

Laurent Kabila: London's cutthroat in Zaire

by Christine Bierre and Linda de Hoyos

Laurent Kabila, the head of the Alliance of Democratic Forces, which is now claiming 300 square kilometers of Zaire on behalf of the Rwandan and Ugandan armies, has been extolled as a hero of Africa by people as disparate as Roger Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, and Lenora Fulani, leader of the New Alliance Party (see p. 64).

Winter, who was side by side with the Zairean mercenary in mid-November on the eve of the artillery attacks on the refugee camps at Mumba, worked to get Kabila in contact with the U.S. embassy in Kigali, and hailed him, in an interview with a journalist, for his apparently single-handed role in attacking the Rwandan refugees then in camps in eastern Zaire and in placing himself at the head of a so-called rebellion of Tutsis living in Zaire. This view of the soft-spoken "philosopher guerrilla" has undoubtedly been forwarded to relevant U.S. agencies as a valid assessment, as Winter describes his role as talking to and dealing with people that *bona fide* government officials have no experience with. Fulani, by routes unknown, holds the same view.

This assessment stands in stark contrast, however, to those who know Africa, and Zaire in particular, well. The French newspaper *Libération* on Jan. 7 printed a different profile: "At first a rebel, taker of hostages and trafficker of gold in his country, then working for Colonel John Garang in South Sudan, and finally, for the account of the new regime in Rwanda, grandmaster of the persecuted Tutsis in South Kivu." He is, *Libération* says, a "political-military entrepreneur." Even this description of the man is "underplayed," say well-informed sources.

The French newspaper has the details to back up its description. We quote here:

"Laurent-Desire Kabila was born Nov. 27, 1939, in Jadot-

ville, near Likasi, in the North of Shaba-Katanga. Strong personality, he is responsible for the 'Balubakat' youth (the Balubas of Katanga, his ethnic group) since 1959, even before the rich mineral province of the South of Zaire cedes, on the eve of the independence of the Belgian Congo, to the secessionist temptation, under the leadership of Moise Tshombe. Kabila rallied to the nationalist cause of Patrice Lumumba, but, after the assassination of the latter, leaves for Paris, and spends a year of studies in Belgrade. At his return in 1962, he becomes 'provincial adviser' (deputy) in his birthplace fiefdom, then rejoins the Lumumbist leaders Pierre Mubele and Antoine Gizenga in the rebellion, first in Kwilu, in the west, then in Kivu, in the east. It is at this time, in 1964, that the Soviet secret services identify him as 'the most formidable chief of an insurrection in Central Africa.' "

'A dealer in alcohol'

However, Kabila was not presumed to be such by Ernesto "Che" Guevara. The most famous of the Cuban guerrilla fighters was in central Africa from April to December 1965, at the head of 200 "barbudos," in an attempt to light the flame of revolution in the region. However, Guevara left "the parasite army" of the rebels of eastern Zaire, without hope. In his memoirs (see box), Guevara remarks briefly on Kabila, to indicate that not only was he rarely at the front, but that when he did arrive at the scene, his major function was to bring alcohol. As Guevara notes, Kabila had lost credibility as early as 1965.

As *Libération* tells the story, "After the departure of 'Che,' the rebel fiefdom (a vague zone of insecurity in the mountains between Uvira and Kalemie), shrunk rapidly."

Kabila and his "barbudos" went into other areas of busi-

ness: "Via neighboring Tanzania, they fraudulently export gold from the mines of Hewa Bora, and the ivory tusks of elephants."

Hostage-taker

Aside from his pirating of Zaire's natural resources for his own gain, Kabila was involved in other sinister activities. Ten years after Guevara had left the scene, Kabila was engaged in professional hostage-taking. *Libération* writes: "During one of these cross-border operations [into Tanzania], on May 19, 1975, [Kabila and his men] . . . fell upon four researchers, three American students and a Dutch scientist, installed in a park in Tanzania, to observe monkeys. Kabila's men grabbed the westerners, and took them to their fiefdom [in Kivu]. In the name of the Popular Revolutionary Party (PRP), they claimed then, under threat of execution of their hostages, the liberation of two comrades in prison, in Dar es-Salaam, and a ransom of 250,000 francs. Following an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Tanzanian government decided not to surrender to this ultimatum."

Twice, during this escapade, reports *Libération*, Idi Amin Dada proposed himself as a "mediator." The second time, on May 30, 1975, the Ugandan dictator revealed that he had the best of relations with the "marxists" of Laurent Kabila, and hurled threats at Tanzania. If the detained members of the PRP were not freed, Amin declared, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere would have to "confront big problems."

It took weeks, but Kabila did win. After long negotiations, including the intercession of two Italian missionaries, reports *Libération*, "two emissaries" for Kabila's PRP "simply took the train, and disembarked at Dar es-Salaam. Received at the American Embassy, they left with a diplomat, and the ransom money."

On the return, their boat was fired upon by Zairean coastal guards on Lake Tanganyika, but managed to survive. After Kabila's men had finally reached home base, the hostages were freed, save one American of 22 years of age, who for some reason was detained for another month.

Interviewed in 1984 by the French magazine *Afrique-Asie*, Kabila appeared to be no more than the usual defeated guerrilla. In this interview, he lied without blandishment, to declare that he "firmly refuses sensational actions," identifies "the rural proletariat" as the leaven of the revolution, and affirms that his party, the PRP, "is evolving toward being a mass movement, directed by cadres having a solid knowledge of the class struggle," reports *Libération*.

Asked about the obstacles preventing his rebels from extending themselves, he complained that "the governing power has built up a network of friends in neighboring countries in order to cut us off from any possible rear base."

However, Kabila was not about to close shop. In June 1985, "the PRP launched, from Tanzania, its second attack in seven months against Moba, a town of around 30,000 inhabitants on the east bank of Lake Tanganyika. After five hours of

fighting, the Zairean Army defeated the rebels, and destroyed eight of their twelve embarkations. More important: granting an amnesty, the governor, Moindo Nsimba, negotiated 'the return to legality' of two-thirds of the men of Kabila."

At this point, Kabila, while continuing his export-import business in Dar es-Salaam, headed in other directions.

John Garang's emissary

The latter half of the 1980s found Kabila working under Col. John Garang, head of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, who was leading a bloody war against the Sudanese government. Kabila was likely forwarded to Garang from Tanzania by his fellow "marxist turned free marketeer," Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, a close friend of Garang's since their days as classmates at the University of Dares-Salaam of President Julius Nyerere, where Lenin and Franz Fanon are required reading.

According to *Libération*, on several occasions, Garang used Kabila as his emissary to visit Gbadolite, the "jungle

Whiskey hauler of the African bush

In his diaries, *The African Guerrilla Years of Che Ernesto Guevara*, the Cuban guerrilla tells of the brief period he worked with Kabila and his forces in Zaire. He described Kabila as "cordial, but aloof."

Guevara wrote: "Kabila showed that he understood his people's mentality; sharp and friendly, he explained in Swahili all the characteristics of the Cairo meeting and the agreements reached. He spoke with the peasants, giving quick answers which satisfied them. Everything ended with a little dance performed by the participants to the tune of a song whose main line was 'Kabila is leaving, Kabila eh.'"

"When news of Kabila's departure was made known, problems again arose between Congolese and Cubans. The doctor, Kumi, took out a note predicting that Kabila would remain in the Congo for seven days, so he was off by two. Changa, our 'admiral' of the lake, was furious and said, 'And why did that man bring so many bottles of whiskey, if he were only going to stay for five days?' . . . It was Kabila who was discredited, and he wouldn't be able to remedy the situation unless he acted quickly. We had a last conversation in which I hinted at the problem with all the diplomacy of which I was capable; we also talked about other matters, and, as was his habit, he asked me in passing what my position would be if there were a rupture."

Lenora Fulani: Where the concubine twineth

by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.

Jan. 7, 1997—The notorious Dr. Lenora Fulani, like Columbia University's Manning Marable, is among a type of so-called "African-American" celebrity featured in the Establishment news media's side-show beat. This type is as justly notorious for its frequent, unabashed outbursts of hysterically uttered, lying libels (against one or another person or organization), as its curious Establishment status. Fulani's latest atrocity goes beyond all limits, her attempt to defend the most intensive genocide occurring—against Africans, in any place, during modern history to date. It is fair to say, that even the lying libeller Fulani has outdone herself with this one.

Compare the following from Lenora Fulani on Laurent Kabila with the facts as presented in Kabila's *Libération* dos-

sier of today. December gleanings from Fulani's Internet utterances ["What Is Behind the Refugee Crisis in Zaire?"] provide the following:

"Last month, the impasse was broken by the entry of a new political player: the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, whose main force is the Banyamulenge—Zaireans of Tutsi origin who have borne the brunt of Mobutu-inspired ethnic violence. The nominal leader of this group is Laurent Kabila, who has fought Mobutu for 30 years.

"In three weeks Kabila's forces broke up the camps, driving both Hutu militias and the Zairean troops away from the border zone, and seizing the area's three main cities. (Unfortunately, many Hutu refugees fled with the troops, who in some cases used these innocents as human shields.) This action has created a new humanitarian emergency, but it has also radically changed the political situation on the ground.

"Kabila has called on all Zaireans to resist Mobutu's provocation to ethnic strife, and to instead join his movement to overthrow the violence and corruption of the Mobutu regime. He has declared a unilateral cease-fire, to facilitate the entry of relief organizations, and has said his army has no objections to an international force being deployed to free the refugees from their criminal captors."

Versailles" of Marshal Mobutu. *Libération* quotes one source as saying: "Kabila was not, then, very important. But, a francophone in the entourage of Garang, he served as emissary for his regional diplomacy. Under this title, Kabila met Mobutu, showing to him all the signs of deference."

Even at this time, Kabila was still active working for a rebellion against Mobutu in Shaba-Katanga, the old Belgian stomping grounds. "Thanks to local leaders like Gregoire Mutemba, Pius Mungenga and Patrice Ngoy, Kabila became close to the UFERI (Federalist and Independent Republican Union) of Karl I Bond, a nephew of Moise Tshombe," *Libération* writes, adding: "Grotesque irony: several years later, between 1992 and 1994, it was the militias of the UFERI which, in Zaire, would put into operation the first large-scale ethnic purification, by evicting from Shaba-Katanga, several hundreds of thousands of Baluba, Kabila's ethnic group."

Contradictions

As *Libération* points out, the idea of Kabila as the hero of eastern Zaire is an idea fraught with contradictions. *Libération* writes: "Without risking to be contradicted, he can declare that he has 'never been a marxist,'"—whatever Che Guevara might have said; "that he has 'no contacts with the government of Rwanda,'"—although Roger Winter could only reach Kabila through the intercession of the Kigali government; and "that the killings committed by his troops

against civilians are only a 'montage of the BBC'"—although these killings have been reported widely by eyewitnesses, reported throughout the press, and been denounced by the U.S. government.

The "absolution" extended to Kabila is so extensive, *Libération* rightly points out, that "without risking being hit with sanctions by the international community, he can even accuse the High Commissioner for Refugees of being complicit with the regime of the Marshal-President and, for two and a half months, prevent the shipment of humanitarian aid to the hundreds of thousands of persons in the east of Zaire, who would have urgent need of it."

Now controlling nearly the entire eastern strip of Zaire, which holds the nation's minerals, Kabila on Jan. 4 invited such VIPs as former President of the United States George Bush, former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and former German Bundesbank director Karl Otto Pöhl to Zaire to negotiate with him over the fate of the mines owned by Barrick Gold—on whose international advisory board all three sit. Kabila has promised already that he will not interfere in any foreign mining operations, if the taxes garnered accrue to his Alliance of Democratic Forces. Since it is suspected that Kabila and the Rwandan and Ugandan armies fighting under his banner are deployed on behalf of Belgian and British-Canadian interests, an agreement between the cutthroat Kabila and the robber barons of Barrick is not unlikely.