

Speech given by Mr. A. Emmanuel, at the M.N.C. banquet, on July 6, at the Stanley Hotel, in Stanleyville, in response to the speech of the Provincial President of the M.N.C.

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My dear president,

As a member of the Greek community of Stanleyville, to whom you have been so kind;

As a member - I claim at least to be one - of this international brotherhood of men of good will, to whom you have addressed such a vibrant appeal;

As, finally, a convinced anti-colonialist and anti-racist;

I can't tell you how touched I was by your words.

But there is one point in your speech that particularly interested me: the distinction you make between institutions and men.

For it has often been said that it is men who make institutions, and this, taken literally, is obviously true. But it has often been forgotten to add that institutions, once established, end up acting on men and shaping them in their image.

Men end up being subjected to the institutions that they or others have created and being conditioned by them.

We did not invent colonialism, but we suffered it like the others.

So, when you made a distinction in the behavior of whites before and after June 30, I wondered if you have an accurate idea of what the condition of an anti-colonialist white person within a colonial society represents:

Rejected by his own clan, and unable to enter deep into the indigenous society, where he encounters incomprehension and mistrust, he finds himself in an untenable position, at odds with the world. It is a drama of every day and every moment.

Yes! You are right, the handshake was not as frank before June 30 as it was after; the wall of colonialism that stood between you and us, prevented our fingers from shaking.

That's right! Our gaze was not as direct before June 30 as it was after. It was the opaque smokescreen of colonialism that troubled it.

If you knew, you who are jubilant today for having been freed from the colonialist yoke, if you knew the joy that is ours, to have been freed from an even more terrible yoke, to have been freed from ourselves, from our complexes, from this inversion of values, in which we struggled without a way out.

We are not responsible for colonialism, you say. That is up to you to say. But we do not consider quitting for so little.

If we do not feel responsible for the specific crimes of colonialism, we certainly feel responsible for its aberration. This monstrous aberration of our Western civilization of the last three centuries, which has wasted so many ideals and so much good will.

How ridiculous I feel when I hear my co-religionists reproach you for your tribal struggles of yesteryear;

We white people, who have just emerged from a war among our own tribes, a war that claimed twenty million victims, a war during which we sent through the gas chambers and crematory ovens six million human beings, whose only crime was to belong to a tribe other than us, a war during which, in a single instant, with a single gesture of the hand, with the push of a single button, we wiped off the map two cities of one hundred thousand people each; a war in the face of which your tribal struggles seem like child's play.

How stupid I feel; when I see my brothers of race boasting of having once liquidated the slavery of the Arabs among you;

We whites, who, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, shipped fifteen million slaves across the Atlantic.

These are white and blond slave traders, in front of whom the small traffickers of Zanzibar seem like choirboys.

No! You may say that we are not responsible; I will not sleep peacefully until colonialism is erased not only from the earth, from all lands, but also from the thoughts and memories of men.

This is why we are answering your call.

The path you have chosen is the right one: Drive out colonialism as an institution, be understanding of men. Punish, if necessary, the great exploits of the colonialists, forget the small deeds and gestures of the whites under the old regime, these small miscellaneous facts which constituted the inseparable corollary of a lifestyle imposed by colonialism.

In this way, you can count on us.

Long live the MNC of the Eastern Province.

Long live the Republic of Congo.