners and to the other people with whom the faithful came into contact.

If Kimbanguism was basically a religious movement with political overtones, its grounding in the prophetic tradition of the Kongo provided a historically potent linkage between modern nationalism and the pre-colonial past. Just as the Bakongo's encounter with Christianity at the height of colonial economic exploitation produced a Kongo prophet of liberation through a religious discourse, their later encounter with social change in the post-war era would produce what the masses saw as a new Kongo prophet, but one who championed the cause of independence through a political discourse. Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the new leader, was actually trained for the priesthood but was denied ordination by his Belgian Catholic superiors, who found him to be too

radical. He left the seminary to join the ranks of the middle-level civil servants and those of the black élite known as *évolués*.

In 1947, Kasa-Vubu made himself known to both the colonial authorities and his African peers with a militant lecture to an *évolué* club on "the right of the first occupant". If the nationalistic orientation of this discourse was clear, it is only after he became president of the *Alliance des Bakongo* (ABAKO) in the early 1950s that he acquired a mass base for the anti-colonial movement. In the eyes of ordinary people in Kongoland, Kasa-Vubu was both a successor to the Prophet Kimbangu and a new king who would resurrect the old kingdom. They called him "Roi Kasa".[9]

ABAKO was originally created as an association for the promotion and defence of the Kongo language, Kikongo, then rapidly losing ground in the capital region of Kinshasa to Lingala, a lingua franca of commerce and popular music also used by the Belgians in the *Force Publique*. Under Kasa-Vubu, the organisation soon became a political movement for the emancipation of the Kongo and eventually all Zairians. Since political parties were not allowed in the Belgian Congo until the mid-1950s, the politically active *évolués* had to rely on elite clubs and ethnic associations to advance their interests. Of the two types of organisation, it was the latter which provided them a critical linkage to the mass of the people. And it is this linkage that made it possible for the democracy movement to arise in the struggle for independence.

THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE, 1956–1960

Thus, it is only when the fight for expanded rights by the *évolués* found a positive articulation with the Kimbanguist struggle for religious freedom, the peasants' resistance to colonial oppression and the workers' demand for better wages and working conditions that a veritable democracy movement was born in Zaire in 1956. This is the year that a little known Belgian professor at the Colonial University in Antwerp, A.A.J. Van Bilsen, published a pamphlet advocating a 30-year plan of

political emancipation for Belgian African — Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi, then known collectively as *Congo Belge et Ruanda - Urundi*. If Van Bilsen was denounced by the defenders of the colonial order as a lunatic and a subversive, the emancipation that he had wished to prepare so carefully came about only four years later in Zaire, 26 years ahead of schedule! The abrupt change in Belgian policy was due to the mass factor in the independence struggle.

There were two notable reactions to the Van Bilsen plan in Zaire. The first came from a moderate group of Catholic intellectuals known as *Conscience Africaine* (African Consciousness).[10] This group endorsed the plan and found it to be a good starting point for political debate on the country's future. The second and more radical response came from ABAKO, which rejected it and called for a more rapid process of political change leading to independence. That the ABAKO position reflected the popular will was confirmed a year later when nearly all the group's candidates swept to victory in Kinshasa in the first municipal elections ever held in the colony. Given the multi-ethnic composition of the city's population, the electoral results did show that people from other ethnic groups shared the political vision of the Kongo-based ABAKO.

The political reforms of 1957 led to the emergence of numerous political parties in 1958. Like ABAKO, most of these parties were ethnically or regionally based. However, the ethnic or regional character alone did not suffice to define a party politically and ideologically. A lot depended on its social basis together with the type of relationship which existed between the leadership and the rank and file. The political profile of two regionally based parties that were miles apart in terms of popular mobilisation and nationalist ideology should serve to illustrate this point. The parties in question are the *Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga* (CONAKAT) of Moise Tshombe and the *Panti Solidaire African* (PSA) of Antoine Gizenga.

CONAKAT was founded on the premise that the wealth of the rich Katanga (or Shaba) Province should benefit mainly the "authentic Katangans" or those native to the province. In reality, the major party theoreticians and financial backers worked behind

the scenes and were to be found among white settlers. The latter saw and used the party as a vehicle for their long-held dream of a separate political entity likely to close ranks with the white redoubt in Southern Africa: the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi), the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, South Africa and Southwest Africa (Namibia). As a secessionist party, CONAKAT was basically the voice of white settlers through African mouths.

The PSA, on the other hand, was rooted in the peasant radicalism of the Bandundu region. The history of this region had been greatly marked by the great Pende revolt of the 1930s, its savage repression by the Belgians, and the resulting myths and cults build around some of the African heroes of the resistance to colonial economic exploitation. The region's proximity to Lower Zaire, with which it shared a single provincial administration based in Kinshasa, together with the use of two of the major African languages in the country (Kikongo and Lingala), also meant that the influence of the Kimbanguist movement was felt there. As a result, the PSA reflected the radicalism of its rural base and became one of the staunchly anti-colonial centrist parties aligned with the major nationalist party in the country, the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) of Patrice Emery Lumumba.

Founded in October 1958, the MNC grew rapidly by attracting support from all sections of the population and in all regions of the country. By the end of the year, it was already competing with ABAKO for mass support in Kinshasa. On Sunday, December 28, Lumumba held a very successful rally to report to the nation on the results of the All-African People's Conference that he and two other national leaders had attended during that month in Accra, Ghana. Fearing to be overshadowed by Lumumba's new prominence, Kasa-Vubu scheduled a rally of his own for the following Sunday, January 4, 1959.

The ABAKO rally was banned at the last minute by the Belgian mayor of the capital. Despite Kasa-Vubu's urging that the already assembled crowd disperse peacefully, the people refused and began to attack the security forces, passing white motorists,

Portuguese-owned shops and all other symbols of white privilege and authority. The rebellion lasted a few days, with dozens of people killed and an enormous destruction of property. If the 4th of January is a public holiday in Zaire today as "Independence Martyrs Day", it is because the mass action on that day in 1959 sounded the death knell of Belgian colonialism in Zaire. *"Indépendance immédiate"*, the slogan of the Kinshasa protesters, soon became a non-negotiable demand of the democracy movement all over the country.

The Belgians were extremely shocked by the violence of their presumably happy subjects. Faced with the people's demand for independence, the lack of political will in Belgium for an Algerian-type colonial war, and an international context in which decolonisation was the order of the day, they had to accept the idea of a negotiated independence. This was the gist of two separate announcements made on January 13, 1959, by both the Belgian king and government.

The masses not only initiated the decolonisation process, they also influenced its pace. A major reason for the Belgian decision to grant independence in 1960 was the fact that several areas of the country had become totally ungovernable. For example, people in rural Lower Zaire and Bandundu had ceased to recognise the authority of the colonial state, and were willing to take orders only from ABAKO and the PSA, respectively. They refused to pay taxes and to respect administrative regulations. Some even refused to have any contact with the social services provided by the colonial state. For the colonialists, dealing with such a situation meant either the use of coercion to obtain compliance or letting the situation deteriorate into anarchy, with negative consequences for all concerned. Since neither alternative was attractive, it was best to accede to the popular demand for "immediate independence".

It must be pointed out that all the major political leaders, including Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu, did not interpret this slogan to mean a precipitous decolonisation. At a conference of nationalist parties held in April 1959 in Katanga (then Luluaboung), Lumumba had won the endorsement of most delegates for a two-year transitional

process under a provisional government, with full independence to be attained in 1961. He and others would certainly have convinced the people to accept the authority of such a government, in which nationals would have shared power with colonial officials. The Belgians rejected this proposal. Yet, less than a year later, they surprised everyone, including the nationalist leaders, by announcing at the January-February 1960 Roundtable Conference in Brussels that they were ready to grant independence on June 30, 1960.

What the evidence clearly shows is that the Belgians exploited the radicalism of the masses to impose on inexperienced politicians an independence settlement that would be rich in symbolic value but meaningless in content with respect to the people's aspirations for genuine independence and economic development. By giving power to people who were not yet prepared to govern effectively, the Belgians gambled that the Africans would be satisfied with political titles as well as the pomp and ceremony of high office together with the material privileges which came with it, and leave the real job of governing the country to Belgian technocrats. Thus, the entire officer corps of the new national army from second-lieutenant to general remained exclusively white, and all national office holders, from the President down to local officials, were to rely on Belgian advisers in the execution of their duties.

This cynical scheme by the Belgians to rob our independence of its true meaning for the people was a carefully mounted strategy from the very beginning of the decolonisation process. It involved, among other things: (1) incitation to ethnic hatred, the best known case being that of the Lulua-Baluba conflict in the Kasai Province; (2) sponsoring an alternative to the nationalist leadership with an administration-created party of conservative middle-level civil servants and traditional chiefs, the *Parti National du Progrés* (PNP), whose initials were derisively used to call it *"Parti des Nègres Payés"* and (3) planning and later on managing the Katanga secession.

By the time independence was achieved, the democracy movement was rent by internal contradictions owing to its own weaknesses and to the destabilising actions of the

Belgians. The African political class displayed its opportunism by jumping on the independence bandwagon without a clear understanding of where it led them to, on the one hand and its inexperience in neglecting to deal with the economic aspects of the transfer of power, on the other. Whereas all major leaders attended the Political Roundtable Conference in January 1960, Moise Tshombe of CONAKAT was the only prominent politician who bothered to go to the Economic Roundtable Conference in April. Yet, it was in this latter meeting that the Belgians sealed the fate of the country. Negotiating with university students and other delegates relying on Belgian experts to make sense of the complex issues at stake, the Belgians laid the groundwork for transferring much of the enormous state portfolios in colonial companies to Belgium while leaving virtually all the public debt to the new state. Our leaders were evidently true believers in the Nkrumahist gospel of firstly seeking the political kingdom.

As Amilcar Cabral has written with reference to Africa as a whole, the petty bourgeoisie was the only class that was capable of leading the independence struggle.[11] Their education, experience in the colonial system and knowledge of the outside world enabled them to articulate the interests of the colonised and to win the confidence of the masses. In the Belgian Congo, the petty bourgeoisie constituted the first and the only viable layer of an emerging civil society. The masses were as yet incapable of producing organic intellectuals likely to carry out negotiations with the colonialists. They had to rely on the petty bourgeoisie, with whom they shared a common perception of colonialism as a barrier to the economic, social, political and cultural emancipation of black people.

Unfortunately, the petty bourgeoisie was more concerned with enjoying the material benefits that colonialism and the colour bar had denied them than with a radical transformation of the system in a manner conducive to the realisation of the people's expectations of independence. Even Patrice Lumumba, the one person who incarnated the aspirations of an entire nation as the standard bearer of the independence struggle, was limited by the elitism of his social class and by the political deals and compromises

he had to make in order to establish a viable coalition government. Witness his politically incorrect and technocratic position that promotions in the army had to await proper training. Soldiers and non-commissioned ranks were justified in feeling discriminated against since, in their eyes, the politicians had undergone no evident training to become ministers or other high level officials.

The army mutiny, which plunged the country into chaos and brought about foreign intervention, was yet another manifestation of the people's expectations of independence. Freedom and material advancement were to be enjoyed by all, and not exclusively by the civilian population, as the Belgian Force Commander had provocatively told soldiers at a public meeting a few days after independence. Everywhere, there was strong resentment by the masses against individuals who were perceived, correctly or wrongly, as undeserving beneficiaries of independence. Thus, many citizens with a good education, a car and a nice house were automatically identified as pro-Belgian PNP members and targeted for punishment through popular justice. Several men in this category were killed in September 1960 by women in the town of Gandajika in Eastern Kasai. Following the tradition of women bathing a corpse before burial, female militants referred to the execution as "bathing" their male victim — *kumowesha mayi*, in Tshiluba.

Lumumba, and through him the entire democracy movement, fell victim to the mutiny and subsequent events. Powerful forces beyond our borders determined that he threatened their interests in the region and consequently worked with his local rivals to eliminate him politically and physically. With his death, the people lost a champion of their cause as well as their newly found confidence to determine their own destiny. That confidence would be rekindled during the next phase of the movement in the fight for a "second independence".

THE "SECOND INDEPENDENCE" MOVEMENT, 1963-1968

During the electoral campaign of May 1960, politicians had promised to their constituents literally everything under the sun: no more taxes, houses in durable materials, piped water, electricity, free health services, free education, more jobs, better wages, etc. After Independence Day, people noticed that most of the promises had not been kept. There were no jobs, houses and modern amenities; the social services available were deteriorating rather than improving; and taxes of all kinds were still being collected. In some areas, people were still being required to do forced labour on public projects such as roads.

Politicians were liars, people said. In many local languages, it became fashionable to equate lying with "doing politics". Added to this, was a general perception that little had changed. The whites were gone but the blacks who had replaced them as rulers and administrators were just as bad, oppressive and at times even cruel. They lived in the big colonial mansions or villas; drove nice and sometimes bigger and better cars; looked down on the people; and were quick to use the army and the police to repress any dissent or questioning of their authority. In many cases, their use of force was uncalled for and totally arbitrary. They were the "new whites", black in skin but white in their thinking.

Moreover, the people found out that the new rulers could not hold on to power in the face of popular discontent without the help and support of the former rulers. Military assistance, training and even intervention from their friends and allies abroad helped the new rulers retain control over unwilling subjects. Thus, to fight them also means fighting against their backers in the international system. However difficult that might be, it must be done if people are to have genuine freedom and to improve their standard of living. The first independence had failed. It was time to fight for a second independence.

The foregoing analysis was made by peasants and other ordinary people in Bandundu, who had been politicised by the PSA during the independence struggle. But the main outline of their assessment of independence was largely shared by people elsewhere in the country. What is impressive in this analysis is the clarity of the popular vision of post-colonial politics — continuity in the functions of the state, its class basis, and its neo-colonial connection. In this regard, it is also relevant to underline the fact that the concept of "second independence" is not of academic origin, nor a construct by a traditional intellectual. It came out of the popular classes, from their own organic intellectuals. It is interesting to note that this concept is consistent with Amilcar Cabral's notion of the liberation struggle as consisting of two phases: the national phase, in which all classes of colonial society unite to fight the colonial system; and the social phase of reconstruction and transformation, in which the essential aspect of the problems is the struggle against neo-colonialism.[12]

Just as during the anti-colonial phase of the democracy movement, even the most politicised strata of the popular classes had to look to the petty bourgeoisie to provide leadership and to give organisational form to their permanent aspiration for freedom and material prosperity. The leadership of the "second independence" movement came basically from two radical nationalist parties, the Gizenga wing of the PSA and the *Mouvement National Congolais/Lumumba* (MNC/L).[13] Collectively known as "Lumumbists", the leaders of these formations had been targeted for elimination from the political scene by the United States government, which used the United Nations Mission in the Congo (ONUC) as well as a shadowy clique of local collaborators called the Binza Group to achieve this aim.[14] The group was named after the Kinshasa suburb where it met, and its core members were Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, the army chief and head of the group; Justin Bomboko, the Foreign Minister; Damien Kandolo, Permanent Secretary in the Internal Affairs Ministry; Albert Ndele, Central Bank governor; and Victor Nendaka, chief of the security police. It controlled, with external backing and supervision, the key organs of national sovereignty and state security.

Pushed out of the government in 1962-63, harassed and persecuted, Lumumbist leaders withdrew from Kinshasa to the relative security of Brazzaville, across the Congo River. It is here that they formed the *Conseil National de Libération* (CNL), an organisation designed to recover through armed struggle the power they had lost back home. Meanwhile, Pierre Mulele, the PSA leader who had served as Lumumba's Minister of Education and Gizenga's envoy to Cairo, returned from military training in China to organise a maquis in the Kwilu district of the Bandundu region. Mulele had refused to go along with the 1961 reconciliation between the Lumumbists and the moderate leaders in Kinshasa under the control of the Binza Group, whom he rightly suspected of treachery.

Both Mulele and the CNL decided to initiate the mass struggle in areas where the MNC/L, the PSA and other parties of the radical centrist coalition had been strongest, namely, Bandundu in the west and the entire northeastern portion of the country, comprising the regions of Upper Zaire (Kisangani), Kivu, Maniema, Sankuru and North Shaba/Katanga. However, given the difference in political itinerary and ideology within the leadership, the "second independence" movement developed as two separate liberation wars, with separate organisations, command structures and political strategies.

The first and the most radical of the two was the Mulelist maquis in Bandundu. Here Mulele attempted to systematise the ideas, notions and thoughts of the masses into a coherent analysis of the situation and a programme of action for purposes of changing it radically. His systematisation was done through a Marxist-Leninist framework of class analysis together with a Maoist strategy of political education and guerrilla warfare.[15] School teachers, nurses, state and company clerks and secondary school students formed the ranks of disciplined cadres that he trained for the struggle. Much of what is known about his teachings comes from the lecture notes taken by trainees. A remarkable aspect of his doctrine was the insistence on discipline and exemplary behaviour by the guerrilla, whose objective is to destroy the old order and not to benefit

from its material goods. Guerrillas were to respect the people with whom they came into contact. They were not to mistreat them or to deprive them of their property. The major task was the radical transformation of society form the bottom up, on the basis of well-tested values of village life.

For nearly five years, the Mulelist maquis held its ground against the state. Attacks were launched on numerous towns and plantations in the region, but the Mulelists never held or occupied a single one, as this was not part of their immediate objectives. Their earlier successes were so spectacular, including the killing of an army colonel, that Mulele became a living legend all over the country. He became so famous that CNL fighters in the east believed he had invented a magical formula for turning bullets into water, took what a CNL fetishist assured them was the real thing, and shouted *"Mai Mulele"* (Mulele water) when they came into direct contact with enemy fire. There is no evidence that Mulele's own guerrillas used this slogan, but controversy remains as to whether Mulele himself led people to believe that he was invulnerable to bullets.

What is highly significant is that in spite of the limited space of his operational theatre, Mulele came to incarnate the entire "second independence" movement. The label "Mulelist" was applied to all anti-government guerrillas, including CNL fighters. And the very periodisation of this phase of the democracy movement is based on the date of his return to Zaire in 1963 and that of his assassination in 1968. His was a principled struggle for general welfare and not for selfish gains such as political office and material benefits. He was so popular that despite a high monetary reward offered to anyone who would reveal his whereabouts, not a soul was found to betray him. He returned to Kinshasa via Brazzaville under a false amnesty offer presented to him by Binza Group member Bomboko on behalf of President Mobutu. The treachery of the group became once again apparent when Mulele was murdered by Mobutu's generals shortly after his last return home. Mulele should have known how dangerous it is to make deals with such treacherous people.

The CNL-led operations in the east constituted the second, largest and militarily more successful front in the struggle for a "second independence". Unlike the Mulelist maquis, which attempted to train cadres for a protracted war, the CNL opted for quick and large scale military operations for the control of provincial capitals and other administrative and commercial centres. Relying primarily on the youth branches of the MNC/L and allied parties, the CNL commanders used surprise attacks by lightly armed but drugged gangs of youths who generally succeeded in overpowering army and police garrisons and took over cities and towns in rapid succession.

The fighters, who called themselves "Simba" (or lions in Kiswahili) would charge poorly motivated and frightened security forces in such large number that, regardless of high casualties, government troops would be so intimidated by the advancing multitude that they eventually came to believe in the invulnerability of the *Simba* to their bullets. After a few major victories, all CNL commanders had to do was to send a telegraph to the next town or city announcing their impending arrival, and all the garrisons would be deserted by the security forces.

The militarist strategy of the CNL succeeded in giving it control over nearly two thirds of the national territory by November 1964. The biggest victory of the campaign was the successful assault and occupation of Kisangani (then Stanleyville) on August 4, 1964. Shortly after this victory, MNC/L president, Christophe Gbenye, formed a "revolutionary" government with Gaston Soumialot as defence minister, General Nicolas Olenga as force commander, and Thomas Kanza as foreign minister. What was done in Kisangani was replicated in provincial and district headquarters in all CNL-held territory, where leaders were above all concerned with settling scores against their political rivals. The first item of business was to occupy the official mansion and to enjoy the privileges of office, which included money, tradeable commodities like gold, and a life of pleasure.

Thus, what appeared to be the CNL's main strength, its militarist strategy, turned out to be its greatest weakness. For, once the hated representatives of the Kinshasa regime

were ousted and/or executed, CNL leaders began fighting among themselves for the spoils of victory. Every imaginable weapon, including appeals to ethnic loyalty and the assassination of rivals, was used in the process. The masses, who had welcomed them as liberators, would soon become disenchanted not only by the apparent neglect of their pressing needs, but also by the reign of terror unleashed by the indisciplined hordes of *Simba*, who behaved as though they were in conquered territory. These youths also gave vent to their class-based frustrations by killing large numbers of professionals and medium to high-level civil servants for the simple reason that they were "intellectuals" and presumably reactionaries.

All of these weaknesses helped to undermine the ability of the CNL to protect its gains from the externally-led counter-insurgency. Because of the support the CNL received from Nasser's Egypt and the Eastern bloc countries, the counter-insurgency was led by the United States and included Belgian military experts, anti-Castro Cuban pilots working for the CIA, and white mercenaries from Europe, South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), working with some elite government units such the former Katanga gendarmes. Disorganised and relying heavily on magical beliefs, the *Simba* were an easy target once they faced opponents who did not share their worldview and beliefs.

As for the CNL leaders, they lacked an appropriate political strategy and were incapable of mobilising the masses, who had already lost faith in these particular heirs of Patrice Lumumba. Mobutu and his Binza Group knew these politicians well and considered them to be less dangerous then Mulele. Unlike the latter, who was assassinated, most CNL leaders were later welcomed to Zaire by Mobutu, who also gave them the means with which to go into private business. By 1992, Olenga was already dead and Soumialot had abandoned politics for commercial farming. At the national conference, Christophe Gbenye and Thomas Kanza were now in Mobutu's camp, with Kanza as the dictator's candidate for Prime Minister against opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi.

Thus, if it is true that imperialism had a lot to do with the defeat of the "second independence" movement in Zaire, there is no doubt that the leaders of the movement

made it easier for the external forces by their intellectual bankruptcy and political opportunism. Only Mulele and his top lieutenants seem to be above reproach, although they failed to exploit his popularity and mass appeal to the full by breaking out of their isolation in the Kwilu and geographically expanding their area of operation. Questions will also remain whether it was a good idea for Mulele to establish the maquis in his own area of origin rather than elsewhere, so as to maximise his role as a national leader.

In the final analysis, the "second independence" movement was a major event in the popular struggle for democracy in Zaire. Other than the continuation of the liberation struggle by the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) after independence, our country was the first to have a liberation war against the post-colonial state in Africa. A culture of resistance against state authority has remained a major feature of Zairean political life.

THE STRUGGLE FOR MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY, 1980–1994

The long interval between the second and third major phases of the democracy movement in Zaire should in no way suggest that our people had given up the fight for freedom between 1968 and 1980. The banner was actually taken up in 1968 by the student movement, which continued to pose the main challenge to the Mobutu regime during the next three years. The *Union Générale des Etudiants Congolais* (UGEC), a militant student organisation founded in 1961 to carry on the nationalist agenda that Lumumba had left unfulfilled, staged a demonstration, with eggs and tomatoes, against visiting US President Hubert Humphrey. Mobutu's newly created party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR), took advantage of this incident to ban UGEC. The regime was then planning to monopolise organisational life in all institutions of higher education, with the youth branch of the party, the JMPR, as the sole representative of student interests.

But the following year, on June, 1969, students at the Catholic University of Lovanium staged a massive anti-government demonstration in Kinshasa, demanding increased support for their academic and social needs. The regime responded with deadly force, leaving 60 or more students dead.[16] Violence erupted again two years later, when Lovanium students held a memorial service for their fallen comrades. This time, the punishment for them and for students at the State University in Lubumbashi who held a sympathy demonstration, was to enrol all of them in the armed forces. The MPR then moved to nationalise Lovanium and the Congo Free University (Protestant) in Kisangani to create a single national university with campuses at Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kisangani. This was the beginning of the destruction of higher education by the Mobutu regime.

With its education policy already causing great concern with a very powerful Catholic Church, perhaps the most important on the African continent, the regime embarked on its so-called authenticity drive following the change of the country's name from "Congo" to "Zaire" on October 27, 1971. The banning of Christian names and the requirement that students in Catholic seminaries take part in JMPR activities brought church and state on a collision course. Led by Joseph Cardinal Malula, the Catholic Church replaced the student movement as the major opposition to the regime between 1971 and 1975.

Since the MPR was institutionalised in 1970 as the supreme organ of the state, all the political space was now monopolised by the party-state. Women, student, labour and youth organisations lost their independent existence to become branches of the party. Thus, besides religious organisations, which had the possibility of retaining some autonomy, only underground and exile groups could still challenge the regime. Thanks to a relatively well-organised security apparatus, underground groups were virtually non-existent, except for one remnant of the CNL organisation still waging a low-intensity and sporadic guerrilla activity in the mountainous region along Lake Tanganyika, Laurent Kabila's *Parti de la Révolution Populaire* (PRP). The PRP made

the headlines in 1975 when it kidnapped a group of American university students doing research on chimpanzees on the Tanzanian side of the great lake.

The main opposition to the regime at this time came from groups in exile. Of these, only two are worth mentioning for their contribution to the evolution of the political situation in the country. The first was a small group of exiles in Belgium calling itself the *Mouvement d'Action pour la Resurrection du Congo*(MARC). Left to itself, the group would most probably have made very little impact in Zaire. But in a one-party system where a presidential monarch seeks unanimity and where serious criticism and nasty remarks or insults are crimes of *lèse majesté*, the work of MARC amounted to more than little nuisance for the regime. The group's paper, *Miso Gaa* ("Open Your Eyes" or "Be Vigilant"), carried embarrassing revelations concerning Mobutu, his family and his close associates. As with all banned reading materials, issues of the paper were regularly smuggled into the country and widely read by the informed public. In 1975, the regime invented an aborted coup d'état *(coup monté et manqué)* in which MARC leader, Kanyonga Mobateli, was allegedly implicated. He was condemned to death in absentia but later assassinated in Brussels. The coup and the assassination were a successful attempt to weaken the group and a warning to potential followers in Zaire on the danger facing political dissenters.

The second group, and the one that did make history in a big way, is the *Front de Libération Nationale Congolais* (FLNC). This was a military organisation of Zairean refugees in Angola who launched two invasions of their homeland in 1977 and 1978. These are known as the Shaba wars: Shaba I and Shaba II, respectively. In each instance, Mobutu's army was decisively routed, leaving the rebels in control of the strategic mining centre of Kolwezi and threatening to expand control in the rich province so as to strangulate Kinshasa economically and then overthrow Mobutu. To retain his power, the Zairean dictator had to rely on foreign military intervention by France, Morocco and Belgium, with US logical support.

In the wake of Shaba I, Mobutu was pressured by his external patrons to leave the day-to-day management of the government to a prime minister and to liberalise the system. Weakened by internal dissent and by open popular support for the FLNC invasions, Mobutu gave in to these pressures. As a result, the 1977 parliamentary elections were the freest vote possible under a one-party dictatorship. Candidates did not have to be handpicked by the MPR political bureau, thus encouraging many independent-minded people to run for office. The new parliament was more assertive of its legislative authority then its predecessors. And it is out of it that the leaders of the new phase of the democracy movement would emerge in 1980.

Thirteen members of parliament sent a 52-page letter to Mobutu in December 1980 demanding political reforms. By this time, Mobutu had already managed to clip the parliament's wings, thanks to diminished concern with the human rights situation in Zaire by Washington, then distracted by its Cold War priorities in the Horn of Africa and in Afghanistan as well as by the Iranian hostage crisis. For their audacity, the Group of 13 members were jailed, tortured and banished to remove detention centres. In spite of this repression, most of them continued to fight for democracy. During a brief release from detention in 1982, they defied the regime by founding a party of their own, the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrés Social* (UDPS). Although illegal, the new party became instantly popular with the masses. In 1988, UDPS leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, chose January 17, the anniversary of Lumumba's assassination, to launch a pro-democracy demonstration in Kinshasa. Thousands of ordinary people answered the call to join the march, held at a very symbolic location in the city, the Kasa-Vubu bridge.

By January 1990, Mobutu had been so overwhelmed by internal and external pressures for change that he decided to launch an exercise called "Popular Consultations" on the country's future. Individuals and groups were asked to send memoranda to a special commissioner stating what was wrong with the system and what should be done about it. Over 6 000 memoranda were recorded. Unfortunately, the public was never told

what they said. What is clear from those that were leaked to the press and from the public fora that Mobutu himself attended briefly as part of the consultation exercise before he was forced to abandon the idea for fear of further embarrassment, is that the popular verdict was against him. The problem, he was frequently told at public fora, "is you, Citizen President". The solution was his departure and the establishment of a multi-party democratic system.

Were Mobutu a patriot who loved his country and a dignified ruler who respected himself, he would have resigned. We are dealing here not with a normal type of political regime but with a kleptocracy bent on promoting its narrow group interests to the detriment of the general welfare. It has destroyed the economic and social fabric of the country while continuing to enrich itself. While the infrastructure of production has virtually collapsed, the regime and its collaborators in the expatriate Lebanese community are depriving the state of needed revenues by channelling much of the production of diamonds and gold into the informal circuits so as to maximise their earnings. The nature of the system as a kleptocracy based on state-sponsored banditry is evident whenever Mobutu sends tanks to encircle the central bank, the customs headquarters and the general tax office to ensure that they remain his private cash boxes.

On April 24, 1990, Mobutu announced to the nation that he was abandoning the single-party system. Within a few months, most of his well known collaborators, including former prime ministers, ministers and other high-level officials, pretended to abandon him to found their own opposition parties. These and nearly all other parties created after April 1990 do not have a mass base. They are for the most part cliques of ambitious individuals who are positioning themselves for political office in the new order. Some of the party founders hoped that by identifying themselves with change, they would be spared punishment by the people and/or judicial pursuits for crimes committed during the Mobutu era.

It is mostly those parties known for their fight against the dictatorship before 1990 which seem to enjoy a high degree of popular support. These include the MNC/L, the *Parti Lumumbiste Unifié* (PALU) of Antoine Gizenga and the UDPS. Despite its disintegration into a dozen or so factions, the party of Patrice Lumumba is still capable of attracting large numbers of people to rallies in its historic strongholds such as Kisangani. Initially founded in 1962 but revived in the late 1980s, PALU has a strong constituency among former PSA supporters and their children. It earned some notoriety in Kinshasa for the rallies of women and young people organised by Madame Thérèse Pakassa, who earned herself the label of *"dame de fer"* (iron lady) of Zaire.

There is no doubt, however, that it is the UDPS which enjoys the greatest support among the mass of the people. This is due primarily to the popularity of its major leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, who has captivated the popular mind by his courage and strong commitment to change in the face of a brutal regime. In February 1991, when Tshisekedi returned home after attending a major conference on Zaire at Howard University in Washington and making a tour of several US cities and European capitals, he was welcomed as a national hero. Over a million people, or about one quarter of the population of Kinshasa, came out to greet him. The cortege from N'Djili Airport to his residence in Limete, a distance of approximately 12 kilometres, lasted about eight hours.

In a popular culture heavily marked by a fundamentalist reading of the Christian message, the popular masses have no problem combining the sacred with the profane like using melodies and ideas from Church music in the music of political struggle. Thus, as Ndaywell writes in his monograph, "God and Satan have names in Zaire": one is Tshitshi and the other Mobutu.[17] The flip side of the demonisation of Mobutu is the elevation of Tshisekedi to the level of sainthood. He is, among other religiously inspired epithets, "Moises", with the power to deliver his people from bondage; "Uncle Tshitshi", a good-hearted, generous and wonderful guy; and the "hammer" that will break the rock with which Mobutu bars our journey to freedom and prosperity.

The people's devotion to Tshisekedi as an individual, together with their depiction of the struggle for democracy in religious terms as a duel between the forces of good (Tshisekedi) and the forces of evil (Mobutu) underlines both the strengths and weaknesses of the democracy movement in Zaire today. The religious fervour of the popular commitment to change has undoubtedly weakened the Mobutu regime. In a country where any saying by the dictator was tantamount to law, the rapid and irreversible disintegration of Mobutu's authority is nothing but phenomenal. The Zairean president no longer feels at home in Kinshasa, where his motorcade is likely to be met by rocks thrown by angry young people. When he does visit the capital, he is escorted by helicopters, tanks and armoured cars. He therefore prefers the security of Gbadolite, a new town built on the border with the Central African Republic, where he is free to live in kingly fashion in his Versailles-type palace.

On the other hand, the people's radical dichotomy between good and evil, change and *status quo*, and other similar opposites does not reflect the complexity of the political situation in Zaire today. There is a marked discordance between the radicalism of the masses and the desire for radical change, on the one hand, and the primary interest of their political leaders in obtaining government positions, on the other. Thus, whenever the opposition leadership is pushed by whatever factor — idealism, principle, fear or intimidation — closer to the position of the popular masses, a political impasse is created as long as the democratic forces are strong enough to prevent the regime from governing effectively but are still too weak to overthrow the dictatorship. When it is guided by opportunism or caught up in the logic of political compromise, it is likely to betray the deepest aspirations of the masses.

This, in short, is the record of the democracy movement during the last three decades in Zaire. Until July 1991, when the democratic opposition formed a coalition known as the *Union Sacrée* (Sacred Union), the leadership held a position identical to the people's that Mobutu's departure from office was a precondition for genuine change and democratisation. Then, during the same month, everyone was surprised to hear an

announcement on national television that Mobutu had appointed Tshisekedi Prime Minister. Secret negotiations had apparently been going on between the two men through trusted aides. Demonstrators descended on Tshisekedi's residence to force him to back down. Their "saviour", the masses thought, should not work with the "devil".

Although bowing to popular pressure, Tshisekedi made it clear that he was prepared to accept the post, as this would have given him the opportunity to organise and manage the national conference that so many people wanted held. The incident created strained relations between him and his senior partners in the *Union Sacrée*, all of whom were jealous of him and would have jumped at the opportunity to head the government, as Nguza Karl I Bond did four months later. It also revealed the elitist and undemocratic strain of bourgeois politics worldwide, with politicians preferring to solve leadership and other important questions through deal-making — in smoke-filled (or, nowadays, in smoke-free) rooms — rather than through open democratic processes. Thus, each time that the democratic process seemed to be going forward, something would happen to bring the politicians back to deal-making behind closed doors, away from the watchful eyes of the people.

The long-awaited national conference opened on August 7, 1991, only to be disrupted in September as a result of looting by poorly paid soldiers. The conference itself was so mired in procedural disputes that the new crisis seemed to offer the politicians the opportunity they wanted to go back to the negotiating table. This they did at Mobutu's Marble Palace in Binza, Kinshasa. Under foreign pressure, it was agreed that cohabitation by Mobutu and Tshisekedi was essential to peace, economic recovery and the progress of the democratisation process. Disappointed but hopeful that their "Moises" would after all find a way to eventually get rid of Mobutu, the people reluctantly accepted the fact that he will serve as Mobutu's Prime Minister. It did not take long for things to fall apart. No longer able to have access to ready cash at the central bank, Mobutu dismissed Tshisekedi and his government, ordering his army to lock them out of their offices.

When other attempts at mediation failed to satisfy all concerned, hopes for change were once again invested in the national conference which resumed its work before the end of 1991. On January 19, 1992, Prime Minister Nguza arbitrarily closed the conference. As in the past, ordinary people stepped in to change the situation. Responding to a call by the Catholic Church and other religious groups, thousands of people left church on Sunday, February 16, 1992, candle and Bible in hand, to join massive demonstrations all over Kinshasa in a Christian march for reopening the national conference. Mobutu's army opened fire, killing over 30 people. To the martyrs of independence who fell on Sunday, January 4, 1959, were now added the "martyrs of democracy". Their sacrifice would compel the dictator to give in to internal and external pressures by reopening the conference.

The *Conférence Nationale Souveraine* (CNS) met uninterrupted between April 6 and December 6, 1992. A total of 2 842 delegates, representing all classes and strata of Zairean society, qualified to seat as the "people in conference". Their task was to take stock of what had gone wrong during the first 32 years of our history and chart a new course for the future. Just as the conference got into full swing with 23 committees and over 100 subcommittees examining all aspects of the country's history and affairs, the elitist logic of the politicians once again reared its ugly head. Under pressure from the United States, the conference president, Kisangani Roman Catholic Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo, insisted that negotiations between representative groups at the conference and Mobutu's aides take place at N'Sele to determine the institutional framework of the transition to democracy.

With few exceptions, all the major groups, including the *Union Sacrée*, went along with this plan, which was a blatant violation of CNS sovereignty and its rules of order. What emerged out of the N'Sele deal-making was the comprehensive political compromise *(compromis politique global)*, a Zairean version of the power-sharing formula originally drafted by Herman Cohen, then US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. The compromise called for Mobutu to remain president during a two-

year transitional period, but this time as a ceremonial rather than executive head of state. That the compromise was undemocratic and contrary to the wishes of the people did not seem to bother the leadership of the democratic opposition, since its major preoccupation was getting a parcel of power with Tshisekedi as Prime Minister.

Having betrayed the people with the compromise, the democratic opposition sought to please them with symbolic gimmicks such as changing the country's name from "Zaire" to "Congo", a move that Mobutu succeeded to neutralise. Crucial issues such as the fate of Mobutu's old parliament, the status of his single-party constitution and the concrete mechanisms of collaboration between the president and the prime minister in the areas of foreign affairs and national security were left extremely vague, with loopholes that the wily dictator could later exploit to his advantage. The democratic opposition displayed an amazing degree of naiveté in concentrating all energies on winning the post of prime minister while neglecting these crucial issues.

With determination, the masses did all they could to make sure that the "people's candidate" for prime minister was elected by the CNS. All over Kinshasa, the *radio trottoir* (sidewalk radio) and the opposition press informed the public that should CNS members choose someone other than the people's candidate, Tshisekedi, they will have some explaining to do, while being dilapidated. And on the night of the vote, which took place between 5 p.m. on August 14, to 5 a.m. on August 15, the People's Palace, the CNS venue, was encircled by large numbers of people eager to get the results of the balloting. Those who stayed home were even in a better position to follow, through television and radio, the finest and most transparent election ever held in Mobutu's Zaire. Being representatives of the people, the majority of delegates voted freely and willingly for Tshisekedi, who beat Thomas Kanza, the candidate of the *status quo*, by 71 percent to 27 percent of the vote cast. The whole country erupted into a joyful victory dance from dawn to sunset on the 15th of August 1992.

Less than four months later, the people's victory turned out to be hollow. After his friend and ally Jonas Savimbi defied international public opinion and went back to war

after losing a free and fair election, Mobutu did not see why he should live with a situation he disliked. He carried out the third coup d'etat of his political career on December 1, 1992. In March 1993, he named a rival government, went back to his old constitution and convened his old parliament. In all this, he was encouraged by the fact that his former patrons in Washington, Paris and Brussels talked tough but did nothing. They called upon the Zairean political class to go back to the negotiating table, as though the national conference had never taken place.

Rather than defending the institutional framework adopted by the CNS that he had chaired, Monsignor Monsengwo showed his true colors by adopting the Western call for more negotiations. For him, important decisions on a country's future had to be made by the political class rather then a representative peoples' assembly. In going along with this elitist thinking, the Zairean political class, including the so-called radical opposition represented by the *Union Sacreé*, showed utter contempt for democratic procedures and for democracy itself. Deal-making among politicians seems to make more sense to them than decisions reached through a democratic process like the national conference.

In the end, Mobutu came out victorious. Negotiations began in September 1993, under Western and UN pressures ended in January 1994. The results can only be read as the restoration of the *ancient régime,* with President Mobutu recovering virtually all his pre-CNS executive powers. Only in Zaire could a transitional process from dictatorship to democracy remain under the control of the dictator himself. The January 1994 *protocole d'accord* merged Mobutu's one-party parliament with the provisional legislature elected by the CNS to give Mobutu a majority in a new and monstrous parliament of 780 members.

Using all the tricks of a Machiavellian handbook, Mobutu and his followers succeeded in dumping Prime Minister Tshisekedi in favour of Kengo wa Dondo, the candidate of the Western Troika (United States, France and Belgium) and the Bretton Woods institutions. For these external forces, a technocrat without a political base in the

country like Kengo is preferable to Tshisekedi, a man of the people who is more likely to listen to his national constituency — as he did in July 1991 — than to be beholden to foreign patrons. With Kengo, the defeat of the democracy movement is all the more blatant for the simple fact that it is he who was Mobutu's prime minister on April 24, 1990! *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

CONCLUSION

Since 1956, the people of Zaire have waged a major struggle for democratic rights, with the hope of improving their lot and ensuring a better future for their children. The struggle has gone through three major phases, corresponding to the fight for independence (1956-60), the revolt against the failure of the post-colonial state to fulfill the people's expectations of independence (1963–68) and the current movement for multi-party democracy, since 1980, respectively. During each of these phases, the democracy movement relied on a high level of mass mobilisation to weaken the enemy. Just as entire regions of the country became ungovernable during the last 18 months of Belgian colonialism, nearly two thirds of the country fell under the control of Lumumbist forces in 1964, and Mobutu has gone through six prime ministers since 1990 without succeeding in effectively governing the country.

Unfortunately, the very popular culture which helps to weaken the enemy and gives the democracy movement its basic strength also undermines it in several respects. For example, resort to cultural values and symbols during the first two phases of the movement was effectively exploited by the enemy to divide people along ethnic lines. Today, there are other weaknesses associated with popular culture. Although the modern sector of the economy and the public infrastructure of social services have collapsed, traditional solidarity mechanisms continue to help people survive and thus diminish the urgency of a frontal attack on the core supports of the dictatorship. Similarly, reliance on religious beliefs, with so much time spent in prayer meetings —

in which dead heroes like Kimbangu, Malula, Kasa-Vubu, Lumumba and others are asked to intercede with God for our deliverance — and with unlimited faith in a saviour called "Moises", makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the masses to make their own revolution.[18]

Finally, a major problem or even a handicap for the democracy movement in Zaire has been the question of leadership. The politicians who arise to lead the movement are, for the most part, self-centred seekers of political power and material benefits: the *évolués* who were fighting to integrate the top layers of colonial society; the Lumumbists who wanted to regain the power they had lost to the Binza Group; and hundreds of Mobutu's former associates who are attempting to position themselves for a new dispensation in the post-Mobutu era.

Hopes raised by the emergence of a single charismatic individual as standard-bearer of the movement in each of its major phases — Lumumba in 1958-60, Mulele in 1963-68, and Tshisekedi today — ended up being dashed. For, however successful these three were in mobilising the masses, their victories over the enemy were shortlived. They were incapable of delivering the goods to their followers, since they were defeated before they could govern by their enemies in the political class, who relied on their control over the key organs of state power — the repressive apparatus and the central bank — as well as on Western support.

The three leaders failed in part because they did not succeed in building a strong political organisation likely to wrestle political power from the enemy and to govern effectively. Mass support in the absence of a strong organisation and an appropriate political strategy is not enough for effective political change. Lumumba, Mulele and Tshisekedi were also weakened by the deals and compromises they were forced to make as part of a political culture that puts less emphasis on respect for the democratic process of open debate and transparent decision-making then on deal-making among politicians.

NOTES

1. That Lumumba's speech was a factor in the Western resolve to eliminate him politically and physically has been clearly established. US President Dwight Eisenhower's assassination order of August 18, 1960 resulted from the growing obsession with Lumumba as "unstable", "erratic" and a danger to Western interests. See, among others, Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); and US Congress, Senate, *Interim Report; Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, by the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 94th Congress, 1st Session, November 20, 1975.

2. See the excellent collection of politically inspired popular songs in Kinshasa in 1090–93 in Isidore Ndaywell è Nziem, *La société zairoise dans le miroir de son discours religieux (1990–1993)*, Vol. 3 of *Zaire, aunée 90* in *Cahiers Africains* (Brussels), No. 6, 1993.

3. This analysis of the Zairean democracy movement is partly based on my earlier publications on the subject, particularly "The Bourgeoisie and Revolution in the Congo", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December, 1970), pp.595–614; "Class Struggle and National Liberation in Zaire", in Bernard Magubane and Nzongola-Ntalaja (eds) *Proletarianisation and Class Struggle in Africa* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1983), pp.57–94; "The Second Independence Movement in Congo-Kinshasa", in Peter Anyang' Nyong'o (ed), *Popular Struggles for Democracy in Africa* (London: UNU and Zed Books, 1987), pp.113–141; and "Zaire: Moving Beyond Mobutu", *Current History*, Vol. 93, No. 583 (May 1994), pp.219–222.

4. *See* Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), pp.92–102.

5. T. O. Ranger, "Connections Between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa", *Journal of African History*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1968), pp.437-53 and Vol. 9, No. 4 (1968) pp.631–641.

6. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.114.

7. See Paul Demunter, *Masses rurales et luttes politiques an Zaire: le processus de politisation des masses rurales au Bas-Zaire* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1975), for Lower Zaire; and Herbert F. Weiss, *Political Protest in the Congo: the Parti Solidaire Africain During the Independence Struggle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), for Bandundu.

8. Ten years later, in 1969, the EJCSK became a member of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. It is one of the most successful African independent churches.

9. According to Wyatt MacGaffey, *Modern Kongo Prophets: Religion in a Plural Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p.8, ABAKO "was clearly similar in some ways to Kimbanguism, and the membership of the two organisations overlapped extensively".

10. Among others, Joseph Malula, who later became the first African in history to attain the rank of a Roman Catholic Cardinal; Joseph Ileo, who is still active in the democracy movement in Zaire today as President of the *Parti Démocrate Social Chrétien (PDSC)*; and Joseph Ngalula, who abandoned the

fight for democracy for the financial security provided by his friend Joseph Mobutu, the Zairean president.

11. Amilcar Cabral, "Brief Analysis of the Social Structure of Guiné", in Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

12. Amilcar Cabral, "The Weapon of Theory", in Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea.*

13. The MNC had split in two in 1959 over policy differences between Lumumba and the moderate leaders of the former *Conscience Africaine* group Ileo and Ngalula along with trade union leader Cyrille Adoula. The dissidents failed to remove Lumumba from the MNC presidency and formed a separate party with Kasai provincial leader Albert Kalonji as president. Eventually, the *Mouvement National Congolais/Kalonji* (MNC/K) became a predominantly Luba-Kasai party. Although the PSA was never formally split, it was known to function as two separate entities, a radical wing led by Gizenga and Pierre Mulele, and a more moderate wing led by Cléophas Kamitatu, an incorrigible opportunist.

14. On US policy during this period, see Stephen Weissman, *American Policy in the Congo 1960-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

15. For a detailed study of the Mulelist experience, see Ludo Martens, *Pierre Mulele ou la seconde vie de Patrice Lumumba* (Antwerp: Editions EPO, 1985).

16. See Georges N. Nzongola, "Confrontation in Congo-Kinshasa", *Mawazo* (Kampala), Vol. 2 (December, 1969), pp.19-24.

17. Ndaywell, *La société zairoise*, p.7

18. These beliefs are even stronger today in the face of misery than they were during the times of Lumumba and Mulele. On the intercession of renown heroes from the worlds of religion, politics and popular music, see Tabu Lay's song "Démocratie", in Ndaywell, *La société zairoise*, p.83.