

The Way of
Patrice Lumumba and Pierre Mulele

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The People's Uprising in the Congo (Kinshasa) 1964 - 1968

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Pierre Mulele takes up the torch of Patrice Lumumba

Mobutu, one of Lumumba's murderers, tried to obscure and falsify the thought of his victim by declaring him a 'national hero' and presenting himself as one of his 'disciples'. The same Mobutu tried to erase what Pierre Mulele did from history by covering it with a deadly silence, seasoned with some insults.

For the progressive forces of the world, the names of Lumumba and Mulele are linked together forever; as were their patriotic and revolutionary achievements.

What Pierre Mulele did has a profound significance for the entire African continent. He triggered off the first important people's uprising against a neo-colonial régime in independent Africa. Most of his revolutionary activity was carried on among the peasant masses. And he was the first in the Congo to draw inspiration from Marxism-Leninism in order to lead a national democratic revolution.

The 'Parti Solidaire Africain'

In February 1959, Mulele, Gizenga and Kama created the Parti Solidaire Africain (African Solidary Party). Basing himself upon the experience of anti-colonial struggles in Vietnam, Algeria and Kenya, Mulele foresaw a long liberation struggle. In December 1959, he went to Conakry. In Guinea, he wanted to learn from the most advanced nationalist experiences the African continent had known until then. Until 1958 Belgian colonialism had managed to prevent all contacts between 'advanced' Congolese and the progressive forces of the outside world. In Conakry Mulele met Andrée Blouin, a left-wing pan-africanist with great talents as an organiser. During April and May 1960, she joined Mulele and Gizenga in their electoral campaign. She managed to lead Kwilu's women into the national struggle. Four years later, women were to play an important rôle in Mulele's maquis. After the elections the PSA, which was to the left of the

Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba, became the second most important nationalist party.

In June 1960, Mulele was Minister of Education and Culture in Lumumba's Government. The clerical circles started to panic. They had the monopoly of schooling and feared nationalisation. Mulele was known for his opposition to both imperialism and the religion that went with it. Kamitatu, Minister of Planning, declared in January 1964, in a violent attack against Mulele: 'Pierre Mulele has been well-known since his youth for his extremism and his atheism. When he was only fifteen and still at school in Kinzambi he tried to convince his fellow-students that the mystery of a virgin who gave birth to a man-god could not be taken seriously and should not be believed.' (1)

Kamitatu believed in the mystery of the virgin, and he also believed in the magic of the Founding-President. That allows him, twenty years later, still to be a faithful Minister of that same President.

With Lumumba on his flight to Stanleyville

In September 1960, President Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba, the Prime Minister. But the latter won a vote of confidence in Parliament. On 13 September Parliament gave him full powers. Soon afterwards Mobutu carried out his first coup. Lumumba was in fact Mobutu's prisoner. On Lumumba's orders Gizenga went to Stanleyville to install the legal government there.

On 27 November, Lumumba decided to flee from Léopoldville. A few days earlier Mulele had left in order to smooth the way for the Prime Minister's journey. From then on Mulele defended the idea that a people's uprising to support the Lumumba Government had to be prepared for. With this in mind he organised, along with Gabriel Yumbu, a big meeting in Kikwit on November 26th. A few days later Mulele and Lu-

mumba met and left for Stanleyville. Lumumba stopped in many villages, making speeches and mobilising the people. At one point, when Lumumba and Mulele had just crossed the Sankuru River, Lumumba wanted to go back to the South bank of the river, where his wife and child were. Lumumba's soldiers had already reached the South bank but Lumumba wanted to join his wife all the same. His companions begged him to continue on his way: 'to go back is to go towards death'. Lumumba was arrested by the Mobutist soldiers. The consequences are only too well-known.

Mulele arrived safely in Stanleyville where Gizenga led the Lumumbist Government from then on. Mulele was later to say to Nkrumah, the President of Ghana, that, in his opinion Gizenga was 'unable to resist the attacks of the neo-colonialist forces'.

Mulele in China

On 17 January 1961 Lumumba was killed in the presence of Tshombé and Munongo. Throughout the world huge demonstrations were held to express the outrage felt against neo-colonialism in the Congo. About twenty countries recognised the Gizenga Government.

Gizenga did not understand that Mobutu, Kasa-Vubu and Adoula already represented a new social class, completely tied to Belgian and American interests, and that a people's revolution would be necessary to get rid of these people and their imperialist masters.

On August 2nd 1961, Gizenga and Gbenye entered a 'national unity' Government, agreed upon during a meeting in Lovanium. Gizenga was to be the first of a long series of nationalist leaders to follow the route of 'national reconciliation'. This 'reconciliation' has always been used either to corrupt or buy the nationalist leaders outright or else to disarm them and send them to prison or to death.

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The period of 'national reconciliation' was used by Belgian and American neo-colonial forces to get a firm grip of the officer corps of the Army and to give it, once and for all, an anti-national, anti-popular direction.

During the same period, high government officials formed a bureaucratic bourgeoisie whose standard of living was similar to that of the big settlers before independence.

Mulele did not want to be compromised in the parliamentary operation set up by Gizenga and Gbenye. He had already understood that, on that basis, the complete victory of neo-colonial forces was inevitable. In 1961 Mulele was in Cairo. In March 1962 he left for China where he stayed for more than a year. The experience of the Chinese revolution greatly interested Mulele. He was to put what he learnt into practice in the maquis that he set up in Kwilu, beginning in July 1963. Until then political parties in the Congo were all election machines, meant only for gaining positions in the State. Mulele understood that, in order to break neo-colonial rule, a people's revolution had to be organised with the crucial support of the peasants. In China he realised the importance of forming liberated areas where democratic power could be exercised. Mulele prepared for guerilla warfare, avoiding full-scale battles and refusing to attack the main cities.

Military terror in Kwilu

Mulele returned secretly to Kwilu. The situation was appalling. The purchasing power of the people was at least 50 % lower than in 1960. The peasants were able to sell practically nothing. But they still had to pay taxes. The army and the police went into the villages, taking goats, pigs and chickens, imposing arbitrary fines and jailing people on idle pretexts.

From September 1963 on, the army launched major operations in search of Mulele. Whole villages were laid waste. This is how Abbé Tarra, who lived in the areas under guerilla control until February

1966, described it: 'This is how the military proceed. They arrive in a village very early in the morning. They immediately summon the village chief, who has to convene the whole village, clan after clan. The head of each clan has to control every family in his clan. If a child, boy or girl, is missing the head of the clan has to pay for the absence of this member. He is tortured, and so are the parents of the child. Sometimes they beat all the clan chiefs because everywhere some people are missing. Heavy fines are inflicted and they even manage to take away the chiefs' clothing and even essential everyday belongings. There are sometimes horrifying scenes. They put all the people of the village, the men on one side, the women on the other. All the men have to lie flat on their faces. The military and the policemen walk on their backs. They beat them with sticks as if they were dogs. There is blood everywhere. They catch goats and chickens, sometimes a whole truckload for the soldiers.' (3) It was only after four months of this terror that the Mulelists began the armed struggle. Abbé Tarra witnessed these events in January 1964: 'One evening, I went and had a drink with the chief of sector. Some soldiers told the story of how some policemen were killed by a Mulelist group. They said: policemen have been killed but we have to kill 500 civilians. One policeman is worth 500 civilians. If a soldier was killed we would massacre the whole village. You will see, as soon as we are in command, you will see what we can do.'

The creation of a Mulelist base

How did Pierre Mulele start his action? First he tried to win the confidence of the village chiefs. He promised to put an end to the military terror and to bring well-being to the villages. With their authorisation he built camps in the middle of the forest, where he gathered schoolboys and girls. The highschool youth, children of peasants, with some education, formed the backbone of

the Mulelist movement in Kwilu. They stayed a few days or a few weeks in the camps and then went back to the village where their work was propaganda, organisation and intelligence. In this way they received a political and military training during several months.

Abbé Tarra had this to say: 'Robert, a youth from the Saint-Ignace High School, told me that he was aware of everything that was going on. One day he had the good luck to visit one of Mulele's youth centres. Everything that happened in the village was reported in great detail to the teams close to the village. There was thus a serious control over what was said and people who dared to speak ill of the movement were in a bad way. When we went into the bush, some well-camouflaged Mulele people were there. They would watch the people who passed by and listen to what they said.

He wanted me to spend the night with them instead of in the village. I agreed. We visited the camps together. There we saw parents of these youths who were really amazed to see such a movement and put great hope in it.' (3)

The soldiers carried out scouring operations in the bush, and the camps had constantly to be moved. On 19 December 1963, Mobutu arrived in Kikwit together with two Belgian colonels, Marlière and Noël. The cruelty of the soldiers had brought the whole population down on the side of the Mulelists. But these constant operations had probably upset Mulele's plans. He had foreseen a longer period for training a large number of political and military cadres.

On New Year's Night, 1963-1964, a first operation using Molotov cocktails was carried out against the technical school in Kiyaka. The activities of the guerillas were growing. On the night of 21 to 22 January several bridges, roads and ferries were destroyed. And thus was created the first liberated area in the Congo: it contained some 500.000 inhabitants.

The Kwilu Rebels

The Mobutist terror became even more ferocious. Echoes of it reached the Belgian press: 'A truck arrived from Mungindu... stained with blood. The driver recounted that he had had to transport 87 corpses to be buried; all of them were prisoners. Among them, some 'Ba-jeunesses'. All the others had been picked up at random: village-notables, tallymen, cutters from the oil-works...

During their expeditions, the soldiers and policemen kill indiscriminately, as if to amuse themselves.' (La Relève, 1 Feb. '64, p 10)

Second independence

From the very beginning, Mulele centred his propaganda around one theme: 'Independence has been sold out to the imperialist forces by the murderers of Lumumba. A second independence has to be fought for.' The targets were clearly defined: imperialism and the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. In a course on politics, Mulele explained: 'People can be divided into three categories:

1. Foreigners or imperialists: they steal all the wealth of the country.
2. The people of the bad government who help the foreigners or the imperialists to steal the wealth of the country; they are the reactionaries. They survive thanks to the foreigners, without caring about their brothers dying of starvation.
3. The rest of the people all live in utter destitution; the poor, the peasants, the workers. They are like dogs catching game but eating only the bones.' (Rébellion au Congo I - B. Verhaegen p 167).

Arrested by Mobutu security officers, Abbé Tarra declared, on March 23, during his interrogation: 'The revolution of Mulele has the following orientation: since the independence of the Congo, it is clear that the economy is in the hands of foreigners, just as it was in the past. What Mulele wants is for this economy to be guided by the Congolese people themselves instead of by

foreigners as in the past. On the other hand, Mulele declares that the revolution is going to last a long time and that even if he died, it would continue till its end result. His decision is firm. Everybody can abandon it, the revolution will still go on, he says.'

A liberated base

The partisans educated by Mulele did not have simply military tasks; they also had an equally important organising rôle to play. The document 'Order of mission of the partisans' is permeated with the idea of revolutionary soldiers being at the service of the people: 'The entire force of the partisans is in the hands of the villagers'. 'The partisans must help the villagers everywhere they suffer.'

Mulele always paid much attention to organising the peasants just as they were, taking their superstitions into account. This explains the importance acquired by the immunisation-rite among the partisans. A magic ritual was to make the fighters invulnerable to enemy bullets. This belief had been common to many peasant insurrections against colonialism in Africa and Asia. It is a way of believing in the invincible force of the people fighting against an enemy which seems to be far superior. It is only by assimilating Marxism that the peasant masses can acquire a scientific basis to sustain this invincibility of the national and social liberation war.

The workers too, played an important rôle in the Mulele revolution. This was especially the case for the cutters of the Lever plantations. In the Congo, Huilever employed about 40.000 black workers.

Mulele and the intellectuals

The peasant insurrection violently attacked the administration officials and the black bourgeois who collaborated with the neo-colonialist regime of Léopoldville and openly opposed the popular movement. During the insurrection of January 1964, Mulelist forces

executed between 300 and 400 people.

The influence of the Chinese revolution is sensed in the way Mulele spared himself no effort to win over the intellectuals who had a relatively privileged situation and were therefore often disliked by the peasants. 'Most of the primary-school teachers were arrested by the rebels because they were suspected of sympathy with the Kikwit regime. About 800 of them were brought to Mulembé, Mulele's headquarters. For a fortnight they had to follow political education lessons, given by Mulele himself or his aides. After the period of instruction, they had to take part in one action or another and afterwards, they were assigned to a function in one or other of the villages: team-leader, political commissioner, secretary to an instructor.' (Rébellion au Congo p 103)

This was confirmed by a declaration made before the director of Kikwit security, by Léon Makassa, employed at A. Cooremans and Company.

'Like everywhere else, Mister Mulele made an appeal to all the intellectuals to present themselves at H.Q. Like everybody else, I answered the call and left my family, thinking I was soon to go back home. At H.Q., Mister Mulele forced me to stay and affected me to the service as a bureaucrat. In September 1964, I was appointed office chief at EMG, where I was in charge of accounts and correspondence.' (official report 21 November 1965). The same united front policy was carried out towards black priests. Mulele was in favour of atheism, but he nevertheless worked for almost 2 years with Abbé Tarra. When the priest proposed to create a 'secretariat for religious affairs', Mulele refused, but he proposed that the priest should put his energy into creating a 'council for the improvement of morals'.

Mulele and the Eastern front

In October 1963, repression came down on the Lumumbist leaders in Léopoldville, causing them to flee to Brazzaville.

The National Liberation Council was created; it was based on the union between the PSA of Mulele and the MNC-L of Gbenye. Soumialot was sent to the East of the country to organise insurrection there. Soumialot was an extraordinary speaker and a very brave man; but he had no Marxist revolutionary education; he was to improvise.

In his strategy and his tactics, Mulele was clearly inspired by Mao Zedong, which cannot be said for Soumialot. Mulele based his actions upon the organisation of the peasants themselves. In each village he created a team constituted by all the most active nationalists. Twice a week, Mulelists organised meetings for all the inhabitants, men, women and children, meetings which often lasted a whole day. Often they followed the question-and-answer method, used by the missionaries to make their message get through.

In the East, Soumialot leant on the revolutionary soldiers, the Simba, but he failed to organise the peasants effectively. Mulele refused to attack the cities and avoided great clashes with the regular army; he wan-

ted first of all to consolidate his political and organisational work among the masses.

In the East, the nationalists took over the big cities like Stanleyville. But these cities quickly became the target of Belgian troops and mercenaries. Two thousand Simba were sent against Bukavu by Olenga: planes piloted by CIA-agents massacred these revolutionaries by the hundred.

Mulele attached a lot of importance to including women in the national liberation war. In the teams, 20 % of the members were women. The seminary in Laba was transformed for a while into a training school for girls. Some women took part in armed struggle, especially in Idiofa and Di-baya.

In the East, the revolution brought no noteworthy change in the traditional rôle of women.

In the East, the revolution was crushed by the superior force of Belgian paratroopers and mercenaries. The mistakes of the revolution itself deprived it of the help of part of the people. In Kwilu, the rebels were defeated by the weapon of hun-

ger. Eye-witnesses declared that the Mobutist soldiers set fire to the harvest and killed the live-stock. The peasants were forced to come out of the forest. Sometimes, the soldiers took the risk of going into the forest to comb it out, firing at random. But the last rebels were only liquidated in 1970. In September 1968, realising that the uprising had been defeated, Pierre Mulele managed to leave Kwilu and arrived safely in Brazzaville. Certain witnesses affirm that he wanted to form a Marxist-Leninist party and at the same time use legal means to reconstitute the revolutionary forces. The reasons why he finally accepted the amnesty offer of Mobutu are not yet clear. Mobutu who had not hesitated to kill Lumumba, was not to wait too long before having Mulele - already a legend in his own lifetime - killed as well.

Lumumba and Mulele, united in martyrdom, will always symbolise the struggle for independence, democracy and people's power in the Congo.

Crushed by Belgian Colonels and White Mercenaries

In August 1964, the Lumumbists controlled about two thirds of the Congo. Some months previously Mobutu's army was striking terror into the hearts of the peasants: throughout the country there was talk of nothing but looting, rape and murder carried out by Mobutu's soldiers. It was only after several months that the terrified population dared react. On 1 January 1964 a revolt led by Pierre Mulele broke out in Kwilu province. By April 15 the revolt had spread to the East of the country where the first villages were liberated by revolutionary fighters led by Marandura and Bidalira. On May 15 the revolutionaries took the town of Uvira. Mobutu's soldiers were seized with panic. They feared the peasants' revenge and began to desert with the approach of Mulele's troops. On 2 July the revolutionaries took the town of Kindu. They met with practically no resistance. On August 5 Stanleyville was liberated.

Colonel Vandewalle

The same day the Congolese Prime Minister, Tshombé sent a letter to the Belgian Foreign Secretary. He asked him to send him the Belgian colonel Vandewalle to be his 'personal adviser'. Before Independence Vandewalle had been responsible for State Security in the colony. During the secession of Katanga he was consul-general in Léopoldville (Kinshasa). Two days later he was in Kamina and on 15 August he proposed a military operations plan to the Belgian Government. On August 18 the Foreign Secretary, Paul-Henri Spaak, a socialist, approved the plan. The Belgian operation could begin. Everything took place in the greatest of secrecy.

General Bobozo's decorations

What did Colonel Vandewalle think of the 'invincible' National Congolese Army (ANC)? This is what he telegraphed to Brussels: 'No ANC unit is sure. When there is no resistance and the troops advance they loot... We must consider that, except for a few units, the ANC as it now stands is either in a state of mutiny, or gone over to the rebels, or stuck far away from the front in camps from which it refuses to budge. The Congolese authorities like Tshombé and Mobutu are in agreement that it has to be replaced.' (1)

Vandewalle demanded full powers to direct military operations against the Lumumbists. Mobutu and Tshombé agreed. The Belgian colonels could then once again take up the old habits they had acquired in the Congo before 30 June 1960.

Four Belgian colonels drew up the plans for the operations. Among them was Colonel Marlière who had been 'personal adviser' to Mobutu from 1960 to 1964. Vandewalle writes:

'They were in perfect agreement on a plan involving the use of columns composed of special volunteers - a euphemism for mercenaries - against the rebellion. These columns would include light armoured vehicles followed by Congolese under the command of the ANC, and would receive air support and protection from supply teams. They also agreed that no result was possible if the African generals from HQ were not first neutralised.' (1)

Vandewalle wanted to get rid of General Bobozo at any price. He told him that Belgium would be honoured by his presence. He promised him honours and decorations. Spaak

agreed to play along with this farce and welcomed the valiant general with open arms. Vandewalle writes in his memoirs: 'The Ministry of Defence was in charge of entertaining him. Jeanne, his official young wife of the moment, was delighted with this stroke of luck, and we had a month's peace.'

The new colonial order

Mobutu had found the ideal way of restoring order: he re-established the old colonial order. On 28 August 1964 a Belgian colonel received a document signed by Mobutu granting him full powers. The document read:

'Considering the state of disturbance which prevails in the East of the Republic, considering the emergency,

1. A zone of military operations is set up to restore and maintain order in the territories affected by the rebellion

2. Colonel Vandewalle, Personal Military Adviser, attaché to the Cabinet of His Excellency the Prime Minister, is entrusted with the co-ordination of land and air operations. He will exercise his powers in the name of the Commander-in-Chief.' (1)

From August 1964 on, in Kamina, Vandewalle formed and trained the Fifth Motorised Brigade, consisting of 5,000 men. All the members of the brigade's general command were Belgian officers who had lived in the Congo during the period of colonial rule. In all, the Belgian Army detached 65 officers and technicians for the training and leadership of the brigade. The Belgian officers commanded 390 mercenaries. The vast majority of the 4,300 black soldiers were Katanga gendarmes back from Angola and led by the Belgian mercenary Jean Schramme.

Mobutu's mercenaries and the Ommegang operation

Mercenaries played an essential rôle in the military operation whose code name was 'Ommegang'. 'Without the mercenaries of all nationalities and all ranks,' writes Colonel Vandewalle, 'there would have been no Ommegang.' 'How the question of the mercenaries was related to the Ommegang operation must be examined in the light of what was happening in August and September 1964... At that time the Congo had to be saved from falling, immediately and totally, into the hands of the rebellion... In fact it was the only possible cure, and Washington and Brussels admitted as much, if with the greatest of discretion.' (1)

For a high-ranking Belgian officer, commanding mercenaries, the majority of whom were notorious fascists, apparently presented no problem. Major Siegfried Müller, for instance, went everywhere in the Congo with Nazi Army decorations on his chest. In a book about his achievements in the Congo he was to write: 'My Iron Cross is still here... but my Führer is no longer there to see this wonderful sight.' (2)

The leader of the mercenaries, the South African Mike Hoare, had been officially received and entrusted with his mission by Tshombé, Mobutu, Ndaya and Munongo, who formed the National Security Committee. (1) On 29 October 1965 Mobutu was to praise the mercenaries in an interview in 'La Libre Belgique' (conservative catholic daily): 'They are good

men who really help the inland population. It upsets me to see them treated like mercenaries to be driven out. We won't drive them out. I know that they come here to earn money but many of them act out of ideals.' We shall see later on what the ideals were that inspired Mike Hoare. In any case, Vandewalle, the Belgian colonel, shared the views of Mobutu. He writes: 'Mike Hoare rendered great services to the Congolese National Army.' (1) On 14 December 1965, Mike Hoare returned to South Africa. The Associated Press correspondent was to declare: 'When one speaks to him about Communists, his eyes flash like lightning. Killing Communists, he declares, is like killing vermin. Killing African nationalists is like killing animals. I like neither one nor the other. I and my men killed between five and ten thousand Congolese rebels in the year and a half I spent in the Congo.' 'But that's not enough,' he added laconically, 'there are fourteen million Congolese, you know, and I suppose about half of them were rebels at one time or another when I was there.' He admitted personally ordering prisoners to be tortured and enjoining his soldiers: 'Kill every enemy taken in battle, whoever he is.' (3)

In enemy country

The Vandewalle brigade was divided into six columns which each had to reconquer certain strategic towns. The main column was called Lima I and was commanded by the Belgian colonel Liégeois. It included 120 South African mercenaries and, after leaving Kongolo on 1 November it took Kindu on November 5. On November 18 it continued on its way and attacked Stanleyville on 24 November, a few hours after the 320 Belgian paratroopers landed there.

In August, the Americans had already delivered four C-130 transport planes and three B-26 and 7T-28 planes that took part in the fighting. The peasants, armed with arrows and spears or at best with automatic rifles, were completely confused and terrified by the air attacks.

The Fabrique Nationale of Herstal (largest arms factory in Belgium) delivered 28 tons of rockets and 55 tons of arms for the Ommegang operation. The enormous fire-power of the brigade overwhelmed the peasant troops, who were completely unprepared for a 'regular' war with large troop concentrations. They were shattered right down the line. Müller, the SS, remarked: 'The main column laid waste the villages that had been abandoned by their populations on its way. The men acted like soldiers in enemy country.' (2)

That is how Mobutu defeated the Lumumbists, that is how he came to power. Put there by Belgian colonels and mercenaries from all over the world.

The Last War of Spaak the Socialist

Leo Collard, président of the Belgian Socialist Party declared on March 16th 1960: "At no time did we "push" the Congolese to ask for independence. In other words, we have not created, or organized or developed or raised up, campaigns, movements or organizations of any sort in the Congo that would have, openly or covertly, pushed the Congolese people to ask for its independence." "The highest interest of both Belgium and the Congo was to achieve independence as soon as possible and as well as possible, an independence, in other words to be achieved with us so as not to be achieved without us and against us." (Annales parlementaires 1960, Nr. 52-53, p. 27).

Spaak boosts "national reconciliation" in the Congo.

From 1961 to 1965 the Socialist Party was part of the government. During this period, it was to show how independence could be achieved "with us"!

At the beginning of 1964, the popular uprising spread throughout the whole country and threatened the Adoula Government.

The Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister, Spaak, a socialist, devised a policy adapted to the circumstances: first of all, divide the revolutionaries through proposals of "national reconciliation"; at the same time, prepare the military means to restore order. On June 12th 1964: he wrote to Adoula, "All the information I receive agrees on one point: it will be very difficult to reduce the present uprising solely by military action. I believe that it is bad politics to think only of coercive means, if it is possible, without jeopardising anything essential, to obtain a political solution through negotiations." "Everything that would help to maintain order would be easier if one had the impression that a reconciliation was under way" (Congo 64, p.158)

At the end of June, Tshombé, the man of the Union Minière, then in exile, met Spaak; the latter also spoke to Bomboko. Spaak gave his impressions to newsman C. L. Binnemans: "How are things viewed in governmental circles? They say that a reconciliation, the widest possible, would open interesting perspectives... Some leaders, involved in the present troubles, are, seemingly, recuperable. Let them join the reconciliation, give them positions and a blow will be struck at the C.N.L. This "Council of National Liberation", which was already not representative of the whole Congolese people would, then, not be "national" at all but would appear as imposed from outside. (Le Soir 28-29 June 64)

The result was that Tshombé, the murderer of Lumumba formed his Government of national unity, he was to have the pleasure of seeing himself supported by "Lumumbists" like Lubaga and Longi from the C.N.L. and by Kiwewa from the M.N.C.L.

But these few traitors did not succeed in containing the movement of workers and peasants. On August 6th Stanleyville fell into the hands of the Lumumbist revolutionaries.

"The Belgian, neither cruel nor racist."

Only one day later, Averell Harriman, United States special envoy landed in Brussels in a hurry. He met Spaak for several hours. The latter speaks in the following words about this meeting: "The Americans really asked me whether Belgium was ready for a military operation. And when Mr. Harriman came, this is what we discussed... We assigned ourselves a certain number of duties in order to help the Congolese Government during a given period of time. This help could always be called (please do not say here that I am cynical, but I have nevertheless to say it) technical help, rather than military intervention... They did it, they

executed everything we had decided together, in that room, but they did it in a spectacular manner. As for us, we acted in a much more discrete way." (4 September 1964; Vandewalle Ommegang, p. 145)

On August 18th 1964, Spaak met Vandewalle and approved his plan for the military liquidation of the Mulelist movement: the plan included sending Belgian officers and recruiting mercenaries. Spaak organised the dispatching of all the military equipment that Vandewalle needed for the Ommegang operation.

While the 5000 soldiers of the Vandewalle Brigade were fighting in the field Spaak was preparing the intervention of paratroops. On November 8th 1964, Spaak met Harriman in New York. The day after, Monday, the idea of a common Belgian-American action was explained to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Spaak pleaded his cause with his usual astuteness. (Vandewalle p.306).

On the morning of November 24th, 320 Belgian paratroopers jumped on Stanleyville. This was a rare opportunity for social-democracy to show its talents: Spaak, who in his younger years had acquired a reputation as a leftist, mounted the UNO tribune in the midst of an icy silence.

"I do not come here in the position of the accused who is going to plead guilty with extenuating circumstances, and ask for the leniency of the court. I come here with the strength that derives from being in the right and having a clear conscience. Belgium is neither colonialist, nor imperialist. The Belgian is neither racist nor cruel. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium is proud to bear witness to this in a solemn and formal way. (Security Council, 9 December 1964, Congo 64, p. 503-505).

On the day of the aggression, Spaak was less well inspired. At 9 a.m. he declared to his fellow-countrymen: "The operation that we launched is not a military one. Its only goal is to save the lives of a thousand fo-

reigners, men, women and children... This is not a military operation against the rebels. (Congo 64, p.40)

One can understand that Vandewalle smiled when he read these statements. It was who had been leading a full-scale military operation for 3 months on the direct orders of the glib-tongued Spaak. Vandewalle had well understood the instructions he had received in November: "The liquidation of the revolutionary government is needed as soon as possible (Ommegang, p.322)

On November 24th 1964 the two essential ingredients of any intelligent and efficient imperialist policy were put together: on the one hand, the extreme right does the dirty job in the field. On the other hand, a reformist "left" wraps the merchandise in nice humanitarian speeches and, if possible, in progressive ones.

Mobutu: a black General Janssens

On Independence Day, General Janssens wrote on the blackboard, for his black soldiers: "After Independence = Before Independence". Then came the revolt and Janssens had to flee; five years later, he came back under the skin of a black man called Mobutu. In "la Libre Belgique" of January 12th 1965, the latter presented as his own project everything that General Janssens ever dreamed of: "In Kitona, said General Mobutu, the formation of the first new battalion was difficult. The Belgian officers and N.C.O.s still regard them-

selves as technicians whose mission limits itself to advising the Congolese cadres. I went there in order to explain what I wanted: a real integration: Whites and Blacks, all are officers and actually exert their authority. Now the soldiers from Kitona have no complexes: they consider it perfectly normal to be commanded by white or black officers. Here, at General Headquarters, the Belgian officers exercise real responsibilities, as if they were in the Belgian army" (Congo 65, p.246).

Leo Collard and Paul-Henri Spaak could thus proudly declare that the independence of the Congo was finally achieved "with us".

It was the Belgian army, supported by battalions of mercenaries that crushed the uprising on behalf of the National Congolese Army (A.N.C.). So the chief of the A.N.C., helped by quite a few Belgian colonels, became the strong man. He was to seize power. For Belgian social democracy, this was to be a great day. Spaak expresses it as follows: "On November 25th 1965, Lieutenant-général Joseph-Désiré Mobutu became Head of State. In Brussels we were surprised but satisfied by this event. General Mobutu had shown himself to be in every circumstance, moderate, reasonable and friendly towards the Belgians. We had every reason to believe that, under his rule, cooperation between his country and ours would develop favorably" (Combats inachevés II p.297).

This was love at first sight and, to the shame of social-democracy, it can be said to have been the beginning of a love that was to last. Seven years later, in 1972, nobody could fool himself about the reactionary and neo-colonialist nature of Mobutism. Nevertheless, a bunch of socialist leaders - Leburton, Van Den Eynde, Cudell, Van Hoorijck - attended the first congress of the Mobutist party from May 21st to May 23rd 1972.

They brought the following message with them: The delegation of the Belgian Socialist Party, led by its two presidents, expresses its gratitude to the M.P.R. and to its president General Mobutu Sese Seko for being invited to and associated with its anniversary celebration and its Congress... The existing cooperation between both countries must be further developed in the years to come, in the interests of both partners... Today, the M.P.R. and its president can be proud of having taken up the challenge they set themselves five years ago. They were able to impulse this new direction of national action in the entire country and to use it as the instrument of a remarkable leap forward. The Belgian Socialist Party sends its best wishes for the success of these efforts. Rightfully set in the framework of that return to Genuineness that will certainly be a fruitful source of inspiration, stimulation and action for the M.P.R. and thus for Zaïre. (Direction du Bureau Politique-premier congrès, p.61-62). This is how social-democracy can flatter tyrants when they are at the pinnacle of their power.

With Spears, Arrows and Machetes

"The Congo has known chaos from 1960 to 1965. I came to restore peace." This is the summary of Mobutu's version of the history of Zaïre: The notion that Independence Day would mean the beginning of chaos was due to the Belgian settlers. Indeed they immediately set themselves to work in order to stop this chaos called Independence. They created the state of Katanga where colonial rule dominated completely. They killed Lumumba, Mpolo, Okito, Mbuyi and other "troublemakers". It took them three years to create a black bureaucratic bourgeoisie. The latter was highly paid for being a wind-screen behind which American and Belgian interests could shelter. The Congolese people quickly understood the meaning of the word "neocolonialism" by comparing its situation, of deepening poverty with the blatant luxury of these Belgian blacks called Tshombé, Adoula, Mobutu. Then this people revolted in order to obtain "the second independence". The Belgians and the Mobutus could cry that the people were savage, cruel and uneducated. However they could hardly deny that they were facing a war waged against them by the entire population.

A People's war.

Mobutu's army was fleeing, retreating from several major cities without fighting. The soldiers felt submerged by the tide of Lumumbist nationalism. Entire garrisons were joining the people, e.g. in Kasongo and Paulis, after having shot down their commander. On the 16th of July 1964, Tshombé, the president of Maniema Province declared in Kindu: "We are only facing gangsters; 90% of the population is with me". He decreed a general mobilisation which yielded about a hundred soldiers with whom he moved against the enemy. On the way, the warriors disappeared one after another... The city of Kindu was liberated by thirty

Mulelists but hundreds of members of the local nationalist youth joined them. All the characteristics of the peasant masses could be found in the war waged by the Mulelists. They launched massive attacks, the way their ancestors did, with total contempt for the rules of modern warfare. The peasants fought with the only weapons they could master: spears, arrows and machetes. They believed that magic rituals made them invulnerable. If Mobutu's soldiers panicked, it was mostly because they felt the general hostility of a nationalist people.

"They are invulnerable.. Let's flee!"

A pupil on holiday witnessed a fight in Kibangula, between Kabambare and Kasongo. Several dozens of Mobutist soldiers were taken by surprise, during their siesta, by Mulelists. "By the time they stood up and found their rifles and their cartridge-belts, the "Mulele" were 400 yards away. Then came a kind of continuous thunder. The 'Mausers' were firing, the machine-guns and the automatic weapons were shooting a hail of bullets. But the horde was moving forward, inexorably. The soldiers were firing, constantly. Defying the bullets, the "Mulele" moved towards them, singing or shouting "Mulele mai, Mulele mai, Mulele". The gendarmes started to doubt the efficiency of their weapons. The distance lessened: 200 yards, 150 and panic increasingly took hold of our gendarmes. A hundred yards! Now they could see the rebels through the smoke of the shooting. All kinds of grasses and banana or palm leaves were hanging round their waists. These grasses covered their trousers. Branches set in their belts gave them a wilder and fiercer look. Their chests and arms were covered with animal skins.

While they were marching, their head-dresses, made of feathers and animal skins looked like lion's manes. Bott-

les and packs of "dama" (magic medicine) around their necks and belts oscillated rhythmically with their steps. As weapons they brandished spears whose sharp blades were shining because of constant sharpening. Others waved heavy clubs, head-breakers. But all of them had a machete at their belt.

The Mulele were a hundred yards away. Very close. It gave the soldiers the shudders. Suddenly the shooting stopped. Only the songs of the rebels could be heard. There was some hesitation. Then the same idea came to the mind of our gendarmes "They are invulnerable... Let's flee!" (Rebellions au Congo II Verhaegen-Crisp p.298). The war waged by the Mulelists in 1964-1965 was indeed a people's war. The duty of every revolutionary was to take the side of the people while giving a political and scientific education to the peasants and to the workers. The third congress of the "Union Générale des Etudiants Congolais" took place in October 1966. For the first time, this Congress expressed the will of Congolese intellectuals to engage themselves on the road traced by Marx, Lenin and Mao Zedong. However, while they denounced the mercenaries and neocolonialism, they refused to come down on the side of the popular uprising. Mao Zedong had already described a similar situation at the beginning of the Chinese revolution: when "savage" peasants struggles started in Hunan province, the opportunists criticized their "exaggerations" While the revolutionaries whole-heartedly supported this struggle of the fundamental classes of the people.

Endeavour towards the creation of a revolutionary political leadership.

The strength of the 1964 popular movement was the commitment of wide masses of workers and peasants to the struggle. Its weakness was the ab-

scence of a revolutionary political leadership.

Mulele was one of the few who understood that the peasants had to be organized and given a political training in order to lay a solid ground for armed struggle. Already in August 1963 he created camps in the forest where he trained cadres for the future uprising. His movement had a double structure: partisan camps were set up next to each village in the forest; in the village itself, the most combative people representing the masses were grouped in "village committees". These committees judged disputes, stimulated production, checked supply to the partisans and organized the people from the village for weekly political education meetings.

In the East, Soumialot had given some training to the first group of fighters. A Congolese barrister who lived two months under the revolutionary regime in Uvira said on November 12th 1964: "In Uvira, after two weeks of the new regime, the population was happier. It was the Mulelist activists who played an essential role in this social revolution. They controlled prices on the markets, settled the palavers and decided penalties. Since the trucks were only for provisioning, they commandeered cars for public services, gave passes and favoured trade with Bujumbura. The people were working and cultivating the land and the Mulelists never seemed to lack money". (Congo 64, p.59)

The limitations of revolutionary nationalism.

In the East, the revolutionaries' efforts were concentrated on the setting up of the People's Liberation Army. In a few months, this army moved forward over hundreds of miles chasing the Mobutist troops. The latter were excellent at the military manoeuvre called "panic-stricken flight". In the vast liberated territories no political organization was created. This vacuum was filled by two types of organisations: the "youths" - spontaneous groups without ideology of young people revolted by the neo-colonial order, and the MNC-Lumumba. The popular uprising gave power to the nationalist leaders who had entered the MNC-L in 1960-1961. They had no plan of social revolution. They did not go beyond the limits of revolutionary nationalism. They wanted the Congo to be governed by true nationalists. Well-being would come when Lumumbists governed. The role of the popular masses was essentially to put these good leaders into power. People from all social classes could be found, and actually were found, behind this nationalist flag: reactionaries using the MNC-L in order to eliminate rivals; bourgeois elements like Gbenye and Malembe aspiring to power in order to develop a national capitalism or radical petit-bourgeois like Soumialot and Olenga jumping into the revolutionary struggle with neither a program nor even a clear outlook.

The day of the kernel of revolutionaries who had been able to

lead the revolution in Uvira-Fizi-Baraka was completely over. There was no force capable of training, shaping or bringing under control the popular movement that was unfurling.

So, all the influences, all the trends of the old society tried to express themselves inside the revolutionary movement. One could see the development of anarchy and lack of discipline, of abuses and looting, of arbitrariness and corruption.

When Olenga was in Kindu, he was able to enforce a revolutionary discipline. Simbas, arrested for stealing and looting, were shot and the money, the chicken or the fabrics they had stolen were displayed on their dead bodies. When Olenga was gone, the bad trends came back.

The defeat of the uprising was the defeat of the political leadership of revolutionary nationalism. This ideology showed its inability to face neo-colonialism politically and militarily. After reaching the limits of its possibilities, the MNC-L dispersed itself into twenty or so political groups. And nostalgia will not put them back together. There must come a new kind of party whose essential goal is the mobilization, the organization and the education of peasants and workers. This is the sole foundation for a victorious liberation war. This must be a party with a scientific thought; a party that understands the positions of the various social classes in the struggle against neo-colonialism; a party that is able to assimilate the historical experiences of the anti-imperialist revolutions of the past.

How to lead a People's Uprising to Defeat

The two attacks on Bukavu

During the 1964 uprising, the brilliant victories of the Lumumbist forces carried the germs of future defeats. Albertville was liberated on June 18th, Kindu on July 22nd, Stanleyville, capital of Lumumbism, on August 5th. These rejoicing cities were to become the graveyards of the uprising. When Mulele heard that Stanleyville had been taken, he sadly confided to his excited aides that it was very bad news indeed.

The revolution was progressing too easily. It had the almost unanimous support of the nationalist population and was able to take advantage of the spectacular collapse of Mobutu's "invincible" army. The bourgeois nationalist leaders of the MNC-L like Gbenye saw the proof of their own perspicacity in this collapse: the narrow political circles of Léopoldville would soon have to accept the fact that MNC-L would form the next national government.

It did not occur to these leaders, in the flush of their victory, to set up or reinforce revolutionary organisations among the peasants, nor to prepare the masses for a long drawn-out war and for the sacrifices demanded by any national, social liberation struggle.

Gbenye hastily proclaimed himself President of the Republic in Stanleyville in the firm conviction that Leopoldville would soon have the privilege of welcoming him in this guise. But Stanleyville proved to be a terrible trap. The revolutionary forces concentrated both their army and their political leadership there. They thus provided easy targets for the Belgian and American colonels, who launched attacks by groups of well-trained troops with unassailable firepower to seek out the careless revolutionaries.

War tactics in the Congo were traditionally those of attacks in compact mass formation. The leaders' ambition to have a "real" army incited them to lump the fighters together in one huge battalion. It was thus that the nucleus of the People's Liberation Army was shattered in the course of two misguided attacks on Bukavu. The first battle took place between August 14th and 21st. Eight hundred guerillas were to enter the city by stealth and liberate it from the inside; at the same time a column of a thousand fighters was to attack the Mobutist garrison. However, the revolutionaries had neither the technical means nor the necessary experience to co-ordinate such complex operations.

On August 15th the Mobutist troops noticed the guerillas coming into the city in little groups. The result was a massacre. The column led by Olenga attacked and occupied the city on August 18th. His units then spread out into the city. Incapable of mustering his troops again or fixing priority targets, Olenga watched his men fall to the guns of mercenaries and white settlers. The retreat was chaos: every man for himself. For three days Mulamba's troops hunted out and killed those revolutionaries who were unable to flee the city.

One lesson, however, was not enough: the second attack was even more disastrous. September 29th: Olenga collected all his best equipment: forty lorries, two machine-guns mounted on jeeps, mortars, grenade-guns against armoured cars and automatic weapons. All of which could have been put to very good use by guerillas, but was lost in this poor imitation of regular warfare. Only half the two thousand fighters survived this fiasco.

The column, too noisy and too visible, was bombed by four T-28 planes before falling into an ambush, professionally laid by white mercenaries. The Mulelist leaders were not lacking in bravery. They had, however, received no political education in the experience of victorious liberation wars.

Guerilla warfare can be carried on only when the political consciousness and organisation of the people has reached a certain point. Guerillas must train by taking part in any number of small-scale armed attacks. They must aim at victories that are within their reach and then go all out to achieve them. It is only when political and military conditions are favourable that the setting up of larger armed detachments can be considered. By leaving out these essential steps the Mulelists were doomed to defeat, in spite of their courage and the support of the peasant and working-class masses.

"Wonderfull guerilla country..."

The leaders of the revolution had no strategic conception of guerilla warfare, of people's warfare and they did not train the Simbas for the sole type of warfare where they had a chance of success.

From September on, Vandewalle was openly preparing his expedition to Kamina: Gbenye and Olenga knew where the attack would come from and the form it would take but they were unable to work out a military strategy capable of countering it.

In his memoirs Vandewalle recounts:

"No effective counter-measure, easy enough over a distance of 1000 miles, was taken to stop the advance. Not a bridge, not a ferry was destroyed. We found all the shelters of the munitions depot on Stanleyville's left bank intact. They were crammed with projectiles of all kinds, and explosives, including mines." (Omegang, p. 259)

Jean Kestergat, reporter with "La Libre Belgique" (Conservative Catholic daily) took part in Vandewalle's march from Kindu to Stanleyville. He writes:

"The road wound through the forest, plunged down towards the rivers, climbed up steep slopes. The seventy Lima I vehicules advanced at a fair speed. It would have been wonderful guerilla country.

If the rebels had wanted to, they could have stopped us with no difficulty. We had to cross countless wooden bridges that the road approached with snake-like caution. Blowing up a bridge with a handgrenade, setting a bazooka at the first bend, waiting for the convoy, destroying an enemy lorry, then quickly disappearing and beginning the operation all over again at the next bridge would have been child's play for well-organised guerillas with a minimum of audacity. But the enemy was not well-organised." (Congo '64, p.375)

...given revolutionary leadership

In spite of the lack of military leadership the fighters themselves devised policies in some places.

On November 20th they organised an ambush sixty miles from Kambare. Two mercenaries and thirty Mobutists were killed and the Belgian leader of the Papa column, André Protin, seriously injured.

On December 20th Major Génis and Lieutenant Glorieux

were killed in an ambush on the outskirts of Paulis. In "Le Soir" of October 28th, 1964, Jacques Cordy had observed that in certain places revolutionaries were already operating in groups of 15 to 20 men, that they were well-disciplined, knew how to use automatic hand-guns and had adopted a policy of systematic harassment.

All this shows that genuinely revolutionary political leadership was the only thing to transform the will to freedom into a people's war which would have made of the Congo a second Vietnam for the forces of imperialism.

"... we used white hostages for a bit of blackmail..."

On November 18th 10.000 demonstrators, made furious by the bombings, demanded radical measures against the mercenaries.

Gbenye tried to calm them with a sickeningly parliamentary speech: "Mr. Jomo Kenyatta is aiming at negotiating with the American Government with a view to finding common ground for a possible exchange of prisoners of war and an end to US delivery of arms and mercenaries to Tshombe's government. I propose that you postpone the execution of the mercenary, Paul Carlson, for four days."

The "policy" of taking hostages revealed the false radicalism of the bourgeois nationalists. It was wonderfully useful in the hate-campaign

against the blacks, which the imperialists used to prepare public opinion for military intervention. In addition it canalised the masses' will to fight towards absurd aims like the execution of a few Belgians and Americans. Gbenye spread the illusion that imperialism would give way to this bluff.

The same day (November 18th) Kindu was occupied by Vandewalle's army. 10.000 patriots, burning with the desire to avenge their dead, reported to their leaders. The leaders should have cared about only one thing: training these thousands of Lumumbists for guerilla warfare, for people's resistance to the rapidly advancing mercenaries.

When the Belgian commandos were dropped on Stanleyville, Gbenye and other opportunist leaders deserted and fled abroad. The people of Stanleyville and the area roundabout took part in spontaneous guerilla fighting that lasted almost two years. There were persistent rumours about Gbenye's betrayal. In "Le Monde" of January 1st 1966 Jean Ziegler wrote:

"it now seems certain that Christophe Gbenye, president of the rebel government, was captured by a National Army unit shortly after the dropping of Belgian paratroopers on Stanleyville. Gbenye was immediately released and led to the Uganda border under an escort of Congolese soldiers belonging to the battalion of Léonard Mulamba."

Gbenye : The Ambition which stifled a Revolution

In July 1963, Pierre Mulele returned secretly to the Congo, convinced that only a people's war could free the country from neo-colonial domination. In discussing his plans with the Lumumbist leaders, he came up against fierce opposition from Christophe Gbenye, President of the MNC-L, the man who liked being called "Lumumba's spiritual heir" and who a few months later was to have himself called "the unchallenged leader of the armed struggle". In the meantime he proclaimed loudly that Lumumba had preached non-violence... Mulele left for the province of Kwilu, followed by a handful of genuine revolutionaries. In a small village near Idiofa, five men met to create the National Council of Liberation (CNL): Pierre Mulele, Léonard Mituidi, Thomas Mukwidi, Félix Mukulubundu, and Théodore Benguila. Mukwidi was sent to visit the different provinces of the Congo in order to create secret cells; Mituidi was instructed to contact the governments and the peoples of Africa.

Léopoldville was witnessing the triumphal march of neo-colonialism. On September 29th, 1963, Kasa-Vubu dissolved Parliament and the Lumumbist leaders were arrested. In spite of himself Gbenye was now stuck in the revolutionary camp. In order to become Prime Minister he was thus obliged to make a detour in Mulele's company. On October 3rd, Gbenye and Mukwidi signed the CNL Manifesto, which bears the imprint of Gbenye's ambitions: "The CNL proclaims the immediate setting-up of a Provisional Government of Public Safety, composed of national, honest and competent elements. This Government will have as its sole task the preparation of parliamentary elections to be held in four months time." (Congo '63, p.234)

Gbenye had no revolutionary intentions whatever: he cared only about becoming Prime Minister and believed only in parliamentary government.

Revolution v. Opportunism

On April 15th 1964 the CNL published its "Action Programme", which, as far as its political and ideological contents went, was streets ahead of any other political document originating in the Congo. To achieve that level of clear, revolutionary reasoning, however, citizen Gbenye had first to be got rid of. The discussions about the programme dragged on from October 1963 to January 1964 to end in breaking-point.

What were the principal points of disagreement? The leaders of the African Solidary Party (PSA), grouped round Pierre Mulele, had traced a revolutionary way from July 1963 on. They wanted to guarantee the revolutionary character of both the programme and the organisation of the CNL.

Gbenye, who viewed the MNC-L as his personal property, was of the opinion that the leadership should fall to "the glorious party of the martyr Patrice-Eméry Lumumba, the MNC-L", in other words to him, Gbenye and his henchmen.

The PSA leaders declared that a revolutionary line could emerge only as a result of self-criticism of the opportunism which had so ravaged the Lumumbist ranks since 1961. Gbenye was opposed. The revolutionaries who knew about Gbenye's past well understood why he refused.

In 1959 Patrice Lumumba had acquired immense popularity in Stanleyville, in spite of being a "foreigner". Gbenye, who came from Stanleyville, considered the town to be his fief. He saw Lumumba's triumph as a personal insult. In his tribalistic mind a secret hatred of the intruder began to take root.

In 1959, when the colonisers wanted to get rid of Lumumba by sending him to prison for "embezzlement", Gbenye was the main witness for the prosecution. After Lumumba was assassinated by the coalition of neo-colonialist forces who went by the name of Tshombé, Munongo, Mobutu, Kasa-Vu-

bu and Adoula, the legal Government withdrew to Stanleyville under the leadership of Gizenga.

Reconciliation with Lumumba's assassins

Only a few months later the Gbenyes agreed to be reconciled to the assassins and on August 2nd 1961 Gbenye became Minister of the Interior in the Adoula Government. Gizenga, an honest nationalist but hardly perspicacious, allowed himself to be boxed in in the same Government. When he tried to withdraw, vengeance fell on his head: on January 13th 1962 Adoula ordered his arrest, arrest countersigned by the Minister of the Interior, Gbenye...

Mulele had thus few illusions about Gbenye's revolutionary capabilities. On April 16th, 1964, after the split, Gbenye was to write: "We have no relations with the communists, whoever they are."

This instinctive aversion for revolutionaries had its counterpart in a propensity for counter-revolutionaries. Gbenye, spiritual heir of Lumumba, approached Tshombé, the real assassin of Lumumba, with a view to reconciliation. The result was a document signed in Madrid on February 23rd 1964:

"Considering that there are good reasons... to restore an atmosphere of trust, security and mutual understanding.

We, the CNL... and Mr. Tshombé, General President of the Conakat... have decided... to form a revolutionary Government immediately charged with setting up national institutions... (Congo '64, p.137)

Once again Gbenye was in a hurry to become a Government Minister. He presented Tshombé, Lumumba's assassin, as trustworthy and even a possible future Minister. And when Tshombé pushed the joke to the point of setting himself up in judgement of Lumumba's assassins, Gbenye applauded and declared: "Mr. Tshombé has just openly de-

nounced the responsibility of Mr. Adoula in the death of Patrice Lumumba." (Congo '64, p.48)

The shameful flight of Gbenye

As early as February 1964, members of the MNC-L had been waging armed struggle in the Eastern Congo. Their president, Gbenye, quietly stayed abroad until August 23rd. Before coming to Stanleyville as a liberator, he made a secret visit to Brussels. On August 22nd, Gbenye had two conversations with Spaak in the Ardennes hills in Belgium. Spaak quickly summed him up: Gbenye was a man who could be bought.

"He appeared to be neither intelligent nor shrewd (...) But he seemed to be willing to listen to advice and able to be brought round to sane conceptions." (Spaak quoted by Vandewalle, Ommegang p.105) Colonel Vandewalle remarks on the same page: "Before leaving Brussels, Gbenye had a meeting with a CIA-man, Mr. Devlin, who had represented US secret services in Leopoldville in 1960. He was to go back there in 1964."

As soon as he arrived in Stanleyville and without consulting the fighters of Kwilu nor those of Northern Katanga, Gbenye hastily proclaimed himself President of the People's Republic.

Once President, Gbenye wanted to be the only sun in the sky. He gave orders that the CNL, the united front of nationalist parties which were organising and politicising the masses, was no longer to be mentioned. Soumialot, unwilling to

commit suicide, opposed the order. The position was patiently re-explained to him: "Since a people's Government has been set up and exercises power in the Liberated areas, talking about a National Council of Liberation in these areas would mean slowing up the actual course of events." (Congo '64, p.300)

When the Belgian paratroopers jumped on Stanleyville, Gbenye shamefully fled. In April 1965 there was a conference of all the revolutionary leaders in Cairo. Gbenye, sure the others would almost unanimously vote against him, decided to boycott the conference in order to safeguard his title as unchallenged leader and President of the People's Republic...

A few months later, this President was to prostitute himself in the rich residential area, saying:

"Calm and political stability will be impossible in the Congo as long as the imperialists do not understand that only the nationalists are capable of controlling the Congolese people."

"The revolution is not against financiers nor against foreigners who have invested in the Congo." (19th October 1965, Congo '65, p.198)

The dilemma of the patriotic bourgeoisie

The fall of Gbenye meant the end of a historical period. Nationalism, supported as it was by all social classes, could guide the revolution as long as the main question was to drive out the colonisers. The MNC-L had accomplished this task. But when the MNC-L, with this same programme, wanted to

lead a genuine people's revolution against neo-colonialism, they headed for disaster. The economic programme of the MNC-L was clearly condensed in the phrase: "The wealth of the Congo must be used for the benefit of the people of the Congo and not for that of unscrupulous foreigners whose sole aim is to spoliage the wealth of the Congo" (Congrès provincial Bukavu, Congo '63, p.228)

This was the programme which enabled the genuinely nationalist bourgeoisie - whose economic base was in fact weak - to fight against neo-colonialism. The experience of 1964-1965 had shown that imperialism could only be destroyed by a long people's war, which would be able to mobilise and organise the entire working and peasant classes as well as patriotic intellectuals. The patriotic bourgeoisie had neither the programme, nor the organisation, nor the strategy necessary to accomplish this kind of revolution. The bourgeoisie had fundamental contradictions with the workers and the peasants and was therefore unable to mobilise them completely. Part of this bourgeoisie was continuously faced with the dilemma: was it not possible to get rich quicker and sooner by making a deal with one or other of the imperialist forces? The opportunism and capitulation of Gbenye were the expression of the position of an entire social class which found itself at the head of a people's revolution only to be completely outstripped by the movement.

Those who painted Marxism in the Heart of Africa

Belgium had not only seized Congolese territory, she had also colonised the minds of Congolese people. Until 1959 Belgium had managed to avoid all contact between the "advanced" Congolese and socialist and revolutionary ideas, Malula, a kind of NCO in the colonial religious hierarchy, attacked Marxism in 1960 for being an imported ideology, incompatible with the deep-rooted realities of the Bantu soul. The white settlers, who had eagerly imported everything that made the misfortunes of the blacks - from slavery to racism and economic exploitation - now furiously attacked an ideology qualified with the insulting word "imported". That was enough to arouse the interests of the genuine nationalists.

Pierre Mulele was the first Congolese leader, as early as 1960, to send young people to Europe and China to get to know revolutionary socialist thought. It was to the extent that revolutionary nationalism of the MNC-L kind revealed itself more and more clearly to be incapable of leading a people's revolution against neo-colonialism that there appeared little groups of cadres everywhere who were taking to Marxism-Leninism, the only doctrine capable of facing the problems brought about by imperialism.

Political Education in Gambona.

When Mulele came back from China in July 1963 he gathered round him some ten revolutionary leaders inspired by Marxism-Leninism. Felix Mukulubundu was to be in charge of organising education in the camps situated in Congo-Brazzaville. "les Cahiers de Gambona" (Notebooks from Gambona) published by the CRISP, contain notes taking during these educational meetings. The character of the revolution was already clearly defined: "Struggle against imperialism is the basic, the cen-

tral task of the revolution, but we should also note that the democratic revolution must not be sacrificed even if it remains of secondary importance. We have to link them together, we have to bring about a National Democratic Revolution." (p.14) The revolution was to be directed against imperialism and against those black wind-screens who masked the domination of international capitalism. "The big bourgeoisie, called bureaucratic or comprador bourgeoisie, gets its wealth from the state-apparatus (high government officials and politicians) or else from trade with foreign capitalists or from posts in the administration of imperialist businesses." (p.17) The "Cahiers" indicate the necessity of creating a Marxist-Leninist party; they declare that the peasants form the fundamental mass of the revolutionary forces and the working-class their leading force.

The most original part is dedicated to criticism of tribalism and individualism, two evils which caused considerable damage to the revolution of 1964. "Imperialism and neo-colonialism continuously fan hatred and rivalry between tribes. One moment they tell the members of one tribe: you outnumber the others, you are richer, it's up to you to lead the Congo. The next they chant to the others: You are more intelligent, you should be leading the country." "The struggle against tribalism demands the following political measures: struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism beside which tribalism constitutes only a secondary enemy; so priority has to be given to the struggle against all forms of foreign domination and oppression. But at the same time the struggle for real recognition of all civil rights and public liberties for all citizens, whatever tribe they belong to." The document stresses that only the assimilation and the strict application of Marxist-Leninist party rules could ever eliminate that terrible disease called

out-and-out individualism. "The struggle for influence mainly consists of using all possible means to build up one's reputation and establish one's prestige and authority at the expense of others and in contempt of truth and justice. In political organisations the struggle for influence is used to get or maintain a leading position or to establish and strengthen personal power." (p.53, 54, 57). The "Cahiers" reveal the efforts made by the first generation of revolutionaries to acquire the basics of the theory of scientific socialism. These texts were, inevitably, often far too general: the principles and methods of Marxism had first to be assimilated before they could be linked to day-to-day revolutionary practice in the Congo.

The UGEC, from Mao to Mobutu

Certain declarations of the General Union of Congolese Students (UGEC) also bore witness to the growing influence of Marxism. The Third Congress of the UGEC, held in 1966, remarked:

'National liberation movements carry the germs of the final triumph of scientific socialism over capitalism in their bosoms; they confirm the rightness and the scientific accuracy of historical materialism conceived and worked out by Marx and Engels, verified and enriched by Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung in the light of practice.' Unfortunately this last light was not shining on the leaders of the UGEC: they did not recognize the revolutionary role of the peasants and the working masses and stood apart from the people's uprising, with the result that they were unable to grasp the real, practical significance of Marxism-Leninism, to which they claimed to adhere. Prisoners of their typically petty-bourgeois hesitations, most of the leaders went over to Mobutu's side.

Léonard Mitudidi

Léonard Mitudidi was one of the first Congolese intellectuals to commit himself resolutely to the revolution. He saved the honour of Congolese students at the moment the great majority of them were openly selling themselves to Belgian and American imperialism. At the end of 1960, at the same time that the Bombokos were offering their services to Mobutu, Léonard Mitudidi, then a student at the Sorbonne, came to Stanleyville in order to join the Lumumbist forces. In August 1963 he helped Mulele form the first group of partisans in Kwilu province. In 1964 Mulele sent him to the East where he became Chief of General Staff to the troops commanded by Kabila. While there he was tireless in his propaganda for Marxist ideas. At the Conference of the National Liberation Council in Cairo in April 1963 he played an important role in maintaining the unity of the movement and neutralising the baleful influence of the Gbenye group. On 7 June 1965 at the age of 30 Léonard Mitudidi was killed in a shipping accident on Lake Tanganyika.

L'Eclair ("The Flash of Lightning") and the PRP

The newspaper "L'Eclair" was published abroad from 1965 to 1968 by Congolese revolutionary students. Its aim was to contribute to the construction of the Party. "Revolutionary cadres and fighters, workers, peasants, intellectuals and students, firmly united with the popular masses in their day-to-day practice, must pursue the aim of arming themselves with Marxist-Leninist theory and practice, being linked to the people and exercising self-criticism.

They should constitute small vanguard groups composed of elements totally dedicated to revolution and to the people and with an absolutely unified point of view on the liberation of the Congolese people through armed struggle as the principal form of struggle." ("L'Eclair" n 12, April 1967). On 24 December 1967 Laurent Kabila and his comrades of the Eastern Front created the Marxist-Leninist inspired Party of People's Revolution (PRP). Gabriel Yumbu, who had stood by Lumumba and Mulele from 1959 on, one of the most remarkable leaders of the 1964 uprising, became vice-president. On 7 May 1973 the secret services of the Mobutist Embassy in Dar-Es-Salaam, directed by Ilangwa-E-Yoka, arrested Yumbu on a train 65 miles from Dar-Es-Salaam and murdered him.

The Mulelists' self-criticism and evaluation of three years of struggle

On 3 October 1966 the Mulele united front published an evaluation of three years of struggle. It contained a thorough self-criticism, an exceptional event in the Congo.

"The first fundamental cause of our successive failures lies in the fact that we did not mobilise or organise the people sufficiently".

"We must first go to the people, live with them and fight alongside them in order to know their problems, their difficulties, their demands, as well as to make a thorough enquiry into their lives. Only after this work is done can we draw up a programme and launch the policy keynotes which translate the objective realities of our country."

"The second fundamental cause of our failures was the

absence of an organisation and of a unified and homogeneous leading core, real vanguard of our liberation struggle, totally dedicated to the cause of the revolution and sincerely attached to the interests of the people."

"It is not possible for us to win easily and rapidly. It is important we should have a clear view of this problem; otherwise we run the risk of making serious strategic and tactical mistakes. We cannot simply light a straw fire."

"The problem of the cadres, which was posed in an acute way, was the third cause of our temporary failure. We stubbornly go on with our revolutionary sight-seeing, running round the capitals of the world, when the triumph of the revolution rests entirely upon the practical work of the cadres inside the country, mobilising and organising the people."

"It is important to pay serious attention to worker and student organisations which form the vanguard of the struggle of the masses in the towns. Since this problem did not receive enough attention from us, it became the fourth cause of our failure. An armed struggle which is not sustained by nor combined with political struggle in the towns and in the regions occupied by the enemy is usually bound to fail."

At the end of the insurrectional movement of 1966 it was clear that all over the country small groups of fighters were putting forward the question of the formation of a Marxist-Leninist party. But the revolutionary forces were already too exhausted. The task was not accomplished. From now on, however, the task is facing the next generation of revolutionaries.

(1) *L'Ommegang, Vandewalle, collection témoignage africain, pages 224, 216, 146, 243, 438, 201, 150, 204.*

(2) *Les nouveaux mercenaires, ed. France Empire, p 14, 120.*

(3) *Congo 1965, page 457.*