Congo Missionary Discusses Independence

TEACHERS—Shown deep inside the Congo are two teachers in the Pedagogie school, Lee Green and Ferdinand Ibonga. Green, author of the Congo report, has lived in the area for the past seven years, and is in charge of a mission primary school there.

Congolese View Independence With Mixed Feelings

(Editor's note: The following dispatch was written by a mission primary school teacher in Africa on Congo independence. The area involved is to receive its freedom June 30.

By LEE A. GREEN

In less than a month the Congo will receive independence. The whites look upon the independence with a resigned dread. The Congolese approach it with mixed feelings. To some it is the casting off of all restraints. To others the approaching date brings uncertainty, apprehension and fear.

We Americans look on with amazement, for we have seen in one short year, a prosperous well organized colony come to a grinding halt. Law and order have given away to anarchy. As one Belgian told us, "The Belgian government has completely abandoned the Congo."

Americans think of independence in romantic terms. We think of a struggling nation fighting the then all powerful England. We think of George Washington and heroic sacrifices. Often we are asked about how we received our independence. It is always ended by the question: "When you got your independence was there so much confusion?"

Grass Roots Level

What about independence for African states and what about democracy at the grass roots level?

Some time ago I was standing beside the road when a car literally stuffed with Africans came rattling by. An African leaned out the window and yelled "Uhuru ya Kazi" (freedom from work). Later I found that he was president of one of the local chapters of a political party.

He has been preaching that independence means less work, more pay. It means equality for all. I heard him make a political speech later where he stated that the Belgians were the worst people on earth, that the local chief was fat and flabby because he was eating all of the people's money, that the Congolese Army won World War II, that missions, both Catholic and Protestant, were hypocrites and that all bad white people should be kicked out of the Congo.

He also stated that anyone without one of his political cards on Independence day would be in serious trouble. He was also later arrested and put in jail for stealing the money collected from selling political cards.

Insecure, Confused

The average African is insecure and confused by the many conflicting reports he hears. Every African who can afford even the cheapest radio set ($25) has one, and listens to reports on the roundtable discussions. Often these reports are interpreted through the eye of tribal custom, and it is fantastic how ordinary news reports can be twisted.

It is not a little startling to hear American popular records like "Honeycomb" drifting out of a native hut. The radio has opened up a whole new world to the Congolese and they are making the most of it.

Can democracy work in Congo? Most of those who have lived in the Congo for many years definitely do not believe that it is possible. Here we are only two generations removed from the tribal wars. There are four major trade languages plus French, plus hundreds of tribal languages that make communication and unity difficult.

However, the main difficulty is in the African culture itself. The African lives in a culture that is more adaptable to Communism than Democracy.

The Congolese have a collective society. He is not free individually, for he himself is the property of the clan, he acts as the clan puts pressure on him, his wife is paid for by the clan, his children belong to the clan.

African Gets Hat

I remember giving an African friend of mine a hat because he had none and I felt sorry for him. A few days later I saw my hat bobbing up and down on the head of a stranger who was strolling by my house. Later I found that he was the uncle of my friend and had liked my hat so he took it. My friend would not think of protesting. This collective society affects every avenue of the African's life-even political thinking.

Recently an African came and asked for an advance on his salary. He stated that his relatives told him that if he didn't join their political group that they would beat him up, so he must join that group, although he knew nothing about it.

This brings me up to this point: the greatest blunders that the white man makes is to take western ideas (we take for granted) and try to apply them in the African society. Most of us, because of our history with despotic kings, think of a one party or one man rule in dark terms. However, the African knows only the strong arm rule.

Recently I was talking with an educated Congolese who had just come from voting. He said, "Bwana, I have just voted, but I don't know what I did. I saw a picture and I thought that man had a good face so I voted for him. I heard that another man in another picture was a distant relative of one of the village men so I voted for him. But, please explain what we are doing."

Tries to Explain

I tried to explain using Ghana as an example and, of course, I warned him of a one-man rule and explained the Ghana situation to him. He beamed and said, "That is exactly what we need here, someone who can be a strong man and beat down his opponents."

I felt that to explain our viewpoint is futile. The head of the African society is a clan head, and above that a chief. It is only natural that elections do not mean much to them.

One of the problems encountered in Congo elections was the placing of a stamp in the workbook of each African who voted. It was merely to show that he had voted, but in some cases whole villages refused to vote because they felt that the stamp had a hidden meaning, a sign that they were making an agreement.

Today there are 28 major political parties and many more smaller ones. Each one is fighting for supremacy. Voting in many places has been accompanied by riots and even death. At present, Stanleyville, Kasongo, Bukavu and Elizebethville are occupied by the Congo and Belgian army. Some are under martial law.

At Kasongo, a small town on the Congo river and the site of famous Arab-Belgian wars, a member of an opposing political party dropped a match down the gas tank of the enemy party.

Dragged From Car

At Kindu, a member of a political party was dragged out of his car and beaten to death. Such violence has put fear into the hearts of the people so that a threat from an officer of a political party is all that is needed to put a group into subjection. It is doubtful that even with such tactics that one party can gain control at least immediately. However, if one party does not gain control, the Congo is ripe for civil war and a collapse of civil government.

Perhaps one interesting condition is the African's attitude towards nationalities. Americans so far have fared pretty well for we, by gaining our independence even back in 1776 (time means nothing to most Africans), have sort of put ourselves in kindred spirits with the African.

I recently was taking photos of an election. The Africans began to get nasty and said that they didn't want their picture taken. They asked me if I belonged to a certain political party. I replied no that I was a misionary, and came only to help the people. I am not interested in politics. They said, "Oh, you are an American." They gave me no more trouble.

It makes one sad to see the strong feeling that has developed against the Belgian officials and people here. We know that the Belgian rule was one of the best in Africa; however, the tide of nationalism has swept over the benevolent deeds of the Belgians as though they were not there.

Mineral Wealth

I have heard Africans say, "What have the Belgians done for us? They stole our mineral wealth." At first I would protest that if though they had the resources, they didn't have the capital to develop them and therefore the mineral wealth was useless to them. I have given up trying to explain for it seems futile. It is sad to see colonial officials, with brilliant records, years of hard work in the Congo, thrown out of the Congo because they have crossed African leaders or parties, most of the time in the line of duty.

Congo for a white man is a touch and go affair. It is a time for cool heads and often courage. Recently in a city near here a demonstration by the official government school teachers was put down by an official. He turned the fire hoses on them for he was afraid. The truth came out later that these teachers had not been paid for four months. The Africans have refused to pay taxes to the Belgian government. They were demonstrating for their money. They meant no harm.

But, one of the women teachers was with child, and when the hoses were turned on her, she fell. She later lost her baby and the Africans angrily blamed the official. He had to be shipped out of town quickly to avoid personal harm. He had had a long record of meritorious service in the Congo, but it only takes one slip and a long career is finished.

Another case of nerves was when recently an argument developed at an election post. One of the political leaders became angry and got into his car and drove to the nearest government post. He reported to the government official that there had been confusion near to rioting at the election point.

The government official became frightened, and called for the Army instead of investigating. The official arrived at the village with three truck loads of troops. Without asking questions the troops beat up the opposing political leader. This very nearly caused a riot. The results were that the man who was beaten up was not held, for no charge could be found against him. He in turn became the hero of the whole area. He has suffered for the cause. The government official had to be removed for his life was threatened.

Local Incidents

These are local incidents, but they could be multiplied many times. Congo is on the verge of civil war and anarchy with yet a month to go before independence. The only hope is not independence, but that one party or a leader will emerge who is strong enough to lead these people through this difficult period. This will take a great deal of personal strength, patience and, yes, even love on the part of both white and colored.

In the past three months many whites have fled from the Congo taking the much needed capital with them. However, a workable agreement between white and black must be found for the Congo needs white people today more than ever. Even though the Congolese do not realize this today, it is the hope of everyone that some day they will become aware of that need. But, in the meantime, the adjustment will be a difficult one.

The Congo needs help as never before, it needs America. As one African put it recently, "We hope that America will help us, but if they don't, we will ask Russia."

STUDENTS—Pictured at work are several students in the Mwanga Teacher's Training school, also called the Pedagogie school. Although these are signs of great advancement in education and living standards, Lee Green, an Oregonian teaching in the area, says that this is an interesting time in Africa. Green cites as the standing joke, "Things are sure quiet, we haven't had a riot in almost a week."

Brink's Tipster Pleads Guilty

Boston — (UPI) — Brink's robbery informer Joseph (Specs) O'Keefe pleaded guilty today in connection with the million dollar heist Jan. 17, 1950.

Superior Judge Felix Forte sentenced him to three to four years in state prison but gave him credit for the four years he already has been in custody.

However, O'Keefe was not freed immediately. He was taken to a lower court for appearance on a probation vio? lation charge stemming from a Pennsylvania warrant against him.

O'Keefe's testimony in 1956 sent eight other men to prison for the fantastic robbery of the Brinks counting house here in January 1950. O'Keefe turned state's evidence when the gang tried to cheat him of his share of the money, most of which never has been located.

West Accused of Thwarting Talks

Geneva — (UPI) — Communist members of the ten - nation Disarmament Conference accused the West today of "continuing to evade businesslike discussions on disarmament."

The five nation Communist statement issued after today's four minute meeting was taken by the West to mean that the Russians were building up a case for breaking off the conference when American delegate Fredrick Eaton returned from Washington, D.C.

He and French delegate Jules Moch were still in their home capitals for consultations on the Soviet disarmament plan.

The Communists have accused the western powers of stalling on presenting a counterproposal to their June 2 disarmament plan.

20th-Century Not To Cut May Britt

Hollywood — (UPI) — Twentieth Century - Fox Studio officials Tuesday denied they plan to drop the services of actress May Britt, fiance of Negro entertainer Sammy Davis Jr.

"May Britt is under long term contract to 20th Century-Fox and there is no factual basis for any story the studio is terminating her contract," said production chief Buddy Adler.

Adler's formal statement followed a studio spokesman's official announcement Tuesday that the blonde Swedish actress' contract, would not be renewed when its option falls due next year.

The couple was booed publicly earlier this month when Davis was making a personal appearance in London.

Green Says Press Reports Are From Survey View Point

Lee A. Green, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Green, 450 Ross lane, Medford, who is currently teaching in a mission primary school in Africa, noted recently that African independence is more than what news reports have said it to be.

Green reports in a letter to the Mail Tribune, ". . . they all seemed from a survey view point and not from the grass roots level itself."

Although he was an Oregonian, Green has been living in the Congo area of Africa for the past seven years. He is teaching there, and is in charge of a mission school. His wife is teaching the sixth grade in the school.

College Graduate

The local man was graduated from Wheaton college in Illinois and the University of Oregon in 1952 with a master's degree in education. He was graduated also from Roseburg High school.

The African project is sponsored by the World Wide Grace Testimony, Milwaukee, Wis. He left on this assignment from New York City Jan. 1, 1953.

At that time he went by freighter into the mouth of the Congo river and spent five years in Africa. After returning for a year to the U. S., he spent a year in Belgium where he studied the French language and government in Africa.

Green left Belgium in July, 1959, and drove from Bristols to Italy. Following, he returned to the east coast of Africa and then drove to his present location, described as M.E.M. Kakumbu, Par Kindu, Africa, on the Congo river.

Changes in Africa

Green also advised of many changes in Africa and describes it as ". . . a southern Oregon forest in August . . . any spark can set off a conflagration."

The missionary sums up the African condition by saying that it is ". . . in bad shape financially and wracked with many problems, but a disillusioned populace could be the biggest problem."

Although April 15 has been observed as Africa Freedom day, the sprawling Congo will receive its independence June 30.

The African dispatch printed on this page is a report on Congo independence as seen by Green. It is written at a time of chaos and trouble from the immediate area involved.

SONG WRITER DIES

New York—(UPI)—Ray Walker, 76, composer and writer of popular ragtime songs during the pre-World War I era, died Monday. Walker's songs included "Oh What I Know About You," "Goodnight Nurse," and "That Funny Bunny Hug."

Trail Youth at JESSI at Corvallis

Corvallis — Richard J. Wilson, Trail, is now participating in the fifth annual session of the Junior Engineers and Scientists Summer institute sponsored by Oregon State college.

He is participating with some 150 boys from Oregon, Washington, and Calfiornia who have demonstrated outstanding promise in science and have been recommended for the special program by their instructors and principal.

Course work covers all feilds of engineering, mathematics, physics, chemistry, zoology, geology, bacteriology, botany, and oceanography. In addition, students visit the various campus research laboratories and observe operation of the college's training nuclear reactor, cyclotron, electron microscope, electronic computers, and high voltage laboratory.

The JESSI program was started in 1956 at Oregon State and has since been adopted by other schools and areas across the nation. Co-sponsor of the program is the Scientists of Tomorrow, Portland.

Northwest Gas Stock Sale OK'd

Salem — (UPI) — Northwest Natural Gas company Tuesday was authorized to issue and sell 60,000 shares of its cumulative preferred stock at a par value of $100 per share.

Public Utility Commissioner Jonel C. Hill said the stock will be sold to a group of underwriters headed by Lehman Brothers of New York.

The estimated $5,800,000 in net proceeds will be used in part to finance Northwest's 1960 Willamette valley construction program.

Accident Reported To State Police

A complaint for failure to yield the right of way to oncoming traffic will be filed against Clair Maud Plummer, 3722 Alley lane, Medford, according to state police.

A car operated by Mrs. Plummer was involved in an accident with a vehicle driven by Jesse Merit Taylor, 4479 Hamerick rd., Central Point, at Hamerick and Head rds., Central Point, police said.

Pauling Risks Contempt Charge

Washington — (UPI) — Dr. Linus Pauling risked a possible contempt of Congress citation today by vowing to keep secret the names of the scientists who helped him circulate his petition demanding an immediate end of nuclear testing.

The grey - haired scientist, long a leader in the movement for disarmament and a permanent ban on nuclear testing, said he would not comply with the Senate internal security subcommittee's request that he divulge names.

After questioning the Nobel Prize chemist Tuesday, the subcommittee gave Pauling until Aug. 9 to change his mind and appear again with the list of scientists.

The subcommittee wants the names of the scientists who helped Pauling collect more than 11,000 signatures on the petition. It was filed with the United Nations in 1958.

India Heat Wave Takes 395 Lives

New Delhi, India — (UPI) — A killer heat wave with temperatures up to 116 degrees has brought death to at least 395 persons in northern India since June 1, the All India Medical and Health Association reported today.

The Weather Bureau reported the monsoon is advancing into central India with cooling showers and is expected to reach the stricken areas within a few days.

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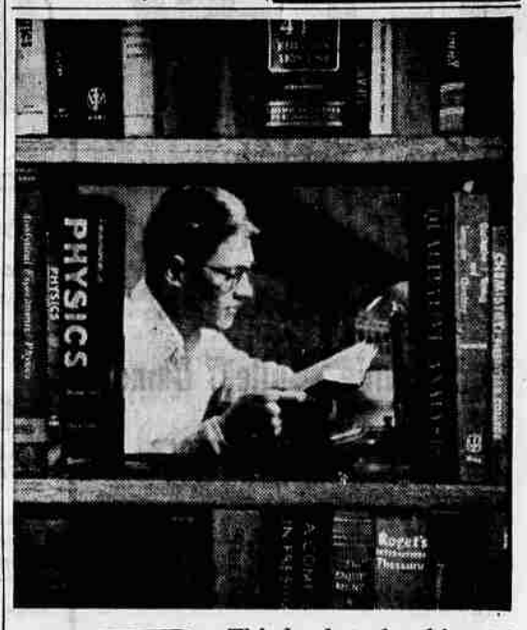

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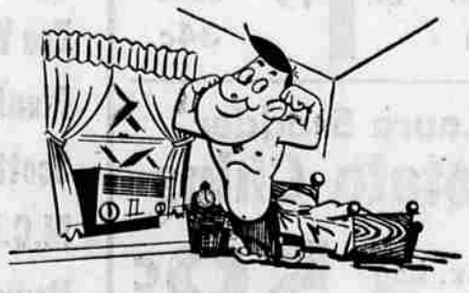

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