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ZAIRE • 1960-1977 : From colonialism to Mobutism

by

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Zaire 1960-1977: From Colonialism to Mobutism

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Jacques Depelchin

Le Mobutisme c'est le mariage entre le peuple et son guide (Mambenga, n° 135, 24 May 1975)

Toward the end of 1974, it is him (Nguza Karl-I-Bond) who instigated the creation of the party school and launched the new doctrine: mobutism to control more directly the party and the press....

With the help of hired pen-pushers and academicians the myth of Zairean authenticity and the doctrine of mobutism celebrated and propagated in a turgid, bombastic and arrogant language. While an anti-Belgian feeling was being pushed in the population, one began to notice similarities with the external forms and manifestations of nazism. This reached a particularly deplorable level immediately after the June 1975 attempted coup by military officers with the instauration of racism and anti-semitism. With the help of academicians a kind of "manifesto on the defense of the race" was published in newspapers. This manifesto extolled the purity of the Zairean race which from times immemorial to the present must be preserved from foreign stain. A few days later, the régime launched a vilifying campaign against those Zaireans who were married to whites. Since mixed marriages had been banned, those who had contracted them before the ban were expelled from the army, party, or any post which may be considered as official.... (Kanyonga Mobateli, Dix ans du Régime Mobutu, Editions Ivy, Suisse, 1976, pp. 75-6)

The excesses of all kinds of Mobutu's régime have led to a denunciation of the régime by highlighting these excesses which are often attributed to the person who was responsible for bringing it about. This kind of approach to the history of Zaire is characteristic of those individuals who wish to personalize the history of that country. As is well known the manner in which a historical problem is posed will also determine the answer. Thus, if the current situation in Zaire can be explained in terms of the failings of one man, then the solution to the crisis will be to remove that man. However much Mobutu himself has endeavoured to personalize and identify himself as the incarnation of Zaire, one must resist the temptation to engage the debate at that level.

The purpose of this brief overview is to offer an analysis which will help to understand the recent events in Zaire. Although the focus of the paper is on post-colonial Zaire, it should be clear that the 1960-1977 period cannot be understood without placing it in the larger context of colonialism and imperialism.

The so-called "invasion" of the mineral rich province of Shaba by so-called "Katangese" rebels on March 8, 1977 brought the former Belgian colony back into the headlines of the International press. Up to then, only the specialized financial press was paying attention to the growing difficulties that Mobutu's régime was encountering in meeting their creditors' deadline. To informed observers, the events that began on March 8th 1977 were not surprising: they were the result of the politics of a régime which had achieved the almost unachievable, namely to antagonize all the social and economic classes of Zaïre except for the small clique which is bureaucratically or ethnically close to President Mobutu Seseke.

Historical background

How could a régime which was being highly praised, and still continues to be praised, for having brought peace, stability and "progress", have been brought to the brink of disaster in such a short time by such a small, determined, but ill prepared group of opponents. Because the régime had grown to be identified with^a one-man rule there has been a tendency to focus on the failures or successes of the President in order to explain the ups and downs of the country as a whole. It is true that Mobutu has enriched himself to an extent which is still to be realized by most observers. Now and then the sensational press has listed his personal assets most of which are located outside Zaire. It is also true that because of his initial position in the army and the external alliances he has forged he was able to concentrate political power in his own hands, but the whole historical process which led to this state of affairs still has to be explained in terms of the internal ^{and external} forces which have dominated in that country since independence (June 30, 1960).

Tribal atavism, the fall of copper prices, the oil crisis have all been used to explain the economic and political difficulties of Mobutu's régime: events outside the control of the régime are conveniently seen as the main cause of all the problems. The régime seems to have weathered (and saved itself) the March 1977 political crisis by attributing its origins to the external machinations of the Cubans who were acting on orders from Moscow.

The logic of the external cause was crucial to the régime because it was (probably) the only one which could have brought about not only a sympathetic hearing from foreign capitals, but also the kind of quick and efficient military and "non-lethal" support which was delivered by the USA, France, Belgium, Germany, Morocco, Egypt, China, Uganda and the Sudan to mention only those helping countries that made the headlines. When Mobutu first came to power in September 14, 1960, he also used the "external interference" argument in order to eliminate the then Prime Minister P. E. Lumumba. In November 24 1965, the coup that brought Mobutu to power/^{was} allegedly aimed at putting an end to the mess created by "politicians", but in fact was motivated by the fear that President Kasa Vubu was going to align the then Republic of the Congo with the progressive states of Africa, something that Lumumba had been trying to do at least since 1959.

Many analyses of the current situation in Zaire start off with a brief account of the conditions under which Zaire gained independence in 1960. The chaos that ensued is often used to illustrate the failures of the Belgian colonial system which is a way of advancing the view that there were "good" and "bad" colonial systems; To out and out racists, the chaos has ^{been} used to highlight the "incurable" incapacity of Africans to rule themselves and/or their inability to rise above their tribal antagonisms.

Tribal antagonisms did/^{exist} (and still continue to be manifested in various ways as can be seen from Mobutu's heavy reliance on people coming from his own ethnic group). However, it would be wrong to attribute their appearance to the departure of the colonial rulers. The practice of the Belgian colonizers systematically relied on tribalism. A man's name was less important than the tribe he came from. On the cards that cotton planters received and where their production (and earnings) were registered one could read not only the name of the bearer, but also that of the village he came from, his chief and his tribal group. When the Belgians recruited for the army they favoured the so-called Bangala (a wrong identification of a non-existing ethnic group which happened to speak lingala). Certain groups were called "pacific" or "intelligent" according to whether they went along with the colonizers without too much resistance. The day to day practice, the politics of colonial rule were riddled with tribalism. So much so that when

"modern politics" were introduced most political parties organized themselves around tribal lines. The party leaders who emerged could only have a narrow social basis. Moreover, the economic basis of most of them was closely linked to the colonial state apparatus: many of them occupied salaried positions as teachers, clerks, subordinate civil servants, etc... Among the politicians who could claim an independent economic basis were the traders and large farmers, but even they sought to establish their legitimacy through tribal identification. Most of the party leaders came from the group that the Belgians contemptuously referred to as the "évolués", that is, those who had "evolved forward" through education and adoption of the social and cultural tastes of the colonizing bourgeoisie. As early as 1936, the colonizers tried to introduce "an immatriculation procedure which would assimilate to European status the educated Congolese who were just beginning to appear, especially in the clergy."¹ While the immatriculation decree never had much success, it is important to point out that the efforts of the colonial rulers to treat a fraction of the colonized population differently was precisely one of the main objectives pursued by those (the évolués) who thought they might benefit from the distinction. One of the constant preoccupations of the évolués was to prove to the colonizers that they were different from the others:

After the Force Publique mutiny in Luluabourg in 1944, a group of Luluabourg évolués had prepared a memorandum demanding 'if not a special statute, at least a special protection of the government, shielding them from the application of certain treatments and measures which could be applied to a retarded and ignorant mass...'

In the same petition another paragraph asked that

the évolués be received separately once a week by an official who would examine their complaints. It is painful to be received like a savage when one is full of good will²

If jailed they also request to be treated differently from the "savages from the bush".

In 1947 a similar petition was sent to the administration by évolués in Kinshasa. Here they did express concern for the well being of the urban and rural masses, but they did insist like their colleagues in Luluabourg that they be distinguished from the rest so that they could become an intermediary group between the Europeans and the masses.⁴

While there were some évolués who did point out the pernicious practice of the colonizers that led to the emergence of an arrogant class^{of} individuals, the general character of that class and its politics were those that can be detected from the above cited petitions. This class revealed its nature again after the January 4 1959 riot of Kinshasa which left 200-250 dead (according to official sources --unofficial estimates put the figure at 3,000).⁴ Following the riot not a single member denounced the brutality of colonial repression, instead, through one of their organs, La Voix du Congolais, they condemned the senseless violence of the mob and pointed out that if the colonizers were going to grant independence they would not consider the multiplication of such actions as the January 4 riot a sign of political maturity. In other words the future leadership of the Congolese people had to prove itself not to the people they were going to lead, but to the colonial rulers. Their understanding of power was typical of a bourgeois mentality: As a class which had striven to see itself as different from the "bush savages" the évolués petit bourgeois perceived itself as the natural inheritor of colonial power.⁵ And yet, just as the colonizers understood January 4th to be the beginning of the end, so did the évolués understand the importance of mass support to quicken the departure of the colonizers. Political rallies, the creation of parties were seen not as a means of organizing, educating and leading the Congolese people, but rather to threaten the colonizers with the possibility of another January 4th. While the "politicians" resented recourse to violent methods, they had noted the rapidity with which the Belgian government had registered the political meaning of the riot: it was the riot that forced the Belgian government to issue a declaration on the political future of the Congo, a political future that was to culminate with independence. (King Baudouin's Speech on January 13 1959)

From January 4 1959 onwards, the "politicians" constantly sought to adjust to the rising anger of the population. In other words the petty bourgeoisie had been forced to reckon with those very people they had constantly despised. Verbal violence and demagogery became a common practice among the politicians. It was during the last few months of colonial rule that the seeds of the 1964 uprisings were sown

The efforts of the évolués during colonial rule to be given a different treatment culminated for them in the granting of independence. Independence was seen as a final recognition and acceptance by the colonizers that the évolués could indeed be treated as Europeans. It is interesting to note that whereas before January 4, 1959 the évolués tended to advocate racial harmony, the opposite trend developed after January 4.⁶ Although it is never discussed seriously, the question of racism under colonial rule affected the colonized people differently according to the class position they occupied in the system. The class that had most to gain through the removal of racism also turned out to be the most vociferous in focusing on the racist nature of colonial rule. By focusing on racism the évolués were reducing the colonial system to an ideological aberration. While racism, injustices and humiliations were fervently denounced, the economic system upon which they were founded was not called into question:

The Europeans bring to the Congo their capital, their intelligence and their experience, whilst the natives supply their energy, muscle and labour power; the Europeans supervises and directs, while the African works hard, loyally and willingly.⁷

later on:

Much has been said recently about the 'crisis of confidence'. I must say frankly that this crisis is the inevitable consequence of broken promises, of past faults, of the unjustified perpetuation of certain discriminatory measures.... These ... are the sole source of the crisis and of all its potential consequences.⁸

While the ideological stridency of the Congolese leaders tended to frighten the white population as a whole it never seriously shook the confidence of the businessmen (especially the financiers).⁹ While the majority of the "politicians" realized that they did not have the trained people to run an independent state, their politics based on ideological outbidding intensified the antagonisms between the colonial rulers and the masses. The departure of the colonial rulers was bound to benefit the local petty bourgeoisie in the form of higher salaries, higher social status. On the basis of their own expectations, the petty bourgeoisie often made extravagant promises to the working population which had been particularly hard hit by the recession that had followed the Korean War.¹⁰ The astounding proliferation of political parties in the few months preceding independence was another illustration of how the petty bourgeoisie understood the meaning of independence. To be

a head of a political party was necessary in order to gain recognition and visibility for the time when new jobs were going to be allocated.¹¹

In 1960, the Republic of the Congo was granted independence in a totally unprepared fashion. The army mutiny that broke out almost immediately only added to the total confusion that was already latent. For those who had actual and potential interests to defend in the Congo, the most urgent task was to rebuild the administrative and bureaucratic machinery of the State disrupted by the massive exodus of approximately 10,000 Belgian civil servants. Hence the stop-gap measure to which Mobutu --after 'his' September 14

1960 coup-- resorted to of recruiting University students who had not even graduated, but who, at least, had some vague theoretical notions of how to run a public administration. The resort to budding technocrats who had not even left the University was also a reflection of the absence of any indigenous social and economic group which could have provided the badly needed skilled manpower. The emerging petty bourgeoisie was one which had been restricted (by economic and political pressures) to vocational training, technical jobs, petty trading, teaching in elementary schools and the lowest rungs of the colonial civil service. It was this situation which led the officials of the UNO civilian mission in the Congo (1960-64) to consider their top priority the training of high ranking civil servants: scholarships were given to study public administration abroad and at the newly established Ecole Nationale de Droit et d'Administration.

The importance of quickly training skilled administrators for the public sector after the exodus of the Belgians was not merely determined by the necessity to restore a well functioning bureaucracy. Rather a well functioning bureaucracy was crucial if the then Republic of the Congo was going to continue to play its role of strategic supplier of raw material to the industrialized countries. With copper, manganese, zinc, tin, cobalt and uranium (until 1957), Katanga province produced most of the mineral ores of the Congo. Other mineral industries exist in other provinces, but not with the same concentration: diamond (especially industrial) in Kasai; gold and tin in Kivu and gold in Oriental provinces. It can thus easily be seen why Katanga (Shaba) province occupied such a strategic position from the point of view of international capital, and why this position had to be preserved against possible political in-

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ferences.¹²

P. Lumumba's radical brand of nationalism combined with a popularity which went beyond his own ethnic base were seen as a potential threat to the preservation of the political and economic relations which had been established during colonial rule. Even before independence, the political and physical removal of P. Lumumba from the Congolese political scene had become the leitmotiv of many western powers.¹³

The army mutiny which began a few days after June 30 1960, the Katangese secession (July 11, 1960) led by M. Tshombe constituted crises which were used by Western powers (especially through the US Ambassador) to eliminate politically (September 14, 1960) and finally physically P. Lumumba (January 1961). Although the UN soldiers had been called by Lumumba's government, and arrived in August 1960 in order to restore territorial integrity, it was not until after Lumumba's death that the UN troops were militarily used to bring an end to the Katangese secession, which was finally accomplished in January 1963. However, as has been pointed out by several writers as well as UN officials in the Congo at the time, the UN in the Congo quickly became a cover for advancing the interests of Western powers.¹⁴ It would be wrong and overly simplistic to view the Katangese secession in purely economic terms. Its importance was first and foremost of a political nature: the furthering of Congolese politics which would keep the entire Congo and not just Katanga province within the Free World to use antiquated Cold War parliance.¹⁵

From his self-imposed exile, M. Tshombe was recalled by President Kasa Vubu and given the task (among others) of putting an end to the rural uprisings which had exploded in Kwilu, Kivu and Oriental provinces. In the meantime a new constitution had been adopted and was to enter into effect after general elections to be held in March 1966. Under this new constitution, the President was to be granted more powers. Because of this, M. Tshombe decided to use his premiership as a launching platform for the presidential elections. President Kasa Vubu realized that his own political career was threatened and proceeded to dismiss M. Tshombe. The replacement, E. Kimba (another Katangese) failed to win Parliament's approval thanks to tortuous manoeuvres of the political factions controlled by Tshombe. It was also at this juncture that President Kasa Vubu made a speech at a OAU conference held in Accra which was interpreted as a turn

to the left.¹⁶

Anti-communist Cold Warriors saw Kasa Vubu's intervention at Accra as a renewed attempt of Moscow to gain more influence in Congolese political affairs. Kasa Vubu's promise that the Congo would not longer resort to mercenaries was seen by Mobutu as a personal affront. The mercenaries had played a crucial role in checking the insurrections, and in the process had somewhat refurbished the image of the Congolese Army. Thus a context made up of an apparent political (internal) impasse and an alleged external interference constituted the background against which Mobutu seized power in November 24 1965.

The scenario of the coup was very much reminiscent of his famous "neutralization" of P. Lumumba and J. Kasa Vubu in September 14, 1960 except that this time the villain seemed to be Kasa Vubu and the man to benefit from the operation Tshombe.¹⁷ Mobutu's own position, however, was different: from the point of view of internal politics he represented a new force to be reckoned with. In 1960 Mobutu's political survival was implausible as well as impossible because he lacked the necessary political and/or military base. But when Mobutu seized power in November 24 1965 he commanded the best equipped and best trained section of the Congolese army: paratroopers who had been trained in Israël (probably with US money) between 1960 and 1965.

In a country which had no autonomous ruling class, in a country where the means of production were still overwhelmingly controlled by international capital, Mobutu's seizure of power constituted the best guarantee of political stability and economic profitability. As commander of the paratroopers his military position was unchallengeable even by those politicians who had been known at one time to control ethnic factions of the army.¹⁸

Although the coup itself was bloodless, the process of consolidation of Mobutu's own personal power was carried out with bloody and efficient ruthlessness. It began with the public hanging of four "plotters" (all of them former cabinet members) in June 1966. Then came the "disappearance" of hundreds of Katangese soldiers who had mutinied in 1967 and returned their weapons under a promise of amnesty. In 1968; several student leaders were arrested and jailed without trial for demonstrating against the visit of US vice-President H. Humphrey, and asking for an end to US aggression in Vietnam. In 1969 several students were killed when asking for a raise in their stipend. A year later, a clash occur-

red between the Army and the students because the latter wanted to commemorate the 1969 killings of their friends. The government reacted by closing the University and jailing the whole student body. Because some of the students were the sons of highly placed bureaucrats, almost all students were immediately released, only to be forcibly integrated into the Army. Mobutu's argument for doing this: the students needed to be disciplined, and the army was the best place for doing this since military justice was quicker and more efficient than civilian justice. Finally, under the guise of reorganizing higher education, but with the intention of disorganizing University students opposition, the three existing universities were dissolved and reorganized as one University with campuses in Kinshasa, Kisangani and Lubumbashi. The loss of teaching and library material that followed the decision to transfer faculties and departments from one end of the country to another has never been assessed, but it dealt a paralyzing blow to the whole University system from which it has not yet recovered.

While the repression that took place against students or well-known individuals (e.g. P. Mulele, leader of the Kwilu insurrection which began in 1963) is fairly well documented, hardly anything is known about the atrocities, exactions and extortions committed by soldiers of an army which has continued to operate, ever since 1960, like an army of occupation. After coming to power in 1965, Mobutu has constantly proclaimed his compassion for the regions which suffered from the insurrections, but he has never admitted that most of the destruction of lives and property that occurred in the said regions was committed by government soldiers.

As pointed out by one of his best known opponents ---Cl. Kamitatu¹⁹ fear of loosing his power has now and then led Mobutu to see or engineer plots which were invariably crushed by summary executions of the alleged culprits. January and February 1976 saw the repression reach new heights as well as strike within the army itself: about 300 soldiers who had refused to fight in Angola were executed by paratroopers. Massive desertions ensued, among them the famous "Kamanyola" regiment which was then being publicized as the "exemplary unit of the future Zairean army". To make up for these desertions young unemployed people were quickly recruited, quickly trained and speedily sent to the front and a certain death.

Nature of the economic crisis

The standard explanations such as the collapse of copper prices, increase of oil price, world economic crisis are insufficient to explain the current disastrous economic situation of a country which has been proclaimed for half a century to be potentially richest in Africa. When the Congo became independent in June 30 1960 its economy was heavily dependent on copper production which represented between 60% and 70% value of all yearly export. In 1974 this situation had not changed: copper and cobalt represented between 66% and 75% of all yearly export. (Zaire is the single largest producer of cobalt). By 1976 copper and cobalt were said to constitute between 85 and 90% of the country's total export. In the agricultural sector, the situation is even worse. In 1972 agricultural products constituted 16% value of all export; in 1974 it decreased to 14%. For 1975 the decrease is likely to be larger because of the careless maintenance of coffee plantations, the declining production of palm oil and cotton. For the latter, the country used to export part of its production, now it must import cotton from the U.S.A.

As might have been expected, the deterioration of internal production led to increased imports of food and agricultural products. For example, maize which was not imported in 1950 had to be imported in 1970 and 1974 to the tune of 87,500 and 174,000 tons respectively. In 1974, for an import bill totalling Z 380 M., Z 70 M. were spent on importing food alone, and the trend has worsened as pointed out by USAID officials:

Increasing quantities of food must be imported. Once self-sufficient in food crops, it is projected that Zaire will import over 325,000 tons of wheat, rice and maize in 1975.²⁰

Economists have a tendency to present statistical data in order to show how these data can be improved. The problem of any economy is therefore visualized in 'objective' figures, as if there is something inherently 'unbiased' in figures. There is a world of difference between the way in which a World Bank official identifies the economic problems of Zaire and sets out to resolve them and the way in which the peasant expresses his disapproval of how the government is run. For the latter, the deteriorating economic situation has meant deteriorating conditions of living. According to 1976 estimates 16 to 18 million of people, i.e. 75% of the total population live in rural areas. Kivu province, known under colonial rule

as the "granary" of the Congo. (for the better fed classes no doubt) now boasts a center for the study of malnutrition. One could continue on and on with an endless list of data to demonstrate how disastrous the economic situation is. Between 1968 and 1973, growth in the agricultural sector was put at 2,5% against a 2,8% demographic growth. Average incomes also show how rural areas are worse off: in 1969-1970 a survey on annual incomes gave the following results:

plantation worker: 71 Z. per annum (1 Z= 2 US dollars)
worker, on plantation re-
lated industries : 100 Z.
worker in chemical and
metal industries : 319 Z.
white collar workers : 500 Z.²¹

Two separate bodies have summarized what this has meant for the peasantry in general::

About one-third of the rural population suffer from deficiencies in caloric intake, and more seriously, a grave shortage of protein is characteristic of most of the population of the country.²²

and :

Overall, an estimated 75% of the population remain outside the formal health care delivery system. For many, traditional medicine dispensed by local practitioners is the only type of health care available.²³

A disillusioned/^(and exiled) member of the budding local bourgeoisie pointed out that with the means available to Zaire it could have avoided the economic crisis if the economy had been properly planned and diversified. With a properly planned and diversified economy "the country would have been a paradise on earth."²⁴

The American defeat in Vietnam and the increasing militancy of the most exploited classes of Third World countries have combined to produce serious re-thinking among the strategists of imperialism, and especially among those institutions without which the ruling classes of countries like Zaire or Chile would not be able to contain those who understand their economic plight in different terms:

I don't like to hear about independence. I don't like to hear of it because it has brought nothing to those of us who work the land. It has only profited the intellectuals. We, the peasants have become poorer. Before independence, I was able to save some money. Today, I don't have a cent. School fees have gone up, drinks have gone up, clothes have gone up, cigarettes have gone up, everything has gone up except for the price of what we produce. Myself, my wife and my children have to work much more than before independence in order to buy the same things. Let us have people in the government who are sensitive to our situation and not thieves.²⁵

Obviously, World Bank officials and ruling classes in the capitalist metropolises would find it hard to admit that the above analysis is more accurate than 4 volumes on the Zairean economy. The "thieves" know better: New Economic Order, social responsibility, Human Rights:

Criticizing Zaire's current development path as basically anti-human demands a concrete alternative. Discussions of the New International Economic Order spokesmen provide an ever more coherent possibility.²⁶

From the ^{above} writer's perspective, the suggestions made by an IBRD official with regard to Zaire's economy are seen as the best correctives for "a strategy of self-reliance aimed at equalizing opportunity" (i.e. make the "stealing" less obvious). This IBRD official suggested the application of four policies:

- (1) not introduce any consumption goods which cannot be shared by the vast majority of the population at that particular stage of development
- (2) make maximum use of local resources and technology
- (3) make minimum use of foreign assistance
- (4) deliberate unlink itself from past dependent relationships²⁷

Because Zaire's economic performance is constantly compared to what took place during colonial rule is not to say that the peasant was not exploited under that system, far from it. Indeed, the fact that the above cited "granary" of the Congo became an area of endemic famine and malnutrition is the logical sequence of the policies that were pursued under colonial rule. And the inability of the current ruling class to equal the colonizers capacity to organize and control production must also ^{be} related to the colonization process.

Without wishing to elaborate on this now, it is worth recalling Fanon's comment on the "national" bourgeoisie:

In underdeveloped countries, we have seen that no true bourgeoisie exists; there is only a sort of little greedy caste, avid and voracious with the mind of a hudsler, only too glad to accept the dividends that the former colonial power hands out to it. This get-rich-quick middle class shows itself incapable of great ideas or of inventiveness. It remembers what it has read in European textbooks and imperceptibly it becomes not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature.²⁸

Let us return to our IBRD official and his suggestions for curing the Zairean economy. First of all, under the guise of pursuing a so-called "people-centered" economy, it is clear that the solutions that are already under way will be centered on the profits returns for the capitalists. It is not

sufficient to show that the agricultural sector of the economy has done poorly over the years. If agricultural production becomes simply a question of increasing productivity (as it was becoming toward the end of colonial rule), then the solution will be to provide the means of increasing agricultural productivity in the most efficient way, i.e. under capitalist conditions of production. C. Meillassoux accurately sized the problem when he was writing on the consequences of the famine in West Africa:

The peasant who consumes only what he himself produces is clearly a parasite as far as capitalism is concerned.... Viewed from the perspective of a world-wide food shortage, these African lands, left until now to the indigenous peasantry, become an asset. The logical consequence of this is the eventual dispossession of the present occupants in the interests of an agriculture that yields higher returns...²⁹

During a recent trip to Zaire, the Belgian Minister of Cooperation and Development visited an agro-industrial complex financed by Belgium. One of the aims of the complex is to produce maize on an industrial scale. At the date of the visit (July 1977), it was reckoned that Zaire was importing 75% of its food consumption.³⁰

Under the guise of concern for the starving peasant, the official of the IRBD is in fact concerned about the inability of Zaire to produce enough in order to repay its debts to the big bankers who loaned money on an unprecedented scale.³¹ The mere possibility that Zaire might default on its debts is more than the capitalists and financiers need to begin lecturing the Zairean ruling clique on the necessity to "stabilize" the economy and to "democratize" the government.³²

It is difficult to say that the Zairean economy is in bad straits solely because of adverse circumstances. Ever since 1960 the structure of the economy has remained the same. When investments were made, they went to finance prestigious and costly projects from the presidential gardens to the Nsele estate to the Inga dam; from "the most sophisticated radio and TV broadcasting station ever built on the continent" (Le Tam-tam d'Afrique) to the building of airports overly equipped with the most advanced technological equipment; from the presidential "village" in Gbadolide to the little known project (until it was recently publicized by Afrique-Asie) of building a huge airbase with missile sites on lake Tanganyika (south of Kalemie). Against this spree of uneconomic investment one finds a land communication network which is becoming

less and less usable. As of 1975 the International Road Transport Federation had estimated that Zaire had only 7,000 km of serviceable roads, which is 10,000 km less than it had in 1970.

The list of wasted resources is long, and whatever benefit has been derived from them has gone in the pockets of a small clique of presidential friends who owe their favours to ethnic affinity or to unswerving and unquestioning obedience. The incompetence and mismanaging skills of this clique has antagonized the emerging local bourgeoisie which sees its chances for capital accumulation reduced or annihilated by economic policies which are reminiscent of the plundering days of Leopold II.

The problem of a good road network is also often presented in the form of a concern for the poor peasant who is unable to sell his produce. It is true that an improvement in the road network will bring some benefits to the peasant, but to believe that the capitalist is concerned about the peasant as a peasant is to display a naive understanding of the capitalist mode of production. The well-being of the peasant is important insofar as this well-being (i.e. being well fed and medically cared for) will increase the surplus that the capitalist will be able to extract.

H.M. Stanley is reported to have told Leopold II that without a railroad link (to by pass the rapids between Matadi and Kinshasa) with the ocean, the Congo would not be worth a penny, and with that began one of the bloodiest episode of the Congo: the building of the Matadi-Kinshasa rail line which, legend says, cost as many lives as there were sleepers on the line. The arguments of IRBD officials may not be as crude as Stanley's, but they are based on the same rationale as the one behind the proposals to reorganize agriculture: to turn Zaire into an efficient capitalist economy.

Even if the internal communication network were serviceable, Zaire would still be faced with a serious problem. Her geographical position and colonial legacy have made her heavily dependent on other countries for importing and exporting her goods. Before the closure of the Benguela Railway (Lubumbashi-Lobito) during the Angolan civil war of 1975-76, most of the mineral production of the country was exported through the port of Lobito on the Atlantic coast. The railway was damaged during the Angola conflict, and while a rapprochement had been worked out, the March/April events in Shaba are not likely to lead to a quick resumption of traffic on this link

unless a sudden surge of demand for copper or other mineral ores requires a prompt political solution.

Internally, there is no rail link between Shaba and the sea. Metal and ores travelling by the "national route" go by rail to Ilebo, thence by river to Kinshasa, and finally by rail again to the estuary port of Matadi, which is both shallow and difficult to navigate. To make use of the giant ore-carriers now favoured by the shipping multinationals, Zaire's minerals must be trans-shipped a fourth time at the deep-water port of Banana (still under construction) at the mouth of the Zaire river.

Thus, a large slice of Zaire's mineral earnings is swallowed up in transport and handling costs, which moreover largely go to swell the earnings of rail and port installations in other countries, in addition to any transit taxes those countries may impose. Recent inflation of equipment fuel and wages costs has meant that ores are becoming more costly to produce and transport.

The transport problems apply equally, of course, to supplies of capital equipment for mineral production, to supplies of petrol and diesel oil, and to agricultural supplies and equipment and the food and cash crops themselves. Thus food shortages in Kinshasa have pushed up prices and contributed to inflation in the most populated and least fertile regions, while crops have been wasted in the fertile northern and eastern regions for lack of transport to take them where they are needed. Yields of the many cash crops in various parts of the country have declined for lack of fertilizers and equipment; coffee, tea, rubber and timber production has declined since independence and palm oil is no longer exported despite efforts to maintain production.

However, while the government is aware of the transportation problems, the corrective measures that it has so far taken do not seem to indicate a willingness to adopt solutions different from those adopted during colonial rule. So far the programme has involved improvement and reinforcement of a network based on the assumption that Zaire is essentially an export economy. Projected rail links to be built by Lonrho and Japanese firms between Ilebo and Kinshasa and from Matadi to Banana will make an unbroken rail route from Shaba to the sea by 1981 --if they are on schedule. Other rail projects --notably a link between Kindu and Ubundu-- will simply reinforce the existing pattern of the communication network which was established during colonial rule?

An efficient transport system is not only crucial for Zaire itself, but it is also important for the industrialized countries which continue to require cheap raw materials from Third World economies. It is because of this importance that the European Economic Community and the World Bank have continued to grant large credits for improving the country's transport system. In an interview which appeared in the Washington Post (July 1st 1976) President Mobutu himself gave an excellent summary of the transport situation in Zaire when he declared that "in spite of all our efforts to re-organize our agricultural program 90% of all imports remain in Kinshasa and do not reach the interior." A disastrous situation indeed if it is realized that 80% of the estimated 25 M. people live outside Kinshasa and its hinterland.

The demographic explosion can only further aggravate the economic situation. A local research institute has estimated Zaire's population growth at 2.82% for the 1970-75 period and predicted for 1976-80 a 2.92% yearly average. In actual figures this would mean a population growth of 21.8 M.(1970) to 28.7 M.(1980). In 1976, 55% of the total population was less than 20 years old; 38% between 20 and 55 years old, and 7% above 55 years old. To many orthodox economists a decrease in population growth would be a sine qua non condition for establishing a sound basis for economic development. Consequently, officials of the USAID have devoted considerable attention to this problem under the disguised title projects of "maternal and infant care".

The chaotic economic picture painted above has led many observers to wonder whether the Zairean authorities will be capable let alone willing and have the financial means to put their house in order. Indeed it is the huge financial indebtedness that has regularly put Zaire in the headlines over the last year or so. Its total foreign debt to both government and private institutions has reached 3 billion dollars. In his latest book against the régime Cl. Kamitatu has advanced an even higher figure of 4 billion dollars computed from figures given by the Central Bank. This figure (for 1977) amounts to a 500% increase over 1973 figures.³³

Zaire's current financial problems are undoubtedly linked to a point already mentioned above, namely the strategic decisions made by Mobutu and his economic advisers in the first few months of his rise to power: to invest in highly capitalized industries such as the steel-fertilizer plant complex at Maluku 30 miles north of Kinshasa on the Zaire river:

the huge Inga dam project. The strategy itself was not based on sound economic calculations nor on correct assessment of means and needs. It was argued that since Zaire was potentially the richest country in Africa it could afford to embark on investment projects which were beyond her actual resources. The strategy and investment decisions were determined by a distorted sense of priority which was itself fueled by an irrational and megalomaniac conception of how to achieve national prestige.

In line with this policy, Zaire had ordered from France in 1973 17 Mirage jet fightersplane eventhough there were no flying nor maintenance personnel available to make proper use of them. With the March/April 1977 crisis, the country had to beg Egypt to provide the needed personnel. In other words the sector of the economy which received the greatest attention as well as largest budget allocation was still unable to function properly. There could not be a worse indictment of the ineptude of the ruling clique. In all spheres the government was carrying out a policy which was beyond its financial and technical means. And yet, in the eyes of the leadership (i.e. Mobutu himself), such a policy was warranted because copper prices were high (3,000 dollars/ton before it fell in 1974), and even if copper prices were to fall, Zaire could, it was argued, easily borrowed from its western allies. To the credit of the authorities of the Central Bank it must be said that they did not share such optimism. In their 1972-73 annual report they advised the government to decrease public spending in order to soften the impact of a less favourable economic conjuncture in the future. No action was taken. The copper prices collapsed in mid-1974. In 1975 and 1976 Zaire failed to pay its debt services or principal of its foreign debts. The amounts involved are disputed, they vary from 700 M. dollars to 2 billion (Kamitatu's estimates on the basis of figures from the Central Bank of Zaire). Alarmed in 1975, foreign creditors began to take action in 1976.

At governmental level, the Paris "Club of Ten" agreed in June 1976 to grant Zaire a moratorium by rescheduling its debts over a 10-year period for those debts falling due in 1975 and 1976. Although Zaire agreed to pay 15% of the unpaid debt service, it failed again to make that payment on July 1, 1976.

At private level, ten international banks representing more than 20 other institutions to which Zaire owed approxi-

mately 1 billion US dollars, requested the Zaire government to send representatives to London to discuss the re-scheduling of unpaid debts. The initial lack of response from Mobutu's government was due to the fact that government officials did not have any idea of how much they owed³⁴—a new record in mismanagement by the ruling clique. Eventually a meeting took place in London on November 5, 1976 at which Zaire agreed to all the conditions set by the banks:

- (1) Zaire must pay all the interests due on arrears, which was about \$ 40 M.
- (2) Zaire must establish a fund of \$ 50 M. to be used for paying delayed principal payments.
- (3) Zaire must negotiate with the International Monetary Fund access to stand-by credit. On this basis the International Monetary Fund will have a right to supervise Zaire's economic policies. (emphasis added)
- (4) If the above conditions are adhered to, the private banks will make their best to find a \$ 250 M. loan which may not be used to pay past debts.

Some representatives of the private banks fearing that Zaire would not respect the above conditions pressured the US government and members of Congress to increase the American Aid to Zaire. These private banks did not have anything to fear for AID had already begun to act as early as May 1975 when it submitted to Congress a request for aid to Zaire whose total was close to \$80 M. The reasons given for demanding such a large amount were:

- To prevent Zaire's severe short-term financial problems from causing economic disruption and undermining political stability.
- To prevent Zaire's economy from further deterioration while steps are being taken to improve financial management (emphasis added, J.D.) and the anticipated up-swing occurs in world copper prices, Zaire's primary export earner.
- To prevent substantial American investment and resource development projects from floundering for lack of essential commodities and equipment, or of banking confidence.
- To indicate through our example, that other donors should also respond to Zaire's immediate financial needs.³⁵

In subsequent documents, AID argued more forcefully about the need to promote "political stability" and to "foster trade and facilitate U.S. investment, to maintain access on favorable terms to Zaire's rich mineral resources."³⁶ Similar arguments were made by the Defense Department to request military aid for Zaire. The Defense Department pointed out that "although Zaire's internal threat is low, subsequent events could encourage internal latent dissident elements to become active."³⁷

Nevertheless, the skepticism of the bankers was understandable: Zaire government officials (following in this the example of their President) have carried the art of corruption, incompetence and embezzlement of public funds to such heights that the losses incurred by the State in this fashion was estimated at one time at 60% of regular State revenues.³⁸ Now and then the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) has tried to inject some sense of public spirit and moral righteousness, but slogans like "MPR does not mean to help oneself" are invariably turned on their heads.

Ideology

The undermined economic credibility of Zaire among its foreign creditors has been paralleled by apathy and resentment inside. The various ideological devices which had been used to insure respectability or acquire a radical image have petered out. From 1965 to 1971 Mobutu found it politically expedient (and politically necessary) to portray himself as the spiritual and political inheritor of P. Lumumba even though he played a crucial role in his elimination. From 1971 to 1973 "Authenticity", a refurbished form of Négritude (despite the régime's denial of this shortened definition) was used to establish a radical image. Authenticity was propagandized as an ideological innovation which would charter a new path for Zaire's people. "Neither left nor right" became the motto of a régime which felt no embarrassment to transform it months later into "neither left nor right, nor in the middle" --the only possibility left being the extreme right.

One of the outstanding common features of post-colonial régimes has been to portray themselves as truly nationalist. In the economic sphere, there were attempts to "gain economic independence" of which the most celebrated example was the so-called nationalization of the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK) into Gécomine in 1967. It is interesting to note that when the dispute broke out the U.S. offered to mediate between Belgium and Zaire. Eventually,

The 1967 agreement, which has been subsequently modified to lessen its burden on the Zairian state, provided for full compensation and granted management, processing, and marketing contracts to³⁹ a UMHK subsidiary, the Société Générale des Minerais.

The ultimate aim of nationalizations (or the subsequent zairianisation and radicalization) was ideological rather than economic: "the only result of the régime's policy of econo-

mic nationalism has been the partial, or sometimes the total, Africanization of the boards of foreign corporations. In most cases, the government representatives on these boards are unemployed politicians, high civil servants, or trade unionists."⁴⁰

Some of the radical elements of authenticity came from its brief association with UGEC (Union Générale des Étudiants Congolais) which had hoped to draw the régime into more radical politics, but the régime used UGEC to its own ends because it could not accept that an organization which implicitly recognized the Communist Manifesto as a starting point for action could be trusted. Authenticity did appeal for a while to those who could identify with some of the slogans such as "we must decolonize our mentalities". For a country which had experienced one of the most oppressive forms of colonialism there was something progressive in this attempt to "stand on your own feet".

In 1972 and 1973 especially, the régime went out of its way to spread authenticity beyond the borders of Zaire. Although authenticity did not become a philosophy to be taught in universities along with Aristotle, Plato, Kant, etc., it did sufficiently impress the presidents of several countries who changed their names (Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Togo).

The cultural aspects of authenticity, i.e. return to the values of our ancestors were emphasized for a dual purpose: to rally behind the ruling clique those very masses which still lived in the ideological world of the ancestors, and to establish a legitimate claim for leadership. When authenticity is examined from this perspective, slogans like "we must decolonize our mentalities" appear for what they are: an attempt by the ruling clique to dictate to the masses their own history. It is obvious that in the context of Zairian history, those who are in the greatest need of decolonizing their mentality are precisely those who during ^{and after} the colonial period strove to acquire those attributes that would have made them the Europeans of Africa, i.e. the current ruling class. The criteria of respectability of this class were always borrowed from the European bourgeoisie. The efforts that went in imitating the social, intellectual and cultural habits of the colonial masters did not go without casualties. African literature is full of characters who were "torn" or "pulled" between "traditional" and "modern" values. In Zaire, the labouring masses did not have the opportunity to be "torn" between two

sets of values. Their income did not even allow them to choose between "modern" bread and the "traditional" fufu, ugali or chikwang. The labouring masses were simply planed, crushed, ground and reduced to produce, either at the factory or in the fields, for (often) less than subsistence wage; but at least, they held to a culture that was their own in great part because the preservation of that culture did not interfere with the production relations that were imposed by the colonial state. The largest part of the peasantry did not get access to an educational system which played an important role in the colonization of mentalities.

Still the culture or the customs of the ancestors is not something to be romanticized for its own sake or for the sake of reinforcing a state apparatus which is increasingly relying on sophisticated equipment to bolster its repressive machinery. If there ever was or is such a thing as African Authenticity, those who were closest to it were the masses whose schools were the factories and fields and whose teachers were the foremen, agricultural officers and policemen. Colonial society was a class divided society, and each class experienced colonialism according to its position in that society. During colonial rule the petty bourgeoisie sniggered at the washenzi of the bush and kept telling the colonizers that they, the évolués were different; but with the departure of the colonial rulers, the new ruling class finds it necessary to point out that they and the washenzi suffered together, and that all that is necessary is to remember that "we all have the same ancestors!"

Incapable of generating a true revolution, the ruling class has attempted to launch a revolt, and it is this revolt which it pompously calls revolution. In fact, it is an attempt by the ruling class to settle its own conscience.

Apart from serving the useful purpose of mystifying reality, the inauguration of authenticity also allowed Mobutu to begin a process of erasing any reminiscences of P. Lumumba whose popularity was still extremely strong in the North eastern area. Mobutu began to rewrite the history of post-independent Zaire: before November 24 1965 there was chaos, then came the "creator", the "guide". In his constant search to monopolize all political power, Mobutu branded any disagreement or potential threat to this power as a perverted and morbid drive to resurrect the devils of the past. Authenticity was revitalized in 1974 (under the instigation of the man that has just been arrested for high treason: N. Karl-I-Bond) it became Mobutism.

One aspect of authenticity --the rejection of catholic names-- triggered in 1972/73 an open conflict between the regime and the Catholic Church. Its highest Zairean representative, Cardinal Malula had to retreat to the Vatican. The conflict was not only around the use of catholic names, it was also about the monopolization of the ideological discourse which Mobutu wanted to establish by forcing the Catholic Church to teach the doctrines of authenticity instead of those of the African imported "inauthentic" religions. Because of the extremely important role of catholic missionaries in the Zairean educational system, Mobutu had to backtrack. In the meantime, Cardinal Malula has returned and been pardoned, but tensions remain as many Catholic priests continue to voice criticism of the regime.

Political and Economic Consequences

Generally speaking, it is correct to say as Cl. Kamitatu argued in one of his pamphlets against the regime that Mobutu's strategy was one of mystification, but it has failed. In spite of the regime's rhetorical exercises the majority of the population has seen its social and economic conditions steadily deteriorate while a Presidential clique continued to accumulate at a speed and rate that have few equivalents on the continent. The clique has enriched itself by drawing directly from the State funds and when these proved insufficient they created a new source by nationalizing foreign businesses. Like the 1967 "nationalization" of UNHK, the "zairianization" of the economic sector (symptomatically restricted to non-multinationals) of 1975 was allegedly aimed at rendering the country economically independent. In fact the measure was simply used partly to appease some members of the emerging local bourgeoisie, and partly to provide an even larger source of enrichment to members of the Presidential clique. Zairianization having failed, a so-called "radicalization" process was attempted at the end of 1975. Aimed at introducing rationality in the management of the national economy, radicalization also failed to revitalize the productive sectors of the economy. At the end of 1976 the regime admitted its failure by de-nationalizing on a massive scale. Foreigners who had had their business nationalized could have them back on a 60-40% basis, the larger size going back to foreigners. "Retrocession" as the measure was called will not necessarily mean the return of investors to the country. For example, Belgian investors, through their national Chamber of Commerce have voiced the conditions under

which they would return to Zaire, and those conditions are much more unfavourable to Zaire than the ones (already favourable by Third World countries' standards) offered previously.

The failure of the Presidential clique to control their own economy must be understood in the context of what has been said earlier about the nature of the class that was granted independence. Unlike its counterpart in Europe, the local bourgeoisie was not involved in production let alone in controlling the means of production. The local bourgeoisie became an intermediary not on the basis of its role in production, but on the basis of social, cultural, intellectual and ideological attributes whose acquisition made it acceptable to international capital. Its claim to distinction rests on purely ideological grounds. Unfortunately, ideology alone cannot organize and control production. A ruling class that reached its position because of its bureaucratic experience, intellectual distinction or social status cannot distinguish itself in something --controlling and organizing production-- in which it never participated. The social and economic history of a ruling class before it became one, will tend to determine the nature of that ruling class. The past can only be shaken through a revolutionary process.

Recent events

Because of the narrowness of its social and political base, Mobutu's regime has antagonized not only the most wretched part of the population, but also a large portion of its wealthiest members as can be seen by the wide spectrum from where opposition is being voiced. On March 8, 1977 this opposition took the form of an armed attack by members of the so-called FLNC (Front de Libération nationale du Congo) headed by general M'Bumba. Formerly a police chief in Kolwezi M'Bumba was arrested and jailed in 1966. Escaping almost immediately, he fled to Angola. Although the FLNC claims in its pamphlets to have been constituted in 1968, its organization as a group determined to overthrow Mobutu is of a much more recent origin, possibly after the Angola independence.

Militarily, the FLNC could count on well equipped and well trained troops. They participated in the Angola war first on the side of the Portuguese and then on the side of the MPLA. Such shifty past was bound to lead some observers to compare them to a bunch of mercenaries who will side with whichever side offers the highest material rewards. The FLNC

attack at the beginning of March 1977 was carried out at a time when dissatisfaction and discontent had deepened not only among the peasants and workers, but also within the bourgeoisie. Politically, economically, socially, the conditions were ideal for any organized group to launch an attack, but it became immediately apparent that the lack of political preparation within the FLNC and within the population they contacted was going to be a determinant factor of success or failure. The hope that the population of the whole country was going to rise like one man did not materialize. Dissatisfaction and discontent alone cannot lead to an organized uprising, they can only lead to spontaneous and short lived outbursts against the oppressors.

The FLNC is not the only organized opposition group. It was loosely connected to the Frodelico (Front de Libération du Congo) of which A. Gizenga, a former close associate of P. Lumumba and later P. Mulele, claimed to be the head. At one point in 1975/76 there was an attempt to unify all the opposition groups under one organization. Some of the groups involved were the P.L.C. (Parti Libéral du Congo) Palu (Parti Lumumbiste Unifié), P.R.P. (Parti Révolutionnaire du Peuple), Mouvement Nationaliste Congolais (M.N.C.), M.N.C.L. Rénové (Mouvement National Congolais Lumumba renovated). Among these, the P.R.P. of Laurent Kabila must be singled out as the one which has attempted in the most systematic fashion to put forward and practice a programme which goes beyond the simple removal of the current governing régime. It controls a small area in the eastern part of the country in the mountains that border lake Tanganyika between Kalemie and Fizi. Ever since 1967-68 and despite several attempts, the Zairean armed forces have failed to dislodge them. Other groups are the Parti Populaire Africain (P.P.A.) headed by Kikunda, an ally of Gizenga; the Front Solidaire Africain of Cl. Kamitatu; the Mouvement d'Action pour la Résurrection du Congo (MARCO) of Kanyonga Mobateli, and finally the MNLC (Mouvement National de Libération du Congo) heavily dominated by students.

The "Invasion" of Shaba

The attack of the FLNC was conducted both as a conventional and a guerilla operation. Conventional in that the troops took over towns and militarily (with the help of the civilian population) controlled them; guerilla in that they also sought to avoid open confrontation with the government troops which seemed to have lived up to their reputation by

fleeing when sighting the enemy.

While it is tempting to say that the ruling clique has fashioned an army after its own image (i.e. incompetence and mercenary attitude turned virtues), there have been signs that Mobutu's grip over the Zairean armed forces has not been as tight as the "Guide" would have wished. A plot of senior officers to overthrow Mobutu was uncovered in mid-1975, and it even led to a cooling of relations with Washington whose embassy in Kinshasa was accused of passive complicity. Later in the year junior officers were said to have tried a similar move. When the FLNC attacked in Shaba, general Bumba was removed from his position of chief of staff for incompetence, but unofficial sources claimed that general Bumba was about to strike a bargain with the invading forces.

In spite of the MPR party slogan of "neither left nor right", Mobutu's politics have always been shaped by those of the dominant powers of the Atlantic Alliance. Shifts in foreign policy have been dramatized for propaganda and ideological effects: viz. the 1972 visit to Peking and the 1973 break of diplomatic relations with Israel. On the South African and Rhodesian questions, Mobutu has always tried to bend the OAU principles to suit his ^{own} lack of any. When Kissinger was still in office he sought in vain to make Zaire part of the front-line states. Nevertheless, whenever US officials tour the southern part of the continent, they never fail to stop in Kinshasa and brief Mobutu.

The US have a large actual and potential stake in Zaire. Over the last few years (especially since 1960) it is the large US dominated financial institutions (such as the World Bank, the I.M.F., U.S.A.I.D., I.A.D.) which have sustained the Zairean economy. It is also the US political support which has encouraged so many US private banks to lend more money than these institutions would otherwise have done had they adopted their own sound banking principles.⁴¹

France and Zaire

Ever since 1960, France has always tried to gain greater influence in Zairean politics. Linguistic affinity helped the implementation of this strategy. By 1975, France had become the second largest trading partner of Zaire. Given this context, it is not surprising that Mobutu should have declared in January 1976 that "France is the country on whose cooperation I count most." And he proved it a few months la-

ter when he called on the French President to provide the help that the US and Belgium were not eager to give so quickly against "the Katangese invaders!"

The apparent accord which brought so many countries to the rescue of Mobutu cannot hide the different motives and strategies of all these countries which have their own interests to preserve: to counter the Russians in their progress on the continent, to protect their own future entry on the Zairean market, to sound a warning against their own internal dissenters.

Provisional conclusions

It is difficult to predict the economic and political consequences of the Shaba episode. Obviously it will be very costly to the opposition. Its adventurism will cost the lives of many innocent peasants and workers. Foreign journalists were prevented from visiting the "combat" zones in Shaba. Previous experiences in Zaire have shown that in order to consolidate his power, Mobutu has never hesitated to "make examples" in the form of ruthless and bloody repression, and there is no reason to believe that the scenario will be different this time. It may in fact be worse because the regime came so close to its end. His much propagandized willingness to "democratize" politics for the forthcoming elections of December must be taken with caution on the basis of past experience. Mulele was invited to return and promised a pardon. He arrived in Kinshasa on September 29, 1968, October 8 he was shot by a firing squad.

Heavily indebted financially to the Western powers, Mobutu's regime is now also politically indebted; the result will be total control by outside powers of Zaire's political and economic life. However, as demonstrated by the different ways in which they came to his rescue, the Western powers do not all agree on the best way to salvage their interests in Zaire. There are capitalists who are in Zaire to plunder in a manner which is reminiscent of the Leopoldian times (1885-1908) there are others who want to invest in productive capital. France's interests are closer to the former type. France is more interested in Zaire as an existing market whereas the US is involved in the kind of investments which will shape and structure the Zairean market as an appendage of the US economy. France has been helped by a local bureaucracy which has no notion of productive capital and which can only think in terms of quick profits. The US strategy in Zaire pertains

to the second type of investors. The lack of enthusiasm with which the US sent aid to Zaire can only be interpreted as a warning to Mobutu's clique. This is not to say that the future of Zaire will be indeterminately shaped by intra-imperialist rivalries. The intra-imperialist rivalries are likely to lead to certain reforms because none of the imperialist powers is interested in having a country which is caught up in a war of liberation.

The democratization process which has recently been announced can be perceived as one of the results of this intra-imperialist rivalry. Also measures will probably be taken to relieve the misery of the labouring masses whose history from 1960 to 1976 can be summarized in the figures below: although the 1960 wage has been multiplied by 15, the 1976 real wage can only purchase one quarter of what it could purchase in 1960.

	<u>wage index</u>	<u>price index</u>	<u>buying power</u>
1.06.60	100	100	100
1.10.63	294	393	77
1.05.66	383	576	67
1.12.70	871	1557	56
5.09.75	1274	3100	41
27.03.76	1530	5888	26

The above figures have been extracted from a document published by the National Trade Union of Zairean Workers (UNTZA), a government controlled body. The document also draws attention to other facts in order to dramatize the plight of the Zairean workers. Whereas in 1960 it cost 4 days work to buy a kitenge, in 1976 it climbed to 26 days; whereas 1 kg of fish cost 1 day of work, in 1976 it required 10 times more. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that strikes were made illegal, several of them took place in the last few months in different towns, and one of them (in December 1976) involved the workers of the national airline. Guerilla warfare should not therefore be the sole indication of whether there is opposition to the regime.

Footnotes

A great deal of information contained in this paper was derived from Marchés Tropicaux, 1976 and 1977.

¹C. Young, Politics in the Congo, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 77.

²P. Demunter, Masses rurales et luttes politiques au Zaïre, Anthropos, Paris, 1975, p. 171.

³Ibid., p. 173.

⁴Ibid., p. 272

⁵As his speech at Independence showed, Lumumba was aware of some of the most blatant shortcomings of his class.

⁶Col. Vandewalle et Jacques Brassine, Les Rapports Secrets de la Sûreté Congolaise, Editions Gamma, Bruxelles, 1973, tome 1, p. 146, tome 2, p. 90

⁷Panaf Books, Lumumba, p. 66.

⁸Ibid., p. 73.

⁹Col. Vandewalle et J. Brassine, II, pp. 104,5
I, p. 144.

¹⁰It was estimated that 40% of those who participated in the January 4, 1959 riot were unemployed. One wonders how this estimate was arrived at.

¹¹See J. Cl. Willame, Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo, Stanford University Press, 1972, p. 171.

¹²C. Hoskyns, The Congo Since Independence, London, O.U.P., 1965, pp. 14-21.

¹³Stephen R. Weissman, American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960/1964, Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 21.

¹⁴C. C. O'Brien, To Katanga and Back, Grosset and Dunlap, N.Y., 1962, p. 63.

¹⁵A. Emmanuel, "White-Settler colonialism and the myth of investment Imperialism", New Left Review, 73, 35-57.

¹⁶Cl. Kamitatu, La Grande Mystification du Congo-Kinshasa, Maspéro, Paris, 1971.

¹⁷Nkrumah's assessment of Mobutu on this episode is a bit naïve in that it tends to take Mobutu's explanations at face value. See K. Nkrumah, Challenge of the Congo, International Publishers, N.Y., 1967, pp. 288-293.

- 18 For a discussion on this see J. Cl. Willame, Op. Cit. For a discussion on the relationship between the rise of Mobutu the nature of the local ruling class and the military, see Muhuni, "Mobutu and the Class struggle in Zaire", Review of African Political Economy, 5 pp. 94-98.
- 19 Aside from the one cited above, Kamitatu has written another book: Zaire, le pouvoir à la Portée du Peuple, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1977.
- 20 AID, Fiscal Year 1976 Submission to the Congress - Africa Programs (May 1975), p. 108; as quoted from Guy Gran, "Policy Making and Historic Process: Zaire's permanent Development Crisis", paper presented at the 19th annual meeting of the African Studies Association, Boston, November 4, 1976, p. 8.
- 21 Kankuenda M'Baya, "Les Industries du Pôle de Kinshasa: Réflexion sur la stratégie des Pôles de croissance en pays Africain", Les Cahiers du CEDA, n°1-2, 1977, p. 52.
- 22 Guy Gran, Ibid., p. 3.
- 23 Ibid., p. 3 as quoted from an IBRD document for which the author provides the following footnote:
IBRD, The Economy of Zaire (confidential document, 4 volumes, July 1975), vol. 2, p. 4. It is naturally verboten to quote such material. It is, however, central to the thesis of this paper that the reader know such documents exist, that IBRD perceives such a reality, and that it describes human disaster with such language. Classification of such material in Washington (at the behest of the Zaire Government) serves entirely to prevent outside or non conventional analysis and critique. None of the IBRD or IMF documents cited in this paper were obtained under official auspices and their release is solely the responsibility of the author.
- 24 Kankuenda M'Baya, cited above, p. 51.
- 25 P. Demunter, Op. Cit., p. 314.
- 26 Guy Gran, p. 27.
- 27 Guy Gran, p. 27
- 28 F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Grove Press, N.Y. 1968, p. 175.
- 29 Cl. Meillassoux, "Development or Exploitation: Is the Sahel Famine Good for Business?", Review of African Political Economy, 1, p. 32.
- 30 La Libre Belgique, 9-10 July, 1977
- 31 See E. Rothschild, "Banks: the Coming Crisis", New York Review of Books, May 27, 1976 which explains the increasing indebtedness of third World countries to capitalist financial institutions.

- ³² See especially the three issues of La Fibre Belgique, July 11, July 12, July 14 1977. The latter
- ³³ On financial debts of Zaire, see Kamitatu, Zaire...
- ³⁴ Guy Gran, cited above, p. 23
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 21, as quoted from AID FY 76 Submission to the Congress Middle East Peace and Security Supporting Assistance, (May 1975), p. 91.
- ³⁶ Ibid. p. 22, as quoted from AID, Project Paper, Zaire Commodity Import Loan, p. 3-4.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 22, as quoted from Department of Defense, Congressional Presentation Security Assistance Programs FY 77, (March 1976), p. 182.
- ³⁸ See Afrique-Contemporaine, Septembre-Octobre 1972.
- ³⁹ Nzongola-Ntalaja, "The Authenticity of Neo-colonialism: Ideology and Class Struggles in Zaire", paper presented at the annual meeting of the African Studies Association, Boston, November 3-6, 1976, mimeo, p. 7
- ⁴⁰ J. Cl. Willame, Op. Cit. p. 157.
- ⁴¹ See E. Rotschild, article cited above and M. Landsberg, "Oil and the Eurocurrency Market: Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Fire", The Review of Radical Political Economics, vol. 8, n° 4 winter 1976, especially p. 51 where the author writes: "The US Treasury has also issued results of an investigation on the security of US private loans to Third World Nations. It concluded that eight countries were to be considered financial risks: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Philippines, Uruguay, Zaire and Zambia.". The document this author quotes from is: U.S. Treasury, Report on Developing Countries External Debt Relief Provided by the United States, January 1976