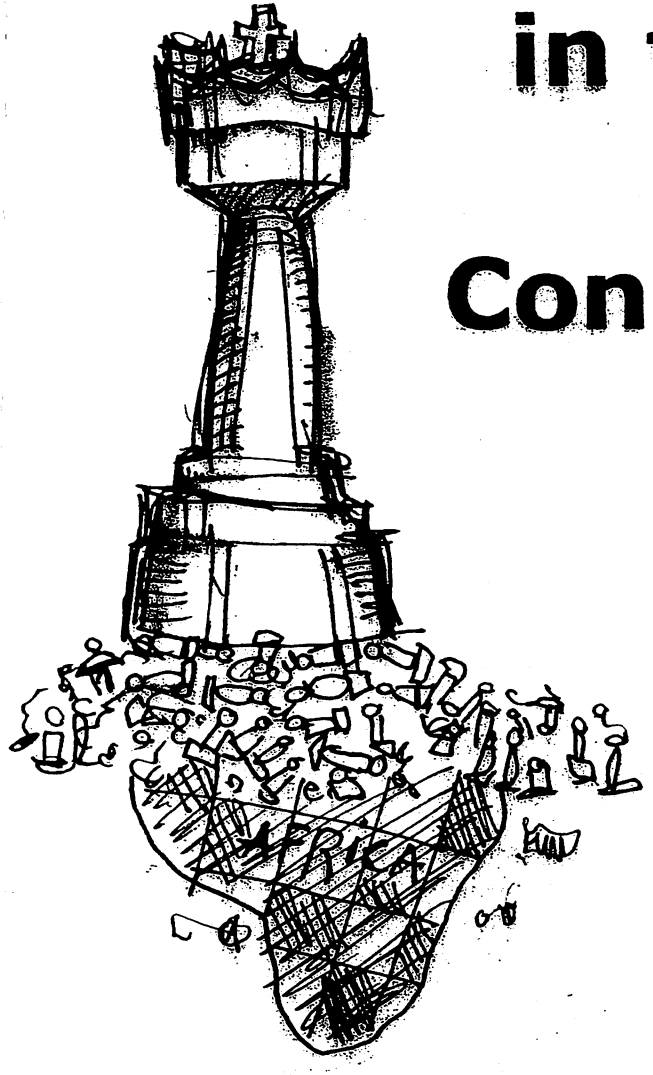
Life is Cheap in the Congo



Ali Khalid Abdullah

Life is Cheap in the Congo

It is reported that nowhere in Afrika is the killing and looting as horrific as it is in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A country where multinational corporations pillage, plunder, bankroll armies and mercenaries to reap the riches that lay in the Congo's rich earth.

From 1998 up to Christmas 2004, 3.8 million people died in the mineral rich eastern Congo, according to the International Rescue Committee. About 31,000 people continue to die every month with no end in sight to the mass killings. Had this kind of mass killing taken place in Europe or North Amerikkka instead of Afrika it would be considered a world war.

Since 1996, Congo has become a place of complicated wars, with "wars within wars" as Human Rights Watch put it in a 2002 report. The Congo is experiencing a combination of civil war and inter-state wars involving at least nine Afrikan states--armies from Rwanda and Uganda invaded Congo and fostered local rebellions (of particular ethnic groups) on one hand, while Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Chad, and after Burundi and Libya, sent their armed forces to support Laurent Kabila's government on the other. A lot of cross-border insurgencies have also taken place most notably between Uganda and Rwanda with European mercenary involvement.

Multinational Greed and Plunder

The world is led to believe that inner-ethnic conflicts are "tribal" communities who've been responsible for the deaths and slaughtering of civilians (men, women, and children) accompanying armed clashed between rival insurgent groups and the starvation and diseases that follow. Nothing could be further from the real truth. Little has been revealed in the Western media about the culpability of the multinational mining corporations, mainly from North Amerikkka and Europe, and the role of the globalized market economy which fuels this mass murder of holocaust proportions. In fact, few revolutionary

groups and organizations take the time to share this carnage taking place in Afrika because for some reason there seems to be a disconnect with the sufferings taking place in this continent to the extent that reporting of it, or connecting to or with an organization that focuses attention of the plight of Afrika is sadly lacking. However, the PPWC will expose these atrocities because the nature of multinational corporations and the relation that the U.S. and other Western countries have in the destruction and mass killings taking place in Afrika forces us to be actively concerned.

With that in mind, we note that today's Western press has only mentioned (in a glance) names such as the Arkansas-basked American Mineral Fields, the Canadian-based Barrick Gold Corporation (on whose board of directors sits George H. Bush, a former U.S. president and the father of the current U.S. president, George W. Bush), the U.S. based OM group, the Belgian Groupe Forrest, the South Afrikan AngloGold Ashanti (part of the international mining conglomerate), and the Anglo American company.

These companies extract the minerals form the Congo and trade on the natural resources of the Congo and reap enormous profits at the expense of the Congolese people.

The Riches the People Never See

When Europeans explored and set foot on the enormous wealth in the heart of Afrika in the 1440's, the scourge of slavery and the slave trade took on a totally different meaning than what had been going on for centuries, in terms of human servitude.

The Trans-Atlantic triangular trade route (Europeans seizing slaves in Afrika, selling them in the Amerikkka's, returning to Europe with goods and stolen treasures), made the involvement in this trade very lucrative, and as a result, Afrika suffered centuries of its people being sold and stolen from its continent.

Though Europe eventually abolished slave trading in the mid-nineteenth century, for the Congo slavery did not end with

its proclaimed abolition. From the end of the nineteenth century through the turn of the twentieth 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, while holding their womenfolk and even children as hostages. Their hands, noses and ears were often chopped off when their men were late in bringing the forest products or failed to return. Leopold's army made hundreds of thousands of his slaves toil till death over a period of 23 years. There were some 20 slave uprisings, all put down with extreme bloodshed. In 1903, a Belgian expedition found gold. In the gold mines men were worked to their deaths. Starvation and disease became rampant and claimed the lives of most survivors who fled into the rain forests. It's been estimated that 10 million people out of a population of 20 million had lost their lives under King Leopold's' murderous rule.

In the twentieth century, diamonds and uranium (for nuclear power), yielded much of the profits that flowed to Belgium and the metropolises of the West generally. In recent years, coltan has brought riches for some in the country and huge profits for Sony PlayStations, Motorola, Ericsson and Nokia, as well as for some companies refining and processing coltan black mud into metallic tantalum powder out of which vital parts for laptops and cell phones are produced in Amerikkka, Japan and Europe. These profits have brought nothing but destruction to the rain forests of the Congo and immense misery to its people.

In 1960, the country gained formal independence from Belgium. The Congo's first elected prime minister, the popular nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba, emerged as one of Afrika's, and in fact, the Third World's, most vocal and articulate critics of colonialism and champions of the sovereignty of oppressed nations against colonizing powers, old and new. As a result, the CIA (under President John F. Kennedy) had him tortured and murdered.

The U.S. and the CIA eventually backed Joseph Mobutu to head the Congo, and he allowed U.S. interests in the country

to soar by plundering its copper, mainly, as Mobutu enriched himself with over $4 billion in U.S. dollars.

In June 2005, the Human Rights Watch published a report entitled *The Curse of Gold*, which exposed AngloGold Ashanti's complicity in financing the GNI, responsible for mass killings, rape, and torture.

AngloGold Ashanti is the world's second largest gold mining company in the world and has secured a concession to a vast 10,000 square kilometers of potential gold fields from the transitional local government. Bush's Barrick Gold Corporation has won rights over 80,000 square kilometers of gold-bearing land.

In 2002, a United Nations panel had reported that the DR Congo state had been stripped of assets valued more than U.S. $5 billion during the period since nine Afrikan countries, including Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, and Zimbabwe, were drawn into the conflict in 1998.

Britain's Tony Blair declared that "[t]he private sector is the engine for growth in Afrika" on the eve of the Gleneagles G8 meeting. George Bush called "fostering vigorous private sector engagement" the key to Afrika's future. But, the Congolese people do not and cannot consume gold, diamonds, copper, coltan, or any other of the other minerals extracted from their land. These items mainly end up in the banks, stockpiles, and factories of imperialist countries, making the rich even richer. Furthermore, the Congo does not manufacture modern weapons, but they have all kinds of guns and plenty of ammunition--as billions of dollars leave the country, hundreds of thousands are left dead each year.

Governments and Multinational Companies Must Be Held Responsible

When we say that "no government is a friend of the people" and that "all corporations are not for the welfare of the people" we mean what we say. History has shown us that governments do not take into consideration the masses. It only uses the masses to obtain power and wealth. The people are

merely pawns, used for their labor, their man and woman power, to go fight for those interests which corporations and multinational businesses would have them fight in order to extract, plunder, and take resources of other countries. The war in Iraq is not about weapons of mass destruction. It never was. It was not about Saddam Hussein being able to threaten the United States and its bootlicker allies. It was never about democracy. It was and is all about oil. Controlling the oil fields so that gas guzzling nations will be able to drive their SUV's and their Hummer's without overpaying. It's about being able to continue operating their machines so more products can be over-produced and sold to the consumer at inflated prices. It's about dominating one group of people and keeping them economically in bondage while others can have the material trinkets and not be concerned about people, like those who live, suffer, and die in the Congo.

Our concern cannot merely be based on what is happening in the U.S.--prison conditions, the legal system, a high paying job. For, if we do not pay close attention and focus on the international actions of multinational corporations and governments and the politics behind what is going on, we will never be able to find the kind of freedom, justice, or liberation we claim we seek.

All of these things work hand-in-hand. If we do not fight the one, you can be assured we will feel the effects of it in one form or another.

A Word from Ali Khalid Abdullah to The People

Since my incarceration (1990) I have worked very hard to be dedicated to the overall struggle for humanity and address the many issues we face because I believe it is important to do so.

I believe we, All Human Beings, have something important to contribute to life and to each other. I also believe that we must be loving and compassionate enough to care about the next person and want for them what we want for ourselves. And what is that we all basically want? To be happy, free of oppression, hunger, thirst, domination by others—to raise our children in the best way possible, to provide for them, to have adequate shelter, a life rich of meaning, and to be treated with dignity, justice, and not to be abused.

It is because I believe so strongly in these pursuits that I dedicate myself to these ends, even with my own human frailties and limitations. But at least I try and try my best to contribute.

Perhaps if we all lend ourselves to doing what we can, we can change our world and make it a beautiful place. But to arrive at this ideal we must be willing to take a stand against those who oppose such ideals and fight for our beliefs.

I hope that you will join me in this fight and dedicate your lives to a noble and worthy cause for the sake of all humanity.

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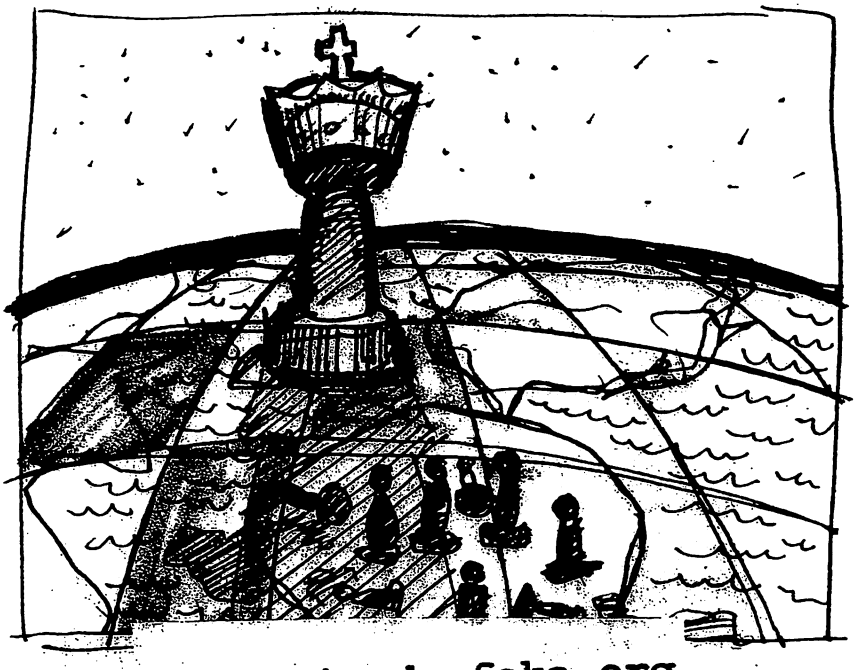

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