

The Soviet Union and National Liberation

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In our August issue we published the first of some short studies on the Soviet Union's relations with the national liberation movements. The second of these studies, given below, is devoted to the Congo.

II THE SOVIET UNION AND THE CONGO

In the course of the current discussions in the international Communist movement, the Chinese Communist Party has made certain allegations concerning Soviet policy towards the Congo.

Briefly the Chinese allegations are:

- (1) The Soviet Union, by supporting the bringing of the U.N. forces into the Congo, paved the way for U.S. intervention and for Lumumba's death.
- (2) After the murder of Lumumba, the Soviet Union, by continuing to support the U.N. action and by "encouraging" Antoine Gizenga to participate in the new Adoula Government

set up in Leopoldville on July 26th, 1961, weakened the national liberation movement and made it easier for the United States to gain control of the Congo.

(1) The Bringing In of the United Nations Forces

Regarding the bringing in of U.N. troops in 1960, the following are the essential facts. The Congo became independent in June 1960. The uncompromising speech delivered by the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, in the presence of the Belgian King who had come to Leopoldville for the independence ceremony, made it clear that under Lumumba's leadership the Congolese people would firmly oppose imperialism in its new neo-colonialist guises.

The mutiny of the Congolese troops of the Force Publique against their European officers also showed that imperialist plans of a continuation of their domination of the Congo after independence were unlikely to succeed without further imperialist intervention. Within a few weeks of the declaration of independence, the Belgians began to pour their troops into the Congo. In the face of this open aggression by a foreign imperialist power against a new sovereign state, Lumumba appealed to the U.N. to act according to its Charter and functions.

There were further factors in the situation which it is important to bear in mind. Lumumba, his country divided by tribalism and political division, with a shortage of trained cadres in every department of state, and the Belgian troops at his country's throat, was in a desperate position. At that time the tide of African independence had only begun; there were only 12 independent African states, compared with 34 today; the new States were, in the main, just coming into being and had their own acute problems; neither the African leaders and governments, not the peoples and their national parties had yet fully experienced the new tactics of neo-colonialism, and there were great illusions concerning the United Nations.

Lumumba's Appeal

In this situation, Lumumba appealed directly to the U.N. Security Council for military aid to drive out the Belgians. It should be stressed, especially in view of the subsequent misrepresentations of the terms specified for U.N. forces to enter the Congo, that the telegram sent to the United Nations Secretary-General on July 12, 1960 by President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Lumumba specifically said that "the aim of the assistance requested is not to restore internal order in the Congo, but to defend the national territory against the act of aggression from Belgian troops." The United Nations was thus faced with a clear and urgent responsibility, that of defending the young Republic of the Congo against Belgian imperialist aggression, of ensuring her political independence and preserving her national unity and territorial integrity.

As a member of the Security Council the Soviet Union strove to ensure that the Security Council's decision would be one that would direct the U.N. member states to assist the Congolese Central Government. The consequence was the important U.N. Security Council Resolution of July 14, 1960:

"Considering the request for military assistance addressed to the Secretary-General by the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo:

1. CALLS UPON the Government of Belgium to withdraw their troops from the territory of the Republic of the Congo;

2. DECIDES to authorise the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps, in consultation with the Government of the Republic of the Congo, to provide the Government with such military assistance, as may be necessary, until, through the efforts of the Congolese Government with the technical assistance of the United Nations, the national security forces may be able, in the opinion of the Government, to meet fully their tasks;
3. REQUESTS the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council as appropriate."

This resolution is absolutely clear. Belgium was to withdraw her troops. The U.N. was to provide military forces to the *Congolese Government*, to act "*in consultation with*" that Government, to continue to provide "military assistance" until through the "*efforts of the Congolese Government*", with the "technical assistance" of the U.N., the Congolese forces themselves were able, "*in the opinion of the Government*, to meet fully their tasks."

Security Council Resolution Violated

It was clear that the U.N. military forces were intended to be subordinate to the Central Government ("to provide the Government with such military assistance"), to act only in consultation with the Central Government, and to have merely the status of "technical assistance"—which means no political interference in Congolese affairs. Further, the first clause of the July 14, 1960 resolution shows that the U.N. decision was taken not in respect of "maintaining law and order", which the capitalist press tried to pretend (and to carry through this pretence they suppressed all publication of the actual resolution), but was a resolution motivated and occasioned by the intervention of the Belgian troops.

This resolution was naturally supported by the Soviet Union. No one could object to it. There was nothing wrong with supporting such a resolution. The danger to the Congo arose not from the resolution but through the refusal of the imperialist powers, entrenched in the U.N. Secretariat and apparatus, to put the resolution into practice.

They completely ignored the resolution, used the U.N. troops to pursue a policy against the Central Government and never, right up to the time of their withdrawal, did they place their troops at the disposal of the Central Government, as the U.N. Security Council resolution had specified.

The Security Council decisions were openly violated and the U.N. Charter itself ignored. The Security Council, as a collective body (and the Soviet Union as a member of the Security Council) was completely excluded from decisions concerning which U.N. member states should participate in the

carrying out of the July 14 resolution, which U.N. member states should direct and provide officers for the operation, how many troops and arms should be sent and by which states etc. Instead of the U.N. Security Council being in control, this function was usurped by the U.N. executive organs, headed by the Secretary-General.

Figures cited by Soviet authorities at the end of 1960 showed that for the United Nations Congo operation, 45 military staff officers came from the United States and its allies, none from the socialist countries; 546 representatives in police and liaison units in the Congo came from the Western powers, 24 from Africa, and none from the socialist countries; 220 non-military staff came from the Western powers, none from the socialist countries.

The Soviet Union, throughout the crisis, strove to get the correct U.N. resolution carried out. At the same time, it did what it could to give direct assistance to Lumumba.

Commenting on the Soviet Union's attitude and its strong condemnation of the imperialist aggression in the Congo, Colin Legum, in his book, *Congo Disaster*, wrote: "The language of the Russians gladdened Lumumba's heart, as indeed it might. Here was one power which was ready to deal with the Belgians." (p. 134). As regards the actual help, Mr. Legum notes: "Soviet aid, unlike others, went directly to the Congolese Government, instead of being channelled through the U.N. The Russians delivered 100 military trucks and 29 Ilyushin transport planes, together with 200 technicians." (p. 141). He points out that this aid enabled Lumumba "to subdue the dissident 'Diamond State' proclaimed by Albert Kalonji in Kasai", adding (p. 162) that "Without the help of Russian transport, Lumumba could not have undertaken that mission, since all planes and other suitable transport in the country were in the hands of the U.N., whose Command would not allow them to be used against the rebel government." The Soviet Union also sent food, medical teams and equipment.

Soviet assistance to Lumumba and his government continued right up to the moment when the American puppets, Kasavubu and Mobutu, seized power, captured Lumumba, and broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Government, compelling it to close down its Legation in Leopoldville on September 17, 1960.

(2) Lumumba's Death

The responsibility for Lumumba's death lies with the imperialists—especially those of the United States—and with Congolese reactionary puppets who carried out their orders.

The Chinese comrades have given currency to the idea that the Soviet Government was responsible

for Lumumba's death. The *Hsinhua* news bulletin of August 25, 1963, published, with apparent approval, the speech made at a Peking rally on August 24, at which A. M. Kheir (a Sudanese working in Peking and who has been denounced by the Sudanese Communist Party and the Sudanese Peace Committee) said:

"I condemn the Soviet delegation and its supporters for openly standing on the side of the most reactionary forces in Japan, with the right-wingers and fascists, against the progressives, genuine peace fighters in Japan . . . Those who prettify Kennedy and call him a man working for peace, helped to murder Lumumba, the son of Africa, and do everything in their power to make the Africans lay down their arms in the battle against imperialism and colonialism, are not friends of the Africans."

According to the Soviet journal, *New Times* (August 21, 1963) a similar statement was made in 1963 by a Chinese representative at Hiroshima, Chu Tsu-tsi, who alleged that the U.S.S.R. "had helped American imperialism murder Lumumba."

The same slanderous implications are contained in the document, *Apologists of Neo-Colonialism*, issued by the Editorial Departments of the Chinese *People's Daily* and *Red Flag*, October 22, 1963. This document asserts that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was "anxious to 'co-operate' with U.S. imperialism in putting out the spark in the Congo."

In contrast to these disgraceful calumnies, Lumumba himself, in one of his last statements, declared:

"*The Soviet Union proved to be the only one of the great powers which, from the very beginning, supported the people of the Congo in their struggle. I wish to convey the deepest gratitude of the entire people of the Congo to the Soviet people and to Premier Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchov personally for the timely and great moral support the U.S.S.R. gave to the young Republic of the Congo in its struggle against the imperialists and colonialists.*"

(3) Gizenga's Participation in the Recalled Parliament

After the murder of Lumumba, and the driving of the Soviet representatives from Leopoldville, the Soviet Union continued to be accredited to the legal Government which carried on in Stanleyville under the leadership of Lumumba's colleague, Antoine Gizenga. This government, the only legal heir to that formerly led by Lumumba, carried on for several months under considerable difficulties. It was supported by the most progressive African states but not by some others—and the refusal of the Sudan Government to co-operate meant that material assistance could not be sent in, neither

from the socialist countries nor from the U.A.R. and other African states wishing to assist the Government in Stanleyville.

Meanwhile the U.N. forces continued their interference in Congolese politics; and the Anglo-Belgian imperialist ultras tore wealthy Katanga away from the control of the Central Government. Soviet attempts to make the U.N. Security Council adhere to the July 14, 1960, resolution were unsuccessful; the U.N. forces continued to act illegally (i.e. not in accordance with the U.N. Charter).

Finally, on February 21, 1961, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling on the U.N., in view of the killing of the Congolese leaders, Lumumba and his colleagues, and the growing "danger of widespread civil war in the Congo," and the "threat to international peace and security," to take "all appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of civil war in the Congo . . ." including "the use of force, if necessary, in the last resort."

It was on the basis of this resolution that U.N. force was used to break Tshombe's regime in Katanga and end the secession.

Even if the resolution was a dangerous precedent, the Soviet Union was not well-placed to oppose it. The Afro-Asian nations were in favour of it. "In this climate", explains Conor Cruise O'Brien (*To Katanga and Back*: pp. 97-8) the Soviet Union "despite its radical hostility to Hammarskjold and the U.N. Congo operation as a whole", did not feel "able to veto measures agreed on by the United States and the Afro-Asian countries."

Thus the Soviet Union, in the Security Council, voted for U.N. military force to be used against Tshombe. But because of the subsequent manner in which the operation was handled and because the U.N. Secretariat had continually, from the very beginning of the Congo operation, acted without consulting the Security Council (which it was obliged to do under the U.N. Charter), the Soviet Union refused to pay towards the U.N. operation in the Congo.

The Soviet Union is not alone in refusing to pay for the U.N. operation in the Congo. By January 1, 1963, no less than sixty-seven states had taken a similar stand.

Congolese Parliament Recalled

Meanwhile there had been changes in the Congolese political situation. At this stage it appeared to the most patriotic sections of the Congolese people that the severance of the rich state of Katanga was the greatest menace. For this reason, together with the difficulties of maintaining the separate government in Stanleyville in the new situation, the leaders of the two most progressive parties (Lumumba's M.N.C. and Gizenga's African Soli-

arity Party), with other elements opposed to the reactionary Leopoldville Government, decided to participate in July, 1961, in the recall of the Congolese Government (which had not met for months), in order to try to establish a new united Government which could uphold Congolese sovereignty and regain control over Katanga.

The decision to participate in the recalled Parliament was freely taken by Gizenga and other progressive Congolese leaders themselves.

The recalled Congolese Parliament (July 26, 1961), revealed that the patriotic forces were still strong. Gizenga became one of the two Vice-Premiers, and the M.N.C. leader, Gbenye, became Minister of the Interior. Later, however, by repression and corruption, the U.S., operating through the reactionary wing of the new Adoula Government, was able to deal a heavy blow to the patriotic forces once again. Gizenga was imprisoned and U.S. control strengthened. (In March, 1964, the Congolese Parliament was forcibly dissolved, and a number of its deputies compelled to flee.

The policies followed by Gizenga, Gbenye, and other leaders after Lumumba's death were their own policies. One can hold different views concerning the tactics of the Congolese leaders, but it is entirely unwarranted for the Chinese comrades to attribute the policies of Gizenga and his colleagues to "persuasion" by the Soviet comrades.

Still less justifiable is the attempt of the Chinese comrades to shift the blame for the setbacks in the Congo from those really responsible, the imperialists, on to the shoulders of the Soviet Union, "the only one of the great powers which, from the beginning, supported the people of the Congo in their struggle". (Lumumba).

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