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*13-03-1981*  
*Maputo*

THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE AND THE STATE IN POST-COLONIAL ZAIRE

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Preliminary note

The following essay is an attempt to provide a historical overview of the various transformations of class relations that have characterized the recent history of Zaire. Because it is an overview, this essay will most certainly not satisfy those who would like to see fuller elaboration of the various arguments or issues presented here. An attempt has also been made to address, indirectly and incompletely, some of the dominant issues discussed in the last numbers of RAPE.

Over the last few years Zaire has been more often in than off the front pages. Through this exposure, most people have some vague idea of the kind of regime that is headed by Mobutu. In 1977 and then, again in 1978 Mobutu himself faced what seemed at the time the severest challenge to his personal and autocratic rule since he took power in November 24, 1965.

Through the press too, the news reading public has been relatively well informed of the financial and economic bankruptcy of the régime. Indeed ~~it~~<sup>it</sup> could ~~be~~<sup>be</sup> argued that the magnitude of corruption and bankruptcy has significantly contributed to the lack of serious analysis. Moral righteousness has always been a safe ideological and political rallying point.

It is therefore not so surprising that, for the opposition and among them many Marxists, corruption and cases of mismanagement, incompetence have become the most important reasons for calling to an end of this regime without, aside from the ritualistic pronouncements about vague socialistic goals, any thought whatever or discussion of what it will be followed by.

A book published by the Comité Zaire entitled Le dossier de la recolonisation<sup>(1)</sup> not only fails to analyze the class rule of Zaire, but worse, goes on to give the impression 1) that the FLNC's (Front National de Libération du Congo) attacks against Kolwezi in 1977 and 1978 were the harbinger of a popular insurrection which was going to engulf the entire country; 2) that Mobutu was surrounded by a small clique which, if removed, would open the way for a more democratic rule in Zaire. In the end, the book's shoddy analysis (motivated by political opportunism?) is as criminal as the opportunism/adventurism which led the FLNC to launch two <sup>identical</sup> military operations against the Shaba province in less than two years. In both cases there was a complete misunderstanding of

- 1) the nature of the Zairean state
- 2) the nature of the Zairean ruling class, its history, its internal and external contradictions as well as its links with the international bourgeoisie. It was this misunderstanding that led the leaders of the FLNC to believe that all it would require would be a little push and the dictator (and his clique) would fall. The leadership of the FLNC was so certain of this that they sought

to gain the Belgian government neutrality by pointing out to them, among other things, that they would know how to better defend the economic interests of Belgium. Some will probably argue that this was a necessary tactical move, but it was also revealing of the FLNC's conception of political power, and which forces they would rely on to accede to power.

By failing to appreciate and know who the enemy was and what kind of repressive forces it could harness through its *links* with international capital the FLNC must be thoughtfully condemned because of the disastrous consequences such an adventure has had on a population which had not even been given the rudimentary lessons of how to organize and defend itself (short of running away and taking refuge in neighbouring countries) against the military machine of Mobutu's Western and Chinese allies.

The analyses contained in Le Dossier de la recolonisation are typical of the euphoric optimism that has now and then led left organisations to come <sup>out</sup> in support of opposition groups whose only credentials are those of being in the opposition (however commendable this may be in itself in the highly repressive context of current Zaire). To the credit of the organization that authored the book, Comité Zaire, it must be said that it has made an effort to distinguish, politically and ideologically between the different groups of the opposition,<sup>(2)</sup> *but one wonders* why this effort has led to a rather superficial and erroneous assessment of the true nature of the FLNC.

For those familiar with Congolese past and recent historiography, Le Dossier... contains passages which are paradoxically reminiscent of discourses usually coming from the mouths of colonial apologists. At another level, the descriptions of the current situation in Zaire do not read differently from the World Bank confidential reports written for the Zairean government since 1972, but it also contains passages which are disturbingly too similar to stereotypes once heard <sup>toward the end of</sup> colonial rule.

when white racists would go on and on about how the blacks could not possibly be able to run their country, how the country was too big for them to control, etc... Some Marxists <sup>have</sup> ~~con-~~ ~~tributed~~ ~~to~~ ~~reproducing~~ ~~similar~~ ~~racialist~~ ~~propaganda~~ ~~by~~ ~~attributing~~ ~~the~~ ~~incurable~~ ~~incompetence~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~black~~ ~~ruling~~ ~~class~~.

The worst examples of this are to be found in the preface to the book written by Jules Chomé a communist lawyer and otherwise dedicated enemy of Mobutu. One is surprised to find under his pen one of the most well embedded propaganda of colonial rule concerning its positive aspects particularly with regard to the transfer of the colony from the hands of the Belgian monarchy to the Belgian state. The minor qualifications with which the argument is surrounded are unconvincing. It is also legitimate to ask oneself why Chomé uses highly derogatory terms to refer to Mobutu and rather neutral ones to refer to Léopold II's rule. Is Mobutu

personally more objectionable than Léopold II just because "the Congolese people under Mobutu ~~are~~ more miserable than under the colonial regime?" (3)

Viewed under these terms the question would probably never be settled. In the history of the Congo, it would be futile to judge the Belgian and now the emerging Zairean bourgeoisies by comparing them. Their crimes are typical of that class under encountered and/or provoked conditions of primitive accumulation.

Moral outrage dominates not only in Le dossier..., but in many other analyses of the left. At the basis of all this is a failure to come to terms with the history of class relations in Zaire, their formation and transformation under the various phases of their history. Furthermore, ever since Zaire became independent as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the central issue for the various factions of the emerging bourgeoisie and the international bourgeoisie has been who will control the state.

Given the ongoing debate on the state, local vs. or cum international bourgeoisies and the fact that this will discuss such relations it may be appropriate to briefly outline the <sup>basic</sup> assumptions of this essay,

*Which are close to C. Leys' (Rape 17)*

with two major qualifications: in both Colin Leys' and Nicola Swainson, the concept of primitive accumulation is applied ambiguously. The dialectical relationship between the process of primitive accumulation and the emergence of specific class relations while giving more emphasis to the quantitative aspects of accumulation of wealth. Secondly, by single-

mindedly focusing on the rising bourgeoisie, to the exclusion of the economic, social and political relations obtaining between the local bourgeoisie and the other classes, most analyses blind themselves to those forces which partly account for the origins of the local bourgeoisie as well as for the particular forms of exploitation and oppression it has resorted to in order to assert itself. Finally, at a more academic level and without wishing to minimize the merit of the work that has been done for Kenya, it is unfortunate that P. Ph. Rey's *Colonialisme, Neo-colonialisme et*

*Transition au Capitalisme (Maspéro)* has not been given the due recognition that it deserves especially in view of the fact that

his concrete study shares the same theoretical and methodological perspectives as those found in the works of C. Leys, M. Cowen and N. Swainson.

The same could be said with regard to the concept of primitive accumulation. In current analyses and discussions of primitive accumulation, the aspect of quantitative accumulation is often given precedence over those of property and class relations. And yet, in K. Marx's treatment, the latter is given equal if not greater emphasis: "The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production." Later on when dealing with the Modern Theory of Colonisation, he identified a similar process at work, but found it necessary to ~~put~~ identify it in quotation marks: "It is very characteristic that the English Government for years practised this method of 'primitive accumulation', prescribed by Mr. Wakefield expressly for the use of the colonies."

Twenty years after the end of colonial rule and well into neo-colonialism one is at a better vantage point to decide what to do with those quotation marks. By plundering the African continent through slavery, colonialism and now neo-colonialism, the capitalist metropolises propelled themselves out of primitive accumulation, but the plundered *social formations* themselves by the very fact of having been plundered could not and did not begin to emerge out of their plundering state until it was realized that these different modes of plundering were also shackles on the expansion of capital in those regions. Once the shackles of slavery and colonialism were removed, a new history of primitive accumulation began to unfold, but this time with emerging new propertied classes. For this reason

it might be appropriate to speak of colonial primitive accumulation and neo-colonial primitive accumulation, with each of these phases representing not the so-called classical phase, but a variation of it. A variation because the central feature of primitive accumulation, namely the separating of the producers from their means of production has not been consummated. Moreover, in those cases where it was consummated, attempts were made to strip the producers of the few political and legal rights they had gained while being proletarianized during colonial rule. These attempts were part and parcel of the process through which the emerging post-colonial bourgeoisies were establishing the class relations without which their accumulated wealth would remain wealth and not be transformed into capital.

As long as conditions of private appropriation exist, emerging national bourgeoisies will more than likely go through their own phases of primitive and expanded accumulation. But it would be wrong to see these phases as delayed repetitions of similar, earlier so-called "classical" phase. And yet historical analyses of African social formations tend to be flawed by rigid, structural, a-historical abstracting exercises to see whether or not the social formation under study fits what has been said of earlier historical processes analyzed in classical texts.

#### Historical and social origins of the Zairean bourgeoisie.

The general agreement about the Zairean bourgeoisie at the time of independence has been that it was <sup>not</sup> ~~hardly~~ <sup>or</sup> existent. This was sufficient, for some, to then explain the subsequent take over of the country by the international bourgeoisie. However, if one accepts that it was not or hardly existent *at that time* but appeared later, then the political, social and economic basis of this later appearance must be investigated. Generally speaking, such investigation has been by-passed by going straight to the social group that was known under colonial rule as the évolués. Evolués referred to a group of *Congolese people* who had been able to differentiate themselves from the rest of the masses essentially through higher levels of education, thereby fulfilling one of the strategic objectives of

of Belgian colonial rule. Because of the social, economic, political, cultural and ideological characteristics of this group, Marxist writers labelled it the petty bourgeoisie, as if the difference between the Marxists and the bourgeois researchers were merely a question of resorting to<sup>a</sup> different terminology. Moreover, this methodological error reproduces the a-historical notion that the petty bourgeoisie was the sole<sup>and direct</sup> product of colonial rule. Finally it also reproduces the : . . . erroneous notion that there was a sharp distinction between the so-called modern Congolese (i.e. the évolués) and the so-called traditional chiefs, despite evidence to the contrary showing, at times, quasi organic links between the two. In short, the methodological error was to <sup>understand</sup> the petty bourgeoisie through the sociological and political categories imposed by the discourses of colonial historiography. Once this is realized it will immediately become apparent that the economic social and political basis of the petty bourgeoisie were : . . . not only restricted to the cities and that their roots went much deeper than the more apparent levels of the . . . economic social and political relations imposed by the colonizers.

Schooling could not be taken as the most determining characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie since, in the colonial context, contrary to colonial propaganda, access to secondary schools and higher was not easy and depended<sup>heavily</sup> among other things, on the financial means and social position of the parents. In many parts of the country, colonial officials argued that the first schools had to serve<sup>first</sup> the sons of chiefs. It is for these reasons that the évolués must



be seen *only as a* small fraction of the petty bourgeoisie, and that their history does not start with urbanization.

By 1910 the colonial officials had realized that in order to make the repressive state apparatus more efficient they would need the active support of the customary chiefs. A decree was passed which in effect made them functionaries of the colonial state. A few years later the colonial state sought to make them even more dependent of the colonial state apparatus by abolishing the tribute system and instituting local taxation and a form of remuneration which depended, as in the case of cotton cultivation for example, on the level of cash crop production. The more the subjects produced, the more the chiefs were rewarded. But while the colonial state, hand in hand with the large colonial companies managed to get the cooperation of the customary chiefs with regard to the smooth functioning of capitalist relations of production, there were entire sectors of the economy which while determined by the capitalist relations of production were not transformed by them. In many areas access to cattle and land was still governed by quasi feudal relations, and as long as these quasi feudal relations did not interfere with the capitalist process of appropriation, they, in turn, were not interfered with by the colonial state apparatus.

The appointment of customary chiefs as agents of the colonial state never meant the total destruction of those social, economic and political relations which had in the first place brought these chiefs to power. In fact,

to call the customary (and not so customary in those cases where they were imposed) chiefs mere agents is not entirely correct precisely because the political role they were given under colonial rule increased rather than diminished the opportunities for reproducing the pre-capitalist relations of production on which their original power rested. Indeed, the colonizers themselves gave so-called customary law a new lease on life by institutionalizing it as part and parcel of the colonial legal system. By the end of colonial rule, customary law had become an academic discipline studied at the University of Kinshasa not because it was academic, but because it served an important function in the resolution of conflicts in those areas which had remained --purposely or not-- unaffected by capitalist relations of production. Thus if a worker committed a felony at his or her place of work he or she would be judged according to the penal code, but if the same person had failed to comply with bridewealth or matrimonial regulations he/she would be tried by customary judges.

Colonial rule did neither completely eradicate the pre-colonial economic and political relations, nor preserved/destroyed such relations. Arguments along these lines are incomplete. In those areas where feudal and quasi-feudal relations had existed before the formal imposition of colonial rule, the latter provided a new basis for reproducing and sometimes expanding, the pre-colonial relations. Contradictory as this may seem, it

was not the first time it had occurred as the co-existence of slavery and capitalism in the US had shown less than a century before.

Thus, before the constitution of political parties in the Congo from the mid-fifties and especially from 1958 (barely two years before independence) the situation with regard to the petty bourgeoisie was as follows: a very small fraction had struggled to make itself acceptable to the colonizers. It was from the ranks of this urban based petty bourgeoisie that emerged the most radical representatives. The radicalism, in great part stemmed from realizing that short of a drastic change in the relations between the colonizers and the colonized, their economic future would remain bleak. For example, they did not see <sup>and rightly so</sup> why a Congolese with the same academic competence should receive a lower salary than a Belgian. It was this fraction of the petty bourgeoisie which felt with the greatest intensity and frustration the consequences of racial discrimination. However, it is important to qualify this radicalism by pointing out that the conceptions of power of this fraction of the petty bourgeoisie was far from radical and coincided, in fact, with that of the colonizers.

This fraction of the petty bourgeoisie was so concerned about its own interests that throughout its own history it always sought to differentiate between itself and the rest of the colonized population. In 1944 after an army mutiny in the city of Luluabourg (now Kananga), one group of them sent a petition to the colonial authorities requesting a different treatment from the rest of the population,

and arguing that this request should be granted if only because <sup>it</sup> had helped the colonial authorities to reestablish law and order. A similar reaction occurred after the January 4 1959 insurrection in Kinshasa. Then members of the petty bourgeoisie <sup>were</sup> at pains to point out that the political maturity of the Congolese people would not be demonstrated by destroying schools, dispensaries, police stations, social centers, etc... However, these same representatives of the petty bourgeoisie realized, through that insurrection, that their political power did in fact come from the pressure exerted (violently or not) by the people and not from their own individual and personal qualities whatever these might have been. Many political leaders realized <sup>also</sup> that the colonial officials did not want a repetition of the January 4 "troubles". The idea that these could occur hung like a Damocles sword whose fall was feared not only by the colonial authorities, but also by the petty bourgeois political leaders because their occurrence could have endangered, i.e. lengthened or modified, their access to power. Typically, the political petty bourgeoisie proclaimed its solidarity when it was no longer necessary: after independence by declaring January 4 the day of the martyrs of independence. Such momentary and opportunistic radicalism must be distinguished from the radical and popular nationalism voiced most clearly by P. Lumumba.

During the few months preceding independence, more precisely from the time of the Round Table Conference of January 1960 to Independence day, the apparent divergences

between the petty bourgeois political leaders and the customary chiefs remained superficial. There are reasons to doubt that the conservative political stands of the customary chiefs were only due to political submissiveness, lack of political consciousness; they could more easily be explained by very concrete economic considerations. Whatever the evils of the colonial system, from the point of view of the chiefly class, it had created more than acceptable conditions for reproducing the social and economic basis upon which they rested their political and ideological power. Quite often as already pointed out earlier the property relations upon which the chiefly class lived were not capitalistic even if some of them had managed to actually make the transition from being mere feudal landlords to becoming capitalist farmers but still resorting to feudal and semi-feudal relations of production, based on property relationships constructed around cattle and/or land.

So strongly imbedded were still these pre-colonial relations that the largest majority of political parties were organized around an ethnic basis. In this very fact alone can be seen the general congruence between fractions of the same class which gave the superficial appearance of being at odds with each other. And this concordance was to be confirmed over the years with many a "politician" resorting to the same methods of economic exploitation and political domination as those feudal chiefs. It was in this perspective that it made political and economic sense for the one time Minister of Agriculture, Zamundu,

to say six years after independence: "we must rely as best as we can on the customary authorities".<sup>(4)</sup>

In 1973, a researcher at the University of Kinshasa was pointing out that although traditional authorities have been abolished by law, they maintain all their prerogatives.<sup>(5)</sup>

Finally, the chiefs' conservatism came from realizing that if the urban based petty bourgeoisie got hold of the state apparatus, they ~~would~~ <sup>might</sup> use that power against them, and they were proved <sup>partly</sup> right because the emerging Zairean bourgeoisie in its struggle to establish its economic legitimacy found it easier to move against their one time allies operating in the most backward sector of the economy than taking on the international bourgeoisie heavily entrenched in the more capital intensive sector of the economy, especially mining.

Within a few days of independence the army mutiny provoked, among other things, a mass exodus of all the Belgians who were still manning the various branches of the state apparatus. In other words within a few days even the visible structure of the state literally disappeared. The army was so nonexistent that when Mobutu engineered his first coup in September 1960 in order to get rid of Lumumba, he could not even dream of holding on to power. To readers of C.C. O'Brien's To Katanga and Back it will not be difficult to recognize the whole period from 1960 to 1964 as unique in the history of Independent Africa. Unique in the sense that while sharp struggles were going on within the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie in order to decide which faction was going to take control of the state,

UN officers and Western <sup>powers</sup> ambassadors (and in particular of the US) were busy not only determining which faction was going to take over but also shaping and moulding the state apparatus to suit their own needs.

Economically, the sector which survived best the independence shocks was the mining sector. On the other hand, both agricultural production and productivity fell dramatically. <sup>(6)</sup> This fact and the collapse of the colonial state cannot but be seen as directly related. With a higher organic composition of capital the mining sector represented the most strategic and least dispensable capital of the Western capitalist firms. The mining sector, in contrast to the agricultural sector was characterized by unencumbered capitalist relations of production. No wonder then that the Western powers encouraged the secession of the richest mineral province in order to bring down Lumumba's government. Eventhough a large portion of ~~the~~ agricultural production was based on capitalist relations ~~of~~ production, these could not be reproduced without the constant resort to the repressive machinery of the state. It was only logical that the collapse of the colonial state should have directly affected the production and productivity of agricultural production, much more so than mineral production. Confirmation of this was given in December 1967 when the then Minister of Agriculture argued that forced agriculture would have to be reinstated. <sup>(7)</sup> Five years later, the Director of the Agriculture Ministry supported the same idea by stating that although colonial agriculture was conceived <sup>in</sup> the interests of the colonizers, it also

contributed to raising the standard of living of cultivators. (8)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo from Independence to Mobutu's seizure of power, November 24 1965.

In chronological sequence this period is characterized by the complete and total collapse of the colonial state as already mentioned; the secession of the richest mining province of Katanga (now Shaba) under the leadership of M. Tshombe; the secession was endorsed by the Western powers but only as a makeshift solution (brought to an end in Jan. 1963) toward and till the elimination of Lumumba; the peasant insurrections at one time led by P. Mulele and culminating in a direct military intervention of the NATO powers in November 1964; the military coup of Mobutu a year later and backed by the same powers was firstly a response to the continued pressure provoked by the insurrections, and secondly a move to strike against all the various fractions of the emerging bourgeoisie by firmly securing state power.

The picture given of the major characteristics of the fraction of the petty bourgeoisie that assumed political power at independence would be incomplete without a brief discussion of the position of P. Lumumba. P. Lumumba emerged as the leading nationalist leader because he was the only one who realized the political importance of creating a political party not based on purely ethnic allegiance. Unlike most of the other political leaders he fought for a unitary state as opposed to all kinds



of federal and confederal schemes which surfaced at the time. Interestingly Lumumba's position was also the one favoured by both international capital and the colonial state. His defense of a unitary state ran counter to what the rest of the petty bourgeoisie perceived as their economic interests. A unitary state structure would <sup>have</sup> made it more difficult for the emerging bourgeoisie to use their ethnic enclaves as the basis for accumulation of wealth. This ethnic splitting of the Congo did not take place, but something akin to it took place when the original 6 provinces of the colonial state grew to 21. *(reduced to 9 soon after Mbatu's access to power)* Although Lumumba's political strategy was seen as running counter to the longer term interests of the petty bourgeoisie, in the more immediate future of gaining independence, his radical <sup>and popular</sup> nationalism was seen by the same petty bourgeoisie as the best leverage against the Belgian colonizers.

From the point of view of the Belgians and especially the cold war crusading Americans, Lumumba's radical nationalism was seen as a potential threat to a stable future of the Congo under Nato. Thus, even before independence had been won manoeuvres were initiated in order to keep Lumumba out of power. This having failed, the army mutiny provided the needed opportunity for Katanga to secede thereby cutting the main source of funds for the state, and thus politically destabilizing Lumumba. For the Western powers, this was the main purpose of the Katangese secession. <sup>(9)</sup> Unfortunately for them it took a while for this to sink in Tshombe's head and his southern white allies.

This being said, it must be kept in mind that Lumumba and his followers adhered to petty bourgeois politics and ideology to such an extent that, to this day, most of Lumumba's political followers have failed to draw the lessons of his destruction. Even P. Mulele who, at one time appeared as the exception, was soon to demonstrate like other insurgent leaders that all they were interested in was to use the peasants as cannon fodder to project themselves to power.

Until 1964, the problem of who controlled the state was never in serious discussion since the USA through the UN troops took care of it. However, within months of the departure of the last UN troops, <sup>(June 1964)</sup> the ~~in-~~ insurgents under the leadership of Lumumba's followers raised the spectre of the Congo being controlled by a fraction of the petty bourgeoisie whose allegiance to the West could be put in doubt.

In spite of all the efforts of various UN generals, but in retrospect one may wonder how hard they really tried, no serious reorganization of the Congolese army was ever undertaken. There were at least two reasons for this. First of all, from the point of view of the petty bourgeoisie and its political representatives such a reorganization would have broken (or at least threaten) the little control that many of them had over various sections of the army. From the point of view of the imperialist powers, there was no pressing need to rush and reorganize the army since a better *army could* also have meant greater potential for relative independence

from the imperialist powers by whichever fraction that would emerge. This particular tactic was not lost on Mobutu who has applied the reverse tactic of never letting a single country assume a dominant role in the never ending reorganization and training of his army. This task is currently divided up between the USA, Belgium, France, Italy, Israel, Morocco, and now, China.

With regard to class relations inside Zaire, the 1960-1965 period illustrated without any doubt the intrinsic weakness of the rising bourgeoisie in relation to the working class and the peasantry, which in spite of being poorly organized politically and poorly equipped technically were, by April 1964, controlling more than half the country. Their progress was stemmed and finally crushed only through the direct military intervention of Nato troops. Aside from revealing the weakness of the rising bourgeoisie, the resort to sheer brutal force against the exploited classes demonstrated the determination of the rising bourgeoisie to create the conditions necessary for its own <sup>neo-colonial</sup> primitive accumulation.

As already pointed out, the so-called classical conditions of primitive accumulation of which Marx or even Lenin were writing about cannot be used as a sort of yardstick or model by which to decide whether or not primitive accumulation has or has not yet taken place. In the post-colonial, neo-colonial history of class struggles, rising bourgeoisies or fractions of them must, in order to reproduce and expand as a class, seek to create or recreate conditions favorable to their own primitive accumulation. This process has usually meant increased reliance on the repressive apparatuses of the state.

The state is not just a register of class forces. According to circumstances, it can be less or more than a register. More precisely, at times it can be the subject of struggles while at other times it will *be* the object of intense struggles. At the risk of distorting the reality of those concrete struggles, it can be said that Zaire has gone from the first (i.e. till more or less the early 1970's) to the second stage (from the early 1970's forward).

The period from 1960 to 1965 was a period of intensive struggles both within the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie as well as ~~between~~ between the bourgeoisie and the exploited and oppressed classes. Such was the intensity of the struggle that it temporarily eradicated the political significance of the exploited and oppressed classes. Thus in spite of the proclamations for a unitary Congo, following in this what was dictated by the interests of the international bourgeoisie, the dominant practice of the petty bourgeoisie was to *divide the country*.

Administratively, the tribalism that had laid at the basis of the constitution of the political parties was used to divide the country from the original 6 provinces into 21, each one with an administrative structure similar to that of the central government. The proliferation of provinces was apparently the best way of opening up the rural areas to the exploitation of

the peasantry by the urban petty bourgeoisie. This process was strengthened at another level by the well known Bakajika law, named after a deputy who thought it shameful that large tracts of land and abandoned plantations were still legally in the hands of foreigners. It was argued at the time that abandoned plantations should be given to deputies who would thus be freed of the anxieties of facing unemployment at the end of their term.<sup>(10)</sup> It has already been explained above why the petty bourgeoisie found it easier to move into the agricultural sector of the economy. What appeared at the surface as political squabbles between various sections of the emerging bourgeoisie (rural vs. urban based for example) was nothing else but a struggle to gain access to the existing means of enrichment in the rural areas.

From the point of view of the rising Zairean bourgeoisie the period starting with independence must be seen as a phase in the process of <sup>neo-colonial</sup> primitive accumulation for itself. As for any other such class, this period has and will always be written in letters of blood and fire. It is only in this perspective that the appeals to Western military interventions, the OTRAG deals, unbound corruption, outright thefts of public property, invention of "authenticity", etc. can be understood. Historically, all bourgeoisies have behaved in the same manner, no matter how different the historical circumstances. It is therefore sheer idealism to expect that the ending of Mobutu's rule will put an end to this process.

The problems (internal opposition, dissatisfaction of certain sections of the international bourgeoisie) faced by the current ruling class in Zaire stem from the contradictions between, on the one hand the modes of economic exploitation and political rule shaped by the economic and political practices typical of the phase of <sup>neo-colonial</sup> primitive accumulation, and on the other those which are typical of a bourgeoisie reproducing itself through <sup>neo-colonial</sup> expanded accumulation and which, thus, stands to lose by the practices of the former. In the history of the country, this is not the first time such a situation has occurred. During the days of Leopold II personal rule, he drew fire from sections of the Belgian bourgeoisie as well as from sections of the international bourgeoisie, especially the British as so well exemplified by E.D. Morel's famous Red Rubber. This is not to say that Zaire has returned to the times and practices of Red Rubber, although some would argue that it has even gone beyond. Rather it is to point out that the resolution between two contradictory developments does not mean that such a contradiction may not recur again. Moreover, as Marx pointed out, it should not be forgotten that while sectors of the economy may be dominated by conditions of extraction of relative surplus value (e.g. mining others (e.g. agriculture) may be experiencing the complete opposite. Sometimes too, the contradiction may exist within the same sector as for example in mining if one compares the most backward mining operations of Kivu province with the most modern technologies used in Shaba province. Although this was not quite so visible

during the 1960-65 period, it became more and more so during the subsequent years: the contradiction between an <sup>emerging</sup> bourgeoisie still in the throes of <sup>neo-colonial</sup> primitive accumulation and one which <sup>not only</sup> no longer need it, but is actually threatened by it, has been intensified by the fact that this contradiction is no longer one which goes along national/foreigners lines.

A question will be raised as to how <sup>can</sup> one go from an economy apparently dominated by conditions of extraction of relative surplus value to one where those of extraction of absolute surplus value are easily reintroduced? First of all, the collapse of the state has already been referred to. Its collapse showed, ex post facto, the extent to which the colonial economy could not properly function without resorting to its repressive apparatuses. It has also been pointed out that in some rural areas semi-feudal and feudal relations of production had continued, not just in the sense of "preserved", but in the sense of reinforced.

The emerging bourgeoisie, in order so to speak to rob undisturbed, had to strip the exploited and dominated classes of those little rights they had gained under colonial rule. The highway robbery that was begun by the emerging bourgeoisie right after independence could only take place under the protection of the army and all the repressive forces including those of their international allies. *Thus* when workers and peasants were lamenting the end of colonial rule, to the great delight of former colonizers, they were expressing with accuracy what had been their fate

*This*

since Independence. had nothing to do with false consciousness or lack of revolutionary politics as suggested by some Marxist researchers who, for purely ideological reasons, and as a matter of principle, would prefer to ignore or deny the existence of problems or facts especially if they are raised by ideological enemies.

As recently as 1977, in the eastern part of the country government officials did not dare ask peasants to cultivate cotton without the protection of a military escort. The proletariat has not fared much better than the peasantry. Very quickly it was stripped of the few rights <sup>(very few indeed)</sup> it had earned during the colonial period; it saw itself increasingly repressed, first through suppression of strikes, then through pure and simple abolition of even the right to strike, and finally through fusing unions and their officials with the state.

1965-1975: The State as a subject and object of struggles within the emerging bourgeoisie.

It was said earlier that one can distinguish between two phases with regard to the state; one during which the state is merely an instrument for accumulation of wealth and then one during which it is treated by various classes and/or fractions of classes as an object of struggles. The state is no longer the instrument of the fraction which is actually operating it, but is transformed and



and shaped from outside of the state apparatus itself. Clearly the argument of this essay is that such a distinction can be seen, but <sup>also</sup> that it would be wrong to interpret each phase as ~~totally~~ excluding the other. Moreover, for the purposes of analysis it is important to divide the above period into two: 1965 to 1973, and 1973 to 1975.

Generally speaking this period was characterized by the consolidation of Mobutu's military rule. In the context of the struggles going on both within the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie and between itself and the other classes, Mobutu used the army to settle all accounts. This was facilitated by the fact that he personally controlled the best trained and best equipped section of the army: the two battalions of paratroopers trained between 1961 and 1964 in Israel.

The most significant aspect of this period to remember, although it is now almost forgotten was the attempt by this section of the rising bourgeoisie to impose its own ideology, the so-called "recourse to authenticity" which could best be described as a populist attempt to identify itself with the masses. Generally speaking, the "invention" of authenticity can be seen as part of that process by which the petty bourgeoisie holding state power sought to enforce its own rule on all other classes, and in particular all other factions of the petty bourgeoisie. Ironically, several aspects of this ideology like the change of city names, and later, christian names had been inspired in part by <sup>former</sup> radical university students for whom Lumumba was still the hero of a truly independent Zaire.

By adopting some of the avowedly Lumumbist nationalist slogans, Mobutu was able to further <sup>thin</sup> the ranks of those who had vowed to continue and struggle for the kind of country Lumumba had dreamed of. This process went hand in hand with the official proclamation of Lumumba as a national hero by the very same man who at the height of the 1964-5 repression of the peasant uprisings had decided to remove the name of Lumumba from one of the streets of Kinshasa. As might be expected, the emergence of "authenticity" coincided with an increased entry into government and state positions of a significant number of those former university students who had most closely identified with Lumumba's radical nationalism. Very few were able to resist this process of cooptation. By adopting some of Lumumba's ideas, Mobutu was able, at least momentarily, to partially defuse the potential hostility against his own regime. At the level of international politics and especially African politics, he clearly hoped to also establish himself as one who restored law and order in Zaire as well as one who continued Lumumba's work.

The ideology of authenticity or of "resorting to the values of our ancestors" fitted very well with the economic struggle to re-institute conditions of primitive accumulation reminiscent of the worst years of colonial economic exploitation and political repression. It fitted very well because at the center of it <sup>all</sup> was the political doctrine of the African chiefs. Time and time again, Mobutu has hammered at this notion of the supremacy of the single chief. During the times of our ancestors, so he would argue, no one would dare dispute the authority of

the chief. Democracy? Just one of those <sup>European</sup> ~~imported~~ notions which had no relevance in Africa. To be authentically African meant in Mobutuesque parlance to draw lessons from the African past and not from Europe. Those who did the latter were still displaying a colonial mentality; and one of the strongest (as well as deceptive) appeals of authenticity was precisely its call for the decolonization of mentalities. Ironically, those most in need of such treatment were the very initiators of "authenticity". The retrograde nature of "authenticity" buttressed at the ideological level the economic strategy of seeking to re-create conditions of primitive accumulation even in areas where these conditions were about to give way to expanded accumulation.

1973-1975: Zairianisation, Radicalisation, Retrocession or the sharpening of the struggle between two fractions of the <sup>emerging</sup> bourgeoisie.

No economic system, and by implication no state can survive if its ruling class lives principally by pillaging. After so many years of using the state as a way of spoiling public funds the rising bourgeoisie and the swelling numbers of the petty bourgeoisie made such a strategy increasingly less rewarding. Along with the obvious negative ratio of growing spoilers in relation to disappearing spoils at least within the reach of state bureaucrats, came the drop of copper, and the rise of oil prices. The latter and not the former were quickly latched upon as the central causes of the disastrous

state of the economy. The diminishing returns from using the state as one of the principal sources for wealth accumulation prompted the state operators to move into two apparently different directions, but which were part of the same strategy, namely

- 1) making the state more productive of wealth
- 2) move into new areas in search of additional sources of wealth.

Both moves were bound to require some form of nationalization of the economy. With regard to the first move, nationalization, or to be more precise zairianisation, went hand in hand with attempts to render more efficient the traditional methods of filling the public coffers <sup>such as</sup> more efficient system of tax collection. This was done either by improving the existing system or by using disguised force such as the "voluntary" contributions of "one Zaire for a greater Zaire" (Zaire *being* the Currency unit) a slogan which was in great use especially after the second so-called invasion of Zaire in 1978. Then there was the effort in 1972 to revive the National Savings Account. Among the measures used for doing this was the compulsory saving by parents of <sup>age</sup> school children; not such an original idea since it had already existed during colonial rule. It was also suggested, but difficult to know whether it was implemented, to make the National Pension Account a credit institution; not out of concern for workers well-being, but as a means of, again, taking advantage of all possible sources of ~~lot~~able wealth.

The other identifiable strategy was the one which took place between 1973 and 1975: Zairianisation, radicalisation in 1974, and finally retrocession (or the return) of some businesses to the former owners. The first steps of Zairianisation went in the direction of sectors of the economy which, it was thought, could be managed by Zairians just as competently as by foreigners. The aim was to ensure that all small and most medium size businesses fell in the hands of Zairian nationals. Sectorially, it affected especially transport and services. However, very quickly, the move encompassed more important businesses, in part because the nationalization of small and medium businesses did not and could not satisfy the basic economic interests of the section of the <sup>emerging</sup> bourgeoisie formally controlling the state, whose central concern was to use the political control as a means of consolidating it through ownership of the means of production.

The initial Zairianisation of 1973 was followed in November 1974 and in November 1975 by, respectively, "radicalization" and so-called "retrocession". Overall, these steps transferred to state ownership around 120 large industrial and commercial firms. (ii) From the various official and unofficial accounts it would be fair to say that radicalization (November 1974) was provoked by the realization that Zairianisation had not produced the desired effects. Firstly, in many cases the Zairian businesses far from prospering under the new owners, saw production decline. Secondly and, perhaps in terms of class relations, more importantly, the nation-

lization led to bitter fights within the ranks of the rising bourgeoisie over who was going to own what. Moreover, as some were emerging tremendously wealthier, they were perceived as a danger to the still dominant fraction of the state bourgeoisie. Indeed, when Mobutu made his radicalization speech this group of profiteers <sup>was</sup> specifically singled out as a target. Outwardly, radicalization was aimed at the new owners who had proved themselves incompetent as well as against those who had appropriated the businesses so skillfully that they were perceived as a threat to the very group which had opened up this new comucopia. Within another year the continued poor performance of the nationalized then radicalized businesses forced the government to introduce retrocession, i.e. ceding the radicalized businesses to their original owners on a 60% (foreign) 40% (Zairian) basis.

The reaction to this whole process and in particular to retrocession has generally been one of "I told you so", be it from the right or the left. From the right this is not so surprising since each failure of the African bourgeoisie is seen as a vindication of their reactionary position according to which blacks, bourgeois or other, are incapable of governing themselves. From the left, mere denunciation or prediction of failure is not sufficient. The authors of Le dossier fall in this except for the allusion to the fact that Mobutu's radicalization was implemented for fear to see a local economic bourgeoisie develop and threaten the absolute power held by the head of state. (12)

Left at this the failure is attributable either to the failings of the president or the president's entourage who are only interested in enriching themselves. Radicalization might have been a failure, but looked at from the point of view of the emerging Zairian bourgeoisie <sup>as a whole</sup> it would be shortsighted to see it as such. True, Zairianization through <sup>to</sup> retrocession did not quite bring even to the emerging bourgeoisie the expected prosperity, but it did intensify and quicken the changing relationship between the local economic bourgeoisie and its state counterpart, and in the process markedly affected the nature of the state. This will be discussed below. In short the failure must be looked at in relative terms, but the causes of it cannot be just incompetence, greed or any other moralizing explanation. It is crucial to also examine meticulously the state of the businesses that were nationalized.

Such an examination is being carried out, but not completed yet. The following lines are provisional conclusions whose main objective is to draw attention to very specific aspects, and as yet unstudied, of colonial Belgian based joint-stock companies. Before going further it cannot be repeated too often, even at the risk of saying the obvious, that the nationalization of foreign firms by a neo-colonial bourgeoisie <sup>can</sup> never be looked at as if it were more or less the same as the concentration or centralization of capital by capitalist firms. In order to understand why production and productivity of the nationalized firms declined it is essential to look at the history of those firms. If the the economists of the regime had done their

homework properly they would have realized that Belgian financial interests had ever since 1960 prepared themselves against such an eventuality by "nationalizing" their own businesses. (13) Of course this legal procedure of transforming Congolese ~~companies~~<sup>joint-stock</sup> into Belgian joint-stock companies was never admitted or denounced as pure and simple nationalization. Since the companies continued to operate in the Congo, it was easy for the Belgian owners to present the adoption of Belgian legal status as a purely juridical matter without consequences with regard to production. On the surface there was nothing wrong with all this. After all these were Belgian joint-stock companies eventhough they had seen the light of day because of their economic activities in the Belgian colony. However, within months of passing that law most of these firms had almost all transformed their original Congolese company into two companies: the Belgium based joint-stock company had now become something similar to a financial holding company controlling 99% of the "newly" created Congolese subsidiary. In other words, what was left in the Congo by all these joint-stock companies was a shell whose substance had been used to create a financial company, thus transforming the original "mother" company into a mere vegetating subsidiary.

The economic history of these subsidiaries still has to be done, but their situation in the Zairian economy of today can by no means be assumed to be the same as what it was during colonial rule. <sup>Moreover,</sup> The uncertainties about the economic future of the Congo led most company executives to adopt, at best, a wait and see attitude combined with precautionary measures such as the nationalization prece-



ding independence as a way of ensuring against losses should nationalization by the Congo occur.

Moreover the pattern of investments by the Congolese companies during colonial rule reveals certain things which to this date and to my knowledge have not been sufficiently stressed. It is generally accepted that the economic crisis of 1929 and WW II led to modernization processes. While it is true that some firms did engage in a modernization effort immediately following WW II, it cannot be said that this was the case for all the sectors of the economy. Partial confirmation of this can be drawn from the way in which the Ten Year plan (1949-1959), which was part of the modernization drive, failed, and by far from its stated goals.

With regard to the companies, an obvious fact acknowledged by non-Marxist economists,<sup>(14)</sup> deserves repeating: the capitalist firms operating in the Congo enjoyed such a monopoly that they used the situation firstly to reap exorbitant profits, secondly, and more importantly, to prevent new and more competitive investment from being made.<sup>(15)</sup> Most colonial companies resorted to reinvestment of profits, a means of financing new investment which has been recognized to encourage conservative economic strategies.<sup>(16)</sup> In short, throughout the post-colonial period, most of the companies, by now depending entirely from the Belgian finance holding, failed for the above reasons plus --in their jargon-- political instability, to carry out the necessary and badly needed investments.

In other words while it might be ideologically understandable to castigate the current ruling class in Zaire it would be shortsighted to single it out for political condemnation. The causes of its failure are not just those of a corrupt and incompetent class, but also the delayed results of tactics adopted by multinational firms in order to anticipate the moves by the emerging national bourgeoisies. It would be wrong to attribute the decline of production and productivity of the various zairianised/radicalised units of production solely to the incompetence, corruption and greed of the rising bourgeoisie. The Belgian joint stock companies had well prepared themselves for such moves by only leaving in the Congo subsidiaries which could not operate without a life-line to the Belgian financial holding. Thus, when nationalization finally took place it did nothing to them since the Zairian subsidiaries had by then been reduced to dead branches of a tree.

The period from 1973 to 1975 brought out very sharply two contradictions which the President's populist speeches sought to make appear as only one, i.e. the Zairean people vs. the "nouveaux riches".

Within the emerging bourgeoisie, there exist two distinctly separate factions, one which is still in command of the State apparatus and which is seeking to maintain its dominance in the economic arena. This dominance was clearly shaken by the Zairianisation-Radicalization-Retrocession. How shaken it was can be deduced from the various speeches against the "new 300 Zairian families". (17)

For the President, the radicalization measures were aimed above all at 'avoiding the formation of a class of 'nouveaux riches' which was becoming more and more a real fact! Therefore no citizen may own goods which would allow him or her to laugh at the popular masses." (18)

The new owners, or at least the greediest among them were castigated because "they had reached the point of forgetting that it was by caring for the community that one most easily achieves progress and social promotion." (19)

One of Mobutu's explanation of radicalization is worth quoting at length:

The state sought to put an end to (this) deteriorating situation by radicalizing the nationalized firms: Radicalization had to be carried out because the situation was about to become like the one we had known at the political level before the second Republic (November 1965) during which the provincial powers laughed at the central authorities, in short the state. Thus some owners turned bourgeois were behaving like uncontested and uncontested owners of the Zairianized businesses allocated to them, to the great contempt of the Zairian State which they were unscrupulously spoiling. (20)

Engaged in a sharp struggles with these new bourgeois, Mobutu sought to present himself as the guardian of public interest while discrediting as well as protecting these bourgeois against un embourgeoisement intempestif. (21) Somewhere else he described himself as the one who will prevent the emergence of a "fistful of fatty and pot-bellied bourgeois next to the misery of the people." (22) As if to prove his good faith, he went as far as introducing measures which will combat this new bourgeoisie. However, while announcing these measures (ceiling on cadres' salaries, official cars only for state guests, special tax on revenues and turnover) others

were specifically invented, such as the removal of import taxes on chemical fertilizers and other goods for SGA<sup>(owned by one of Mobutu's uncle)</sup> and other Zairianised firms<sup>(23)</sup>, in order to boost the profits of those businesses in which the State bourgeoisie is involved. Thus, on the one hand Mobutu would publicly ~~be~~ declare war ~~on~~ the new bourgeoisie, but on the other he would reassure them as he did with regard to the ownership of private houses: "the houses continue to belong to their owners even if they were built with stolen money, for by building them they were building up Zaire..."<sup>(24)</sup>

This ambivalence came <sup>in part</sup> from the realization on the part of Mobutu and the State bourgeoisie that they could not really stem the tide of this new bourgeoisie. Moreover, Mobutu himself through various investments <sup>has long</sup> been a member of this new bourgeoisie. Later on he clearly sensed that his political future lay on the side of the latter. In a speech known as Le Diagnostic du mal Zairois (26 November 1977) the principal target was no longer the new bourgeoisie but "those people who use the state or the party as instruments of personal enrichment!"<sup>(25)</sup> Those who <sup>were</sup> castigated <sup>were</sup> the cadres who hid behind the Président-Fondateur in order to achieve an abusive juridical and political immunity. Then the failures of Zairianisation and radicalization were attributed to "the psychology and action of a certain Zairian bourgeoisie which wanted to get rich without working, to consume without producing and rule without being controlled --in short replace the colonizers without "colonizing"

To be sure, Mobutu was not unaware of the links that existed between the new bourgeoisie and the state "untouchables" who were accused of being the first to quit the ship when things *went* relatively badly, as they did in 1977. After quitting and, at least for some of them, becoming part of the new bourgeoisie, these former "untouchables" would most vociferously denounce the poor management of the state.

This aside, the November 1977 speech was a direct appeal to the new bourgeoisie. As such the speech could be seen as a turning point in the relations of the two fractions of the bourgeoisie with respect to the use to be made of the state apparatus. On the one side there was the fraction which turned to the state as its privileged instrument for accumulation of wealth and on the other there was the fraction for which such use of the state apparatus could only impede the process of expanded accumulation.

Evidence of this changing relations can be deduced from the increasing number of interventions of businessmen (les hommes d'affaires) in areas previously reserved for the state: at the state hospital of Isiro (North Eastern Region) the sick were saved from starvation by a food donation from a private firm; <sup>(26)</sup> a similar case was reported for a hospital in Kivu region which ran out of fuel and was helped out by another "humanitarian" capitalist; <sup>(27)</sup> it became common place to read in newspapers about businessmen taking upon themselves the maintenance of roads; <sup>(28)</sup> near Rutshuru (Kivu region) a prosperous businessman was planning the building of a mini-dam; <sup>(29)</sup>

in Bukavu (Kivu region) a Woman's traders association provided the needed three tons of cement to complete a city market; (30)

And one could go on and on with more examples. All this does not mean that the changes were solely a result of internal changes. The international bourgeoisie, as a whole, was also interested in a state more atuned

if not to the needs of expanded accumulation, certainly to the alarmed international bankers who were pressing for repayment of their loans.

One of the results of pressures brought about by the international bourgeoisie has been the acceptance by the Zairian government to implement some economic and political reforms. The Zairian government had to accept various measures imposed by the I.M.F.; from 1978 this included the supervision of the Central Bank by an I.M.F. appointed official.

The Customs Department and the SNCZ (National Railway Line) both received new heads from Belgium.

The official and urgent tasks of all these foreign experts was to increase efficiency and eradicate corruption, but in theoretical terms it can be seen as an attempt to increase the productivity of invested capital by improving the circuits of circulating capital.

It is a bit more complicated to analyze the political consequences of these changing relationships. The growing strength (but still very weak in comparison to international bourgeoisie) of the new bourgeoisie is paving the way for new contradictions one of which will be between a national and a comprador bourgeoisie. On the one hand many

Zairian nationals are being appointed to the boards of directors of several foreign joint-stock companies. With regard to Belgian joint-stock companies alone, and as of 1974, a total of 28 individuals occupied positions on the boards of directors of 16 different companies. With the 1973-75 shake up, this figure is likely to have jumped up dramatically. <sup>(31)</sup> And on the other some Zairian capitalists have begun to question, and some, to clash with the quasi monopoly positions enjoyed by foreign firms. <sup>(32)</sup> The distinction made here between a national and a comprador bourgeoisie should not be seen as a contradiction which is constantly given. This is being said in part because the line which divides the national from the comprador bourgeoisie is a constantly shifting one. Assuming the analogy could be useful one could say that the comprador bourgeoisie is somewhat in the same position as the petty bourgeoisie: on the one hand <sup>the former</sup> is drawn between the international bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie, and on the other <sup>the latter</sup> is drawn between the bourgeoisie and the working masses.

Given this role of the international bourgeoisie in the ~~transformations~~ <sup>transformations</sup> of the new Zairian bourgeoisie, and given what has been said earlier with regard to the state bourgeoisie's attempt to stem its rise, must one conclude that the state bourgeoisie has opted to ally itself with international capital in order to safeguard its dominant position? It seems so, and to a certain extent understandable. Understandable if it is assumed that foreign capital within the context of Zairian political economy was sensed as politically less menacing. In the

long run, Mobutu has clearly realized that it will be easier to contain a foreign bourgeoisie whose political weight would depend on its Zairean allies than a national bourgeoisie with a political and social basis in Zaire. At present, however, the international bourgeoisie through its economic weight can exercise more political and economic pressure than the emerging Zairian industrial bourgeoisie. It was through the pressure of the international bourgeoisie that Mobutu reinstated Nguza Karl I Bond as his foreign minister even though he had been accused of high treason (1978), judged, found guilty and sentenced to death. Along with the pardon and subsequent re-instatement of Nguza Karl I Bond, the international bourgeoisie also requested the introduction of democratic reforms.

Mobutu craftily used this as a way of first spotting ~~the~~ *actual and potential* dissenters then of appointing them to the highest positions in order to make them directly accountable to himself. But there were limits to how far Mobutu would accede to the demands for more democracy. He *expressed them* in his famous speech of February 1980 when he balked at the suggestion coming from Zairians, but attributed to the international bourgeoisie that an opposition party should be allowed in the Zairian political system.

The economic basis of the new bourgeoisie.

All along this essay various allusions have been made to the agricultural basis of the new bourgeoisie, but so far with no elaboration. It was stated why agricul-



ture more than any other sector of the economy constituted the favourite target of the rising bourgeoisie. Much more than any other sector, the agricultural sector relied on the repressive apparatus, and this was one of the reasons why it was also more affected by the collapse of the colonial state. In the agricultural sector this event also meant the <sup>almost total</sup> disappearance of highly qualified personnel who, in 1959, numbered 418. (33) The following lines will concentrate not so much on how the emerging bourgeoisie established its <sup>economic</sup> basis in agriculture, but on showing how it sought to consolidate this economic basis.

One of the most visible signs of this process has been the creation of financial institutions to help in and accelerate the transition from primitive accumulation toward expanded accumulation. Thus, in 1970 it was decided to create, with the encouragement of the World Bank, within SOFIDE (Société Financière de Développement) a new bank --SOFIDAG-- (Société Financière pour le Développement Agricole) whose sole objective was to be the financing of agricultural projects. It was made clear from the very beginning that financial help would only go <sup>to</sup> large

projects.<sup>(34)</sup> By 1977 the SOFIDAG experiment was considered such a success that it was suggested in some corners that it should be expanded by studying how unused resources such as those of SONAS (National Insurance Company) and INSS (Social Security) could be mobilized for agricultural development.<sup>(35)</sup> Insofar as the transition to expanded accumulation under neo-colonial rule is also linked to the problem of capital formation, it is not surprising to see the emerging bourgeoisie seriously turning its attention to the ways and means of collecting money not just from <sup>existing</sup> banking and financial institutions, but also from new ones to be created. Already in 1970 the governor of the Central Bank had drawn attention to the increasing resources which needed to be tapped, failing which they would find their way abroad.<sup>(36)</sup> The compulsory saving imposed on school children, workers of private enterprises and government employees were part of the same scheme which had been encouraged by World Bank experts after they had noticed that savings deposited in financial institutions averaged 25% of GNP between 1960 and 1970 as compared ~~to~~ with 40% between 1950 and 1960.<sup>(37)</sup>

Another financial and credit institution, the COFIKI (Compagnie Financière de Kinshasa) began to operate in October 1974 (less than a year after Zairianisation). One of its objectives was defined as "to assist national entrepreneurs in the acquisition of large units of production, by acting as an intermediary between these enterprises and foreign financiers."<sup>(38)</sup> Five years before Mobutu decreed the five-fold increase of the Ministry of Agriculture budget favourable financial terms began to be granted to agricultural firms. Private banks were authorized to grant credit without any limitation; preferential interest rates for commercial agriculture and agro-businesses were introduced;

in 1972 the Central Bank introduced a preferential rediscount rate of 5% in favour of agriculture. (39).

Clearly while all this can be seen as part of the process of transition from neo-colonial primitive accumulation to expanded accumulation, it ought to be equally clear that it could be another way of carrying on neo-colonial primitive accumulation as exemplified by the use that was made of the C.N.E.C.I. (Caisse Nationale d'Epargne et de Cr dit Immobilier), a credit institution created in 1972 and which began to run into difficulties 5 years later because the debtors were failing to repay their loans. As lamented the top executive of the CNECI: "the rate of defaulting is highest among the wealthiest and most well advised debtors." (40)

In November 1975 a journalist reminded his readers that no year had gone by without the President reminding everybody that agriculture was the highest of priorities. (41) But it was not until 1975 that

appropriate budgetary allocations were made to match the political pronouncements. Then President Mobutu announced that the budget for agriculture should be increased five fold. In other words government subsidies and aid to agriculture <sup>was</sup> increased at the very moment when agriculture was no longer the business of small poor peasants, but of citizens with substantial means. The history of post-independence agriculture is the history of the marginalization and pauperization of the peasantry and its losing battle against the emerging bourgeoisie.

In 1967, the then Minister of Agriculture had spoken of mechanizing agriculture, but <sup>then</sup> suggested that it should wait. In 1969 another Minister of Agriculture pointed the way to a policy which was not concerned with the individual peasant household arguing that agricultural growth would depend on "our will to modify outdated structures" (42). Almost ten years later, the move against the peasant producer had gone so far that it led some to ask whether "the private capital injected in this (agricultural) sector will not risk leading to an increased marginalization of peasants in rural areas?" (43)

While the general trend was toward paying more attention to large scale agricultural projects, one also finds now and then some preoccupation with the fate of the single peasant family. Thus was created in 1978 a department for rural development which was aptly described as the department of the new "missionary" which shall be called upon to "carry on to the populations of the most remote corners, the good news of the revolution." (44) But this concern,

reminiscent of colonial paternalism, is not necessarily for the peasant as an independent producer, but rather as the potential labourer for the new plantation owners. The constant calls for return to the land are not made out of concern for the well being of independent producers, but reveal the anxieties of plantation owners who are increasingly complaining about the lack of labour, itself the result

of plunder by the very same class which is now crying for labour. As mentioned earlier, this class found no better way of resolving the labour shortage and declining agricultural production than reintroducing wherever and whenever possible the colonial practices of forced cultivation.

The extreme pauperization of rural workers has been identified even by the World Bank researchers as one of the contributing causes of labour shortages on plantations.

However, while noting that "actual wages in medium and large plantations often exceed minimum levels; even so, absenteeism rates are high", the World Bank report goes on to point that "the main problem concerning wage legislation hinges on the existence of social contributions which create a wide divergence between the cash return to the worker and the actual cost to the employer." Without questioning the merit of social benefits provisions, it might be worth reviewing if a nearly 100% tax on wages is compatible at the present state of development of the country with increasing economic and social pressures to expand employment opportunities and output." (45).

This argument illustrates very well a point made earlier with regard to the necessity of the rising bourgeoisie, in its phase of primitive accumulation to force the producing classes into that phase. This meant stripping the working masses of those small, limited advantages gained under colonial rule. But it is interesting

to note that while the World Bank is making the case for extraction of absolute surplus value, other Zairian capitalists have castigated those employers who are failing to pay full social and pension benefits to their workers. But then the World Bank experts may have known better for in another report published later, they pointed out that between 1968 and 1973, the highest growth rates occurred in manufacturing, construction, services (including government). Growth in the Agricultural sector (2.5%) was lower than population growth over the same period (2.7%) (46)

However, there is nothing contradictory in these developments. They are rather typical of a situation which sees at work processes of primitive accumulation as well as tensions created by fractions of capital (local and foreign) which are aware of the political dangers contained in these fetters preventing the full scale development of expanded accumulation. It was pointed out by a researcher that "new" relations in agriculture have meant especially in regions with high demographic intensity the resurgence of feudal potentates. (47)

In Kivu province, the local weekly directly linked endemic starvation with very well entrenched feudal practices. (48) Five years later, in 1979, almost twenty years after independence, a reader exasperated by the social and economic conditions wrote to the editor of the same paper asking if colonialism had returned to Kivu province. (49) A telling reminder of the sad state in which the largest section of the petty bourgeoisie has been driven to, and for this essay, an appropriately

open-ended conclusion.

### Conclusion

This essay has primarily focused on the fraction of the petty bourgeoisie which has secured state power. In the process it has tended to ignore or underplay the concrete struggles waged by the oppressed and exploited classes which included large and growing numbers of the petty bourgeoisie. This neglect was in part deliberate not because these struggles were considered secondary, but because of the political priority of first understanding the characteristics of the ruling class. It was also deliberate because of the paucity of reliable information on the organization, ideology, strategies and tactics of the opposition movements. Such movements as they exist have been and are speaking for themselves in various ways.

More than never before Zaire's future will play a key role in the future of the southern part of the continent, and for this reason alone a discussion and an analysis of the political struggles cannot be carried out within the same parameters as those used throughout this essay. As long as the Zairian bourgeoisie cannot stand on its own feet, the struggles of the oppressed and exploited will always be against the emerging Zairian bourgeoisie and their imperialist allies. Only by taking this into account can a consequently organized opposition seriously hope to achieve victory.

Jacques Depelchin  
Maputo, March 1981

Footnotes

- Comité Zaire
- (1) Zaire, le dossier de la recolonisation <sup>Comité Zaire</sup> L'Harmattan, Paris, 1978, Vie Ouvrière, Bruxelles, 1978. Translated and edited from Zaire, Ketens van koper, Kritak, Leuven, 1977.
  - (2) See the bi-monthly Info-Zaire published by Comité Zaire. Editeur responsable, Ph. Borel, rue des Riches Claires 12, 1000 Bruxelles.
  - (3) Le dossier..., p.8.
  - (4) Le Progrès, 15.3.1966.
  - (5) Lumpungu Kamanda, Le régime foncier au Zaire et son incidence sur le développement agricole, Cahiers Economiques et Sociaux, vol. XI, 3-4, 1973, p. 57.
  - (6) A very well researched article published in Salongo (Kinshasa daily), 21.3.1978, distinguished between a declining phase from 1960 to 1967, then a slight picking up between 1967 and 1970, followed by an accelerated drop. According to the National Bank (Central Bank) Annual Report of 1967 agricultural production had dropped by at least half in comparison to 1958-1959. Finally it has been shown (Lumpungu Kamanda op cit.) that acreages devoted to agriculture have increased only by approximately 11% over twelve years which is below the demographic growth for the same period.
  - (7) Le Progrès, 19.12.1967.
  - (8) Salongo, 28.8.1972.
  - (9) A. Emmanuel, White-Settler colonialism and the myth of investment imperialism, New Left Review, 73, 35-57.
  - (10) Annales Parlementaires, Congo, Léopoldville, 1966.
  - (11) Zaire, Economic Survey, Main Report, IBRD-821-ZR, p.iii, 1975.
  - (12) Le dossier..., p. 124.
  - (13) P. Joye & R. Lewin, Les Trusts au Congo, Bruxelles 1961; where attention is drawn to this spoliation of the Congolese economy on the eve of independence. The second step was not discussed simply because the book ~~had~~ appeared as it was taking place.
  - (14) In particular see F. Bézy, Problèmes Structurels de l'économie congolaise, Louvain, Paris, 1957.
  - (15) Illustrated by F. Bézy, Op. Cit. in an analysis of the cement industry.
  - (16) Morphologie des groupes financiers, C.R.I.S.P. , Bruxelles p. 424.



- (17) Allusion to the so-called 300 (sometimes 200) Belgian families who controlled the colonial economy. Jua (Bukavu, weekly), 18-24.1.1975.
- (18) Salongo, 13.1.1975.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) Ibid.
- (21) Salongo, 21.5.1975.
- (22) Salongo, 2.2.1975.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Ibid.
- (25) Salongo, 26.11.1977.
- (26) Salongo, 8.1. 1976.
- (27) \* Jua, 18-24.3.1978.
- (28) Salongo, 24.11.1976; JUA, 2-8.11.1974.
- (29) Jua, 17-23.6.1978.
- (30) Jua, 18-24.3.1978.
- (31) Unfortunately, Le Receuil Financier (Bruxelles), from which this information is drawn ceased providing such information since 1975.
- (32) In Kivu ~~prov~~ region, the case of the West German firm Pharmakina against local businessmen.
- (33) See F. Jurion & J. Henry, De l'Agriculture Itinérante à l'Agriculture Intensive, Bruxelles, 1967.
- (34) Banque du Zaire, Rapport Annuel, 1974, p. 217.
- (35) Salongo, 24.11.1977.
- (36) Banque du Zaire, Rapport Annuel 1969-1970, p. 18.
- (37) IBRD-821 ZR, Main Report, I, 1975, p. 50
- (38) Banque du Zaire, Rapport Annuel, p. 223
- (39) Salongo, 26-27.8.1972.
- (40) Salongo, 5.12.1977.
- (41) Salongo, 27.11.1975.
- (42) Le Progrès 20.1.1979.
- (43) Azap, 1.3.1978.

- (44) Salongo, 12.6.1978
- (45) World Bank Report PA -118a, Agricultural <sup>Sector</sup> Survey, Republic of Zaire, vol. I, June 19, 1972, p. 16.
- (46) IBRD -ZR, Op. Cit., 1975 , Main Report, p. ii.
- (47) Lumpungu Kamanda, Op. Cit.
- (48) Jua 9-15.3.1974
- (49) Jua, 2-8.6.79.

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March 1981