
Interview: Honoré Ngbanda

‘Habyarimana’s Killers Caused Rwanda Genocide’

*Honoré Ngbanda was formerly the Defense Minister of Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo), in the last days of the government of President Mobutu Sese Seko. He is the author of a book, *Ainsi sonne le glas, les derniers jours du Marechal Mubutu* (So comes the end, the last days of Marshal Mobutu), and was an eyewitness to the tragic events that led to the killing of at least 800,000 people in Rwanda in just a few weeks, following the crash of the plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira. Mr. Ngbanda was interviewed by Christine Bierre and Karel Vereycken in Paris in late March 2004. The interview has been translated from French.*

EIR: M. Honoré Ngbanda, could you briefly introduce yourself?

Ngbanda: I’ve been an ambassador and several times a minister of my country, in particular Minister of Defense. In 1991, when the Zairean Army revolted and started looting, President Mobutu called upon me to get the troops back into the barracks. Afterwards, between the end of 1992 and 1997, I served as his special advisor on matters of security and international policy.

EIR: The timespan of your government responsibility coincides with the events following the fall of the Berlin Wall, that provoked major realignments in Africa. Today, people speak of the “balkanization” of the Democratic Republic of Congo [D.R.C.]. What were the causes?

Ngbanda: All of this fits a specific geopolitical logic that goes way back before the fall of the Wall, to the decolonization period. “Decolonization” was not exactly always a philanthropic undertaking, contrary to what is generally thought. The two superpowers that emerged after the Second World War wanted to impose their control on Africa and forced the old colonial powers to “decolonize.” The consequence was that the African countries were pushed into two camps: the Soviet camp or the American camp; the Warsaw Pact or NATO.

But that classification was just a cover for the sharing of economic resources, like those of Zaire, considered a scandalous reserve of raw materials and resources. We are the world’s first producer of uranium, of copper, of industrial and jewelry diamonds, and also the third-largest producer of gold. Forty-seven percent of Africa’s forests are located

in Congo, and we have the biggest water resources. Consequently, our potential is immense. The first war for the control of these resources went back to the early stages of our independence, when the Soviet Union and the United States confronted each other through Patrice Lumumba and Joseph Kasavubu. Later, the Katangese secession was a Belgian attempt to keep a hand on their mining facilities of the region. Today, as in the past, the balkanization of Congo corresponds to the logic of the same international vultures out to loot these resources.

EIR: Don’t you think that since that shift, the state institutions themselves were thrown out the window? We discovered the outrageous activities of companies such as Executive Outcomes,¹ which, under cover of protecting mining interests, created mini-states, equipped with private armies, schools, and hospital facilities, and took areas in the country which they call the “useful” Africa, as opposed to the rest, which they abandoned to chaos.

Ngbanda: I agree, but I would add the slight nuance that it is the Western countries that barricade themselves behind these so-called companies. The companies that signed the contracts with [Congo President] Laurent-Desiré Kabila in Lubumbashi—while he was not yet even in power—were completely in the hands of associates of the American President at that time, Bill Clinton! So, there was indeed the benediction of a state apparatus, which didn’t necessarily appear on the surface, but which was at work on the ground. One sees the same, if one looks at the origin of the weapons employed in the attack on Rwanda and Congo. These came from the stocks of weaponry abandoned by the U.S. after their rout in Somalia, weapons that were then transferred to an island in the middle of Lake Victoria in Uganda. And it is from there, and with the support of Great Britain and Belgium, that the destabilization of Zaire was prepared, to carve it up.

EIR: Starting from that analysis, you give a different coherence to the drama of the Great Lakes region.

Ngbanda: One has to remember the elementary conditions of the conflict. At that time, the United States and Great Britain adopted Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, whom they wanted to build up as a leader for the whole region. Together, they had defined the obstacles to eliminate. First, two disturbing Presidents had to be taken care of: Mobutu and Habyarimana, to allow Museveni to shine with his halo and to play the role planned by these powers. It was also a skirmish between Great Britain and France, between English- and French-speaking countries. The Anglophone countries wanted to take leadership, with an English-speaking country as a base. Therefore, two obstacles had to be liquidated, Mobutu and Habyarimana. The suppression of Habyarimana had,

1. “Executive Outcomes vs. the Nation-State,” *EIR*, Aug. 22, 1997.

however, grave consequences. The United States, Great Britain, Belgium, France, the African countries, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) of Gen. Paul Kagame—everybody, and I speak as a witness—was persuaded that killing Habyarimana would make the dike burst. Because he stood between an anvil and a hammer: On the one side, there was the very strong pressure from the Hutu extremists, who thought he was too accommodating toward the Tutsis. Especially, he was on his way to Arusha [in Tanzania], and on the verge of accepting that the Tutsis could be part of the government, something the extremists considered unacceptable. But he was the unique person capable of stopping them. The Hutu extremists also thought of the possibility of getting rid of Habyarimana, but not for the same reasons as the RPF: They wanted to liquidate all the Tutsis. And this was known to Kagame and the other Tutsi leaders.

Everybody, including the UN, knew that if Habyarimana fell, a hecatomb would take place. UN reports just confirmed that. And that is the essence of my argument, as I develop it in my book: Those who planned the assassination of Habyarimana carry the responsibility of the genocide. I heard Habyarimana asking that question of Mobutu, and he asked me the same thing when I discussed with him the nature of the threats he had received. He told me: “I don’t understand the West, these Americans who pretend to be interested in the fate of Rwanda: Why do they want my death, when my death will provoke a bloodbath?!”

EIR: When and where did this encounter with Habyarimana take place?

Ngbanda: On April 4, [1994], two days before his death, when he had come to Gbadolite to meet President Mobutu. Contrary to his habits, this visit was unannounced. I was in a meeting when I was informed that the Rwandan President was landing two hours later. He came, panicked, on a surprise visit. During the encounter, there were only two questions on the agenda. First and foremost, he knew he was threatened.

EIR: What were the indications of that?

Ngbanda: He had sources I don’t want to mention here today. Of course, like any chief of state, he had sources in the U.S. and in Europe that informed him. But I can mention the letter of the pilot of the Falcon-50 airplane, of which he had a photocopy that he showed us. The pilot indicated the danger of their travels, and pointed to the fact that the RPF



The brutal cost of the Anglo-American-backed invasion of Zaire by Rwanda and Uganda: starving refugees in a camp south of Kisangani in Spring 1997.

forces possessed surface-to-air missiles and had the intention of bringing down the plane. To avoid this, one had to come in flying at a very high or a very low altitude. Nobody knew the moment of their take-off from Kigali [Rwanda], or the hour of their return. Those were the fears before his last trip.

EIR: Why didn’t these security precautions save his life?

Ngbanda: That is effectively my domain. There was a difference. When they came to Gbadolite, he was the sole master of his itinerary. The take-off was a surprise; the landing was a surprise. But in Arusha, he couldn’t operate that way. There, everybody was informed; that was the protocol. When he took off, his hour of departure and landing were communicated. From there on, our security recommendations became inapplicable.

EIR: As far as I remember, it was said that President Mobutu strongly advised him not to take the plane.

Ngbanda: President Mobutu didn’t want to go to Arusha himself.

The second point on the agenda of the meeting at Gbadolite was Habyarimana’s request to Mobutu to accompany him to the summit meeting at Arusha. The whole international community was unfavorable to him; most chiefs of state invited to the summit were supportive of the cause of Museveni and the RPF of Kagame. Habyarimana desired the presence of Mobutu as a counterweight, to balance the Arusha agreements in his favor. President Mobutu accepted. But when Habyarimana was about to leave, it was I, as the official in charge of security, who told the President not to go. The conditions for a safe trip, to both Arusha and Kigali, were not guaranteed, for different reasons. (For the return trip, one has

to fly over Kigali.) I also told the President that in our security procedures, before the President travels somewhere, a team has to travel his route at least 48 hours in advance. It was April 4, and the conference took place on April 6. There wasn't time to do the advance security work on the ground. Considering all these elements, I told the President we didn't give him the green light to travel.

There was even a second element. In principle, I had to go with President Habyarimana to prepare the security measures. I had already designated the expert teams that had to precede us. If President Mobutu had decided to go anyway, it was agreed that I would return directly with Habyarimana to Kigali. So, I was programmed to be on that plane. But since everything was cancelled [by Mobutu], we stayed where we were. Habyarimana left on April 6, and, on the way home, it was his last trip. The threats were very clear. Many strange things happened in Arusha, but I'm still waiting for confirmation before going further. It was in any case from Arusha that the information was transmitted about his hour of arrival.

EIR: It has been often stated that the killing was prepared by Kagame and the RPF, but in collusion with the extremist Hutus. Is that true?

Ngbanda: I cannot subscribe to that argument. There could be no collaboration between the two extremes. The Hutu extremists wanted precisely Habyarimana's death in order to liquidate the Tutsis, and the Tutsis knew it. My hypothesis is the following. If this is confirmed, and many indications demonstrate it, if the Tutsis of the RPF planned and executed, even with the help of foreign Western powers, the killing of Habyarimana, we're dealing here, for me, with a form of political cynicism. They told themselves this genocide would benefit them politically. It was foreseeable.

EIR: The recent article of Stephen Smith [*Le Monde*, March 10] on the inquiry of French judge Jean Louis Bruguière,² seems to confirm that hypothesis, by the declaration of a bodyguard of Kagame who declared that the latter was ready to sacrifice the Tutsis of the interior, in order to take power.

Ngbanda: It is a totally logical hypothesis and plausible in regard to the realities as I know them. Why? Because there is a reality that the West doesn't perceive. The Arusha agreements were not going to profit Kagame, since they would result in the organizing of elections. It was out of the question for Kagame to win elections under the control of the international community, because of the very simple sociological conditions of the area. The Tutsis only represent a minority of about 9% of the population, while the Hutus represent 90%, and the remaining 1% are the Twa pygmies. A Hutu was not going to vote for a Tutsi. So Kagame had every reason to interrupt

the process, whatever the price. It is for that reason that the declaration of his bodyguard, amidst so many others that have spoken up, is perfectly logical. For me, it is the confirmation of this hypothesis.

EIR: A couple of days ago, the black box of the Falcon-50 was discovered, in a cupboard at the offices of the UN in New York, and it was transferred for analysis to the American National Transport Security Bureau (NTSB). Do you think this is the black box of the plane? And if I follow your argument, one gets the impression that the functioning of this institution was heavily contaminated by the interests you mentioned, and the UN became complicit in sabotaging the investigation of the instigators of the genocide.

Ngbanda: Let me answer by starting from another flank. Recently there was an accident of an airplane in Egypt. The plane fell into the ocean. We saw all the efforts mobilized by France to recover the two black boxes, in order to identify the exact causes that led to the death of more than 150 people. But in face of *hundreds of thousands of deaths*, and the assassination of two heads of state of member countries of the UN, whatever their size? Missiles shot down two heads of state and their deaths unleashed the hecatomb of hundreds of thousands of people! And is it considered normal, not to know where the black box is? Is it normal? That is the question. One can advance two hypotheses. Either the life of an African doesn't count, so nobody cares that they died; or, if one says the life of an African has the same value as the life of anybody else, then I ask myself, is this negligence or cover-up?

If one goes deeper into the question—and I don't want to accuse anybody, the facts scream for themselves. If one looks at all the noise that was raised to try to identify the cause of the genocide, yet there was this silence. What hurts me is the way this is presented, when we are told that the black box was found "by chance." Sincerely it makes me sick, because it shows contempt. . . .

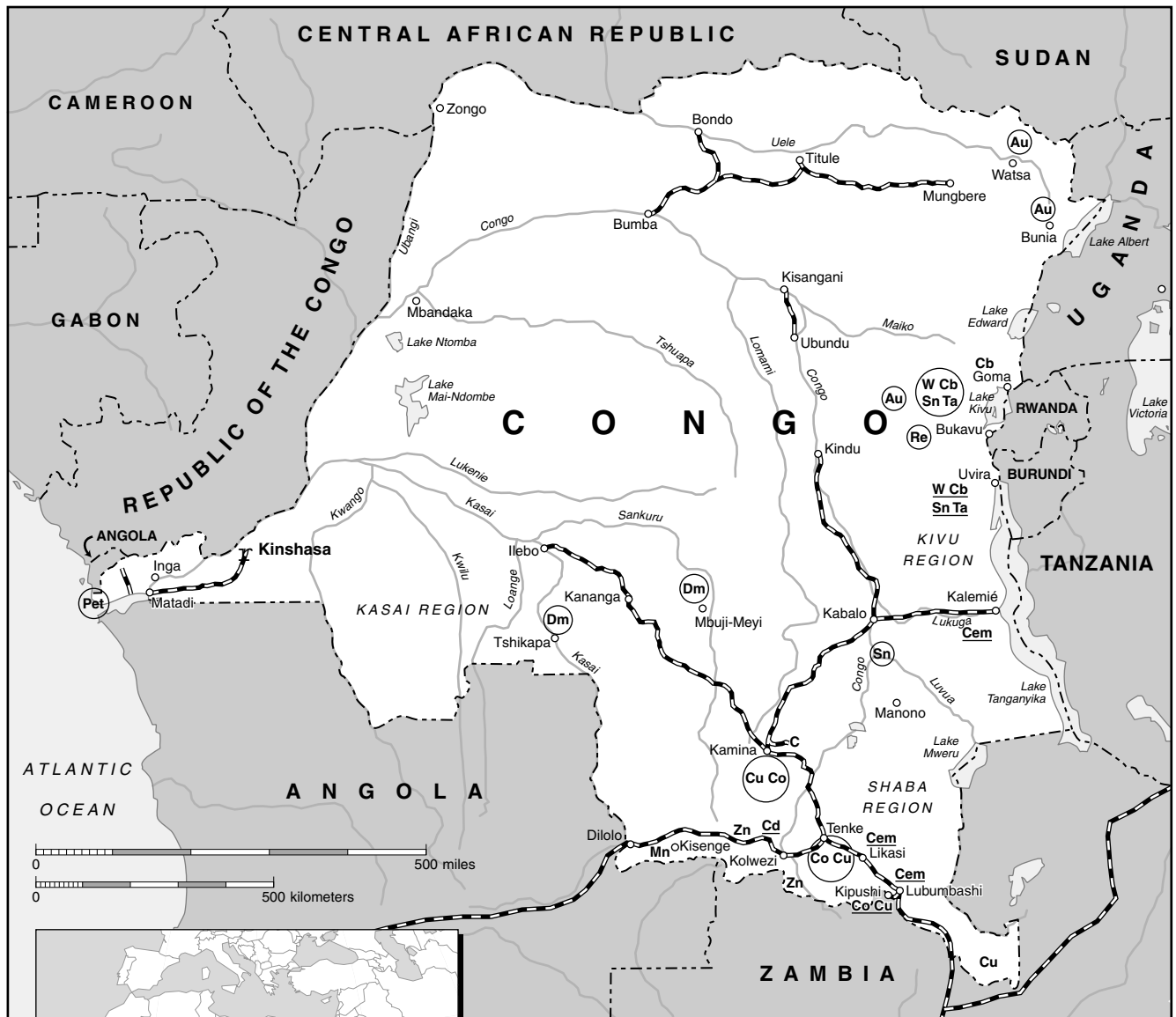
EIR: In your opinion, was Rwanda destabilized to provoke a domino effect on Zaire? Was it conceived as a double strike?

Ngbanda: As I write in my book, when President Mobutu heard of the death of Habyarimana, I stayed the night outside with him, reflecting, because it was he that learned the news by phone and came to tell me. He stated something indicative: "They got him, and the fact they got him was an Indian sign. *They're going to destroy the region.*" This man had vision. You can say anything you want about Mobutu, but he was a visionary; he possessed a capacity for projection and synthesis that was a gift to him. And when he said that, I understood. I realized that he comprehended that this was the beginning of the destabilization of the whole region. And that is what happened.

EIR: The rivalry between France and the English-speaking countries in Africa dates back a long time. But here, the deci-

2. "Rwanda's Kagame Accused of Causing 1994 Genocide," *EIR*, March 26, 2004. See also: "French Judge Blames Kagame for 1994 Deaths," in *International Intelligence*, *EIR*, March 19, 2004.

Congo's Strategic Resources



Symbol Resource

- Au Gold
- C Coal
- Cb Columbium (niobium)
- Cd Cadmium
- Cem Cement
- Co Cobalt
- Cu Copper
- Dm Diamond
- Mn Manganese
- Pet Petroleum
- Re Rhenium
- Sn Tin
- Ta Tantalum
- W Tungsten
- Zn Zinc

○ Group of producing mines or wells

Symbol indicates plant

— Railway



Victims of seemingly endless wars: Rwandan refugees in Goma, Zaire in 1997. Mr. Ngbanda sees the problem with U.S. policy in Africa today, in the fact that “there is no policy in the White House, nor at the State Department; it doesn’t exist.”

sion to destabilize a region in such a way that it would blow up and provoke the death of thousands of people is terrifying. How do you explain that the Anglo-Americans took such a decision at that point? And how do you explain that they went that far?

Ngbanda: I think the responsibilities need to be situated at different levels. I believe that the responsibility for the killing of Habyarimana and its consequences cannot be perceived identically when speaking about Kagame and the RPF, Museveni, and the others. I know how the Americans operate, and I’ve followed that evolution. The U.S. gives the orientation, but those that were directing the operation were Museveni and Kagame. They were the work-masters on the ground. It was they that planned with the Americans. Everything was planned! For the Americans, at such a date, such an objective had to be achieved. But to know how to get there, was the dirty work left to the Africans. And I believe they were somewhat surprised by the magnitude of what happened.

EIR: You mean [U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs] Susan Rice and [Britain’s] Baroness Caroline Cox?

Ngbanda: Yes, it was they who were with Museveni.

EIR: Do you see any difference between the policies of the U.S. and of Britain?

Ngbanda: It was a scheme of the U.S. to control the raw materials of the region, by controlling the Horn of Africa by the use of Uganda. There was another determining element in the U.S. interest in Uganda, and that was the rise to power of the extremist Hassan al-Turabi in Sudan, who was perceived as a threat. That was the reason that brought the Americans to move their bases, especially after the failure in Somalia. They needed a leverage point to control the Horn of Africa, from Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, to Egypt. And then, from there on, extend toward Central Africa to control the raw materials. For the British, it was in first instance the secular Franco-British rivalry, which has merely changed form since Fashoda.³ Kagame, who came out of American training schools, transformed Rwanda into an English-speaking country, and tried to do the same thing in Zaire, where it failed. But there existed, as they say, a community of interests.

EIR: Afterwards, Laurent-Desiré Kabila entered Zaire, and the Mobutu regime was dismantled. Once Kabila was installed in power, he ended up pushing back the Rwandans, and concentrated on some kind of national force, before entering into an alliance with Angola and Zimbabwe [in August 1998]. Is that alliance a reconstitution?

Ngbanda: That’s a very good question. It is rather a change of partner. Kabila was co-opted by Museveni, since he was nothing more than a gold and diamond dealer. He was never a real warrior; he never controlled any type of army. Those who researched the case, even Che Guevara, said so: He is a real mafioso. The Americans knew it; he had taken U.S. citizens hostage and held them for ransom. He was given the money, and he released them. They have a file on him. I told Susan Rice: “Have you forgotten that this man is registered in your files as a terrorist?”

But Laurent-Desiré Kabila, when he met Museveni, was instigated to be the head of the Ugandan/Rwandan army to destabilize Zaire. He made all kinds of deals. First with the Americans, he made a deal for the manganese and uranium mines, and a large part of the copper mines. Second, with Kagame, he had to deliver a good part of the Congolese national territory to Rwanda. This was called the Agreement of Lemera (Oct. 23, 1996). Certain mines from the eastern part of the nation and certain quinquina plantations and plants were supposed to be handed over to Kagame. To Museveni, he had promised, nearly for nothing, without taxes, the agricultural region of the eastern area that faces Uganda. This

3. The British faced down the French at Fashoda, Sudan, in 1898, without firing a shot. This confrontation between two colonial armies changed the game being played by the great powers in Europe, eventually leading to World War I.

is the Zairean coffee-producing region, which happens to grow one of the best coffees of the world. Those were all the deals they concluded with Kabila, and why they supported him and his army to take over the government. And so he took power.

But Kabila was a real mafioso, and understood, by the way he was being managed, that he was going to lose. First, he was unacceptable to the Congolese, since he was identified as the one who brought in the occupiers. They started putting the heat on him. The Angolans also had serious misgivings. So what did he do? He broke the deals. He dropped the deal with Rwanda; he gave up the deal with Uganda; and also broke the deal with the U.S. That's where he signed his own death sentence. Because the Gecamines mines [Générale des Carrières et des Mines] which he had promised to companies from Kansas, were given to Mugabe. The affiliates of Gecamines which he had promised to the Belgians and the Americans, were also given to Mugabe, through his intermediary, his associate Billy Rautenbach, a white South African, about whom the press wrote a lot. It was at that point that the Americans, the Ugandans, and the Rwandans understood they had made an error.

In the meantime, Kabila relied on national forces, and that is where I join in what you said. And it is also the reason they didn't want to give him time. They said, we'll attack him and destabilize him. They made the error of not soliciting the appreciation and formal agreement of Angola, which led to the situation where, when Rwandan paratroopers arrived in the south of Kinshasa [capital of Congo], at the base of Mbaza-Ngungu, and wanted to start their advance, to bring in the troops from Kigali and Kampala, the Angolan Air Force intervened on the second day, because the Angolan troops were already in Kinshasa and about to take the airport. And the night right before they were to take over the airport, the Angolan Air Force intervened at the demand of Laurent-Desiré Kabila, and everything was turned around.

Now, with this, the second offensive of the war started, and it is at that point that they told themselves: If things go this way, we will start a second offensive. And that offensive took the form of a second rebellion, with the RCD [Rwandan-backed Congolese Rally for Democracy, a political-military organization] in Goma. But because of the rivalry and differences that appeared between Kagame and Museveni—Kagame no longer wanted to accept the diktats of Museveni—the two no longer agreed on the dividends on the ground in Congo. You saw their confrontations, as in Kisangani, where the two armies violently fought each other. It was all about the redistribution of the economic and mining profits of their undertaking, and they couldn't agree on that. . . .

EIR: What about the fact that Angola and Zimbabwe came to help Kabila? Was that an African operation, or did it involve French or international support?

Ngbanda: No, Zimbabwe intervened to save Kabila, be-

cause there exists a personal friendship between Kabila and [Zimbabwe President Robert] Mugabe. Don't forget that both lean toward Marxism, and knew each other from the guerrilla period.

EIR: Mugabe also had many reasons to fight the British and the Americans. What about the role of Angola?

Ngbanda: When Angola intervened, it was at the demand of the United States, because a strong logistical capacity was needed to go as far as Kinshasa. Uganda couldn't support such an effort beyond 2,000 kilometers, and Rwanda simply doesn't have such a capacity. And that is where the U.S. called on [Angolan President José Eduardo] dos Santos, who after all, had some quarrels to settle with Mobutu, involving Mobutu's support for [rebel leader Jonas] Savimbi of UNITA. So for dos Santos, it was the occasion to fight his enemy, because Savimbi was still alive at that moment. By bringing down the Mobutu regime, UNITA's support for its rebellion in Angola out of Congo was shut down. That strategy seems to have paid off, since after the fall of Mobutu, UNITA didn't survive for long. Angola's support for Kabila was conditioned by that objective. As they say, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." They supported Kabila, because they opposed Mobutu, who was their enemy.

EIR: But it was the United States that supported the second intervention by Angola?

Ngbanda: No, the second time, it was not the U.S.A. But Angola was obliged to do so, since it feared that, by liquidating Laurent-Desiré Kabila that way, things would return to the previous situation, and somebody close to Mobutu would take power. They feared that, since they had helped Kabila, who would have just disappeared, it would not be possible to reach agreement with the people close to Mobutu. It's very complex.

EIR: Did you see any change of policy since the arrival of the neo-conservatives of the G.W. Bush Administration?

Ngbanda: What is at stake for Africa from the American side, in my opinion, is the absence of an Africa policy. *There is no Africa policy in the White House, nor at the State Department; it doesn't exist.* If somebody tells you there is an Africa policy of the U.S., they don't know the U.S. What does exist in the United States, are calculations to occupy strategic points according to economic and strategic interests, and that's it. There is no policy. Which means that whether Democrats or Republicans govern the U.S., it doesn't make a difference.

EIR: Certain neo-conservatives have shown their interest in African oil reserves, in the context of a perspective of a major conflict in the Persian Gulf or Saudi Arabia.

Ngbanda: You are right, but that thesis exists more in the minds of the strategists of the Pentagon and the Israelis than in those of the CIA.