

by Dave Pugliese
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Soldier of Fortune isn't exactly your average magazine. The monthly publication bills itself as "the journal for professional adventurers," and its pages are full of articles on guns, mercenaries and fighting techniques.

At its helm is Robert K. Brown, an ex-Green Beret let loose in the financially risky world of magazine publishing.

Brown started his magazine in 1975 with less than \$10,000 in capital and only 4000 subscribers. By the third issue, *Soldier of Fortune* was selling 100,000 copies and was the centre of a major controversy.

Much of the controversy surrounds the magazine's ads recruiting mercenaries.

Daniel Gearhart, an unemployed Vietnam veteran, had obtained mercenary employment through an ad placed in the magazine. On July 26, 1976, he was executed as a mercenary by the new leftist government of Angola.

Currently *Soldier of Fortune* is being investigated by a United Nations committee on mercenary activities.



Does your anti-communist stand overlook the disregard that many pro-American regimes have for human and civil rights?

Brown: I don't think it does. I think I would respond to that by saying we are realists. It's a head in the sand approach for us to expect every country in the world to live up to our standards of civil rights and certainly we even here have injustices that need to be corrected.

We approach it from a pragmatic view and the old Arab proverb: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. So I think it's too much to expect that we can impose our particular type of human rights or our particular concept of democracy on all governments which we are allied with. But certainly we would be remiss not to use any influence we might have to ensure civil rights are not violated.

The Nicaraguan consular general charges that *Soldier of Fortune* is supplying military aid to ex-Nicaraguan national guardsmen for what he terms "terrorist" raids into his country. How do you respond to these accusations?

Brown: That is certainly a matter of perception. It's the classic case of one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

We are providing uniforms for what we consider freedom fighters against a communist-inspired, Marxist-dominated totalitarian type of regime. We make no apologies about it and if in fact we can provide them with weapons and funds we would do that also, but of course that's beyond our capability. Also, providing weapons would be illegal.

What we're dealing with here is a simple fact of Russian imperialism. They have very dramatically stated through their theoreticians and leaders they have every intention to dominate the world at some point in time.

This goes all the way back to Marx and up to the present. World War III in effect is going on at this time, although it's certainly not a conventional type of action like World War II. It's quite evident to us that the Russians are pursuing their effort to extend their influence through surrogate and puppet states such as Cuba and Nicaragua. We will oppose these efforts wherever and however we can in our own modest way.

How do you explain the increase of mercenary activity in the last decade? A few mercenary operations that come to mind include the Angola war, Nicaragua and the recent attempts to take over the islands of Dominica and the Seychelles.

Brown: Once again it's a matter of perspective. You said increase in the last decade, but compared to what? Certainly in the preceding decade we had the mercenary operation in the Congo which probably involved a larger number of people than all the operations you have just mentioned, although that was a singular operation.

But if you go back through history, well for instance in America we have had a long tradition of Americans serving as mercenaries.

One of our most noted American heroes, John Paul Jones, ended up serving as an admiral to the Czarina of Russia.

In World War I of course there was the Lafayette Escadrille as well as hundreds of Americans fighting for the French Foreign Legion prior to the U.S. entry into the war.

In World War II you have the Flying Tigers which certainly fit the definition of mercenaries, although they were aided and abetted by the U.S. government unofficially. They were paid a salary plus a \$500 bonus for every Japanese plane shot down, which back in those days was big money.

You had a significant number of Americans, and Canadians for that matter, who flew with the Eagle squadron in the British air force prior to our entry into World War II.

So once again you see the peaks and valleys in this type of thing, and I don't think you're seeing a great deal more mercenary activity than you have in the past. But then we come to each individual's concept of a mercenary.

Webster's defines a mercenary as simply being an individual who fights under a foreign flag for pay. If that criteria were used, then certainly the Americans and Canadians who fought in the recent Rhodesian war would fall into this category.

But on the other hand, they were not mercenaries as exemplified in...let's say the movie *The Dogs Of War*. They were subjected to the same rules and regulations as other members of the Rhodesian army. It all depends on your own definition of what a mercenary is.



SOF's military small-arms editor, Peter G. Kokalis, fires Schwarzlose Md. 07/12 medium machine gun made by Steyr of Austria in 1918.

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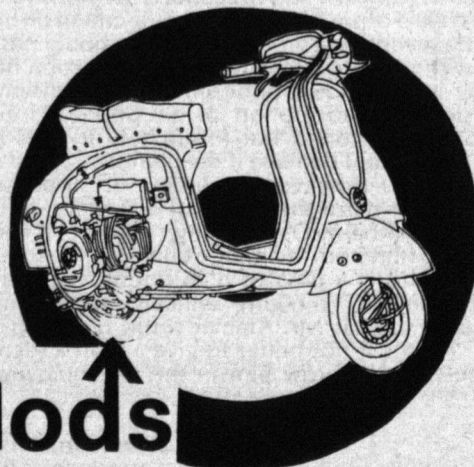
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