

Anglo-Americans Consolidate Power in South/Central Africa

by Uwe Friesecke

After more than eight weeks of negotiations in the South African resort Sun City, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) drew to a close without an agreement signed by all parties participating. The South African government, the United States, and the European Union, which paid for the negotiating marathon of more than 360 delegates—representing the Kinshasa government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, various opposition groups, and the two main rebel groups controlled by Uganda and Rwanda—declared that they wanted to bring lasting peace to the Congo. But again, as with most Western-sponsored peace negotiations in Africa, a careful analysis reveals a much more cynical design, followed in particular by the British and U.S. governments.

If one disregards the rhetoric of diplomatic declarations, and looks at the facts on the ground, it becomes obvious that Western governments' concern for the well-being of the people is pure hypocrisy, and their real attention is focussed on the enormous wealth of raw materials buried in the ground in Central Africa and under the ocean along the western coastline of Southern Africa. While many political observers in the region expect nothing else from the governments in Washington, London, Paris, Brussels, or Lisbon, they are deeply concerned about South African President Thabo Mbeki, whose proposal for a transitional Congolese government suited more the regional designs of Western strategists, than the genuine interests of the Congolese people.

The Regional Context

The ICD in Sun City started shortly after the death of National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) leader Jonas Savimbi at the end of February. It is by now an open secret that Savimbi was hunted down in the bush of Angola's Moxico province by the Angolan Army with the help of U.S. and Israeli intelligence. Right after Savimbi's death, Angola's President Eduardo dos Santos, Savimbi's rival for more than 25 years, went on a state visit to Washington and offered an increased supply of Angolan oil. (The United States already receives about 7% of its supply from Angola.)

The death of Savimbi, who during the Cold War used to be Washington's most favored ally in Southern Africa, was widely hailed as the removal of an obstacle to peace in the country. But the peace that is being prepared for Angola now,

looks more like a dictated peace by the West, than a genuine effort of Angolans to undue the horrors of almost 30 years of civil war, and lay the just foundation for peace and development, benefitting all citizens of the country.

The Angolan malaise has been the intricate involvement of the country's power elites with Western multinational corporations, especially in oil and diamonds, to loot the country—regardless of the ever-deteriorating living conditions of the people. For decades now, U.S., British, and French oil firms have lifted billions of barrels of petroleum offshore in Angola, knowing full well that the proceeds fuelled the war and filled the pockets of a few individuals inside and outside the country. And the same Western interests bought diamonds from the rebel group UNITA, the other side of the war.

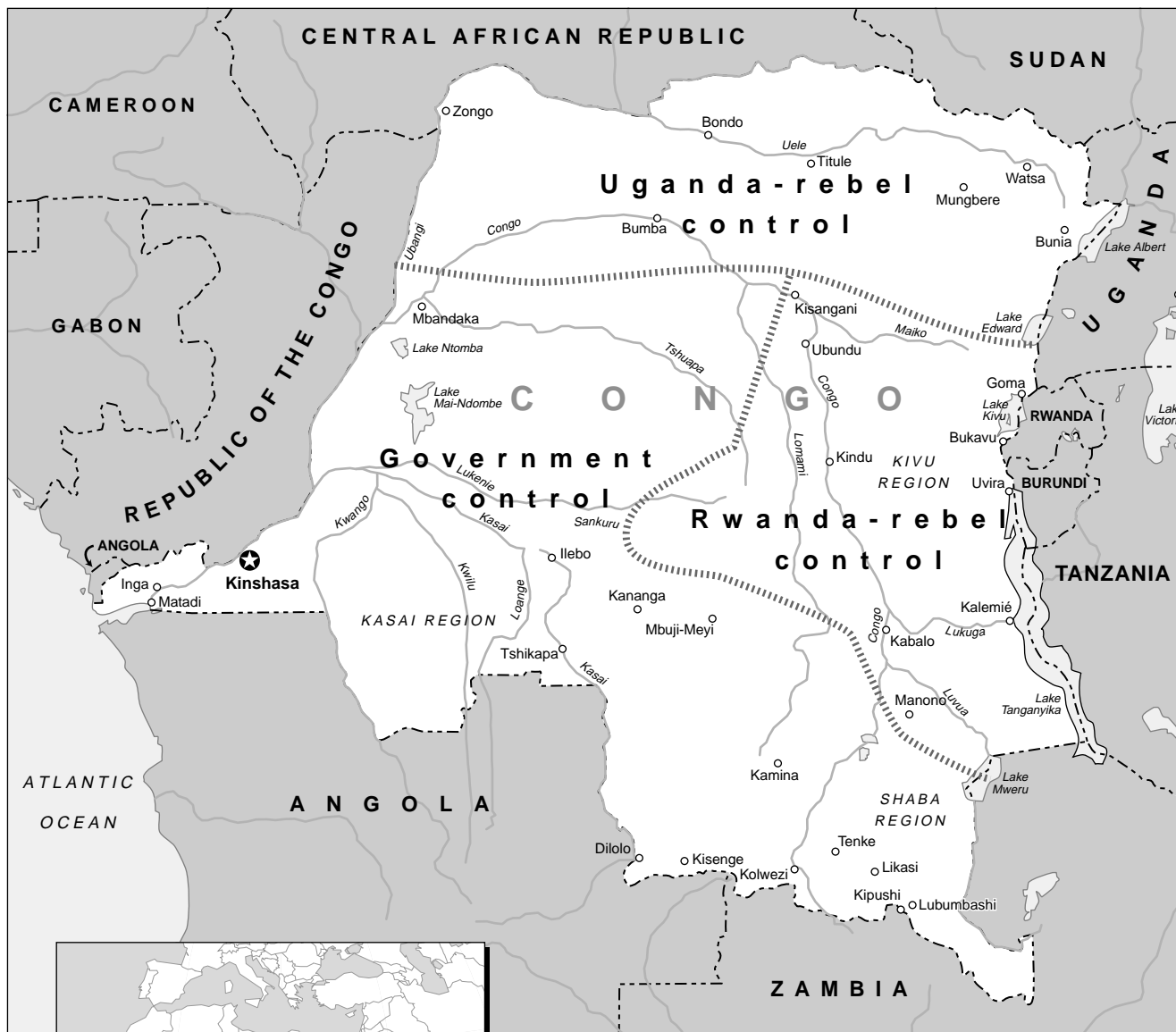
But Savimbi had apparently outlived his usefulness, and rather than making another attempt to include him in a power-sharing agreement with the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government, he was removed from the scene as a complicating factor. The government could then dictate a cease-fire agreement, which was signed by the government and UNITA at the beginning of April.

The cease-fire may have ended the military fighting for the time being. But political observers fear, that the wrangling over the participation of UNITA leaders of different factions in the lucrative oil and diamond business with the MPLA government, will destroy all serious efforts for rebuilding the country economically and politically. As long as the oil flows and diamonds find their way to Antwerp, the Anglo-American powers don't care. For them it is a strategic question, because the western coastline of Africa—from Nigeria in the north down to Namibia in the south, including Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, the Cabinda enclave in Angola, Congo-Kinshasa, and Angola—contains probably as much, or more petroleum and natural gas than the Middle East. With a war against Iraq looming, with its incalculable consequences for the stability of the Arab world, relations with those countries in Africa are moving higher up on the agenda for Washington.

Therefore, the Pentagon is intensely involved in guiding U.S. Africa policy. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Michel Westphal, at a Pentagon news conference on April 2, explained how some longtime oil-

MAP 1

Political Division of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



producing nations in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region are now beset by anti-Western sentiments, that could affect future energy exports to America; and therefore that Sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly looking attractive to the United States. Westphal said, Africa “does matter” to U.S. policy-makers, because “15% of the U.S.’s imported oil supply comes from Sub-Saharan Africa.” One should keep in mind, that the State Department’s Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, Kannsteiner, served with the Department of Defense as a member of the strategic minerals task force.

A consolidation and streamlining of power structures is under way in Central and Southern Africa. To control Ango-

la's oil and diamonds from just one center, the capital city of Luanda, is more effective than having to deal with the incalculability of a continuous war. Besides consolidating influence over Angola, the Congo must be controlled, because its tremendous wealth contains important strategic minerals such as coltan. This is the real issue in the ICD.

The Fraud of Western Peace Efforts

In January 1961, Patrice Lumumba, the hero of Congolese independence, was murdered by an operation of Western secret services, and Col. Mobutu Sese Seko was brought to power. He relentlessly looted the country in the name of his Western backers. By 1996 an ailing Mobutu had outlived his usefulness, and the same Anglo-American powers that had backed him, worked with the governments in Uganda and Rwanda to organize Laurent Kabila's march to power in Kinshasa in May 1997. But Kabila did not honor the agreements he had signed earlier, and he fell out with his invading former "allies," Rwanda and Uganda. He apparently preempted an assassination plot against himself, and threw the Rwandan advisers out of the country. In return, in the Summer of 1998, Rwanda and Uganda staged an invasion of so-called rebels into the Congo, with the aim of removing Kabila from power in Kinshasa and replacing him with somebody who would fit into the their Anglophile alliance.

But President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and then-Vice President Paul Kagame of Rwanda were doing nothing in the Congo without the active consent of the British and U.S. governments. Because the Presidents of Namibia and Zimbabwe realized the danger to their countries if Uganda and Rwanda were to take over power in Kinshasa, they deployed troops into the Congo to save the Kabila government.

Since then, the Congo has been divided, and the Kinshasa government of the Democratic Republic of Congo controls less than half of the territory. The southeast is occupied by the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), controlled by Rwanda, and the north by the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), controlled by Uganda. Even though the Presidents Museveni of Uganda and Kagame of Rwanda have since fallen out with one other, they both remain willing puppets of the U.S. and British governments, and occupy half the Congo for those Anglo-American interests.

After Laurent Kabila was assassinated in January 2001, his son Joseph, who assumed the Presidency, was forced to the negotiating table. U.S. and British diplomacy organized the Lusaka peace accord of 1999 and the deployment of a UN observer mission to watch over the cease-fire. The ICD dialogue, following the Lusaka agreement, is supposed to work out an arrangement for a transitional government to prepare general elections of a parliament and President for Congo-Kinshasa while preserving the unity of the country.

The fundamental flaw in this dialogue is that the invading forces, the so-called rebels, are being accepted as legitimate. As with so many precedents in Africa, first the West, the U.S. and British governments in particular, organized the invasion.

Then they called both sides, the two Uganda- and Rwanda-controlled rebel forces (as the aggressors), and the Kinshasa government (as the victim), to the negotiating table, gave them equal status, and tried to manipulate a peace agreement which accomplishes for the Anglo-American strategy diplomatically, what it couldn't achieve militarily—in this case the control of the resources of the Congo.

Regional observers are alarmed that the proposal of South African President Mbeki at the Sun City talks fits exactly into this. Mbeki's proposal would keep Kabila as President, with much reduced powers, and give the rebel groups control of all important portfolios—the army, the economy, and the interior. Under cover of "withdrawal of foreign forces," the Zimbabwe troops defending Kabila's government would be forced out of the Congo, while in reality, the other foreign forces, from Uganda and Rwanda, would occupy ministerial posts in Kinshasa. Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe would be further isolated and cut off from his economic cooperation with Kabila. Thus, the most aggressive opponent of Anglo-American colonial control in Southern Africa would be significantly weakened, if not eliminated.

But the Sun City talks took a turn which the facilitators, the South African government, and former Botswana President Sir Ketumile Masire did not expect. Joseph Kabila and his ministers struck a separate deal with one of the rebel forces, the Uganda-controlled MLC. Their leader, Jean-Pierre Bemba, will become Prime Minister, and Kabila will remain President. The government in Kinshasa announced, after leaving Sun City, that it would implement this agreement, even though the other rebel group, Rwanda's RCD, protested loudly and threatened the resumption of the war.

Joseph Kabila had apparently understood that the praise which was heaped on him right after he took over power in Kinshasa was conditional on his willingness to make the expected deals with the Western powers concerning Congo's raw materials. Having in mind what happened to his father, he is trying to survive by exploiting the differences among his adversaries. So far, he has succeeded. But the chances that he could establish a government for the Congo, committed to the real development of the country against the strategic design of a neo-colonial Anglo-American policy, are slim. London and Washington, with other Western partners, will continue to push aside any independent political force in the region which stands in the way of their control over the region's raw materials. This reminds us again, that if U.S. and British diplomats speak of peace, they mean peace for their interests, not for the suffering people in these African countries.

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