

In a speech delivered in Ghana, Barack Obama talked about disease and conflict ravaging Africa. Then he said:

“It is easy to point fingers, and to pin the blame for these problems on others. Yes, a colonial map that made little sense bred conflict, and the West has often approached Africa as a patron, rather than a partner. But the West is not responsible for the destruction of the Zimbabwean economy over the last decade, or wars in which children are enlisted as combatants.” (July 11, 2009)

In actual fact, “the West” – European countries and the U.S. – have a long colonial past and neo-colonial present in Africa. And for centuries, and today, what this has meant for people throughout the African continent is economic destruction, poverty and misery.

The history of the Congo is only one example of this:

1. KING LEOPOLD’S GENOCIDE:

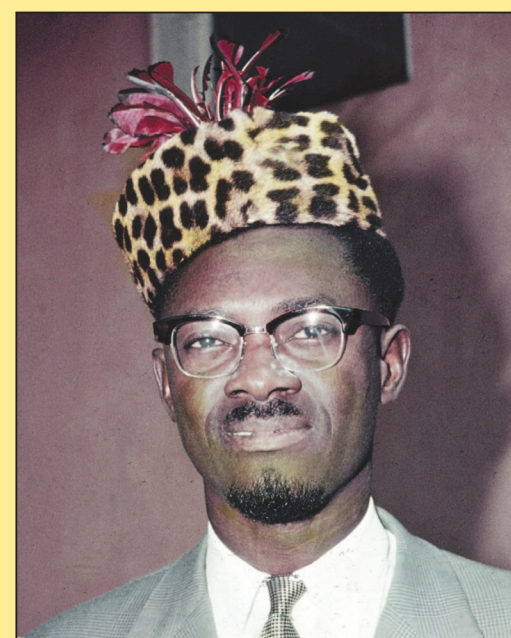
From the end of the 19th century through the turn of the 20th century, King Leopold II of Belgium ran the so-called Congo Free State as his private property, amassing an enormous fortune by turning most adult males into slaves to collect wild rubber and ivory from the jungle. The women and children were held hostages—their hands, noses and ears often chopped off when the men in their families did not meet their rubber quota or failed to return. For over 23 years, Leopold’s army forced hundreds of thousands of slaves to work in killing conditions where many died from exhaustion. Some 20 slave uprisings were put down with extreme bloodthirstiness. After the Belgians discovered gold in 1903, they worked thousands to death in gold mines. It has been estimated that about 10 million people out of a population of 20 million lost their lives under King Leopold’s barbarous rule.



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We Are Being Lied To About the *REAL* Cause of Africa’s Oppression and Suffering

2. THE ASSASSINATION OF PATRICE LUMUMBA:



Patrice Lumumba

In 1960, the Congo gained formal independence from Belgium. Patrice Lumumba, a popular nationalist leader and critic of colonialism, became the country’s first elected prime minister. The imperial powers who had dominated the Congo set out to remove Lumumba from power. The CIA worked to destabilize the country and recruit pro-U.S. forces within the army and government, including Joseph Mobutu. Mobutu, who had been a colonel in the Belgian colonial army, was later put in power. A memo by Allen Dulles, Director of the CIA, stated that Lumumba’s “removal must be an urgent and prime objective.” Mobutu staged a coup d’état and shortly afterwards, on October 10, Lumumba was arrested. After escaping and then being recaptured by Mobutu’s men, Lumumba was beaten, tortured and executed. It is now known that U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower ordered the assassination of Lumumba during a White House national security meeting in August 1960, less than two months after the Congo became independent. Just days before Lumumba was arrested, the Belgian Minister for African Affairs sent a cable to Katanga’s capital calling for the “definitive elimination” of Lumumba.

3. U.S. PUPPET MOBUTU:

After the murder of Lumumba, Joseph Mobutu came to power with the help of U.S.-supplied arms and money. The country’s name was changed to Zaire and became a U.S. neo-colony—a legally independent state dependent on and dominated by U.S. imperialism. U.S. companies began plundering the country’s wealth anew, while Mobutu enriched himself to the tune of \$5 billion. The country became a mainstay of U.S. interests in the region. The regime’s security apparatus used torture and murder to crush attempts at building rebel movements among the people over almost four decades until he was overthrown in 1997 by Laurent Kabila, a former supporter of Lumumba and guerrilla commander in the mid-1960s.



At the burial of a person killed in fighting between warring militias, 2003.

4. COLTAN AND CIVIL WAR:

Coltan is a composite mineral used to make micro circuits for cell phones and other handheld electronic devices. Coltan brings huge profits to companies like Sony, Motorola, Ericsson, Nokia, Hewlett-Packard, Compaq, Dell, Intel and IBM. The Congo holds 80 percent of the world’s coltan reserves. Coltan is mined in the Congo by super-exploited workers and in some instances slave labor. Think about the hundreds of millions of people around the world who are walking around with blood-soaked coltan in their cell phones and Sony Playstations.

Civil war in the 1990s in the Congo was fueled and financed by competing foreign powers, using local mercenary and government armies in which rape was a common weapon of domination and control. This cost the lives of over 5 million people—making it the deadliest conflict worldwide since World War 2. Competition over coltan perpetuated the civil war with fierce fighting between different groups over access to the mines in concession areas and trade or smuggling routes, as well as control over the mine workers, their work camps, and the “right” to extort protection money from the workers and prostitutes based in and around the camps.

Today there is a new scramble for great power control over the vast resources in Africa, including copper, cobalt, and titanium. In West Africa, the U.S., Western Europe and China are vying for control over oil resources and the U.S. has established a new Africa military command.

The horrible situation of war and poverty in Africa is actively shaped by the colonial past AND further heightened by the imperialist present. Obama’s argument that the West is not responsible for today’s poverty and wars is a lie!

The ruling powers in Africa—whether “democratically elected,” forcibly installed, or coming to power through coups—are all regimes dependent on and serving one or several imperialist powers. And imperialism uses these corrupt thieves and tyrants to extract untold wealth and riches, leaving behind unimaginable suffering.

Resources used for this centerfold are available on-line at www.revcom.us.

The essence of what exists in the U.S. is not democracy but capitalism-imperialism and political structures to enforce that capitalism-imperialism. What the U.S. spreads around the world is not democracy, but imperialism and political structures to enforce that imperialism.

Bob Avakian, Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA