

“Flee! The White Giants Are Coming!”: The United States, Mercenaries, and the Congo, 1964–1965

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On 14 August 1964, Carl Rowan, the prominent black journalist who was the director of the United States Information Agency, wrote President Lyndon B. Johnson that there was “a real danger that in saving the present situation in the Congo we . . . could lose the longer range struggle for all of Africa.” Rowan was writing in the midst of a crisis: on 5 August 1964, Stanleyville, the Congo’s third largest city, had fallen to rebels, and in Washington a national intelligence estimate on the Congo had predicted “a total breakdown in governmental authority.”¹

The Congo had become independent on 30 June 1960. Unprepared for self-government, it had fallen into anarchy a few days later and been sucked into the whirlwind of the Cold War. Over the next two years the communist bloc sent money and weapons to the Congo, but its interference there was very limited compared to that of the United States. In the summer of 1960 the Eisenhower administration had concluded that Patrice Lumumba, the country’s first prime minister, was an African Castro, a Soviet instrument. (Scholars now agree that he was in fact “a genuine nationalist, fanatical in his opposition to foreign control of the Congo.”) For U.S. officials, he was an enemy of the most dangerous type—charismatic and popular. It would not be enough to bring him down: he would have to be eliminated. But the CIA was beaten to the punch. On 17 January 1961 Lumumba was killed by his Congolese enemies.²

President John F. Kennedy inherited a raging crisis as Lumumba’s followers prepared to wage war to avenge their leader’s death. Kennedy said that he wanted the Congolese to chart their own course and, moving beyond Eisenhower’s narrow intransigence, expressed his preference for a coalition

government that would include even Lumumbists. But when the Congolese parliament seemed ready to elect a Lumumbist as premier, Kennedy's response was not very different from what Eisenhower's would have been: U.S. officials bribed the parliamentarians, plotted a military coup, and succeeded in having their candidate, the lackluster Cyril Adoula, elected premier in a contest that would otherwise have been won by the Lumumbist. In time, Washington would forget this and would come to consider Adoula the true and legal expression of the parliament's will.

Adoula's election did not resolve the Congo crisis. A few days after independence had been declared, the dynamic, brave, and corrupt Moïse Tshombe had led the country's richest province, Katanga, into a war of secession. As the Congo's self-proclaimed arch anticommunist, Tshombe enjoyed the sympathy of many in the United States, including members of Congress. The Kennedy administration, however, thought that Katangan independence would lead to the fragmentation of the Congo and offer opportunities to the Soviet bloc. Therefore, Washington supported sending a UN peacekeeping force to the Congo. That force finally quashed the Katangan rebellion in January 1963.

With the defeat of Lumumba's followers and the reintegration of Katanga, the Congo settled into corrupt, oppressive, pro-U.S. stability that rested on two pillars: the UN troops, numbering in the thousands, and the Congolese Army (ANC), led by General Joseph Mobutu. Therefore, in early 1964 when the UN troops prepared to leave, rebellion flared up again. Leading the revolt were the fractious followers of Lumumba, whose vague ideology was couched in Marxist jargon. "Despite the revolutionary slogans which its leaders mouthed . . . the rebels have to all intents and purposes no political programme," the British ambassador reported. "It's definitely an African and a Congolese movement but all very confused," explained the U.S. consul in Stanleyville. Ethnic rivalries, old feuds, and the fear of witchcraft added to the brew that bubbled up through the thin crust of the Pax Americana.³

The revolt spread "like a forest fire,"⁴ taking the Johnson administration by surprise. In mid-June, Ambassador Godley had assured Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Mennen Williams that "all of us here share your optimism that the economic and political progress that has been made in the Congo during the past four years will . . . continue and that the pace will accelerate." A few weeks later the ANC had virtually collapsed. "Everywhere the soldiers of Mr. Mobutu, armed with machine-guns, flee from rebels who usually have only bows, arrows and bicycle chains," *Le Monde* reported. As they advanced, the Simbas ("lions"), as the rebels were called, seized the

weapons abandoned by fleeing troops. "Refusing to face its humiliation," *Le Monde* explained, "the government claimed that the rebels were being armed by Communist China."⁵

The army's collapse was due, in part, to the troops' belief that the rebels were using witchcraft. As the foremost student of the crisis put it, "The mere announcement of their arrival terrorized the soldiers of the Congolese army, convinced as they were that their bullets would turn into water or fly back to strike them." In the words of one eyewitness, an African journalist, "This superstition has had a powerful effect on Congolese National Army troops. In many places they lay down their arms and run when the rebels advance."⁶

More than magic, however, explained the Simbas' successes, as the U.S. consul in Elisabethville, the capital of Katanga, made clear:

There is in this and contiguous areas [a] strong, nearly universal feeling of dissatisfaction at [the] present GOC [Government of the Congo]. . . . All levels [of] population [in] this area are thoroughly disgusted with [the] first four years of Congolese independence, whose corruption, inefficiency, public violence and economic decline are in crass contrast with their original exaggerated expectations. . . . These disaffected views [are] shared also by ANC troops here. The main reason for their failure to fight is not so much lack of military capacity and superstitious fear of rebels, which of course are important factors, but that they do not want to fight.⁷

Not only were the troops unwilling to fight, but, as the U.S. embassy noted, "indiscriminate killing, looting and raping" were "normal pursuits" for the ANC. The CIA was equally blunt: "The ANC is noted for its pillaging and raping and is hated and feared. Now it is near collapse as an organized force. [It is] woefully lacking in leadership, prone to mutiny, and manned by soldiers who tend to regard their rifles as meal tickets." Therefore, Godley pointed out, the population usually welcomed the rebels, "who treat them better than [the] ANC in most cases." Rose agreed: the Simbas, he wrote, "were received with open arms" by the population.⁸

On 26 June, four days before the last UN troops left the country, the erstwhile leader of Katanga, Moise Tshombe, returned to the Congo from self-imposed exile in Spain. Tshombe "is now leading a bandwagon built of despair, disillusionment, friction and opportunism," the U.S. embassy reported. Frightened by the rebels, the country's leaders turned to their former enemy, who towered over them in vigor, courage, and charisma. ("Lumumba was probably the only Congolese who exceeded Tshombe in what is known as the charismatic quality of leadership," noted a U.S. intelligence report.) "We are all for giving Tshombe important post in gvt," cabled Godley.⁹

But neither he nor any other U.S. official expected what happened next: on 6 July, in a move that testified “to the extent of the desperation felt by President Joseph Kasavubu and General Mobutu,” Tshombe was appointed prime minister. “It all happened so fast,” observed the embassy’s deputy chief of mission. “Before we knew it the decision had been made. It was very much a Congolese decision.” Reserved at first, the U.S. reaction soon turned into warm endorsement. “Prime Minister Tshombe has brought zest and dynamism to his job,” said Assistant Secretary Williams.¹⁰

African leaders were less impressed. Despised by many of them as “a walking museum of colonialism”¹¹ because of his ties with South Africans, Portuguese, and Belgians and his attempt to divide the Congo, Tshombe was also known as the moving force behind Lumumba’s murder. “How could anyone imagine,” the king of Morocco asked in a broadcast to his nation, “that I, the representative of my country’s national conscience, could sit at a conference table or at a banquet with the man who personifies secession? How could anyone even begin to imagine that I, Hassan II . . . could observe a minute of silence in memory of our African heroes when one of their murderers is seated among us?”¹²

In the weeks that followed, the United States increased its military aid to the Congo. But neither aid nor Tshombe could stem the revolt. By late July frantic cables were reaching Washington from Leopoldville: the rebels were winning, the ANC was collapsing, and well-trained, foreign soldiers were necessary.

U.S. officials knew that the rebels were receiving very little outside assistance and thought that neither the Soviet Union nor any other communist country beside China was involved. They also realized that the Chinese role was marginal: “While the Chicoms may have contributed an element of sophistication to insurgent activity, the eastern Congo fundamentally collapsed from within. In comparison with indigenous causes of dissidence, the Chicom contribution to the collapse of central government authority probably has nowhere been more than marginal.”¹³ Furthermore, there was no indication that the Simbas were communists. An intelligence appraisal noted that

while at this point it is impossible to make firm judgments about the orientation of a rebel government, it would certainly seek close links with the East and there is a good chance that it would make the position of the West in the Congo increasingly difficult. (On the other hand, given the enormous reliance of the Congo on the West and the inability of the East to duplicate Western assistance, we do not believe the position of the West would become untenable—at least not in the short run.)¹⁴

A rebel victory would have ended the pro-U.S. stance of the Congo that had taken four years and two U.S. administrations to establish. The loss of the Congo ("the richest country and the richest prize in Africa") could have cost Johnson votes in the presidential race.¹⁵ The revolt had to be crushed.

Washington turned to Europe. U.S. officials badgered the Belgians, the former colonial power. The most effective measure, Ambassador Godley informed Washington, would be the "use of Belgian paratroop battalions to come in rapidly, clean up [the] situation and then withdraw as soon as possible."¹⁶

Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Undersecretaries Averell Harriman and George Ball agreed. On 4 August, Harriman cabled the U.S. ambassador in Brussels, Douglas MacArthur, to ask, "Under what conditions would [the] GOB [Government of Belgium] be willing to provide troops?" On 6 August, Rusk cabled the Belgian foreign minister, Paul-Henri Spaak: "Events in the Congo have reached so critical a point that you and we and all our European friends must move immediately and vigorously to prevent total collapse. . . . We must concert urgently on tangible, specific measures to save the Congo." The next day Harriman arrived in Brussels "for a final effort" to convince the Belgians to take "primary responsibility." The United States would provide the hardware; Belgium, the men. "I will tell you, but you must keep it to yourselves," Spaak later told a group of Belgian ambassadors, "they [U.S. officials] asked me if Belgium was willing to send in troops. And when Mr. Harriman came, that is what we talked about." The Belgians balked: they agreed to put more military advisers in the Congo, but no Belgian would be authorized to engage directly or indirectly in combat.¹⁷

U.S. policy makers were also rebuffed on a second proposal: that Belgium "take the lead in the organization . . . [of] a joint military force of the Six [European Community countries], or some of its member nations." As Harriman prepared to fly to Brussels, MacArthur had cabled Rusk that "he [Spaak] did not want to mislead us, and among other things he did not r[e]p[ea]t not see the slightest chance of getting any of the 'Six' to intervene militarily in [the] Congo. Luxembourg had no military forces and he was certain France, Germany and [the] Netherlands would refuse [to] participate in any military intervention." Further attempts in the next few days proved futile. The Europeans "had no stomach for it," Ball observed.¹⁸

Not only did the "gutless Belgians" fail to respond with the proper zeal, but they also seemed ready to collude with the enemy. Washington worried about the "apparent Belgian preference to try to do business with the rebels, even if Communist, rather than facing up to putting down the rebellion."¹⁹ In fact, the Belgians were simply being practical. They had no intention

of sending in troops, they did not believe that anyone else would, and they had no confidence in the ANC's ability to do the job. Moreover, they did not consider the Simbas communists and thought they could achieve a *modus vivendi* with them should they win. The Belgians, Ambassador Rose reported from Leopoldville, "laugh at the Americans for seeing a Communist behind every bush." In Brussels, the day before Harriman arrived, Spaak told Ambassador MacArthur that "top Belgian industrialists having [the] most extensive interests in [the] Congo . . . agreed that they could do business with . . . [the] rebel leaders since [the] latter realized Belgian economic and technical presence and assistance was essential to [the] economic life of [the] Congo." A few days later Spaak told a group of Belgian ambassadors, "My assessment of the situation . . . differs markedly from that of the Americans. People always say that I do everything the Americans want, that I always share their views, but in this affair of the Congo this is not true at all. Neither my assessment of the situation nor the remedies I proposed were similar to theirs."²⁰ Rusk did not mince words. He told the Belgian ambassador that he "was bitter that the European governments had refused to intervene in the Congo, even though it was above all their responsibility. He added," the ambassador reported, "that if the Congo were to be lost because of the Europeans' failure to act, it would have a profound impact on U.S.-European relations."²¹

Unlike Belgium, Washington was not interested in a *modus vivendi* with the Simbas. Failure to act would mean, a 6 August memo warned Johnson, "let chaos run its course, hoping the Congolese will work out an adjustment without serious Communist intrusion; and rely on [the] Congo's need for our aid and support for influence with the eventual government. This would be hard to explain politically in [the] US, but it is essentially what [the] Belgians and Europeans are doing."²²

On 11 August, Johnson and his key advisers met in a hastily called session of the National Security Council (NSC). This was the first NSC meeting about the revolt. The mood was somber. Director of Central Intelligence John McCone stated that "Western troops would be necessary." Harriman concurred. "The Congolese army in most cases has proven useless. . . . The people in government are demoralized and Leopoldville in danger."²³

No one challenged the basic premise: the rebels had to be defeated, and the ANC alone could not do it. Direct U.S. military involvement was considered only as "an extreme last resort," as Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon argued. "The President said emphatically that we all share this view." Therefore, African and European troops had to be found. Harriman suggested France, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Canada. "The

job . . . should be put squarely to the Europeans as their responsibility," Rusk asserted. "We should urge them immediately to put troops into Leopoldville, using Presidential pressure if necessary." Lyndon Johnson agreed. "Time is running out and the Congo must be saved."²⁴

The discussion had an air of unreality because no European government was willing to send its troops, and Washington knew it. In addition to the Europeans, the administration had already been rebuffed by Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Senegal, and in any case African troops would not have been welcome in the Congo: Mobutu and Tshombe trusted neither them nor their governments. "Despite our efforts, the Congolese Government has not so far asked any other African country for military forces save South Africa which fortunately refused," noted a U.S. official.²⁵

The United States preferred a "clean solution" (European or African troops), but it would fall back on mercenaries if necessary. This had been its two-track approach from the onset. A cable from Godley on 5 August had posed the problem crisply. "There are only three places," he wrote, where the Congolese government (GOC) could turn:

a) GOC can seek direct Belgian military intervention; b) it can attempt to recruit white mercenary brigade; c) it can ask for US troops. . . . If Belgian Government refuses to accept risks of intervention . . . mercenary brigade is second best alternative. . . . From US standpoint [the] employment of mercenaries would carry advantage of being done on GOC responsibility and would reduce overt western (i.e., Belgian or U.S.) involvement. . . . It would place burden of responsibility on GOC and not on ourselves or Belgians.²⁶

Washington concurred. "Tshombe and [the] GOC should proceed soonest to establish [an] effective gendarmerie-mercenary unit," Rusk had cabled Leopoldville on 6 August, as Harriman was about to leave for Brussels.²⁷ Tshombe was an old hand at the mercenary game: they had helped him when he had been the leader of secessionist Katanga, and he was happy to use them again.

In Brussels, on 7 August, Spaak told Harriman unequivocally that neither Belgium nor any other European country would send troops. That same day Rusk approved a proposal by Mennen Williams for an "immediate effort . . . to concert with [the] Belgians to help Tshombe to raise [a] mercenary force," and he cabled Harriman urging "Belgian help on [the] mercenary problem including recruitment of Belgians." Washington and Brussels would supply the money to pay the mercenaries and the weapons to arm them; Washington alone would supply the planes to fly them. Bowing to U.S. pressure,

the Belgians embraced the mercenary option. "In fact, mercenaries were the only possible solution," wrote Colonel Frédéric Vandewalle, who would head the Belgian military mission in the Congo and was briefed by Spaak on the talks with Harriman. "In private, both Washington and Brussels admitted it." And so the United States embarked on a dual policy in the Congo. It openly provided military aid to Tshombe while it covertly financed, armed, and oversaw the mercenaries. "The Americans . . . regard white mercenaries as the essential cutting edge of the Central Government's forces," wrote a British official.²⁸

The mercenaries flowed into the Congo. Most came from South Africa and Rhodesia. "Hundreds in queue for Congo army," reported the *Cape Times* from Salisbury. "They will be formed into all-White commandos." South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd said at first that his government "did not intend to interfere" in the recruitment, but he soon became concerned at the stampede. "The extent of recruiting must not get out of hand," he warned. "There is [in South Africa] a manpower shortage which has to be filled at considerable cost by State-aided immigration." The arrival of the mercenaries "is the talk of the town," wrote a Leopoldville daily.²⁹ By October there were, by NSC estimates, "over a thousand" mercenaries in the Congo.³⁰

The U.S. embassy kept them at arm's length—in public. In private the CIA, the military attachés, and the military mission kept in close contact. The army attaché, Col. Knut Raudstein, was an admirer of their leader, Mike Hoare. "Tshombe's supporters [are] most fortunate in having [a] man of Hoare's temperament, character and capability in his position," Raudstein cabled. "He . . . conducts [him]self as [a] typical upper class Briton proud of [his] Irish extraction. Avows disagreement with some SA [South African] political concepts calling himself a moderate."³¹

Hoare's "moderate" views on race were reflected in his comment to a fellow mercenary: "I believe . . . we have a great mission here. The Africans have gotten used to the idea that they can do what they like to us whites, that they can trample on us and spit on us."³² And they were reflected in his response to a South African black who wanted to enlist: "We only engage white mercenaries."³³

Why did men volunteer? "For money, first of all," five freshly arrived French mercenaries told a journalist over drinks in Leopoldville. But there were loftier reasons: "Because we're ashamed of France. . . . We've lost Indochina; *le grand Charles* has tossed Algeria aside. The *fellouzes* will not get the Congo."³⁴

The year 1963, a philosophical mercenary mused, "was the heyday of African unity, of the dream of African grandeur and of the expulsion of the

white man from the continent.” The year 1964 would be the year of the White Giants—“tall, vigorous Boers from South Africa; long-legged, slim and muscular Englishmen from Rhodesia”—who would come to the Congo and restore the white man to his proper place. “How often was I to hear the muffled drumming in the night, through forests and savannahs, ‘Flee, the White Giants are coming!’”³⁵

The U.S. ambassador was less romantic. The mercenaries were, he thought, “an uncontrolled lot of toughs . . . who consider looting or safe-cracking fully within their prerogatives.” Their “serious excesses,” the CIA reported, included “robbery, rape, murder and beatings.”³⁶

They were also boastful and naive. Once in the Congo, they tended to trust every white face, even that of a journalist. “These mercenaries are everywhere evident, talk frequently to the press and anybody who will listen to them,” Godley complained. They talked openly, for instance, to an Italian journalist, who subsequently described their entry into the town of Boende in late October 1964. “Occupying the town,” he wrote, “meant blowing out the doors with rounds of bazooka fire, going into the shops and taking anything they wanted that was movable. . . . After the looting came the killing. The shooting lasted for three days. Three days of executions, of lynchings, of tortures, of screams, and of terror.”³⁷

Just as tourists send postcards home, so the mercenaries sent photos of their exploits. Several found their way to the British weekly, the *Observer*. The first showed two almost naked black men, their hands tied behind their backs, ropes around their necks, being led by a white mercenary to their hanging. In the second, “smiling mercenaries” fought for the privilege of doing the “stringing up.” A photograph of the swinging corpses was described but not printed. “The pictures,” the *Observer* noted, “show how mercenaries not only shoot and hang their prisoners after torturing them, but use them for target practice and gamble over the number of shots needed to kill them.”³⁸

In a poignant two-part article in the *Cape Times*, a returning South African mercenary wrote of the mercenaries’ “senseless, coldblooded killings,” of their rule of never taking prisoners (“except for the odd one for questioning, after which they were executed”), of their robberies. He pleaded with his government “not to allow decent young South Africans” to enlist and become “senseless killers.” In an off-the-record conversation with British journalist Colin Legum, Mike Hoare described his men “as appalling thugs.”³⁹

Appalling and efficient. They advanced along the paths of the Congo in mobile columns—“lightly armored Belgian jeeps mounting some automatic weapons and, for heavier work, British Ferrets [armored cars] have been [the]

backbone of counterinsurgency military effort,” Godley reported. Four U.S. C-130s with U.S. crews transported the mercenaries and their equipment across the Congo’s immense expanses. “Nothing went by road, rail or boat—all was supplied by the C-130s,” the *New York Times* journalist who covered the campaign explained.⁴⁰

When they met resistance, the mercenaries called on the Congolese air force, which included not one Congolese. It consisted of the “21st Squadron” (seven T-6s from Italy piloted by South African and European mercenaries) and the T-28s and B-26s supplied by the United States. The State Department’s official line was that the T-28s and B-26s were “provided to the Congolese government and will be flown by contract personnel engaged by that government.” No U.S. citizens would be “called upon by the Congo government to engage in operational missions in the police action” under way in the country, and none therefore would fly the planes.⁴¹ The pilots and crews of the T-28s and B-26s were Cuban exiles who, as Undersecretary Ball reassured the U.S. mission at the United Nations, were not U.S. citizens. “Guiding them into action,” the *New York Times* reported, “were American ‘diplomats’ and other officials in apparently civilian positions. The sponsor, paymaster and director of all of them, however, was the Central Intelligence Agency. . . . Its rapid and effective provision of an ‘instant air force’ in the Congo was the climax of the agency’s deep involvement there.” It was an impressive air force, particularly against an enemy without planes or anti-aircraft guns. “The pattern,” notes a careful study, “was always the same: [exile] Cuban-piloted T-28s and B-26s bombing and strafing in front of ground columns; Simbas either scattering in panic or being slaughtered by the more accurate and lethal firepower of the mercenaries.” The planes, the CIA stated in November 1964, “operate over insurgent territory with impunity.” This remained true throughout the war. Over the entire period, not one was downed by enemy fire.⁴²

The mercenary ground offensive got under way on 1 November 1964. A mercenary column, accompanied by truckloads of ANC troops and led by Ferret armored cars, advanced from the south toward Stanleyville, the rebel capital. The CIA-controlled T-28s and B-26s “terrified the Simbas,” a U.S. military officer wrote.⁴³ One by one, the rebel towns were recaptured, and the mercenaries closed in on Stanleyville. Then, on 24 November, as the mercenary column was approaching, Belgian paratroopers, transported in U.S. planes, raided the city, freeing about three hundred Belgian and U.S. hostages.

The raid provoked an uproar in Africa and many public pledges to help the Simbas. “We help the rebels. It is our duty,” Algerian President Ben Bella

proclaimed defiantly, while President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania lashed out: "In an action reminiscent of Pearl Harbour, foreign troops were flown into the Congo at the very moment that negotiations were taking place to secure the safety of all who lived in the Stanleyville area."⁴⁴

The raid also galvanized the Soviet Union. East German reports indicate that before Stanleyville the Soviets had been reluctant to help a revolt about which they knew virtually nothing. "Our Soviet comrades do not yet have a clear idea of the present situation of the liberation movement in the Congo," the embassy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) reported from Moscow in mid-September 1964. "They only know that . . . the leaders of the movement . . . are engaged in a power struggle that is about personal ambition, not politics." The constant, petty infighting among the rebel leaders gave the Soviets pause. A few days after the raid on Stanleyville, however, the Soviet Union decided to provide military aid to the rebels.⁴⁵

After Stanleyville, the rebels began receiving small amounts of military aid from African countries and larger amounts of weapons from the Soviet Union and China. The weapons were, however, of little value, because the Simbas did not know how to use them. "We're not worried too much about the rebels getting small arms and ammunition," a military attaché in Leopoldville told the *New York Times* in December 1964. "We're not even worried about their getting heavier equipment, like mortars and bazookas, which they don't know how to handle any better than the Congolese army. But if they get some guerrilla veterans from outside, the war could change overnight." The CIA agreed: "The appearance in the Congo of combat 'volunteers' from the radical African states . . . [would create] a new, more ugly and dangerous situation." The radical African states, however, sent no volunteers. "The African governments that opposed Tshombe were a worthless bunch," according to Ambassador Godley. "They did nothing effective, nothing that I'm aware of."⁴⁶ As for the mythical Chinese military advisers in the eastern Congo reported by some newspapers, they turned out to be just that—a myth.

Only Cuba sent men—about 120 military instructors led by Che Guevara. They began drifting into the eastern Congo in late April 1965. By the time they fought their first skirmish, on 29 June, the back of the rebellion had been broken.⁴⁷ The mercenaries had triumphed.

Victory would have been pyrrhic, however, had it caused a backlash in Africa or at home. U.S. officials were painfully aware that the United States was vulnerable to African charges of racism despite the sincere efforts of the Johnson administration to strengthen civil rights legislation. In the summer of 1964, as the Congo operation began, intermarriage was a crime in

nineteen U.S. states, segregation was rampant, and violence against blacks was apparent to anyone who opened a paper or turned on a television. On 22 July, the second summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) unanimously approved a resolution condemning “continuing manifestations of bigotry and oppression against Negroes in the United States,” while race riots in New York reminded Africans that racial hatred was not limited to “the ever-explosive Deep South.”⁴⁸

U.S. officials went to work. “I believe that there are some things that we can do to make our actions in the Congo more palatable internationally and to make ourselves less vulnerable to Communist propaganda,” USIA Director Rowan told Johnson.⁴⁹ This meant polishing Tshombe’s image. And it meant making the mercenary issue as politically acceptable as possible, while transforming the United States from the mercenaries’ patron into a concerned onlooker.

Through reams of documents, we see senior U.S. officials trying to get Tshombe to utter the right noises and make the right gestures; they worked directly with him, and they worked through his advisers and public relations people. It was a thankless task, Ambassador Godley and his Belgian and British colleagues concluded, as they swapped stories of Tshombe’s stubbornness. The man’s survival depended on the United States, but he knew that his patrons also needed him. “We all agreed that dire threats should never be made unless we [are] prepared [to] accept [the] consequences and have [a] tangible alternative in mind,” Godley cabled in December 1964. “For [the] moment, we can see no satisfactory person [to] replace Tshombe.”⁵⁰

The previous August, U.S. efforts at image making had faced a deadly threat. Unbeknownst to Washington, Tshombe had asked Pretoria for weapons, “white officers and white enlisted men.” While sympathetic to Tshombe, the South Africans had been hesitant. They told U.S. officials that they were worried that their involvement would be “grist for the mill” for Tshombe’s enemies. Washington agreed heartily, and Pretoria held back.⁵¹

U.S. officials would have preferred Pretoria as well as South African mercenaries to stay out of the Congo. In their stead should be Europeans. “Such a shift,” Harriman and Spaak concluded during a three-hour lunch in New York, “would not in itself overcome African opposition to Tshombe but would make it easier for moderate African countries to support [the] GDRC [Government of the Congo].”⁵²

Initially—in August 1964—Spaak had refused to let Belgians serve as mercenaries; he had even threatened to withdraw military assistance “if Belgian white mercenaries enter the Congo.” With U.S. prodding, these reservations soon dissipated. Honored as one of the fathers of European unity, Spaak

appears here in a less positive light. He looked aside while the Zairean military attaché supervised the recruitment of mercenaries in Belgium. "Several recruitment centers, of which we know the addresses, exist in Brussels and in the provinces," he cabled Ambassador de Kerchove in Leopoldville. On his behalf, de Kerchove urged Tshombe to try to recruit in Belgium "as discreetly as possible," but no one was fooled. "All this was public knowledge," remarks Colonel Vandewalle. All this was also in frank violation of a 1936 Belgian law that outlawed the recruitment of mercenaries on Belgian soil.⁵³

Nevertheless, fewer than two hundred Belgians enlisted and even fewer Frenchmen; the number of Italians and Germans could be counted on one hand. U.S. officials were realistic: as long as so few Europeans volunteered, the South Africans would have to stay. In fact, for the duration of the war, South African and Rhodesian mercenaries constituted well over half the total. Godley was philosophical: while a shift to Europeans might "alleviate [the] political unacceptability [of the] mercenaries . . . none of us [the Belgian and British ambassadors and Godley] believe this would appreciably modify [the] situation." Moreover, he added, "the English-speaking mercenaries . . . have proven themselves more able than the Belgian and other heterogeneous French-speaking mercenaries."⁵⁴

U.S. officials did what they could to package the unsavory product better. Why not call them "military technical assistance volunteers," the U.S. ambassador in Belgium asked. (Others preferred "special volunteers.") Well-meaning, repetitive suggestions rained on Godley. Rusk told him to "play down to [whatever] extent possible [the] role [of the] mercenaries." Rowan urged "more emphasis on Congolese and less on mercenaries," and Ball insisted that he take "measures to avoid publicity such as keeping mercenaries out of Leo[poldville and] impressing upon Hoare [the] necessity [of] keep[ing] quiet." Not an easy task: "Hoare can never resist the temptation to say the wrong thing to the press," the British embassy in Leopoldville remarked. The Congo "will need white troops for many years to come," he told *Le Figaro Littéraire*. "The work we have started has to be completed, and the only way to complete it is to kill all the rebels."⁵⁵

The United States stayed in the background and built "a few fires under [the] Belgians"; as the former colonizers, they could dirty their hands. "We had to press them, cajole, yell at them," recalled a U.S. official. The Belgians were "small in resources and small in imagination," observed another.⁵⁶ U.S. policy makers wanted the Belgians to take the lead in the Congo—the lead, that is, in executing Washington's policy. The Belgians cooperated: by early 1965 their military mission in the Congo had swelled to almost 450 people, and Belgian officers were placed "in de facto command of most major Congo

Army detachments.” Furthermore, it was the Belgian military advisers who openly maintained the daily contact with the mercenaries. “Overtly at least,” Godley recommended, “US Reps should keep as far away from [the] mercenaries as possible.” The United States wanted the mercenaries to be seen as the responsibility of the Congolese government and of Brussels. To make this unequivocally clear, “in accordance with the wishes of the American government,” the mercenaries did not accept U.S. citizens.⁵⁷

It is unlikely that U.S. public diplomacy swayed many Africans. U.S. involvement in the Congo “has resulted in a considerable strain in United States relations with a number of African countries,” the British ambassador in Washington remarked. “The United States seems to have lost, in African eyes, that reputation for innocence which it once enjoyed because of its lack of colonial connection with the African continent.”⁵⁸

The governments of Algeria, Egypt, the Sudan, Guinea, Ghana, Congo Brazzaville, and Burundi lambasted U.S. support for Tshombe and the mercenaries, as did Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, which usually entertained cordial relations with the United States. Moreover, most of these governments provided money or weapons to the rebels or allowed aid to pass through their territory. Pragmatism, however, soon dampened their rage. With the exception of the Congo, all of these governments relied on U.S. economic aid (or, in the case of Burundi, Belgian aid)—a fact that U.S. officials did not let them forget. Moreover, from the outset England used its clout with African governments to rally support for U.S. policy in the Congo, and in early 1965 the French joined in. Finally, the mercenaries’ victories could not be overlooked. “My personal relations with [President Jomo] Kenyatta healed slowly,” writes the U.S. ambassador in Kenya. “But on May 5 [1965] he called me over [to] the State House, held out his hand and said, ‘The Congo is finished. Now we can be friends again.’”⁵⁹

At times, sheer luck helped the Johnson administration. Algiers had been providing some materiel to the Simbas ever since the Belgian-U.S. raid on Stanleyville. Relations between Algeria and the United States were strained, and in April Dean Rusk told the Algerian ambassador that “bilateral relations could not usefully be discussed as long as Algerian policies on Vietnam and the Congo were at such variance with those of the US.” It was Ben Bella’s overthrow at Boumedienne’s hands in June 1965 that broke the impasse. Boumedienne, the CIA noted, “has been warm, open, and attentive with US officials.” He promised that no further aid would be given to the rebels.⁶⁰

By mid-1965, the storm was subsiding. Ghana’s hostility was unchanged, but in material terms, as CIA Station Chief Larry Devlin observed, “Nkrumah did not play a role in the Congo in 1964–65, or a very limited one at

most." Egypt, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, and Guinea were "adopting a more pro-Western stance." Only Tanzania remained firm in its support for the rebels—defiant in its revulsion for the "traitor" Tshombe and his mercenaries. Tanzania, a Soviet official remarked, "is basically the only country that allows arms shipments and other assistance [for the Simbas] to pass through its borders without difficulty." The military impact of Tanzania's stand was negated, however, by one of the CIA's most successful operations: the establishment, in the spring of 1965, of the naval patrol on Lake Tanganyika, which intercepted boat traffic to the beleaguered rebels. "The trend line is going our way," the NSC specialist on Africa observed drily in June 1965.⁶¹

The trend was going in the right direction at home as well. The Congolese crisis had exploded at a time when the U.S. press was focusing on Vietnam. On 7 August 1964, Congress had approved the Tonkin Gulf resolution, which, as Robert McNamara remarked, "brought home the possibility of U.S. involvement in the war as never before." When a few days later, Johnson sent four C-130s with U.S. crews to the Congo and fifty-six paratroopers to guard them, the *New York Times* warned that "the United States is getting itself militarily involved in still another conflict. . . . [It] is starting with only enough arms, men and matériel to put out a little bonfire . . . but as Southeast Asia showed, bonfires can grow into great conflagrations." These fears were echoed by several members of Congress. "Today we are providing transport service," remarked Senator John Stennis (D-MS). "I cannot but wonder whether the next step will be the function of advising and training the Government forces, in the style followed in South Vietnam so that ultimately our men will be fighting and dying in combat."⁶²

The administration was eager to dispel these fears. The C-130s were "mostly for evacuation purposes," George Ball assured Walter Lippmann. "We have no intention of getting . . . bogged down in the African swamp." And upon learning that the *New York Times* was "thinking of writing some editorial on the Congo situation," Ball called editorial page editor John Ochs and volunteered to send Deputy Assistant Secretary Wayne Fredericks "to N.Y. and have him talk to Ochs and [his] colleagues."⁶³

It was not Ball's or Fredericks's eloquence but the mercenaries' successes that quelled the fear that the United States might be "drawn ever deeper into the Congolese jungle."⁶⁴ Through the months that followed, the U.S. press reported the obvious: "It has been the white mercenary force . . . that has contained and rolled back the insurgents." Led by the "intelligent, poetry-reading Colonel Mike Hoare," the mercenaries squared the circle: the Congo would be saved, and U.S. soldiers would not die.⁶⁵

Nor were the mercenaries such bad chaps either, according to the U.S.

press. "They resemble rough-hewn college boys," one *Life* reporter wrote.⁶⁶ The *New York Times*, which provided more intensive coverage of the Congo crisis than any other U.S. newspaper, made only one attempt to show the U.S. people who the mercenaries were. It did so by devoting two articles to Lt. Gary Wilson, "a lean, 25-year old South African" who had enlisted, he confided, "because he believed Premier Moïse Tshombe was sincerely trying to establish a multiracial society in the Congo. 'I thought that if I could help in this creation, the Congo might offer some hope, some symbol in contrast to the segregation in my own country.'"⁶⁷ We hear Wilson's distress at what he witnesses in the Congo. "It's a weird war," he muses, "frightening, brutal, sometimes comic, utterly unreal." We hear him talk about performing acts of great bravery. "He recalled the time two weeks ago when he captured [the town of] Lisala with 15 men [white mercenaries] against more than 400. . . . 'The rebels have one thing in common with our own Congolese,' he added. 'They don't take aim. They think that noise kills.'"⁶⁸ We hear his reaction to the cruelty of the Congolese—on both sides. "'It's mass murder, it's mass murder,'" he mutters. Moreover, we hear that "his words summed up the feelings of most of his compatriots here."⁶⁹

In its eighteen-month coverage of the war the *New York Times* reported the mercenaries' successes time and again; only on three occasions did it mention—and then ever so briefly—their transgressions. No photos like those published in the *Observer* appeared in the *Times*. Its readers learned instead of the mercenaries' efforts to protect the natives from both the rebels and the army. In a similar fashion, the *Washington Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Life* constantly assailed the rebels' atrocities and occasionally mentioned those of the army, but only exceptionally did they utter a single word of criticism of the mercenaries. They stressed instead how the mercenaries were saving the Congo from communism.

Perhaps the U.S. journalists who went to the Congo were silent about the atrocities the mercenaries committed because they were dependent on the U.S. embassy for information and transportation. Perhaps it was because the mercenaries were doing the United States's work. Perhaps it was because the mercenaries, like the journalists, were white and because they killed only blacks, while they saved the lives of white hostages (including some U.S. citizens). *Le Monde* put it well: "Western public opinion is more sensitive, one must acknowledge, to the death of one European than to the deaths of twenty blacks."⁷⁰

Given the press's selective reporting, it is not surprising that very few whites in the United States expressed any qualms about the mercenaries.

African Americans were less placid. Malcolm X and the black Muslims lashed out at President Johnson, at his “hireling Tshombe,” and his “hordes of white Nazi-type mercenaries.” *Muhammad Speaks* asked: “If it is wrong for a rich individual to hire a thug to kill his enemy, does it become right for a rich country to hire killers to slaughter people of another country? . . . Or is it forgiven because the killers we hire are just ‘killing niggers?’” Malcolm X called on African Americans and Africans to join together against their common enemy—in Alabama and in the Congo alike.⁷¹

Martin Luther King’s wing of the civil rights movement was more cautious. The Call Committee of the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa repeatedly expressed its unhappiness with U.S. policy in the Congo, called for a withdrawal of “mercenaries and other external forces,” and asked that the problem be solved by negotiations. But these leaders and their constituencies were absorbed in the civil rights struggle that was raging in the United States. They had no desire to quarrel with a president whose help they needed. Insofar as they paid attention to foreign policy, they focused on issues that directly affected blacks in the United States—Vietnam, above all, where black soldiers were dying. “To them, Africa was distant, far off,” remarked Congressman Charles Diggs (D-MI), one of the founders of the Black Caucus. Their interest in the Congolese drama was limited, and their complaints were somewhat perfunctory. Nevertheless, even their mild criticism provoked hostile comment. “Insofar as the civil rights leaders allow their movements to become hostage to the uncertain and confused events in Africa, they can provide heedless comfort to their enemies,” the *Washington Post* lectured.⁷²

The decision to rely on white mercenaries to win the civil war in the Congo did not stem from a belief that the rebels were communists or that a major Soviet or Chinese offensive was under way in the Congo but from the fact that the rebels were unfriendly to the United States. At best, their victory would have meant an unpleasant neutralist regime in a country where both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations had labored mightily to impose a pro-U.S. government. It came down, in the end, to a question of costs. If the cost of defeating the rebels could be kept low, then there was no incentive to explore alternative solutions, to run any risks, to accept any compromises. Had the only way to prevent a rebel victory been to dispatch U.S. troops—with its high cost at home and abroad—then U.S. officials might have allowed events in the Congo to run their course. As it was, there was very little debate among U.S. policy makers about the proper course to take, and if the administration’s “doves”—Assistant Secretary Williams and his deputy, Wayne Fredericks—were uneasy, they kept their counsel.⁷³

Only two newspapers, both African American, roundly denounced the United States's role "in the raising and paying of white mercenaries."⁷⁴ In the white press, the only references to any connection between the United States and the mercenaries were a phrase in *Life* about "Cuban exiles" having been "recruited by the United States" to fly the planes and three short sentences buried in a full-page article in the *Washington Post*: "The United States is flying mercenaries to the front. Better still, the United States is in effect underwriting the cost of the entire force of 'operational technicians,' as they are known in official circles. The monthly payroll: \$300,000." One might have expected other newspapers to pick up the story, or *Life* and the *Washington Post* to elaborate on it. In fact, nothing happened.⁷⁵

This reticence was not new. It had been present in 1954, at the time of the CIA covert operation in Guatemala, in 1957–58 during the covert operation against Indonesia, and in 1961, in the weeks before the Bay of Pigs. "If the leaders of the U.S. government decide that all the risks and perils of a major covert operation are required . . . it is not the business of individual newspapermen to put professional gain over that of country," Joseph Alsop explained. This "journalistic discretion," as he called it, survived the tumult of Vietnam and characterized the press's treatment of the 1975 Angolan civil war. Although aware of the U.S. covert operation there, the press maintained its silence until the failure of U.S. policy became too obvious to ignore.⁷⁶ In the Congo, however, the mercenaries were successful, and the press applauded.

It was in the Congo, in 1964 and 1965, that the United States used mercenaries in Africa for the first time, and the policy was successful at a very low cost. In late 1975, during the Angolan civil war, the Ford administration found itself in a tight spot, and again the United States turned to mercenaries. This time, history did not smile on them. This time, thousands of well-trained Cubans greeted the "White Giants." This time, the mercenaries fled. The White Giants—"who had sown death and despair in African countries in return for pay"⁷⁷—were finally defeated.

Notes

A previous version of this essay was published in *Diplomatic History* 18 (Spring 1994): 207–37.

1. Rowan, memo for president, 14 August 1964, Confidential File, Country 29, box 7, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, TX; Director Central Intelligence (DCI), Special National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), "Short-Term Prospects for the Tshombe Government," 5 August 1964, National Security File (NSF), NIE, box 8, Johnson Li-

brary. Throughout this chapter, “Congo” refers to the former Belgian Congo, “Leopoldville” to Kinshasa, and “Stanleyville” to Kisangani.

For Congolese politics in 1964–65, see Centre de Recherche et d’Information Socio-Politiques (CRISP) of Brussels, *Congo, 1964* (1966) and *Congo, 1965* (1967); Benoit Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo* [Rebellion in the Congo], 2 vols. (Brussels, 1966, 1969); and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Alain Forest, and Herbert Weiss, eds., *Rébellions-Révolution au Zaïre 1963–1965* [Rebellion-revolution in Zaïre], 2 vols. (Paris, 1987).

2. On U.S. policy toward the Congo in 1960–63, see Richard Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York, 1983), 43; Madeleine Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York, 1982); and Stephen Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960–1964* (Ithaca, NY, 1974). For the domestic situation in the Congo in 1960–63, see CRISP, *Congo, 1960* (Brussels, 1961); *Congo, 1961* (Brussels, 1962); *Congo, 1962* (Brussels, 1963); and *Congo, 1963* (Brussels, 1964).

3. Quotations from Rose, “Congo (Leopoldville): Annual Review for 1964,” 12 January 1965, General Political Correspondence of the Foreign Office, Record Class FO 371, 181656, Public Record Office, Kew, England (PRO) and *Washington Post*, 25 November 1964 (quoting the consul, who had been held prisoner by the rebels for almost four months).

4. Rose, “Congo (Leopoldville).”

5. Godley to Williams, 16 June 1964, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Mennen Williams Papers, box 29, National Archives II, College Park, MD; *Le Monde*, 30 July 1964. On the alleged Chinese role, see *Le Monde*, 4 and 13 August 1964; *Le Progrès* (Kinshasa), 5 and 6 August 1964; and *Le Courrier d’Afrique* (Kinshasa), 12 August 1964.

6. Benoit Verhaegen, “La Première République” [The First Republic (1960–1965)], in *Du Congo au Zaïre, 1960–1980* [From the Congo to Zaïre, 1960–1980], ed. Jacques Vanderlinden (Brussels, 1984), 126; *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 30 July 1964.

7. Dean to U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, 2 July 1964, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Department of State, microfiche 8503217.

8. U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, to State Department, Joint Weeka no. 10, 20 September 1964, FOIA, Department of State, microfiche 8503217; CIA, Directorate of Intelligence (DI), “The Security Situation in the Congo,” 17 June 1964, FOIA 1978/135B; Godley to secretary of state, 5 August 1965, NSF Country File (NSFCF), box 81, Johnson Library; Rose, “Congo (Leopoldville).”

9. U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, to State Department, Joint Weeka no. 1, 2 July 1964, FOIA, Department of State, microfiche 8503217; Hoffacker, “What Should Be U.S. Policy vis-a-vis Tshombe in Future Contingencies?” n.d., enclosed in McElhiney to Palmer, 3 December 1964, FOIA, Department of State, microfiche 8503217; Godley to secretary of state, 1 July 1964, FOIA, Department of State, microfiche 8503217.

10. DCI, Special National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), “Short-Term Prospects for the Tshombe Government,” 5 August 1964, NSF, NIE, box 8; interview with Robert Blake, Washington, DC, 21 May 1992; Williams to Harrison, 24 July 1964, RG 59, Williams Papers, box 12.

11. Ahmed Ben Bella, quoted in *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 March 1965.

12. Broadcast of 14 July 1964, quoted in CRISP, *Congo, 1964*, 456.

13. Denney to Harriman, Intelligence and Research Office of the State Department (INR), “Chinese Communist Involvement in Congolese Insurrections,”

11 August 1964, quoted, NSFCF, Congo, box 81; Hughes (INR) to secretary of state, "Appraisal of Congolese Insurgency," 7 August 1964, NSFCF, Congo, box 81; CIA, Office of Current Intelligence, weekly report, "The Situation in the Congo," NSFCF, box 87 (hereafter CIA, "Situation"), 27 August and 3 September 1964.

14. Denney to Harriman (INR), "Congo Contingency: Possible Alternatives Ahead," 15 August 1964, NSFCF, box 82.

15. *Washington Post*, editorial, 25 September 1964.

16. Godley to secretary of state, 2 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.

17. Harriman to MacArthur, 4 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; Rusk to U.S. embassy, Brussels, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; Brubeck, memo for president, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; Rusk to U.S. embassy, Brussels, 31 July 1964, NSFCF, box 81; "Exposé de Monsieur P. H. Spaak," 4 September 1964, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE), 149.1, Brussels, Belgium.

18. Rusk to U.S. embassy, Brussels, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; MacArthur to secretary of state, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; telephone interview with George Ball, 18 May 1992.

19. Interview with Blake; Williams to Rusk, 7 August 1964, RG 59, Williams Papers, box 12.

20. Rose to FO, 7 September 1964, FO 371, 17665; MacArthur to secretary of state, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; "Exposé de Monsieur P. H. Spaak," 4 September 1964, MAE, 149.1.

21. Scheyven to MAE, 21 August 1964, MAE, 18293 I (a).

22. Brubeck, memo for president, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.

23. "NSC Meeting on the Congo—12:30 P.M. Aug. 11, 1964," NSF, NSC Meetings File, box 1, Johnson Library.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Author's name deleted, memo for Bundy, 14 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.

26. Godley to secretary of state, 5 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.

27. Rusk to U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, 6 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.

28. Williams to secretary of state, 7 August 1964, RG 59, Williams Papers, box 12; Rusk to Harriman, 7 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; Frédéric Vandewalle, *L'Ommegang: Odyssée et Reconquête de Stanleyville 1964* [L'Ommegang: The odyssey and reconquest of Stanleyville, 1964] (Brussels, 1970), 201; Wilson, "White Mercenaries in the Congo," 28 August 1964, FO 371, 176683.

29. *Cape Times* (Cape Town), 25 and 27 August and 2 September 1964; *Le Courrier d'Afrique*, 28 August 1964.

30. NSF, NSC History, Congo C-130 Crisis, July 1967, box 15, Tab 1, "Background," Johnson Library.

31. USARMA Leopoldville to RUEPDA/DA, December 1964, NSFCF, box 85.

32. Hans Germani, *Weisse Söldner im schwarzen Land* [White soldiers in a black land] (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), 103.

33. The letter and the reply are in Anthony Mockler, *The Mercenaries* (New York, 1969), 244. It was not U.S. policy to exclude blacks: their inclusion was repugnant to the white mercenaries, particularly the dominant South African and Rhodesian element.

34. "Escale à Léo," *Jeune Afrique*, 8 August 1965, 19.

35. Germani, *Weisse Söldner*, 8, 60.
36. Godley to secretary of state, 13 December 1964, NSFCF, box 85; CIA, Intelligence Information Cable, "Situation Report of Stanleyville, 11-14 January 1965," NSFCF, box 85.
37. Godley to secretary of state, 26 August 1964, NSFCF, box 82; Carlo Gregoretti, "Una guerra privata in cinemascopo" [A private war in cinemascopo], *L'Espresso*, 20 December 1964.
38. *Observer*, 29 August 1965.
39. Peter Lloyd-Lister, "Stop Our Young Men from Going to the Congo," *Cape Times*, 14 and 21 August 1965; FO Minutes, "West Africa and the Congo. Impressions of Nigeria and the Congo by Colin Legum on his recent visit," 30 April 1965, FO 371, 181632.
40. Godley to secretary of state, 30 October 1965, NSFCF, box 85; telephone interview with Lloyd Garrison, 7 May 1992, who was the *New York Times* correspondent in the Congo in 1964-65. The best sources on the campaign are by the CIA (NSFCF, box 87). The most useful memoir by a participant is Vandewalle, *L'Ommegang*. Good secondary accounts are CRISP, *Congo, 1964*, 349-411, 535-36; CRISP, *Congo, 1965*, 43-58, 89-160; Fred Wagoner, *Dragon Rouge* (Washington, DC, 1980); and Thomas Odom, *Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964-1965* (Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1988).
41. Rusk to U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, 15 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.
42. *New York Times*, 26 April 1966; Wagoner, *Dragon Rouge*, 66; CIA, "Situation," 17 November 1964.
43. Odom, *Dragon Operations*, 33.
44. Ben Bella, "Nous aidons les insurgés. C'est notre devoir" [We help the rebels. It is our duty], *Jeune Afrique*, 10 January 1965; Nyerere, *The Standard* (Dar-es-Salaam), 27 November 1964.
45. Politische Abteilung of the embassy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), "Aktenvermerk," Moscow, 17 September 1964, quoted in AussenAmt (AA), A1154, GDR; Winzer to Ulbricht, 15 December 1964, AA, A14593.
46. *New York Times*, 13 December 1964; CIA, DI, "The Congo: Assessment and Prospects," 31 December 1964, NSFCF, box 87; telephone interview with Godley, 27 October 1992. Some Chinese aid may have arrived before Stanleyville.
47. On the Cuban presence in the Congo, see Jon Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (New York, 1997), 276-325; and Jorge Castañeda, *Compañero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara* (New York, 1997), 595-669.
48. *Le Peuple* (Algiers), 25 July 1964; *Tanganyika Standard* (Dar-es-Salaam), 27 July 1964.
49. Rowan, memo for president, 14 August 1964, Confidential File, Country 29, box 7.
50. Godley to secretary of state, 13 December 1964, NSFCF, box 85.
51. Memorandum of conversation, "Tshombe Request for South African Assistance," 11 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81.
52. Harriman to U.S. embassy, Brussels, 14 December 1964, NSFCF, box 85.
53. Williams to Harriman, 24 July 1964, RG 59, Williams Papers, box 12; Spaak to de Kerchove, 17 September 1964, MAE, 18289 (III); Kerchove to Spaak, 28 August 1964,

MAE 18288 (X); Vandewalle, *L'Ommegang*, 209. For the 1936 law, see U.S. embassy, Brussels to secretary of state, 30 January 1976, FOIA, Department of State, microfiche 8904623.

54. Godley to secretary of state, 13 December 1964, NSFCF, box 85; Godley to Department of State, 2 December 1965, FOIA, Department of State, microfiche 8503217.

55. Quotations from: MacArthur to secretary of state, 3 December 1964, NSFCF, box 85; Godley to secretary of state, 15 August 1964, NSFCF, box 81; Rusk to U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, 6 January 1965, NSFCF, box 85; Rowan to U.S. embassy, Leopoldville, 29 December 1964, NSFCF, box 85; Ball to U.S. embassy, London, 28 January 1965, NSFCF, box 85; Mason to Le Quesne, 26 June 1965, FO 371, 181705; and *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 17 December 1964.

56. Godley to secretary of state, 18 November 1965, NSFCF, box 85; interview with Robert Komer, Washington, DC, 26 September 1991, the NSC official in charge of Africa; interview with Blake.

57. CIA, "Situation," 27 January 1965; Godley to secretary of state, 26 August 1964, NSFCF, box 82. Mockler (*Mercenaries*, 247) prints the letter from which the above quotation is taken.

58. Harlech (British ambassador, Washington), "Annual Review for 1964," 1 January 1965, FO 371, 179557.

59. William Attwood, *The Twilight Struggle: Tales of the Cold War* (New York, 1987), 276.

60. Memorandum of conversation (Rusk, Guellal, et al.), 16 April 1965, NSFCF, box 79; CIA, OCI, "Consequences of Algerian Coup," 19 June 1965, NSFCF, box 79.

61. Interview with Devlin, Washington, DC, 18 June 1992; Komer, memo for president, 16 June 1965, NSFCF, box 76; *Tanganyika Standard*, 21 April 1965 (quoting Nyerere); Ronmeisl, "Auszug," Moscow, 11 August 1965, AA, A1168; Komer, memo for president, 16 June 1965, NSFCF, box 76.

62. Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York, 1995), 127; *New York Times*, editorial, 13 August 1964; Stennis, 14 August 1964, *Congressional Record*, 88th Cong., 2nd sess., vol. 110, pt.15: 19531.

63. Telephone conversation, Lippmann and Ball, 25 August 1964, 10:45 A.M., Ball Papers, box 2, Johnson Library; Telephone conversation, Ochs [Oakes] and Ball, 21 August 1964, 3:20 P.M., Ball Papers, box 2.

64. *New York Times*, 21 August 1964, editorial.

65. *Washington Post*, 14 March and 22 April 1965.

66. "Red Arsenal Arm the Simbas," *Life* (12 February 1965): 31.

67. *New York Times*, 25 October 1964.

68. *New York Times*, 2 October, 1964.

69. *New York Times*, 25 October 1964.

70. *Le Monde*, editorial, 28 November 1964.

71. Quotations from *Muhammad Speaks*, 18 December 1964 and 1 and 15 January 1965. See also Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1973), 347–63; and John Henrik Clarke, ed., *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times* (Trenton, NJ, 1990), 288–301, 335–42.

72. *Washington Post*, 29 November 1964; interview with Diggs, Prince George's County, MD, 18 March 1992; *Washington Post*, editorial, 1 December 1964.

73. The absence of debate on Congo policy is reflected in the documents available

at the Johnson Library and the Mennen Williams papers, and it was confirmed in interviews with Ball, Komer, Godley, and Blake.

In a letter to the author, however, Fredericks suggested that there were “differences of opinion within the USG on Congo policy” (New York, 28 May 1992). If so, they were so subtle or subterranean that U.S. policy makers were not aware of them. Thus Ball told Fredericks (who was, apparently, a dissenter) that “he and Fredericks saw eye to eye and he had complete confidence in Fredericks and his judgment” (telephone conversation, Fredericks and Ball, 11 November 1964, 3:45 P.M., Ball Papers, box 2). As for Williams, the written record shows him solidly behind the mercenary policy. The same is true for Rowan.

74. *Afro-American*, 11 September 1965 (quoted). See also 3 October 1964, 14 November, 5 December 1964, 2 and 23 January 1965. The other newspaper was *Muhammad Speaks*. (See 18 December 1964, 15 January and 19 March 1965.)

75. “Red Arsenals,” 31; *Washington Post*, 15 November 1964.

76. Joseph W. Alsop with Adam Platt, “I’ve Seen the Best of It”: *Memoirs* (New York, 1992), 443. See also Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 258–62, 367–70; Audrey Kahin and George Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York, 1995), 158; Victor Bernstein and Jesse Gordon, “The Press and the Bay of Pigs,” *Columbia University Forum* (Fall 1967): 5–13; James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War* (New York, 1970), 153–69; and Harrison F. Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: The New York Times and Its Times* (New York, 1980), 137–64.

77. Agostinho Neto, quoted in *New York Times*, 11 July 1976.