

THE CONGO COMPROMISE

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EVEN though one should no longer be surprised at events in the Congo, developments in this former Belgian colony at the beginning of August must have astonished a great many people. Events unrolled as though there had never been a year of anarchy, of civil war, of political assassinations, and of dictatorship. Previously irreconcilable enemies were reunited in the best of parliamentary traditions, deliberated together, elected the administrative officers of both Houses, and gave their confidence to a government whose head had been proposed by the President of the Republic.

All this undoubtedly constitutes a posthumous victory for Patrice Lumumba who, until his tragic death, ceaselessly demanded the meeting of parliament. Twice, after his removal last September by President Kasavubu, the Houses had given him their vote of confidence, explicitly condemning the steps taken by the Head of State. Twice, anti-Lumumbist forces had claimed that the votes had been faked. But the extended parliamentary recess had clearly shown that the accusers did not believe in their own accusations. It is now confirmed: the Lumumbists have consistently held the majority inside parliament.

The coalition government established at Leopoldville on 2 August is not the one of which Patrice Lumumba dreamed. The Presidency and the key portfolios of Defence, of Foreign Affairs, of Finance and of Information are not in the hands of his supporters. On the other hand, the Lumumbist bloc enjoys a large majority within the heart of the cabinet and, as well as the two Vice-Presidencies (Gizenga and Sendwe), possesses the important Ministries of the Interior and of Justice. In addition, the nationalists have no reason to feel distress at the choice of Cyrille Adoula as Prime Minister. Minister of the Interior under the Ileo régime, he had never stained his hands with the blood of his adversaries. What is still more important, he has declared himself to be a unitarian at home and a neutralist abroad, so accepting the essential stand of the Lumumbists.

In order to obtain these more or less satisfactory results, the Congolese nationalists have been compelled to make several

concessions. They had from the first to accept the University of Lovanium as the meeting-place of parliament, although the Kamina base, originally proposed by Mr. Gizenga, offered better security guarantees. They gave their support to the principle of a coalition government although they might have hoped, on parliamentary arithmetic, for a homogeneous Lumumbist Cabinet. Finally, they recognised the authority of President Kasavubu as legitimate Head of State, so sacrificing the dismissal of the man they had accused of having helped in the assassination of Lumumba.

When I met Antoine Gizenga in Stanleyville last March, the Congolese leader seemed very far from accepting such a compromise, and showed himself anything but conciliatory towards the "criminal clique" in Leopoldville. His reasoning was simple. "My government", he told me in effect, "is the only one to have obtained investiture by parliament. It is therefore the only legitimate one. Kasavubu has usurped power, violated the constitution and had the leading patriots assassinated. He had put himself outside the law."

In the absolute, this reasoning could have been defended. It did not, however, correspond to Congo realities in 1961. The Stanleyville government was isolated geographically and controlled—and then incompletely—only two of the six provinces in the country, Orientale and Kivu. It was incapable of extending its power by military means, as had been demonstrated last March when units had tried to 'occupy' Kasai and Equator Provinces. Nor could it count upon substantial foreign help, because of the blockade imposed in the North by the Sudan and the Central African Republic, in the East by Ruanda Urundi, and in the West by the Leopoldville régime.

On the other hand, let us suppose for a moment that the Lumumbists, taking advantage of their parliamentary majority, had installed a homogeneous nationalist government. What would have happened? It is probable that the Lower Congo, dominated by the *Abako* party of President Kasavubu, would have proclaimed its secession. Other regions, under the influence of tribal chiefs, discontented at having been excluded from power, would almost certainly have followed suit. In the same way General Mobutu, supported by foreign forces, would not have slept and, as a year ago, the army would have fallen prey to mutinies and divisions, opening the way to a new civil war. Even less than the government of Patrice Lumumba, that of

Antoine Gizenga, however "legitimately elected", would have been incapable of re-establishing the imperative unity of the Congo.

The Lumumbist representatives measured the existing balance of power at its true value and did not wish to repeat the mistakes of their vanished leader, mistakes which had ended by costing him his life.

The fundamental fault of Patrice Lumumba was not to have realised that the Congo—having emerged from colonial rule in circumstances of such unpreparedness, amidst intrigue and even sabotage—was not the Guinea of Sékou Touré, the Ghana of Kwame Nkrumah, or the Egypt of Gamal Abdul Nasser. He thought it sufficient to fight Belgian colonialism, to defend the unity of his country, to declare himself for positive neutralism, in order for the people of the Congo to rise as a man in his support.

That the Congolese should oppose the splintering of their country seems obvious to us. It is true that three-quarters of the population still live under more or less tribal rule. It is true that some hundred tribes of four different races share a territory as large as the whole of Western Europe. But 80 years of Belgian colonialism have done their work, and this State—entirely created by explorers and industrial companies—has evolved features which make of it a relatively coherent national whole. Subordinated to a single code of laws, attending the same Belgian schools, missionary or secular, participating in a common economic life, jostling against the same Belgian colonial administration, the Congolese tribes have finally acquired a national character distinctively theirs, different from that prevailing, for instance, in either the formerly French Congo or Northern Rhodesia.

Congolese of all races work side by side in factories, live in the same urban centres, are lost in the heart of the army, where they speak the same language—Lingala. Three other languages have firmly established themselves in the country—Kiswahili, Kiluba, and Kikongo. It might be well to remember here that in Belgium, for example, a territory 90 times smaller than the Congo, two very different cultures still live side by side in the heart of the same nation.

The determining factor of Congolese unity, however, is the economic interdependence of the territory's different regions. 16,000 kms. of navigable waterways, two maritime ports, three

large interior ports, 5,000 kms. of railway, 150,000 kms. of road, 30,000 kms. of internal air routes, and less than a handful of Belgian financial trusts to exploit all the country's resources, have finally stirred together in the same pot the peoples who make up contemporary Congo. The Congolese recognise instinctively that their nourishment and their well-being depend on the maintenance of Congolese unity.

Is it not significant, in this connection, that the federal parties, although of tribal inspiration, should never seriously have promoted secession? On the contrary, the congress of the cartel of federalist parties held at Kisantu in December 1959 had condemned "all manifestation of tribalism or of regionalism, and separationist designs likely to undermine the integrity and unity of the national territory within its geographical boundaries". Even Mr. Tshombe, who secretly planned with his Belgian friends the secession of Katanga, was to congratulate himself at the Brussels round table conference of January 1960 that the 'fundamental law' elaborated there would permit "the independent Congo of tomorrow to escape the disintegration with which it is threatened".

Fighting the federalist tendencies, Lumumba had set himself to court the many ethnic minorities—which constitute some 60% of the population—by making them feel that their security and their liberties would be better assured in a unitary state than in semi-autonomous republics, where they would be at the mercy of ethnic majorities. This campaign reaped rapid rewards and, allying himself to other parties which shared his neutralist and Pan-African ideas, he ensured victory for his nationalist cartel at the pre-independence legislative elections of May 1960.

This success did not, however, make of him the uncontested leader of the Congo. He lacked the weapon of a Sékou Touré, for example: a large nationalist party with deep roots in the country, firm and disciplined, which could mobilise the masses for great political or economic battles. In Leopoldville itself, he was at the mercy of the Lower Congo and of President Kasavubu. In the interior, his supporters were totally unversed in those methods of popular struggle—demonstrations, strikes—which could have assisted him. Deprived of political leadership at local level, the population remained passive, paying heed to their more or less hostile traditional chiefs.

Despite these handicaps, Lumumba, in his ardour, in his

inexperience (he had less than three years of political struggle behind him), pitted himself against forces far stronger than his own. Passionately propagating his ideas, he ended by acquiring a powerful coalition of enemies: Belgium (well disposed towards him at first), the Belgian trusts (which he threatened with the thunderbolts of nationalisation), the Americans (terrified by his neutralist declarations and his plans to take possession of the Kamina and Kitona bases), the British, the French, the United Nations Secretariat, the 'moderate' African States.

Lumumba clearly over-estimated the bargaining power of neutralism, believing Soviet aid to be limitless, whereas such aid could only stretch to the extent that it did not lead to a third world war. On the other hand, he seems to have underestimated the enormous interests of the Western powers in the Congo, together with their determination to defend these interests at any cost. How could they, in effect, surrender without struggle the "geological disgrace" that is Katanga, the fortune in annual profits, the two ultra-modern military bases, and accept with a Lumumbist victory a fundamental change in the political balance not only of the Congo but of all Central Africa? The triumph of Lumumba would have served as an example to all the neighbouring territories of the Congo.

Lumumba's own errors of judgment or strategy do not reduce, however, in any way at all the responsibilities of the Great Powers for the Congo tragedy. The decision of Belgium, in particular, to send its paratroops into the Congo at the time of the mutiny in the Force Publique had the effect of pouring oil on fire. That act was a clear violation of Congolese sovereignty and opened the way to an internationalisation of the conflict. In addition, these military reinforcements contributed much more to securing the secession of Katanga than to preventing anti-European violence (which had in any case been exaggerated by the Belgian press for the sake of the cause). The other Western powers, following Belgium's example, did all they could to undermine Lumumba's authority, thus exasperating him further. Now supporting Moise Tshombe, now General Mobutu, now President Kasavubu, they contributed to prolonging a state of anarchy in the Congo. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, over-estimated the central government's capacity for action and supplied it with the material means for the undertaking of a military expedition against Katanga and South Kasai, the act which led directly to the fall of Lumumba.

The African States divided over support for Lumumba and so sustained the equivocal policy of the U.N. and of Mr. Hammarskjöld himself.

One cannot say in this connection that the part played by the Secretary-General of the United Nations has been particularly impressive. While he ought to have been openly and absolutely impartial, if only for the prestige of the international organisation in the uncommitted world, Mr. Hammarskjöld allowed himself to be swayed by his personal affinities. He never got on well with Patrice Lumumba. From the beginning he tended to ignore the Congolese Prime Minister, treating Mr. Tshombe as an equal, opposing by every means in his power an assault on Katanga secession (whereas now the U.N. Congo Command declares that it would not oppose an eventual "police expedition" by the government of Mr. Adoula against Elisabethville). During the clash between Lumumba and Kasavubu, when each attempted to deprive the other of office, he sided with Kasavubu against Lumumba, despite the votes of confidence won by the Congolese Prime Minister in both the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. He prevented Lumumba from using the national radio (Kasavubu had his declarations broadcast by Radio Brazzaville) and closed all the airports, thus hindering political and military action by the central government. He finally accommodated himself for many months to the 'military' régime of Mobutu and the government appointed by President Kasavubu, although these did not rest upon any parliamentary basis.

The tragic death of Lumumba, however, changed the situation altogether. Under the impact of world reaction, the Security Council voted on 21 February for a succession of resolutions favouring a return to legality. These required—1. The expulsion of all military, para-military and foreign political personnel from the Congo: 2. The opening of an investigation into the death of Lumumba and his companions, and the punishment of those responsible: 3. The convocation of parliament: 4. The reorganisation of the National Congolese Army, to prevent it from meddling further in the political affairs of the country. These resolutions are now at last being applied, with the sudden change of United Nations and Western policy in the Congo.

With Lumumbism beheaded, Belgium no longer really fears the nationalist tidal-wave which would have swept her away from all her possessions in the Congo. The Belgian financial houses, especially those whose investments are located outside

Katanga, have returned to their old unitarian conceptions and are hostile to an Elisabethville separatism which prejudices their interests. Even the Union Minière disclaims responsibility for the secession of Katanga. "A definite rupture between Leopoldville and Elisabethville", a director of the mining trust told me, "would deprive us of the use of the port of Matadi. There would then be only four possible outlets: Dar es Salaam, Lobito, Beira, and the Cape. Tanganyika will be independent before the end of the year, Angola and Mozambique are or will be at the mercy of African terrorists, and nationalist agitation has made a risk of the Rhodesias". The Union Minière now favours the economic unity of the Congo, precisely because this would allow it to use the port of Matadi and the lines of communication through the territory controlled by the central government.

The United States for its part, anxious not to compromise its relations with the Afro-Asian States—the vast majority of which are hostile to Mr. Tshombe and his friends—and fearful of encouraging a secession of the provinces controlled by the Lumumbists (which would then turn even more to the Eastern countries), has given its blessing to the reunification of the Congo.

The creation of a coalition government, fruit of a compromise between Congolese unitarians and federalists, has therefore been made possible by the convergence of East and West. This does not of course exclude—quite the contrary—second thoughts by either side. For the Kasavubists and their allies, it was a matter of peacefully absorbing the provinces of Orientale, Kivu and Katanga, and thus consolidating their tottering power. The Lumumbists had to emerge from their isolation before undertaking action necessary to extend their influence over the whole territory. In order to do this, they intend establishing the great nationalist party which Lumumba did not have time to establish—the *Parti National Africain-Lumumba (P.N.A.-L.)*—which will combine all the political forces of the Lumumbist Cartel.

It is with this instrument that the Congolese nationalists hope to consolidate the independence of their country in the economic as well as the political field.

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