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Jason B. Locke  
DePaul University, [mr.jlocke@gmail.com](mailto:mr.jlocke@gmail.com)

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# **Death at Birth**

**The Political, Economic and Social Impact of the Decolonization and Perpetual,  
Neocolonial Control of Congo**

**A Thesis  
Presented in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

**June, 2010**

**By**

**Jason Locke**

**Department of History  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
DePaul University  
Chicago, Illinois**

*Europeans must recognize and come to accept the idea that the liberation movement that we are engaged in throughout Africa is not directed against them, nor against their possessions, nor against their persons, but purely and simply against the regime of exploitation and enslavement that we are no longer willing to tolerate.*

—Patrice Lumumba, International Seminar, Ibadan, Nigeria (March 1959)

*Whatever its aim, however minimal the regional autonomy that any one party demands, federalism is the worm in the fruit that will spoil everything, for imperialism will immediately exploit it.*

—Jean-Paul Sartre, Introduction to *Lumumba Speaks* (1963)

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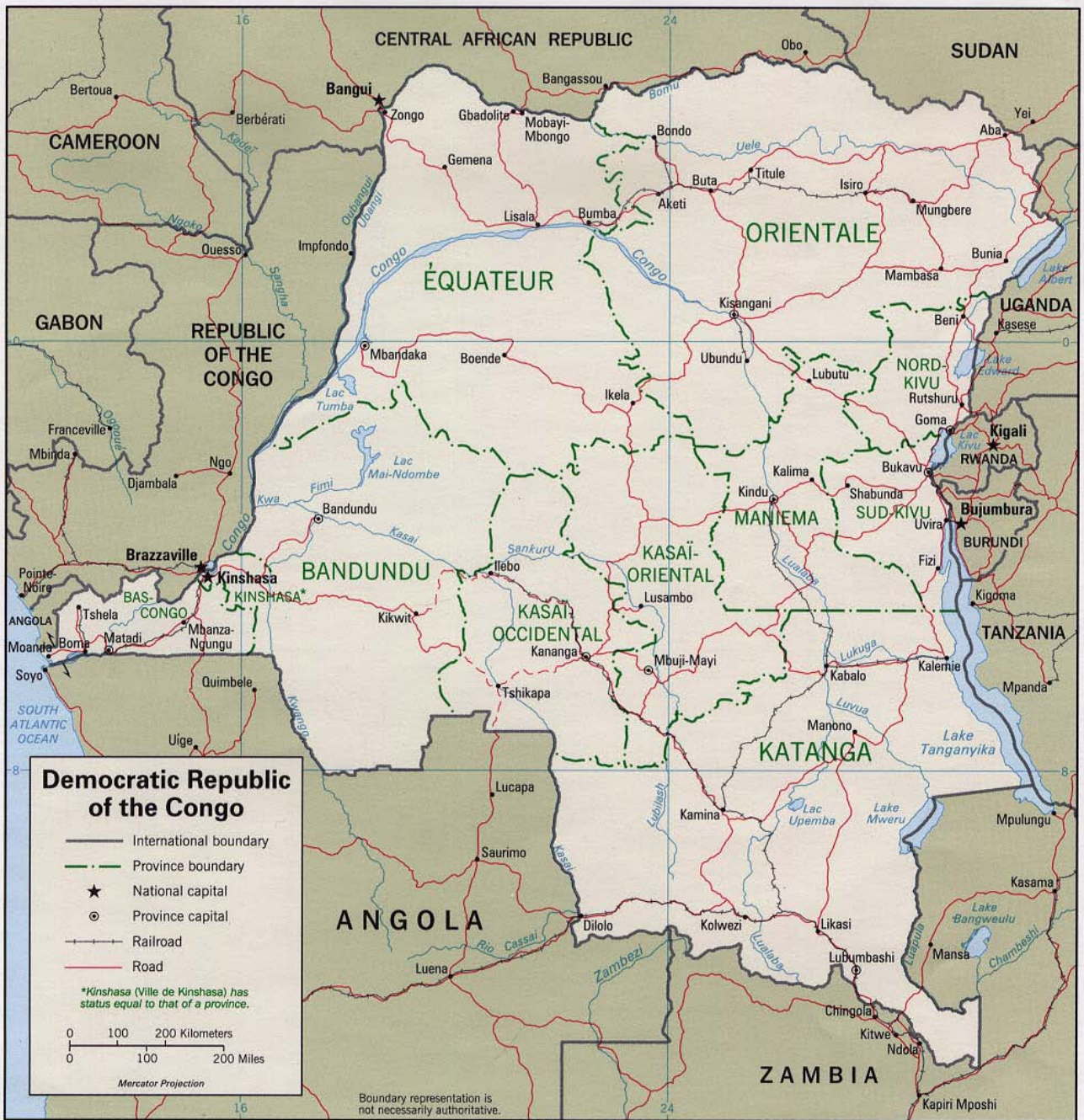
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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abako	<i>Alliance des Bakongo</i> a regional nationalist organization promoting mainly the interests of the Bakongo, the Congo's largest ethnic group
ADFL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, headed by Laurent Kabila
ANC	<i>Armée nationale congolaise</i> , Congolese national army
CNL	<i>Conceil national de liberation</i> , National Council for Liberation
CNS	<i>Conférence nationale souveraine</i> ; Sovereign National Conference
Conakat	<i>Confédération des associations tribales du Katanga</i> , Confederation of the Tribal Associations of Katanga
DDLDC	<i>Département des droits et libertés du citoyen</i> , The Department of Rights and Freedoms of the Citizen
DRC	<i>République démocratique du Congo</i> , Democratic Republic of Congo
DSP	<i>Division Spéciale Présidentielle</i> , Special Presidential Division (an elite portion of Mobutu's Military)
FAR	<i>Forces armées rwandaises</i> , Armed Forces of Rwanda (Habyarimana's Hutu army)
FAZ	<i>Forces armées zaïroises</i> , Zairian Armed Forces (Mobutu's personal army)
FLN	<i>Front de libération nationale</i> , National Liberation Front (Algeria)
FLNC	<i>Front de libération nationale congolais</i> , National Congolese Liberation Front
Gécamines	<i>Générale des carrières et des mines</i> , nationalization of UMHK
HCR-PT	<i>Haut-Conseil de la République-Parlement de transition</i> , Supreme Council of the Republic-Transition Parliament
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development of the World Bank
IDA	The International Development Association, another arm of the World Bank committed to aiding poor nations worldwide
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MNC	<i>Mouvement national congolais</i> , Congolese National Movement, led by Lumumba
MPLA	<i>Movimento popular de libertação de Angola</i> , Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MPR	<i>Mouvement populaire de la révolution</i> , Popular Movement of the Revolution
ONUC	United Nations Operation in the Congo
PDCI	<i>Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire</i> , Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast

RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i> , Rally for Congolese Independence
RDA	<i>Rassemblement démocratique Africain</i> , African Democratic Rally
RPF	<i>Front patriotique rwandais</i> , Rwandan Patriotic Front
SGB	<i>Société générale de Belgique</i> , large Belgian company owning UMHK
SOCOFIDE	<i>Societe congolaise de financement du development</i> , a “private institutional source of medium and long-range finance”
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UMHK	<i>Union minière du Haut-Katanga</i> , United Mines of Haut-Katanga
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITA	<i>União nacional para a independência total de Angola</i> , National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USOR	<i>Union sacrée de l’opposition radical</i> , Sacred Union of the Radical Opposition

Reference Map



“Congo, Democratic Republic (former Zaire) (Political),” *Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection* (1998) <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/zaire.html> (accessed January 26, 2010).



## **INTRODUCTION**

This work argues that the predatory policies of Western powers, especially the United States, in regards to the decolonization and subsequent neocolonial stranglehold of Congo created a situation in which any nationalistic, truly independent-minded government would be stifled and ultimately fail—a failure documented and exacerbated by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. With the added pressure of a poorly-educated elite class of leaders and military and diplomatic intervention surrounding Congo's independence in the summer of 1960, questions emerge as to the level of success any new, indigenous government could achieve. Did Western powers, particularly the United States, destroy the independent, fledgling Congolese government due to a fear of communist build-up in Congo during the height of the Cold War; or, did these powers use the Cold War as a pretext for destabilizing intervention and exploitation of the mineral wealth of Congo at the expense of any popular leader prepared to combat continued exploitation? Was the Congo destined to fail? Was death at birth inevitable? These policies of intervention, often clandestine, by foreign powers constitute a visible trend, with slight variances, in all stages of Congolese political and economic development since 1960. Congo has yet to develop a functioning, sovereign government, and as a result, the country continually harbors violence and controversy, and the people of Congo remain the victims—ravaged by the civil war, corruption in government and destitution.

This work contributes to the field of Congo studies by demonstrating the aforementioned paradigm. It argues that Belgian decolonization policies and Western intervention during the first days of Patrice Lumumba's ascension to power crippled his ability to unify the myriad ethnic groups within Congo, ultimately leading to a push for federalism, and eventually, the secession of the Katanga and Kasai regions. This secession—which was financially and

militarily backed by the Belgian and American governments and private mining interests—led to the elimination of Lumumba’s unification efforts, the horrific end to his life, and the rise of Joseph Mobutu’s Western-friendly, three-decade reign of Congolese exploitation as well as the pilfering of Congo’s abundant natural resources. The selfish, Western decolonization policies that Lumumba’s regime failed to prevent manifested in the form of Mobutu’s neocolonial<sup>1</sup> dictatorship and still impair Congolese independence today. This trend will continue unless a

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<sup>1</sup> Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah represented the vanguard of African scholars defining postcolonial Western policies. Neocolonialism, according to Fanon and Nkrumah, was an economic and political policy perpetuated by exiting colonial powers and their allies (i.e., the United States) whereby these powers placed loyal colonial elites in charge of newly independent nations, and channeled monetary and military support the new regimes in exchange for a continued exploitation of the raw materials available in those former colonies. In this regard, the European face of colonial exploitation replaced itself with an indigenous face perpetrating the same exploitation under the guise of independent government.

As Fanon stated in 1961: “Taking advantage of their strategic position in the cold war struggle, these countries sign agreements and commit themselves. The formerly colonized territory is now turned into an economically dependent country. The former colonizer, which has kept intact and, in some cases, reinforced its colonial marketing channels, agrees to inject small doses into the independent nation's budget in order to sustain it. Now that the colonial countries have achieved their independence the world is faced with the bare facts that makes the actual state of the liberated countries even more intolerable;” and “In fact the Western financiers are wary of any form of risk taking. Their demands, therefore, are for political stability and a peaceful social climate which are impossible to achieve given the appalling situation of the population as a whole in the aftermath of independence. In their search, then, for a guarantee which the former colony cannot vouch for, they demand that certain military bases be kept on and the young nation enter into military and economic agreements. The private companies put pressure on their own government to ensure that the troops stationed in these countries are assigned to protecting their interests. As a last resort these companies require their government to guarantee their investments in such and such an underdeveloped region;” Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Richard Philcox, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 2004): 60.

Kwame Nkrumah defined neocolonialism in much the same way. “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside. . . neo-colonialist control is exercised through economic or monetary means. The neo-colonial State may be obliged to take the manufactured products of the imperialist power to the exclusion of competing products from elsewhere. Control over government policy in the neo-colonial State may be secured by payments towards the cost of running the State, by the provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy, and by monetary control over foreign exchange through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the imperial power. . . Where neo-colonialism exists the power exercising control is often the State which formerly ruled the territory in question. . .”; Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism, The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1965): ix.

strong leader emerges with popular support who can successfully reduce Western influence and diminish the mining interests that currently perpetuate political instability.

In order to understand the crisis of contemporary Congolese society, it is necessary to analyze the key issues of Belgian colonization policies and the decolonization process of the 1960. These issues are violence, nationalism, access to resources, political rivalry and instability, Western neocolonial interests, and Cold War politics. These issues continually reproduce themselves throughout Congo's turbulent history, ultimately affecting an increasingly elusive course to peace and prosperity. Consequently, this trend has devastated any sense of unity between all the ethnic groups within Congo and has decimated the population as an ongoing, brutal civil war takes its disastrous toll.

Much of the current scholarship dealing either directly, or tangentially with the decolonization process of Congo—and Africa in general—has amply elucidated the exploitive and brutal colonization of this area, many of the reasons for a hastened transfer of power to indigenous Congolese, and the immediate crisis following the independence ceremony of June 30, 1960. Current scholarship also analyzes in great detail the continued status of conflict and mass destitution gripping Congo to this day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Recent scholarship on Congo continues to unravel the nature of the neocolonial exploitation of Congo's two abundant resources—minerals and people. Many of these works lean toward a Marxist interpretation of Congolese history, focusing mainly on the Western imperial boom and bust exploitation of Congo from the ivory trade in the nineteenth century, to the compulsory wild rubber cultivation during the early twentieth century, to the industrial copper and cobalt extraction, to the Cold War era uranium enrichment, and finally to the harvesting of the telecommunications, heat-resistant conductor coltan (columbo-tantalite) used in capacitors. The main difference in these works rests in the fashioning of histories that delve into the rationales used by the different parties involved in this exploitation. The fresh perspectives of these works ultimately affect the sources consulted by each scholar; namely, all of the following scholars cite the CIA as a catalyst in the elimination of Lumumba and the subsequent neocolonial control of Congo, yet they do not consult the recently declassified documents to solidify that assumption.

Several scholars have relied on one another to draw their conclusions, which is understandable, provided that someone initially analyzed and publicized the data from the CIA. These scholars cite no CIA documents. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja's *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila* focuses on the national liberation movements within the Congolese population to eradicate imperial economic and political control, including the neocolonial

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desires of Western powers and their African stooges. Regarding Lumumba's assassination, Nzongola-Ntalaja infers the CIA's compliance, yet he does not analyze the sources themselves; Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 106-12. Ludo De Witte asserts that Lumumba's elimination showed signs of neocolonialism; De Witte goes so far as to say that the Cold War masked the real intentions of Western intervention—the Soviets had no intention of supporting Lumumba's cause; however, the Cold War did provide the pretext to exert Western hegemony in the region; Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2002): XV. The following three works constitute scholarship with a proclivity for declaring Western exploitation as the cause of Congo's ill-fated history—all mention the CIA's involvement in the disruption of an organic selection of leadership (i.e., the assassination of Patrice Lumumba); however, none examine the CIA correspondences explaining the perceived need for Western intervention; David Renton, David Seddon, and Leo Zeilig, *The Congo: Plunder and Resistance* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 96-100; Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of the Congo* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002): 20; Jeanne M. Haskin, *The Tragic State of the Congo: From Decolonization to Dictatorship* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005): 26-7.

John Hargreaves, in his student textbook *Decolonization in Africa*, explores the British, French and Belgian policies affecting decolonization. Relying on mostly secondary material, this work represents more of a synthesis of recent scholarship; however, it does make use of extensive British and French archives for the period of the 1950s, and Hargreaves does assert the CIA's "increasingly unscrupulous and active" participation in the fracas of Congolese decolonization. His source for this assertion is Stephen R. Weissman, "CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (Summer, 1979): 263-286. Weissman analyzed the *Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Interim Report: Alleged Assassinations Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., November 20, 1975, which did not contain several classified correspondences because of the national security risk involved.

Two recent historiographical essays assess the state Congo studies; as posited by Jennifer Wenzel in "Remembering the Past's Future: Anti-Imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World," and Yaël Simpson Fletcher in "'History Will One Day Have Its Say': New Perspectives on Colonial and Postcolonial Congo, the state of the field rests in the analysis of internal politics and social movements of the postcolonial state of Congo. Scholars agree that the decolonization game of the 1960s excessively favored the imperialists; however, the new trend in the field analyzes the political maneuvering and social movements within Congo (the playing field of that rigged game). Both Wenzel and Fletcher state their concern for how imperialism distorts the different ways of presenting the history of Congo. Both works state that the CIA exacerbated the assassination of Lumumba; however, these authors, while summarizing the dynamics of neocolonialism, continue to perpetuate the scholarship's holding pattern. Why have the internal correspondences of the CIA during decolonization remained unexamined? Fletcher argues that the expression of exploitation comes through not only in monograph form, but also in fictional writing, modern art and film. Simpson's approach to unravel neocolonialism is to "read these narratives with and against each other [to illuminate] how insights and understanding shift with changes in perspective." This approach allows Fletcher to remove the "Otherness" from Africa and "recognize the plurality of histories of Congo, on their own terms." While this method magnifies African agency, it glosses over the Western forces tempering that agency, and ultimately diminishes the culpability of technologically advanced nations using their power to extract resources from an endowment-rich Congo at the expense of millions of Congolese. Wenzel explains that Western imperialists invented Congo as a prehistoric place, acting as a gauge to demonstrate to the West how far it has come in its development. The Congo River of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* conjured up a trip to the beginning of man. This invention provides the rationale for neocolonial exploitation barely disguised as a civilizing intervention of Congo. She asserts that an imperialist nostalgia looks back a Congo that "squandered the efforts" begun by Belgium, but an anti-imperialist nostalgia that "looks back at the past as it imagined the future, would refuse to jettison the moment of promise that was central to Lumumba's vision for the Congo, would refuse to forget the reasons why that vision was unacceptable to the First World, and would instead acknowledge the past in the name of the future, so that going up that river might be something other than going back in time." Here, the neocolonial aspirations of the West clearly define the reasons for its continual intervention in Congo; however, a close look at the documents produced by CIA personnel during the decolonization process would add nuance to this perspective—the politics of the Cold War did affect the United States' *raison d'être* in Congo; Yaël Simpson Fletcher, "'History Will One Day Have Its Say': New Perspectives on Colonial and Postcolonial Congo," *Radical History Review*. Issue 84 (Fall

Great Britain, France and Belgium—which controlled the vast majority of sub-Saharan Africa North of the Limpopo River from the mid 1880s to the 1960s—developed decolonization policies through which to hand over political power to their African subjects while maintaining an advisory role to the new states that would be economically advantageous to the old colonial masters. Such policies were designed to make former African colonies politically, and therefore, economically dependent on their former rulers. This is not to say that Africans did not demonstrate noticeable agency in the process of decolonization or after gaining some degree of independence. Many nationalist movements were formed by peasants, urban workers, local elites, and middle-class civil servants and were, by and large, successful in hastening the departure of overt European colonization. Once independent, some African nations enjoyed a brief increase in economic productivity; however, all were subject to unfavorable trading policies with the international community, namely their former colonizers. This condition, coupled with the poor investment decisions made by African leaders—most likely attributed to their lack of education—led to infrastructure decay, poverty, and ultimately, social unrest. Many African leaders, especially Mobutu in Congo, did maintain control of their nations with the help of neocolonial powers, but overspent on prestigious buildings and used their military and police forces to protect their positions at the expense of their citizens' lives. The international economic stagnation of the 1970s forced African leaders to borrow vast sums of money to maintain social welfare programs and to sustain their regimes. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank intervened to prevent economic meltdown in many of these nations, only to insist on a cold, calculating dismantling of many welfare, education, and development programs

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2002): 195-207; Jennifer Wenzel, "Remembering The Past's Future: Anti-Imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World," *Cultural Critique*, No. 62 (Winter 2006): 1-32.

to pay back the delinquent loans. In the end, many African nations were left with a paucity of expendable capital. Congo was no exception.

This work fills the gaps in current scholarship concerning the political, economic and social impact of the decolonization of Congo and the ubiquitous neocolonial pressure exerted by Western interests in this beleaguered nation by demonstrating a paradigm of Western covert action aimed at destabilization tactics and Congolese political and economic dependency. With an ever-widening interest in African studies, why have such a small number of scholars even broached the topic? John Hargreaves and Ludo DeWitte lead the field in arguing that decolonization policies in Congo stunted growth and fostered state decay after independence. In *Decolonization in Africa*, John Hargreaves suggests in his concluding remarks on Congo that these foreign, neocolonial policies, in all likelihood, killed any chance of a sovereign nation.<sup>3</sup> Ludo deWitte makes almost the same claim in *The Assassination of Lumumba*. Both differ in their final assessment, however. Hargreaves argues that Congo was a Cold War theatre, and as a result, the crisis deepened due to Congo's strategic war resources. On the contrary, De Witte claims that the Congo crisis was not a product of the Cold War, rather an attempt by former rulers to maintain political and economic control.<sup>4</sup> Admirably, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja argues in his work, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*, that foreign Cold War and neocolonial policies represented only part of the problem. The other was a succession of Congolese leaders who joined in the pillaging.<sup>5</sup> Both Hargreaves and De Witte fail to flesh out the continuing policies of interested foreign powers such as Belgium, the United States, the former Soviet Union and the United Nations and the effect of these policies on Congo:

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<sup>3</sup> John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London: Longman, 1996): 180.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-1; Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2002): 187.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 2.

particularly in the way the policies created a weak, dependent system of government that carried through to the present day. Nzongola-Ntalaja, while depicting a much needed perspective of African agency, does not demonstrate the ubiquitous presence of Western powers who resisted the growth of socialist nationalism in Congo. Moreover, Western powers actively tolerated Congolese leaders who pilfered and pillaged their country because those leaders were Western-friendly and provided the likes of the United States and Belgium with vast resources during the international Cold War imbroglio. The other problem, perhaps even greater, is that these scholars who explicitly state this hypothesis represent only a fraction of the scholars dedicated to this area of work.

The body of research for this work lies in the relevant recent scholarship, recently declassified United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) documents and United Nations resolutions concerning Congo, and the personal papers of Vernon McKay. As an accomplished Africanist scholar throughout his long career, McKay served in many capacities as an advisor to the United States Department of State, most notably as chairman of the Advisory Council on African Affairs during much of the critical period under analysis: from 1962-1968. His personal collection of papers offers a fairly robust glimpse of the role of the State Department during the transition of European colonialism to the neocolonial structure in central Africa, and Congo in particular.

The first chapter analyzes the revolutionary theory posited by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and its application to understanding the decolonization of British and French colonies of sub-Saharan Africa north of the Limpopo River.<sup>6</sup> The chapter demonstrates that the controversial issues raised by scholars on this topic pose significant implications for the

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<sup>6</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*.

decolonization of Congo. The policies implemented by Britain and France on their African colonies around Congo in the late 1950s informed, in large measure, how Belgium would proceed to withdraw from its African colonies.

In the second chapter, the work analyzes Fanon's theory as it applies to Congo; it frames the debates surrounding the decolonization of Congo; it demonstrates their implications on understanding the struggle during the first years of independence; and it examines recently declassified CIA correspondence, briefings, memoranda, a UNSC resolution explaining the crisis in Congo in 1961, and the files of Vernon McKay pertaining to Belgian and Western policies for the decolonization of Congo, particularly the correspondence between the CIA, the US State Department, and the various agents and/or diplomats operating in the areas in and around Congo and key colonial officials in Africa. The work examines the intent of the Belgian and Western governments in the process of decolonization and raises the following questions. How much political sovereignty would the Western powers afford the newly elected Congolese government in shaping the future of independent Congo? Why was Lumumba perceived as such a threat to Western interests? Why did these interests believe he had to disappear?

The third chapter posits the rise of Joseph Mobutu's kleptocracy as a direct result of Western, particularly American, support. Mobutu represented the "strongman" needed to secure Western neocolonial interests. With direct support from the United States and its Cold War allies, Mobutu was able to stabilize a chaotic Congo, secure his dictatorial position for over thirty years, and enrich both himself as well as his neocolonial benefactors. For the United States, Mobutu represented a Cold War ally from 1965 to the early 1990s, attempting to eliminate any communist threat in the heart of Africa—even if the American government had to look the other way when it came to the human rights abuses inflicted upon the Congolese masses. When the



Cold War ended in the early 1990s and the reality of Mobutu's brutal control garnered international attention, the United States gradually reduced public support for Mobutu due to his unwillingness to reform his governance. To appease his long-time supporter, Mobutu began a bogus campaign of reform including a purported increase in political rights to Congolese citizens, which Mobutu sabotaged from the start. As a result, American support continued to evaporate as Mobutu faced fierce rebellion in the remote provinces of Congo

In the fourth chapter, the work analyzes the decline of Mobutu's physical and political health, the transfer of American support to Laurent Désiré Kabila, and new methods of exploitation in Congo as a result of Kabila's forces' defeat of Mobutu. Underscoring the destruction of Mobutu and the chaotic nature of Kabila's subsequent political maneuvers, the perpetual hardships facing the Congolese masses remain. Following the Rwandan atrocities, Kabila was able to oust Mobutu with the support of neighboring Uganda, led by Yoweri Museveni—a man with Tutsi ties, Tutsi-controlled Rwanda and Burundi, the United States, and private Western mining interests. These supporters planned to use Kabila as a conduit to the treasure within Congo's soil; but, when Kabila did not concede to all the treasure demands of his supporters, he made enemies quickly. Uganda, Rwanda, and Western mining interests began supporting rebel groups in Eastern Congo. When conflict again arose in the form of another civil war, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi committed troops to the region. Western mining interests supplied rebel leaders with economic aid to purchase more weapons. Under the guise of protecting their borders, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have inserted their military will in Eastern Congo, while their soldiers continue to extract natural resources from the war zone. Western mining interests continue their support of rebel groups because the political instability advances Western positions regarding mining rights. These rebel groups continue to use rape as

a terror tactic to destroy the will of rival groups in Eastern Congo. As a result, HIV/AIDS continues to decimate the military and civilian population in the area. Kabila's assassination and the installation of his son, Joseph, in 2001 resulted in the continuation of neocolonial domination in Congo to the detriment of the Congolese masses.

The final chapter offers concluding remarks which assess the damage inflicted upon the Congo as a result of colonial and neocolonial policies dating before 1960 to the present. The controversial liquidation of Patrice Lumumba—orchestrated by his political rivals, Belgium, the leadership of the United Nations and the United States government—during the early stages of the Cold War set the stage for Western intervention throughout the history of Congo as an independent state. The interests of Western mining companies now operating within Congo's rich Katanga region mirror the actions of Belgium during the early stages of independence, in some instances funding rebel leaders, only to exacerbate the current instability to the detriment of the Congolese population and the benefit of their stockholders. The work does not attempt to offer a clear solution to this complicated crisis; however, it does add nuance to our understanding of a neocolonial trend occurring in Congo—a trend of exploitation with consequences the likes of Gomorrah—that destroyed, at birth, any chance of Congolese independence, peace or prosperity.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Decolonization of British and French Black Africa and the Immediate Aftermath**

*At the level of the unconscious, therefore, colonialism was not seeking to be perceived by the indigenous population as a sweet, kindhearted mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather a mother who constantly prevents her basically perverse child from committing suicide or giving free rein to its malevolent instincts. The colonial mother is protecting the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune.*

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)

The partition of Africa and the European imperial projects that followed the Berlin Conference in 1884-5 fundamentally changed the nature of African political, economic and social structures. Imperial metropolises established projects to extract vast amounts of raw materials from Africa, almost exclusively on the backs of indigenous peasants mired in the process of learning new colonial languages, compulsory cash crop agriculture, and essentially, only unpaid labor to facilitate the exploitation of the colonies. For the better part of the eight decades of imperial control, European powers not only dominated the vast landscape of sub-Saharan Africa north of the Limpopo, they also denied, on the grounds of racial superiority, the proper education and equal treatment of black Africans necessary for the eventual process of decolonization: the creation of sovereign, economically viable and politically stable African states. Africans resisted these policies in several visible ways: 1. indigenous religious leaders like Simon Kimbangu interpreted Christian teachings through local religious traditions; 2. urban and workers conducted strikes in order to draw attention to unjust forced-work policies; 3. local indigenous leaders conducted political protests; and 4. colonial intellectuals like Frantz Fanon wrote scathing indictments of imperial policies in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London: Longman, 1996): 6-31, 51, 78-83; for discussion of racial and moral superiority, see page 11; Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Owl Books, 2005): 5-7; David Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995): 1-8; Fanon, *Wretched*; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New

The process of decolonization was not, as the reviewed works will show, an afterthought. Major European colonial powers, following the profound socio-economic and political crises at home at the end of World War II, reluctantly began to enact policies that were intended to slowly prepare the peoples of black Africa for independence. This reluctant imperial process was initiated too late for the rapid pace of decolonization during the 1950s and 1960s. This rapid pace of decolonization was influenced, in part, by the political and economic pressures of the post-war western powers, namely the United States, for free trade and to deny the Soviet Union the high moral ground during the Cold War era. The meteoric rise of indigenous nationalism, as explained by Frantz Fanon, also prematurely hastened this process, thereby giving rise to African leaders that were ill-equipped to handle the complexities of self-rule in the aftermath of tension-laden and fractured colonial societies, especially under the weight of their neocolonial commitments to the metropole.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, most of the African nations, since independence, have floundered economically, socially and politically and witnessed small groups attain vast political power at the expense of the masses. To what extent are post-colonial crises a direct result of the colonial policies, including the unwillingness to adequately train future African statesmen in a reasonable time and manner? How much of the crises are a reflection of the incompetence and home-grown corruption and dictatorship of the African leaders? This chapter seeks to unravel the answers to these questions by assessing prominent scholarship in the rapidly growing field of African decolonization with a focus on the former colonies of Great Britain, France and Belgium. These three imperial powers have been chosen due to the ample amount of relatively current historical

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York: Grove Press, 2008, original date 1952); Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965, original date 1959).

<sup>8</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 47;

work available and to keep the focus of this inquiry manageable. Portugal, Spain, Germany and Italy have been neglected, not because they were not significant actors on the colonial stage (especially Portugal, with the longest colonial tenure), but because the scholarship available concerning the aforementioned nations far exceeds the amount on the latter. Moreover, Britain, France and Belgium controlled the vast majority of colonial holdings south of the Sahara and the policies enacted by each elucidate some common trends visible throughout the African decolonization process: the political and economic dependency of independent African nations on the majority of former colonizers, and the autocratic nature of African leaders in these states.

Before a clear analysis of the historiography can begin, a working understanding of decolonization theory must be developed. In this regard, an analysis of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* will serve as the underpinning of the historical arguments under investigation. Fanon, a Martinique-born psychiatrist trained in France, took up the cause of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) in the 1950s after serving as the head of a French mental hospital in Algeria. While in this position at the hospital, Fanon gleaned "valuable insight into the nature of the violence which he saw as an essential part of the anti-colonial struggle."<sup>9</sup> As a result, the psychiatrist-turned-revolutionary began to pen several influential revolutionary works, including *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), and *A Dying Colonialism*, which was published posthumously in 1965. Because of the credence given to *The Wretched of the Earth* by revolutionaries and scholars alike in the nearly five decades after its publication, this seminal work will be the basis of analysis.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Grant Kamenju, "Review of *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, *Transition*, No. 26 (1966): 51.

<sup>10</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, "Forward," *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, Richard Philcox, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 2004): xiv, xl-xli; Edmund Burke III, "Frantz Fanon's '*The Wretched of the Earth*,'" *Daedalus*, Vol. 105, No. 1 In Praise of Books (Winter, 1976): 127.

## Fanon as Revolutionary Theorist

Fanon argued that violence cleanses the soul of the colonized and that violence, both physical and psychological, inflicted by the colonizer on the colonized, must be reversed in order to begin the process of successful revolution. The physical violence wielded by the foreign occupier must be overcome by the fury of the technologically disadvantaged indigenous masses. The psychological violence of the colonizer perpetually and systematically destroying the culture of the colonized, destroying the colonized subject's sense of self-worth, making racism the reason for the colonized subject's subjugation, must be reversed if true independence is to be achieved. Racism, as Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), explained the colonial setting. In intentionally incendiary prose, Fanon explained:

Running the risk of angering my black brothers, I shall say that a Black is not a man.

There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge. In most cases, the black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell. . .

Blacks are men who are black; in other words, owing to a series of affective disorders they have settled into a universe from which we have to extricate them.

The issue is paramount. We are aiming at nothing less than to liberate the black man from himself. We shall tread very carefully, for there are two camps: white and black.

We shall inquire persistently into both metaphysics and we shall see that they are often highly destructive.

We shall show no pity for the former colonial governors or missionaries. In our view, an individual who loves Blacks is as "sick" as someone who abhors them.

Conversely, the black man who strives to whiten his race is as wretched as the one who preaches hatred of the white man. . .

The black man wants to be white. The white man is desperately trying to achieve the rank of man. . .

As painful as it is for us to have to say this: there is but one destiny for the black man. And it is white.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin*, xii-xiv.

This powerful two-page foray introduces the reader to Fanon's vision of his world. At the risk of offending his readership, Fanon explained that the black person's future would be determined by that person's ability to negotiate a world system created, and dominated by white men. Fanon further argued in *The Wretched of the Earth* that within the colonial construct, no truthful behavior exists between the imperial power and the oppressed.<sup>12</sup> The colonized subjects clandestinely tone their muscles waiting for the right moment to flex and strike with all their might. Psychologically, the persecuted subjects dream of one day becoming the persecutors.<sup>13</sup>

Fanon's work still reverberates in current scholarship, largely due to his theory of the oppressed. As long as imperialism exists, and as long as indigenous people resist that imperialism, Fanon's work will remain relevant, because he eloquently demonstrated the viewpoint of the oppressed, not just in Africa, but globally. George Nzongola-Ntalaja states "none of the contributions of Fanon . . . to our understanding of the national liberation struggle and the post-colonial state has been superseded by radically different analyses in the last 30 to 40 years."<sup>14</sup> Ali A. Mazrui and J. F. Ade Ajayi praise Fanon's contribution to current scholarship as well.<sup>15</sup> He also posited an explanation for ruthlessness and abuse by the formerly abused as they gain power in a given territory. Some of the red flags in Fanon's work center not necessarily in the analysis, but in the prescription to remedy the malady of colonialism. Some revolutions involve a level of violence—often justified as retribution—but Fanon advocated for violence as the *only* guaranteed method to total liberation. But, violence may not be a cleansing act; it may actually be counter-productive in the long term. As Victor A. Olorunsola and Ramakris

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<sup>12</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-7.

<sup>14</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ali A. Mazrui and J. F. Ade Ajayi, "Chapter 21: Trends in Philosophy and Science in Africa," in *UNESCO General History of Africa VIII: Africa since 1935: Unabridged Edition*, ed. Ali A. Mazrui (California: James Curry Ltd., 1999): 676.

Vaitheswaran assert: “An extreme of violence may, under extreme circumstances, be inescapable and even necessary, but to accept this is different from accepting the inevitability, necessity, and rightness of violence under all circumstances in the national liberation struggle.” The use of violence against the oppressor may in fact dehumanize the colonized subject, thereby tainting his/her liberation.<sup>16</sup>

Fanon states that violent revolution was the only means to independence, and in the case of the *Mau Mau* in Kenya, and in Algeria, where Fanon’s revolutionary roots took hold, this was evident.<sup>17</sup> But, in many other parts of Africa, such as Ghana, Congo and Nigeria, the actual transfer of power was preceded by comparatively little violence. Depending on the nature of the colony, the scale of violence more or less depended on the concentration of white settlers in the area at the time of nationalist movements.<sup>18</sup> Fanon offers a different approach, considering the relatively fast dispersal of news in the new global construct and his presence in the struggle for independence in French North Africa. According to his theory, the decolonization process in areas of Africa like Congo began in earnest to prevent another Algeria.<sup>19</sup> This is what Fanon believed based on his experiences and the European intellectuals that he knew. What Fanon could not know was the fate of Africa after his death in 1961 of leukemia, even if he did have a good idea of what the future held if unity within African nations never materialized.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Victor A. Olorunsola and Ramakris Vaitheswaran, “Reflections Prompted by Frantz Fanon’s ‘The Wretched of the Earth’: A Review Essay, *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Oct., 1970): 124.

<sup>17</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 42; Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 29-30; Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 150-3; in the case of *Mau Mau*, atrocities committed by both the British military aided by loyalist Kikuyu subjects determined to hold on to their colonial property and *Mau Mau* warriors of the forests determined to rid their land of British imperialism created a constant state of terror in the early 1950s. In the case of Algeria, French military counter-terrorism units raided the Arab casbah in Algiers, only to invite make-shift bomb and weapons attacks on the white, settler population of the city in the late 1950s through the early 1960s. Large white settler populations exacerbated both the *Mau Mau* and Algerian independence struggles.

<sup>18</sup> Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 38-40; Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 113.

<sup>19</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Bhabha, “Forward,” *The Wretched*, vii-viii.



What Fanon saw by 1961 was an attempt by Western powers to have colonialism by another name: neocolonialism, or satellite imperialism. In this new form of exploitation, Western powers would make a grand show of relinquishing power into the willing and unable hands of African statesmen lacking the specific skills necessary to succeed in a Western-dominated world. In short, these statesmen needed the support of the former colonizer to maintain control of their fledgling nations. The new leaders' lack of education and their desire to enrich themselves quickly proved disastrous for sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>21</sup>

These under-educated, self-enriching African leaders were not ubiquitous, though. A few notable leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Patrice Lumumba of Congo tried in earnest to break the imperial shackles around the necks of their countries. The ghastly reality of most of Africa during the 1960s is that the Western powers' political and economic imperatives would not permit these revolutionary leaders to carry out their national agendas. Lumumba was assassinated in 1961 and Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 while he was out of the country. Both politicians' fall from power smacked of Western neocolonial intervention.<sup>22</sup>

The political imperative that Fanon posited rested in the context of the Cold War. Neither the capitalists nor the communists were willing to disengage from Africa. Violence dominated national politics in the metropolises and this would soon spill over into Africa.<sup>23</sup> Economically, the Cold War adversaries would need enormous revenue streams to enlarge their offensive and defensive military abilities. The resources necessary for domestic and military build-up in the post World War II period came from former colonies, like those in Africa.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>22</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo* (New York: International Publishers, 1967): x-xii; Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 7, 96-7, 115; Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2002): 186; Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 211.

<sup>23</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 36.

Though he offered no statistical analysis, Fanon claimed that the money spent on Cold War militarism could raise the living standards in Africa sixty percent in fifteen years. While it is problematic that he omitted the data to support this assertion, it is hard to fault the logic Western powers spent vast sums of money on militarization rather than on humanitarian aid to former colonies.<sup>24</sup> Fanon argued that the new African national identity during this period was largely viewed in terms of the juxtaposition of capitalism and democracy versus socialism/communism. To demonstrate this theory, Fanon cited the *Mau Mau* uprising in Kenya. Where the violence against the white settlers in Kenya did not physically threaten the metropole, socialism might. In Britain, opponents of Kenyan liberation argued that “outside” socialist agitators provoked the fight against racism and the overall liberation struggle in Kenya.<sup>25</sup> To compound the problem, new African leaders were under-educated in Western philosophy and economic principles. This disadvantage proved disastrous in negotiations with the metropole. European administrators and civil servants would have to remain in former colonies to build an infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> Adding to the dilemma, the former colonial intellectuals—now African statesmen—suffered a precarious position. The education afforded by the colonizer less than adequately prepared future African leaders in a Western sense, and Fanon argued that this education and thought process was worthless when the leaders rallied support among the rural masses.<sup>27</sup>

Fanon’s prescription to remedy these political economic and social ills demanded an organized approach to build unity within the new nation by beginning a national culture with African—not European—values and that the rural masses were essential in this development.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 68, 76, 88, 136, 140.

While this type of grassroots organization and buildup to revolution and self-governance is one ideological approach to achieve independence, it fails to take other variables into account. The colonial intellectual carries out the political education of the masses and then the first generation students pass on to others and so on. Fanon argued that European education corrupted and isolated the bourgeois colonial intellectual. Although the intellectual may have disavowed this education, the perception of class was already ingrained. Fanon briefly contradicted his argument by introducing the idea that Western-education lifted colonial intellectuals to an elevated status within the colony. These intellectuals would begin to judge the rural masses in much the same way the colonizers did.<sup>29</sup>

Fanon predicted that when the colonial intellectuals realize the need to get back to their roots and educate the masses, the rest of the world still operates under a system designed by the West. How would an African nation defend itself against another technologically advanced invasion from a Western power? Would it need to develop methods of defense capable of matching Western advances? Is that Western education necessary in negotiations and trade in a global society? In the grizzly reality of the Cold War period, no amount of education, whether Western or subaltern, could change the ferocious nature in which the West continually exploited Africa.

Fanon further argued that a national consciousness would impede European neocolonial designs. The national bourgeois, or the African intellectuals who received a cursory education in Western-run schools, would serve as the conduit for the continued extraction of African resources to the European metropolises in an independent Africa. Once in power, this “harmful” bourgeois would see the immediate potential for enriching themselves, and would act to continue

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 99.

their country's exploitation by granting personally lucrative concessions to the former colonizer.<sup>30</sup> Instead of investing these funds into national infrastructure, the bourgeois would invest in themselves.<sup>31</sup> In order to keep the exploitation efficient and steady, "the army and the police force form the pillars of the regime." The strength of the army and police force equal the task of subduing their own people, and foreign experts commanded these weapons of neocolonial control.<sup>32</sup> Eventually, the citizens of Africa would grow tired of exploitation of a different color; in fact, Fanon confided to his long-time friend, Jean-Paul Sartre:

We blacks are good men; we have a horror of cruelty. For a long time it seemed to me that Africans would not fight among themselves. Unfortunately black blood is flowing, blacks are causing it to flow, and it will continue to do so for a long time. The whites are battle of the colonial victim against the colonial master is oftentimes going to be a battle between the victims themselves.<sup>33</sup>

In order to prevent or defeat this neocolonial apparatus, Fanon asserted that a national consciousness—one that curtailed a national bourgeois and included the rural masses—was necessary. "Barring the way to the national bourgeoisie is a sure way of avoiding the pitfalls of independence, the trials and tribulations of national unity, the decline of morals, the assault on the nation by corruption, an economic downturn and, in the short term, an antidemocratic regime relying on force and intimidation. But it also means choosing the only way to go forward."<sup>34</sup>

Fanon believed the road to independence and the reestablished dignity of Africa rested in its culture; colonialism killed this simple word that harkens tradition, custom, unity and belonging. "In the colonial context, culture, when deprived of the twin supports of the nation and the state, perishes and dies. National liberation and the resurrection of the state are the

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 119, 100.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, "Introduction," in *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961*, Jean Van Lierde, ed., Helen R. Lane, trans. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963): 4.

<sup>34</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 121.

preconditions for the very existence of a culture.” When the colonized intellectual writes fiery literature admonishing the colonial regime, the colonizer knows that its system is working; but, when the colonized intellectual stops “producing work exclusively with the oppressor in mind. . . [and] switches over to addressing himself to his people,” the underpinnings of nationalism take shape, and culture—of an independent, proud African nation—begins to form. This nascent nationalist fervor would start, according to Fanon, the process of decolonization.<sup>35</sup>

Fanon’s ability to predict many of the pitfalls of post-colonial Africa are quite remarkable. Though he would not see the formal independence of Algeria or many other African nations, his time spent on the revolutionary front informed his hope and horror. Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, wrote with the passion of humanism, of the potential of Africans as contributors to the world, and of the hard work required to make decolonization and post-colonial Africa a successful endeavor. His optimism, however, was not without doubt, fear, or giving credence to the rapacious nature of European colonizers. His views on violence as the only method to end colonialism are not unchallenged. His rejection of Western education in Africa, especially with the onset of the global economy, seems naïve. His belief in nationalism over *negritude*, or Pan-Africanism, may even sound disengaged. However, Fanon maintains a readership and many of his predictions and social formulas proved valid, and prophetic to a surprising degree. For this reason, Fanon’s work serves as a starting point for modern, sub-Saharan scholarship and its impact on Black Africa (and Algeria).

### **The Decolonization of British Sub-Saharan Africa North of the Limpopo River**

First, in the case of Britain, colonial officials as well as politicians in London did not envisage leaving the task of government of their colonies to Africans immediately following the

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 177, 173.

Second World War; they did, however, make plans to “substitute collaboration for force,” meaning the British saw the need for African leadership within its colonies to quell strong nationalist movements like those of which Fanon wrote. The British government believed this policy of gradually increasing the level of prominent Africans in government would diminish foreign pressures from post-war allies—namely the United States—to open Africa to free trade. At first, the British planned to create a Commonwealth within Africa, much like the relationship it developed with Canada and Australia, with a “racial partnership” for an undetermined, yet ever-diminishing future. By 1960, however, official policy of the British Empire deemed continual colonial occupation a “hindrance to their new national objectives,” preferring to rapidly decolonize “with the greatest speed compatible with the appearance of responsible trusteeship, sometimes without much concern about future relationships.” This decision would lead to the rise of African leaders of varying degrees of capabilities.<sup>36</sup> These leaders exhibited many of the negative traits of Fanon’s national bourgeois.<sup>37</sup>

Before the Second World War, the British government’s colonial policies proceeded in relative autonomy compared to the French and Belgian governments, and the Western world generally assumed that colonization was good for Africans and that civilizing the Third World was an honorable goal. In *Decolonization in Africa*, John Hargreaves argues that in the interwar period, colonial powers believed that Black Africa seemed “centuries short of any capacity to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.”<sup>38</sup> What is more, African resistance in the 1920s was neither united nor effective in many corners of the continent. Fanon argued that the problem of uniting an effective resistance within the European colonies of

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<sup>36</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 2, 3.

<sup>37</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 65.

<sup>38</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 10.

Africa resulted from of a lack of the colonized subjects' maturation and the neutrality of traditional leaders in the Cold War context. Potential aid from both the capitalist and communist blocs paralyzed the decision-making ability of these African leaders.<sup>39</sup> Popular support for protests against injustice or for the defense of traditional values had been effectively suppressed in most areas of colonization. The strongest resistance during this period came from religious leaders. Many Christian leaders demonstrated discontent with the incongruities between Christian teachings and colonial policies. Many Muslim leaders, including Muhammad Ahmad Ibn 'Abdallah—"the Mahdi" in Sudan, led revolts against foreign invaders like the Ottomans and British. A force led by a British officer named Hicks Pasha defeated and drove back The Mahdi's Islamic forces, ultimately leading to the demise of the Mahdi's revolutionary *djihad* and the decline of African leaders' ability to stave off European encroachment in the area. Even with defeat:

Perhaps no part of Africa resisted European conquest and occupation in the period 1880-1914 so forcefully as the north-eastern part of the continent. . . The peoples of Egypt, the Sudan and Somaliland were not fighting in defence of home alone; but also in defence of religion. The Muslims there, like their fellow adherents in the rest of the Islamic world, were conscious of the social and religious disruption that would be caused by alien encroachment on hitherto Muslim territories.<sup>40</sup>

Hargreaves does not discount the fierce resistance of these rebellious Muslim inhabitants, although he carefully limits his study to lands between the Sahara and the Cape of Good Hope. Furthermore, Hargreaves states that the aim of sub-Saharan African religious leaders was more a "spiritual rather than political emancipation." What is unclear is the relationship of these Northeastern Africa rebellions to his area of study. Northeast Africa had cultural ties to the

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<sup>39</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 21, 40-1.

<sup>40</sup> A. Adu Boahen, ed., "African Initiatives and Resistance in North-East Africa," in *UNESCO General History of Africa VII: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935: Abridged Edition* (California: James Curry Ltd., 1990): 41-43; The abridged version was prepared from the texts of the main version written by H. A. Ibrahim.

Sudanese living south of the Sahara. How many lived near and/or participated in the rebellions? Did those movements remain in the memory of sub-Saharan Africans during colonization? To prove this assertion, Hargreaves turns to native politics. Local colonial chiefs largely supported the British colonial government who allotted them a small share of power in return for political support, soldiers and workers. “The most militant radicals were usually perfectly satisfied if the rulers properly carried out their protective functions, if there was no forced labour, if slavery was abolished and oppressive levies were stopped. This attitude is hardly surprising. Most of the colonies were as yet little developed.” In this way, according to Hargreaves, the British minimized nationalism during colonialism in the interwar period.<sup>41</sup> This seemingly controlled African population would later convulse in response to colonialism, especially following the Second World War, where many Africans on the front experienced responsibility equal to their white counterparts.

In the early 1900s, the British government, if not most British citizens, and almost certainly, British colonial administrators perceived Africans as inferior. This reality, coupled with the lack of telecommunications linking Africa to Britain, rendered a largely ignorant and/or indifferent British metropolis in regards to African colonial policies prior to the popular release of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902), which shed light on the colonial administration of the Congo Free State. Sparse numbers of Baptist missionaries unleashed the brutal reality of Leopold’s Congo Free State, but many in Europe questioned whether atrocities were avoidable in the uncharted depths of the African wilderness. Rebellious natives might have to be killed to

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<sup>41</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 10, 13, 16, 21; Gann, Lewis H. and Peter Duignan, ed. *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960, Vol. II: The History and Politics of Colonialism 1914-1960* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970): 3.



protect civilizers.<sup>42</sup> While vocal critics of colonialism in Egypt, India and Ireland were prevalent, few colonial critics could imagine that Black Africans would be able to rule themselves. In the minds of most British citizens, Black Africa was inferior to the Western world in all intellectual and political pursuits. The British had shown that local colonial chiefs could be exploited, especially during the First World War, to rule as effective colonial agents. The thinking in the metropolis mirrored the exploitive attitude on the ground in Africa. “War, in other words, may have contributed in an oblique and unintended fashion to the practice of indirect rule which subsequently became part of a rarely challenged political orthodoxy in British colonial Africa.” While local leaders were largely complacent, this did not necessarily translate into British rule *sans* conscience.<sup>43</sup> Indirect rule, as envisioned by Lord F. D. Lugard, in the British colonies in Nigeria and Uganda was a myth. Lugard proposed a system of governance whereby local, indigenous rulers would retain their authority and much of their holdings; however, those indigenous rulers would become mid-level management. The British colonial authorities would relay policy information to these local rulers, and those rulers would have to enforce those policies. This system, in reality did not run smoothly, as those who opposed colonial policies were replaced by colonial governments or other colonial agents that would follow policy. Such was the case in “Ankole (1905-8), Toro (1923-4) and Teso (1927-30)” in Uganda. The British

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<sup>42</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness: Second Edition*, Ross C. Murfin, ed. (New York: Bedford Books of St. Martins Press, 1996): 6; Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 92-5;

<sup>43</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 22; Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism*, 10; for criticism of British colonialism in Egypt by Sa'ad Zaghlul, see Boahen, “Politics and Nationalism in North-East Africa, 1919-35,” *UNESCO General History of Africa . VII*, 250; for criticism of British colonialism in India, see Eleanor Zelliott, ‘Gandhi and Ambedkar: A study in Leadership’, in Zelliott, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (New Delhi: Gyan, 1992): 150-183; while both B. R. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi garnered international attention during the interwar era seeking Indian independence, each disagreed on the role of the British in this process. While divergent on the status of *Dalits*, or Untouchables in Hindu society after the British departure, both strived diligently for an Indian rule of India; for criticism of British colonialism in Ireland, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998): 284-287, Roger Casement, famed for his work to expose the injustices of the Belgians in Congo, was a staunch Irish national that was caught smuggling German weapons to Ireland in the hopes that they may be used to free Ireland from British control. He was tried for high treason and executed on August 3, 1916.

instituted a four-stage process in which indigenous leaders had to conform to the Native Authority Ordinance of 1919 or face dismissal or regulated conditions of service. Indigenous rulers had no power in this regard.<sup>44</sup>

Scholars agree that the Second World War was the real catalyst for the type of change debated during the Depression. According to Michael Crowder, the British were forced by the economic disaster of the 1930s to reconsider social welfare in their African colonies. “[A]t the very time that African protests against the conduct of colonial rule, heightened by the depression, were gathering momentum, similar criticisms were being raised by government officials and by politicians in Britain not only in the press and in parliament but in the corridors of the Colonial Office itself.” Clearly, even some British officials objected to the living conditions of the teeming masses under their care. African workers’ reaction to the privations of the Great Depression forced Britain, in many respects, to improve the welfare of its African subjects. During the worldwide economic collapse, when global prices for goods depreciated, many Africans found it increasingly difficult to acquire basic necessities in urban areas. Rural migrant workers in urban mines and the plantations, for instance, became dependent on agricultural surplus from home, as their wages would not buy food in city markets. Ultimately, unemployment forced many workers to return to their villages for support, just as drought and locusts hindered the ability of villages to feed them. When urban nationalists and farmers found common cause in protesting increasingly harsh conditions, coordinating to riot and conducting work stoppages, the British were forced to respond. Though they met the unrest by instituting stricter social restrictions on mobility, they also initiated constructive labor legislation, largely because German aggression in Europe and the uncertainty of the policy of appeasement

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<sup>44</sup> Jan Jelmert Jorgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1981): 82.

prompted Britain to adopt a preemptive strategy regarding colonial resistance. “The German threat had reinforced a lesson of the Depression: that those who publicly justified their rule by the benefits it brought to Africans needed to take more active measures to produce positive results.”<sup>45</sup> One of these measures was to loan up to £1 million annually to the British colonies in Africa to develop agricultural and industrial production. In 1940, British government also “approved a Colonial Development and Welfare Bill” in which £5 million “was to be allocated annually to support plans, which each colonial government was required to prepare, ‘to bring their services [for education and social welfare as well as economic infrastructure] up to a reasonable standard’.”<sup>46</sup>

As these social ideas were being considered in the late 1930s, the 1940s and the onset of another international feud would bring war economy and social change to Africa.<sup>47</sup> The Second World War, “with its rhetoric of freedom and self-determination in Europe, and its legacy of decolonization in Asia,” created space for Africans to acquire wealth and demand autonomy. In the words of David Birmingham, “the debate over independence for Africa could not be silenced.”<sup>48</sup> The need for previously imported goods, now in short supply, stimulated light industrialization. Compulsive military service placed Africans on the battlefield next to Europeans, although in strictly segregated units. America gained international prowess during the conflict, and because the British needed American supplies and military support, Winston Churchill, then the Prime Minister of Great Britain, agreed to America’s Atlantic Charter ‘equal access’ clause. Franklin Roosevelt, President of the United States, was also firm on the idea of

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<sup>45</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 32-41, 42.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Crowder, “Africa under British and Belgian Domination, 1935-1945,” in Ali A. Mazrui, (ed.) *The UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VIII: Africa since 1935* (California: James Currey Ltd., 1999): 92.

<sup>48</sup> Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 4.

all peoples, including Africans and Asians, to self-determine the type of government under which they will live. This pressure from America would only increase at war's end.<sup>49</sup> Added pressure from within Britain's own borders and from its nationalist-leaning African subjects prompted the government to initiate its own program of decolonization—"Britain was the first imperial power to acknowledge that it could benefit by granting self-government to its colonies"<sup>50</sup>; this included the creation of African universities and the training of future African statesmen. "World War II did not in any sense create African nationalism. Global conflict did, however, sharply accelerate existing trends."<sup>51</sup>

Additional pressure mounted from African entrepreneurs—predominantly men who were able to invest in marginal businesses now prevalent under colonial rule—who used their local influence in constructive ways. "An expanding economy could no longer make do with unskilled workmen; there was a need also for foremen in mining and construction jobs, for painters, carpenters and bricklayers. Many Africans became producers of cash crops such as cocoa, cotton, maize and coffee. In addition, some black people began to enter trade. The 'new men' played a major role also in the emergent political organizations of Africa."<sup>52</sup> A few of these 'new men' that were able to acquire sizeable amounts of wealth and local influence would later be rewarded with nominal access to Western education opportunities. These 'new men' that Fanon dubbed 'national bourgeois,' would eventually play a substantial role in the decolonization process of the mid-twentieth century.

The restriction of education to only a minority of Africans, as well as the relatively slow pace of British decolonization, provoked discontent, including racial tensions, among many

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<sup>49</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 52-63.

<sup>50</sup> Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 4, 5;

<sup>51</sup> Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism*, 23.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

colonial subjects. The time was now for independence according to some African leaders, and local action was taking place by the end of the 1940s. “In the absence of a national political forum, the various welfare improvement associations, co-operative unions, independent churches, and secret societies to which such men devoted much creative energy began, with varying degrees of force, to express radical dissatisfaction with the colonial order.” These associations, including the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led to the discontented proliferation of native angst described by Fanon. Rural African soldiers returning from tours in Burma, India, Southwest Asia, and Europe had learned new trades, experienced social upheaval and had come home with ambitions “for themselves and their children that were utterly different from those they had when they first stood before the recruiting officer.”<sup>53</sup>

By the 1950s, many within the borders of Britain believed that African nationalism was a homogenous force demanding self-governance; this was not the case. Many leaders within African colonies used anti-colonial rhetoric to gain credibility; however, each leader had differing reasons for their efforts. Complex realities of class, ethnicity, religion and beliefs separated these leaders at levels only visible after closely examining the nature of each colonial experience. This reality was true in other European-controlled African colonies as well. “[T]he central feature of nationalism in any African country was the common desire to oppose the colonial rulers within their colonial frontiers. This anti-colonial nationalism, with rare exceptions, was not replaced by any broader forms of national awakening that transcended the frontiers of the old ‘scramble for Africa’.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Fanon argues that Pan-African cultural movements, especially *negritude*, are a dead end. African intellectuals and their *negritude* siblings across the world were faced with a factious dilemma: while the societal placement of

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<sup>53</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 74; Crowder, “Africa under British and Belgian Domination,” 99.

<sup>54</sup> Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 5, 6.

people of color was under people of European descent worldwide, cultural problems are essentially national problems. “[T]he problems for which Richard Wright or Langston Hughes had to be on the alert were fundamentally different from those faced by Léopold Senghor [of Senegal] or Jomo Kenyatta [of Kenya].” When colonial intellectuals attempt to counter “[c]olonialism’s insistence that ‘niggers’ have no culture,” they ultimately glorify cultural agendas that exceed the national boundaries and become “singularly racialized.” This broad Pan-African phenomenon that encompassed adherents around the world made culture a racial issue, and in Fanon’s mind, lost track of the very ideals necessary to gain tangible independence: national consciousness and awareness of the needs of the rural masses.<sup>55</sup>

Though it lacked unity and a highly organized structure, the nationalist movements within British Africa received a shot in the arm from the most powerful nation emerging from the Second World War—The United States. The imperial (neocolonial) designs of America looking for new markets manifested themselves prior to the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, retreated to an isolated state prior to and during the Great Depression, and reemerged following the Second World War. America, touting its belief in self-determination following the colonial period, intensified its interest in British colonial affairs during the beginning stages of the Cold War in the late 1940s. “[T]he rapid escalation of an ideological Cold War intensified American interest in supervising the evolution of nationalist movements in the empires of [its] allies.”<sup>56</sup> To hasten the process, Britain could not feasibly, after such a costly war, provide the necessary capital to develop new resources in its African colonies. A strong Africa was necessary, according to both America and Britain, to combat international communism, and with the British sterling devaluing thirty percent in 1949, the prospect of holding onto African colonies became a harder sell. “The

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<sup>55</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 152-5.

<sup>56</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 103.

economic and strategic benefits of holding the colonies, it was thought, could be maintained without the political and financial cost of direct control.”<sup>57</sup> A push for African university graduates in the 1950s to manage some of the lower levels of colonial governments seemed all the more necessary. One of the major obstacles to this policy coming to fruition was, again, the lack of financial resources. While many Africans were enthusiastic about school, some realized that they could only get so far, according to their colony’s resources. Discontent among the educated Africans was now an issue, and the seeds of the nationalist fervor of the late 1950s were sown at this time.<sup>58</sup> And, it is natural that the seeds of nationalism began to sprout in urban areas. When Africans attended higher education facilities, they had to go to the cities. When they finish their technical training, and look for new jobs that require their technical skill, they find that the opportunities are in urban areas. “[T]he colonized who are indispensable for running the colonial machine: tram drivers, taxi drivers, miners, dockers, interpreters, and nurses, etc.”, become loyal nationalist party members. Protecting their elevated position in colonial society binds them. And as the rumors of decolonization spread through Africa, these loyal party members poised themselves to potentially run the government in the future. “So it is understandable that the clientele of the nationalist parties is above all urban: technicians, manual workers, intellectuals, and tradespeople living mainly in the towns. Their way of thinking in many ways already bears the mark of the technically advanced and relatively comfortable environment in which they live.”<sup>59</sup> And the British let them posture and organize so long as they were not perceived to be a communist threat. This is evident in the Gold Coast.

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<sup>57</sup> Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 107-9; Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 64.

Kwame Nkrumah, a well-traveled, educated, political leader from the Gold Coast presented issues for the British, and for the French later. He was a leader of a populist nationalist movement, arguing for the independence of the Gold Coast. He was briefly imprisoned, due to his incorrectly perceived communist bent (an uninformed British government assumption), but on the strength of his movement, and the Gold Coast subjects' continued support at the polls, Nkrumah would be released, and by 1957, he would lead the Gold Coast, renamed Ghana, to independence. Nkrumah and Ghana would lead the way, as other nationalist leaders would use popular movements to secure political independence over the next decade. Although the Korean War stirred fears of Soviet aggression in British Africa, and the idea of weak, nascent African nations falling to the communist threat did circulate around British and American politics, the threat was not realized in any substantial manner.<sup>60</sup>

One of the major contributing factors to the liberation of many African nations during this period is the British dependence on Southwest Asian oil. The fate of the sterling now rested on industrial competition world-wide, and oil was more profitable than continued colonial occupation in Africa, especially in regards to the political and economic capital wasted on bloody military operations to crush nationalist movements. Oil production also garnered more financial returns from less investment than agricultural economy.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Decolonization of *Afrique noir***

France proceeded in the decolonization of the its Black African colonies in similar fashion to the British, with initial notions of incorporating Africans within the larger French Union, and an intent to “mobilize colonial resources to support the restoration of [its]

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<sup>60</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 113-21; at this time, communists had taken control in Czechoslovakia, waged civil war in Greece, and were mounting an sizeable force in Malaya (a profitable British colony). Nkrumah had numerous conversations with British and American communists as well when he studied abroad.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.



international power.” Some West Africans resisted compulsive conscription in the French Army during the First World War by violently attacking French authorities in Dahomey or migrating into the bush or across colonial boundaries. These efforts forced the French, early on, to consider improving conditions for future conscripts; like the Indian conscripts in the British military, Black Africans were crucial to France’s need to maintain a large enough army to counter any possibility of a revival of German power in Europe (France suffered from a declining birth rate during and following the First World War).<sup>62</sup>

Amidst varied resistance, Africans in French colonies also collaborated with colonial authorities. Catholic missionaries educated the sons of local elites, eager to earn employment in foreign trading houses. Like the British, France was content to offer incentives to local colonial chiefs for political support and a steady supply of men for war and work.<sup>63</sup> Fanon argues that these traditional authorities—the tribal chiefs, religious leaders and their cadres—acted as a buffer between the elite, or educated intellectuals, and the masses. Because these intellectuals valued modernization, traditional rulers distrusted them. Fanon asserts: “These traditional authorities, sanctioned by the occupying power, feel threatened by the growing endeavors of the elite to infiltrate the rural masses. They know too well that the ideas imported by these urban elements are likely to threaten the very existence of their feudal authority.”<sup>64</sup>

During the Depression, the Popular Front governments of France (1936-8), attempted small reforms. Socialist Colonial Minister Marius Moutet appointed a committee to discern the implementation of the ‘great principles of the Rights of Man,’ however the government showed little signs of ensuring these attributes in the colonies. According to Hargreaves, “[p]erhaps the

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 10, 21; Marie-Monique Huss, “Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 1990): 39-40.

<sup>63</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 66.

most important result in the long run was to advance in the colonial service a new generation of officials, inspired by the ideals of ‘colonial humanism’.” These new servicemen would raise questions of justice while maintaining authoritarian control in the colonies.<sup>65</sup>

The Second World War ushered in new hardships for all of French Black Africa, or *Afrique noire*. Under German occupation, France’s imports and exports significantly decreased in West Africa. Domestic food production was increased in *Afrique noire* to compensate, but at the severe cost of forced labor and compulsory cultivation. Governor-General Pierre Boisson, also required his West African colonies to muster an army of 100,000 men to protect against the British and General de Gaulle, due to his distrust for both. During the war, the subjects of *Afrique noire* suffered compulsory deliveries of crops, unpaid labor and an increased tax burden.<sup>66</sup>

The end of the war also brought pressures from the United States for France to open up its colonies to free trade and the self-determination of its subjects in selecting government. Like the British, the French also realized that a self-imposed policy of decolonization would be the best economic and political solution. “Most Africans were sympathetic to the Free French and to De Gaulle, but the war did accelerate African political awareness and forced changes in the colonial relationship with France.” Assimilation of Africans in the French Union still held favor in certain circles, and de Gaulle worked to eliminate the unjust colonial policies in a gradual manner. In the years following the Second World War, de Gaulle and others pushed for African integration in the political process. Unlike in British Africa, the subjects of *Afrique noire* would enjoy at least some level of direct participation in government. Unfortunately, other French officials blocked any meaningful change, diluting most African representation to certain colonial

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<sup>65</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 46.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-1.

governments. According to Hargreaves, “although the French reformers (unlike the British) were permitting direct African participation in debate about the future of the empire, it was far from certain how effective their voices would be.”<sup>67</sup>

In Cote d’Ivoire, emerging capitalist farmers united under the leadership of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, a successful coffee farmer and Baule chief, demanded an end to the forced-labor system. They were supported by André Latrille, the Gaullist governor, who also disagreed with the forced-labor system. The movement eventually became a viable political party named the *Parti Démocratique de la Cote d’Ivoire* that advocated for the rights of groups within French West Africa. Houphouet would later lead an African movement with communist overtones called *Rassemblement démocratique Africain*, or the RDA, that would play a sizeable role in decolonization politics of *Afrique noire*. In Cameroon, railway workers and unemployed migrant workers went on strike, only to be brutally suppressed by armed French settlers. Eventually, the subjects of *Afrique noire* gained a small, yet audible voice within French colonial politics, having a small percentage (e.g. one percent in Côte d’Ivoire) of the total African population vote on elected representatives to participate in the French Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution for the Fourth Republic of France in 1945. This constitution would include a drafting of French colonial policy and perhaps a chance to gain more political rights for Africans. This move to allow a minimal number of African delegates (20 total delegates from *Afrique noire*) was a calculated poker play by de Gaulle and his allies. Allowing African participation in the process, even though they were elites in the African colonial context, placated some of the pressures brewing in *Afrique noire*.<sup>68</sup> Many of these elites would also fit Fanon’s view of the

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 66; Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism*, 21.

<sup>68</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 78-83

national bourgeois: educated in Western thought, and judgmental of the masses.<sup>69</sup> The next phase of the plan was to incorporate all of France's global territories into a French Union, with each territory having a continually evolving constitutional status, which, in effect, would buffer the international pressures from the United States and increase France's moral position worldwide.<sup>70</sup>

This French attempt at marginal African agency, it would seem, did not initiate the desired compliance within all of France's *Afrique noire*, as communist-backed strikes erupted in West Africa. West Africans, led by Houphouet, decried international politics, claiming that the problem was not the communist bloc versus the Western bloc; rather it was the camp of the oppressors against that of the oppressed. The French reacted by aggressively attempting to win international praise for their colonial reforms such as an intention to open "entrepreneurial opportunities to the aspirant middle classes," and increasing colonial budget allocations for social expenditures and agricultural production to eighteen percent a piece; however, they had to somehow deal with the fact that during the war, "black soldiers travelled [*sic.*] widely, to India, Burma, Palestine and other countries from which they often returned with new ideas and a broader outlook." Educational opportunities within France were extended to colonial elites and a university was created out of existing colleges in Dakar. The French expanded the bureaucracy within *Afrique noire* to better apply colonial reforms and Africans were granted more participation. However, "[i]ncreases in Africans' political representation gave them little control over policy or administration; the new Territorial Assemblies were required to vote substantial salary increases for a bureaucracy whose rate of expansion greatly exceeded the rate of Africanization." While some Africans did enjoy more benefits, the real motive for reform

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<sup>69</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 64-5.

<sup>70</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 78-83.

remained in France's desire to reassert itself internationally.<sup>71</sup> Fanon stresses that these concessions—increasing political representation without granting any real agency—are problematic because they “do not address the essence of the problem.” What Africans need to understand, according to Fanon, is the “historical law which stipulates that certain concessions are in fact shackles.” These concessions must be seen for what they are and why they are bequeathed. The colonizer will not give up political power—no matter how small—for nothing, or out of good will, but because it can no longer avoid these considerations.<sup>72</sup>

Much like the British, the French need for Africans in their military apparatus and their economic endeavors created the space for local African leaders to voice their concerns for independence. Literate Black Africans such as Leopold Senghor, once a French assimilationist and socialist, resigned from French politics to form the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais. This rejection of French culture was, according to Hargreaves, inevitable, “encouraged by the progress of populist nationalism in British Africa,” and the most admired leader of African populist nationalism was none other than Kwame Nkrumah. His vision and charisma encouraged many subjects of *Afrique noire* to envisage independence, perhaps some for the first time. By 1950, for example, mass strikes, boycotts and demonstrations in Côte d'Ivoire landed thousands of Africans in jail and fifty had been killed. Houphouët, the popular African leader in Côte d'Ivoire, dodged prison thanks to the immunity he enjoyed as a member of the French Parliament. The policy of assimilation in French colonies had advantages that Nkrumah and countless others never enjoyed under the British system.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 94-7; Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 91-2.

<sup>73</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 139-141.

The appearance of a communist threat in *Afrique noire* prompted the United States and the United Nations to act. Pressures from United States Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee to appease nationalist sentiment in order to subdue communism and the General Assembly of the United Nations pushing Chapter XI of its charter (concerning “territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government [and] recogniz[ing] the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount”) forced France’s hand. Reforms in areas like French Togoland created a controlled self-government in this territory, ultimately providing a possible roadmap for future *Afrique noire* endeavors at freedom.<sup>74</sup>

The scholarships available to Africans to attend schools in France acted more often than not, as a catalyst to radical Left thought. “As most students simultaneously discovered that French society was more racist than its ideologues admitted, these future leaders of African society tended to adopt radical attitudes, sustained by intensified racial pride.” These leaders, upon returning to *Afrique noire*, used the *loi-cadre*, or Enabling Act, of 1956 to gain access, via the polls, to local patronage positions. Although significant in the local sphere, the ascension of local politicians to positions of power in *Afrique noire* was not the dagger to French colonialism.<sup>75</sup> The dagger was Algeria.

Although Algeria is not a part of *Afrique noir*, it was the straw that broke the back of France’s colonial dominance in Africa, thereby directly influencing French policies in *Afrique noir*. Yes, the military defeat and humiliation in Dien Bien Phu precipitated France’s exit from its colonial territories in Southeast Asia, but the Algerian War directly affected all of *Afrique noir*. The war for Algerian independence raged throughout the 1950s, requiring a substantial

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<sup>74</sup> “Chapter XI: Declaration Regarding Non-self-governing Territories, Article 73,” in *The Charter of the United Nations*, 2008-2009, <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter11.shtml> (accessed March 24, 2009).

<sup>75</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 54-6.

flow of French resources to North Africa, including a half a million troops. France's inability to assuage Algerian nationalist rhetoric and paramilitary successes led to a revolt of French military officers and *Pieds noirs* (Black Legs, or French settlers in Algeria) against the French government, consequently dissolving the Fourth Republic and providing the space for the resurrection of de Gaulle's political career. The unpopular war against this strategic colony forced de Gaulle, now president of the Fifth Republic, to move toward Algerian self-determination. In March 1962, a cease-fire and preliminary agreement of Algerian Independence ushered in a new era of French African colonial history. "For the first time in Africa the independence settlement corresponded more closely with the immediate aims of the successor government than with those of the decolonizers." The French proceeded to invest more resources into partnerships with former colonies than the British. By the end of 1960, the colonies of *Afrique noire* gained "what de Gaulle preferred to call their 'international sovereignty'."<sup>76</sup> The price of this "international sovereignty" was tragic. "[I]t is estimated that nearly one million Algerians lost their lives; another two million were uprooted; ten thousand houses and buildings were destroyed during the war, and subsequently by OAS [*Organisation armée secrete*] terrorism. No other African nation paid such a high and tragic price for its independence."<sup>77</sup> But to the Algerians, according to Fanon's theory, participation in this nationalist revolution was "the only way of casting off their animal status for a human one."<sup>78</sup> Dignity was purchased with blood.

France continued to promote its civilization and influence to its former colonies through deposits of French francs, French diplomats and educated support personnel, as well as mobile

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<sup>76</sup> Ivan Hrbek, "North Africa and the Horn," in *The UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VIII: Africa since 1935*, Ali A. Mazrui, (ed.), (California: James Currey Ltd., 1999): 132-140.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>78</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 77.

military support. The result was a relationship between France and its former colonies that was beneficial to France's international image as well as the new leaders' personal enrichment. "The new rulers [of former French African colonies] not only preserved the frontiers of their colonial adversaries but also frequently hitched their postcolonial fortunes to the former colonizers. Most French territories became a part of a francophone community chaired by the president of France, who kept a close political grip on African affairs."<sup>79</sup> Fanon was dead before Algeria was granted independence, but his experience through the late 1950s and 1960 led him to analyze the importance of the Algerians' struggle to the rest of Africa. According to Fanon, the damage done by the Algerian War prompted other European colonizers to change their colonial positions. They did not want another Algeria. One of those European colonizers was Belgium.<sup>80</sup>

The small nation of Belgium shaped the lives of millions of Central Africans during its harsh colonial tenure and decolonization policies in the Congo Basin and African Great Lakes Regions. In many ways, the self-serving, exploitive imperial rule and hastened departure of Belgium created the first international decolonization effort in 1960, involving the substantial investment of the United States, the United Nations, Belgium, South Africa and the Soviet Union to resolve crisis in Congo, largely destabilized by the sordid efforts of all parties involved. The events and controversial decisions of this tragic era will be discussed, at length, in the next chapter.

### **The Immediate Aftermath of the Decolonization of British and French Black Africa**

The decolonization process in Africa, generally, as hinted by the mention of Congo, did not necessarily equate to the economic, political or social success that many African leaders had hoped for in the decades after independence. Europeans paid African farmers less than generous

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<sup>79</sup> Hargreaves, *Decolonization*, 171, 174; Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 31.



prices for their produce, but with few additional outlets of trade, most of these farmers had to deal with this unfavorable balance. African governments were forced to pay premium prices for insurance, communications, medicines, shipping, and finished goods that they could not provide, at least initially, for their people. Loan repayment proved difficult or non-existent for many sub-Saharan African nations that saw the International Monetary Fund and World Bank step in to control repayment, only to take away any financial or political choices on the part of the African governments. In order to build or maintain a national military, African leaders had to purchase weapons and training programs from former colonizers or other world powers looking for influence in that particular area of Africa. Discontent amongst the civilian population of the new African nations often justified the over-spending on military equipment and personnel. This left little to no money for use on infrastructure improvement or social welfare programs.<sup>81</sup>

In his economic study of Black Africa, D. K. Fieldhouse concludes that the decolonization of European colonies was in no way—or at most, minimally—dependent on economic considerations. Black Africa in the 1950s and 1960s was as productive and economically dynamic as during any period since 1920. The driving motivation for decolonization was political, due, in large measure, to two overarching considerations: first, the transfer of power from the metropole to the colony would prevent “growing responsibilities and liabilities;” and second (although to a lesser degree), the moral considerations for the project of colonialism were increasingly suspect. Nationalist movements posed a threat of continued political and military expenditure and the subjugation of Africans was seen as less and less of a civilizing mission. Fieldhouse is quick to add, however, that the decision to liquidate colonial territories did not “operate in an economic vacuum.” The financial recovery of European nations

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<sup>81</sup> Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa*, 7-8.

in the 1950s—following the devastating effects of the Second World War—made African colonial contributions less important to the metropole. Also, a rapid exit seemed to be the best way to ensure a favorable trade relationship with the former colonies. In many cases, this belief had validity.<sup>82</sup>

The problem for African states after independence was a lack of ample, capable political leadership. African leaders were thrust into a position of power too soon to be as effective at the administration of a modern nation as was needed. The question still remains: how did this problem arise? First, Fieldhouse asserts that the rise of strong nationalist movements debilitated any colonial plan for long apprenticeships in modern government for future African leaders. This nationalism hastened the timetable for decolonization exponentially, thereby leaving a miniscule amount of time for proper training. The problem with this line of reasoning is that it exonerates the colonial powers of any responsibility for not educating Africans sooner than they did. A paucity of African college graduates by the dawn of independence points to the unwillingness of colonial governments to educate their subjects to Western standards, most likely due to the fear that educated people tend to question the reasons for their plight.<sup>83</sup>

Fieldhouse goes on to argue that the slow rate of development in African states during the late 1960s through 1980 is a direct product of incompetent African politicians spending scarce capital on unnecessary items such as prestigious buildings and over-adequate military and police forces to protect their positions. These leaders “borrowed recklessly abroad” and failed, even with soaring foreign debt, to increase the agricultural productivity of their peasant society. This tragic fate is telling of the issues surrounding, and imbedded in, post-colonial Africa. Leaders

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<sup>82</sup> D. K. Fieldhouse, *Black Africa 1945-1980: Economic Decolonization and Arrested Development* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1986): 231-232.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

made poor decisions regarding government spending; however, many of those choices were, by and large, out of their immediate control. Fieldhouse does acknowledge that the African unity found in anti-colonial sentiment during occupation ultimately disappeared in the struggle for attaining and maintaining post-colonial power. Geographic, ethnic and religious tensions quickly led to one-party states or military rule in many African nations. Unfortunately, Fieldhouse remains strangely silent on the culpability of colonial powers for creating these geographic and ethnic tensions. Imaginary lines drawn by alien rulers according to spheres of influence severed many friendly group ties while they also inadvertently wrangled myriad rivalries within the borders of one political entity. Clashes may have been kept to a minimum during the colonial era, but this was most likely the product of a unifying goal: anti-colonialism.<sup>84</sup>

Colonial governments attempted at all costs to balance spending with the ability to make profits. Fieldhouse contends that after the shackles of subjugation were thrown off, “need and ambition rather than the ability to meet the costs became the criteria of policy-making.” In other words, the decision to spend money on unsustainable enterprises deteriorated the ability of African governments to remain solvent. Still, others disagree with assertion that proliferated this deficiency. According to L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan:

Many modern African writers strongly uphold this Pan-African tradition. Independence, in their view, has not made it easier for Africans to break the fetters of alien economic control; the African countries remain suppliers of raw materials for the industrialized countries of Europe; their dependence on foreigners persists. The editors see these problems in a different light. The new states, in our opinion, would certainly be at an even greater disadvantage if Western capitalists refused to invest their money abroad.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 237, 232-237.

<sup>85</sup> Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism*, 24.

One of the major goals of post-colonial governments was to increase the social welfare of their peoples. Domestic consumption increased dramatically under these new regimes, mostly because politicians wanted to maintain a positive image as they sought to improve the lives of Black Africans. Fiscal responsibility was a priority, but it ultimately proved impossible to maintain following the first two decades after independence. International commodity prices dropped as domestic surpluses vanished with increased domestic consumption. Many politicians did make large sums of money while the quality of life of their constituents decreased. Poor economic decisions increased inflation and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank did step in to stabilize a potential catastrophe; the result has been economic debilitation for many Black African nations since independence. While some leaders knowingly protected their interests at the expense of their people, many had little alternatives to the dependency created in the colonial aftermath. Black Africa proved that it could unite “against the foreign oppressor,” but “uniting for development” has been a struggle.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Fieldhouse, *Black Africa*, 244; Ali A. Mazrui, (ed.) *The UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VIII: Africa since 1935* (California: James Currey Ltd., 1999): 13.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Neocolonialism, Underdevelopment, Nationalism, and the Cold War during Decolonization**

*No matter what their party, the Congolese who attended the [Congolese Independence] ceremony did not want to be handed a gift: freedom cannot be given; it must be forcibly taken. To turn these terms around, it can be seen that an independence that is conceded is merely slavery in another guise.*

—Jean-Paul Sartre, Introduction to *Lumumba Speaks* (1963)

This chapter argues that the inadequate education of the Congolese elites elucidates the woefully unprepared nature of pre-independence Congo and the challenges that faced a new nation in terms of human resources (e.g. bureaucratic management); however, Cold War politics and Western economic interests would dictate the harsh reality of decolonization. Given the nature of post-colonial politics and foreign economic interests within Congo, and sub-Saharan Africa in general, even a symbolic level of amply educated bureaucrats would have made an infinitesimal difference on the Cold War designs of Belgium and its allies. The Western world aimed to create neocolonial relationships in former African colonies and any government—save for a puppet regime supporting that goal—would be neutralized.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first section challenges the Belgian claim that its major African colony exhibited the necessary educational resume to succeed in a modern world, created by Western powers. The second section explains the Cold War political challenges facing the new Congolese nation in its infant state. The third section analyzes the ideological economic imperative of Belgium and its Western allies to protect foreign firms from the possibility of a Congolese leader nationalizing any industry, thereby forcing those firms to forfeit all investment and profit possibility. The final section reflects on the crippling nature of Belgian decolonization and its neocolonial ramifications for the future of Congo.

## Belgian Congo

Historically, the Congo Basin has been a land rich in natural resources and populated by many ethnic groups. When King Leopold II of Belgium seized this area at the conclusion of the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, the Western world began to see the extent of this massive wealth. With brutal force, Belgian imperialists began to extract vast stores of wild rubber from the Congo Basin in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Adam Hochschild, in *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, asserts that “[f]or Leopold, the rubber boom was a godsend. . . [t]he world did not lose its desire for ivory, but by the late 1890s wild rubber had far surpassed it as the main source of revenue from the Congo.” The rubber removed from his personal fiefdom made Leopold fabulously rich; however, the cultivation of this resource was dangerous and intensive. The quotas of rubber harvests required by the Belgians demanded slave labor from the Congolese. The work was “arduous—and physically painful,”<sup>87</sup> as often the only way to dry the rubber was to spread the sap all over the workers’ bodies until it coagulated. The first few times completing this process ripped all the hair from workers’ ‘drying surfaces’. According to a journal of Force Publique officer Louis Chaltin analyzed by Hochschild, “[t]he native doesn’t like making rubber. He must be compelled to do it.” One of the more grotesque methods of compulsion utilized by the Belgians was to hold the workers’ wives hostage until the quotas were met. Often, due to the harsh hostage conditions in Belgian stockades, these women died. Other ubiquitous compulsory tactics were to flay workers with the notorious *chicotte* (a raw, sun-dried whip made of hippopotamus hide) or cut off hands. This would be the treatment that the Congolese came to know, although not always to harvest

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<sup>87</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, 161.

rubber, until liberation in 1960. By that time, and certainly from 1890-1910, eight to ten million Congolese lost their lives, during “the first major international atrocity scandal in the age of the telegraph and the camera.”<sup>88</sup>

While evocatively elucidating the plight of the victimized Congolese to the general reader, Hochschild offers little by way of new information to the African historian. The wealth of natural resources in Congo is well documented. Rubber, timber, hydroelectric potential and a vast wealth of mineral deposits have been extracted from Congo since trade routes first appeared across the vast terrain—long before European colonization; however, the Belgians modernized the process of extraction and reaped the benefits of the seemingly endless bounty. According to Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, “the Congo [River] is second in the world after the Amazon with respect to hydroelectric potential. The Congo has a vast array of minerals including copper, cobalt, tin, zinc, gold, diamonds, iron ore, silver, cadmium, uranium, europium, niobium (or columbite), tantalum and thorium.” The value of a few of these minerals is great. Uranium, used to develop nuclear power, spurred the possibility of a Cold War showdown between the United States and the former Soviet Union over the mining rights to this radioactive material. Aerospace engineers use the highly coveted tantalum and niobium. The problem for the Congolese is that they have been denied access to their resources. Nzongola-Ntalaja asserts: “in 110 years of mineral extraction, the wealth of the country has not been used to the benefit of the great majority of its people. Since the days of King Leopold, it has gone to serve the interests of the country’s rulers and those of their political allies and business partners in the international community.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, 159, 161, 123, 164, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 28.

Perhaps the largest privately-owned scourge of Congo was the Union minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), an enormously profitable corporation created by a group of trusts operated by the elites of Belgian society with close ties to the crown. UMHK's sprawling mining territory was the "single most important business enterprise in the Congo's economy."<sup>90</sup> By the early 1960s, eighty percent of Katanga's revenue (\$84 million annually) came from the international sale of the minerals extracted by UMHK.<sup>91</sup> Belgians felt the exploitation of Congo's labor and resources necessary to survive during the two World Wars. The dividends from the compulsory production in Congo maintained Belgium's coffers during these wars so much to the extent that the occupation of the metropole by the Germans still did not bring Belgium into debt with its allies. The Congolese footed the bill at the expense of many of their brethren.<sup>92</sup>

The idea of relinquishing this profitable industry to the natives of the colony was nearly unthinkable to most Belgians at the start of the 1950s. The return on their colonial investment prevented the small European nation from being overrun in the political and diplomatic battles on the European continent. But, more strikingly, the colonial regime most likely did not intend to surrender this property to the Congolese, especially considering Belgium's effort to educate its African subjects. At the time, Belgium claimed to have the best educational system in Central Africa and one of the best in the whole of Africa. Belgium professed that its colony's economic stability and standard of living was better than most African colonies, and this European power

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>91</sup> Smith Hempstone, *Rebels, Mercenaries, and Dividends: The Katanga Story* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962): 46; Hempstone, a journalist, held a higher view of Tshombe, the leader of secessionist Katanga, than most people around independent Africa. Hempstone held a much lower view of UMHK.

<sup>92</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 29.



claimed to be an administrative, not imperialist regime: not intending on staying in Africa, but civilizing the African masses to meet the needs of a technological, modern world.<sup>93</sup>

### **Education for the Future of Congo**

Belgium's efforts to educate its Congolese subjects would best be described as progressive at the primary school level, pedestrian at the secondary school and technical institute level, and virtually nonexistent at the university level. The Congolese were in no way prepared for sovereignty and the responsibilities of fair and adequate governance. According to Michael Crowder, "the quality of independence clearly depended on the extent to which Africans' had been given access to real forms of political power and education in the years preceding it. The fiasco of Congolese independence was the direct result of Belgium's failure to provide her African subjects with more than primary education and to offer them any opportunity of participating in the political processes of the colony, except very late in the day."<sup>94</sup> It is true that Belgium did provide many Congolese with a primary education. By 1938, out of a population of approximately 11 million people, 716,857 attended primary school. These schools taught French and provided a basic education for many in Belgian Congo; however, by 1948, only 7,540 Congolese attended schools somewhat equivalent to European secondary education, such as Christian mission schools, which were not subsidized by the government.<sup>95</sup> This pattern raises questions. What was the motive for this pattern? Were the Congolese not ready for a European-like secondary education? Were the Congolese incapable; or, were educated subjects dangerous?

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<sup>93</sup> "Some Aspects of Belgium's Achievements in the Congo," *Memo From Belgium*, No. 7 (July, 1961) in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 7.

<sup>94</sup> Michael Crowder, "Africa under British and Belgian Domination, 1935-1945," in Ali A. Mazrui, (ed.) *The UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VIII: Africa since 1935* (California: James Currey Ltd., 1999): 86.

<sup>95</sup> Michael Crowder, "The White Chiefs of Tropical Africa," in L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan (eds.) *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960: Vol. II, The History and Politics of Colonialism 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970): 322.

The reality of the matter is that the numbers speak volumes: “[t]here were fewer than twenty Congolese university graduates in 1960.”<sup>96</sup> Internal factors (such as Congolese nationalism) and external catalysts (like the wave of Pan-Africanism spreading throughout Africa and the free trade pressures exerted from countries like the United States) forced Belgium to hasten its plan of gradually surrendering its grip on Congo to its former subjects. According to “Some Aspects of Belgium’s Achievements in the Congo,” prepared and distributed by The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and External Trade (Belgium), of the Congolese attending higher-level schools, 343 received an education in domestic science, 1,954 in pedagogical training, 1,641 in technical schools, and 660 in secondary schools, for a total of 4,598. This number is approximately 0.04% of the population (around 11 million), and illustrates Belgium’s attempt at educating, at least nominally, a select group of Congolese subjects to help administer the colony. By 1958, the Congolese population climbed to 13.5 million. The amount of Congolese attending primary school was 1,413,603, while the number attending schools for domestic science was 14,038; pedagogical training topped out at 17,552; technical school enrollment increased to 19,643; and secondary school enrollment was up to 17,949. The percentage of Congolese attaining higher than a primary school education in 1958, two years prior to independence, reached 0.5%.<sup>97</sup> The *évolué* class grew from this group of Congolese educated in these post-primary institutions. What political progress (in the Western sense, modeled by Belgium) would be expected to come from a situation as dire as this?

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<sup>96</sup> T. R. Kanza, “The Problems of the Congo,” *African Affairs*, Vol. 67, No. 266 (Jan., 1968): 56; Congo scholars dispute this figure; however, the total is always paltry when compared to the actual Congolese population. For instance, Ch. Didier Gondola cites 30 Congolese university graduates, earned either home or in a foreign land. See Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of the Congo* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002): 117.

<sup>97</sup> “Some Aspects of Belgium’s Achievements,” 10-13.

The *évolués*, an expanding social class of Congolese “elites” that purchased political power with education, rather than gaining it through traditional family affiliations, were the leaders of the anti-colonial movements of the chaotic 1950s. They had post-primary education such as clerical training and were predominantly urban dwellers, as Fanon addresses as a result of the opportunities available in the city<sup>98</sup>. These new Congolese elites accepted much of the Western cultural ideology concerning marriage, occupation, and living a modern life. The *évolué* was a monogamous, white-collar city worker that separated himself (as women were not considered *évolués*) from the Congolese peasantry and “felt acutely the failure of Belgian policy to distinguish between the ordinary person and himself, that he wanted a separate status and that he wanted closer relations with Europeans.”<sup>99</sup> Here, Fanon’s assertion—that the colonial intellectuals and elites begin to judge the masses from a European perspective—holds true.<sup>100</sup> Patrice Lumumba, the future first Congolese Prime Minister, was a member of this class. Living in Stanleyville, a northern city situated on the Congo River, the largely self-educated Lumumba trained as a postal clerk. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, Lumumba, “a prominent figure in elite circles and later on Congo’s first prime minister, was an autodidact whose formal education consisted only of four years of elementary school and one year of technical training at a school for postal clerks.”<sup>101</sup> At this time in the early 1950s, native political parties were not allowed in Congo. Eventually, these clubs and associations would swell to form political parties after August 23, 1956, when Joseph Kasavubu, leader of the *Alliance des Bakongo* (Abako—a regional nationalist organization promoting mainly the interests of the Bakongo, the Congo’s largest

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<sup>98</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 64.

<sup>99</sup> Roger Anstey, “Belgian Rule in the Congo and the Aspirations of the ‘Évolué’ Class” in L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan (eds.) *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960: Vol. II, The History and Politics of Colonialism 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970): 200.

<sup>100</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 65, 99.

<sup>101</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 84.

ethnic group), used a public meeting to oppose a suggested thirty year plan for decolonization, demanding instead for *indépendance immédiate*.<sup>102</sup> Many of these upstart political parties would play a large role in the national elections held in June of 1960, and included Lumumba's *Mouvement national congolais* (MNC), Jason Swende's Balubakat, and Tshombe's *Confédération des associations tribales du Katanga* (Conakat). Belgium, not blind to the rise of Pan-African and democratic ideals in its territory, quickly moved to allow the political participation, at least at the municipal level, of these *évolués*.<sup>103</sup>

Lumumba, living and working in Kinshasa as a publicity director of a brewery, founded the MNC with other Congolese intellectuals in October 1958. The MNC was the first viable national party and Lumumba quickly earned respect. His meteoric rise to national popularity was due, in large measure, to his masterful political oratory and ability to reach across ethnic divides with a message of Congolese unity and independence.<sup>104</sup> After attending the First All-African People's Conference in Accra in 1958, where he participated in the drafting of the "Resolution on Racialism and Discriminatory Laws and Practices," Lumumba came back to Congo with a revitalized energy to challenge Belgian colonial authority. The question remains: did Lumumba or any other *évolué* have the intellectual training necessary to effectively run a sovereign Congo?<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 80-83; Kasavubu denounced the proposed thirty year plan of Belgian professor A.A. J. Van Bilsen. This public denouncement of colonialism did not take place in a vacuum. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja: "In addition to the preservation of Egypt's independence, 1956 was the year of independence of Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia; the setting in motion of the decolonization process in the French territories of West Africa, Equatorial Africa and Madagascar; and the birth of the national independence movement in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and the Belgian Congo.": 81.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-4; "Resolution on Racialism and Discriminatory laws and Practices," First All-African People's Conference, Accra, December 5-13, 1958,

[http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/boycotts/first\\_allafrican\\_conf.html](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/boycotts/first_allafrican_conf.html) (accessed June 1, 2009).

The *évolués* were the only Congolese, with the exception of seminary-trained Congolese priests, eligible for *immatriculation* (assimilation), or acquiring “the status of Europeans in any field covered by legislation distinguishing between European and native—and these included housing, type of employment contract and schooling.” Nevertheless, this title did not, in reality, end the racial stigma that truncated many Congolese efforts. European employers almost exclusively hired Europeans over an *Immatriculés* because the employers believed that European employees would be more efficient than Congolese if both demanded the same pay.<sup>106</sup>

The issue of *Immatriculation*, or assimilation of the *évolués*, created a class of leaders that expected to be treated like their Belgian counterparts in the urban areas of Congo. Political and social rights, earned through education, emboldened *évolués* to participate more forcefully in the political process by founding sociopolitical movements in elite clubs and ethnic associations. These *évolués* would join other colonial elites such as colonial chiefs and their immediate families to form the core of the independence movement.

According to an article in a monthly bulletin, *The Belgian Congo*, Belgium, at least in 1958, saw the need to begin a transition to Congolese self-government. In December of that year, the bulletin states:

We shall develop the educational system to the greatest possible extent ... Soon we shall be able to open Government offices to qualified natives. More and more Congolese will be elected to office and will take an ever-increasing share in political affairs. We shall continue to work along the lines indicated by recent reforms such as the granting of town status. Our progress will be orderly and methodical. We shall try to avoid at all costs anything which might be prejudicial to personal freedom, for this would be in direct contradiction to our obligations.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Roger Anstey, “Belgian Rule in the Congo,” 207, 209.

<sup>107</sup> INFORCONGO, “Preparing the Congo for Self-Government,” *Belgian Congo 58, Monthly Bulletin*, No. 12 (Dec., 1958), in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 5; “The many publications for INFORCONGO [The Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi Information and Public Relations Office, Brussels] were for general orientation purposes and included general reports, commercial statistics, maps, customs requirements, directories, etc.,” L.H. Gann and Peter

This statement follows the pattern of gradual *immatriculation*, a process Lumumba and Kasavubu believed entirely too slow. Social unrest, led by the new political parties/sociopolitical groups would soon follow. Professor Doucy, chairman of a November 22, 1958 discussion on the future of Belgian Congo at the Belgian Institute of Political Science, stated that “Care should be taken . . . to avoid falling into the error of regarding six or seven particularly active social groups as representative of the entire population. But it is also an error to imagine that they only represent themselves. Their ideas and opinions have a sociological significance in that they may embody the aims and feelings of a vast public which is incapable of expressing itself.” The success of these groups captured the attention of Belgians back home; urgent reform was necessary to avoid conflict.<sup>108</sup>

In his posthumously published work, *Congo, My Country*, Lumumba expounds on this very issue. Seeing himself as a spokesperson for the Congolese masses, Lumumba writes of the hardships that the Congolese, and *Immatriculés* in particular, endure. As an *évolué*, Lumumba’s perceptions may have been well intended, but his class that claims to be the voice of the Congolese, speaks with total disregard for the peasant masses.<sup>109</sup> Pushing for African presence in the government of the Congo, he urges:

The presence of these future African deputies in the various administrative and legislative assemblies would often give useful guidance when decisions had to be taken in regard to native policy.

Living as they do side by side with their fellow Africans in the Congo, they are more closely in touch with the development of the African mentality than are the Europeans, and they have a better knowledge of the problems affecting the life of the

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Duignan (eds.) *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*: Vol. V: Bibliography of Sub-Saharan Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973): 374.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, “A Discussion on the Political Future of the Congo,” 2.

<sup>109</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 74; Jean-Paul Sartre, “Introduction,” in *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961*, Jean Van Lierde, ed., Helen R. Lane, trans. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963): 18

natives and of all the currents of opinion which sometimes escape the authorities: much can be learnt from them because they have the confidence of the peoples to whom they belong.<sup>110</sup>

Lumumba was obviously frustrated with the slow progress of assimilation. The Belgian government in the late 1950s rarely handed out “civic merit cards,” or the documentation required to prove *immatriculation*. He states:

This is a paradoxical situation when one notes that in the EIGHT YEARS since the card was instituted, from the 12th June 1948 to the end of 1955, the total number of civic merit cards issued was only 884 (eight hundred and eighty-four), whereas among the twelve million inhabitants of the Congo there cannot, at the present time, be less than one hundred thousand genuine *evolués* who deserve to benefit from this distinction.

At this rate - the equivalent of 110 cards a year for the whole of the Congo - it is going to take ten centuries or one thousand years before we have 110,000 officially-recognised *evolués* in the Congo; and, before all of our 12,000,000 inhabitants can obtain their certificate of integration, we shall have to wait at least a thousand centuries or 100,000 years!<sup>111</sup>

He consistently fought for the rights of those Congolese that took the initiative to educate themselves and he roundly rejected any discrimination based on skin color, as long as that skin color was like that of a Congolese—as long as that Congolese is attempting to improve him/herself through education. He does not overtly advocate for an improvement in the civil liberties of the peasant, uneducated masses.

Lumumba distrusted Arabs and Asians, particularly due to his perceptions of unfair trade practices conducted by these ethnic groups. Was Lumumba a racist ironically protesting discrimination based on skin color, or an ardent nationalist realizing that the Belgians were in Congo to stay and that by eliminating other ethnic rivals, the Congolese would ensure their economic and political survival? As he argues:

I much prefer to have Belgians, French or other nationalities in the Congo rather than the Asians and Arabs, who come with the sole aim of enriching themselves. Their

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<sup>110</sup> Patrice Lumumba, *Congo, My Country*, Graham Heath, trans. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962): 37.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

behaviour amongst the natives is often scandalous. The Congolese *évolués* have already complained to the local authorities about the behaviour of certain ill-famed members of these communities. We asked that some of them should be expelled, not merely because their conduct was scandalous, but also because they carried on subversive activities. We obtained no satisfaction.

Perhaps there will be more understanding of this problem later on. “Not all Asians are bad. We have some very good ones. But I am convinced that a large number of them bring no benefit either to the Africans or the Europeans. Many are the times that they have ruined Belgian traders by their unfair competition. They are specialists in the practice of dumping.”<sup>112</sup>

Political survival in Congo was a dream deferred at that moment. The Congolese had little authority by way of politics in their land, and the currents of social unrest due to political, economic and social stagnation quickly emulated the rapids of the Congo River. The hydroelectric potential of this raging river of Congolese nationalism would soon engulf the Belgians; and whether or not they believed they acted in the best interest of their Congolese subjects by assimilating the *évolués* into the urban work force and integrating the elites and *évolués* into government apprenticeships, the move came too late. Independence on June 30, 1960 hastened the time table. Had Belgium taken the steps to further educate more Congolese in a secondary setting, perhaps the world, and the Congolese in particular, would have seen and/or experienced a vastly different political ascension of native leaders. As the drama of decolonization began to unfold in 1960, it is clear that the educational underdevelopment of Congolese leaders was not the only pitfall to hamper the fledgling nation; Cold War politics, the neocolonial designs of Western powers, and inter-ethnic feuds would soon drive Congo into a perpetual state of crisis.

### **The Neocolonial and Cold War Politics of Decolonization**

Belgian colonial officials suspected the potential of a communist threat as early as April, 1951. The Cold War ideologies of Western Europe and the United States created a bond

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.



between Belgium and the latter. The United States appeared to take an interest in the possibility of a communist movement in the Congo at this time. In a correspondence sent from Brussels to the United States Department of State, Office of Dependent Area Affairs on April 4, 1951, a clipping of an interview with Belgian Minister of Colonies André Dequae reveals the nature of the communist threat in the Congo:

Regarding the Communist danger in Africa, the Minister of Colonies remarked: "It seems that there have been attempts at infiltration, but in any case it seems certain that Communism as such has only little influence on the masses. Except by making use of religious fanaticism and perhaps of fear, Communism cannot have any influence on the native masses. Be assured, in any case, that this matter will be kept under observation".<sup>113</sup>

Congo, according to Minister Dequae, appeared to be safe from a massive communist threat. So how could this minimal, at best, communist movement in Congo gain enough momentum to cause Western powers, and specifically the United States, to need to commit troops and military support to a sovereign Congo suspected of communist leanings in 1960? Perhaps Congo was not a communist nation, but one searching for any aid to suppress its internal secession conflict, ultimately turning to the Soviet Union after being turned down by Westerners.

Social unrest was apparent in the late 1950s in Belgian Congo. On June 16, 1957, after a controversial Belgian versus Congolese soccer match, a riot broke out in Léopoldville. The Congolese, unhappy with decisions made by the referee during the match, stoned several European cars and wounded numerous people. A year and a half later, after returning from the All-African People's Conference in Accra, Lumumba delivered an impassioned speech at a public meeting in Léopoldville on December 28, 1958 that called for unconditional independence. The Léopoldville paper, *Présence congolaise*, later published this speech on

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<sup>113</sup> Hugh Millard, U.S. Charge d'Affaires, "Interview with Minister of Colonies Dequae on Congo Problems," to U.S. Department of State, Office of Dependent Area Affairs (April 4, 1951), in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 1, Folder 1.

January 3, 1959. On January 4, Kasavubu's Abako planned a public meeting at a YMCA, with the leader scheduled to speak. The party did not receive permission to have this meeting and proceeded to reschedule the event for January 18; however, the crowd, against the directive of Kasavubu refused to go home quietly. Colonial angst turned to riots that afternoon. Congolese vandalized white sectors of Léopoldville and reports of attacks on white women called for the Force Publique to proceed:

to a "systematic cleanup" of the communities closest to the European city. Meanwhile, Belgian forces had been called in, arriving on Monday night [one day later] at Ndjili airport from their base in Kamina. The cleanup was concluded on Wednesday, with an official count of 49 Congolese dead and 101 Congolese wounded; 15 Europeans wounded. Unofficial estimates indicated between 100 and 300 dead.<sup>114</sup>

Kasavubu and other Abako leaders would be detained for their involvement. Later, on October 29-30, 1959, another deadly riot consumed Stanleyville in Oriental Province. Comparable to the riots in Léopoldville, twenty deaths and the arrest of Lumumba resulted after the MNC party congress, held from October 23-28, incited pro-independence protests in the following days. Lumumba would stay in prison, all the while gaining popularity within the Congolese ranks, until he was summoned to the Roundtable Conference of Belgian and Congolese Leaders which began in Brussels in January 1960. After the Léopoldville riots, the Belgian government had endorsed a hastened emancipation of Congo. After Stanleyville, the sooner the better.

According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, "[i]f 4 January is a public holiday in the DRC today as 'Independence Martyrs Day', it is because the mass action on that day in 1959 sounded the death knell of Belgian colonialism in the Congo."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 80; See also Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 85-6.

<sup>115</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 86-7.

The Congolese leaders came out of the Roundtable Conference with a date of independence in hand: June 30, 1960. As these leaders celebrated their victory in Europe, still more work had to be done. With most of the Congolese leaders staying home, Moïse Tshombé was the only Congolese elite to attend the ever-important Economic Roundtable Conference in Belgium from April 26 to May 16, 1960. This would ultimately prove disastrous for the new Congolese state. Fanon argues that in the post-colonial world, the “national bourgeois possesses neither industrialists nor financiers.”<sup>116</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja concurs, stating that by “[n]egotiating with university students and other politically insignificant delegates relying on Belgian experts to make sense of the complex issues at stake, the Belgians laid the groundwork for transferring much of the enormous state portfolios in colonial companies to Belgium, through privatization, while leaving virtually all the public debt to the new state. The Congolese leaders were evidently true believers in the Nkrumahist gospel of first seeking the political kingdom.”<sup>117</sup> Fanon corroborates, stating that the political parties operated with political independence as their sole objective. When asked about their economic plans after independence, the party leaders cannot answer, because they “do not have a clue about the economy of their own country.”<sup>118</sup>

Lumumba’s MNC won the majority of seats in the lower house of parliament in the May 1960 elections, catapulting him to the position of Prime Minister. Joseph Kasavubu became the ceremonial head of state.<sup>119</sup> The May elections were not without incident. According to a CIA “Central Intelligence Bulletin” from May 6, 1960:

Belgian Congo: The 3 May disorders at Stanleyville, in which the cars of European’s were stoned, constitute the first major anti-European outbreak of the pre-independence period. They coincided with two political rallies in the area in connection with legislative

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<sup>116</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 98

<sup>117</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 88.

<sup>118</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 99.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

elections to be held from 11 to 15 May. The incident is likely to accelerate the departure of Europeans from the Congo prior to its independence on 30 June. The threat of further anti-European outbreaks will add to the problems of Belgian security forces, which are already hard pressed to keep the peace between warring tribes in Kasai Province.<sup>120</sup>

Lumumba's victory, especially because of his perceived militant nationalist goals and broad national constituency, posed a problem for the neocolonial designs of Belgium and other Western allies.<sup>121</sup>

Decades of Belgian colonialism resulted in more Belgians settling in Congo. The two groups that made up the Belgian presence in Congo, defined by Nzongola-Ntalaja, are the imperialist bourgeoisie and the European middle and petty bourgeoisies. All doctors, pharmacists, dentists and professional attorneys came from these groups.<sup>122</sup> When international pressure finally persuaded Belgium to relinquish its African colony, many of these professionals left Congo in fear, leaving a vacuum of qualified, professional civil servants necessary for any government to function. One of the problems of independence would be replacing these vital positions. According to Yaël Simpson Fletcher, “[i]n the absence of a Congolese middle class ready to fill the posts abandoned by Belgian officials and technicians, Haitians [and other foreigners] . . . were recruited as a stopgap measure.” This effort proved helpful, but not enough.<sup>123</sup> Paying any civil service employees and the military would also prove difficult, as Belgium left Lumumba and his regime with a paltry budget and a hefty debt. Of the Congolese available and able to lead a newly established independent nation, few had formal education. Barely five hundred individuals “put their training and their intellectual gifts at the service of the

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<sup>120</sup> Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Full Document Viewer (CIA FOIA FDV), “Central Intelligence Bulletin,” May 6, 1960, [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009).

<sup>121</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 94.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>123</sup> Yaël Simpson Fletcher, “‘History Will One Day Have Its Say’: New Perspectives on Colonial and Postcolonial Congo.” *Radical History Review*. Issue 84 (Fall 2002): 202.

community.”<sup>124</sup> Fanon theorized that the lack of qualified intellectuals will result in nepotism, and as the system rots from the inside out, the masses will begin to doubt the benefits of independence.<sup>125</sup> In the case of Congo, Lumumba initially tried to keep European technicians, administrators and experts, but due to circumstances described in detail below, this did not happen—the result was tragic.

Following the chaotic rebellions throughout the Congo in 1959, the international community pressured Belgium to grant independence to the Congo. Lumumba, Kasavubu and other leaders such as Antoine Gizenga, Moise Tshombe and Pierre Mulele won government positions in a national election. During the independence ceremony, King Baudouin, grandson of Leopold II, offered a condescending speech stating “[t]he independence of the Congo is the crowning glory of the work conceived by the genius of King Leopold II, undertaken by him with firm courage, and continued by Belgium with perseverance.” He went on to state that Belgium modernized the Congo and created necessary infrastructure, and that the pioneers responsible for that modernization “deserve admiration from us and acknowledgement from you.” He concluded his speech by adding “[i]t is now up to you, gentlemen, to show that you are worthy of our confidence.” Lumumba, who upon hearing this speech, revised his address, and instead delivered a fiery retort. He was unwilling to accept Baudouin’s version of the past eight decades; the brutal treatment of the Congolese; the non-acknowledgement of the valiant struggles of black Africans to break free from European bondage; and the gross underestimate of

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<sup>124</sup> David Renton, David Seddon, and Leo Zeilig. *The Congo: Plunder and Resistance* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 85. Lumumba knew that in order for the Congo to be truly free, his country must shed the economic dependency on Belgium and its Western allies. The Congo on the eve of independence faced a formidable deficit of £40 Million and no liquid assets; Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 67.

<sup>125</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 10.

African ability. In poetic prose, Lumumba articulated just what eighty years of a European hierarchy entailed.

Who will forget that to a black one said ‘tu’, certainly not as a friend, but because the more honourable ‘vous’ was reserved for whites alone? . . . For though this independence of the Congo is today being proclaimed in a spirit of accord with Belgium, a friendly country with which we are dealing as one equal with another, no Congolese worthy of the name can ever forget that we fought to win it [applause], a fight waged each and every day, a passionate and idealistic fight, a fight in which there was not one effort, not one privation, not one suffering, not one drop of blood that we ever spared ourselves.<sup>126</sup>

This act of independent oratory infuriated many in Belgium who could not believe that their king was chided in such a way, and by a black man. “Belgium was humiliated.”<sup>127</sup>

In this regard, Lumumba directly challenged the “psychological devices” that Belgium, the colonizer, used to defuse the hatred of the Congolese. According to Fanon, these devices included, and are not limited to the following. First, the occupier phases out the violent nature of its presence. The colonized begin to feel better, safer. Second, the occupier and the colonists change their personas in the towns and cities. The colonized subjects seem to be treated with a modicum of respect: a bit of dignity is somehow restored. Fanon warns the colonized that this behavior is just a ruse, and a last desperate attempt of the colonizers to hang on to their colonial holdings. The colonized subjects must not have the wool pulled over their eyes. Lumumba exemplified the behavior Fanon wished to see in this regard, even if Lumumba’s approach was more conservative and too conciliatory for Fanon’s taste.<sup>128</sup>

Lumumba changed the language of his speeches to meet his goals in relationship to his intended audiences. These shifts in representations of Belgians as oppressors or friends during transition and the Congolese as victims of brutal colonization or friendly collaborators during the

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<sup>126</sup> Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig. *Plunder and Resistance*, 74-80, 81.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>128</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 90-1.

same period ultimately maintained Lumumba's overarching goal: a unified, independent Congo. In "When Group Representations Serve Social Change: The Speeches of Patrice Lumumba during the Congolese Decolonization," Oliver Klein and Laurent Licata argue that during speeches directed at his fellow countrymen, "Lumumba uncovers what he considers to be the inherent hypocrisy of the colonial regime. He stigmatizes its [the colonial regime] oppression of local Congolese populations and its ideology, which alienates Blacks. He also rejects the colonialist ideology as a form of 'false consciousness'." When speaking to Belgians:

Lumumba contests the negative stereotypes held by Belgians about his countrymen. These stereotypes describe the Congolese as 'thieves', 'looters', and 'anti-Belgian'. He consistently repeats that the latter hold friendly intentions towards the Belgians. In support of these claims, he reports his frequent positive encounters with Belgians in Congo and in Belgium.<sup>129</sup>

Despite the seemingly opposite positions of these two speech environments, Lumumba, according to Klein and Licata, still kept true to his goal of an eventual self-reliant and a united Congo. His intended audience following King Baudouin's speech was obviously his newly sovereign Congolese. Here, Lumumba exhibits Fanon's theory of revolutionary rhetoric. When the colonial intellectual changes the dialectic and shifts the audience from colonizer to colonized, and switches the discourse from fiery criticism of the oppressor to inspirational flourishes to the oppressed masses, the tide has shifted. The colonizer knows that the colonial system is in fine working order when the colonized intellectual complains. As Fanon posits, when Lumumba shifts his dialogue to his compatriots, a nascent national culture is evolving—a culture that Belgium does not wish to see evolving any further.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Olivier Klein and Laurent Licata, "When Group Representations Serve Social Change: The Speeches of Patrice Lumumba during the Congolese Decolonization," *British Journal of Social Psychology*. Vol. 42, Issue 4 (2003): 580, 581.

<sup>130</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 173.

Although Lumumba's scathing response at the independence ceremony garnered international attention and acclaim, the process of transition from an autocratic Belgian authority to the will of the Congolese people would prove too monumental a task for just words. Swift action was necessary to quell a coup within the military just days after independence. At this point, Lumumba and other Congolese leaders made a costly political mistake; they promised promotions to Congolese military and civil personnel upon completion of more training. This perhaps sounds logical; however, when these military and civil personnel correctly perceived the Congolese leaders as having gained the ultimate political promotion without any additional training, this patient approach to increasing the standard of living was a bitter pill to swallow.<sup>131</sup> The new government made a decision to keep Belgian commanders in charge of the military. In particular, Emile Janssens, commander of the Force Publique, informed the Congolese troops that life after independence would be the same as before. This unsettled the rank and file to the point of rebellion. Lumumba was forced to promote unqualified Congolese such as Victor Lundula and Joseph Mobutu to the highest positions in the military. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, the Mobutu appointment was a fatal mistake because Lumumba did not heed "apparently well-founded rumours" that Mobutu had strong ties to American and Belgian intelligence. "In appointing Mobutu to this sensitive position, he had unwittingly chosen his own Judas."<sup>132</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre testifies that Fanon knew of Mobutu's affiliations and questioned Lumumba about the Prime Minister's decision to trust Mobutu. It was this humanism that sacked Lumumba:

"He was shown proof that one of his ministers was betraying him," Fanon told me. "He sought him out, showed him the documents and reports, and said to him: 'Are you a traitor? Look me in the eye and answer me.' When the man denied that he was and

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<sup>131</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 88-9.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.



looked him straight in the eye, Lumumba finally said: ‘All right, I believe you’.” But this immense kindheartedness, which Europeans called naïveté, seemed to Fanon on this occasion to be an unfortunate thing: in and of itself, he was proud of it, seeing in it a basic trait of Africans.<sup>133</sup>

To confound matters even further, Moïse Tshombe exerted his influence and announced the secession from Congo of the mineral-rich region of Katanga. Perhaps Lumumba and the Congolese government could have responded to this crisis with soldiers loyal to the government; however, Belgium supported the secession of Katanga and parachuted troops into Tshombe’s territory on the very day of secession. Tshombe stated that “[t]he Government of Lumumba is in minority,” and “[t]he Parliament does not truly represent the people of the Congo.” Here, Lumumba had recourse. According to Kwame Nkrumah, “Lumumba was the only Congolese political leader to achieve a clear majority in the Parliamentary elections preceding independence, and the Chamber consistently supported him.” And according to David Renton, David Seddon and Leo Zeilig, “[o]n the eve of independence, Congo and Belgium had signed a Treaty of Friendship, Assistance and Technical Aid. Among its many clauses, this agreement ruled that no Belgian troops could be brought to the Congo, except by mutual consent”—mutual consent meaning Lumumba and Kasavubu requesting Belgian troop presence.<sup>134</sup>

Lumumba understood that the Katanga province was rich in mineral resources and that the party controlling Katanga, Tshombe’s Conakat, wanted a loose federal system with strong regional power for the new independent Congo. This political philosophy differed from Lumumba’s MNC, which argued for Congolese unity and a strong central government capable of redistributing wealth and civil services amongst all of Congo’s inhabitants. Conakat wanted the wealth of Katanga to benefit predominately “authentic Katangese,” hence the secession.

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<sup>133</sup> Sartre, “Introduction,” 4.

<sup>134</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Challenge of the Congo* (New York: International Publishers, 1967): 25; Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig. *Plunder and Resistance*, 88.

Lumumba also knew that Tshombe was a front for the “more powerful interests of mining companies and white settlers.” Together, Lumumba and Kasavubu requested support from the United Nations to demand the withdrawal of Belgian troops.<sup>135</sup>

The request to the United Nations presented conflicting interests. Western powers distrusted Lumumba’s socialist rhetoric and populist politics. The United Nations, controlled by Western influence, had to be careful of supporting Lumumba at the expense of potential profits from the Katanga region. Also, the people of the region of South Kasai, a stronghold of one of Lumumba’s political enemies, Albert Kalonji, decided to secede as well.

Another major detriment to Lumumba’s efforts to control the chaotic situation in Congo was his disagreement with United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld on the implementation of the ONUC mandate. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja and Nkrumah, the mandate read quite clear. Nzongola-Ntalaja writes: “The Security Council directed the secretary-general to provide military assistance to the Congolese government to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian troops, to end the Katanga Secession, and to resolve law and order throughout the country.”<sup>136</sup> The ONUC was also responsible for lending technical assistance to Congo to ensure smoothly running essential civil services. Lumumba essentially expected the mandate to be followed verbatim; however, Hammarskjöld had another interpretation. The Secretary-General believed that Belgium would withdraw its troops peacefully without bloodshed. While this may have happened throughout other portions of Congo, withdrawal did not occur in Katanga, where Belgian and American mining interests were at stake.

Hammarskjöld chose to focus more on the return of law and order and the smooth operation of

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<sup>135</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 83, 100, 99.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 113; Nkrumah, *Challenge*, 27-34.

civil services segment of the mandate, rather than focus on a potentially bloody Katanga incident, which again, favored the Western powers over the wishes and rights of Lumumba and the legitimately elected Congolese government.<sup>137</sup> Fanon warns of this neocolonial maneuver. Lumumba tried to shatter the shackles around the neck of Congo, but Tshombe, preferring healthy monetary injections into his personal bank account, allowed Belgium and the United States to maintain their neocolonial marketing channels in Katanga. Kasavubu, bowing to the former colonizer's demands, also had a hand in this neocolonial chess match.<sup>138</sup>

Ralph Bunche, an African-American Nobel laureate and chief of the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), attempted to reach an agreement with Lumumba and Kasavubu on the role of the UN troops in Katanga. Lumumba insisted that Bunche place the UN troops under control of the Congolese government. Bunche declined, and commented later to US Ambassador Timberlake that Lumumba behaved like a child. Lumumba and Kasavubu proceeded to threaten Bunche and the UNOC with an ultimatum: the UN was to remove Belgian troops from Katanga or the Congolese government would call on the Soviet Union to lend military support. Had the governments of the United States and Belgium doubted whether Lumumba was a radical leftist up to this point, this threat, along with a personal correspondence between Khrushchev and Lumumba dated July 14, certainly raised doubts as to a potential neocolonial Congolese government headed by Lumumba.<sup>139</sup>

In late July, Lumumba traveled to North America to lobby his country's need for military assistance to end the secession in Katanga. By this point, U.S. Ambassador to Belgium William Burden, who spent time with Lumumba just after the Congolese leader took office, telegraphed

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-115, 113.

<sup>138</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 55.

<sup>139</sup> Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire* (Washington: American University Press, 1993): 32-3).

Washington that Lumumba was growing increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union and was moving closer to an anti-Western stance. Removing Lumumba, even in his first twenty days as Prime Minister, seemed inevitable in order to facilitate neocolonial relationships. While in the North America, Lumumba met with members of the Eisenhower administration, Canadian officials and UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. Receiving little assurance of receiving his request for UN military intervention in Katanga, Lumumba returned home without an “American commitment to help in the withdrawal of the Belgian troops from Congolese soil.”<sup>140</sup> When Lumumba requested help from President Eisenhower, the American leader politely told Lumumba to ask the United Nations. At this critical juncture, Lumumba, fearing his back to the wall with no other alternatives, reached out to the Soviet Union. As Fanon explains, Cold War ideology dominates all policy in the Third World. Neither side—whether it is the West or the Soviet bloc—is willing to disengage.<sup>141</sup> With this militant, ideological standoff rampant throughout the world, Lumumba’s act of reaching out to the Soviet bloc agitated the Americans.

The Soviets also criticized UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld and UN Deputy Secretary-General Ralph Bunche, citing that Hammarskjöld was using “bullying” tactics in the Congo and that Bunche “was ‘heavily compromised’ by his ties with the colonizers.” It is clear that Western influence in Congo did not go unchecked, however, due to Cold War politics, the willingness of the United States and the Soviet Union to go to war over a nation in Africa seemed most unlikely. Because of this, the Soviet Union appeared to be unwilling to directly

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<sup>140</sup> Sergei Mazov, “Soviet Aid to the Gizenga Government in the Former Belgian Congo (1960–61) as Reflected in Russian Archives,” *Cold War History*. Vol. 7, No. 3 (August 2007): 427.

<sup>141</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 35-6.

intervene on behalf of Lumumba and Congo.<sup>142</sup> However, the U.S.S.R. would funnel military trucks, planes and weapons to Congo.

In August 1960, less than two months after independence, The CIA believed Congo to have a strong communist presence and was prepared to plan an overthrow of the Lumumba government. In a correspondence from the United States Embassy in Congo, to headquarters in America:

1. EMBASSY AND STATION BELIEVE CONGO EXPERIENCING CLASSIC COMMUNIST EFFORT TAKE OVER GOVERNMENT. MANY FORCES AT WORK HERE, SOVIETS [censored material, unreadable] COMMUNIST PARTY, ETC. ALTHOUGH DIFFICULT DETERMINE [sic.] MAJOR INFLUENCING FACTORS TO PREDICT OUTCOME STRUGGLE FOR POWER, DECISIVE PERIOD NOT FAR OFF. WHETHER LUMUMBA ACTUALLY COMMIE OR JUST PLAYING COMMIE GAME TO ASSIST HIS SOLIDIFYING POWER, ANTI-WEST FORCES RAPIDLY INCREASING POWER CONGO AND THERE MAY BE LITTLE TIME LEFT IN WHICH TAKE ACTION TO AVOID ANOTHER CUBA [rest of document censored and unreadable].<sup>143</sup>

It is obvious that following the embarrassment that the American government, and particularly the CIA, felt after its failed attempt to prevent Castro's socialist forces from ousting the U.S.-friendly Bautista government from Cuba, that another nationalist government with a socialist feel, would not be allowed to succeed in Congo.

A week after Lumumba took office, the armed forces were angered that promotions were not swift and that they had to have more training to receive these promotions. The soldiers felt as though they did not get their share of the spoils of independence, and were disgusted with the continued white military leadership. As a result, the soldiers mutinied, forcing Lumumba's hand. Joseph Mobutu, who would ultimately step on anyone in his path to power, took over as

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<sup>142</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Broadcast Review: Soviet Broadcasts," (August 22, 1960, Release Date September, 1985): 2, 5.

<sup>143</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Correspondence," (August 18, 1960, Release Date February 10, 1981) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1.

the chief of staff of the armed forces, which Lumumba renamed the *Armée nationale congolaise* (ANC). At this point, the Western powers decided on destabilization tactics to overthrow Lumumba's regime. The Soviet Union was quick to respond to the West's actions, publicly stating that "responsible UN officials" openly acted against United Nations Security Council (UNSC) decisions. The Soviets objected to the intervention of UN troops that militarily intervened against Congolese troops at Léopoldville airport in July of 1960.<sup>144</sup> According to Sir Brian Urquhart, former Undersecretary General of the United Nations, the Belgians panicked when the Congolese armed forces mutinied. Belgian paratroopers were flown in to attempt to recapture the Léopoldville airport. The UN flew in 3,000 troops in three days and 10,000 in two weeks. Urquhart attests that the UN troops were not supposed to be on a military mission. "They simply arrived and got between people who were likely to be killing each other."<sup>145</sup>

With the help of Russian trucks and planes, Lumumba's Congolese Army had suppressed the rebellion in South Kasai and was on the doorstep of Katanga. This initial success with the help of Soviet weapons prompted the United States diplomats in Congo, led by Andrew Cordier (Interim UN representative in Congo, August-September 8, 1960) to pressure Kasavubu and Mobutu into forcing Lumumba from office, albeit illegally. Both complied. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, Lumumba's ANC moved to crush the rebellion in Kananga, Kasai, where gross human rights atrocities were committed by the ANC. Lumumba, Kasavubu and Mobutu must share the responsibility for these acts; however, Hammarskjöld heightened the level of heinousness by claiming that this action by the ANC was genocide. Kasavubu moved to illegally dismiss Lumumba, and was successful in getting International support for this move, proving

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<sup>144</sup> CIA FOIA FDV "Broadcast Review: Soviet Broadcasts," (August 22, 1960, Release Date September, 1985): 2.

<sup>145</sup> Harry Kreisler, "A Life in Peace and War: Conversation with Sir Brian Urquhart," *Institute of International Studies, UC Berkeley*, May 19, 1996, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/UN/Urquhart/urquhart6.html> (accessed June 2, 2009).

that the secession of Kasai gave Lumumba's enemies, both domestic and foreign, set the stage to overthrow the Prime Minister.<sup>146</sup> The atrocities committed by the national army in putting down the rebellion in South Kasai caused Lumumba to lose what favor he had in the rest of the international community. Whether it was his or Kasavubu's or Mobutu's call to end the secession with brutal military force, the sheer volume of death including women and children gave Lumumba's enemies the excuse they needed to remove him from office. Kasavubu obliged by illegally dismissing Lumumba in September 1960 without consent of Parliament, but was able to get away with it with international support.<sup>147</sup> "Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba as Prime Minister. . . On 14 September, Colonel Joseph Mobutu, chief of staff of the Congolese army, seized power with the clear intention of paving the way for Kasavubu to get rid of Lumumba, since the deposed premier still had the backing of the Congolese parliament and loyalist detachments of the army." Lumumba was placed under house arrest and effectively run out of government.<sup>148</sup> How could this happen if Lumumba was the head of government? Sartre explains that:

Lumumba's power was merely parliamentary; Kasavubu's was real and massive. As long as Belgium was still a presence in the Congo, Ganshof [a Belgian official sent to Congo to develop a government for independence] was obliged to take the elected majority in Parliament into consideration; no course was open to Belgium except to set up a caricature of bourgeois democracy in its former colony. *After the departure of the Belgians*, votes were not important: Lumumba was thrown out of office and arrested without ever having lost his majority. In other words, democracy was simply rejected out of hand: the trappings were retained, but power was based on sheer force.<sup>149</sup>

Lumumba's ultimate fate was sealed on the eve of independence, when Belgium designed to place him (because he was not the conservative politician that they desired to install) in "a

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<sup>146</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 105-6.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-106.

<sup>148</sup> Mazov, "Soviet Aid to the Gizenga," 427-8.

<sup>149</sup> Sartre, "Introduction," 27-8.

constitutional straightjacket.” According to Guy Martin’s analysis of *Lumumba, un Crime d’État* by Colette Braekman, Belgium wanted to neutralize the communist threat that Lumumba posed. The Belgian government set up ambiguous powers for the president and the prime minister, much to the detriment of Lumumba. According to Martin’s analysis, “the Belgian government deliberately sought to engineer a federal or confederal restructuring of the Congo: ‘These rebellions [in Katanga and Kasai] were not designed to create autonomous or independent entities, but were rather meant to undermine the political and economic bases of Lumumba’s power’.” He was set up to fail from the start due to his unpopular political leanings.<sup>150</sup>

The planes designated for Lumumba’s discretion returned to Moscow and the Russian trucks became the personal property of Joseph Mobutu. Those trucks would later be used to haul off Lumumba’s supporters throughout Congo to be executed.<sup>151</sup> International pressure mounted against Lumumba as Kasavubu excused himself and Mobutu, along with other top brass in the ANC, from the “genocide” against the Luba people in Kasai while placing full responsibility on Lumumba. Kasavubu then announced over the Congolese airwaves that Lumumba was dismissed. Lumumba returned the favor on the same radio station. Tensions flared for a week before Mobutu, the darling of the West, used the military to stage a coup. He placed both Lumumba and Kasavubu under house arrest on October 10, 1960 “for their own safety,” and took charge to neutralize the two sides until the situation improved. Lumumba’s foreign minister, Justin Bomboko would oversee a commission of university graduates that would run the country. In essence, Lumumba was under house arrest while Kasavubu was free to continue operating with most of the rights he enjoyed before the coup. He swore in the commissioners

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<sup>150</sup> Guy Martin, “Conflict in the Congo: Historical and Regional Perspectives.” *African Studies Review*. Vol. 48 Issue 1 (Apr., 2005): 132.

<sup>151</sup> Mazov, “Soviet Aid,” 427, 428.



and received foreign envoys. His faction of the government won the endorsement of the international community at the UN General Assembly in late 1960, effectively ending Lumumba's political career.<sup>152</sup>

Antoine Gizenga, President of the *Parti de la Solidarité Africaine* and deputy Prime Minister of the Congo between June and September 1960 was now the last holdout of the Lumumbists. His stronghold in Oriental Province provided a safe zone for discussion with the Soviets, however most agreements were never fulfilled. Half of the money supposedly sent to Gizenga from the Soviet Union via Cairo and Gamal Abdel Nasser never made it to Congo. Although Gizenga sent several desperate telegrams to Nikita Khrushchev in the Soviet Union, the communist premier delayed all correspondence. Khrushchev balked at dealing with a dissident government after his planned support of Lumumba did not go as planned. To add to the peril of Gizenga, a military blockade of Oriental Province and the stiff refusal of the Sudanese government to allow Soviet supplies through its land or air space (largely due to the external anti-communist influence of the United States) denied the Lumumbists holding out in Eastern Congo the supplies they desperately needed. "Soviet diplomats made every effort to stimulate allies to run the blockade of Oriental Province, and thus avoid Soviet involvement in the Congo."<sup>153</sup>

Gizenga's inability to continue Lumumba's vision or to gain any substantial victories to increase pressure on the forces holding Lumumba eventually contributed to the Prime Minister's continued status under house surveillance and his eventual escape attempt and capture.

Lumumba's repeated requests to the United Nations went unanswered while in custody and Andrew Cordier, acting representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, denied

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-9.

<sup>153</sup> Mazov, "Soviet Aid," 429, 430.

Lumumba access to Congolese radio. Cordier informed Lumumba that all Congolese involved in this fracas were temporarily banned from public speaking. Kasavubu, however, was permitted to cross the Congo River to Brazzaville to deliver a broadcasted speech.<sup>154</sup>

The CIA planned to remove Lumumba prior to his house arrest. In a correspondence from "Dulles" [CIA Director Allen Dulles] to Léopoldville on August 14, 1960, the CIA gives clear directives about its next move to eliminate Lumumba via covert action and the reasons for his removal. It states:

1. IN HIGH QUARTERS HERE IT IS THE CLEAR-CUT CONCLUSION THAT IF LLL [Lumumba] CONTINUES TO HOLD HIGH OFFICE, THE INEVITABLE RESULT WILL AT BEST BE CHAOS AND AT WORST PAVE THE WAY TO COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF THE CONGO WITH DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PRESTIGE OF TH [sic.] UN AND FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE FREE [illegible] WORLD GENERALLY. CONSEQUENTLY WE CONCLUDE THAT HIS REMOVAL MUST BE AN URGENT AND PRIME OBJECTIVE AND THAT UNDER EXISTING CONDITIONS THIS SHOULD BE A HIGH PRIORITY OF OUR COVERT ACTION.

2. HENCE WE WISH TO GIVE YOU WIDER AUTHORITY ALONG LINES LEOP 0772 AND LEOP 0785 AND [illegible] 46115 INCLUDING EVEN MORE AGGRESSIVE ACTION IF IT CAN REMAIN COVERT. WE REALIZE THAT TARGETS [illegible] OPPORTUNITY MAY PRESENT THEMSELVES TO YOU AND IN ADDITION TO ARMS HERETOFORE AUTHORIZED, WE FURTHER AUTHORIZE EXPENDITURES UP TO A TOTAL OF \$100,000 TO CARRY OUT ANY CRASH PROGRAMS ON [illegible] YOU DO NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT [illegible] ADVISE YOUR CASH NEEDS.

3. TO THE EXTENT THAT AMBASSADOR MAY DESIRE TO BE CONSULTED, YOU SHOULD SEEK HIS CONCURRENCE. IF IN ANY PARTICULAR CASE HE DOES NOT WISH TO BE CONSULTED YOU CAN ACT ON YOUR OWN AUTHORITY [illegible] TIME DOES NOT PERMIT REFERRAL HERE.

4. [illegible] MESSAGE HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED AT COMPETENT [illegible].

END OF MESSAGE  
CABLE SECRETARIAT: LIMIT DISTRIBUTION TO  
MR. HELMS.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 112; Nkrumah, *Challenge*, 35-55.

<sup>155</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Correspondence," (August 14, 1960, Release Date: January 1996): 1-2.

It is clear that the CIA was poised to make a move against Lumumba while he struggled to find any help to solidify his position and prevent the secession of Tshombe's Katanga Province, currently occupied by Belgian troops, and the secession of Kalonji's Kasai Province. It is apparent that the United States wanted to take advantage of a destabilized Congo and participate in the overthrow of a Congolese leader responsible to his nation's constituents in order to install a more Western-friendly strongman.

Lumumba did not go down without a fight, however. In a correspondence from September 1960, Lumumba is given credit for his ability to inspire his fellow Congolese. This correspondence states: "LUMUMBA TALENTS AND DYNAMISM APPEAR OVERRIDING FACTOR IN REESTABLISHING HIS POSITION EACH TIME IT SEEMS HALF LOST. IN OTHER WORDS EACH TIME LUMUMBA HAS OPPORTUNITY HAVE LAST WORD HE CAN SWAY EVENTS TO HIS ADVANTAGE."<sup>156</sup> It is precisely this oratorical ability that made Lumumba a liability, even with the cards stacked against him. If he failed in Léopoldville, he might try to regroup where he got his political start as a postal clerk: in Stanleyville. The CIA, once again, plotted to eliminate Lumumba before they might not have the chance. In a message from Director Dulles to Léopoldville:

1. APPRECIATE EXCELLENT REPORTING YOUR REFERENCE AND COMMEND [Censored] ALERT ROLE. WE WISH GIVE [*sic.*] EVERY POSSIBLE SUPPORT IN ELIMINATING LUMUMBA FROM ANY POSSIBILITY RESUMING GOVERNMENTAL POSITION OR IF HE FAILS IN LEOP. SETTING HIMSELF IN STANLEYVILLE OR ELSEWHERE.

2. WHILE FULLY AWARE OF NEFARIOUS PLOTTING GHANA, GUINEA, UAB, TO RESTORE LUMUMBA, GREATLY DISTURBED AT REFERENCE TO [] AND PARTICULARLY [Censored] AS MEMBERS OF THE [Censored], CAN YOU SUGGEST ANY ACTION WE CAN PROPOSE TO ODACID OR TAKE OTHERWISE TO HELP DETACH THEM FROM LUMUMBA

3. DISTURBED AT POSSIBILITY THAT [Illegible] MIGHT LOST CONTROL OF HIS FORCES DUE POSSIBLE HIGHER PAY BEING OFFERED SOURCES

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<sup>156</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Correspondence," (September, 1960, Release Date: February 10, 1981).

HOSTILE TO US AS SUGGESTED PARA 4 YOUR REFERENCE. IS PAY SITUATION IN ORDER AND CAN ANYTHING ELSE BE DONE ABOUT [Illegible] THROUGH UN OR COVERTLY THROUGH [Censored]

4. AGREE POSITION OUTLINED LAST SENTENCE REFERENCE WHICH WE ASSUME IS FULLY ENDORSED BY AMBASSADOR.

5. AT YOUR DISCRESSION, SHARE THIS MESSAGE WITH AMBASSADOR.

END OF MESSAGE

C/S COMMENT: [Censored] 920 reported on 2? September that [censored] were mounting a coup against Mobutu and the Council of Commissioners.<sup>157</sup>

The CIA continually plotted attempts to ensure Lumumba's political, and probably physical demise. The installation of Mobutu as the West's malleable strongman in Congo proved difficult, as Mobutu was not immediately viewed as the answer to the current Congo crisis by many in Congo. Gizenga, for instance, was a regional power from Stanleyville, and continued the Lumumbist struggles from Oriental Province well into Mobutu's rise to power after his second military coup.

Dwight D. Eisenhower and the American government also feared a possible "African Fidel Castro." Former Central Intelligence Agent Larry Devlin recently revealed in an interview with Scott Shane of the *New York Times* that he received orders to assassinate Patrice Lumumba. At the time, the American plan was to poison the young, "charismatic Congolese politician." Devlin did not feel the same way as his superiors at the Central Intelligence Agency and the White House; so, according to Devlin, he stalled. Patrice Lumumba would not be poisoned to death by toxic toothpaste, as was part of the murder kit received by Devlin; however, this evidence does show that America, not just Belgium, was uncomfortable in the Cold War era to have a left-leaning populist in control of a vast wealth of natural resources. American interests

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<sup>157</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Correspondence," (September 24, 1960, Release Date: January 1996): 1-2.

had to be protected at all costs, to the disadvantage of Congo, whose rightful ownership of the land and its natural assets were not a part of the decision.<sup>158</sup>

Devlin did not have to commit this grisly plan, for Lumumba, in his frustrations under house arrest attempted to escape his domestic imprisonment in late November 1960. Lumumba, under cover in an automobile during the night slipped past Mobutu's guards and began his ill-planned, four day journey to Stanleyville. Mobutu's men eventually caught up with Lumumba three days later and the sacked Prime Minister was arrested. After reports that Lumumba was "brutally manhandled and struck with rifle butts by ANC [Congolese national army] soldiers." When international reporters witnessed his transfer two days later, Lumumba had difficulty walking and his face had the appearance of recent assault. United Nations troops reported that he was suffering from serious bodily harm and that his hands were tied as he was "kept in a cell under conditions reported to be inhuman in respect of health and hygiene." Hammarskjöld did attempt to permit the International Red Cross to see Lumumba, but Kasavubu would not allow it. Instead, "Kasavubu charged Lumumba with five offences—usurpation of public power; assaults on individual freedom accompanied by physical torture; attacks against the security of the state; organisation of hostile bands for purposes of devastation, massacre and pillage; inciting soldiers to commit offences." Kasavubu described Lumumba's arrest and detention as a domestic matter.<sup>159</sup>

Nkrumah warns his readers about the injustices of the United Nations, stating that "[t]oday, world public opinion has been confused by the agents of imperialism into accepting the thesis that the tragedy of the Congo is essentially a domestic dispute between rival leaders." He

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<sup>158</sup> Scott Shane, "Memories of a C.I.A. Officer Resonate in a New Era," *New York Times* (Feb., 24, 2008) <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/24/world/africa/24congo.html> (Accessed Oct., 28 2008).

<sup>159</sup> Nkrumah, *Challenge*, 89, 90.

goes on to chide the United Nations for withdrawing Ghanaian troops and proceeding with its Western motivations, ultimately leading to inaction and the continued detainment of Lumumba.<sup>160</sup> Here, Fanon's theory of the neocolonial designs of the former colonizers holds true.

Ludo DeWitte, in *The Assassination of Lumumba*, highlights an international plot to eliminate Lumumba from Congo's political scene. De Witte convincingly argues that in order to effectively remove the anti-Western, nationalist Lumumba for good, his physical specimen must be destroyed. The Belgian government, still propping up Tshombe in Katanga due to Belgian mining interests in the region, proposed Lumumba's *élimination définitive*, or secret assassination. This clandestine plot was carried out less than two months after the United Nations delivered Lumumba, after his attempted escape from house arrest, to Mobutu. During those two months, Lumumba was detained at Camp Hardy, just outside of Leopoldville, where he was systematically beaten and treated in an inhumane manner. When Lumumba's popularity amongst the soldiers at Camp Hardy was perceived as dangerous by its commander, Colonel Louis Bobozo, Mobutu and his Western backers decided to transfer their famous prisoner to Katanga. Initially, Tshombe rejected this situation; however, with strong recommendations from his Belgian advisors, the secession leader finally accepted the former Prime Minister's confinement in Katanga on the day of Lumumba's arrival.<sup>161</sup>

Lumumba and two other associates, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito were flown to Katanga on January 17, 1961. During the flight, the prisoners were beaten repeatedly until landing in Elisabethville, the capital of industrial Katanga, and Tshombe's stronghold. It is clear that Lumumba was not to leave Katanga and his remains were to disappear. In February 1961,

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>161</sup> Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2002): 46-51, 57-66, 91-2.

the Congolese government released information stating that Lumumba was dead. He was executed in January along with Mpolo and Okito, his body was chopped to pieces and dissolved with acid. When the acid ran out, the rest was burned. Lumumba had not even reached forty years of age.<sup>162</sup>

Nkrumah was quick to point out who was to blame. His fiery discourse in *The Challenge of the Congo* points to several culprits. “The inadequacy of UN action, the failure to provide Lumumba with transport when he asked for it in connection with his daughter’s burial [during his house arrest] and then the feeble acceptance of a promise by Kasavubu that he would visit Lumumba in prison, makes it clear that the Secretary-General and his advisers cannot escape blame.” Lumumba was a global icon, wrongfully eliminated for Cold War ideology and bigoted perception. Would this course of action happen to a European leader at this time? Would the United Nations fail to effectively intervene if this crisis occurred in the Western world? Perhaps these questions cannot be answered, but they do raise significant doubt.<sup>163</sup>

Worldwide outcry over Lumumba’s death solidifies his importance to the African aspirations of true independence, free from neocolonial control. His attempts to administer his country on his terms, refusing to meekly acquiesce to the demands of Belgium and its allies, demonstrated his resolve to the world. Masses of demonstrators from Shanghai to Belgrade to Damascus to Rome denounced Lumumba’s murder, taking their message to the streets.<sup>164</sup> In Congo, Lumumba would be regarded as a national hero, even by Joseph Mobutu, himself, who was instrumental in his liquidation, as will be discussed later.

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<sup>162</sup> Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig. *Plunder and Resistance*, 99, 100; For a detailed, yet horrifying account of Lumumba’s last day, see De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 93-124. In this chapter, De Witte details all the major players involved in the torture inflicted upon Lumumba and his associates. Much of the physical damage was inflicted by Belgian mercenaries operating in Katanga, however, Tshombe and his entourage also participated in profusely beating the prisoners before their summary executions in the bush.

<sup>163</sup> Nkrumah, *Challenge*, 126.

<sup>164</sup> Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig. *Plunder and Resistance*, 100.

Congolese leaders, Belgium and the United States are responsible for the murder of Patrice Lumumba. Was it because of his unwillingness to work with fellow native politicians in a neocolonial system or was his iconic status too much for Kasavubu, Tshombe and Mobutu to endure? Were his reforms too radical for Africans, or were Western powers, unwilling to lose their colonial foothold in Africa, prepared to eliminate an independent intellectual who marched to the beat of a different drum? Was the Soviet Union too soft in its support of a desperate nation in dire straits? All of these questions expand well beyond the scope of this analysis, however, they are important to understand the current and continuing crisis in Congo: one that witnessed a brutal, three-decade-long kleptocracy under Joseph Mobutu; the ascension, plunder, and eventual assassination of the externally supported revolutionary, Laurent Kabila; and his replacement by his more conservative, Western-friendly son. Millions have been killed over the past four decades and the situation does not appear to be getting any better. Did Patrice Lumumba give his life for this result, or did Congo have any other future so long as the Western world has a vested interest in Africa's abundance of natural resources?

Western political intervention was a large contributor in the downfall of Lumumba, and the installation of Joseph Mobutu as the leader of Congo in 1965. The American and Belgian ravenous political behavior, at the expense of the newly created Congolese government, stems not just exclusively from their Cold War ideology, but also from their neocolonial economic interests. Both Western nations feared a nationalist leader, like Lumumba, responsible to his constituents, would jeopardize the private investments of Western companies, particularly in the mining region of Katanga. If Lumumba, or any other Congolese leader were to nationalize the mining industry, much money would be lost, and in the hands of the Africans themselves.



## Neocolonial Economics in the Decolonization of Congo

From the beginning of the decolonization process, Belgium controlled the banks of Congo. Belgian and other Western firms controlled the mining industry of Katanga, and the new Congolese government was in debt. The World Bank provided predatory loans that required scheduled payments at the expense of social welfare initiatives, and foreign companies were given tax breaks to invest in the fledgling nation. From the moment of independence, Congo was under the iron fist of a neocolonial economic system that proved to be an overburdened load the African government could not carry nor from which it could escape.

In November of 1959, eight months prior to independence, INFORCONGO, or the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi Information and Public Relations Office, stated in its monthly bulletin, *Belgian Congo*, that since 1957, unfavorable trade conditions and the worldwide drop in prices created a reduction in foreign currency returns, stifling the Congolese economy. The deficit was “a result of the decrease of export values. Consequently the budgets were unbalanced and the foreign currency reserves were gradually drained.” Although Congo showed signs of improving up to October of 1958, the Minister of Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi, Mr. A. De Schryer, implored the Belgian parliament to stick with Congo, even after independence, because the economic tutelage of the Belgians would be necessary to help Congo decrease its debt. The Belgian Parliament recorded its discussions following the Minister’s speech, and this record raises interesting questions. Were the Congolese responsible for that debt? Were any Congolese privy to the economic decisions that were made during the period that the debt occurred?<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> INFORCONGO, “The Belgian Parliament Debates on the Policy Followed in the Congo ,” *Belgian Congo 59, Monthly Bulletin*, No. 11 (Nov., 1959), in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 5: 10.

Interestingly, the second topic discussed in the record deals with the number of Congolese natives sitting in positions of higher administrations at the time of the Parliament's meeting. The answer is as follows: "Broaching the subject of the Africanization of the administration, the Minister declared that the Congolese must be assigned to posts in the higher administration. Besides these nominations, probation candidates must also be admitted to all levels of the administration." From this dialogue, it is hard to prove that any Congolese person would be responsible for the economic decay up to that point.<sup>166</sup>

At this point the record shows that the Belgian Parliament had the audacity to say:

1. "The Congolese people will be chiefly responsible for either their welfare or their economic, social and political decline."
2. "The financial situation cannot be adjusted within a short time unless the Congo herself makes a great effort to restore public finance."
3. "This effort of the Congo should lead to an important reduction of the ordinary budget's deficit."<sup>167</sup>

Not only are the Congolese the people who are toiling day after day, with little political rights to speak of, but they are also the sole bearers of this economic decline. Belgium owns up to none of the problems that led to this dilemma; however, its Parliament does claim to know how to fix it. Belgium must stabilize the Congolese economy by fusing it with its colonizer:

In order to achieve this goal, the Government proposes to ask Parliament to legally declare the gold coin and bullion of the Congolese franc, which at present is defined by decree. This gold covering is analogous to that of the Belgian franc. Thus the two currencies, while remaining distinct, will each have an identical basis determined by the same legislative body.

The "Banque Nationale de Belgique" and the "Banque Centrale du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi" will each keep its monetary reserves, but they will be managed according to special agreements concluded between the two banks. In view of facilitating the covering of the temporary deficits of the Congo's balance of payments, the Banque Centrale's foreign currency reserve will be backed by an intervention of the Banque Nationale. . .

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

In the framework of this monetary agreement all matters having a specific influence on the Congo's monetary situation will be handled as problems of joint interest.<sup>168</sup>

Upon independence, Congo would be under the direct supervision and control of the Belgian National Bank, giving Belgium the neocolonial power to adjust currency values and keep Congo in constant economic dependency. This cooperative banking structure would, in effect, leave Congo at the mercy of a former imperial power still interested in reaping the benefits of colonization.

In 1959, Mr. Cornelis, Governor General of Congo, delivered alarming news to Government Council:

In our march forward, however, we come up against a sizeable obstacle.

The year 1958 was the year of economic recession, and the year 1959 was one of political unrest and disorder. The combination of both these factors brought- about our -financial weakening.

The characteristics of this weakness are twofold: the balance of payments shows serious unbalance, and public finances are very heavily compromised.

The reason for this is that, owing to loss of confidence on the part of investors as a result of passionate and even incendiary statements, public finances - which had come to the aid of private investment during the recession period in order to sustain the country's economy - found themselves deprived of their sources of supply.

Thus, the major part of this year's extraordinary expenditure had to be met out of Treasury reserves which, as a result, are now dangerously weakened.

This weakening will have a very serious effect on whatever important decisions will be made in the future.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>169</sup> INFORCONGO, "The Congo's Economic and Financial Situation in 1959: A Speech by Mr. Cornelis, Governor General, to the Government Council," *Belgian Congo 59, Monthly Bulletin*, No. 12 (Dec., 1959), in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 5: 7-8.

This news came at a time when the Congolese were consuming more and more. Wages were raised by the Belgian government and the Congolese responded by improving their day to day existence by purchasing more food and consumer goods. With this recession, the colony went into debt to continue paying these wages. On this regard the Belgian colonial government was looking out for the best interest of the Congolese, however, no Congolese were involved in the process. How, then, can the Congolese be responsible for the debt incurred at independence, especially after the wealth it produced for King Leopold II and Belgium for the eight decades prior? Is Belgian and Western modernization of Congo the bill for this debt?

This debt, theoretically, would be manageable with a functioning industrial complex in the hands of national industrialists willing to reinvest domestically. This was never an option; neocolonial policy and Congolese economic education thwarted such a scenario. As Fanon argues:

The national bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries is not geared to production, invention, creation, or work. All its energy is channeled into intermediary activities. Networking and scheming seem to be its underlying vocation. The national bourgeoisie has the psychology of a businessman, not that of a captain of industry. And it should go without saying that the rapacity of the colonists and the embargo system installed by colonialism hardly left it any choice.<sup>170</sup>

With prophetic prose, Fanon juxtaposes African bourgeois leaders to American robber barons, who were in the process of ironing out mining rights in Congo. American interest in the Mining industry is evident by the presence of David Rockefeller, co-founder of Bauxicongo, a mining company concerned with the resource extraction of all alumina production minerals, and shareholder in none other than Union minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), the largest mining company in southern Congo. As the largest portion of the Congolese economy, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, substantial investments by American and Belgian firms had to be protected. To

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<sup>170</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 98.

attract even more investors, the Belgian government set up a five-year tax break for companies willing to invest before independence:

[I]f the Congo is to find on foreign markets the capital so vitally necessary to finance its extraordinary budget, it is essential to inspire confidence abroad. In actual fact, one of the main sources of confidence is precisely a well-balanced ordinary budget.

To ensure this balance, it is necessary to do one of three things: increase the receipts, cut down the expenditure, or, -- as I have done - combine the two.

Increased income will be achieved thanks to fiscal reforms which will provide an extra billion francs or so for the Congolese Treasury.

The reforms will also have the advantage of eliminating all racial discrimination and will enable a more equitable distribution of the fiscal burden amongst all taxpayers. Reinvested profits will be subject to lower taxes than shared profits. During the first five years, company profits will be exempt from taxes, insofar as they contribute to the economic development of the country.

It has also been necessary to cut down expenditure considerably, even where such expenditure' was for social purposes.<sup>171</sup>

This tax exemption for foreign companies willing to invest in Congo did provide a nexus of industrial development, but the ability of independent Congo to develop any initiative based on the revenue procured from these companies who swooped in just before independence would have to wait five critical years. The neocolonial aspects of this arrangement speak for themselves.

### **Concluding Remarks**

It is clear that the independence of Congo was hampered by the political chaos (provided, en masse, by Western interests); underdevelopment in education; neocolonial economics; and the Cold War politics that seem to emerge among nationalist movements in the Third World. The outcome was grim for the new nation, yet promising for the established Western community.

Was this death at birth a tragedy like a destiny foretold by the oracles in ancient Greece or could

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<sup>171</sup> INFORCONGO, "The Congo's Economic and Financial Situation in 1959: A Speech by Mr. Cornelis, Governor General, to the Government Council," *Belgian Congo 59, Monthly Bulletin*, No. 12 (Dec., 1959), in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 5:

this gruesome situation have been avoided? The answers lie in the future of Congo; did Western powers benefit from the exploitation of minerals and labor that Congo provided? Was a destabilized government necessary for the West to gain a foothold in Congo and continually reap the benefits of mineral exploitation at the expense of a vast Congolese population? In 1960, the answer was yes, and the Western policies enacted and actively pursued during this time period would continue through the next phase of Congo's political history: the failure of a second independence movement after the assassination of Lumumba and the rise of a Western-friendly, kleptocratic strongman in Joseph Mobutu.

Given the nature of post-colonial politics within Congo, no amount of native, secondary and post-secondary education would have helped the ferocity of immediate post-colonial Cold War politics. It was apparent that the former colonizer and its Western allies were intent on creating neocolonial relationships by propping up a friendly puppet regime. The question of who would lead this regime had less to do with the educational preparation of the Congolese *évolués* and was more akin to the level of loyalty that any traditional Congolese elite or *évolué* exhibited toward Belgium and its allies, particularly the United States. However, an analysis of the minimal education of the Congolese before and during the decolonization process evinces the nature of colonial Congo and the challenges that faced Congo in a post-colonial setting. The human resources necessary to effectively manage a country as large as Congo far exceeded the amount of qualified indigenous leaders. Lumumba and his *évolué* compatriots were too few in number to run an effective government without the crushing, ubiquitous presence of neocolonial Cold War politics. "Western fears of Soviet bloc influence in Africa seriously affected Afro-Western relations. . . Soviet actions and intentions thus became a crucial element in the

calculations of both sides in all aspects of their relations.”<sup>172</sup> Challenging the former colonizer and its allies presented mortal problems for the first Congolese Prime Minister, yet, none of his successors (prior to Mobutu’s successful 1965 coup) fared any better under the tutelage of Western diplomats: the same diplomats that perpetuated the need to eliminate Congo’s first Prime Minister. Following Lumumba’s arrest in December of 1960, only radical leaders within Congo supported his claim to leadership. That radical leadership, led by Antoine Gizenga attempted to hold out in Stanleyville in Oriental Province, even after news of Lumumba’s assassination, but would eventually accept positions in a united government because it did not wish a Western- intervention like Tshombe’s secession in Katanga.<sup>173</sup>

At some point just prior to his assassination, Lumumba, perhaps sensing his ultimate demise, wrote a letter to his wife, Pauline. Lumumba was married to two women with Pauline as a first name. He was separated from his fourth wife, Pauline Opango, at the time of his arrest; his third wife, Pauline Kie, visited him in his prison cell at Thysville, disguised as a soldier. The intended recipient of the letter is not known.<sup>174</sup> What is clear from the letter is Lumumba’s undying passion for Congo and his relentless efforts to rid the former colony of its neocolonial shackles. “The letter was published by the Tunisian weekly *Jeune Afrique*. Serge Michel, a journalist for the Algerian National Liberation Front, who was Lumumba’s press attaché during the Congo crisis, was in Tunis at the time”:<sup>175</sup>

My beloved companion,

I write you these words not knowing whether you will receive them, when you will receive them, and whether I will still be alive when you read them.

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<sup>172</sup> Chinweizu, “Africa and the Capitalist Countries,” in *UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. VIII: Africa since 1935: Unabridged Edition*, Ali A. Mazrui, ed. (California: James Currey Ltd., 1999): 74,

<sup>173</sup> Sergei Mazov, “Soviet Aid,” 435.

<sup>174</sup> De Witte, *Assassination*, 184.

<sup>175</sup> Jean Van Lierde, ed., *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961*, Helen R. Lane, trans. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963): 421.

Throughout my struggle for the independence of my country, I have never doubted for a single instant that the sacred cause to which my comrades and I have dedicated our entire lives would triumph in the end. But what we wanted for our country - its right to an honorable life, to perfect dignity, to independence with no restrictions - was never wanted by Belgian colonialism and its Western allies, who found direct and indirect, intentional and unintentional support among certain high officials of the United Nations, that body in which we placed all our trust when we called on it for help.

They have corrupted some of our countrymen; they have bought others; they have done their part to distort the truth and defile our independence. What else can I say? That whether dead or alive, free or in prison by order of the colonialists, it is /not my person that is important. What is important is the Congo, our poor people whose independence has been turned into a cage, with people looking at us from outside the bars, sometimes with charitable compassion, sometimes with glee and delight. But my faith will remain unshakable. I know and feel in my very heart of hearts that sooner or later my people will rid themselves of all their enemies, foreign and domestic, that they will rise up as one to say no to the shame and degradation of colonialism and regain their dignity in the pure light of day.

We are not alone. Africa, Asia, and the free and liberated peoples in every corner of the globe will ever remain at the side of the millions of Congolese who will not abandon the struggle until the day when there will be no more colonizers and no more of their mercenaries in our country. I want my children, whom I leave behind and perhaps will never see again, to be told that the future of the Congo is beautiful and that their country expects them, as it expects every Congolese, to fulfill the sacred task of rebuilding our independence, our sovereignty; for without justice there is no dignity and without independence there are no free men.

Neither brutal assaults, nor cruel mistreatment, nor torture have ever led me to beg for mercy, for I prefer to die with my head held high, unshakable faith, and the greatest confidence in the destiny of my country rather than live in slavery and contempt for sacred principles. History will one day have its say; it will not be the history taught in the United Nations, Washington, Paris, or Brussels, however, but the history taught in the countries that have rid themselves of colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its Own history, and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history full of glory and dignity.

Do not weep for me, my companion, I know that my country, now suffering so much, will be able to defend its independence and its freedom. Long live the Congo! Long live Africa!

Patrice. <sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Van Lierde, ed., *Lumumba Speaks*, 421-3; the same letter, with slight translation differences can be found in Nkrumah, *Challenge*, 128-9; and De Witte, *Assassination*, 184-5.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Continued Neocolonialism from Martyr to Marionette**

*The national bourgeoisie discovers its historical mission as intermediary. As we have seen, its vocation is not to transform the nation but prosaically serve as a conveyor belt for capitalism, forced to camouflage itself behind the mask of neocolonialism.*

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)

From October 10, 1960 to August 1961, during the house arrest and imprisonment of Patrice Lumumba, and after his grizzly assassination, the people of Congo experienced marshal law under the leadership of a young Joseph Mobutu. Many were collateral damage in a bloody war of secession, as Moise Tshombe and Albert Kalonji insisted on the sovereignty of Katanga and Kasai Provinces, respectively. Cyrille Adoula, the one-time Lumumba ally, took the reigns as Prime Minister in August 1961. His government, though, was a puppet regime, under the advice and watchful eyes of Mobutu, his Binza Group partners and their Western backers. This neocolonial government operated as America's visible hand in Congo, with the US Embassy driving the decision-making. Adoula's government, though, proved unable to quell the violence of secession and bring the Katanga and Kasai Provinces back into the fold. The American answer to this politically volatile situation was to install Tshombe as the redeemer. Western interests replaced Adoula with Tshombe in 1964, promoting the idea that "old secessionists, radicals and moderates" could come together to save Congo.<sup>177</sup> The rebellion in Stanleyville in late 1964 would prove to the Western powers that many Africans believed Tshombe an African traitor. The United States and Belgium intervened to put down this rebellion in Eastern Province; however, this politically motivated, divisive episode paved the way for Mobutu's

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<sup>177</sup> Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 136.

second hack at military rule. His 1965 coup, unlike in 1960-1961, would succeed and place Joseph Mobutu in control of the Congolese government for the next three decades.<sup>178</sup>

This chapter analyzes the political and economic motivations prompting Western intervention in the war-torn Congo, initially controlling the puppet regimes of Adoula and Tshombe, and eventually leading to Western support of a neocolonial strongman—Joseph Mobutu. Furthermore, the chapter argues that the economic investment of foreign nationals and the Cold War politics of this period motivated Western powers, especially the United States, to intervene, support and control the successive Congolese governments in order to exploit the riches of this vast nation in equatorial Africa. The United States would become the leading voice of this satellite imperialism, surpassing Belgium in diplomatic influence, military support and international loans, only to overlook Mobutu brutally suppressing free will, democratic ideals and public criticism on a path to personal enrichment at the expense of millions of Congolese. The first section examines the nature of Cold War politics after the assassination of Lumumba through the rise of Mobutu, detailing the perceived political imperatives of the United States and other Western allies, potentially validating their neocolonial control. The second section focuses on economic motivations for Western intervention and the utter lack of meaningful Congolese resistance. The third section dissects the societal implications of the Mobutu rule, which left most Congolese living in worse socio-economic conditions than on the eve of independence. And, the final section offers concluding remarks highlighting the major findings.

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-139; The Biza Group was named for the location in which it held its meetings in Binza, a suburb of Kinshasa. The leaders of this neocolonial elite group were Victor Nendaka, a former Belgian informant and colonial intelligence commissioner; Justin Bomboko, foreign minister for Lumumba, Adoula, Tshombe, Kimba and Mobutu; Albert Ndele, the National Bank President; and Damien Kondolo, permanent secretary of the interior ministry; see Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2002): 50; and Jeanne M. Haskin, *The Tragic State of the Congo: From Decolonization to Dictatorship* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005): 27; the visible hand is a reference to Alfred Chandler's work, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap Press, 1977) in which Chandler argues that a managerial hierarchy promotes efficient business, more so than Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand," or natural market forces.

## Neocolonial Cold War Politics Post-Lumumba Congo-Zaire

### *Post-Martyr*

A neocolonial state developed under Kasavubu's government following the execution of Lumumba. The secession of Tshombe's mineral-rich Katanga and Albert Kalonji's South Kasai prohibited any real societal progress from 1961-1965. The ineffectual interim Prime Minister Joseph Ileo, a proponent of an "undivided, yet decentralized Congo" could not coax Tshombe to rejoin the Congolese government.<sup>179</sup> Kasavubu then appointed Cyrille Adoula, once a Lumumba ally, only to join Albert Kalonji's faction of the Congolese National Movement (MNC-Kalonji), in 1961 and Adoula held that position until 1964. Consumed with the secession of Katanga during his entire time in office, Adoula ineffectively administered Congo and Western interests eventually replaced him with Moise Tshombe, who joined the government as Premier after formally ending his province's secession at the prodding of the United States and Belgium.<sup>180</sup>

The secession of Katanga and, and to a much smaller extent, Kasai wreaked havoc on the political stability and public security in Congo. Moise Tshombe controlled the mineral rich province of Katanga with the political and military support of Belgium and the white settlers of Northern Rhodesia and Angola. The Belgian government feared a nationalization of the Union minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK), and Tshombe proved willing to provide a neocolonial provincial government to allow continued mining during the first Congo crisis. In order to stave off a conflict spill-over into their territories, the white settlers of Angola and Northern Rhodesia allowed access to the sea for export of the valuable minerals and transport of Belgian

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<sup>179</sup> Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002): 185.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-194.

mercenaries, military supplies and advisors.<sup>181</sup> Adoula was under intense political pressure to solve the Katanga situation. Extremists and moderates in the Central Government supported Adoula against the common threat of Tshombe, however, if Adoula were to fail, that tacit support would diminish greatly. Antoine Gizenga, in Stanleyville, as a Lumumbist opposition leader to Adoula, presented another problem. Adoula depended on United Nations intervention to reintegrate Katanga, but this intervention was not permanent. The UN forces were at a stalemate with the Katangan forces by December 7, 1961. The Central Government's army showed little discipline and Adoula would have to demonstrate access to substantial funds, military supplies and foreign aid that Lumumba was incapable of harnessing.<sup>182</sup> According to the CIA:

Whatever may be done to remove Katanga's separatism, the Congo as a whole seems likely to remain in turmoil for many months to come, with UN presence required for an indefinite period if a minimum degree of order is to be maintained. Aside from the problems of Katanga and the Gizengists, the Congo seems likely to remain plagued with the problems of lack of army discipline, massive unemployment, lack of national consciousness, tribal rivalries, and lack of leadership and training at all levels of government and in the economy as a whole.<sup>183</sup>

Lumumba's successor in the Prime Minister's office had his back against the wall.

By May 1962, the secession of Katanga still raged in southeastern Congo, with interprovincial tribal conflict between the Luba people of northern Katanga and the Lunda people of Southern Katanga. The Luba opposed Tshombe, a Lunda, and fiercely resisted his forces in the northern reaches of the province. Meanwhile, half of Congo's budgetary income stemmed from Belgian mining interests in Katanga. With no money coming from the mining

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<sup>181</sup> Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire* (Washington: American University Press, 1993): 87.

<sup>182</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 115-126.

<sup>183</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 65-2-61: Possible Developments in Katanga," (December 7, 1961, Release Date July, 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1-4, 4.

province, the Central Government's potential to raise an effective army to smash the secession seemed bleak. The CIA believed that negotiations between Tshombe and Adoula would remain at a standstill without the foreign pressures exerted "by the Belgium and UK Governments and economic interests, the UN and the US."<sup>184</sup>

In many corners of Africa, Katanga's secession symbolized "the power of Western commercial interests and 'neocolonialists' to block the realization of unity and full national independence." Adoula needed the United States and the UN; however, a "unity-by-force" resolution from the UN would showcase conflicting Western neocolonial interests and the dwindling UN coffers made it likely that the UN forces in Katanga would significantly diminish. These factors, despite growing resentment of Tshombe around Africa, made it unlikely that a cease-fire and reintegration of the Katanga Province would happen soon. This increasingly hostile situation had significant security concerns for the US. "Were integration efforts to fail, many Afro-Asian states would consider the US responsible along with the UK, Belgium, and France. Soviet Bloc states are currently playing no significant role in the Congo, but they will be alert to exploit for their own purposes any change which turns Adoula or the Afro-Asians against the West on the issue of integration."<sup>185</sup> Both Tshombe and Adoula proved unwilling to offer concessions before each other's counterpart because each felt the other might not honor the agreement. Tshombe required some level of autonomy, and according to the CIA, most of the other provinces would ultimately demand the same. The UN would be necessary to pressure both sides into a deal.

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 3; CIA FOIA FDV, "Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 65-62: The Katanga Integration Problem," (May 16, 1962, Release Date July, 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 2.

<sup>185</sup> CIA "Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 65-62," 5.

In January of 1963, Belgium was the only country that stood to face economic hardship if the Katanga mining industry faltered in exporting at its capacity. The US had stockpiles of cobalt, cadmium, zinc, and copper, and it was able to withstand a prolonged cessation of production from Katanga. Belgium, then, had an economic interest to maintain support for the government allowing the mines to operate despite the political conflict.<sup>186</sup> Tshombe was the figurehead in charge of Katanga, and his cache of Belgian advisors worked diligently to protect Belgian investments.

After the mysterious death of Dag Hammarskjold on September 18, 1961, U Thant of Burma became the Secretary-General of the United Nations.<sup>187</sup> In 1963, the US and UN officials in Congo were alarmed that Thant was prepared to proceed with a full withdrawal of UN troops in Katanga. To the US, these troops were vital to maintaining order in the embattled province. As an alternative political tactic, the Adoula government partitioned Katanga into two separate provinces. The Congolese Parliament decided to create a Lualaba Province in western Katanga. Tshombe opposed this measure, as his Lunda people shared that region with a traditional adversary, the Tshokwe. The partition also posed another possibility of conflict: the new province would include Kolwezi, an area that yielded nearly two-thirds of Katanga's minerals and almost three quarters of its hydroelectric power, and where a third of UMHK's processing facilities resided.<sup>188</sup> Tshombe, though in a political bind, still publicly denounced Adoula's efforts at reunification. Tshombe's political maneuvering from 1962 through the beginning of

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<sup>186</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Current Support Brief: Threat of Sabotage to the Mining and Metals Industry of Katanga" (January 8, 1963, Release Date July 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 6.

<sup>187</sup> "Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden): Second United Nations Secretary-General," *UN.org*, <http://www.un.org/Overview/SG/sg2bio.html> (accessed June 7, 2009); Hammarskjold was on a peace mission in Congo when his plane mysteriously crashed. His ongoing feud with Tshombe led many to speculate Tshombe's participation in the plane crash. No conclusive evidence has been found.

<sup>188</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Weekly Summary," Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency (May 31, 1963, Release Date July 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 12.

1964 poked many holes in the façade of the Adoula regime. His statements to the press in Katanga served to illuminate the contradictory behaviors of the Adoula regime, such as the Prime Minister's condemning of Albert Kolonji for imprisoning political dissenters in Kasai while the Adoula regime conducted the suppression of speech in much the same way. Tshombe also claimed that the Prime Minister enjoyed a privileged, elite status while millions in Congo went hungry. Much of Tshombe's political banter made waves inside Congo as well as in the international community, including his implication that the United Nations and the United States had been duped by Adoula, much to the detriment of Congo: "Mr. Adoula, who is supposed to represent legality in the Congo, cares little for the laws which prohibit such imprisonments. By professing high principles which he did not practice [*sic.*], Mr. Adoula was able to deceive the United Nations and more particularly the Americans who, by the 'Council of Lovanium', brought him to power."<sup>189</sup>

The campus of Lovanium University (now the University of Kinshasa) hosted another neocolonial action. In order to quell the rise of the alleged Lumumbist radicals like Antoine Gizenga following the assassination of Lumumba, the United Nations convened the Congolese Parliament to name a prime minister. The Parliament selected Adoula, viewed as the best choice to eliminate any radical threat, as the head of government. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, the whole selection process smacked of US puppeteering, with many US personalities taking unofficial credit for the choice.<sup>190</sup> This appointment and the largely unproductive, subsequent talks spelled political trouble for Tshombe. By the end of 1963, with external pressure mounting, the writing of reunification and a loss of Katangan autonomy was on the wall.

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<sup>189</sup> Moise Tshombe, "Statement to the Press by Mr. Tshombe at Elisabethville on Thursday, 17 May 1962," in "Annexes to the Report on the Adoula-Tshombe Talks," *United Nations Security Council, S/5053/Add.10/Annexes* (28 June 1962) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009).

<sup>190</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 117.

By February 1964, Tshombe enjoyed a self-imposed exile in Spain. U Thant, after taking the reigns of the UN, succeeded in doing exactly as Lumumba asked in 1960: his UN troops forcefully ended the secession of Katanga. While the UN troops in Katanga maintained order, a new agreement had to be reached about the government make-up of Congo. Adoula's political liability prompted the United States and Belgium to make a deal. The unification and stabilization of Congo appeared more advantageous than bitter secession conflict.<sup>191</sup> Adoula proved unable to effectively administer the Congolese government even with Tshombe out of the picture. Members of the Congolese Parliament opposing Adoula succeeded in preventing the Prime Minister's wish to restrict the legislature's powers. They continually harassed his political endeavors and the Congolese government exuded dysfunction.<sup>192</sup> Meanwhile, Tshombe sat in Spain, poised to make his political return, waiting for Western interests to install him as the new prime minister, bringing together radicals, extremists and moderates in Congo. Interestingly, this promotion also coincided with the withdrawal of UN troops from Katanga.<sup>193</sup> "If the Binza Group clings to power in Leopoldville, it may attempt to forestall an ANC [led by Joseph Mobutu] takeover and at the same time pacify regional attitudes by bringing Tshombe into an influential position in the central government. Tshombe has made it clear that his objective is power at the national level."<sup>194</sup>

Adoula's ailing government felt the pressure from rebellions in the Kivu Province and in Kwilu, just south of Kinshasa. The *maquis* in Kivu Province in eastern Congo, (led, in part, by *Conceil national de liberation* [CNL] leaders Cristophe Gbenye, Gaston Soumialot, and a young

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<sup>191</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Memorandum: The Political Situation and Prospects in the Congo" (February 20, 1964, Release Date November 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 6

<sup>192</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Weekly Summary, Office of Current Intelligence" (September 20, 1963, Release Date July 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 14.

<sup>193</sup> Nzungu-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 115-6.

<sup>194</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Memorandum: The Political Situation and Prospects in the Congo" (February 20, 1964, Release Date November 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 6.



Laurent Kabila), resulted from the protracted decay of that area due to a decrease in the economic and social well-being of the Congolese living there. The entire eastern portion of Congo, isolated from the political and industrial centers of Kinshasa and Katanga (Shaba), became the scene of an intense, violent resistance to the ANC—the atrophied muscle of the central government, commanded by Joseph Mobutu. Pierre Mulele and his Kwilu rebellion—with communist ties—carved out a portion of southwestern Congo, fighting for social transformation. Mulele spent 15 months in the People’s Republic of China and brought a Maoist approach to resistance in Congo. His grassroots education and guerilla tactics succeeded for a time, but as detailed later, Tshombe’s neocolonial forces would ultimately quell his rebellion. Mulele would later leave Congo—following the failure of his rebellion—for Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, just across the Congo River, only to come back in 1968 under the auspices of a Mobutu amnesty promise, and was later brutally executed as a public warning to those who sought to undermine Mobutu’s rule. The CNL rebelled from the comforts of Stanleyville, but mostly concerned itself with narrow class interests, led by politicians stationed in Brazzaville and Burundi, and after Israeli, American and Belgian military intervention, ceased to be an effective resistance in Congo.<sup>195</sup>

Aware of the deficiencies in the ANC, the central government approved the retraining of its armed forces. According to the CIA, “[a]ttempts to retrain the ANC are being stepped up; about 90 Belgian, 70 American, and 10 Israeli military men are in the Congo now and more US and Belgian advisers are on the way. . . The arrival in Kivu of a handful of Belgian officers, for example, was probably responsible for avoiding the complete collapse of the ANC there early

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<sup>195</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 126-135.

this month.”<sup>196</sup> Neocolonial policies continued through the entirety of Adoula’s government, and with the Western-friendly Binza Group switching to throw its support behind Tshombe, Adoula found himself out of the picture.<sup>197</sup> Adding to the already blatantly apparent need for Western support, Tshombe, upon taking office, increased the obvious neocolonial nature of Congo in 1964. “As for the relations with the US, Tshombé told [censored material] that he hoped ‘*bygones* would be *bygones*,’ but implied that cordial relations might depend on the continuation of US aid, now running at a rate of about \$50 million a year.”<sup>198</sup>

Two politically crippling situations mired Tshombe’s brief time in office. First, Tshombe inherited two internal rebellions (though not of his making) from the start. Second, many Africans outside Congo as well as many within his own government and country viewed Tshombe as a traitor. Switching allegiances and favoring Western powers did not serve his political career well inside Congo. In June 1964, the CIA deemed the CNL rebellion in Kivu the “thorniest immediate problem” of the Tshombe regime. The two months of fighting in Kivu by a small ethnic rebel force demoralized the ANC and drove it back several times. The ANC eventually quelled the rebel conflict, but the *maquis* fighters continually received military supplies from Burundi. Westerners regarded Mobutu as “vain and lazy” and he refused to admit his army’s shortcomings. He proved to be a roadblock rather than catalyst in the West’s efforts to retrain ANC soldiers. The CIA believed, in June 1964, that as a last resort, the Congolese central government would call on Belgium for support in stopping the rebels in the East. The CIA predicted that Belgium would be hesitant to deploy troops again after the international

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<sup>196</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Memorandum: The Security Situation in the Congo,” The Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency (June 17, 1964, Release Date November 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 4.

<sup>197</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Central Intelligence Bulletin: Current Intelligence Relating to National Security” (July 2, 1964, Release Date September 2002) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 5.

<sup>198</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Central Intelligence Bulletin: Current Intelligence Relating to National Security” (July 11, 1964, Release Date September 2002) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 4.

criticism it received for its 1960 intervention.<sup>199</sup> Tensions escalated when Cristophe Gbenye, a leader of the CNL, held a press conference from Stanleyville on September 20 in which he proceeded to highlight the international presence in eastern Congo. According to Gbenye, “the Americans are in progress of destroying the population with their aircraft. I have given an order to have a mercenary brought here. When this is done, you will see how a negro (‘un negre’) takes vengeance.” Further into the conference, Gbenye stipulated the he “cannot reply for the security of the European population if these countries continue to interfere in our affairs.”<sup>200</sup> The Belgians did commit paratroopers via an American airlift approved by President Lyndon Johnson on November 24, 1964. Under the humanitarian pretext that the US and Belgium intervened to save white hostages, the Belgian forces drove back the rebels and paved the way for the central government’s reoccupation of the important cities of Stanleyville and Isiro. The CNL leaders in Stanleyville lacked “programmatic and ideological” platforms from which to govern Stanleyville and the surrounding area. “The acquisition of a liberated area (which devotees of Mao’s guerilla strategy claim as a vital stage in any development of a guerilla effort), was a catastrophe rather than being an advantage. It was at this point [when the CNL gained control of Stanleyville] that the absence of economic or social goals became exposed.” Stanleyville, from the instant of rebel control, became chaotic and the leaders had too few men, ideas or financial options to govern.<sup>201</sup> After the externally-led intervention eliminated the eastern rebellion, all of the CNL leadership faded into exile, or in Kabila’s case, retreated to the

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<sup>199</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Special Report: Exile Activity Against Leopoldville Government,” Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency (May 22, 1964, Release Date November 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1-5.

<sup>200</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Intelligence Information Cable: Treatment of American Consular Personnel at Stanleyville” (October 16, 1964, Release Date November 2001) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1-5.

<sup>201</sup> Crawford Young, “Violence and Rebellion in the Congo,” in *The Congo, Africa and America*, Gary Gappert and Garry Thomas, eds., Occasional Paper, Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 20, Folder 13.

small Fizi-Baraka area, leading a “low-intensity guerilla struggle” until the 1980s, when he “retired” to a life of smuggling gold and ivory across international borders for profit.<sup>202</sup>

Lumumba’s Minister of Education, the revolutionary Pierre Mulele, began a popular rebellion in his home province of Kwilu in 1963. Mulele, a proud Lumumbist, incited fighting a nationalist *maquis* just east of Leopoldville, leading many marginalized Congolese peasants and *évolués*. Throughout Congo, many cheered Mulele’s exploits. Even eastern Congolese locals, many of whom were members of the other rebel group, The CNL believed Mulele had magical powers. Rumors spread like wildfire throughout the area that Mulele could turn bullets to water. Many of the rebel soldiers of the area would shout *Mai Mulele* (Mulele Water) when under enemy fire, believing it would protect them.<sup>203</sup> Mulele’s rebellion would not last, however.

According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, basing a revolution solely in one’s home territory is ultimately not sustainable. He states:

The choice of his own region of origin as a revolutionary base, the lack of external sources of military supplies, and the absence of a dependable rear base in the neighboring countries turned out to have the most negative consequences for the struggle. Although it did appear sensible for all revolutionaries to start the struggle in their own areas with the aim of eventually merging all of the revolutionary bases in a truly mass-based national struggle, the fact that a revolutionary leader of Mulele’s stature was to be mainly identified with his and allied ethnic groups proved detrimental to the struggle, as other groups were encouraged to feel excluded from it by the enemies of the revolution.<sup>204</sup>

United States President L. B. Johnson committed American paratroopers to the cities held by Eastern rebels under the pretext of saving the lives of whites held hostage in the area in a humanitarian mission. Belgium also provided paratroopers for the mission codenamed *The Red Dragon*. These elite troops paved the way for the Congolese government to reclaim these rebel

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<sup>202</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 134-138.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-130.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

strongholds and permanently damage the ability of the Eastern rebels to mount any future attacks. This externally led military operation stabilized the eastern reaches of the young nation and gift-wrapped a weak, reeling government waiting for Joseph Mobutu to usurp in late 1965 as he ushered in the Second Republic.<sup>205</sup> Fanon's correctly theorized that a new leader, as a member of the national bourgeois, will turn his back on the interior, and instead operate as "the CEO of the company of profiteers composed of a national bourgeois intent only on getting the most out of the situation." Fanon's prediction proved true for 80 percent of Congo's first government leaders. Lumumba was the lone exception, whereas Kasavubu, Adoula, Tshombe, and especially Mobutu, were the rule.

The view of many Africans of Tshombe proved valid. Tshombe, the western puppet, quickly set out to repair the damage done during the five years of conflict since independence. According to the CIA, Tshombe was in Belgium's pocket and would listen to the US on account of his relationship with his former colonial masters. He sought to give the impression to the Congolese masses that he ran the show, but his methods were "cheap and easy," by making payments of arrears in salaries to ethnic leaders; however, animosity for Tshombe's government still remained throughout the country. He then turned to harsher measures to establish his reign and many thought him likely to use the ANC, his ex-"gendarmes" [Belgian mercenaries] and white mercenaries to prove his might. Tshombe remembered the role of the United States in his foiled Katanga secession; however, upon taking the office of Prime Minister, he quickly realized his dire need of American money and supplies.<sup>206</sup> His entire, brief existence as Premier was a neocolonial puppet show, highlighted only by free and fair elections held in 1965, only to create

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<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-9.

<sup>206</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Special National Intelligence Estimate: Short-Term Prospects for the Tshombe Government in the Congo" (August 5, 1964, Release Date January 18, 1990) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 3, 7.

a tense rivalry between Kasavubu and Tshombe. On October 13, 1965, with the elections approaching, Kasavubu dismissed Tshombe in a bold move reminiscent of his ousting of Lumumba in 1960. Tshombe's replacement, Évariste Kimba, was not the ideal man for the job. Not liked by foreign countries invested in Congo, lacking the charisma of Tshombe, and failing to carry a large constituency, Kimba's ad hoc installation was the perfect opportunity for Mobutu to stage his second coup. Mobutu deposed Kasavubu on November 24, 1965, citing the President's inability to govern during civil unrest. Mobutu pronounced himself head of state on the same day.<sup>207</sup>

Tshombe was not out of the political game just yet, or at least, that is how Mobutu saw it. The day after his bloodless coup, Mobutu asked Tshombe to accept a position in the government of Premier Designate Colonel Leonard Mulamba, a close military ally of Mobutu. Tshombe refused.<sup>208</sup> Mobutu immediately sought the advice of the Binza Group who recommended Mobutu not seek the consultation from provincial leaders, but incorporate the educated youth into his government, and most importantly, "appoint persons in whose loyalty and ability he has absolute confidence to the key ministerial posts. Those members present told Mobutu they consider the ministries [*sic.*] of foreign affairs, interior, information, defense and finance to be the critical ministries [*sic.*]."<sup>209</sup> That night, Mobutu took their advice, hiring his first cousin, though not qualified, as his finance minister. Tshombe would retreat to Spain following this

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<sup>207</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, 133.

<sup>208</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Ex-Prime Minister Tshombe's Intention Not to Participate in the Mulamba Government," Intelligence Information Cable (November 27, 1965, Release Date March 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009).

<sup>209</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Mobutu Meets with Other Members of the Binza Group," Intelligence Information Cable (November 27, 1965, Release Date March 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009).

drastic change of events, only to be kidnapped shortly thereafter and jailed in an Algerian prison.<sup>210</sup>

### *The Second Coming of Mobutu*

For thirty-two years, Joseph Mobutu controlled Congo with an iron fist, only to fatten the pockets of the military dictator and his cronies at the expense of the Congolese masses. From 1965-1990, Mobutu proved unassailable, using the vast wealth of Congo as a personal cash register to fill his coffers. After decay and social unrest led his Western backers to discontinue their patronage of Mobutu, the dictator eventually permitted (though he personally sabotaged it) a push for a multi-party democracy during the 1990s. Three realities paved the way to Mobutu's success for the better part of three decades. First, the economic success of Congo from 1965-1970, due to a largely stabilized nation, allowed commerce to flourish—a sharp contrast to the chaos of the First Republic. Agricultural and mineral wealth poured out of Congo, bringing economic viability to the Mobutu regime. Second, Mobutu demanded an authenticity shift, which Africanized the European names from the days of colonization, to distinguish his regime from the weak, neocolonial government he replaced. Streets, buildings, cities, provinces, the nation—renamed Zaïre—and even citizens had their European names replaced by those of an African persuasion. For example, Mobutu renamed Leopoldville to Kinshasa; Stanleyville to Kisangani; and the Province of Katanga to Shaba. Third, and most important, Western powers supplied Mobutu with the money, supplies and diplomatic assistance necessary to maintain his authoritarian grip on Congo, while also catering to the West's Cold War agenda in Africa. This agenda included supplying Jonas Savimbi's rebel force in Angola via a Zairian "pipeline" that brought weapons from the United States to Zaire and across the Angolan border to Savimbi's

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<sup>210</sup> Kelly, *America's Tyrant*, 180-4.

UNITA soldiers. Mobutu was helping the West's crusade to preserve the "vital interests of the free world."<sup>211</sup> His tenure as leader of Congo-Zaire for over thirty years epitomized Fanon's definition neocolonialism:

But in the aftermath of independence, far from actually embodying the needs of the people, far from establishing himself as the promoter of the actual dignity of the people, which is founded on bread, land, and putting the country back into their sacred hands, the leader will unmask his inner purpose: to be the CEO of the company of profiteers composed of a national bourgeoisie intent only on getting the most out of the situation.<sup>212</sup>

The first year of Mobutu's rule was not particularly effective in the eyes of Western powers. As he tried to build a name for himself as an African nationalist, Mobutu exacted measures against the Belgian investments in Congo. According to the CIA:

The Congo as always is only a step away from anarchy. President Mobutu has done little to alleviate its chronic woes, and his weaknesses as a leader are daily becoming more apparent. His main crutch, the Congolese National Army, is weak and in considerable disarray. Continued Belgian assistance is vital to the functioning of the government and economy, but Mobutu is conducting a clumsy vendetta against the Belgians in the name of Congolese economic independence. . .<sup>213</sup>

Mobutu highjacked a government with a near-impossible task of controlling an anarchic realm, hampered by his perceived lack of administrative attributes and skills. He sought acclaim from his countrymen, most notably paying "public homage to the spirit of Patrice Lumumba," in a conspicuous attempt to win over the lingering Lumumbists around Congo.<sup>214</sup> His brutal measures to suppress insurrection by using the ANC and his security force garnered Mobutu "more control over the provincial governments than any of his predecessors;"<sup>215</sup> however, his failure to improve the perpetual local ailments proved harmful, as discontent continued to brew

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-143, 143.

<sup>212</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 112.

<sup>213</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Special Memorandum No. 12-66: Implications of the Latest Congo Crisis" (August 4, 1966, Release Date March 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



in the perennial hot beds of rebellion: Kivu, Katanga, and Kisangani (new name for Stanleyville under Mobutu's regime). According to the CIA, if it were not for the continued presence of Belgians, by way of military, technical and economic assistance, Mobutu's Congo would have been in a much worse position. Because the Belgian interests were so large in the former colony, the Belgian government agreed to continually support Mobutu, even after the Congolese leader enacted economic policies unfavorable to the Belgians. More on Mobutu's economic exploits will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>216</sup>

Mobutu did calculate some political moves to his advantage, both shrewd and crude. He did select a Western-oriented cabinet, securing future aid from the likes of Belgium, the United States and other European powers. His effective use of former *gendarmes* from Katanga and Spanish and French-speaking mercenaries to ferret out rebels in the forests of Kwilu and in the northeast parts of the country slowly but surely reduced the rebellious nature of Congo, though in the East, his troops failed to successfully end resistance.<sup>217</sup> In May 1965, Mobutu showed the dark, ominous side of his dictatorial rule. His forces arrested Évariste Kimba, the former Prime Minister, and three other politicians on charges of a plot to assassinate the President. In a rapid military trial which featured an abrupt ten minute deliberation, the four politicians accused of what would be known as the "Pentecost Plot," were sentenced to hang. The execution happened in front of 50,000 observers in a busy section of Kinshasa, sending a loud-and-clear message to all potential political opponents: public criticism, subversive behavior, or any other acts deemed detrimental to the Mobutu regime would be dealt with swiftly and ruthlessly.<sup>218</sup> The CIA appraised Mobutu's handling of the situation as effective in the short term. "The plot never was

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-6.

<sup>217</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Intelligence Memorandum: The Situation in the Congo," Directorate of Intelligence (February 24, 1966, Release Date Unknown) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1-6.

<sup>218</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, 135.

a serious danger, but politicians are an ever-present potential threat to Mobutu's position, and the treatment of these four was clearly designed to discourage other would-be plotters, military as well as civilian. In this context there is little doubt that this 'solution,' too, will 'work,' at least for a while.<sup>219</sup>

For the remainder of his rule, Mobutu would need the help of the Americans to maintain his dictatorial powers, as the economic position of Congo plummeted over the next twenty years. What was once a potentially wealthy and powerful Congo became a nation full of poverty and despair. Fanon argues that a dictator in Mobutu's position cannot last very long, given the secrets of his contradictory policy—stashing away all available money, thereby depriving the government of the money necessary to dominate the masses while depriving them of any crumbs that might lead them to support the government. Before long, the masses will have had enough, and Fanon is right; but, what he fails to take into account is the level of neocolonial support available to the dictator. Mobutu would be propped up for over three decades, while the Congolese suffered through intense poverty.<sup>220</sup> Mobutu would soon have to wage war again in Tshombe's old stomping grounds, only a decade and a half after Tshombe's political and physical demise.<sup>221</sup> In Shaba, a Congolese rebellion executed by the National Congolese Liberation Front (FLNC), demonstrated the acrimony rampant in Mobutu's dictatorship. Fanon posits that the masses will turn their backs on the exclusionary government, and the leader begins

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<sup>219</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Intelligence Memorandum: The Congo's Joseph Mobutu: Past, Present and Future," Directorate of Intelligence (June 6, 1966, Release Date Unknown) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 3.

<sup>220</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched*, 111.

<sup>221</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 149-157; Tshombe was kidnapped and taken to Algeria, where he died in prison two years later of an apparent heart attack. The plot was funded by Mobutu and developed by persons closely associated with the CIA, namely Alfred J Büler, "who as a lawyer has since been involved in handling other CIA interests;" see Sean Kelly, *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire* (Washington: American University Press, 1993): 180-184.

to lose political power. Mobutu benefited from an ethnically factious nation, and a united front against his government never materialized.<sup>222</sup>

Mobutu also enjoyed regular, covert aid. The CIA signposted many of the routes Mobutu would take in his quest to hunt down real and perceived plotters, thereby protecting the Congolese leader that best suited American desires in Congo. In March 1968, an alleged plot against Mobutu, under the direction of Pierre Mulele, was underway in Congo (Brazzaville). Although the record is partially censored, it is clear that someone was informed of the alleged plot, most likely a person affiliated with the CIA. This unknown person (the name has been censored) informed Mobutu of the plan. A person working for an unknown organization (censored material) “succeeded in infiltrating a Congolese Army Colonel (Unidentified) into the rebel group posing as a partisan. [Censored name] plans to allow the rebels to mature their plan of operation and seize them at the moment they try to carry it out.”<sup>223</sup> What is clear is that someone with access to the CIA sent a cable to America informing the agency that Mobutu had been informed of the plot against him. In October of 1968, Justin Bomboko, perpetual foreign minister of Congo, delivered a bogus amnesty offer to Mulele, who accepted, and returned to Congo from Brazzaville. After a reception for Mulele at General Bobozo’s estate, Mobutu’s agents arrested the rebel leader, tried him via military tribunal and executed by firing squad. Mobutu then set out to liquidate other rebels throughout the country. Executions and exiles occurred frequently until 1971, when general amnesty was granted to exiled opponents, who then returned home.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched*, 114.

<sup>223</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Intelligence Information Cable: Alleged Congolese Rebel Plot to Overthrow the Mobutu Government” (March 9, 1968, Release Date August 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009).

<sup>224</sup> Gondola, *History of Congo*, 136.

Mobutu's popular support was high through 1975, largely due to the rising economic standards; the propaganda aimed at portraying his government's liquidation of corrupt and useless politicians who were aligned with foreign interests; the overall stability of Congo; and his authenticity process. The economic successes of the regime will be discussed later. The propaganda, while effective, did little to shed the neocolonial reality of Congo.<sup>225</sup> His authenticity project succeeded in shedding the ubiquitous colonial names of Congo, even so far as to change the name of the country to Zaïre. Inside as well as outside of Zaïre, Mobutu was given credit for a reasonable amount of domestic peace and stability. His dictatorial regime, not dissimilar to other regimes in Africa, and his Popular Revolutionary Movement (MPR)—the sole, legal political party in Zaïre—effectively garnered some level of political participation in local areas throughout the country. The United States relied on this African strongman as an ally throughout much of his reign, and his personal connections to Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush solidified continual support from the US, especially in the economic sector.<sup>226</sup> All of this, however, began to unravel once again in Shaba.

After Tshombe's defeat in the early 1960s, many of the Katangan soldiers fled Congo to neighboring Angola and joined the National Congolese liberation Front (FLNC), a rebel group that threatened Mobutu's power in the South. The group attempted to secure the mineral-rich mining centers in Shaba and to cease mineral shipments, which would strangle Kinshasa's economy, and allow the masses to overthrow Mobutu. This rebellion in Shaba did not succeed. The United States was determined to help Zaïre, because it believed that if the United States left Mobutu to his own devices and he was defeated, the rest of the African leaders

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<sup>225</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 166.

<sup>226</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Zaire: Is It Reformable," Director of Central Intelligence (June 1980, Release Date December 1995) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 5.

that supported the United States would perceive their affiliation a liability. When Mobutu's army proved woefully weak against the insurrection in Shaba leading to the Shaba Wars of 1977 and 1978, the United States stepped in to help. Belgium and France also stepped in to put down this rebellion.<sup>227</sup> External military and economic support was crucial for the Mobutu Regime to maintain its stronghold in Zaïre, but it would not be enough to keep Mobutu in power for long. By 1990, most Congolese had enough of the poverty and oppression that Mobutu came to represent. Large-scale discontent prompted Mobutu to allow a Sovereign National Conference (CNS) to assess the government and society of Zaïre and move toward a multi-party democracy, with a goal of transition in two years. Mobutu agreed, but only as long as he was guaranteed a two-year mandate while transition occurred. The goals of this conference appear in Peta

*Ikambana's Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System:*

1. A revision of the national history;
2. a thorough evaluation of all national institutions;
3. the elaboration of a new social plan consigned both in the transitional act and the draft of the constitution of a third republic;
4. the creation of new political, economic, and socio-cultural policies;
5. the definition of new political, economic, and socio-cultural orientations;
6. the definition of new political structures and institutions as well as the profile of the new Zairian leaders; and
7. the establishment of a new transitional government in charge of leading the country toward a third republic. The new transitional institutions were recognized and accepted by President Mobutu (who remained Chief of State during the transition), the High Council of the Republic (HCR), the Supreme Court, the High Commission of Elections, and the Provincial Council.

The Transitional Act established the legal foundation of the transition period, which was aimed at leading the country toward a democratic society. The Act comprised ten principles. Three of the most significant were as follows:

1. The Chief of State would not lead the transition, but would remain the symbol of national unity.
2. Political power would be equally shared by the actors of all political parties.

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<sup>227</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 161, 179-184.

3. The current President would be guaranteed a two-year mandate until the end of the transition. In addition, the Transitional Act denied the President the power to appoint or dismiss the Chief of Government and its members. This prerogative was given to the High Council of the Republic, which became the new parliament during the transition.<sup>228</sup>

Even though the CNS was permitted to investigate the Mobutu regime, it quickly realized its major roadblock: Mobutu and his cronies did not accept the findings and the recommendations in good faith. From the outset the ruler of Zaire set out to destabilize the Conference, and he did, for the most part until Laurent Kabila's forces, backed by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, stormed through Eastern and Southern Zaïre, eventually capturing Kinshasa and effectively ending Mobutu's long, brutal, totalitarian reign.<sup>229</sup>

Politically, the inability of Lumumba's successors in the early 1960s to effectively manage the constant problems of Congo created the space for Mobutu's rise to power. His time in office was brutal, often erratic, and mired by his micromanagement; however, Mobutu was a Western ally, particularly to the US, and the continual aid he received due to this alliance solidified his rule. The Cold War politics, maneuvered well by Mobutu, provided a political buffer for Zaïre, so long as it remained an anti-Soviet state. Few other African leaders stayed in power as long as Joseph Mobutu, and just as few personally profited from the spoils of power like he was able to do. As the next section suggests, Mobutu's economic policies greatly indebted Zaïre, while stuffing his bank accounts to the extent that when Mobutu was forced out of office by Laurent Kabila and his foreign partners in 1997, Zaïre owed as much as 10 billion dollars to foreign interests. This still stifles Congo today.

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<sup>228</sup> Ikambana, *Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System*, 39-40.

<sup>229</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 192-3.

## Neocolonial Economics in Post-Lumumba Congo-Zaire

The economic interests of Belgium and the United States during the post-Lumumba period of 1961-1965 were, to say the least, important enough (in the minds of the Belgian and American governments) to intervene, at will, via political and economic avenues, to ensure advantageous business arrangements in their neocolonial nest egg. The valuable minerals contained in Congolese soil, or rather Katangan (Shaban) soil, created a mounting desire of these Western powers to control the mining, processing, and distribution of precious Cold War and industrial materials such as uranium, copper, zinc, germanium, cobalt, and later columbite. Little attention was paid to the agricultural food production of Congo so long as its workers were fed enough to produce these minerals for Western consumption. Little else besides mining and banking—and perhaps agricultural cash crops—seemed to rouse the interest of the neocolonial custodians of Congo's wealth; Western interests politically and militarily intervened only if economic interests were compromised. During Mobutu's dictatorship, they applied the same formula, with the US taking a more active role in supporting a regime focused on survival and enrichment, utilizing brutal tactics to ensure political stability and a constant economic output to meet the demands of its neocolonial benefactor. The aspirations of Congolese neocolonial politicians and their Western backers created a dysfunctional Congolese economy that benefited only the corrupt government officials and Western patrons involved, while producing a massive debt for future Congolese to inherit.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> David Renton, David Seddon, and Leo Zeilig. *The Congo: Plunder and Resistance* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 120-126, 148-9; by 1988, Congo had amassed a \$7 billion debt and agricultural production declined. In that same year, World Bank estimated that the per capita income of the Congolese was \$160 annually, making the nation the eighth poorest in the world. See also Kelly, *America's Tyrant*, 175; Mobutu would fly in a lavish buffet of foods from Kinshasa when he visited areas hit hard by civil war where food, any food, was limited. Leftovers were non-existent.

On February 27, 1963, Prime Minister Adoula addressed a dinner gathering (in his honor) of the Belgian clubs the *Cercle Royal Africain* and the *Cercle Royal Gaulois Litteraire et Artitique*. In this speech, Adoula stated what the Belgian presence in post-colonial Congo meant: a helping hand in the tumultuous transition period. Prime Minister Adoula was, after all, at a function in his honor, hosted by two clubs tied to his former colonial masters; however, his speech attests to the neocolonial presence of Belgium in Congo:

There is first of all a fact that holds within itself promise for the future -- the tenacity of the private sector.

... the private sector has understood the real interests of Belgium in the Congo. Consequently, avoiding hasty conclusions, it has aimed at the future. The evolution of the situation, my presence here, the conversations we have had with the Belgian Government prove fully that is [*sic.*] has seen accurately.

... It would be unjust and contrary to the elementary principles of recognition preached by the Bantu civilization not to recall and insist upon the fact that we have been aided in our immense task by sons of this noble nation (Belgium).

... Realizing the importance of cooperation between our two countries, these men have steadfastly refused to insult the future. How many were they? That hardly matters. The essential, I will even say the good fortune of our two countries, is that they remained. It is through them that the ties woven between our two nations over eighty years have been maintained, it is their courage that permits us today to see in these relations a happy future in a new framework.<sup>231</sup>

Adoula, in his speech, acknowledged the presence of Belgian technicians and civil servants remaining in the Congo. These servants earned higher wages than the Congolese for their services and they represented the colonial power still remaining in Congo. The courage of these Belgians was economic, as most were in Congo to protect the vital American and Belgian interests—mineral exploitation. Also, many Belgian expatriates decided to stay because their social status, living and working in Congo, remained much higher than it would have been in Belgium. Since Belgium controlled this area for the better part of a century, the presence of

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<sup>231</sup> “Excerpts from an Address by His Excellency Prime Minister Adoula of the Republic of Congo,” *The Belgo-American Letter* (March, 1963) in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 8.



Belgian nationals proved the most logical choice to keep operations running during these years of crisis.<sup>232</sup>

New companies were formed during this period, demonstrating a strong American and Belgian alliance in the Katanga Province. SEDEMA (Société Européenne des Dérivés du Manganèse), the first European company to produce Manganese derivatives, formed in 1963. The company, “jointly owned by Manganese Chemicals Corp., an affiliate of Pickands Mather & Co., of Cleveland, Ohio, and various companies of the Société Générale group,” would produce manganese products for use in dry-cell batteries, drying agents for paints and industrial products, ferrites for radio and television sets, alternators and semi-conductors.<sup>233</sup> The Bus and Car Company, an affiliate of the Transcontinental Bus System of Dallas, Texas and *La Brugeoise et Nivelles*, opened in Bruges, Belgium. Katanga most certainly provided the refining products necessary for the bus industry.<sup>234</sup> Another joint venture, the Fansteel-Hoboken, S.A., merged in 1963, would be “the first fully integrated producer of refractory metals in Europe.”<sup>235</sup> The company produced materials vital to the aerospace, electronics, and chemical industries.

The United States began to take a more pivotal responsibility in Congo in 1961, ultimately leading to a larger economic investment by private American firms and the overall higher prices of imports into Congo:

Higher prices for imported goods, due mainly to increased purchases from the United States, are largely responsible.

From the first half of 1961 to the first half of 1962, deliveries from the United States to the Congo more than tripled, growing from 417 million Congolese francs to

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<sup>232</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 118; CIA FOIA FDV, “Intelligence Memorandum: The Economy of Congo (Kinshasa): Trends Since Independence and Prospects” (June 1968, Release Date, August 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 19.

<sup>233</sup> “Several Recent Industrial Developments by Members of the Societe Generale de Belgique Group of Companies,” *The Belgo-American Letter* (March, 1963): 9; in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 8.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

1,405 million. Thus, the United States has almost caught up with Belgium -- until now by far the first supplier of goods and equipment to the Congo—which sold 1,518 millions in merchandise in the first six months of 1962 against 677 millions for the same period in the preceding year.<sup>236</sup>

Many Belgians working in Congo knew that foreign investment was necessary, along with severe budget cuts, to allay any more accumulation of debt, and the harsh reality that Congolese citizens would have to give up many of the newly gained imports to reverse the trend. “[T]he deficit is already so large that the most severe fiscal discipline will be required before the Congo balances its budget. Even this will fall short of the mark without substantial foreign assistance, possibly channeled through the United Nations or other international agencies.”<sup>237</sup> By the end of 1962, Congo consistently spent much more than it produced, and desperately needed of a steady flow of foreign loans. The increase in the purchase of imports did not counterbalance an increase in exports, forcing the Congolese government to seek and accept more loans from the Monetary Council:

The balance of payments of the Congo in 1962 shows a deficit of 1,988 million Congolese francs (at the official rate of 50 C.F. to \$1.00). This deficit represents the difference between debits of 8,270 millions and credits of 6,282 millions. The headings “Capital” and “Foreign Exchange Reserves” showed a deficit of 214 millions.

The final total balance shows a surplus of 86 millions but only as a result of major financial assistance of 2,288 millions received and used by the Congo in 1962.<sup>238</sup>

By the end of 1962, the Monetary Council limited the amount of funds to Congo that financed “invisible operations” and the council urged the Congolese government to maintain a level of savings that would encourage more foreign technicians to commit to living and working in

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<sup>236</sup> “Excerpts from 1962 Annual Report of the Studies and Coordination Committee, *Federation des Entreprises Congolaises*” *The Belgo-American Letter* (July 1963): 3; in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 8

<sup>237</sup> Philippe Chevalier, “Economic Leadership in the Congo,” (paper presented by P. Chevalier, Executive Assistant to the Vice Governor, *Société Générale de Belgique*, before the Princeton University Conference on Sub-Sahara Africa, Princeton, NJ, November 10, 1961), 11; in *Belgo-American Development Corporation* in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 21, Folder 8.

<sup>238</sup> “Excerpts from 1962 Annual Report of the Studies and Coordination Committee,” 4.

Congo. The total Congolese debt owed to the Monetary Council by the end of 1962 was 24.8 billions, whereas the debt on the eve of independence was 2.1 billions.<sup>239</sup>

Clearly, the Congolese debt grew exponentially due, in large measure, to the crisis of the time period coupled with an undereducated and under-prepared government. In a little over two years, the debt of the nation increased by 1,200 per cent. What is interesting about this debt collection is that Congo started out with a debt at all. The \$2.1 billion debt on June 30, 1960 was not the responsibility of Lumumba, Kasavubu, or any other Congolese officials. These men had no access or decision-making power to reduce any debt, nor create any surpluses of food, money, or minerals prior to independence. Working from an obvious disadvantage, the Congolese government began, from birth, pressed between a rock and a hard place.

In May of 1962, During the height of the Katangan secession, The CIA estimated that pressure on both Adoula and Tshombe to reconcile would stabilize tensions in Congo thereby allowing maximum mineral production and continual profit for the Western business interests in Congo. The CIA believed that Adoula would accept a proposal that granted formal civil and military control to the central government. Likewise, it estimated that Tshombe would accept partial autonomy and a guarantee of revenue to Katanga, beginning a pattern that the CIA envisioned for the whole of Congo. The CIA prescribed modest provincial autonomy as the future of Congo, and the most lucrative regarding foreign business interests.<sup>240</sup>

As talks between Tshombe and Adoula dragged on with little headway, external pressures led to a “rapid deterioration of the Tshombe regime in Katanga Province.” By January of 1963, The CIA reported a serious risk of sabotage of the industrial facilities in that province.

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>240</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “The Katanga Integration Problem,” Special National Intelligence Estimate (May 16, 1962, Release Date July 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 6.

Tshombe, backed into a corner by the UN presence in his province, continually threatened a “scorched earth policy.” With the destruction of land and resources, the UMHK would suffer from a prolonged loss of production, seriously cutting into the profit margins of the company. While the CIA did not estimate a worldwide shortage of these minerals, the stability of the region, and the whole of Congo would be detrimentally affected. While most of the Western powers with interests in Congo had stockpiles of cobalt, uranium, and other important minerals, Belgium stood to take a hit on its economy.<sup>241</sup>

In February 1964, the CIA estimated that the modern sector of the economy of Congo was stable, despite economic turmoil. The large European-owned and operated cash crop plantations and mining outfits were largely self-sufficient and the majority of Congolese existed on subsistence farming, fishing and hunting, largely unaffected by the overall economic situation, unless they decided to participate in, or fell prey to violence relating to ethnic conflicts. While this estimation may have been accurate as it applied to the industrial complexes and the rural sectors, the vast majority Congolese had to rely on their home villages to get food. The insurrections in Oriental Province by the CNL under the leadership of Cristophe Gbenye proved that many Congolese were not happy with the living conditions in Congo in 1964, whether it was political or economic, or both. The CNL had viable reason to resist the central government under Adoula and Tshombe. From 1957 to 1970, the population of Kivu Province increased by 47.7 percent, while the percent increase in gross national product (GNP) of Kivu was only 12 percent, largely due to government allocations. The difference is a decrease of 35.7 percent, translating to substantially lower standards of living for the people of Kivu, while Kinshasa and

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<sup>241</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Threat of Sabotage to the Mining and Metals Industry of Katanga,” Current Support Brief, Office of Research and Reports (January 8, 1963, Release Date July 2000) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1-6.

Katanga (Shaba) experienced growth in the same period.<sup>242</sup> Operation Red Dragon's success in halting this insurrection severed any unity between the remaining Lumumbists in Congo and any chance of an overthrow of the government by radical forces. It also ensured that the neocolonial government in Kinshasa would live to fight another day.<sup>243</sup>

By May 1964, the CIA saw a different picture. The agency reported much discontent in Congo, largely due to the corruption and maladministration at all levels of government. Due to this corruption and inept governance, road repairs ceased, leaving farmers no method to market their goods; low-level civil servants rarely received their pay on time due to upper-level administrators skimming their salaries; inflation exploded along with unemployment in urban centers, leaving many without access to a steady diet; and, the twenty-one provincial governments within Congo operated on a largely autonomous basis. In the confusion of the period, ethnic animosities flared up as many groups succeeded in grabbing power at the local level, while others lamented in losing it. With Mobutu's ANC reeling from several humiliating defeats over the past few years, the Congo situation, according to the CIA, looked bleak. The agency believed Congo would ask Belgium for troops to solidify the ranks in the ANC, even though Belgium was likely to deny such a request due to the remaining international scrutiny regarding its intervention in 1960. Still, the CIA believed that Belgium might send troops to the aid of the Congolese central government if it deemed its economic "interests—still substantial—were seriously threatened, and it were [*sic.*] assured of firm Western—especially US—support."

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<sup>242</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985): 80-84.

<sup>243</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, Directorate of Intelligence, "The Political Situation and Prospects in the Congo" (February 20, 1964, Release Date September 2002) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 3; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 135-139.

Neocolonial politics and economic interests constantly permeated the crisis in post-colonial Congo.<sup>244</sup>

On June 30, 1964, Adoula resigned from the office of Prime Minister, as his time limit had expired. Rumors circulated throughout Congo that Tshombe would be selected as the new premier after a special two-week constitutional referendum supported by President Kasavubu. At the time, Tshombe had the most leverage of the Congolese leaders in the national spotlight. According to the CIA, “Tshombe’s bargaining position is strong. Southern Katanga, richest area of the Congo and the source of most of the government’s revenue, still supported him, and there is little doubt that he could re-establish himself there if he chose.”<sup>245</sup> Tshombe did choose. By July 11, 1964, Tshombe helmed the Congolese national government with bitter antagonism from the CNL and Christophe Gbenye. The CNL reacted to the appointment of Tshombe with harsh words, calling the former secession leader and new head of a coalition government a traitor. Tshombe, with a mountain of crisis in front of him, decided to reach out to one of Congo’s largest financiers, the United States. As mentioned above, in his correspondence to the United States, the Congolese Premier hoped “bygones would be bygones,” and that an amiable relationship could exist provided the United States continued its current financial support.<sup>246</sup> The United States responded to Tshombe’s olive branch with continued economic support. Tshombe still faced stiff criticism from other African leaders and was perceived as a Western imperialist puppet. For instance, many African leaders perceived Tshombe to maintain friendly relations with the racial South African and Portuguese governments. The Prime Minister did take

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<sup>244</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, Office of Current Intelligence, “Current Intelligence Memorandum: The Security Situation in the Congo” (June 12, 1964, Release Date November 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 2-6.

<sup>245</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, “Central Intelligence Bulletin: Daily Brief” (July 1, 1964, Release Date September 2002) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 3.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, (July 11, 1964): 4-5.

some steps to appease the hostility towards him, like releasing Antoine Gizenga from political detention and allowing Mrs. Lumumba to return to Congo; however, his largest asset was his status as the leader of the economically critical Katanga region.<sup>247</sup>

The economy of Congo would be Tshombe's largest roadblock. Even with his pro-Belgium approach, Tshombe failed to reverse the downward-spiraling economy, largely because the former colony had so much external debt laid on it by Belgium on the eve of independence. The profitable industries owned and operated by the colonial state were divested to benefit private, Belgian companies—much to the chagrin of the Congolese leaders. With no real opportunities at viable, profitable industry in the hands of the state, Tshombe's leadership suffered from declining popular and international support.<sup>248</sup>

One of the leading aspects that proved to be the end of Tshombe's political career, contrasted to the development of Mobutu's, was economic and political allegiance to international partners. While Tshombe favored Belgium, the influx of economic aid changed precipitously. By the mid 1960s, Belgium had taken a back seat to American economic assistance. Belgium funneled \$23 million annually compared to the \$45 million from America. Mobutu benefited from his pro-American leaning; Tshombe lost the confidence of Western powers.<sup>249</sup>

In his second attempt at governance, from 1965-1997, Mobutu enjoyed multiple economic successes during his first five years in charge (he initially promised to unilaterally control the country for five years, until stability and progress were achieved). Mobutu exported

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<sup>247</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, Director of Central Intelligence, "Special National Intelligence Estimate Number [censored]: Short-Term Prospects for the Tshombe Government in the Congo" (August 5, 1964, Release Date January 18, 1990) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 3-8.

<sup>248</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 145-146.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*; CIA FOIA FDV, Director of Central Intelligence, "Special National Intelligence Estimate Number [censored]: Short-Term Prospects for the Tshombe Government in the Congo" (August 5, 1964, Release Date January 18, 1990) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 6.

copper and other minerals such as uranium to his Western allies and fetched fair international prices. Agricultural output sustained the Congolese population without the need of much by way of imports. As Crawford Young and Thomas Turner astutely posit:

The insecurity, the dislocations, the sufferings of the First Republic were indeed fresh in the popular recollection, and 1970 was a better year for nearly all than 1965. Not only was the nightmare of the past behind, but dazzling prospects for the future were promised. "Objectif 80 [or, an economic prediction that the Congo would be developed and industrialized by 1980]" was a major campaign theme, a rendezvous with abundance to be accomplished by a doubling of copper output and a flood of investments directed toward three "development poles"—Kinshasa, Kisangani, and southern Shaba. Viewed through the prism of subsequent economic calamities, these promises have a hollow ring. But as they fell upon the ears of enthusiastic crowds in 1970 they carried conviction.<sup>250</sup>

Young and Crawford go on to outline Mobutu's desire to create the Congo's economic independence. Through his one-party state, Mobutu explained that "because economic independence was 'the sole means to achieve a real amelioration in the standard of living of the populace,' the MPR would have to 'engage in a pitiless struggle so that our country will no longer be an economic colony of international high finance'."<sup>251</sup> Fanon warns of the potential hazards of single-party rule in former European colonies. One of the inherent flaws of political parties in colonized areas, as Fanon points out, is that they exclude the peasant masses. Following the European invention, groups of educated individuals form the modern political party. Being active in the political party sheds one's animal status and creates a human one. But, what happens in formerly colonized areas, the party of the leader becomes the single party of the state, and the party now becomes a "screen between the masses and the leadership." The party exists as the conduit in which the leadership sends its instructions to the masses. No "productive exchange between the rank and file and the higher echelons" exists.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline*, 63.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>252</sup> Fanon, *Wretched*, 64, 77, 111, 115.



This economic strategy worked for a time, as Congo began to show a reversal of economic woes due, in large measure, to Belgium's strong support of Tshombe's economic recovery plan before the Prime Minister left office. Mobutu and the rest of Congo rode this wave into 1967 when he enforced the Bakajika Law of 1966, which established Congo's "rightful claim to all land and mineral rights in the country;" and nationalized UMHK in January 1967. He renamed the industrial complex *Générale des carrières et des mines*, or Gécamines for short, prompting an economic war with Belgium, including the threat of legal recourse to any party associated with the sale of materials formerly owned by UMHK.<sup>253</sup> According to the Belgo-American Development Corporation, UMHK offered half ownership of all assets in Congo to Mobutu's government. When Mobutu denied this offer, UMHK claimed that the Congolese government demanded that UMHK cease its legal status as a Belgian company. The mining conglomerate was in no position to fold under Mobutu's demands, as it was a private enterprise with assets outside Congo. Furthermore, a change in the nationality of the company, per its bylaws, required unanimous approval of its shareholders, which would not happen. Adding to this unrealistic demand, in the eyes of the Belgian government, a transfer would constitute liquidation and would be subject to a 35 percent tax based on the value of the total assets of the company. Plus, the last two scenarios would, in the eyes of UMHK, contradict its fiduciary responsibility to its shareholders—a legitimate, legal argument. All of the legal arguments put forth by UMHK fail to acknowledge the reason for the company in the first place—labor and mineral exploitation as a direct result of colonization, which legally does not exist in Congo at that time. In fact, the company declared that "Union Minière owes nothing to

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<sup>253</sup> Belgo-American Development Corporation, "News Release: Union Minere du Haut-Katanga" (January 3, 1967) Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 20, Folder 13; Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 145-146.

the Congo.”<sup>254</sup> Belgium, shocked to learn that its nationals would lose such a valuable private industry, immediately placed an embargo on all Congolese copper and encouraged its European allies to do the same. At this moment, Belgium forced Mobutu to go to bed with the United States who could afford to purchase the copper during the embargo. With former Kennedy aide Theodore Sorensen as his counsel, Mobutu conceded to most Belgian demands, and granted “full compensation and . . . management, processing and marketing contracts to a sister company of the UMHK in the SGB [*Société générale de Belgique*].” Using propaganda to sell the agreement as a victory towards economic independence, Mobutu developed patronage from the new ruling elite (which consisted of newly recruited university students, merchants, former leaders of the independence movement, and military officers) by purchasing bargaining power with foreign capital, thereby providing them with a stable economic base. Using Mobutu, America and other international, capitalist powers swooped in to break the Belgian monopoly on Congolese economic interests.<sup>255</sup>

According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, high copper prices worldwide aided Mobutu in this endeavor, coupled with the devaluation and renaming of the Congolese currency from Belgian francs to zaires in 1967. Copper prices increased due to demand in the Vietnam era and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Congo rose ten percent from 1967 to 1970 and another five percent from 1970-1973. This economic growth, unequaled either before or after this period since Congo’s independence, gave Mobutu a popular mandate by which he could exploit his position to aggrandize his (along with a small group of supporters’) personal finances.<sup>256</sup> This

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<sup>254</sup> Belgo-American Development Corporation, “Position of Union Minere du Haut-Katanga” (January 5, 1967); and “Statement of the Union Minere du Haut-Katanga” (January 4, 1967): 3, in Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 20, Folder 13.

<sup>255</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 146-8.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-9.

course of events strengthened the neocolonial bonds that Mobutu publicly denounced, leaving him powerless, economically, as a puppet of the Western powers, especially the United States.<sup>257</sup>

In June 1967, Mobutu's government agreed to reform its economic policies in order to receive a \$27 million loan credit from the International Monetary Fund. The government agreed to devalue its currency by 67 percent to reflect Congo's actual purchasing power, loosen its restrictions on imports and the remittance of earnings by foreign expatriates, all in an effort to attract new foreign investment. In addition, Mobutu and his team of economic advisors and ministers agreed to curb wage increases to 40 percent even though consumer prices were expected to double. The high copper prices, largely a result of the 1967 U.S. copper strike, allowed Mobutu's government to balance its budget in the first year of this agreement. Better security in the formerly war-torn eastern provinces led to a small increase in cash crop production, even though plantation owners in those provinces struggled to turn modest profits due to the high (40 percent) export duties. Still, according to CIA estimates in June 1968, agricultural production levels would most certainly increase from the unusually low, conflict-ridden 1966 amounts with any security improvements. The agency also expected wage increases for Congolese workers as purchasing power initially dropped due to the devaluation of the country's currency.<sup>258</sup>

By the end of 1967, the CIA estimated that copper prices would fall in the next year with the end of the U.S. copper strike, and with illegal smuggling and the continual devaluation of the currency, the agency did not expect large economic gains. Congo's longtime advantage, subsistence agricultural production, fed most of the populace. Minimal shortages in imports and

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<sup>257</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 147-8.

<sup>258</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, "Intelligence Memorandum: The Economy of Congo (Kinshasa): Trends Since Independence and Prospects" (June 1968, Release Date, August 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 24-28.

exports could be offset by rural farmers' production. With continued foreign aid, Mobutu would be able to meet his loan agreements, including a mandated ten percent of his budget committed to internal development. Private American and Japanese companies also began to seek newly tapped copper deposits and other mineral deposits to exploit, like columbite. Private companies maintained transportation routes and minimal social welfare services, especially in Katanga and Kasai provinces, as they were critical to turning profits. Despite mounting odds, Mobutu, with his neocolonial economic strategy, had options; and the United States had a Cold War ally and strongman that could be manipulated to great extents.<sup>259</sup> The CIA estimated that "if no new, debilitating crises occur, the central government should be able to extend its control and influence further in the next few years." Mobutu's government would extend its control over Zaïre for many more years, in large measure, due to the continued support of the United States, and the international banking firms initiated in America during the Second World War.<sup>260</sup>

Another of Mobutu's initial successes was his authenticity program. This process ushered in a feeling of empowerment in Congo, because "Authenticity allowed the Zairian people to regain their ancestral pride and cultural heritage . . . During colonial rule, every citizen of Zaïre was supposed to be baptized and received a Christian name as a consequence of being born again in the European Catholic tradition . . . Under the policy of authenticity, Zaïrians went back to bearing names that had a cultural meaning or message rooted in African tradition."<sup>261</sup> Mobutu did not sit on the sidelines; he led by example. He formally changed his name to

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<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-30; CIA FOIA FDV, "The Congo: A Political Assessment," in Special Report: Weekly Review (June 28, 1968, Release Date, August 1999) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 3.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>261</sup> Peta Ikambana, *Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System*, 25.

Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu WazaBanga, which loosely translates to “the all-conquering warrior who triumphs over all obstacles.”<sup>262</sup> According to Peta Ikambana:

Authenticity was the rediscovery by the Zairian people of their role as subjects of their own history as well as their unique place and contribution to the history of the world. It filled the gap between the past and the present. Authenticity allowed the African people of Zaire to borrow from the best of their ancestors in order to envision the present as a harmonious continuity from tradition to modernity. In short, authenticity allowed the African people of Zaire to be themselves.<sup>263</sup>

Ikambana explains that authenticity as an African-centered concept uplifted the African individual, as it promoted the well-being of the people; it provided a sense of uniqueness and a clear understanding of one’s role in the history of his/her people. Mobutu had the opportunity to provide this to the Congolese, however, his use of authenticity as a method of solidifying his political control over Zaïre did not advance the well-being of the people: it bankrupted it.<sup>264</sup>

The third reality explaining Mobutu’s initial success is the continual support he received from the West, most notably, the United States. Nzongola-Ntalaja asserts that during the Cold War, Western powers preferred a “strongman” with little or no social or political base to a native leader with a strong nationalist foundation. In the eyes of the West, a “strongman” could be manipulated and supported by foreign interests because he would be less susceptible to popular movements and the demands of potential coalitions. Mobutu fit this description and was rewarded with largely unfettered support from the United States and its allies for the better part of three decades.<sup>265</sup> “Washington. . . had already begun providing Mobutu with an early warning service in order to protect him from his enemies—protecting, at the same time, ‘our interest as much as possible.’ Mobutu and the U.S. self-interest, in Washington’s view, had thus become

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<sup>262</sup> Kelly, *America’s Tyrant*, 1.

<sup>263</sup> Ikambana, *Mobutu’s Totalitarian Political System*, 25.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>265</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 142-3.

virtually synonymous.”<sup>266</sup>

During the reign of Mobutu, Zaïre, acquired much debt. Fighting insurgent groups, building lavish homes for Mobutu and his cronies, stashing part of the annual gross domestic product in foreign bank accounts, and importing the goods necessary to keep the population alive and working forced the government into financial ruin. As Fanon argues, this results from the bourgeois dictator and his cronies pocketing large sums of money and refusing to invest in their home country. This lack of investment in infrastructure prevents any progress and eradicates the nation’s solvency. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund loaned money to Zaïre’s western puppet with the understanding that the loans would be repaid, as this was the predatory lending standard that these financial institutions came to expect (and prize) in Africa and throughout much of the Third World. Mobutu, however, because of his close ties to the United States (especially Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush), was able to reschedule debt payments with the help of his benefactor.<sup>267</sup>

Mobutu’s neocolonial policies did lead to heavy foreign investment from the Western powers. In 1971, the World Bank’s International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), conducted a meeting in which “the governments of Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States” collected World Bank reports on the recent economic policies and prospects of Congo and policy statements from the Congolese government for the purpose of allocating funds to finance transportation and agricultural development in Congo. Finance Minister Louis Namwisi confirmed the Congolese government’s commitment to encouraging foreign investment while increasing domestic private savings. Members of the group agreed that the economic development of Congo justified

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<sup>266</sup> Kelly, *America’s Tyrant*, 178.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

continued support and some members agreed to increase foreign aid to Mobutu's government.<sup>268</sup> In September, The International Development Association (IDA), another arm of the World Bank committed to aiding poor nations worldwide, approved a \$10 million credit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to further develop the *Societe Congolais de Financement du Development* (SOCOFIDE), a "private institutional source of medium and long-range finance." SOCOFIDE was to develop Congo's productive economic sectors, namely manufacturing and processing industries. SOCOFIDE received an IDA credit of \$5million the year before to aid its creation, and after one year, financed \$12 million to help implement \$24 million in new industrial investment projects. The IDA extended these credits at .75 percent with ten years of grace to the Congolese government. The government would then relend the capital to SOCOFIDE at 7.25 percent interest.<sup>269</sup>

Interestingly, the mission of the IDA claims to provide interest-free credits to encourage economic improvement as well as provide funds for basic social services in the world's poorest countries. In the early 1970s, Congo qualified for this aid; however, the wording of the press release signifying the first approved Congolese credit is less convincing: "SOCOFIDE will provide financial assistance to productive private enterprises, primarily to manufacturing and processing industries. Enterprises engaged in commercially oriented agriculture, forestry, fishing, transport and tourism will also be *eligible* [my emphasis] for assistance." It appears the members of the IDA who lent the money expressed, at best, marginal concern for social welfare in Congo. Also, SOCOFIDE was a publicly-owned company with 26 percent of its

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<sup>268</sup> "Meeting of the Consultative Group for the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (May 7, 1971) Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 20, Folder 13.

<sup>269</sup> "IDA Press Release No. 71/39: \$10.0 million credit for second development finance company project in Democratic Republic of the Congo" (September 2, 1971) Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 20, Folder 13.

shares owned by “13 financial institutions in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.” If social welfare improvement was a goal, the wording of this press release does not reflect that goal. Perhaps profit and a return of investment reflect the sole aims of this economic endeavor in the heart of Africa.<sup>270</sup>

Continual injections of international currency into Mobutu’s Zaïre continued throughout the early 1970s, as banks, especially in the United States, loaned millions to the mineral-rich African nation expecting handsome returns on their investments. Copper prices remained high—at one point copper fetched \$1.52 per pound—and as Zaïre’s main export, repayment of loans seemed a sure bet, even from the prodigal Mobutu. By 1975, Zaïrian external debt to private banks totaled \$887 million dollars. When the price of copper plummeted—to a paltry \$0.55 per pound—to its lowest level since Mobutu seized power, debt repayment proved exceedingly difficult, and Zaïre began to default on its obligations. In 1974, Zaïre’s Department of Finance admitted that external debt increased by \$655 million in that year alone. With copper earnings failing to meet the debt repayment minimums, Mobutu had to invite an IMF team to examine Zaïre’s economic possibilities in the fall of 1975. The IMF did not expect what it discovered; myriad government bodies and parastatals borrowed from ninety-eight different banks from the United States to Japan to Europe; Zaïre had no comprehensive data to determine its exact debt. 59 percent of that money, or \$164 million, came from Citibank in the United States, through Mobutu’s long-time economic associate, former IMF official, Irving Friedman. Friedman, a vice-president of Citibank in 1975, worked to broker many loans to Mobutu. Much of the

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<sup>270</sup> “IDA Press Release no. 70/21, IFC Press Release No. 70/13: “Joint financing for SOCOFIDE, a development finance company in (Kinshasa)” (June 1, 1970) Vernon McKay (1912-1988) papers, ca. 1935-1977, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies (Evanston, IL): Box 20, Folder 13; for information on the IDA’s mission, see “What is IDA?” *International Development Association*, 2009, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/IDA/0,,contentMDK:21206704~menuPK:83991~pagePK:51236175~piPK:437394~theSitePK:73154,00.html> (accessed October 19, 2009).



foreign bank loans—about \$500 million—were not guaranteed, and many banks wished to declare the default as a result of Zaïre’s stoppage of payment. Recourse to the loan default was a slippery slope. The loans and credits allocated to Zaïre by the IMF could not be stopped, as Zaïre needed its main imports—food for the urban population of Kinshasa and petroleum products to maintain copper and other mineral production—to keep the Zaïrian economy running. The IMF would need to intervene, at the insistence of these banks, if Zaïre was going to meet its obligations later than sooner, if ever. Partially due to its close relationship with the pro-Western dictator during the height of the Cold War, the United States pressured the IMF to handle Mobutu leniently. Ultimately, by June 1976, Mobutu negotiated a three year grace period and an additional seven years to pay off 85 percent of Zaïre’s debt. The other fifteen percent was to be paid immediately (which never did materialize). The IMF granted a \$47 million credit provided Zaïre would devalue its currency by 42 percent, limit wage increases to twenty percent and significantly restrain government spending.<sup>271</sup>

The agricultural industry demonstrates the one-dimensional nature of Zaïre. In the early 1970s, when copper prices soared, Mobutu’s government allocated one to two percent of the nation’s budget to agriculture. Of that small allocation, 90 percent went to pay the salaries of the agricultural administrators, who, according to Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, were essentially useless. Before the decolonization process, Belgium reputedly had the best agricultural research infrastructure in Africa. During Mobutu’s reign, the agricultural administrators did not interact with the cultivators, as dilapidated roads made transportation in the rural sectors difficult; and due to the administrators’ costly salary requirements, they distributed the little resources left amongst the farmers. Instead, these administrators’ “major

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<sup>271</sup> “The Zaïre Bailout,” *Forbes* (December 1, 1975): 19; Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, 378-386.

output was statistical tables calculated within [their] offices; [their] guesses were aggregated into official national output figures. The excellent research infrastructure created by the colonial administration . . . had lost its function.” The roads, and their dilapidated state, exacerbated the agricultural woes in Zaïre. Due to the rough travel conditions, the work life of state trucks averaged roughly 50,000 miles. In addition, “it is estimated that the serviceable road network had dwindled from 140,000 kilometers in 1959 to 20,000 by the early 1970s.” As the Zaïrian population plodded through the 1980s and early 1990s, on the brink of starvation, they received virtually no help from the government. It would take UN intervention before the rural masses would be the beneficiaries of any relief.<sup>272</sup>

In 1975, the Gerald Ford Administration supported lending money to Mobutu, and lobbied for Congress to appropriate \$81 million in aid to Zaïre. Even if Congress balked on the proposed aid package, the Administration was primed to lend “at least \$49 million at its own discretion,” despite Zaïre’s precarious situation at \$5.5 million in arrears with the Export-Import Bank of America. Mobutu and the Ford Administration justified this debt by claiming that copper prices would rebound sooner or later; however, critics disagreed with that hopeful assessment. Some experts argued that even with a substantial \$427 million loan from Chase Manhattan Bank to improve the copper industry, Zaïre’s high-grade ore production would increase by less than eight percent a year through 1980. With other copper-producing countries also increasing their production, the worldwide supply of copper would probably have increased 5.4 percent per year, while the demand would probably only reach around four percent. With supply and demand working against Mobutu, copper alone could not save Zaïre. The United States government continued to reward the central African strongman, even after he accused the

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 310-1.

CIA of attempting to overthrow his government via a *coup d'état* and after Mobutu expelled the United States ambassador to Zaïre.<sup>273</sup> Why did the Western superpower carry on this behavior?

The Cold War provides a plausible answer. Debt rescheduling was not the only service that the United States afforded Mobutu Sese Seko. As a Western sympathizer in the era of the Cold War, Mobutu received millions from the United States annually to effectively run his nation. Much of this money never made it to the Congolese masses. “One possible explanation for our ‘warm spot’ for Mobutu is his activities in Angola.” The United States government had officially taken a neutral stance on the Angolan liberation struggle in the early 1970s, fearing repercussions from Portugal if it supported the indigenous rebels. Portugal leased a strategic, mid-Atlantic, military refueling station in the Azores Island group to the United States, and may have discontinued that lease if America supported the Africans in this struggle. Many inside and outside the United States suspected that America funneled weapons into Angola through Zaïre in order to supply the Western-friendly UNITA and FNLA rebels in their fight against the socialist-leaning MPLA.<sup>274</sup> The United States provided weapons, airplanes, advisors, and trainers to help maintain Mobutu’s order in Zaïre from 1965 to 1990. This friendly assistance came at a price. Mobutu’s Zaïre would be the launching point of supplies to Savimbi in Angola who was leading his UNITA rebels against the MPLA in 1975. The United States underestimated the strength of the MPLA, now backed by Cubans sent by Castro and indirectly supported by the Soviet Union. The MPLA succeeded in turning back Savimbi and creating a socialist government, and later in

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<sup>273</sup> “The Zaïre Bailout,” 19.

<sup>274</sup> See Michael Wolfers and Jane Bergerol, *Angola in the Front Line* (London: Zed Press, 1983): 70; in February 1975, the MPLA planned and hosted a Peoples Power week in Luanda culminating in a mass rally at the “huge Sal Paulo sports stadium, pass[ing] radical resolutions, clearly demonstrating political development towards universal socialist policies, with little regard for traditionalist or specifically African cultural issues.”

the decade would look the other way when Angolan rebels fought in a rebellion in Shaba.<sup>275</sup>

*Forbes* magazine posits interesting, if not probing, questions concerning unwavering American support of Mobutu during these trying years: “are we propping up a spendthrift dictator? If so, why are we doing it? Is it for political reasons? And is it partly to help U.S. bankers who made questionable loans?”<sup>276</sup>

In August 1983, Mobutu scheduled a meeting with President Reagan and other top U.S. officials. In June 1983, the CIA believed Mobutu arranged the visit to the American capital to demonstrate to other African leaders that he was still the senior statesman and to negotiate U.S. assistance with Zaïre’s IMF loan repayment schedule. According to the Agency, Mobutu supported a Western-friendly regime in the African nation of Chad by deploying 1500-1800 Zaïrean troops to help Chadian President Hissene Habre defend Chad from a Libyan invasion which threatened Habre’s government. The United States, in 1983, authorized an emergency \$10 million military assistance package to aid President Habre, but the CIA believed Mobutu was in Washington to persuade the U.S. policy makers to designate a large portion of that money to Zaïre for its critical role in Chad up to that point. Also, Zaïre had severe budgetary problems in 1983, having to conform to IMF guidelines of loan repayment, thereby significantly limiting any and all Zaïrian government actions, leaving little margin for maneuvering. The CIA also believed that Mobutu would request American assistance in securing additional bilateral economic aid as a just reward for consistently supporting American ambitions on the UN Security Council, his pro-Western alignment, and the fact that Zaïre’s economic problems stem largely from falling international commodity prices for which Zaïre had no control. In short,

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<sup>275</sup> Kelly, *America’s Tyrant*, 209-224.

<sup>276</sup> “The Zaïre Bailout,” 19; Kelly, *America’s Tyrant*, 213-4.

Mobutu needed help rescheduling Zaïre's \$4.5 billion external debt that had continued to snowball since independence in 1960.<sup>277</sup>

The economic imperative of the Mobutu regime was to sustain its power and enrich the top brass in Congo-Zaïre by maintaining a strong relationship with the United States and its Cold War allies. Despite brief periods of tension between Mobutu and his benefactor, relations between Kinshasa/Gbadolite<sup>278</sup> and Washington remained strong throughout his thirty-two year tenure: that is until continual economic collapse with no foreseeable end, coupled with an appealing, internationally-backed replacement was available. Statistical analysis of American economic and military aid show that the United States government supported Mobutu's regime by means of economic and military aid from the time of his successful coup in November of 1965 until 1992, the year Mobutu and his cronies continually sabotaged the reform efforts of the CNS, against the will of the people of Zaïre and to the dismay of the international community. From that point, economic and military aid drastically decreased, and by the end of 1997, Mobutu was in Morocco, ousted from power, and dying of prostate cancer (Table 1).

With economic injections from the United States slowing to a trickle, Mobutu and his regime lost a major advantage that it had enjoyed for the previous 26 years. Consequently, Mobutu's FAZ, largely due to inadequate funding, ceased to be an effective security force in Zaïre—and in many ways, was forced to plunder the countryside in order to feed itself. The harsh reality of the FAZ's situation and the public perception of Mobutu's army perpetuated

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<sup>277</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, Directorate of Intelligence, "Zaire: President Mobutu's Visit" (July 28, 1983, Release Date unknown) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 1-5.

<sup>278</sup> According to the New York Times, "At home, [Mobutu] converted his northern village of Gbadolite into a gaudy, white marble retreat that was often called the 'Versailles of the Jungle,'" and as his level of comfort in Kinshasa began to fade, Gbadolite became the capital away from the capital; Howard W. French, "Mobutu Sese Seko, 66, Longtime Dictator of Zaire," *New York Times* (September 8, 1997) <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/090897obit-mobutu.html> (accessed January 25, 2010); Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 142.

burgeoning calls for real reform, even if it meant speaking out in favor of Mobutu's opposition. The events of 1992, in many ways, changed the latent criticism of Mobutu to public cries for change, even if it meant a death sentence for those critics.<sup>279</sup>

Table 1. *American Economic and Military Aid to Zaïre, 1966-1992 (bilateral loans and grants, in millions of U.S. dollars)*<sup>280</sup>

Program	Total (1966-1992)	Avg. Per Year (1966-1992)	Low/High (1966-1991)	1992	Monetary Decrease from Average in 1992	% Decrease from Avg. in 1992
Economic Aid	1099.1	40.71	5.4 - 127.7	0.6	40.11	98.5%
Military Aid	206.5	7.65	1.9 - 30.4	0	7.65	100%
ESF Aid*	156.5	5.80	0 - 24.6**	0	5.80	100%
Total Aid	1480.6	54.84	8.2 - 127.1	0.6	54.24	98.9%
Total Aid in Grants	512.3	18.97	3.3 - 60.3	0.6	18.37	96.8%

Figures for Table 1 are derived from Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incremental Crisis and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 112-3.

(\*) Economic Support Fund (ESF), Created to assist U.S. allies and countries in democratic transition; the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State implement most of ESF programs.

(\*\*) Zaïre received ESF loans in only 16 of the 27 years from 1966 to 1992 and received none from 1988 to 1992.

## Social Implications of Kleptocracy

By June 1980, the CIA assessed the current condition of the people living Zaïre; the outlook was bleak. Most urban dwellers felt the stranglehold of the economy, relying on rural family members to provide food stuffs to survive. Some 60 percent of urban women marketed goods brought from the countryside, while the workers with paying jobs were responsible for assisting their less fortunate relatives. Because this informal welfare system helped ameliorate the harshest ills of economic stagnation, many urban civilians stayed alive despite having

<sup>279</sup> Roberto Garretón, "Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire, prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Roberto Garretón, in accordance with Commission resolution 1994/87," *United Nations Economic and Social Council*, E/CN.4/1995/67 (December 23, 1994) <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G94/751/80/pdf/G9475180.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed August 1, 2009): 27-32.

<sup>280</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incremental Crisis and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 112-3.

infinitesimal employment opportunities. While most considered Mobutu's country a generally stable political environment, the harsh decline in its economic portfolio deeply affected the inhabitants of Zaïre.<sup>281</sup>

By 1983, the CIA reported that the dreadful economic state in Zaïre could lead to civil unrest with little warning; the living standards were lower at that moment than on the eve of independence.<sup>282</sup> Widespread unemployment in Zaïre during the decline of Mobutu's reign ushered in a tidal wave of women workers, albeit in the informal sector of business. Largely due to the violence of the time, many women lost their husbands who shared the responsibilities of providing for their children. Many took to the markets, selling what little goods they had in reserve. The money earned stayed in the local markets as women would buy what their families needed with the money they earned selling their own wares. This self-sufficient informal economy did not revitalize Zaïre's economy because the money earned in the informal market sector did not make its way to banks (because many women distrusted them), but served to stave off destitution. Some women made large gains as wholesale vendors, with one woman winning an election for a seat in the regional committee of the Kisangani Chamber of Commerce; however, this was not typical as most women eked out a meager living. Still, the social ramifications of the political instability caused by civil war and the brutally steady economic decline were glaringly evident at the family and local levels of society.<sup>283</sup>

On December 3, 1990, thousands of Kinshasa residents took to the streets to protest their ever-reducing quality of life. The government responded by sending the army to quell the

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<sup>281</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, "Zaire: Is It Reformable?" (June 1980, Release Date December 1995) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 5, 9.

<sup>282</sup> CIA FOIA FDV, Directorate of Intelligence, "Zaire: President Mobutu's Visit" (June 28, 1983, Release Date unknown) [http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse\\_docs\\_full.asp](http://www.foia.cia.gov/browse_docs_full.asp) (accessed April 13, 2009): 7.

<sup>283</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women: A Modern History*, trans. Beth Gillian Raps (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997): 106.

situation, which resulted in “hundreds of deaths and injuries.” The government saw the protest as an affront to the regime. In actuality, the FAZ, or Mobutu’s personal security blanket, murdered several people reacting to the ills of unproductive, kleptocratic economic policies favoring only Mobutu and those in his trusted nucleus.<sup>284</sup> This slaying of civilians unhappy with the central government’s economic policies designed to enrich the ruling elite while exploiting the poor is not isolated. According to Peta Ikambana, “twenty-seven cases of assassination, slaughter, and violation of human rights were brought against the Zairian government by the” National Sovereign Conference.<sup>285</sup>

In 1994, Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights Roberto Garretón prepared his report on the human rights situation in Zaïre after visiting the troubled nation. In this report, Garretón asserted that although Zaïre announced, in 1981, its intention to ratify the UN’s Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the country had yet to do so. Zaïre also failed to submit a report to the UN’s Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination—this amidst mounting allegations that the country had committed myriad human rights violations, including summary or arbitrary executions violating the right to life (in which allegations were forwarded to the UN in 1985, 1986, 1988, 1991 and 1992) and the implementation of arbitrary detention. The report also highlighted that “the Zairian population had suffered numerous ‘acts of plunder’” at the hands of Zaïre’s security forces (highlighted in the next chapter) since 1990, further illustrating the government’s inability to provide social welfare and well-being to its inhabitants.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Peta Ikambana, *Mobutu's Totalitarian Political System*, 60.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire,” 6, 32.



The general decline in living conditions in Zaïre began with the economic collapse beginning in the 1970s and continued through April 1990, when Mobutu, due to mounting internal and external pressures, announced his intention to reform Zaïre by creating the Third Republic, a transitional period allowing for a national convention, with participants from opposition political parties, to reform the government. This conference:

was intended to prepare for an authentic transition to democracy by becoming a legislative authority, drafting a new constitution, drawing up legislation governing elections, the political parties, the mass media and nationality. It was also to be responsible for allocating powers during the transition and determining the status of the armed forces. In cultural terms, the Conference was to restore the spiritual and moral values of the Zairian people.<sup>287</sup>

The very allowance of political parties other than the *Mouvement populaire de la révolution* (MPR), created by Mobutu in 1966, excited most Zaïreans, since the MPR was the only legal party for the last 25 years.<sup>288</sup>

The *Conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS), as it would be known, began a new phase in Zaïre, one of continual sabotage on the part of Mobutu and his loyal instruments, and continual ethnic and political conflict, eventually climaxing with Kabila's usurpation. Because the CNS was unable to reform the government and economy, largely due to Mobutu's intentionally disruptive actions and the Conference's own internal political problems, living conditions sharply declined in the mid 1990s. Kabila, rescued from obscurity by his international backers, used the anger of the people to his advantage in 1997, routing Mobutu's forces in a matter of months. Many inside and outside of Zaïre reacted favorably to this shift in power, hoping that an African struggle to replace an African despot, without the direction of international powers, was a step in the right direction. As the next chapter will demonstrate,

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<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

Kabila's regime failed to meet the most basic needs of the people and his ascension to the helm of Congolese government was not, in fact, just an African struggle to replace an African despot: he had considerable help from the United States and its allies.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Following the brutal demise of Lumumba and the controversial death of Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations, under the leadership of U Thant, posthumously honored Lumumba's initial request by forcefully ending the secession of Kasai and Katanga. With Tshombe self-exiled in Spain, Cyrille Adoula still struggled to stabilize Congo. When this instability became too much of a liability, Western powers paved the way for Tshombe's return to Congolese politics—with the hope that he could unite various conflicting interests. This plan, however, did not work, and the United States, Belgium, and Israel deemed it necessary to forcefully stabilize the conflict in the interior by intervening on behalf of the Tshombe government. The physically weakened and frayed government proved incapable of preventing the second military takeover of Joseph Mobutu. His subsequent lengthy tenure as the neocolonial strongman in Congo personally enriched his family and members of his ethnic group, while millions of Congolese suffered the years in poverty. Western industrial and business interests benefited from Mobutu's dependency on United States' aid, as America found it strategically imperative to prop up this African ally during the tensest years of the Cold War. Zaïre's one-dimensional industry brought relative success in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but has perpetuated devastation ever since.<sup>289</sup>

This mutually beneficial arrangement exacerbated exploitation reminiscent of the colonial period, yet the Western world turned a blind eye to human rights violations in the

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<sup>289</sup> Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline*: 306-309.

interest of perceived global security. When the population of Congo, in the form of the CNS, pressured Mobutu to reform his fiefdom and Mobutu responded by permitting and subsequently sabotaging this reform, unrest began to swell. Many in Congo were ready to make a change; but as the old adage goes, it would get worse before it got better.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **The Collapse of Zaïre and the Precarious Arc of the Rebel Laurent-Désiré Kabila**

*We are all in the same boat. Everybody will be slaughtered or tortured, and within the context of the independent nation everyone will suffer the same hunger and marasmus. The collective struggle presupposes a collective responsibility from the rank and file and a collegial responsibility at the top. Yes, everyone must be involved in the struggle for the sake of the common salvation. There are no clean hands, no innocent bystanders. We are all in the process of dirtying our hands in the quagmire of our soil and the terrifying void of our minds. Any bystander is a coward or a traitor.*

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)

While Mobutu was able to control the political scene through his one-party state, for most Zaïrians, the business of staying alive rested solely on the rural population, and the rampant civil war of the 1990s throughout the eastern reaches of the state wreaked havoc on the inhabitants. While suffering in poverty, many were forced to bear the brunt of the debilitating HIV/AIDS pandemic and endure the use of rape as a method of terror—this in addition to the countless lives lost in combat as rebel groups and their external partners battled the FAZ for supremacy in the area. As Mobutu’s autocracy faded, the quality of civilian life—especially in the eastern portions of Zaïre—diminished exponentially.

Despite, and because of the debt of Zaïre, the American government and individual investors maintained the neocolonial relationship into the next decade, until another strongman presented a viable alternative. The United States supported the Mobutu regime throughout the Zaïrian economic crisis, the proposed reform efforts tied to the *Conférence nationale souveraine* (CNS) in the early 1990s, and the continuing decay within the Zaïrian state from 1992 to 1997, when the rebel Laurent Kabila and his externally backed rebel forces marched to Kinshasa, hammering Mobutu’s army, the *Forces armées zaïroises* (FAZ), into submission. During this

time of decay, the Zaïrian government sought only to compensate the upper brass of the administration and the officials tied to *Gécamines* while setting aside a paucity of reserves to address the collective needs of the society at large. By 1997, Forbes estimated that Mobutu's net worth exceeded \$4-8 billion dollars including his international properties, though "a search by Swiss bankers in 1997 turned up only \$3.4 million."<sup>290</sup> Regardless of the numbers, Mobutu's thrift, at the expense of his constituents, caused Zaïre's precipitous decline.

### *The Conférence nationale souveraine*

The collapse of the CNS in the early 1990s sounded the death knell for Mobutu in Zaïre, though it would take five years for rebel groups within Zaïre, in conjunction with international actors, to drive him out of power. From 1992 to 1997—from the sabotage of the CNS to Laurent Kabila's usurpation of Mobutu's position—Zaïre experienced Mobutu's abusive administrative policies, including military cruelty; continual economic collapse; and perpetual social deprivations. This chaotic period culminated in a bloody civil war that destroyed the security of Zaïre's people, utterly ruined of its economic capacity, and significantly increased the scope of its myriad obligations to international predators seeking to exploit a disastrous situation in the heart of Africa. The incessant suffering of the people of Zaïre seemed to turn a corner in May 1997 as the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), headed by Laurent Kabila, occupied Kinshasa after several months of conflict, signaling the end of Mobutu's kleptocracy. Kabila immediately changed the country's name from Zaïre to the *République démocratique du Congo* (DRC) and many in this newly renamed nation had cause to believe the worst years were behind them. On the contrary, Kabila's political inexperience and

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<sup>290</sup> Arik Hesseldahl, "How Dictators Manage Their Billions," *Forbes* (June 22, 2000) <http://www.forbes.com/2000/06/22/feat.html> (accessed October 26, 2009); Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985): 400-1.

his inability to honor all of the deals that he made (in order to finance the movement that propelled him to leadership) ultimately proved to be his, and Congo's undoing. Kabila's unstable, controversial regime lasted until the end of his life, when Rachidi Kasereka, a bodyguard in Kabila's entourage, assassinated the head of state on January 16, 2001.<sup>291</sup>

This chapter provides an analysis of the political, economic and social ills of the last years of the Mobutu regime; examines the reasons for the diplomatic changes that brought the United States to support Kabila and his external partners instead of Mobutu; highlights the successes and failures of the First Congo War; and offers a brief panoramic of the situation in Congo at the end of Laurent Kabila's life. This chapter argues that Mobutu's kleptocratic rule for the better part of three decades brought about the public outcry for a national convention to reform the Zaïrian government; however, Mobutu's unwillingness to allow any democratic change that diminished his power proved fatal to his political career. This slow, political marasmus resulted from a grossly under-provisioned military, a neglected and rightfully unsupportive populace, and a loss of his most important ally: the United States—who quickly shifted diplomatic support to Kabila and his partners to serve the dual purpose of ensuring a pro-Western successor government in Congo and building its ideological toehold on a part of Africa no longer susceptible to communism, but the threat of fundamentalist Islam. The tragic figures in this period are the Congolese masses, splintered by the ethnic rivalries exacerbated by the nepotism of several strongmen as those leaders struggled to seize and maintain power.

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<sup>291</sup> Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007): 253-64; 276-78; François Ngolet, "African and American Connivance in Congo-Zaire," *Africa Today*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2000): 65-85.

## **Mobutu's Demise**

The agonizing process of Mobutu's transition from power can be traced through the political, economic and social decline of Zaïre from 1992 to 1997. Politically, Mobutu's government purposely failed to provide basic security to its people. Attacks on the population by various military groups were ubiquitous during this period, leaving the victims with little or no food along with debilitating physical and mental scars. Economically, Mobutu's kleptocracy crippled his nation's ability to provide for itself, despite having great mineral and agricultural potential. Socially, Zaïre was a haven for murderers, marauders, rapists, scavengers, nepotists and charlatans, all disguised as government personnel, exploiting the resources and dignity of millions of their compatriots until there was nothing left to take. By 1997, corruption throughout Congo-Zaïre and rampant state decay created a treasure-trove for any interested domestic or foreign parties to take what they could carry. Kabila and his external backers merely got enough people organized—and enough foreign support—to march through Mobutu's corroded vault and take what they pleased; and Mobutu, because of his own thievish *modus operandi*, could not pay anyone to stop them.

### *Political Death*

The end of the Cold War had an immediate, lasting effect on Mobutu and Zaïre. With the threat of Soviet encroachment in Africa evaporating by 1991, the United States government reassessed its relationship with Zaïre, and specifically, its embattled leader. In 1991, many politicians in the United States Congress supported removing Mobutu from office, but the Bush administration and the Africa specialists of the national security bureaucracies held firm to their long-time commitment to Mobutu, citing the imminent danger of a Zaïre without Mobutu. The White House maintained that, if Mobutu was removed, chaos was likely in Zaïre. Since his

successor was unclear, the Bush administration thought it prudent to stick with the dictator that it knew. This “Mobutu or chaos” platform eventually lost favor as international awareness of the human rights violations occurring in Zaïre began to surface. Congress, the body responsible for appropriating foreign aid funds, virtually cut ties with the Mobutu regime. On average, the United States provided Zaïre \$55 million in economic aid annually from 1985-1990. In 1991, with the conclusion of the Cold War imminent, economic aid from the United States dropped to \$31.2 million, and in 1992, America provided just \$600,000 in economic aid to its long-established ally.<sup>292</sup>

In September 1991, thousands of Zaïrian soldiers, upset over lack of pay, started a riot in Kinshasa, which quickly spread to other provincial capitals like Lubumbashi, resulting in 30 dead and over 1,200 injured. As the mobs threatened Mobutu’s regime, the United States did little to help—little compared to previous military aid over the past 26 years. A Belgian and French intervention force of 1,750 soldiers intervened in order to evacuate roughly 8,000 foreigners. “Although the US did not directly take part in the rescue operation, several C-141 military transport planes were ‘loaned’ to France to facilitate the evacuation of foreigners living within the country.” This seemingly hands-off approach, according to Peter J. Schraeder, reflected contemporary international phenomena. “The relatively low-key US response to spreading riots throughout Zaïre during September 1991 suggested that, in the emerging post-Cold War era, Mobutu’s almost unquestioned status within the executive branch as ‘our man’ in Kinshasa was beginning to fade—or at least be questioned more openly.” As the early 1990s progressed, politicians in and around Washington, DC gradually began clamoring for a democracy in Zaïre, and in 1992, they may have been delighted with Mobutu’s decision to allow

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<sup>292</sup> Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa: Incremental Crisis and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 105-8.



free, multi-party elections as a show of reform. Whether they believed that Mobutu genuinely intended to reform Zaïre and transition to a democratic nation, or doubted Congolese reform due to his past discretions, those same politicians were most likely disappointed with the outcome.<sup>293</sup>

The establishment of the CNS brought about great excitement throughout Zaïre as many believed the Conference to be a step toward genuine democracy. “Mobutu’s Prime Minister, Isaac Kalonji Mutambayi, opened the National Conference in August 1991. It was attended by 2,800 delegates, including four members of each political party and representatives of public institutions and sectors of society.” The Conference stated three main goals: 1) to become a legislative body responsible for “drafting a new constitution, drawing up legislation governing elections, the political parties, the mass media and nationality;” 2) “to formulate a power hierarchy during the transition to democracy, including the position and function of the military;” 3) “to restore the spiritual and moral values of the [Zaïrian] people.”<sup>294</sup> Having a mandate from the masses of Zaïrians calling for political and social change, the Conference intended to eliminate Mobutu’s rapacious Second Republic in favor of a democracy of popularly elected representatives aware of the dire needs of their constituents.<sup>295</sup>

The excitement and grandeur of the Conference soon dissipated as Mobutu’s government sprang into action to desperately hold on to power. Quarrels between the regime and the largest opposition party, the *Union sacrée de l’opposition radical* (USOR), immediately caused the suspension of the Conference from September to November 1991 and again in January 1992. On January 23, 1992, antagonists of Mobutu forced their way into the National Radio station in

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<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-1.

<sup>294</sup> Roberto Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire, prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Roberto Garretón, in accordance with Commission resolution 1994/87,” United Nations Economic and Social Council, E/CN.4/1995/67 (December 23, 1994) <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G94/751/80/pdf/G9475180.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed August 1, 2009): 8.

<sup>295</sup> Peta Ikambana, *Mobutu’s Totalitarian Political System: An Afrocentric Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2007): 39.

Kinshasa demanding a change in government and that the Conference resume. “Two persons lost their lives during these incidents, which the Prime Minister described as ‘an attempted coup’. The leaders of the unsuccessful coup were sentenced to death in absentia.”<sup>296</sup> Christian marches, called by Catholic priests and other religious leaders, filled the streets of Kinshasa and other cities throughout Zaïre on February 16, 1992 to protest the suspension of the Conference. Mobutu’s forces responded in Kinshasa by firing into a crowd of candle-wielding marchers, killing over thirty people. Domestic and international pressure following this massacre forced Mobutu to reopen the Conference, which operated from April 6 to December 6, 1992. Delegates to the Conference, including Geroges Nzongola-Ntalaja, were charged with the task of examining “their country's history in order to determine how and why things had not worked out as expected at independence, and to find a way to get out of the multidimensional crisis—political, economic, social, cultural and moral—facing the country. This was to lead to the establishment of the political institutions needed to manage the transition to multiparty democracy.”<sup>297</sup>

The Conference worked earnestly to set up a transitional framework through which a new government would be formed. On August 4, 1992, the Conference established “a transitional institutional order by its approval of an *Acte portant dispositions constitutionnelles relatives à la période de transition*, in order to put an end to the political and institutional crisis in the country.” The act defined the roles of the President, Prime Minister, the Supreme Council of the Republic (HCR), and the court system. Delegates named Monsignor Monsengwo, Bishop of Kisangani,

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<sup>296</sup> Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaïre,” 8.

<sup>297</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 190; Dr. Nzongola served as chair of the Sub-commission on Political Files of the Political Affairs Commission at the National Sovereign Conference. See Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, “Curriculum Vitae,” *Department of African and Afro-American Studies*, [http://www.unc.edu/depts/afriafam/fac\\_staff/nzongola/index.shtml](http://www.unc.edu/depts/afriafam/fac_staff/nzongola/index.shtml) (accessed October 31, 2009).

the President of HCR. One of the roles of the President was to ratify the CNS election of the Prime Minister within 48 hours.<sup>298</sup>

Mobutu, who refused to honor Etienne Tshisekedi's appointment to Prime Minister, effectively began his campaign of sabotage the following January. Soldiers, according to a presidential ordinance, were to be paid in new currency that Tshisekedi and the Conference claimed to be worthless. Mobutu then proceeded to convene his own conference, preferring instead to form this body with political supporters that elected another Prime Minister, Faustin Birindwa. The illegally installed Prime Minister then proceeded to order "members of the Presidential Guard to search the home and offices of Etienne Tshisekedi, whom HCR continued to recognize as Prime Minister. The violence associated with this operation resulted in a large number of injured among Tshisekedi's supporters. On 6 April 1993, soldiers once again prevented HCR from functioning."<sup>299</sup>

Confusion throughout government ultimately followed, with a duality of institutions and barking orders, and soon paralysis gripped the entire system. Tshisekedi requested a peacekeeping mission from the UN that proved unproductive, as did attempts by other African statesmen acting as arbitrators. Eventually, by the end of 1993, the conflicting interests ironed out a constitution with Mobutu remaining as the Head of State and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and only members of the opposition party eligible for the position of Prime Minister, which would be appointed by Mobutu on recommendation from the new transitional legislature composed of a majority of members from supporting political parties. This transitional constitution and the government bound to it purportedly intended to govern for a period of fifteen months. In essence, because Mobutu was the head of the army and the police,

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<sup>298</sup> Garretón, "Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire," 9.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

the Prime Minister—the theoretical head of government—had little power (drawing a striking parallel to Lumumba’s government). Rampant nepotism defined the military. Ngbandi men (Mobutu’s ethnic group) from the Equator Province “wield enormous influence within the army.” The state police force, or Civil Guard, operated under the same protocol and civilians largely feared it throughout Congo, especially because of its methods of suppressing public demonstrations. In addition, Mobutu’s government underpaid many within the military and Civil Guard, and in the period of transition, the police forces pillaged peasant holdings.<sup>300</sup>

Mobutu’s military and police forces, more importantly, served his political purposes. The sabotage of the transitional government was only made possible by these forces, including surrounding Tshisedeki’s residence in 1992 after the Prime Minister’s controversial decision to suspend the Governor of the Bank of Zaire, allowing no access to Tshisedeki, or the enforcement of his policy. These forces prevented the legislature of the transition period from meeting in 1992 and in the early months of 1993. Because of their service to the President, the impunity with which they meted out their orders was wide-spread. Few stood trial for misconduct or torture in the transition period, and fewer punished. Furthermore, when faced with legal action, the army—as it is under the direct authority of the President, and not the government headed by the Prime Minister—has specific recourse detrimental to the victims’ cases. The army justifies its actions by using “a version of the facts” that emphasizes confrontation and self-defense, as well as proliferating refutation strategies like the insinuation of suicides and/or accidents. When questioned about the army’s brutal treatment of the Congolese, the Office of the President maintained that it was the duty of the “Prime Minister’s Government to clean up the security forces.” This has obvious problems, as all of the armed services and police report directly to the

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<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-15.

President.<sup>301</sup> Still, Mobutu maintained a relatively firm grip on Zaïre as a result of these terror tactics until horrific ethnic conflict in the Great Lakes region spilled over into Zaïre.

Perhaps no other international tragedy had more gravity in dethroning Mobutu than the Rwandan genocide. The ethnic conflicts in eastern Congo, deriving largely from Banyarwanda (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa ethnic groups originating in Rwanda, now living in Zaïre) and the indigenous population, namely the Bahunde, Banyanga and Banande (also of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa origins), precipitated the intervention of the Ugandan, Rwandan, and Burundian military forces in conjunction with the Kabila rebellion. According to the UN Economic and Social Council's Commission on Human Rights, the Government of Zaïre granted suffrage and the right to hold political office to the Banyarwanda with Decree Law No. 71-020 of March 26, 1971. Mobutu's government granted the Banyarwanda Zaïrian nationality as a result of this law; "[h]owever, Law No. 81-002 of 29 June 1981 amended previous legislation granting Zaïrian nationality solely to those who could prove that their ancestors had lived in Zaïre since 1885. The application of this Law, because of its retroactive nature, would revoke the rights acquired by the Banyarwanda."<sup>302</sup>

This reversal of nationality fortune obviously angered the Banyarwanda population, and the CNS acted to diminish the tensions brought about by this law. The transitional government agreed to honor the position of the Banyarwanda prior to the 1981 law in order to prevent the statelessness of over a million people. The Bahunde and Banyanga, apparently outraged by the new government's position, attacked communities of Banyarwanda in eastern Zaïre in 1993, resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of around 150,000. With the steady and massive migration of refugees of the Rwandan conflict arriving in eastern Zaïre, and the

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-8.

integration of many of those refugees into the existing Banyarwanda communities, ethnic rivalries once again erupted claiming more victims and an increase in cattle theft.<sup>303</sup>

As many as a million Hutu refugees, after the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) succeeded in installing a Tutsi regime in Rwanda, were forced to live in refugee camps in an area near Goma in eastern Zaïre. The UN estimated that the ubiquitous presence of the *interhamwe*—the militia groups believed to be responsible for the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda—in these camps, for obvious reasons, staunchly opposed repatriation in Rwanda. The *interhamwe* took over the food distribution in the refugee camps, and forced other Hutus to subscribe to the *interhamwe* political and ideological beliefs. Yet, if these Hutus, who did not wish to subscribe to the dictates of the *interhamwe*, chose to repatriate, the Tutsi government in Rwanda may have suspected them of being members of the very group they were trying to escape. Vicious, localized fighting between the groups within the refugee camps and the indigenous population dotted the countryside as a result of the poor living conditions, especially the lack of fuel for cooking, such as wood. The local authorities also had their run-ins with refugee groups, causing casualties.<sup>304</sup>

As much of a problem as this conflict was to the local communities in eastern Zaïre, they did not touch the western reaches of the nation, including Kinshasa and Mobutu's home of Gbadolite. What transformed the refugee situation in eastern Zaïre into Mobutu's Achilles heel was the formal repatriation agreement between the Rwanda, Zaïre, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to "Annex II" of the "Tripartite Agreement on the Repatriation of Rwandese Refugees from Zaïre," "In the area of mutual security, the two heads of Government undertake not to allow the territory of one to be used as a

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<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-20.

base for destabilizing the other.” This issue allowed Uganda and Rwanda to militarily intervene in Kabila’s rebellion, later, in 1997.<sup>305</sup>

Mobutu proceeded, in 1994, to protect the Hutu population living Zaire, which, according to his opposition in the CNS, distorted the national will to the benefit of the President’s political allies. After several months of a transition government, many within Zaire saw no improvement in the reform process. Many Zairians perceived the President to have no interest in the democratic transition process, causing much political frustration, and a dissipation in support for the CNS, as it proved unable to live up to its reform goals. In reality, the Mobutu government ruled in absentia during the 1990s as it applies to social services. It expended no effort to provide for its inhabitants. Ironically, the only political action routinely carried out by the government was political suppression; and, according to Roberto Garretón of the UN Commission on Human Rights, “the human rights violations described in [his] report have all been committed by State employees.”<sup>306</sup>

By January 1996, the situation in Zaire did not improve, and in many cases, got worse. As Garretón revisited Zaire to update his previous report, he detailed the following disappointing results:

There has in fact been no progress in any of the following areas: effective and genuine control over the State security apparatus by the Government and the HCR-PT [*Haut-Conseil de la République-Parlement de transition*] and an end to their impunity; the organization of "States General" on those forces, the separation of the defence and police functions and concern for their training . . .; bona fide measures to limit the authority of Marshal Mobutu . . .; adoption of the electoral laws and other prior requirements for elections to be held . . .; ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, including the declaration provided for by article 21. . .; strengthening of the judiciary and ending the intimidation of judges, as

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<sup>305</sup> “Tripartite Agreement on the Repatriation of Rwandese Refugees from Zaire,” United Nations Security Council, S/1994/1305 (November 17, 1994) <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/455/10/PDF/N9445510.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed August 1, 2009): 10.

<sup>306</sup> Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire,” 25.

well as the fulfilment [*sic.*] by the latter of their role as custodians of liberties . . . ; attention to complaints from society at large . . . ; and cooperation with the specific procedures of the Commission . . . Worse still, there has been a regression in respect for the independence of the judiciary and in the role of judges as custodians of human rights.<sup>307</sup>

Mobutu successfully sabotaged nearly every effort of the transition government to reform Zaïre. His police and military forces still committed human rights violations with impunity; fair and legitimate elections did not occur; Mobutu's authority remained unchecked; and perhaps, the most unfortunate reality after a year of reform: the cries of the people fell on deaf ears.

In addition to the lack of reform, the situation in eastern Zaïre intensified. Despite the attempts of the international community to decrease statelessness, the Mobutu government denied the Banyarwanda Zaïrian nationality, despite Zaïrian birth, due to "excessive nationalism" in the local scene. Conflict between members of anti-Rwandan, indigenous groups and the refugee camps continued. The Zaïrian transition government supported the expulsion of refugees in August 1995, thereby compelling one hundred-fifty thousand to flee to the mountains to join the Banyarwanda. Much of this decision was resulted from the presence of weapons—brought by Hutu soldiers after their defeat in Rwanda—and the use of those weapons in local ethnic conflicts. The government took steps to expel the Banyamulenge, or Zaïrian-born people of Tutsi origin (a sub-ethnic group within the Banyarwanda family) with all Rwandan refugees because the local government did not trust the group due to its Rwandan origins, further exacerbating ethnic tensions.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Roberto Garretón, "Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire, prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Roberto Garretón, in accordance with Commission resolution 1995/69," *United Nations Economic and Social Council*, E/CN. 4/1996/66 (January 29, 1996) <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G96/104/24/pdf/G9610424.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed August 1, 2009): 29.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-6.



According to Article 33 of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, *refoulement*, or expelling refugees to a country where their lives or freedoms are threatened, is illegal. Zaïre, invoking its understanding of Article 33, paragraph 2, claimed that it had every right to expel “refugees who constitute ‘a danger to the security of the country’ of asylum.” To Garretón, however, the massive amount of people involved clearly trumped the principle invoked. The real problem rested in the local population and police authority, which had terrorized a great deal of the refugees. To complicate matters further, Garretón reported allegations of “former refugee members of the Rwandan Armed Forces” [Hutu-dominated military of Rwanda from 1960-94] conducting attacks in Rwanda and then returning to the refugee camps only to provoke retaliation from the Rwandan Army [Tutsi-dominated military of Kagame regime after 1994]. These situations ultimately gave Rwanda the justification it needed to intervene in Zaïre.<sup>309</sup> Through all of this, Mobutu’s government offered little to its citizens. His political life mirrored his physical life, decaying at an accelerated rate during the mid 1990s.

#### *Economic Collapse of Zaïre*

The demise of Mobutu’s state in the 1990s resulted, in large measure, from the vapid economic state of Zaïre. Mobutu’s history of nationalizing natural resource mining interests, the international smuggling of minerals, the meager price of copper, and the rampant macro-mismanagement of funds that had been the hallmark of Zaïre, made international investment in Mobutu’s fiefdom a liability. Prior to the success of Kabila’s ADFL, the Mobutu regime suffered from the effects of decades of self-indulgence. Without the reinvestment in the education of future Congolese, the mind of the nation began to falter. Without the insistence of discipline within the ranks of the military and police forces, the muscle of the nation began to

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-2, 14-5.

atrophy. Without the courtship of other nations and without a serious attempt to compromise with the people, the virility of the nation began to dissipate. By the mid 1990s, Mobutu had little else than a reputation of cruelty and a loyal military that exhibited little restraint and even less regard for human dignity. The relative economic success that he enjoyed in the late 1960s and for first four years of the 1970s was a distant memory. Beginning in 1992, the United States, Mobutu's largest benefactor, began to diminish its aid to the former anti-Soviet ally, as the last act of the Cold War concluded. Without an influx of foreign economic aid, Mobutu, once the African strongman, revealed himself to be more akin to the Wizard of Oz: strong, capable, and awe-inspiring—if not fearful, so long as the curtain was drawn.

As indicated in the previous section, the United States ended much of the aid previously endowed to Zaïre in 1992. The UN then had to shoulder most of the burden of improving the dreadful conditions within a decaying Zaïre. As a humanitarian effort, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed “country programmes” that aimed to improve the living conditions of impoverished people living in the Third World. Zaïre qualified as one of the nations with such a programme. In the 1990s, the UNDP aimed to improve the food security, eradicate poverty, and further develop the private sector. The programme focused on the empowering “the most vulnerable groups for sustainable human development.”<sup>310</sup> Much of the programme failed to meet its original goals due to the political fighting in Zaïre during the National Sovereign Conference and the nation-wide riots in September 1991 that caused an evacuation of UN workers. The political stalemate between Mobutu and the opposition in the National Sovereign Conference intensified the instability in Zaïre and prevented the

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<sup>310</sup> “Country Programmes, Mid-Term Reviews and Related Matters: Assistance to Zaïre,” *Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund*, S DP/1994/43 (25 March 1994) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009).

implementation of UNDP initiatives. As noted by the UNDP: “The principal obstacles to the completion of the exercise are . . . the absence of a national framework programme, the delay in establishing the process of democratization and the lack of national counterparts.” Indeed, the UNDP saw more cause for disappointment than hope for reform in 1993. “An analysis of the economic results for 1992 confirms the disappointing performance of the economy during the 1980s in the light of the country’s potential in human and natural resources. The growth of the gross domestic product (GDP), which averaged 1.4 per cent a year between 1980 and 1990, has been negative since 1990.” In 1992, the inflation rate in Zaïre, because of the negative growth in GDP, exceeded 4,500 percent. This figure alone attests to the destitution strangling Zaïre at the end of Mobutu’s reign.<sup>311</sup> At this time, government officials, including civil servants working for foreign diplomats, military personnel, judges, teachers, and doctors suffered from “the very long delay in paying public employees.” Some of these government workers waited 24-30 months to receive their due pay, causing immense strain on their families and the economy in general.<sup>312</sup> As a plausible solution, the UNDP supported the transition to democratically elected leaders, and “prepared to be associated with the democratization process and the organization of elections in Zaire.” The UNDP did, however, state that Mobutu would not likely acquiesce from power unless other “donors are also involved.” This time period, when the United States reevaluated its relationship with Mobutu, ushered in a new policy whereby the United States remained quite aloof.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> “Programme Planning And Implementation: Country, Intercountry And Global Programmes: Extension Of The Fourth Country Programme For Zaire,” *United Nations Development Programme*, DP/CP/ZAI/4/Extension II (16 April 1993) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 2-3.

<sup>312</sup> Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire,” 25.

<sup>313</sup> “Programme Planning And Implementation,” 4.

To put Zaire's economic decline in perspective, the value of the zaïre—the country's currency—must be analyzed. According to Garretón, the value of the zaïre equalled two US dollars in 1970. In 1994, 3,200 zaïres equalled one US dollar—a 6,400 percent depreciation. The inflation associated with this economic free fall paralyzed Zaïrians; as many as 12 million suffered unemployment in 1994, and most could not meet their most basic needs.<sup>314</sup>

The political conflicts of the early 1990s encumbered The UNDP “country programme” to improve the living conditions of Zaïrians, but the refugee crisis as a result of the Rwandan genocide and other civil conflicts in Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Burundi and Angola decimated the programme. By 1995, Zaire had the largest refugee population in Africa, and substantial UN commitment to that international catastrophe (outside Zaire) certainly prevented the full attention needed to improve the economic ills in Zaire.<sup>315</sup> In mid-1994, the UNHCR felt the immense weight of the Rwandan refugee situation:

The deterioration in the social and economic situation, the widespread insecurity, the very tense political climate, the hyper-inflation following the monetary reform in October 1993 and the massive influx of Rwandese refugees will disrupt the implementation of the activities that UNHCR's Regional Office wanted to undertake to assist the refugees in Zaire.<sup>316</sup>

The UNHCR did not fathom the scope of this tragic period by August 1994, as demonstrated by the “proposed revised allocation” of aid relief committed to the Burundi/Rwanda Emergency. At that time, the UNHCR estimated over \$10 million in funds to this catastrophe.<sup>317</sup> By the end of

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<sup>314</sup> Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire,” 45.

<sup>315</sup> “UNHCR Activities Financed By Voluntary Funds: Report For 1994-1995 and Proposed Programmes And Budget For 1996, Part I. Africa: Section 22 – Zaire,” *UN General Assembly: Executive Committee Of The High Commissioner's Programme*, A/AC.96/846/Part I/22 (25 July 1995) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 5.

<sup>316</sup> “UNHCR Activities Financed By Voluntary Funds: Report for 1993-1994 and Proposed Programmes and Budget for 1995, Part I. Africa: Section 22 – Zaire,” *UN General Assembly: Executive Committee Of The High Commissioner's Programme*, A/AC.96/825/Part I/22 (30 August 1994) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 4.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

1994, the actual expenditure by the UNHCR reached \$99 million, and the “proposed revised allocation” of funds for 1995 was over \$107 million. The refugee camps, as stated in the previous section, created security problems that called for international military resources as well as the Zaïrian military “to allow the international aid community to address this unparalleled man-made disaster.”<sup>318</sup> Obviously, Zaïre and Mobutu could not have planned for spending money and resources to protect over a million refugees from a neighboring country; and in the end, this disaster would play a large role in Kabila’s successful rebellion.

Interestingly, businessman Jean-Raymond Boulle, founder of American Mineral Fields (AMC) with significant ties to the Clinton administration, switched allegiances to rebel leader Laurent Kabila when Mobutu barely clung to his kleptocratic control of Zaïre in 1997. Boulle was searching for new mining concessions in the war-torn country. At that point, Boulle, with a small \$1 million donation in “mineral taxes” to Kabila’s rebellion, initially gained concessions to the cobalt-rich Kolwezi Tailings Project worth an estimated \$16 billion. Boulle, a shrewd entrepreneur, who successfully negotiated the experimental—yet unproductive—diamond mining in Crater of the Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro, Arkansas with the approval of then-governor William J. Clinton, made his fortune in controversial mining enterprises in Newfoundland; after which, he invested heavily in the mining sector (a 42% in AMF and a 28.5% share in Nord Resources, an NYSE-traded mining company) which ultimately found him intricately connected to the Democratic National Convention (DNC) and mining within Zaïre. No evidence demonstrates any knowledge on behalf of the Clinton Administration as to the designs of Boulle, but his affiliations suggest a different story.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> “UNHCR Activities Financed By Voluntary Funds: Report for 1994-1995,” 8, 3-4.

<sup>319</sup> Richard C. Morais, “Friends in High Places,” *Forbes* (August 10, 1998) <http://www.forbes.com/global/1998/0810/0109038a.html> (accessed Oct. 26, 1998).

The San Francisco-based firm, Robertson Stephens Investment Management Company, for years, funneled money to not only Boule-run companies, but also the DNC. Through its DNC connections, according to Forbes, the Robertson Stephens Investment Company was able to broker a significant deal with China's "largest investment banking firms, Shanghai International Securities." After that lucrative trip, Sanford Robertson (co-founder of the company) celebrated the worthwhile deal that had been struck by donating \$100,000 to the Democratic Party on January 23, 1996. Clinton, then President of the United States, had a close relationship with one of Boule's international partners, Maurice Tempelsman, of Lazare Kaplan International, Inc. Tempelsman, a significant financial supporter of the Democratic machine, had the privilege to accompany President Clinton via Air Force One on missions to Russia and Ukraine in 1995. Kabila, after his successful coup, reneged on many of the promises he made to Boule and almost granted mining rights to the large Anglo American Corporation of South Africa, Ltd. (AACCSAL) Boule was able, in U.S. courts no less, to shrewdly sue AACCSAL in an antitrust suit, eventually succeeding in making the international company capitulate and concede partnership to Boule in the Kolwezi Tailings Project. Both parties stood to make a substantial profit while the masses of Congolese reeled in starvation, disfranchisement and civil war.<sup>320</sup>

It is clear that while Mobutu was able to secure American support, his country suffered through an elongated decline that culminated in an utter collapse as Kabila seized power. Kabila, as the new liberator, made deals with external interests that handcuffed any real change for his native people. As shown earlier in Chapter Two, much needed to be done on the domestic front in regards to social welfare, but nothing was. External humanitarian aid filled a small portion of the void; however, most encountered deplorable conditions while the elite either

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<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

shifted allegiances to Kabila and enjoyed relative economic security or defected to other countries to live off the spoils of past despotism. Regardless, the masses that stayed in Congo-Zaire learned that rule by an unknown military leader was not a significant upgrade in their living situation.

### *Social Deprivations*

The standard of living for the vast majority of people living in Zaire since the early 1970s to the end of the First Congo War in 1997 epitomized destitution. Countless masses could not meet their most basic needs, demanding the involvement of myriad foreign aid programs. Political repression and violations of human rights defined the Mobutu regime during this period, as Mobutu's FAZ and the Civil Guard terrorized the population. As international awareness of the brutality of Mobutu's dictatorship increased during the late 1980s and early 1990s, American support for the Zairian "strong man" precipitously declined, and by 1996, that support shifted toward Laurent-Désiré Kabila and his ADFL rebellion. At the time, Western media and politicians hailed the First Congo War of 1996-1997 as an African solution to an African problem, as Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Zairian rebels systematically marched from eastern Zaire to Kinshasa, defeating Mobutu's military one swift battle at a time. As Mobutu's prostate cancer advanced, weakening Mobutu's body, it provided a metaphor for the dictator's regime: the social deprivations levied against the impoverished masses in the previous years symbolized the cancer of Zaire, metastasizing in the form of rebellion, ultimately killing the host regime.

In February of 1989, the UN Commission on Human Rights required Zaire to submit a "report giving a detailed account of all action to protect and promote human rights that would be initiated or undertaken by Zaire" in the following months. Mobutu's government hoped the report would support the decision of the Commission to discontinue the question of Zairian

human rights violations. The investigation leading to the report, conducted by Zairian Deputy Chief State Commissioner Nimy Mayidika Ngimbi, highlighted key areas where Zaïre demonstrated human rights violations, decisions made by the Mobutu regime that proliferated societal abuses, and a detached United States with regards to aid.<sup>321</sup>

First, in June 1989, the Deputy Chief State Commissioner visited various prisons throughout Zaïre. Part of his visits entailed releasing prisoners detained illegally. As a result of his findings, the Commissioner “decided to organize a seminar for police officers to remind them of the legal procedures for the detention and physical treatment of detainees.” Zairian officials held this seminar from 10 to 14 December 1989 to coincide with the forty-first anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The letter does not offer any statistical analysis or anecdotal evidence to attest to the success of the seminar, nor does it cite how many persons the police illegally detained; but, in the eyes of the Commissioner, this act was a step in the right direction.<sup>322</sup>

Second, the report exposes legal disparities rampant in Zaïre. Mobutu’s government set up the *Département des droits et libertés du citoyen* (DDLCC) as check on the legal system in the form of judicial reform. The DDLCC represented the final recourse for citizens in a legal battle, and therefore could only hear cases after they matriculated through the lower courts and tribunals. Most of the time, the DDLCC refers citizens to the proper channels in the lower courts, but it did render favorable decisions to the complainant in most of the cases that it heard. The one glaring disparity dealt specifically with Mobutu’s army and police force. According to Legislative Ordinance No. 89-049, “[t]his law authorizes the Department to bring proceedings

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<sup>321</sup> “Further Promotion and Encouragement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Including the Question of The Programme and Methods of Work of the Commission,” United Nations Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/1990/79 (23 February 1990) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 2.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 12-3.



against any civil servant in general and police officers in particular who are convicted of torture.”<sup>323</sup> As Special Rapporteur Garretón observed in 1993-4, the DDLC rarely enforced punishment when it involved the military or Civil Guard.<sup>324</sup>

Finally, the report illustrates a United States government distancing itself from Zaïre, no longer available to Mobutu at a moment’s notice. In order to successfully implement the encouragement of human rights required by the UN, the DDLC argued that it needed 50 jeeps to traverse the rugged interior. The Executive Council of Zaïre requested these vehicles sometime between 1987 and 1989, but as of the submission of this report, the United States had not responded to the request. In addition to vehicles, communication devices were necessary to connect the central administration with department offices throughout the country, but were in short supply. Again, “like the first request for some 50 jeeps—even second-hand—this request for radios has remained a dead letter.” This clearly demonstrates that the United States, according to the Zaïrian commissioner, chose to ignore two different appeals for relatively inexpensive assistance.<sup>325</sup>

By 1993, human rights violations, unbridled throughout Zaïre, continued to draw the close attention of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The Commission specifically targeted the Mobutu regime’s systematic and brutal acts of suppressing peaceful demonstrations during the transitional government period, stating that the Commission:

deplores the continuing serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Zaire, particularly the practice of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary detention and detention incommunicado, inhuman and degrading prison conditions, especially in the detention centres administered by the army, enforced

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<sup>323</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>324</sup> Garretón, “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire,” 16, 22.

<sup>325</sup> “Further Promotion and Encouragement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,” 17.

disappearances, summary and arbitrary executions of persons who have exercised their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and denial of the right to a fair trial.<sup>326</sup>

Clearly, at this point, Mobutu's totalitarian grip in Zaïre continued to slip, and the use of the military and police represented the only method to maintain the regime.

In November 1993, the government of Zaïre delivered a memorandum to the Secretary-General addressing the Commission's criticism. In this memorandum, the government of Zaïre defended its position on the situation of human rights, deriding the procedural errors of the Zaïrian complainants in filing their claims with the UN. According to "article 41 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 2 of the Optional Protocol, any complainant must have exhausted available domestic remedies before applying to the competent international authorities of the United Nations." The memorandum asserts that the government of Zaïre, at the national level, received no complaint concerning the allegations reported by the Commission, and that the complainants who filed claim with the UN failed to negotiate the proper domestic channels which include appealing to the Inspectorate-General for judicial services in any event of a miscarriage of justice, and as a last resort, requesting the services of the DDLC. Consequently, in the memorandum, the government of Zaïre chastises the Commission for accepting inadmissible claims due to the claimants' negligence in exhausting all possible domestic options. The government also noted that the claims were too vague, and that they lacked any specific information about the alleged violations or the perpetrators. Legally, the government had leverage because the claimants failed to maneuver through the proper domestic

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<sup>326</sup> "Question of the Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Any Part of the World, with Particular Reference to Colonial and Other Dependent Countries and Territories: Situation of Human Rights in Zaïre," UN Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/1993/L.33 (3 March 1993) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 2.

alternatives.<sup>327</sup> However, by 1993, the people of Zaïre had only known political repression. What is more, the DDLC represented the last resort. In order to petition this judicial body and successfully file a claim of a violation of human rights, local justice must be exhausted. As noted by the Commission, the success of the DDLC in exacting justice is difficult to measure, as “people who have received advice or other forms of assistance from the DDLC are hardly likely to come back to report on the final decision taken by the relevant department regarding their complaint.” The daunting task of negotiating the legal system in a repressive regime turned many people away from domestic remedies, as evidenced by the inadmissible claims in question.<sup>328</sup>

During this period, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance, appealed to the government of Zaïre regarding the apparent abduction of the editor-in-chief of a local newspaper by members of the Special Presidential Division (DSP) or Civil Guard. The government did not respond to this appeal by the time the Working Group finalized the report to the Secretary-General. Also in 1993, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions submitted five urgent appeals to the government regarding the lives of several political opponents of Mobutu. The Special Rapporteur fretted over two members of the *Comité laïc de coordination* and two members of the Supreme Council of the Republic (HCR-PT) “whose names reportedly were on a blacklist of persons to be executed by members of the security forces;” the President of the Zaïrian Supreme Court, who had been the victim of three armed attacks; the reported abduction of the siblings of a writer who had criticized Mobutu; two advisers to Prime Minister Tshisekedi, one who had been injured in an armed attack, and the

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<sup>327</sup> “Situation of Human Rights in Zaire: Report by the Secretary-General,” UN Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/1994/49 (23 December 1993) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 4-5.

<sup>328</sup> “Further Promotion and Encouragement of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,” 15-6.

other who had been followed by security forces; the victims of an attack in front of the Prime Minister's house in which the DSP reportedly opened fire indiscriminately; and concerning "allegations of a massacre of the Banyarwanda in North Kivu." Perhaps the most gruesome incident documented and transmitted to the Government by the Special Rapporteur occurred in Kinshasa, "when members of the DSP reportedly killed at least 15 civilians, including an 11-year-old child and a pregnant woman, in retaliation for the murder of one of their members."<sup>329</sup> Quite clearly, although all of these reports were of alleged offenses, the Mobutu regime, in the same span of defending its efforts to promote human rights, continued to commit gross injustices with regards to political dissidents.

Regardless of the political posturing by the Mobutu regime in its communication with the UN, the clearest indication of human rights abuses appears in the report of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs accompanying the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi to Zaire that year:

The past three years have witnessed an unchecked acceleration in the decline of Zaire's human capital, economic fabric and social infrastructure, with the modern sector more seriously affected than in previous crises. Destructive riots in September 1991 and January 1993 led to a further deterioration in basic infrastructure, aggravating an already precarious social situation characterized by social indicators which are among the most alarming in Africa: a GNP per capita of less than US\$ 262, an under-five mortality rate of 200 per 1,000, a maternal death rate of 6 per 1,000 live births, 25 per cent of children and 13 per cent of pregnant women suffering from malnutrition, a high prevalence of tropical diseases and AIDS, less than 23 per cent of the population having access to drinking water, a primary school enrolment rate of about 61 per cent, and a secondary school enrolment of barely 16 per cent. The continuous economic decline is further eroding the purchasing power and aggravating the already fragile nutritional status of the population. Disease is widespread and poverty is pervasive.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> "Situation of Human Rights in Zaire: Report by the Secretary-General," 6.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

The report demonstrates the dire situation that all Zairians faced; disease, malnutrition, a lack of drinking water, economic collapse, and a lack of education predominated Zaïre before the arrival of the refugees, *en masse*, from the Rwandan and Burundian crises.

In March 1994, well before the flood of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi, the UN Commission on Human Rights issued the same forceful condemnation of the government of Zaïre as in March 1993. Again, the Commission deplored the brutality of the regime in committing serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms; however, the Commission now questioned the “forced displacements of more than 750,000 persons belonging to ethnic minorities, especially in the provinces of Shaba and northern Kivu, as well as the heavy loss of human life and numerous other violations of human rights accompanying such displacements,” and reemphasized “the need to put an end to the impunity of persons responsible for human rights violations.” Mobutu’s vicious efforts to maintain his authority in an increasingly hostile nation of frustrated and deprived people were soon to be challenged, yet again, by a rebellion far east of Kinshasa; however *this* rebellion would prove able—with the help of Mobutu’s former ally, the United States, in conjunction with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.<sup>331</sup> Mobutu’s armed forces folded under pressure from an organized opposition.

As Mobutu’s forces retreated to Kinshasa in early 1997 the ADFL sealed the fate of Zaïre. The “authenticated” nation, created by draconian law and political, economic and social deprivations exacted upon its citizens for over three decades, crumbled around the cancer-stricken Mobutu Sese Seko. “The all-conquering warrior who triumphs over all obstacles”<sup>332</sup> could not anymore; thirty years of self-indulgence solidified a nation and international neighbors

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<sup>331</sup> “Situation of Human Rights in Zaire,” UN Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/1994/L.101 (4 March 1994) <http://documents.un.org/mother.asp> (accessed September 9, 2009): 2.

<sup>332</sup> Kelly, *America’s Tyrant*, 1.

against him. The spotty, at best, pay of his military and its predatory exploitation of the masses bred disorganization and dissidence amongst the ranks. His nation, rife with disease, malnutrition, discontent, and poor education, no longer represented a necessary ally in the war against communism, and as a result, the United States government decided to cut ties. In short, Mobutu could not function, could not terrorize, could not exploit, nor could he successfully administer his massive fiefdom without the support of the United States and his former colonial master. What transpired in 1996-7 was a relatively bloodless recall of a dying despot who instilled bitter resentment amongst his people—a far cry from the terror he enjoyed for the previous thirty years. As if to suggest a hint of karma, Mobutu’s last experience in Zaïre demonstrates his utter destruction:

Mobutu left Kinshasa, where he had returned from prostate cancer surgery in Europe for negotiations with the Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed rebel leader Laurent Kabila, for the relative security of Gbadolite. On the next day, he suffered the double indignity of refusal by the crew of his presidential jet to fly him out of the country, as they insisted, rightly, that the plane was state property, and his attempted lynching by some of his own soldiers, who blamed him for the assassination the night before of General Mahele in Kinshasa. The soldiers fired on the military transportation plane carrying Mobutu and his family into exile, as it was taking off from the Gbadolite airport. The strongman had become a weak and lonely man. The helmsman had lost his grip on the helm of the ship of state could no longer steer it out of trouble or find the anchor to keep it secure.<sup>333</sup>

### **The Rise of Kabila**

Laurent-Désiré Kabila, a Luba from Northern Katanga, relatively obscure in Congolese national politics until his foreign-supported rebellion ousted Mobutu in 1997, proclaimed himself the president of the newly named Democratic Republic of Congo. He continually evinced his background prior to this successful rebellion against Mobutu as a resistance fighter and leader. He fought against Tshombe in Katanga and later the Léopoldville government in the 1960s. During the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, Kabila led a small state run by predominantly Marxist

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<sup>333</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 214.

principals in the Fizi area of Kivu province, mostly surviving via the international gold and diamond smuggling industry.<sup>334</sup> His assault on Mobutu's forces harnessed support from many foreign nations, including Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, and Mobutu's formerly reliable crutch—the United States. Unfortunately for the Congolese masses, Kabila's rise to power looked all too familiar to his predecessor, Mobutu Sese Seko. Kabila proclaimed himself president upon his ousting of Mobutu; he used his position to line his pockets with incredible wealth; he filled his government with relatives and close friends; and he encouraged neighborhood youth groups called Popular Power Committees, or grassroots political machines aimed at solidifying his rule—much like Mobutu's Volunteer Corps of the Republic (CVR).

Kabila owed his military and political success largely to ethnic conflict in the Great Lakes region of Africa and external support. In the countries of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and in Eastern Congo, ethnic tensions between the predominantly pastoral Tutsi and agrarian Hutu peoples exploded into genocide and retaliation wars in the 1990s, forcing refugees from both ethnic groups into harsh living conditions and constant threat. Prior to colonization, the Tutsis, although less than 20 percent of the population, represented the elites of the area of the Great Lakes region. The Hutus, making up 80 percent of the population, represented agriculturalists and clients of the Tutsi nobility and occasionally climbed the social ladder through intermarriage. At present, distinguishing between Tutsis and Hutus by comparing physical characteristics proves unreliable; however, the source of ethnic tension comes from the colonial period. The Germans, and later the Belgians, created a rigid social system that made intermarriage almost nonexistent and ethnic identity a priority. The imperialists gave the Tutsi nobles the task of administering the colonies as auxiliary governors, often brutally enforcing colonial policy.

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<sup>334</sup> Gondola, *History of the Congo*, 186.

During the 1950s, Hutu consciousness erupted as a resistance movement and upon independence, the Western world, especially Belgium, decided to bequeath the political power to the Hutu majority. Reprisals and retaliatory conflict has ensued ever since, culminating in the genocide of 800,000 to 1 million Tutsis in 1994 as the rest of the world did very little to stop it.<sup>335</sup>

From various areas outside of Rwanda, where the genocide occurred, Tutsi exiles prepared a counter attack to gain control of the country. Later in 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), or the Tutsi nationalist army, took control of the Rwandan government after bloody conflict. Over 1 million Hutus flooded across the border into neighboring Congo as refugees. It is these refugees and the presence of Tutsis in Congo that provided the pretext for the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan government to intervene in the Congo conflict to overthrow Mobutu. The same can be said for Uganda and Burundi who also have Tutsi populations in power in their respective governments. Yoweri Museveni, the embattled president of Uganda, aided the RPF in its effort to reclaim Rwanda. It is fair to assume, because of his ethnic background (his father was a Mtutsi from Rwanda), that he may have designs on the Tutsi-laden areas of Eastern Congo. According to Ogenga Otunnu, "Museveni responded quite promptly to the crisis in the west [political insurrection in Western Uganda] because the area is Museveni's stronghold and an important route to the Tutsi nationalist project in Eastern Zaire. The area was also an important corridor to the 'treasure house' in Zaire."<sup>336</sup> Rwanda invaded Congo in 1997 under the guise of ferreting out the Hutu extremists amongst the refugees in the Congo who continued to raid Rwanda and murder Tutsi citizens of Congo. The international community sat idly by and watched, yet did little to help. The UN focused more on feeding the refugees than limiting

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<sup>335</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 214-224.

<sup>336</sup> Ogenga Otunnu, "Chapter 2: Uganda As a Regional Actor in the Zairian War," in *War and Peace in Zaire/Congo: Analyzing and evaluating Intervention: 1996-1997*, Eds. Howard Adelman and Govind C. Rao (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2004): 40-1.



the criminals in their ranks. Kabila would not have been able to successfully march on Kinshasa and oust Mobutu without this intervention by the RPF and the Ugandan army in eastern Congo. This collaboration *de force* would be known as the AFDL.<sup>337</sup>

The Western powers also played a vital role in this overthrow of Mobutu. The United States and its allies officially approved Kabila as the opposition force leader. The United States, the IMF-World Bank and Great Britain funded Museveni's government because he was an African leader capable of bringing stability to the area. This economic, political, and military support flowed into Eastern Congo. The Western world also had to temper its criticisms of the Rwandan government due to the utter lack of humanitarian aid during the genocide. According to Otunnu: "The unwillingness of the international community to prevent the genocide in Rwanda had deprived it of the moral authority to effectively revive Mobutu's power or to forcefully condemn Rwanda and Uganda for armed intervention against the 'perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide' in Zaire."<sup>338</sup> Supporting Kabila did not necessarily change the aspirations of the West, and the United States in particular; Kabila would be another strongman to stabilize the Congo.

The United States, now disassociated with the Mobutu regime, sought to expand its influence in Africa, curtail fundamentalist Islam movements in East Africa, and reap the benefits of close associations with a new Congolese leader, thereby increasing its ability to wield influence in the mining industry in southern Zaïre. In order to accomplish this, several factors come into play, including political support for a rebel leader, coordination of an international force against Mobutu's military, and economic assistance to that force. The United States

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<sup>337</sup> Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 224.

<sup>338</sup> Otunnu, *Uganda As a Regional Actor*, 49.

achieved all of these goals while maintaining relative anonymity in the process.<sup>339</sup> How did this happen, and to what extent was American influence the deciding factor in installing Kabila as the new president of the newly renamed Democratic Republic of Congo?

### *Political Maneuvering*

The ADFL's success in deposing Mobutu closely mirrored General Eisenhower's strategy in Germany near the end of the European theatre during World War II. "The rebels first seized the gold mining areas in the northeast, the diamond center of Mbuji-Mayi and the copper capital of Lubumbashi before advancing to Kinshasa." According to François Ngolet, this hardly seems coincidental. Paul Kagame, the Vice-President and Commander of the Rwandan forces involved in the rebellion, "was trained at the US army's command and general staff College at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas." By taking over the economic regions in the East, the rebel operation achieved two important goals; first, Mobutu would not receive any money from lands occupied by enemy forces; second, Kabila's forces then negotiated favorable terms with foreign mining interests in order to continually fund the rebellion. Canadian company Tenke Mining Corp paid \$50 million for initial mining rights to lucrative copper and cobalt deposits in 1997, and Jean-Raymond Boule's American Mineral Fields negotiated an estimated \$1 billion mining contract with Kabila and the ADFL in the same year. These private investors also provided transportation for ADFL troops en route to Kinshasa. In addition to mining contracts, Kabila's minister of Finance, Mawampanga Mwana, hosted a business meeting in a hotel in Lubumbashi—during the height of the rebellion—with the likes of "Goldman Sachs, The First

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<sup>339</sup> Ngolet, "African and American Connivance in Congo-Zaire," 66, 70.

Bank of Boston, Morgan Grenfell and other fund managers from North America.” This arrangement demonstrates the continued neocolonial presence of the West in Congo-Zaire.<sup>340</sup>

With the departure of Mobutu and the renaming of the Democratic Republic of Congo came flattering media coverage for Kabila and his rebel forces. Many newspapers created Kabila’s celebrity as a reformer virtually over night. *The Daily Telegraph* reported on April 16, 1997: “Decades of misrule in Zaire have turned it once again into Africa's heart of darkness. It is, therefore, natural that Laurent Kabila should be welcomed as a messiah in the towns which his rebels have taken from President Mobutu's forces.” Chris McGreal of *The Guardian* posited on May 19, 1997: “Perhaps the West has finally realised that Zaireans are human beings after those decades when it propped up the Mobutu regime, while Zaireans died for lack of medicines. Washington nodded in agreement – without Mobutu there would be chaos. But there was chaos. The rebellion brought order.”<sup>341</sup> This relatively positive coverage would soon be overshadowed, though, by a tumultuous government helmed by Kabila, leading to more devastation and millions of deaths as a result of the Second Congo War. A large part of Kabila’s problem in office resulted from the large part of Mobutu’s problem: the aftermath of the Rwandan conflict.

As the liberation armies of the ADFL marched through Zaire, soldiers meted out retribution, in all its bloody horror, against the refugee Hutu population in eastern Zaire. According to Kisangani Emizet, the RPF and ADFL forces, as they moved through Zaire, systematically sought out and destroyed a massive portion of the refugee Hutu population living in Zaire as a direct result of the RPF’s victory in Rwanda just a couple of years before. Special Rapporteur Garretón, charged with investigating what he believed to be forty possible massacre

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-1.

<sup>341</sup> Osei Boateng, “The Second Scramble for Congo,” *New African*, No. 446 (December 1, 2005): 30-2.

sites, reported this terrorist activity. Kabila, now calling the shots after declaring himself President, requested the replacement of Garretón and the UN granted his request. Emizet believes Kabila's motive to remove Garretón resulted solely from the Special Rapporteur's belief that a genocide had occurred. When the UN assigned a new team leader, Kabila proceeded to complicate the process by: first, requiring the UN to pay Congo \$1.7 million per day to pay for Congolese officials that would accompany the Special Rapporteur and his team in the field; second, the team would only be granted access to the eastern portion of Congo, where the refugees were originally located; third, the period under investigation was to date as far back as "1993 to include the 1994 genocide inside Rwanda"; and fourth, that no crimes would be investigated after Kabila's ascension to power on May 17, 1997. These demands, according to Emizet, indicate the Kabila regime's commitment to a cover-up. In his estimation, Emizet concludes that 233,000 refugees disappeared during the First Congo War; these refugees, predominantly Hutu, and heading west across a country of which they knew nothing in order to escape the vengeful RPF and ADFL, vanished. Emizet asserts that Kabila agreed to let the investigating team survey only the eastern portion of Congo because this western migration of the Hutu refugees resulted in their massacres perpetrated away from their camps, further west. The UN backed down and conceded to Kabila's demands, probably due to the Western world's guilty conscience concerning the Rwandan genocide; because the West did little to prevent the horrific episode, the UN lacked the moral authority to criticize the RPF's actions. This utter lack of moral authority also played well into ability of the ADFL and RPF to escape accountability for these actions. "All these conditions seem to exclude the RPF and the ADFL as possible perpetrators of the massacre of refugees, because the two parties accused of the massacre are currently in power in Rwanda and Congo respectively." Here, Kabila astutely maneuvered the

murky waters of politics while preserving his legitimacy.<sup>342</sup> This legitimacy would be put to the test later by his co-conspirator in the alleged genocide: Rwanda.

### *Economic Manipulations*

With the exit of Mobutu and the victory of Kabila and his external partners, the Congolese masses hoped for reform and a jumpstart to their economy. After installing himself as president, Kabila set out to curb the financial extravagances of the Mobutu regime and did succeed in halting the devaluation on the Congolese currency and the rampant inflation marring the economy; however, his policies, largely controlled by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, met with opposition from the start.<sup>343</sup> The invading armies stayed in Eastern Congo after Mobutu left the political scene. Congolese nationalism intensified as these neocolonial forces conspicuously dictated Kabila's government. When Kabila decided to expel the external allies, another civil war began, with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi supporting local leaders in Eastern Congo that were, in essence, their puppets.<sup>344</sup> This civil war ravaged the economy once again, and Kabila became just as unpopular as Mobutu in the darkest days of his presidency. Inflation increased, corruption and nepotism proliferated, and foreign business investment plummeted. A regime mired by instability and a "lack of transparency in government economic policy continue[d] to inhibit economic recovery and growth."<sup>345</sup>

Kabila's first major concern as the political leader of the DRC was to secure international support for his regime, both politically and economically. Politically, Kabila needed his claim to the presidency to be legitimized by the Western powers so that he could begin to form diplomatic

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<sup>342</sup> Kisangani N. F. Emizet, "The Massacre of Refugees in Congo: A Case of UN Peacekeeping Failure and International Law," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Jul., 2000): 170, 190-1.

<sup>343</sup> Gondola, *History of the Congo*, 6.

<sup>344</sup> Otunnu, *Uganda As a Regional Actor*, 70-1.

<sup>345</sup> Gondola, *History of the Congo*, 7.

relationships with them, and hopefully, attract economic support for his reconstruction needs. In December 1997, Kabila secured \$120 million in foreign assistance with the bulk coming from the European Union, which accounted for about 10 percent of his reconstruction plans. The United States and Belgium, the two largest contributors to Mobutu's regime offered \$10 million and \$4 million, respectively. The two perennial Western neocolonial nations were not prepared, at least in 1997, to dump more money into a nation with enormous infrastructure liabilities. The money that Kabila did garner, though, did help reduce the inflation to 15 percent per month, as opposed to the 350-9,000 percent per month during the last few years of the Mobutu regime. Still, the DRC suffered dire financial straits. The World Bank could not loan any more money to Congo due to its \$300 million in arrears from the previous administration. What, then, can be made of the financial support Kabila did receive?<sup>346</sup>

The bulk of the money coming from the United States came from private investors, mostly in the mining industry. Belgium's slim support underscores the larger picture of the former colonizer pulling most of its influence from the region, as demonstrated by its handling of the Rwandan crisis. Belgium's withdrawal of its UN peacekeeping troops in 1994 directly preceded the slaughter of Rwandan Tutsis. France, a contributor to the European Union's financial support, continually strives to maintain its sphere of influence in francophone Africa, and its presence in the DRC's rebuilding effort epitomizes its attempt to stave off American designs in Central Africa, an area formerly dominated by France.<sup>347</sup> At this juncture, Kabila would accept money from virtually any donor, as the wedding between the interested parties within the ADFL was over.

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<sup>346</sup> Jean-Claude Williame, "The 'Friends of the Congo' and the Kabila System," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Central Africa in Crisis (1998): 27-9.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

Perhaps Kabila's largest problem derived from the way in which he could negotiate between all the parties responsible for installing him as the President of the DRC. Each party wanted some form of reimbursement in return for their efforts; but more precisely, they wanted to cash in on their investment, namely the treasure beneath the topsoil. According to Boaz Atzili, external actors played a critical role in overthrowing Mobutu, and as Kabila proceeded to limit their rewards for doing so, many of the same external actors played a critical role in the Second Congo War to remove Kabila.<sup>348</sup>

Atzili's theory states that countries that adhere to fixed borders more readily engage in international conflicts because of weak governments and instability. Fixed borders, according to Atzili, deprive states the ability to build strong institutions and assemble unity. The possibility of external threats develops a unity amongst the masses and the potential to aggrandize instills confidence and ingenuity. Congo continues to suffer from this disadvantage. First, Kabila allocated little resources to providing a military, much like Mobutu. The military of the DRC consumed only 1.4 percent of the country's GDP. This small investment in defenses brought on significant repercussions.<sup>349</sup>

First, in order to maintain his legitimacy, Kabila had to expel the armies of Rwanda and Uganda, which decided to maintain their presence in Congo after the departure of Mobutu. As Otunnu asserts, these armies were the conduit through which Rwanda and Uganda extracted Congo's subterranean treasure. In reality, the United States, the IMF-World Bank, and other Western institutions provided this thievish Ugandan force with massive political, economic, and military support in order to combat Khartoum's Islamic government in Sudan. In many ways,

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<sup>348</sup> Boaz Atzili, "When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors: Fixed Borders, State Weakness, and International Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Winter 2006/07): 139-73.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-40, 156.

The West applauded Museveni was the statesman bringing stability to central and eastern Africa.<sup>350</sup>

After Kabila's expulsion ultimatum, the neighbors of Congo switched their strategy. Using the inability of Kabila to disarm the *interhamwe* and former Hutu military refugees in Congo as the pretext to intervene once again in Congo, Rwanda and Uganda renewed their exploitive endeavors in the "breadbasket."<sup>351</sup> In Congo, unity amongst the masses did not exist. As opposed to uniting in the cause to defend Congo, rival ethnic groups used the invasion in 1998 as an opportunity to defeat their intra-Congo enemies. The weakness of the state resulted not from the ineptitude of the Kabila regime, but rather from the nature of the threat of the invading force: the people did not perceive it as a threat to the entire nation—just to particular regions and ethnic groups.<sup>352</sup>

The invading forces occupied the mineral deposits in eastern Congo, weakening Kabila's regime with the same tactic he used to oust Mobutu, and Kabila could not continue this Second Congo War without external help—once again. During this period, another rebel leader, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, garnered support for his cause from Uganda. Wamba's *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD), in many ways mirrored Kabila's efforts prior to deposing Mobutu. Wamba's RCD the strength to challenge Kabila on its own and needed external backing.<sup>353</sup> Uganda and Rwanda obliged, but unlike the First Congo War, Angola supported Kabila.

Many speculate why Angola, the former enemy of Zaïre, would lend military support to Kabila; but, with rumors of Mobutu and UNITA sympathizers in the RCD and Uganda

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<sup>350</sup> Otunnu, "Uganda As a Regional Actor , 49.

<sup>351</sup> Ngolet, "African and American Connivance," 80.

<sup>352</sup> Atzili, "When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors," 161.

<sup>353</sup> Ngolet, "African and American Connivance," 81.



circulating, Angola decided to aid the man in Congo. This theory gained plausibility when, upon the defeat of UNITA and the death of Jonas Savimbi back home, Kabila's Angolan military-on-loan withdrew from the conflict. Zimbabwe also came to his rescue, but for less nuanced reasons. Mugabe had loaned large sums of money to Kabila for his rebellion, and the Zimbabwean leader feared losing his investment. Also, much like the North American mining interests, Mugabe and the top brass in his military struck deals netting lucrative mining contracts as a result of his support.<sup>354</sup> This support received by these African nations, and to a smaller extent, the aid from Sudan and Libya, staved off Kabila's defeat. Still, when the warring parties signed the Lusaka agreement in 1999, Uganda's military controlled Mobutu's old home town of Gbadolite in northern Congo. Wamba, once the supported leader of the RCD, lost influence within his own party, and it swept to the side. Kabila's largest disadvantage brought about by this war was the involvement—regardless of how small—of Libya and Sudan, both of which were on the United States government's list of nations that sponsor terrorists.<sup>355</sup>

Kabila may have been able to save his regime following the Second Congo War; however, the political backlash was severe. Uganda, still supported by the United States, presented a continued threat to national security and the pilfering of Congo's natural resources continued through Kabila's assassination in 2001. In the media, Kabila would be presented, now, as a Mobutu-esque despot, exploiting the Congolese masses for his own benefit. In the Western world, he exemplified another brutal dictator that caused immense suffering, while lining his own pockets. According to Osei Boateng, "While in office, Kabila was quickly

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<sup>354</sup> Atzili, "When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors," 167-9.

<sup>355</sup> Ngolet, "African and American Connivance," 81-2.

disowned by his Western supporters after he refused to sell his country for a song.”<sup>356</sup> On January 20, 2001, *The Economist* ran the following leader comment:

The passing of Laurent Kabila from the Congolese presidency—and probably also, despite the confusion, from the wider world—will not be mourned by many. Though hailed as a ‘new breed’ African leader, his path to power was a trail of blood, and he ruled with all the venality, incompetence and arbitrariness of the worst of the old breed. Still, for anyone tempted to help the wretched people of Congo, it is much less easy to say what should be done after the despot's demise than what should not.<sup>357</sup>

Perhaps the most striking retraction comes on January 17, 2001, from Chris McGreal of *The Guardian*, who in stark contrast to his May 1997 comments, posthumously lambastes Kabila in his article, “Congo’s ‘saviour’ brought bloodshed: How Kabila, the brothel keeper, caused a war that engulfs Africa:”

There was no shortage of candidates with a motive for trying to assassinate Laurent Kabila . . . He did after all, manage the near-impossible feat of making himself more reviled than his predecessor, Mobutu . . . Until four years ago, Mr. Kabila was best known for the scorn Che Guevara poured on his fighting abilities when the Cuban revolutionary descended on Congo in the 1960s. [Kabila] had waged a half-hearted civil war against Mobutu, but much of his time was spent in neighbouring Tanzania where he supplemented the booty from his ‘struggle’ by running a brothel. In October 1996, Rwanda invaded Zaire . . . But Rwanda’s Tutsi-led army needed a cover story. It chose to dress up the invasion as an indigenous uprising in eastern Zaire, and Mr. Kabila was plucked from obscurity to front it. From the start, it was clear he was not running the war. He spent much of his time resting in a villa in Goma while Rwandan troops drove Mobutu's army back at amazing speed. While the Rwandan government initially portrayed Mr. Kabila as a great democrat and soldier, its military commanders derided him as a lazy, incompetent oaf who ate two chickens for breakfast. [Kabila] was no more a president than a rebel leader. He swapped one set of foreign masters for another and both wearied of him.<sup>358</sup>

Gross human rights violations remain the hallmark of Kabila’s regime. “[A]ny

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<sup>356</sup> Boateng, “The Second Scramble for Congo,” 32.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

civil society activist suspected of being too outspoken or critical of the new regime was a target for repression.”<sup>359</sup> The Ugandan and Rwandan troops still maintaining their strongholds in Eastern Congo have been accused of numerous atrocities. “Troops committed the worst kinds of atrocities in retaliation against local civilians. Numerous charges of mass murder, rape, and extrajudicial executions have been leveled by human rights organizations against the Rwandan and Ugandan troops who operated in eastern Congo.”<sup>360</sup> HIV/AIDS continues to plague Congo. According to Stephan Elbe, five percent of the adult population in the Democratic Republic of Congo has AIDS. The disease afflicts many women in Eastern Congo because they have been mass raped by infected soldiers. The U.S. National Intelligence Council estimates that between 40-60 percent of the Congolese army has HIV/AIDS, and the South African defense intelligence assessment similarly estimates the rate at 50 percent. AIDS is now the number one killer of soldiers in the Congolese Army. What Elbe cannot analyze in this article is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst paramilitary forces in Congo. If the rate remains so high amongst government troops, is it fair to assume that the percentage of rebel groups living in the same areas would be nearly as high? Charges of Ugandan troops using HIV/AIDS as a weapon continue to surface, according to Elbe. He suggests that the Ugandan government deploys its HIV positive troops to Eastern Congo to prevent its spread back home. He also argues that from August 1998 to March 2001, approximately 2.5 million more people have died of HIV/AIDS-related illness because of the civil war than if no conflict existed at all. This epidemic decimates swaths of the Congolese population, and if Ugandan soldiers knowingly target and infect female victims in the areas they control, they could possibly destroy the future of certain ethnic

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<sup>359</sup> Gondola, *The History of the Congo*, 165.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

groups.<sup>361</sup> Kabila's inability to protect his people, coupled with the widely-held view that his government was corrupt, ultimately led to his demise.

Controversy still surrounds the assassination of Laurent Kabila; however, what seems to be clear is that he was shot to death in the presidential palace in Kinshasa by one of his bodyguards, Rachidi Kasereka, who was then killed by Colonel Eddy Kapend, Kabila's right-hand man. His assassination leads Ch. Didier Gondola to conclude "Kabila's death was part of a large, well-orchestrated plan. This plan was probably masterminded by one or more of the foreign governments that still control Congo in a bid to replace him with a more amenable figurehead."<sup>362</sup> Otunnu also comes to similar conclusions. When Kabila became a liability without a mandate from the masses, Western powers, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi started looking for other Kabilas to replace the man who was not the puppet they thought he would be.<sup>363</sup> Kabila was then replaced by his son and commander of the land forces of Congo, Joseph Kabila. Little is known about the current president of Congo, but he seems to be more receptive to Western tutelage than his father demonstrated. The potential problem with this new president's current reform process is that he spent most of his life outside Congo (in Dar es Salaam) and he is not a native French speaker. Western influence could be the jumpstart that Congo's economy needs, but it will probably continue its current and historical course. Instability and regional conflict have enabled foreigners to extract Congo's treasures, just as they did in the past. Mining companies pay rebel leaders and supply them with the weapons necessary to secure that area. "Competing interests over Congo's abundant mineral resources remain the prevailing reason behind Africa's First World War. It is a war of attrition, approved

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<sup>361</sup> Stefan Elbe, "HIV/AIDS and the Changing Landscape of War in Africa," *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall 2002): 162-4, 169, 171.

<sup>362</sup> Gondola, *The History of the Congo*, 173.

<sup>363</sup> Otunnu, *Uganda as Regional Actor*, 71.

by Western corporations and inflicted by foreign invading armies and local militias on the Congolese people.”<sup>364</sup> Millions have died and many more will in the next few years due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Steps need to be taken now to ensure some stable future for the Congolese masses.

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<sup>364</sup> Gondola, *The History of the Congo*, 172-8, 177.

## CONCLUSION

Today Congo constitutes two paradoxical realities. The lush vegetation and abundant resources speak volumes about what is possible in this bountiful land. Conversely, the mounting body count, debt, and ethnic animosity are inescapable. In the nearly fifty years since Patrice Lumumba's fiery independence speech, myriad competing interests have unleashed a tragic period mired in exploitation, conflict, destitution, and terror that mirror the unbearable reality of the very colonization that Congo's first prime minister tried to eradicate. Calculated acts of attrition ordered by politicians and rebel leaders and perpetrated by their loyal military and paramilitary forces continue to ravage the heart of Africa, matched only by the vicious retaliations of rival politicians and rebel leaders. The Congolese are caught in the middle of the crisis, teetering on the brink of starvation and life-threatening disease. Since 1885, the seemingly endless mineral deposits in the Congolese soil have never benefited the people who work the land; instead, colonization by the Belgians and the neocolonial stranglehold maintained by the United States and its Western allies have raped Congo's abundance at the expense of the laboring masses.

Frantz Fanon, who was a personal friend of Patrice Lumumba, posits in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

This compartmentalized world, this world divided in two, is inhabited by different species. The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Richard Philcox, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 2004): 5.

This reshaping of Marxist theory may indeed be flawed, but in Congo, as in most of sub-Saharan Africa, it is hard not to follow this line of reason. White colonial masters, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, carved up Africa with barely any knowledge of ethnic group relations. Forced to toil under colonialism, a small percentage of the colonized population enjoyed a higher social status bestowed upon them by their “magnanimous” colonial masters. These colonial chiefs and their close social circles were often the face of colonial policy, and therefore this rift in social hierarchy intensified the ethnic relations in many parts of Africa, only to ignite once the European physical presence was all but gone. To the African, white was colonial; any other skin hue was colonized—even the African neocolonial collaborators. Far from physically leaving the scene of exploitation, Western colonizers maintain the visible hand of neocolonialism to prevent the development of fully functioning, solvent, sovereign governments in their former territories, and feast upon the spoils manifested in the bitter, inter-African struggle that continue to this day.

This has been the pattern in Congo. White *was* colonial; now, white is might, and foreign, and a source of war resources for any formidable African presence willing to grant profitable neocolonial concessions. Congolese leaders since the independence ceremony on June 30, 1960, have served the purpose of the Western powers. When they fail to do so, they are removed. Lumumba was the trial. When he refused to play along with the game of neocolonialism, he was sacked and physically eliminated. Adoula and Tshombe proved incapable of maintaining a modicum of stability following Lumumba’s departure. Kasavubu, and later Mobutu, were marionettes, manipulated by their puppeteers. Kabila was the best of several tepid options to remove Mobutu, who continued to prove that he was a liability in the more modern, more visible game of neocolonialism. The Western powers aided their forced patrons and intervened only to maintain stability in areas where neocolonial investment was

high, yet turned their back on their patrons when supporting the opposition increased profitability or global security, or both. Congo is reeling today, and its future is uncertain. Will the neocolonizers step up to lend a helping hand in ending ethnic conflict, halting rape as a tactic of war, and rebuilding necessary infrastructure and stability with few strings attached? Or will this tragic state of affairs perpetuate for the unforeseeable future?

Fanon's incendiary rhetoric was a product of revolution—a bitter struggle for liberation in Algeria that in many ways prompted the Belgian government to consider a peaceable disengagement of its physical presence from Congo. In many instances, Fanon's call for surgical, anticolonial violence to end Western domination in Africa does not initially apply to Congo, as Belgium initially agreed to leave Congo without the need for bloody revolution; but, when applied to the violent Congolese civil war, immediately following independence, involving Western neocolonial posturing and the assassination of Lumumba, Fanon's prescription proves difficult to refute. In the nearly five decades since the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon's definition of neocolonialism still holds true. Mobutu would not have survived for as long as he did without the help of the United States, and the war in eastern Congo continues with the help of Western business interests. This trend, articulated in 1961 by Fanon, continues with no signs of ending, and if the competing ethnic groups within Congo decide to channel their collective animosity towards a common, foreign enemy, violence directed toward the Western presence in Africa may again take place.



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